

GARIFUNA PLACE-MAKING: HOPE FOR THE GUATEMALAN NATION

BY

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## **I. Introduction**

### ***A. An Invitation to Geographic Thinking about Guatemala***

There are different visions and versions of progress in play all around us. In seeking progress, we human beings employ our geographic selves to construct and reconstruct places with specific meanings. In this thesis I use the geographic framework of moral progress to analyze the few places within Guatemala that are being constructed by the Garinagu. I use specific criteria from the framework to judge whether or not the Garinagu are making moral progress in the construction of those places. Information about these places was acquired through my progressive fieldwork (as described in Chapter II, section D) and literature. Because learning from one another is a primary way we increase knowledge and value diversity, in this thesis I focus on analyzing some of the ways the Garinagu and their identity within Guatemala have and potentially could play a role in local and national place-making efforts for progress. Before I go in to detail about the Garinagu, I invite you to consider the place of Guatemala from the moral geographic perspective, because understanding the development of the nation provides a crucial context for understanding the unique role of the Garinagu.

While the brutal Guatemalan civil war officially ended in 1996, the battle to shape the nation according to differing notions of progress continued. I critically examine parts of the Peace Process that officially ended the 36-year long civil war, and I dissect the latter attempts to create a more ethnically egalitarian, eco-friendly, and internationally-respected country. The Peace Accords of 1996 included in the

legal recognition of cosmovision (typically understood to be the worldview and cultural practices of the Maya) the cultural rights of the Xinka<sup>1</sup> and Garinagu (Anderson 2002, 19). Predominantly Creole Ladino lawmakers have given more legal rights to indigenous peoples, but they have also have exploited Mayan culture to falsely advertise a purely historic Mayan image. They use heterosexual and traditionally gendered images to shape the global view of Guatemalan national identity. Only recently have the indigenous Maya of Guatemala begun to argue for Garifuna<sup>2</sup> indigenous rights to political, economic, and cultural participation in Guatemala. Cultural rights such as bilingual, bicultural education is still a dream for many, and job opportunities in the neoliberal market are often in unhealthy and low-paying factories. Mayans struggle to live on and off land that is being conserved for biodiversity. Suffice it to say, the power structure in place since the 1500s has not changed much, and the majority indigenous population does not politically control the country or its own way of life.

In this text I use the ethnic terms, *Maya*, *Ladina/o*<sup>3</sup>, and *Garinagu* to refer to ethnic groups of Guatemalan peoples, though the groups themselves are not homogenous. I use *Maya* to refer to people who consider themselves descendents of pre-invasion inhabitants of the present-day territory of Guatemala and current

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<sup>1</sup> This paper's focus is on the Garinagu, which leaves out the reality of the Xinka people and their cultural needs and misrepresentations. Another examination could be done (or may already be) on the value of raising awareness about the Xinka in Guatemala, who are an ethnic group distinct from the Maya and Garinagu and live in the southeast.

<sup>2</sup> "Garifuna" is an adjective referring to the people and their culture. The plural word for the people is "Garinagu." Their name comes from Carib = garif, and "karaphuna," the word in their language.

<sup>3</sup> Ladina/o is the gender-inclusive version of "Ladino," an ethnic group described below. The "a" represents the inclusion of women in this group. When I use "Ladino" or "Ladina" I am referring to men or women only, respectively.

participants in the Mayan culture. Participants in Mayan culture primarily proclaim their identification through their dress and/or language. By *Ladina/o* I refer to those who identify as “not Maya,” either because they are of mixed indigenous Maya and Spanish descent or have cast off Mayan culture and identity as expressed in dress, language and lifestyle. The polarization of diverse combinations of racial mixing (once labeled by castes) into one unified group called “Ladino” and the counterpart construction of a “homogenous” Maya population occurred over time as identity-related groups were built (Casaus Arzu 2001). Some scholars continue to note a difference between the Creoles (elite Guatemalans with pure or near-pure European ancestry) and the Ladina/os of mixed race, but most people refer to the Creoles and Ladina/os collectively as “Ladinos” because they share political control and mutually participate in the erasure of Mayan culture. “[...] Those of more clearly mixed descent have been ‘invited into history’ by changes in ethnic and racial labels, which no longer distinguish between Ladinos and creoles (both groups now being labeled Ladinos)” (Smith 1996, 59). Keeping cultural norms is more important than class in determining ethnicity (though not necessarily “whiteness”) (Smith 1996). For example, a poor Ladina/o is not considered a Maya. The few wealthy Maya are still Maya when they continue to dress in traditional clothing and/or speak a Mayan language. Like Latinos in the U.S. who originate from different countries, most Maya from different communities do not self-identify as a cohesive group. While a small but growing pan-Maya population of elite intellectuals fight for cultural rights such as the right to wear ethnic clothing, most Maya are focused on community

concerns, and some are anti-pan-Mayanism. Likewise, not all Guatemalan Ladina/os would support the typical images of their identity; while some would deny them yet still participate in living them out, others are actively fighting against them (Hale 2006). The question of how to address individuals and groups of individuals who do not subscribe to the nationalist ideology or dominant cultural identity is an issue for all scholarship on nations of people. Kay Warren (2001) questions the benefits of using pan-Mayan arguments when Mayan communities have a “radical localism,” which means they are extremely focused on local community. I believe we need to look at local and larger movements for change.

By *Garinagu* I refer to afro-indigenous ethnic population that mostly lives on the Caribbean coast of Guatemala and numbers around 10,000. While their heritage is made up of various African descent and Arawak-Carib ethnic groups, not many Garinagu have made families or procreated with Maya or Ladina/o and are physically distinguished from them. However, as will be shown later, the social construction of their role in the nation has at times blended their identity with the Maya or the Ladina/os. When I refer to the *indigenous* or *indigenous rights* in this text, I am including the Garinagu. See figure below for geographic ethnic divisions according to language.



## LINGUISTIC COMMUNITIES OF GUATEMALA



SOURCE: BEST Project 520-0374, USAID – Guatemala

Linguistic map of Guatemala, which corresponds with ethnic groups. Besides the Garifuna and Xinka areas, all other labels represent Mayan languages spoken, and the large unlabeled area in the southern half is where Spanish is dominant (Source: CEH, Guatemala Memory of Silence, <http://shr.aaas.org/guatemala/ceh/report/english/toc.html>).

While the 1996 Peace Accords and laws were created in Guatemala to give more rights to the indigenous people, they emphasized the differences in the two dominant ethnicities over shared human needs for inclusion, security, civility, etc. This is one of the major obstacles to valuing a varied and complex reality in Guatemala: dualistic thinking about ethnicity (Warren 2001). The meaning that has been applied to Guatemala's history is centered on ethnic dualisms, and consequently inter-ethnic justice is thought of in dualist terms. Dualisms are the inaccurate structuring of thoughts into binary oppositions (Sayer 1990, 285). To make progress, we must overcome these dualisms and consider continuums, outlying factors, causes and effects, and the like. In the case of Guatemala, we need to look outside of the Maya-Ladina/o ethnic and class debate. So I bring to light how the Garinagu participate in making their communities, and by looking at these places, I seek to provide an alternative view of how place-making can be done.

Making a place (place-making) is complicated and the situation is serious for Guatemalans and the rest of the world. Humans make places and are aware of some- but not all- aspects of this process, which can result in place-making efforts that construct detrimental places. According to John Paul Ignosh y Michael A. Kilgore (2005), who write about sustainability in Guatemala, both the Guatemalan people and the environment are diverse and rich in culture and natural resources but also suffer greatly. In a historic moment of rapid neoliberal change, the western hemisphere is at the crossroads of deciding how it will continue to strive for a sustainable future with so much present injustice. Geographer Dr. Peter Herlihy emphasizes the seriousness

of the situation by calling it a crisis, "... [G]rupos mayas se encuentran en medio de una inminente crisis ecológica: su población crece mientras que los recursos se agotan" (2003, 243).<sup>4</sup> But all Guatemalans, just like all humans in the world, are confronting a crisis as petroleum runs out, environmental pollution and violence increases, etc. With all these problems, how do we make progress? If progress involves homogenization, or if we commit only to diversity, at what cost do we do so? What criteria do we use to determine the benefits of those costs?

I argue that understanding Garifuna culture and the way they employ it within their communities could provide hope for the Guatemalan nation to make moral progress. I use criteria of valuing diversity, truth, justice, and the natural, from a moral geographic framework. This thesis first addresses the differing kinds of progress being sought after and enacted by Maya and Ladina/o Guatemalans and judges whether or not they are moral progress. Then within the context of national progress, I consider the tiny population of Garinagu and their place-making efforts as an example for progress. While I identify delusion and lack of true progress by the State and many nationalist groups, I share the hope for the expansion of real progress that has been taking place in the Garifuna communities. The Garinagu an afro-indigenous people, have used places such as the Catholic Church, schools, town meetings, and the cultural centers in their communities to reveal truth about inter-ethnic strife and potentials and to work toward the good of all. In constructing other, genuine meanings of diversity and equality in these places by providing open and free

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<sup>4</sup> "Mayan groups find themselves in the middle of an imminent crisis; their population grows while resources are depleted."

access to information, they increase their own awareness and provide an example for others to follow to make real progress. Cinthia Fuentes Rodríguez, director of the Commission against Discrimination and Racism (*La Comisión Contra la Discriminación y el Racismo*, or CODISRA) estimated that 50% of Guatemalans do not know about the Garinagu. Increasing awareness in Guatemala about the Garinagu and the progress they are making in their communities could break the dichotomous mold of the nation and help make it a place of progress toward truth, justice, and the natural.

This document has three main chapters of information on Guatemalan progress. In this chapter I give a brief recount of the history of Guatemala from conquest to the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century so the reader may understand the development of the struggle between the Maya and Ladino populations that escalated to a civil war in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I also begin to talk about the Peace Process to end the war and the neoliberal values that began to permeate Guatemalan economies and cultures. Then, in Chapter II, I analyze attempts of progress in Guatemala with a geographic theoretical framework of moral progress. I end the chapter by explaining how this framework of progress informed my research methodology. In Chapter III, I describe the existing places and “places under construction” where the Garinagu are making progress for themselves, their communities, and the nation. This is mostly based on my fieldwork in Guatemala from June through August, 2007. The Conclusion of Chapter IV draws together a narrative of collective liberation through which the Garifuna communities provide hope for other communities in Guatemala.

## ***B. Guatemala: The Scene, the National Place***

### **1. Conquest to mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

The various Maya peoples who were living in what was to be Guatemala after the Spanish invasion were descendents of indigenous peoples who had lived in Mesoamerica since circa 12,000 BCE. From Tobasco, Mexico to El Salvador, communities of Maya inhabitants grew corn, built astronomical structures and religious temples, and moved around the land fairly freely. They flourished in larger cities and via increased trade during the Classic Era<sup>5</sup>, from 0 to 900CE, before communities dispersed. When the Spaniards arrived in present-day Guatemala in the 1500s, both the conquistadors and Catholic bishops struggled to conquer the Maya, who lived in separated communities and spoke around 30 different languages. The invasion and conquest involved killing, rape, slave labor, Christianization, language domination, and cultural suppression. The Spaniards mixed with the indigenous Maya population and created a “Ladino” population that controlled and continues to control Guatemala.

Since 1524 when the Spanish *conquistador* Pedro de Alvarado invaded Maya communities, the indigenous have had to resist outside conquest of their land. Though the Spanish conquistadors struggled to conquer the separate communities, the Church was successful in establishing local control (Smith 1991). Castes and hierarchy were intensified in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Garinagu settled on the Caribbean Coast in the Amatique Bay area in the early 1800s. By 1821 Guatemala had its

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<sup>5</sup> Also known as the “Formative Period” to shirk the European-centric label that refers to Greek progress, though some argue the Formative Period took place 2000BCE-0CE.

independence from Spain, but not from Creole and Ladina/o oppression, that through class hierarchy and classic racism would continue to control more and more natural resources and thus control others' culture.

After centuries of *encomiendas*<sup>6</sup> and *reducciones*<sup>7</sup>, in 1877, when coffee was growing in world popularity, President Justo Rufino Barrios passed legislation that transferred much of the Maya property to Ladina/os and Germans to cultivate coffee and to free indigenous labor. By the 1890's the indigenous population of Guatemala had twice the birth rate of Ladina/os, who then pressured the Maya to modernize and assimilate to a Ladina/o way of life throughout the early twentieth century (Handy 2002, 40). State policies supported assimilation and full political rights for Maya who ladinoized (Smith 1996, 60). Carey (2006) illustrates an example of this by describing early attempts by the state to ladinoize Mayan medical practices. From 1931 to 1944 the dictator Jorge Ubico made conditions worse for workers by emphasizing grant ownership rights over the original inhabitants'. He implemented Decree 1816, that "exempted landowners from the consequences of any action taken to protect their goods or land" (O'Kane 2000, 16). Nearing the 1940s, there was a national campaign against *curanderismo*<sup>8</sup> and *brujería*<sup>9</sup> and the state required midwives to be trained in Western medical techniques. The national police went after midwives without licenses because the state saw them as threats to national progress

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<sup>6</sup> Plantation-like system where indigenous persons and their labor are granted to a person of Spanish descent.

<sup>7</sup> Reductions took indigenous people off their land and out of communities and placed them in congregated communities.

<sup>8</sup> indigenous medical practices

<sup>9</sup> witchcraft

toward a modern, homogenous Ladino nation (Carey 2006, 45). While the Maya selectively modernized by taking advantage of communication technology like radios, they were still reluctant to give up their dress, language, and agriculturally based way of life. Communities continued to operate with local control instead of relinquishing power to the state. Until the civil war that began in the 1960s, some Mayan communities would peacefully push out Ladina/os by not hiring, trading with, or electing them (Smith 1991).

Guatemala celebrated its first democratic elections in 1944, which were followed by the implementation of economically liberal state policies until 1954 when the U.S. CIA led a coup to install right-wing leaders (Fischer 2002, 30).<sup>10</sup> In 1944 President Juan José Arévalo attempted agrarian reform, but there was considerable protest from foreign investors. Then in 1952 President Arbenz' congress passed Decree 900, an agrarian reform that allowed uncultivated land to be given to land-poor peoples, resulting in half of the land in the state redistributed (O'Kane 2000). Many communities in the Department of Izabal, where the Kekchí Maya and the Garinagu live (such as Quebrada Seca, Creek Maya, Punta Arenas, Lámpara, El Cedro, Creek jute, Nueva Generación, y Esmeralda) never received titling before the counterrevolution and now continue to request it via the Instituto de Transformación Agraria (Comunidad 2008, 5). After the coup d'état backed by the United States in 1954, the conservative elites dominated the country for the entire second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, using arms to ensure that the leftist revolutionaries

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<sup>10</sup> President Jacobo Arbenz had expropriated unused land previously owned by the United Fruit Company.

and the indigenous did not succeed in taking control of the government or land. They have had the backing of giant multinational companies that benefit from cheap labor, appropriate climate, and fertile land that provide excellent economic conditions for the agricultural industry.

## **2. Civil War, Peace Process, and Neoliberalism**

Juan Adolfo Vásquez said in 1982, “The conquest has not yet ended, and neither has resistance to the conquest” (Wright 1992, 52). Another twenty-six years after Juan Adolfo Vásquez’s statement, the conquest of Guatemala continues. As the Ladina/os and the Maya have battled each other throughout history over legal rights, development practices, and the national identity of Guatemala, the Garinagu have often been an afterthought or a tool used by a Maya or Ladina/o group attempting to gain power of the State. The two main ethnic groups and factions within them argue over the ideological and physical construction of the country; some consider it “underdeveloped” in comparison with “first world countries” while others view this perspective of national identity as ignorant of the indigenous cultural practices. They have used the political arena, international trade, and symbols and images to emphasize their view and shape others’ view of Guatemala. Observations on the construction of Guatemalan national identity often focus on ethnicity and the political and familial arena in which the battle takes place.<sup>11</sup> In addition to ethnicity, both gender and sexuality are employed by nationalists in these arenas and in the images

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<sup>11</sup> See Diane Nelson (1999) and Carol Smith (1996) for discussion on uses of ethnicity, gender and sexuality in Guatemalan politics and family life.



they use to foster identification with a view of what “Guatemalan” means. As I look at the meanings created by social relations that are intertwined with the nature around them, I explain who did the conquering and the resisting through the 36-year-long civil war, the Peace Process that officially ended that war, and the ideology of neoliberal multiculturalism that replaced physical conquest as a means to suppress resistance.

The 36-year civil war is commonly dated 1960-1996. The physical and political struggle, however, started before 1960 and is not yet over. Neither were those involved only Maya and state affiliated Ladinos. The historic oppression and inequality, along with the success of Fidel Castro’s Marxist 1959 revolution, motivated Guatemalan Ladino peasants to begin an insurgency against the rich and powerful state Ladinos in the 1960s. The state, in turn, fought the peasant ladinos and also blamed the Maya and attacked Mayan villages. Ethnic and class lines were again conflated. In response to the killing and torture of their people, including the massacres of four communities, Maya men and women joined the Ladina/o peasant guerrilla movement (Smith, 1991). The U.S. government and military continued to support the Guatemalan state in exterminating “subversives.” More than 200,000 people died or disappeared. According to the UN report on the war, 93% of human rights violations were committed by the Guatemalan state. Of identifiable victims, 83% were indigenous and 17% were Ladina/os. The conclusions by the UN in “Memory of Silence” state that (my emphasis):

The rape of women, during torture or before being murdered, was a common practice aimed at destroying one of the most intimate and

vulnerable aspects of the individual's dignity. *The majority of rape victims were Mayan women.* Those who survived the crime still suffer profound trauma as a result of this aggression, and the communities themselves were deeply offended by this practice. The presence of sexual violence in the social memory of the communities *has become a source of collective shame.*" (Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico, 1998, emphasis mine).

Jan-Michael Simon prefaces the electronic Memory of Silence "Truth Commission" report with a quote from the Nuremberg Trials of 1946, "Los crímenes contra el derecho internacional son cometidos por hombres, no por entidades abstractas."<sup>12</sup> Though "men" may be used in terms of "human," I think the gendered statement is particularly relevant for crimes committed in pursuit of nationalist agendas because of the often male-dominated sphere of constructing the national identity and holding power.

Members of the government have denied responsibility for their ethnic and sexual abuses in the spotlight of mainstream press, but laws and alternative media sources refute those claims. An elite white, Otto Pérez Molina, retired general and secretary of the Patriot Party, defended Rios Montt, president during the war, "He never ordered any massacre," (Sandoval, 2003). At the same time, his key advisors bragged about exterminating 600+ villages that were guerrillero by implication. Denial of massacres of indigenous peoples may not be new information for Latin American readers, but the ways in which sexuality is used for nation building may be less known. John Kyper (1983) wrote in the "Gay Community News" that General Montt was a gay-hater who supported violence against homosexuals. Montt's

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<sup>12</sup> "Crimes against international law are committed by men, not by abstract entities," my translation.

alliance with the U.S. and international evangelical church encouraged the cleansing of “sinners.” The law even sanctioned patriarchal values. According to the Guatemala Civil Code, the employment of women during the war could be restricted by their husbands so that elite women’s role in nation building was reduced to the reproduction of the white race through marriage (Smith 1996, 61).

The guerrilla front was hardly more gender sensitive. A major player of the guerrilla movement, the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG), claimed they had no time to take up women’s rights during the insurgency (Luciak 2001, 184).<sup>13</sup> As secondary to men’s nationalist projects, women’s rights are often left for “later” (Nagel 2003, 160).

Mayan resistance to this conquest has taken form, in the last score of years, through another nationalist construction also highly pushed by men. A pan-Mayan movement has spread through the country and united Maya intellectuals and cultural advocates to fight for bilingual education and a shared Mayan view of historical and calendric events. While the vast majority is not seeking political autonomy (Montejo 1997, Smith 1991), Maya people want respect and rights from the Ladinos currently in control of the state, and some wish to participate in the State. The 21 different groups of Guatemalan Maya are uniting behind the symbol of traditional Mayan dress and the image of linguistic diversity. Pan-Mayan strength is believed to be in the reproduction of and continuing Mayaness of their women. During the journey of

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<sup>13</sup> To the URNG’s credit, or to credit the world movement for women in politics, or to the credit of the women of the URNG themselves, a section on women’s rights was included in one of their 1994 official documents (Luciak, 2001; 185).

resistance, Maya men have adopted some patriarchal gender roles<sup>14</sup>, and they now greatly depend on the women for maintaining standards of Mayan culture through dress, language, and sexual loyalty. But there is another group of people in Guatemala with a very different culture and way of survival, and their story has lessons from which to learn.

The process of the Peace Accords of 1996 was wrought with ethnic inequality. Estuardo Zepeta (1994), a Guatemalan editorialist, denounced that two minority groups, poor urban Ladina/os (represented by URNG) and rich government Ladina/os, were discussing indigenous rights in 1994 to end the civil war. The majority, which Zepeta cited as 65% Maya, were excluded from joining the “dialogue,” though the Mesa Maya was invited in 1993. The Coordinadora de Organizaciones del Pueblo Maya (COMAGUA) wanted to enter the conversation but was denied. On 22 December 1994 the United Nations gave an ultimatum to the Guatemalan government and URNG to come to agreement because they were stalling the peace.

As agreements were reached in 1995, one of the seven substantive peace accords was *Acuerdo sobre Identidad y Derechos de los pueblos indígenas*.<sup>15</sup> Though it was considered a major achievement by many, there were also legitimate concerns about the accords. Some questioned whether the State would actually carry out the 52 (of 108) provisions of the accords that dealt with indigenous rights. Estuardo

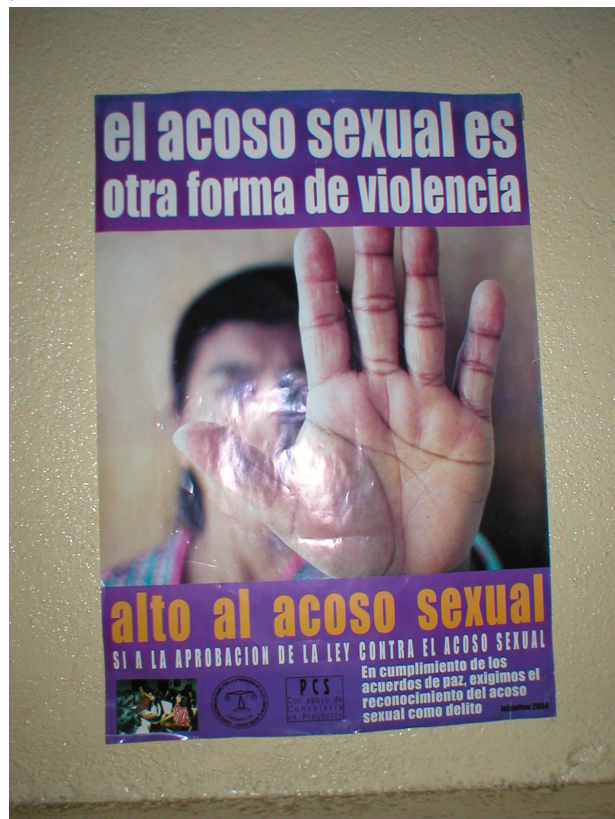
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<sup>14</sup> Historically Maya men participated in a gendered system of complementarity, where men and women’s roles were seen as different but equal.

<sup>15</sup> Accord on the Identity and Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Zepeta lamented the continual necessity to negotiate Mayan rights. Zepeta's demand for a due recognition of Mayan rights is not even accomplished through the law. Under this accord, "The constitutional right to wear *traje* ought to be respected and guaranteed in all circles of national life" (Fischer 1996, 119, cited as 1997:34-35). Many Maya men had already stopped wearing indigenous clothing during the war, partly because of the risk of being suspect and consequently disappeared. But Maya women continued and continue to wear it when possible. Women's rights were addressed in four of the seven accords reached between 1991 and 1996, and the right to not be sexually harassed was protected by punishment under the law.

*In 2003, women who worked in the capital city were discouraged from wearing their traje, and one Maya woman informed me that in order to get a job she created an alternate ID with a picture of herself in a modern business suit (2003). She now works for an organization that fights for Maya women's rights, including the right to wear traje and to not be sexually harassed (see figure below)*



Yet 14 months after the accords took affect, there was no visible change in women's rights, and rural areas still lacked public services for women (Luciak 2001, 56).

Convention 169 (the Convention Concerning Indigenous Peoples and Tribes in Independent Countries) was adopted by the General Conference of the International Labor Organization in the 1989, and it established policies for respecting indigenous rights to land, justice, education, language, and religion (Handy 2002, 42). While Guatemalan Ladina/os ratified the convention on June 5, 1996 during the Peace Process<sup>16</sup>, hundreds of lynchings were used to terrorize the Maya at the same time (Handy 2002, 56). Fears of the passage from indigenous rights to indigenous autonomy and subsequent revengeful violence gave way to more violence against the Maya (Rubin 2004, 123). Pushes for Mayan community rights were labeled racist or reverse discrimination by Ladina/os (Rubin 2004, 123; and Smith 1991; and Hale 2006). The ineffectiveness of the truce was challenged by a push for the 1999 referendum that backed a constitutional amendment calling for actions to implement the peace accords. The Maya overwhelming voted in support of the referendum, but it failed because not enough Maya voted in contrast to Ladina/os in the capital (Luciak 2001, 63). Jim Handy (2002, 64-66) attributes the lack of Mayan votes to the national focus of the referendum and the local, community focus of most Maya. The fragmented view of the ethnicity of Maya peoples still appeared stronger

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<sup>16</sup> I borrow the term "Peace Process" from A. L. Anderson's "Of One Accord," as it refers to a series of national and international conversations and debates about building a stable and peaceful Guatemala post-civil war.

than the images, symbols, and calls for pan-Mayanism that elite Maya men were producing, which has resulted in few advances in collective Maya rights.

After many international organizations involved themselves in calling for peace, the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca<sup>17</sup> (URNG) and the government made an agreement to allow the Mission of Verification of the United Nations in Guatemala (MINUGUA) to observe and help with the process to end the war. Although the Peace Accords signed in December 1996 included agrarian reform, almost nothing changed. The spokeswoman of MINUGUA, Seda Pumpyanskaya, indicated that poverty, inequality, and discrimination continue to plague the country. She went on to state that of the peace accords, “the agreements on indigenous and economic matters are the least fulfilled and need serious state policies” (Daniel 2008, 1). John Paul Ignosh and Michael A. Kilgore commented that eight years after the Peace Accords, although the violence had diminished, the criminal activity had increased, largely due to extreme poverty. When there is official peace, but little justice, those with power can continue to take advantage of social structures and land ownership.

Ladina/os with political control construct images of their nation through national symbols and laws that support Western, white culture. Still suffering from some post-civil war international shame, the Ladino state has attempted to publicly project an identity based on human rights and equality. They project “Guatemalan” images of their nation through state symbols and government-sponsored tourism.

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<sup>17</sup> National Guatemalan Revolutionary Union.

Both gender and sexuality are employed as components of ethnic strength and national pride in these images. President Arzu's (1996-2000) policies did not address labor or land issues and were low on social programs but generally supported Maya cultural activism (Hale 2006, 143). The Ladinos of the government display ethnic diversity to benefit their image and their pocketbooks, but they only advertize heterosexual identity. By donning distorted indigenous traits on white bodies, the Ladino state co-opts a perceived gendered Mayaness of masculine males and feminine females (explained further in Chapter II, section C.2). The government has sought to establish the nation as a modern, progressive state, void of "backward" beliefs and traditional practices.

As previously stated as the purpose of this thesis, I seek to identify ways in which the Garinagu can use their cultural identity to make progress for themselves and for the nation of Guatemala. Through the Peace Process progress was made, but made slowly because appreciation for the true variety and complexity of Guatemala was buried in neoracism and dualist thinking. Throughout the 1990s Garifuna identity has been increasingly used in political discourse in the name of multiculturalism. This multicultural discourse could improve the democratization and building of a stable, unified (but diverse) nation if it included the afro-descended parts of Garifuna culture and their current ways of adjusting to modernization. I will argue why the nation should learn from their neighbors on the Caribbean coast, as they live



in tension but peacefully with the Kekchí', Kulí<sup>18</sup>, and other ethnic groups, and why the nation could benefit from reframing what it means to be Guatemalan (the dichotomous groups could even deepen their own analysis of what it means to be Ladina/o or Maya in context of merged cultures and identities).

The direct peace negotiations (1994-1996) officially ended the 36-year civil war in Guatemala and were a major step in building opportunities toward the moral progress of equality. Both prior to the 1996 Peace Accords and after their official conclusion there was national and international debate about the reasons why Guatemalans were fighting and what the divisions were. These complications contributed to the difficult and slow law-making process. The ethnic-class debate asks whether the war was more about the cultural divide between the Maya and the Ladina/os, whose economic and political power resulted in dominated Maya culture, or about class issues, where the poor fought against the rich to bring about a toppling of concentrated political power and wealth. The ethnic-class debate in Guatemala comes from a long history of oppression of the Maya by the Ladina/os. Since the physical features of indigenous peoples and Ladina/os are similar due to *mestizaje*,<sup>19</sup> ethnicity is usually determined from cultural attributes (type of clothing and language spoken) and economic status. Some Guatemalans believe the socio-political struggle is about this difference in ethnicity, while others believe it is about class. It becomes an even stronger dichotomy when “poor” is almost always associated with indigenous

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<sup>18</sup> Kulí (or “coolie” in some English contexts) is the term used to talk about people of Asian descent, many of whom were said to be descendents of laborers from India. Though the term can be used derogatorily by some, it did not appear to be derogatory to me.

<sup>19</sup> Mixing of races/ethnicities to produce mixed offspring.

and “wealthy” with Ladina/o. Though it would be more accurate to use it to describe specific cultural practices, “Garifuna” is often simplified or altered to fit into one of these two categories. Only recently and slowly have non-Garinagu begun to acknowledge the Garinagu and their culture as another ethnic group existing in the nation with a long and deep ethnic-class divide.

The 1988-1990 FLASCO conference proceedings in *Estado y Nación*<sup>20</sup> show how the Garinagu were considered neither Maya nor Ladina/o before the Peace Process started. At the conference Victoriano Alvarez reported his view of the Maya-Ladina/o conflict by defining four groups in Guatemala in dualistic terms, which exclude the Garinagu:

What provokes conflict in Guatemala is not an ethnic kind of conflict, but rather cultural- between the cosmovision and the anthropocentrism that has divided the people of Guatemala into four factions: poor Ladina/os and rich Ladina/os; poor Indians and rich Indians, because among the indigenous peoples there is a capitalist bourgeois, who exploit more viciously than the actual Ladina/o and who exploits his brother of the same race. (Solares 1993, 76; my translation)

Editor Jorge Solares broke the Maya-Ladina/o dualism by including the Garifuna voice in the debate because “the Garifuna question sheds important light on how the Indigenous and Ladinos think” (22). Since the Peace Accords officially ended the civil war, discrimination and political power struggles have nonetheless continued (14), and in this tense dichotic dialogue, the reality of Guatemala’s Garinagu population is often forgotten. Raymundo Caz Tzub, a Maya participant in the conference, argued that the Maya:poor::Ladina/o:wealthy dichotomy needed to be

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<sup>20</sup> State and Nation

expanded, but did not acknowledge the Afro-descended people living as citizens in Guatemala (92). The rights of the Maya have been severely violated by the state, and they need to be defended. At the same time, however, the focus on Maya culture has included a “...historical amnesia occluding Guatemala’s participation in the slave trade...” (Anderson 2002, 11).

When the Garinagu are included, it is minimal and conditional upon their relationship with the dualistic Maya-Ladina/o concept of the Guatemalan state. A. L. Anderson’s work (2002) “Of One Accord” explains that some people try to place the Garinagu in a middle-class category alongside Ladina/os, but this ignores not only the discrimination suffered based on their dark skin color, but also that many Garinagu are lower-class with little opportunity to move up (79). Since indigenous people and Ladina/os are distinguished by culture rather than race, they minimize the fact that race relations (especially in the case of the Garinagu) are incredibly tied into culture and class (ibid. 97). Above all, Anderson argues that the Garifuna community is diverse and has diverse opinions in response to the recent changes within the country (ibid. 51), but they were simplified and commercialized under the new economic-political model. Though accords and laws were often inadequate and difficult to establish, they gave hope to the international community and some Guatemalan citizens that the two major ethnic groups, Maya and Ladina/o<sup>21</sup>, would reconcile.

Post-conflict peace processes are long journeys, and in the last 15 years Guatemalans have pushed toward more awareness and a better reality but seen limited

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<sup>21</sup> Or the poor and the rich, depending on interpretation of the dichotomy.

results. For example, President Arzú visited Livingston in November 1997 for National Garifuna Day and used terms like “pluricultural” in his speech (Anderson 2002, 29). The 1999 Referendum was an effort to put into practice the rights legislatively guaranteed to indigenous people. Rachel Sieder explained its failure, “The rejection of the constitutional reform package in May 1999 demonstrated that the idea of a multicultural nation-state is not yet socially and culturally embedded in Guatemalan civil and political society” (Anderson 2002, 218). The initiative for a multicultural nation-state failed in the case of the 1999 Referendum because two qualities were lacking: free and open access to information (regarding to what extent rights of the indigenous people would be protected) and an appreciation for varied and complex reality (the thought of indigenous people with power was threatening). While Ladinos have historically used Livingstonians (as described in Chapter III, section A), and Maya have begun to rhetorically include the Garinagu as indigenous people (as described in Chapter II, section C1), the Garinagu have utilized their black and indigenous identity to their benefit. A. L. Anderson affirmed in 2002 that the “Garifuna people use this invisibility in official historical narratives and dominant geographical knowledge strategically” (18). In 2005 Mayan writer Dr. Waqi’ Q’anil Demetrio Cojtí Cuxil published a book, *The Difficult Transition to a Multinational State*<sup>22</sup>, in which he addresses the situation of the Maya, Xinka, and Garinagu and the racism that needs to be overcome. When Rigoberta Menchú Tum ran as an indigenous candidate for president in 2007, it was the first time a non-Ladina/o was

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<sup>22</sup> Ri K’ak’a Saqamaq’ Pa Iximulew : La Difícil Transición Al Estado Multinacional : El Caso Del Estado Monoétnico De Guatemala, 2004

seriously considered to govern the nation, but pan-Mayanists had not convinced enough “radically local” Maya to vote for a Maya from another pueblo. It is difficult to imagine a Garifuna even having the opportunity to run for president, because s/he would be seen as “black” and all the prejudices that come with it.

The war between simple, rural life and industrialized neoliberal life continued after the Peace Process. Historically the control of land was a struggle between inheritance rights of indigenous family lines and non-indigenous people looking for land and resources, while now it is between the necessity of the poor people-indigenous or not- to survive and the desire of others to make a profit. Today, 52% of people live in rural areas, sometimes in the worst conditions of the western hemisphere, and 30% of the labor force is underemployed, and the highest percentage of them are indigenous (Ignosh and Kilgore 2005, 21). When half of the land is not used in a sustainable way, and less than 1% of the population owns 70% of cultivated land (ibid. 21), the reclamation of Mayan land is the goal of some indigenous and international groups.<sup>23</sup>

So still today, the nation of Guatemala is biodiversity rich and equality poor, though both could change in the future. The erasure of the Maya and their culture by the White nationalist agenda is still reflected in the slighted existence of the Maya people. When an internet user clicks on the link to read facts about Guatemala on the national tourist website (Turismo 2007), the link jumps to the U.S. CIA online fact book , and the CIA uses statistics that agree with the White Ladino government; for

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<sup>23</sup> For example, the Catholic Church in San Lucas Toliman uses international funds to buy land from Ladina/os and sell it at an affordable price to Kaqchikel Maya.

example, the population statistic reports 60% of Guatemalans are Ladina/os (CIA 2006). The Guatemalan National Census of 2002 reported 59% of the population self-identifying as “not indigenous” and 41% as indigenous. Most Mayanist scholars estimate the actual population in opposite proportions, which makes the Maya the majority (Fischer 2002, 29).<sup>24</sup> It is to the mutual advantage of the White Ladino government and the White U.S. government, who both seek to mutually profit from capitalism and Free Trade Agreements, to cite the Maya as the minority because it decreases the power of Mayan arguments for land and community rights, and it is in the Mayanist interest to inflate their numbers conversely. The Maya and the Garinagu face Plan Puebla Panama, a Mexican (and U.S. backed) plan to build a massive infrastructure of roads and canals integrating southern Mexico and Central America. Because of the absence of Garifuna rights in political documents, Garinagu may be exploited even more in the future (as the Maya are today) by multi-national corporations and wealthy Ladino politicians with connections to business.

At the same time the Peace Process attempted to create equality from within the Maya-Ladina/o binary by using multicultural rhetoric, the economic-political ideology of neoliberalism started to sink its teeth into Guatemalan society. What resulted was neoliberal multiculturalism: a state that governs via multiculturalism (many cultures/ethnicities live together) and neoliberalism (ultra-capitalism). Anthropologist Charles Hale (2006) is critical of the limits of the current model; “Neoliberal multiculturalism holds out the promise of both equality and cultural

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<sup>24</sup> This discrepancy is due to indigenous persons not being included in the census (possibly due to illiteracy, missed solicitation, or intentional exclusion). See Richard Adams and Leopoldo Tzián.

recognition, but grants only the latter and then promotes intercultural exchange, anyway” (38). In his book, *Más que un indio*, he analyzed the Ladina/o perspective and clarified this shift in ideology by calling it neoracism, or “cultural racism” (210). He explained how the State recognizes ethnicities and differences, which creates a few opportunities (albeit challenging) for people to move up the ladder (211); how racial privilege still exists in symbolic and material advantages; and how racial ambivalence from the upper class Ladina/os results from the structural-ideological weight of racial formation and variability of cultural-political practice (212). Hale explains how ambivalence is seen in the racist spectrum of the Ladina/o view of indigenous-Ladina/o relations: 1. those who are critical of classic racism (and take the moral high ground), 2. those who say the difference is cultural (and blame Maya for their low positions), 3. those who believe equality exists and downplay Ladina/o racial privilege while criticizing the Maya movement as racist toward Ladina/os (a preemptive strike to make sure the Maya do not achieve redistribution of resources). This reverse racism argument is used by Ladina/o elite to block the Maya from gaining rights or climbing up the hierarchical ladder by arguing that equality has already been achieved and Maya who keep fighting are racist (118). Neoliberal multiculturalism foments the latter part of this spectrum and keeps hierarchical structures in place. It continues to work because multiculturalism sounds great, ambivalence about need for more change is high, and the neoliberal model is not a “strict, market-oriented individualism” that indigenous people might strongly reject, but rather a part of global capitalism to which some indigenous responses are to

participate collectively. This all functions well for the market and keeps hierarchy in place (75).

As Demetrio Cojti and Charles Hale observed, tangible recognition in a multicultural neoliberal state is tricky. The semi-radical legal discourse fabricated a sense of Garinagu inclusion in national politics and rights under the category of “indigenous,” but under closer examination of written works, it became apparent that actual Garifuna culture and identity were not accurately recognized nor protected. Hale argues that the neoliberal state does not deny indigenous cultural rights but is selective about which rights it recognizes and what “recognition” means (37), thus reserving the right to decide who is “authentic” and how to apply the laws that protect it. The many Ladinos who control the state believe equality already exists and downplay Ladina/o racial privilege in socio-economic spheres. Neoliberal multiculturalism keeps hierarchical structures in place with this ideology, while those on the bottom struggle to climb the ladder.

In the neoliberal multicultural state of Guatemala, neither cultural rights nor economic rights are equal for ethnic groups or genders, and there are many examples of exclusion or fake inclusion of Garifuna people. On one hand, in 2007 Ladino President Oscar Berger attended the inauguration of the Garifuna Cultural Institute to show official support for Garifuna culture, but there will be no state funding to maintain the Institute (Silva 2007). On the other, sources of information about the Garinagu are unavailable or difficult to find. For example, the national public library in the central plaza lists less than 10 books with information on the Garinagu, and one



was lost. At the library, staff referred me to the journalism holdings, where the receptionist said they had nothing on the Garinagu but gave me one name of a French scholar to research. The University of San Carlos staff cared immensely about displaying their multiculturalism. The Multicultural Center door had salutations in many indigenous languages, of which Garifuna was one. However, they only had one piece of information on the Garifuna culture- an article by the Prensa Libre (a national newspaper) that a staff member told me was part plagiary and partly erroneous. At the University of San Carlos, Professor Alfonso Arrivillaga has published numerous articles and books on Garifuna culture, available for public use. Copies of this information, however, are expensive, and once an article is published and the limited copies are printed, it seems to disappear.

## **II. Uncovering Progress**

### ***A. Introduction to Progress***

We might each define progress differently because we have different visions of the real and the good. Yet if we have shared criteria by which to judge change, we can collectively determine what progress is and work together to achieve it. In this chapter I first address the question of criteria for judging change based on a moral geographic framework, and then I give examples of how that framework can be applied to recent attempted acts of progress in Guatemala.

The decade of the 1990s is often referred to as one of “Peace and Parks” for Central America. “Peace” refers to the official ends to many civil wars<sup>25</sup> which brought about limited progress through legal measures, which I address in section C1 of this chapter by analyzing the dichotomous laws. “Parks,” addressed in section C3, refers to the creation of reserves and biospheres to protect the biodiversity of the region, which could be noted as progress toward sustainability. Neoliberal multiculturalism was also a major player of the 1990s and in to the 2000s. An economic-political ideology that defines progress much differently, neoliberal multiculturalism focuses on the force of capitalism to develop infrastructure and views production of “new” goods as progress. It is based on the ideology that material improvement, “growth”, and production efficiency are always good. It is addressed in the section C2 of this chapter when I look at symbols and false images. I conclude with a reflection on how the geographic framework for moral progress informed my research.

### ***B. The Geographic Framework of Moral Progress***

*“Now that’s progress!”*

*...What is?*

The concept of progress that I use to analyze Guatemala is called “moral progress” and comes from a geographic theoretical framework that is based on a Critical Realist view of the world. “Geography... helps us root our moral

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<sup>25</sup> While wars were mostly among factions within nations, such intense ideology and arms support was provided by foreign countries such as the U.S. that the term “civil” is not quite accurate.

imagination to reality, giving it practical relevance and potential to inform place-making projects” (Herrera 2008, 53, citing Sack 1997, 2003; Tuan 1991, 1992). The geographic theoretical framework of moral progress holds that humans in a place can morally progress by increasing their awareness of reality and appreciation for diversity. It is based on the idea that humans create and recreate places. I will first explain Critical Realism, the philosophical tradition from which geographic moral progress was developed, then describe how humans make places as moral endeavors toward progress (place-making), and then apply these concepts to Guatemala.

Critical Realism is a theory and social scientific philosophy<sup>26</sup> that advocates the human ability to reason by stepping outside our viewpoint (and back in, and back out) as a process of increasing our awareness of reality and using that awareness to morally progress<sup>27</sup>. There is a reality outside of our own perspective, and, as we gain more knowledge about this reality, we come closer to but never completely know the truth (which is not ultimately knowable because it is always changing) (Sack 2001). Critical Realism calls for a mindful interaction of thinkers because no relative opinion alone holds all the truth and multiple perspectives of reality are needed to make the best decisions for a community of people. A principal way that a group of people can understand their own culture better- their reality- is by comparing it with other groups’ cultures (Tuan 1991, 103). Moral geographers apply this value (awareness of reality) to places, explaining that it involves (Sack 2001, 122)

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<sup>26</sup> To read about the philosophical concepts first developed by Roy Bhaskar, see Collier, A. 1994. *Critical Realism: An Introduction to Roy Bhaskar's Philosophy*. London and New York: Verso.

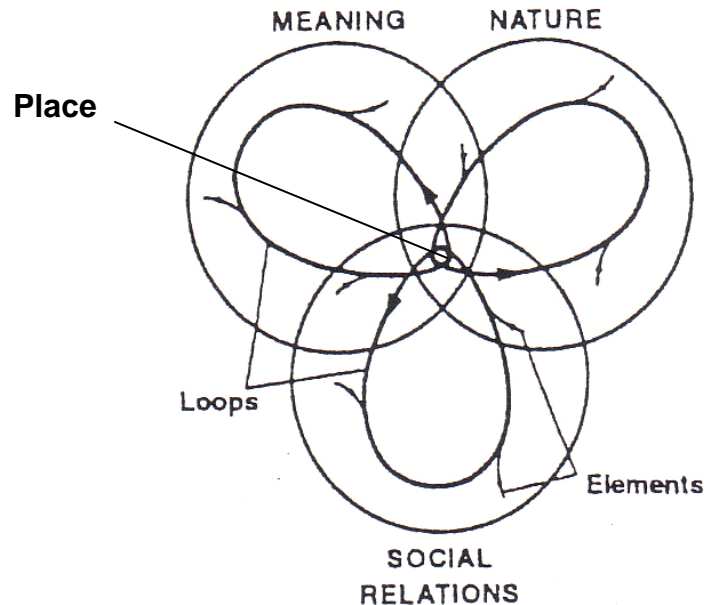
<sup>27</sup> It is a philosophy that falls between empiricism/positivism and post-structuralism/relativism.

Seeing as completely and publicly as possible how the world and its parts or places are interrelated... Seeing the world as completely and realistically as we can is a public and democratic effort [...] possible only if we can share knowledge and compare views... [it] requires a complex social apparatus that promotes free and open exchange of knowledge, and provides everyone with opportunities to expand his or her horizons.

The value of free and open information must work in conjunction with a second equally important value, the appreciation for diversity. A place with a constant flow of information can be overwhelming, and also disorienting if the information is a clutter of unrelated data that make the place so undefined that it appears to run in to and out of other places in a way that decreases variety. “We value a more varied and complex reality than a duller and simpler one” (Sack 2001, 122) so that the permeability of a place’s boundaries is judged not only by how much it provides open and free access to information, but also by how much the boundary sustains or limits diversity. Too much secrecy or too much chaos in our place-making produces “...a landscape of disorientation and moral relativism. This is so because autarkic, hegemonic and some places are clearly evil, ‘for they violate one of [the criteria of intrinsic judgment] to the point where the other cannot offset it,’ and others are clearly good in that they contribute to both aspects of intrinsic judgment [valuing diversity and information], most places are ‘morally mixed’, ‘for they contribute to neither aspect of intrinsic judgment very much’” (Herrera 2008, 63, quoting Sack 1999, 39).

Geographers apply these two values of moral progress to our human place-making efforts. Yi-Fu Tuan, a Critical Realist geographer, simply defines the

discipline, “Geography is the study of the earth as the home of people” (1991, 99). Tuan then goes on to describe how the earth as a home for people is altered by humans who make decisions to change our home based on the meaning we understand it to have or that we want it to have. This process is called “place-making” and involves three interacting components: nature, social relations, and meaning. Robert Sack developed this concept of place-making (with its relational components and loops) to describe the process highlighted by Tuan. See figure below.



The loom-like dynamic structure of place (Sack 2001, 109)

As seen in the figure above, nature, social relations and meaning are woven together to form places, which then interact with other places in space. Human beings both exist in these places that are real and modify them by altering one or more of the traits in the loops. Thus we engage in place-making by altering a loop and constructing new places or re-construct existing places by keeping loop components the same as

possible. When an individual has not stepped out and back in to his or her culture, by leaving a place and experiencing a new one with a different dynamic interaction of the loops, he or she often sees his or her culture as the only representation and enactment of the “real and the good” (the geographic view of the best life possible) and continues to reenact it. An option besides leaving a place and its culture is to learn how to deconstruct one’s culture and place from within, that is, how nature, social relations, and meaning of a culture create the place in which a person lives.

Inter-ethnic relations and cultural change occur in place-making, and furthermore, ethnicity comes from our human activity of place-making. Ethnic groups share cultural traits such as food, dress, and music, and often originate from a specific geographic area, or place. When ethnic groups point to these cultural aspects as key indicators of the difference between their human group and another’s, placing thick meaning on specific aspects of nature and social relations, they are engaging in place-making. The more aware of their place-making an ethnic group is, the more they can develop their capacity for imagination and creativity, and so engage in a place-making of ethnicity reconstruction to make a better life as they conceive of it (Brown 2008). Dr. Mauricio Herrera (2008, 47, quoting Sack 2001, 114) says that:

As human beings we alter places to make them better, according to our judgments.

We transform reality and make places in a never-ending place-making process “because we have conceptions of what [reality] ought to be”. In contrast to other living species, we are aware of this process and reflect upon it through abstract thought and linguistic representations

and “have the will to decide and execute what we think *ought* to be the case”.<sup>28</sup>

We use certain criteria to make better moral judgments about whether or not place-making is making progress toward the real and the good. Two kinds of criteria are instrumental judgments and intrinsic judgments, detailed by Robert Sack in his geographic theory of morality (1997, 1999, 2003). Instrumental judgments look at whether or not people are successful in meeting their goals for a place. If rules and boundaries of the place help the place’s project, then they are successful and desirable. However, a place’s project may be inward focused and morally relativistic. Therefore, intrinsic judgments must be used as well to determine if the place is making progress toward the real and the good, which is for all people. Intrinsic judgments include values of truth, justice, and the natural that are not just reliant on numbers and statistics, though they may be one of various ways to validate or denounce reality. These intrinsic judgments, though present, are often denied in the natural sciences, business world, and similar areas that see truth as derived from facts in isolated experiments.

“In opposition to this trend, scholars writing from critical-realist stand points argue that effective social critique needs to acknowledge [and make explicit] its often hidden or repressed premise – that its evaluations of practices imply a conception of human flourishing [human suffering, the good, and the undesirable]” (Sayer 2007, 25).

Truth, justice and the natural are non-relative qualities that can be used to intrinsically judge a project’s purposes and goals in any and every place. As Dr. J.

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<sup>28</sup> This assertion holds to the extent that we assume there is an essential self but “only in the sense that there is a morally responsible agent who can reason and exercise free will”; but all other aspects of the self are assumed to be contingent (Sack 2001a, p.114).

Chris Brown (2008) described, they are moral cognates of meaning, social relations, and nature, respectively. They discourage decision-making based only in self-interest and encourage decision-making that creates a more varied and good world for all (Sack 2001). If a place reveals the truth about reality through its projects' meanings, then it helps us better envision and strive for the real and good. Our knowledge of reality is incomplete and fallible, so discovering (and revealing) truth is not completely attainable by one person, and thus multiple perspectives of meanings are needed to understand the truth a place is projecting.

Justice, in this theoretical framework, is a result of all people having as much open access to information as possible so that awareness is continually increased and the strive to work for the real and the good therein increased. "Justice concerns our obligations to increase the awareness of all others" (Sack 1999, 40). It is also about "understanding the consequences of our actions so that we can act responsibly and not diminish the chances for ourselves and others to see and move toward the real and the good" (ibid., 40). Human suffering caused by poverty, malnutrition, disease, and violence "diminishes our humanity; it narrows our world and prevents us from thinking and reasoning to our fullest potential" (ibid., 40). Thus places where human suffering flourishes can be judged as limiting the real and the good, and social relations that contribute to it can be judged as bad. The natural quality is taking in to account the non-relative existence of nature in our world, parts of which are modified by humans (into building materials and entertainment products, etc.) and parts of which are not fully controlled by humans (evapotranspiration, reproduction of insect



life, etc). That latter's abundance and life-giving qualities compel us to appreciate diversity and imitate it. If we imitate this gift-giving quality, we work to sustain nature not only for ourselves but for others around the world and for future generations to come.

In order for our actions to improve a place, we must increase our awareness of the qualities of judging moral progress (truth, justice, the natural), and how to be agents toward those goals. The more we become aware of our human agency and of the possibilities to use that agency to change places, the more we are compelled to think and act reflectively. Reflective thinking prepares us by "...reduce[ing] illusion and chang[ing] people's perceptions of what is possible so that they may change their reality" (Lawson and Staeheli 1991, 233). Structures and institutions often actively define meanings of places for us, seemingly taking away our agency and alternative loop components. However, creating another reality (hopefully less repressive and absolutist) is possible when we deepen our understandings of nature, social relations, and meaning, and then engage in altering those very parts of place-making to make better places. "This is the essence upon which the emancipatory power of reflective thinking is sustained and it is often portrayed as the ultimate instrument and goal of human development" (Herrera 2008, 74; referencing Freire 1970; hooks 1994; Sen 1999).<sup>29</sup> As we become more aware of our human agency and the effects of using that agency in the places we inhabit, we can learn how the consequences of our

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<sup>29</sup> This also constitutes the grounds for the justification of moral critique and hope for moral improvement (see Sack 1999, 38).

actions in one place have consequences and change other places near and far. Additionally, as our understanding of the complexity of making decisions for moral progress grows, we can make better decisions with that awareness. Thus we should engage in place-making that actively supports projects that heighten our awareness of reality, various understandings of that reality, and alternate possibilities (Sack 1999).

In the case of the Guatemala, a major place-remaking effort occurred during the Peace Process and afterward. The State, local organizations, and international interest groups worked toward visible reconstruction of the natural, social relations, and meanings of life in Guatemala with a goal of progressing away from civil war and human suffering and toward peace and stability. According to Sack's two necessary conditions for moral progress, free and open access to information so reality can be seen, and value placed on a more varied and complex reality instead of a simpler one (2001, 122), to increase moral progress in Guatemala, we need more information about Guatemalan reality and we need to become more aware of misconstrued reality. In the social relations loop, there is very low awareness of the non-Maya and non-Ladino ethnic groups and minimal (if not fake) appreciation for the diversity they bring to the country. The mixed indigenous and Afro-descended ethnic identity of the Garinagu, as well as cultural differences from the rest of the population, brings variety and complexity to the citizenry of Guatemala. Instead of being accurately recognized as members of a nation that declares multicultural values, the Garifuna community faces limited rhetorical inclusion in the national discourse and political exclusion in the laws, which limits justice. In the nature loop, increased

industrialization through mega-projects (such as Canadian gold mining and the construction of dams) is damaging biodiversity while failing to provide communities with decent jobs, health options, and respect (Rodríguez 2008). Those in power thread and rethread the meaning loop that paints multicultural neoliberalism and unsustainable Western lifestyle as progress. Other interpretations of nature and social relations have been denied, silenced, and threatened by the military and international corporations, but alternative meanings are still expressed by those who resist (see Epilogue about the America's Social Forum).

I argue that to make Guatemala a better place, or nation, those in charge of creating laws concerning citizens' rights and those in charge of cultural education should value all the ethnic groups living in Guatemala and more accurately discuss their cultural attributes. We also need to determine what parts of diversity contribute to a healthy State and which parts do not. Valuing diversity does not mean valuing all diversity, because a variance which leads to harmful destruction is not a valuable variance and does not automatically lead to moral progress. Thus we can make intrinsic judgments that some places of diversity, such as places of torture and femicide, are bad and should not exist.<sup>30</sup>

At the same time, we cannot create stagnant definitions of the bad or of the good and the real because it would constrict reality. This is so because the real and the good are seen as attractive and compelling but also as infinitely complex and forever receding horizons. Geographer Robert Sack defines true progress as a

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<sup>30</sup> After the Peace Accords of 1996, massive violence in Guatemala diminished, but the struggles to shape a national identity did not, and femicide has increased.

directional growth toward inclusion and universal love, and Yi-Fu Tuan lists civility, food security, and valuing the arts over a “splendid material world” (Sack 2002, 81). Living sustainably and healthily leads to civility and food security, so we can also include these in the description of attaining moral progress. Civility excludes violence and war, which are fueled by and result in a lack of knowledge and appreciation/respect for another’s culture, and inequality (in this framework understood as the exclusion of certain groups of people from experiencing the real and good experienced by others).

When we look at cultural identity traits of Guatemalan ethnic groups, we can analyze them in terms of helping to produce moral progress or not. For example, religion and spirituality are often labeled as the aspects of cultural identity that produce morality, but it is not bound to the typical associations of Guatemala’s religious life: Catholic, Pentecostal, and Presbyterian churches, or in the Garifuna culture, *diigüis*<sup>31</sup>. Spirituality is a practice of reflection of human existence (how we relate to other people and the earth) in a place.<sup>32</sup> Typically, people who say they are not spiritual mean they do not go to a specific designated place for reflection on their human existence, but may still participate in a process of reflection and interpretation of our complex existence. Progress comes through religion and spirituality when the codes are not absolutist or relativistic but based on reality. So a religion or spirituality that increases diversity, balanced with free and open access to

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<sup>31</sup> Places of Garifuna worship.

<sup>32</sup> Critical realism is thus kind of like religion, Christianity or Buddhism or atheism, with beliefs about how to interpret and act in the world around us.

information, could lead to moral progress if it also maintains qualities of truth, justice, and the natural.

Because learning from one another is a primary way we increase knowledge and value diversity, in this thesis I focus on analyzing some of the ways the Garinagu and their identity within Guatemala have and potentially could play a role in local and national place-making efforts for progress. Place-making in the Garifuna communities of Livingston and Puerto Barrios has its own interaction (and places within these communities have their own meanings), and these unique places could have a thicker interaction with the rest of Guatemala. The geographic theory of morality “focuses on human awareness because it sees evil and avoidable suffering as a consequence of human ignorance (lack of awareness). According to this view, ‘we kill others, treat them unjustly, humiliate them and take away their dignity, and [...] degrade nature’ precisely because we do not fully understand what we are doing (and its consequences)” (Herrera 2008, 74, quoting Sack 1999, 40). I seek to make you as a reader aware of my perspective of reality so that we can all engage in better place-making near and afar.

### ***C. Recent Attempted Acts of Progress in Guatemala***

My task in this section is to uncover the ways in which progress was attempted so that you and I can become more aware of the Guatemalan reality. Throughout the Peace Process and after, government entities and other organizations have acted intentionally in Guatemala through place-making projects in attempt to improve the national place. While diversity has been touted as the love of the nation,

exclusive dichotomies have been constructed around two ethnicities, ignoring others. While increasing open and free information in some areas, the State has limited information in others. Both exclusive dichotomies and limited information are likely to limit the real and the good. I dissect these attempts by using the criteria of moral progress and by looking at the weavings of the loops of nature, social relations, and meaning, which vary in visible strength depending on the place. Since they all play a role in all places, I use an example to illustrate each loop, starting with social relations.

In the law, the need to improve social relations and the quality of justice are most prevalent. In the symbols and false images, misconstrued meanings are most obvious. In bioreserves, the value of nature and the natural provides a clear start for the deconstruction of a place-making project. Overall, the State of Guatemala has not been assessed as making progress according to standard measures. According to the table below, political corruption is perceived as high and rights as low. Since the press is not free to report the truth, I chose to find additional perspectives to increase my awareness of Guatemala's reality. I searched independent media such as indymedia.org, upsidedownworld.org, mimundo.org, and indigenous organizations and interviewees.

<b>Title of index</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Classification</b>	<b>Scale</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Corruption	2003	2.2	Corrupt	0 Corrupt – 10 Clean	Transparency
Perception	2004	4	Partly Free	1 Free – 7 Least Free	Int'l
Political Rights	2004	4	Partly Free	1 Free – 7 Least Free	Freedom House
Civil Liberties	2004	62	Not Free	0 Free – 100 Least	Freedom House
Freedom of Press				Free	Freedom House

(Ignosh and Kilgore 2005, Table 2.1. Corruption and civil freedoms.)

Also, while international favor was a subtext of the Peace Accords, international involvement in place-making has not always been honest. Especially in the areas of health and education improvement, corruption has been prevalent (Ignosh and Kilgore 2005, 20):

Though many international donors' intentions are noble, in many instances the money they contribute is poorly managed. In fact, frequently million-dollar projects lack a substantial verification component. This irresponsibility on the part of international donor agencies has created a climate for corruption to excel. Corruption in these large-scale projects takes on many forms. Often public officials are bribed, kickbacks are routine, project bids are noncompetitive or costs over inflated.

While I critique international involvement in place-making projects in the nation of Guatemala, and point to the flaws in in the results of neoliberal projects, my principle argument is not against a specific philosophy (such as neoliberalism as an economic practice) or people (such as people from the United States). I do critique the ways in which some philosophies of progress, as demonstrated here, consistently lack truth, justice, and the natural.

### **1. The Law Strengthened Dichotomies**

The (mostly Ladino controlled) State worked to produce reconciliation by creating laws that recognized the rights of the Maya. Rachel Sieder, Latin Americanist at the University of London, affirms that State government, and specifically its law-making processes, is a central realm for the unending formation of the nation of Guatemala:

During periods of political transition a range of actors, including domestic elites, international donors, and intergovernmental institutions, and political and social movements attempt to advance different and often competing visions of the state, governance, and citizenship. The state itself can usefully be analyzed as a series of institutions and sites where conflicts over power are constantly negotiated from above and below. One of the primary sites of engagement where such different imaginaries and political projects are contested from the top down and the bottom up is the law. This is because the law is central to claiming rights and enforcing obligations. (204)

To make Guatemala a truly democratic and multicultural nation, which is cited again and again as a principle goal of the Peace Process, the Garinagu's existence and rights to their cultural identity should be recognized, protected, and practiced under the law. Only through increasing awareness about the reality of ethnic groups in Guatemala can discourse become genuinely inclusive, create steps necessary to improve inter-ethnic relations, combat racism, and ultimately become truly multicultural. Though a small percentage of the population (see table),<sup>33</sup> the Garinagu are different from other indigenous groups and add diversity and complexity to Guatemala's reality. Linguistically the Garinagu are identified as a separate, localized population by the Guatemalan census. However, in the national political realm, their culture, though incredibly different, is often blended into one of the two dominant ethnicities in discourse on race and culture (Anderson 2002, 92).

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<sup>33</sup> See Table of ethnic percent, taken from the national census of 2002 (Guatemala Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 31). Numbers probably vary from census figures, as accurate reporting is difficult, and most scholarship cites the Maya population to be around 60% and the Ladino population around 39%



**Ethnicity      #                      % of Total**

Ladina/o	6,750,170	60.09
Maya	4,411,964	39.3
Xinka	16,214	0.001
Garinagu	5,040	0.0004
Other	53,808	0.005

TOTAL      11,237,196      100%  
 Population of Guatemala, 2002 (Censo)

The proposed laws of the Peace Process 1994-1996 and the international support of the indigenous people acknowledged a more varied and complex reality of Guatemala by incorporating indigenous rights, but they left aside its full complexity by failing to address the Garifuna (and Xinka) culture. A step in the direction of progress, these laws could have gone further to raise awareness of the Guatemalan reality. I critique in order to raise awareness, in accord with what geographer Andrew Sayer believes regarding what theorists Habermas and Apel say, “[A]ll criticism presupposes the possibility of a better life” (cited in 2002, 172).

This section will address two documents that were produced during the Peace Process, through which the national discourse was “lasting peace through multicultural equality and democracy.” Rachel Sieder ascribes much progress to this process:

The peace settlement also mapped out a radical agenda, which aimed to include Guatemala’s 60 percent indigenous population, historically subject to discrimination, socioeconomic exploitation, and political marginalization, in a new nation-building project. In spite of a deep-rooted legacy of racism, by the late 1990s internationalized ‘rights thinking’ had become part of the dominant idiom of political reform in Guatemala. (2001, 205)

As Sieder discusses the democratic transition that took place from 1994 to 1996, she praises the recognition of “Mayan values” and cites the pan-Mayan movement as the key group to lead the state out of its exclusionary nature. She calls the proposed “customary law” giving legal rights to the indigenous through the peace agreements “radical” (211) and says the *Defensoría Maya* preferred to call it “Mayan law” (213). What would be truly radical would be to address issues of racism and discrimination against the Garinagu through the law and to consider how applying “Mayan law” to indigenous communities uniformly excludes the African roots of the mixed culture of the Garinagu.

This semi-radical discourse fabricated a sense of Garinagu inclusion in national politics and rights under the category of “indigenous,” but under closer examination of written works, it becomes apparent that actual Garifuna culture and identity are not accurately recognized nor protected. As Gerardo Mario Ellington said, “It is also evident that the situation has gone to the extreme in separating the Garifunas from the national process, as if their abduction were, in addition to geographical, also existential” (Solares 1993, 40).

In *Guatemala, Memoria del Silencio*<sup>34</sup>, the Report of the Commission for Historical Explanation gave conclusions and recommendations about the Guatemalan civil war in 1999, three years after the signing of the Peace Accords. The Garinagu’s suffering was not acknowledged in what is viewed nationally and internationally as a “Maya-Ladino” conflict. The prologue began with:

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<sup>34</sup> Guatemala, Memory of Silence

Guatemala is a country of contrasts and contradictions. Situated in the middle of the American continent, bathed by the waters of the Caribbean and the Pacific, its inhabitants live in a multiethnic, pluricultural and multilingual nation, in a state which emerged from the triumph of liberal forces in Central America. (Guatemala)

The authors listened to thousands of testimonies and read thousands of documents, yet nowhere in the document are the effects of the civil war on the non-Maya and non-Ladina/o community discussed. The civil war did cause economic and sociopolitical problems in Livingston (Anderson 2002, 26). Not once anywhere in the document does “Garifuna,” “Garinagu,” or “Livingston,” appear. Even in the section titled “Recommendations” that includes the sub-sections V. “Measures to strengthen the democratic process” and VI. “Other recommendations to promote peace and national harmony,” the Garinagu and the progress of their communities on the northern coast are ignored.

Shortly after the Report was released, another collective recommendation to improve the Guatemalan socio-political situation was produced. To produce *Ley de los Pueblos Maya, Garífuna y Xinka* (“Law of the Maya, Garifuna, and Xinka Peoples,” from here on referred to as “Ley”), 400 indigenous organizations worked together in regional meetings from 1993 to 1996 to propose 113 articles to become law. While the laws were a step at building indigenous solidarity and awareness of Garifuna culture, the articles protected considerably more Mayan cultural practices than Garifuna cultural practices. Alliances between the indigenous Maya and the Garinagu led to initial Garifuna participation in the Peace Process (Anderson 2002,

89). Because of Garifuna and Xinka participation in the Peace Process, some renamed the Pan-Mayan movement “pan-indigenous.”

Renaming movements, however, does not reveal the true diversity of Guatemalan cultures or literally include them. The proposed laws repetitively use the name, “...the Maya, Xinka, and Garifuna Peoples” (here on “the Peoples”). The phrasing sounds inclusive, but it becomes rhetoric when the laws only promote indigenous rights that are centered on Mayan culture. There are a plethora of articles that use just the word “Maya” in reference to a right specifically desired for the Maya. No articles focus specifically on Garifuna needs or rights.

In 1985 the Constitution, under Article 70, gave the indigenous people the right to make laws and guaranteed them four main areas of rights (Ley 1997, 13):

1. Protection for indigenous life: traditions, social organizations, dress for men and women, languages.
2. Protection of land, and cooperative agriculture.
3. Provide state land to indigenous communities for their own development.
4. Protection and legislation of safety, health, and just salaries.

The *Ley* adds that the Peoples have been marginalized by the law and their participation in governing the state has been minimized as a result of discrimination.

Jesús “Chucho” Garcia and James Early reflect on the racism that is intertwined with discrimination against afro-descendants participating in political processes throughout Latin America:

Yet a gap in racial consciousness and political analysis, disturbingly displayed by many progressive activists and political parties in Venezuela and throughout Latin America, continues to highlight Indigenous communities and avoids addressing needs and aspirations of Afro-Descendant communities. (2005, 52)

Mayan culture is promoted in articles that address indigenous dress, respect for the elderly, and protection of agriculture. Garifuna culture could be promoted by articles that address the rights to international community, respect for women's leadership roles, and the protection of fishing. Garifuna community organizers are primarily women, and their social networks were international in scope, because their blackness weaves a wider net of solidarity than their indigenous roots could within the national Guatemalan context (Anderson 2002, 35). To protect the rights to Garifuna identity and culture, there should be an article that protects transnational identities and alliances.

Chapter II in the Ley details the rights of the Peoples to participate in state institutions. Article 15 lists requisites for elected officials, and the second item is “of Maya, Garifuna, or Xinka decent.”<sup>35</sup> The geographical distance from the Garifuna homeland to the capital and how the transportation of resources is desperately needed is not addressed. The national legal system is centralized (though efforts have been made to decentralize it), and this creates unequal access to state government (Sieder 2001, 211). Under Article 41, “USE OF THE MAYAN LANGUAGES,” public service personnel are required to speak native languages (23). Why does this article say “Mayan languages” instead of the common “Maya, Xinka, and Garifuna” phrase? Article 49, “ACADEMY OF MAYAN LANGUAGES IN GUATEMALA,” calls for the organization of appropriate forms of the Peoples’ cultural education and promote

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<sup>35</sup> In a Ladino-run state, this is a step toward progress. But does it discriminate against the other ethnicities living in Livingston, such as the Chinese and the Kuli? How might focusing on getting these dominated ethnic groups into power at the national level ignore other members of the community?

the development of the Xinka and Garifuna Academies (25). Financial support for Garifuna culture, however, is lacking; Article 52 calls for 5% of the state's general budget to go to the Mayan University to support Mayan culture, but no percent of the budget is demanded for Garifuna education to help preserve their language, an integral part of their cultural identity.

Chapter VIII, "Work," includes articles that guarantee rights of the Peoples regarding working conditions and access to jobs. Article 67 cites two holy days for the Maya, which have to be paid holidays (28), but there is no article pertaining to the celebrations or holidays of the Garinagu<sup>36</sup>. The diversity of indigenous spirituality is not recognized. Articles 69 and 70 require safety measures for agricultural workers but not the right to fish or the protection of waters. Why is safety while fishing, an important part of cultural identity in the Garifuna community, not addressed? ONEGUA (Black Guatemalans Organization) believes that cultural survival is of utmost importance, and survival requires the right of Garinagu to work where and how they want, whether it seems traditional or modern (Solares 1993, 82).

Chapter X on the economy contains Article 86 that prohibits the exploitation of cultural symbols, dress, and sacred places. What about prohibition of exploitation of skin color? Since the Maya and Ladina/o populations share phenotypes, indigenous dress and other visible cultural markers are protected from misuse. But dark Garifuna skin color is not protected from exploitation but rather used to attract

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<sup>36</sup> These could include the John Canoe, November 28 Garifuna Settlement Day, and dügüs.

tourists. The 1980s and 90s saw a rise in the number of *capitaleños*<sup>37</sup> who traveled to Livingston as vacationers (Anderson 2002, 10). At the same time, international tourism was increasing. Article 87 did propose that the profits of tourism go back to the communities, and that the Peoples be allowed to participate in the Guatemalan Tourism Institute. Currently, however, the Caribbean coast is advertised on the Institute's website in ways that fail to reveal the complexity of Garifuna cultural identity (Instituto 2007).

The fake inclusion in the laws was apparent to the Garinagu. ONEGUA withdrew from the Joint Commissions of the Peace Process because people continued to say that the day had come for the Garinagu's voice and vision and identity to be made known to the rest of Guatemala, but after two years, their name continued to be used without sincere support in political documents (Anderson 2002, 28). The Garifuna people felt that the "chorus of Maya, Xinka, Garifuna" was in name only and did not accurately represent their indigeneity (3). Anderson argues that this new and sudden use of their name as a part of the multicultural state came about through the use of their blackness and indigenusness, but it failed to recognize the fact that they were both black and indigenus at the same time (4). Articles that support Garifuna political participation, language, lifestyle, and equality of skin color would make this document more multicultural as it claims to be, and it would be a step toward breaking the dualist thinking. Similarly, laws that address Garifuna rights in the context of rights that support the true diversity of cultures and their

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<sup>37</sup> People from the capital

interdependence, while recognizing there are judgments to be made about which parts of cultures will best contribute to sustainability, food security, health, etc., would be better for moral progress. There is an interconnected lack of valuing the truth (lack of information about the Garinagu), justice (eg. no financial support for their language), and the natural (no protection of fishing waters).

Besides binding legal documents, the Guatemalans have also looked to use symbols to portray and foment progress in the nation. Just as the laws were an attempt to build justice and equality, the national symbols employed by the State were an attempt to promote a specific meaning and reveal the truth about the Guatemalan nation. However, as seen in the next section, they produced more false images than truth.

## **2. Symbols Influenced False Images**

Because they are powerful employers of meaning, symbols convey quickly what may take a long time to reveal about the truth through other means such as dialogue. Benedict Anderson (1991), in *Imagined Communities*, explains that nations portray themselves through symbols and use the symbols to strengthen national identification. In Guatemala, the Ladina/os have been working on the complete conquest of the indigenous for centuries,<sup>38</sup> but the pan-Mayanists have recently begun to unite in opposition to colonization with their own national images. As Maya and Ladina/o Guatemalans compete to define the national identity, each use ethno-sexual

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<sup>38</sup> For some Ladina/os, conquest would involve obliteration of Mayan culture. For others, it is the genocide of the Maya people.



images to foster an imaginary identification with their respective peoples. On both sides elite men have been the principal actors in nationalist discourse. As men of different ethnic groups behold their women, the “other” women, and the other men as gendered, sexual tools for construction, they build their masculine, ethnic vision of nationalism.<sup>39</sup>

In this vision, the Garinagu are excluded from national place-making. The Garinagu could use their own cultural symbols to break the dichotomy and add to the diversity of Guatemala. Their symbols could reflect both their African descent and their matrifocality.<sup>40</sup> The Garinagu have a matrifocal culture in which the women are respected as the heads of households and often lead in community organizing, which is different from the typical complimentary familial structure of the Maya and the patriarchal structure of the Ladina/os. In this section I describe the State symbols and images in use; then in Chapter III section C3 I explore some options for the Garinagu, such as promoting the African based-drum and the flag.

Benedict Anderson (1991), in *Imagined Communities*, explained how nations are constantly reinventing themselves through symbols. Ladinos control the official state symbols, and I will describe three national symbols that reflect the Ladino-controlled nation’s view of the ethnic other. First, Tecún Umán was a Maya man who fought against the Spanish conquistador Pedro Alvarado in the 1500’s (Wright

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<sup>39</sup> For more information on how Ladininas’ sexuality is used, see Najera, Luna (1999) *Engendering ethnicity: the economy of female virginity and Guatemalan nationalism*.

<sup>40</sup> Even feminist anthropologists fail to include Garifuna women, such as their absence in Berger’s 2006 revolutionary book, *Guatemaltecas*.

1992). Alvarado defeated Umán, and the Annals of the Kaqchikels<sup>41</sup> say, “And he told his soldiers then that he had never seen an Indian so gallant, so lordly, and so bedecked in such beautiful quetzal plumes, ... nor in any part of the nations he had conquered” (Wright 1992, 57). Then Umán, a Maya defeated by the white man, becomes the National Hero of the national symbols (Standford 2006). Carol Hendrickson points out that in his praise there is a failure to acknowledge the subordination of indigenous cultures through his defeat (80). See figure below, a banknote of Guatemala that bears his face and the Quetzal, the national bird. Note that the bill is worth .5 Quetzals (1Q = ~\$.13 USD), which is half of the principal monetary unit. One Quetzal can buy you a trinket at the market or a piece of bread, but you need several 10 Quetzals bills made in 2003 bearing General Granados’ slender (Whiter) face and the national assembly to buy a pair of shoes or (Western) ice cream.

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<sup>41</sup> The Annals are a historical record of the Kaqchikel Maya and are currently stored at the Univ. of Pennsylvania.



Tecún Umán (Source: Banknotes.com, Guatemala 2006)

Second, in 1934 the national flower was declared the “Monja blanca,” or “white nun,” by General Jorge I (Standford 2006). It is said to symbolize peace, beauty, and art. The idea that the “white nun” captures these positive and desired attributes leaves one to question what attributes are in turn being expressed about the non-Catholic and non-white Maya. One could also ask what a nun would represent for a Maya or Garifuna person.

Third, multiculturalism is presented as a goal of the Guatemalan nation with the 1999 approval of the marimba as another national symbol. Said to arrive in Guatemala with enslaved people from Africa, the xylophone-like instrument was adopted by the Maya in the 1500s (see figure below). The only members of congress that did not support its approval were those from the Guatemalan Republican Front

(FRG), a white political group closely linked to the military (Larra and Espada 1999). Myriam Larra and Alberto Ramírez Espada, writers for Guatemala's major newspaper "Prensa Libre," point out that by approving the marimba as the national instrument, the mostly Ladino congress appeared to be respecting the Mayan culture but avoiding placing national pride on a more ethnically Mayan instrument such as the chirimía, a flute/clarinet-like instrument. Additionally, with all the cultural uses of the marimba, it may be a symbol more of mestizaje than of a specific cultural group.



The marimba inside the Livingston tourism shop (my photo, 2007).

The authentic Mayan dress is an unofficial symbol of the nation, principally employed by the state when useful in tourism or appeasing the international

community. Philip Dilorio (1998) calls the use of native symbols in the construction of a nation by non-indigenous nationalists a grown-up version of the child's game "playing Indian" (in Nagel 2003, 157).<sup>42</sup> "Playing Indian" can create a false image of inclusiveness, while at the same time, decrease lifestyle diversity. For example, the government and some non-profit organizations have supported diversification of hand-woven objects for sale to foreign markets (Fischer and Hendrickson 2002, 120). They are encouraging the Maya to modernize their culture through modernizing their crafts, such as the weaving of cell phone holders. When Pope John Paul II visited Guatemala in 2001, Ladino president Alfonso Portillo of Guatemala presented children dressed in Mayan clothing. These children were his own, White kids.

While countless indigenous people were outraged by this act, some do advocate the use of dress as a cultural symbol if used appropriately. Victor Montejo (1997), a Guatemalan pan-Mayanist, said that Guatemalan nationalists should proclaim their nation through Maya elements and symbols. One of the most important identification of Mayan culture is the women's dress, the *traje*. The *traje* has two parts: a hand-woven, colorful shirt and a colorful, machine-woven skirt. Each community has their own color patterns, so women are identified by community in their dress. Men used to wear hand-woven clothes as well, but now the majority dress in Ladino/Western clothes. In interviews conducted by Edward F. Fischer and Carol Hendrickson, Mayan men explained that the women's *traje* was more beautiful

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<sup>42</sup> Research could be done to see if Garífuna children "play Indian" or if their neighboring Kekch'és "play Garífuna?"

and that women deal less with Ladina/o national agents and thus are less likely to be criticized for wearing native dress. One man admitted, “*Son más valientes*”<sup>43</sup> (116).

Maya men pressure Maya women to reproduce their ethnic communities not only through dress, but also through language and sexual reproduction. Both Maya women and Ladinas’ sexuality has been portrayed in inaccurate ways to foster identification of a unified, homogenous Guatemalan nation. In pan-Mayanism, there exists the rhetoric of gender equality, but emphasis is placed on the importance of women’s childrearing and tortilla-making (Rubin 2004, 132). This view of gender roles could go back to pre-conquest Maya complementarism, but Carol Smith sees it linked to men’s view of women’s nationalist duties. She argues that post-colonial indigenous societies adopted the Western view of nationalism, thus linking the inheritance of culture to women (55). Starting in the 1980s with the creation of the Academy of Mayan Languages of Guatemala, elite Maya men have been successful in the building of Mayan languages and schools that focus on a unified Maya culture, not political autonomy or economic rights (Rubin 2004, 110-122). Outside of these few schools, the women are charged with speaking the mother tongue (as well as how to cook and weave) and passing it to the children (Smith 1991, 63). Maya men often speak Spanish because they work more outside the home with other Spanish speakers (source *Stolen Cont Life of our Language*). Partha Chatterjee believes that the colonized, in their efforts to throw off the political and cultural shackles of their colonizers, adopt a Western nationalist discourse by homogenizing the representation

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<sup>43</sup> Women are braver than men.

of their own culture (Smith 1991, 54). We see these post-colonial changes starting to take place within local Maya communities as the nationalist pan-Maya community utilizes them to strengthen a larger group identity that sometimes excludes or falsely includes the Garinagu.

There are clear examples of how the neoliberal multicultural State sells and profits from applying diverse and inclusive meanings to the State via symbols and images. By projecting a historic Mayan masculinity, a modern female sexuality, and inclusion of Garifuna blackness to the international scene, the State brings in tourists and their capital. The state of Guatemala has a tourism website maintained by the Guatemalan National Tourist Institute (INGUAT) that sells “Indian” heritage by publicizing the Guatemalan nation as a historically indigenous nation. The government is trying to connect a historical Mayan identity to a contemporary, re-invented one in order to sell “Mayan” culture (Handy 2002, 37, and Fischer 2002, 29). The link “About us” reads (Tourismo 2007):

**“WHO WE ARE”**

Our vision: Uniting cultures through sports and tourism while respecting cultural and historical values.

Mission: Is to promote enthusiasm about Guatemala's unimaginable sights and cultures utilizing no trace and minimal impact travel techniques and are committed to supporting conservation efforts and providing long term benefits to the communities where we travel within the Mayan World – **“OUR WORLD IS THE MAYAN WORLD”**.

It does not say “Our World is Half Mayan,” though it does advertise non-Mayan cultural traits of golf, Hooters restaurant, and other non-Mayan sporting events. Are

the Ladinos admitting they, too, are part Maya? Or that they are not a part of but own the Mayan world?

The website boasts a five-sport event called the Maya Challenge® (Tourismo 2007). Biking, kayaking, and rappelling are all purportedly associated with Mayan athletic ability (see figure below).



The Maya Challenge (Source: Tourismo 2007)

It takes place at Tikal, an archeological site of an ancient Mayan ballgame. The top of the page encourages: “Say no to Racism,” but I would identify all the male contestants (who have to pay exclusionary prices to compete) as White. The image of white men competing in a “Maya Challenge” constructs a national identity of white, modernized people with indigenous strength and vigor. The Maya Challenge® is for white men to compete in events that make them feel as strong and valiant as the indigenous people “once were.” The Guatemalan government tourism sector is portraying an image of masculine athletic ability to sell their event to Ladina/os and



international consumers. Yet Maya men still exist, and though they are not seen rappelling the walls of Tikal, their abilities and disabilities are real and not imagined. In a list of acts that lead to disqualification in the event, number three ironically states: “Littering or disrespect [sic] towards cultures, monuments and jungle.”

Misconstrued reality is also present in the way INGUAT produces a historical view of the Caribbean coast that is full of adventure. “Boats brought goods from Europe and the United States and those goods attracted enough "pirates" that the government built the San Felipe castle to choke off piracy.” Besides mentioning the pirates and the “centuries ago” Garífuna arrival, the website says little else about the actual culture of the people. This indicates again that the State includes the Garífuna name for profit and the appearance of neoliberal multiculturalism but is not actually concerned about the realities of their culture.

Through use of the unofficial national symbol of dress, Ladinas also misconstrue reality by “playing Indian” and profit success in pageants. Miss Guatemala has interpreted Maya women’s “otherness” as sexually exotic but domesticated, as is desired in the Miss Universe pageant (Banet-Weiser 1999). The image of Miss Guatemala shapes the international view of Guatemalan identity. Miss Guatemala is almost always Ladina and almost always wears Maya dress in the Miss Universe pageant (Fischer and Hendrickson 2002, 29). In 1975, a White Miss Guatemala won the national costume division of Miss Universe wearing a one of the Mayan *trajes* (Hendrickson 1995, 81). The indigenous dress was undervalued in a local 1970’s pageant when the indigenous queen of a small Mayan community was

given 50 Quetzals to buy her *traje*<sup>44</sup>, while the Ladina queen received 100Q to buy her Western formal (81). Use of the natural (the dress) to create inaccurate meaning (indigeneity) which results in social relations that lack justice is repeated and repeated in Guatemala place-making.

In 2006, the Miss Guatemala contestant in the Miss Universe Pageant was blonde, thin, and open to conquest (Universe). When non-indigenous people “play Indian” by appropriating indigenous culture, it is not always accurately reconstructed. Like young U.S. children who tie feathers to their head and repeat the word, “How,” Ladina/os appropriate indigenous culture. Though incredibly dissimilar to the traditional *traje*, Miss Guatemala’s national costume outfit is colorful and feathered (see figure below). The plumes of the Quetzal, once having decorated the admired indigenous leader Tecún Umán and now contribute to the beauty of the national bird, are revered in Mayan culture. Here, they accent Jackeline Piccinini’s seductively naked body. Her arms are chained and weighted down, but she is smiling! Unlike many Guatemalans, she is also very slender, which is likely an attempt to appear modern. Thinness is a major part of the construction of Western femininity (Banet-Weiser 1999, 66).

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<sup>44</sup> The *traje* is a colorful top woven on a loom paired with a machine-woven skirt.



Jackelinne Piccinini, Miss Guatemala 2006 (Source: Miss Universe 2006)

In addition to modernity, the image of multiculturalism is also presented to the international community through the Miss Universe Pageant. In the pageant, the West is perceived as the leader of womanhood. When India won the Miss Universe (and World) pageant in 1994, it was said that their country was no longer “lagging behind” (Banet-Weiser 1999, 187). Though there has never been a Mayan Miss Guatemala, the nation did show its multiculturalism when Marva Weatherborn became Miss Guatemala in 2004 (see figure below). From the Caribbean coast, black and beautiful, she is not the “Mayan” seductress open for conquest, but dressed in white and pearls. Her dress displays the “exotic yet respectable” quality that is desired in pageants according Banet-Weiser’s *The Most Beautiful Girl* (192). Banet-Weiser argues that virgin status receives sexual respectability, and I wonder whether Weatherborn is dressed in white because it is a great complement to her deeply

pigmented complexion, or because as a “black” she needs a white dress to symbolize virginity to appear respectable.<sup>45</sup> Guatemala appeared very multicultural to the international community when Weatherborn responded to a question during the Miss Universe pageant, “Name one person, other than your parents, who has had the most influence on your life. Why?” She acknowledged the present-day existence of “natives” and emphasized increasingly modernizing women by answering, “Rigoberta Menchú because she won the Nobel Peace Prize. I respect her for fighting for the rights of the native people in my country” (Miss Universe 2005 Hot Gallery).



Marva Weatherborn, Miss Guatemala 2004 (Source:123India.Santabanta.com)

These attempts to project a modern and yet multicultural image of the nation through symbols is one way the State is trying to create “what it means to be

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<sup>45</sup> Heterosexuality can also be vital. In 1983 the first black Miss USA, Vanessa Williams, lost her crown for posing in Penthouse with another woman; it is questionable whether or not her black skin was the cause of the “lesbian” label (Banet-Weiser, 1999; 149).

Guatemalan.” Even in its attempted diversity, is lacking truth and creates a partially false meaning. Just as the laws were attempts to make progress in inter-ethnic relations and were supposed to bring about more justice, these symbols are attempts to make progress. In another arena, the State has attempted to increase the value of the natural through bioreserves, described in the next section. However, they have failed to maintain justice and truth in their efforts toward sustainability, and hence will not be successful in creating a sustainable place.

### **3. Bioreserves Sustained Autarky, Not Land or People**

The State does not always use full geographic awareness to create places that contribute to progress via the natural. Here I share two examples of land and resource struggle between the State and the Kekchí Maya who live in the eastern departments of Izabal and Petén. The location of the struggle is important to later discussion of the Garinagu’s potential to increase awareness and diversity and thus progress, because the Garinagu mainly live in the two communities Livingston and Puerto Barrios, in the Department of Izabal. I will discuss the cases of OMYC in the Petén Maya Bioserve and Encuentro Campesino in the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor Reserve in Izabal to show how the meaning that has been put on “appropriate land use” limits the good of the natural and just social relations, the two other parts of the place-making loop. Also, I will show how limited access to information and devaluing of diversity often result in people making decisions that do not lead toward progress, as identifiable by the lack of truth and justice in addition to the degradation of the natural.

First we look at the case of the Management and Conservation Organization (OMYC, for Organización de Manejo y Conservación), which regulates the use of resources in Uaxántun, Petén, inside the Maya Biosphere Reserve. A relatively recent attempt to make progress in Guatemala, the Reserve was created in the 1990s by the Legislative Decree 5-90. OMYC works with other groups to manage the land, which is considered an area of “multiple use.” These groups make up the General Assembly, which is made up of more than 200 associates (50% are from the Petén, 36% are from the departments of Alta Verapaz, Izabal, and El Progreso) and is responsible for making decisions to benefit the community.

After four years as an organization, the OMYC felt it faced two major challenges: improve communication so more members could understand the legal avenues and techniques necessary to sell officially certified wood by the proper extraction method, and educate people who live there about following formal rules because they do not have the same ideas or cultural practices (section 3.4.1, p.12). Increasing communication by providing more information can lead to the real and the good if it is balanced by an appreciation for the diversity. Thus if their goal is to get everyone “on board” with the “right way to live”, then we have to ask if the way of living they are advocating involves truth, justice, and the natural. The truth needs multiple perspectives, and while 200 people are in the General Assembly, I ask if their perspectives are all understood, and I wonder about the perspectives of those who choose not to participate. How do they feel about the extraction of wood? If their human right to live is being minimized, along with the diversity of life and the

opportunity for them to flourish and continue building awareness, then the quality of justice is weak in the OMYC. We must also ask how the quality of the natural is affected by looking at the effect of wood logging and certification on biodiversity.

The State works with organizations to determine the “real and the good” for bioreserves via CONAP, *Consejo Nacional de Areas Protegidas* (National Council of Protected Areas). In 2004 CONAP did a case study about “integrated and certified management of the forest resource.” Their online statement indicates that CONAP believes it is possible to take out natural resources and benefit communities, “...it is possible to extract forest resources without altering significantly the forest ecosystem. Therein, it appears to offer consumable goods for the design and mutual benefit of policies and national strategies relative to the management and conservation of the renewable natural resources, by demonstrating that communities can participants, users, and beneficiaries of them” (my translation, <https://www.cbd.int/doc/case-studies/for/cs-manejo-integrado-RBM.pdf>) And it certainly is, because we need to use resources to live. But we must be aware of how we are affecting the balance of nature with our use.

The State says it is interested in ethnic diversity and maintaining the biodiversity of Guatemala through parks, but knowing how neoliberal multiculturalism has worked in the past, we must ask what economic goals influence decisions. Similarly, even though the organization OMYC is new and an attempt to make progress in Petén, it is imperative to ask questions concerning the amount of intrinsic values used in making progress goals, and we must think about the threat to

the diversity of human and natural life. Will the place-making efforts to homogenize production, consumption, and living in Uaxantun create a more varied and complex world overall?

Yet conservationists like John Paul Ignosh and Michael A. Kilgore also know that “solutions” that only seek to conserve biodiversity without providing opportunities for human flourishing (ex. opportunities to earn income) are not solutions that result in sustainable living (2005, 34). While Ignosh and Kilgore recommend that politicians integrate the indigenous of Guatemala in the national and international market to achieve sustainable development (33), I do not believe it is the only nor the best solution, because the larger systems dominate cultural lives through economic pressure and destroy ethnic diversity through urbanization and modernization. I advocate another route: the State reconsider their Western mentality of progress embodied by their use of neoliberal policies and re-consider the intrinsic aspects of sustainable development. Instead of using instrumental judgments of progress such as the GDP and number of hectares in biospheres, politicians should ask more intrinsic questions such as: How can we live in harmony on our land, and what if compromising does not work? Will conservation work if people are suffering? What is the cost of saving resources for the future while children die of hunger today? What about the qualities of life defined by truth, justice, and the natural?

One example of the State’s deficient attempt at progress was their effort to conserve biodiversity by keeping members of Encuentro Campesino off land. It was



a deficient attempt because not enough value was placed on justice, truth, or the natural. In February and March 2008, this conflict between the State and Encuentro Campesino over land use and rights came to a head when the group Encuentro Campesino and allies reclaimed land in the Department of Izabal. The press reported that they had invaded Areas Naturales Protegidas and that the State responded by arresting one of the leaders, Ramiro Choc. Then an ally, Mario Caal, was killed. The *Prensa Libre*, a widespread national newspaper, reported the following timeline of events:

- 2007            Leader Ramiro Choc and others invade private property in the Department of Izabal, the Chocón Machacas biotope, and Cerro San Gil.
- 2008:
- Feb. 14*            Choc is arrested for appropriating the land of Silvia Lemus Solórzano de Castellanos (in the neighborhood of Buena Vista, La Esperanza, Livingston) (and for invading protected areas).
- Feb. 21*            18 national police agents are held hostage by 3 thousand people from the town of La Lámpara (neighbor to Livingston) to demand Choc’s release. (According to the BBC, there were 29 police captured and brought to the town Maya Creek by 1,500 peasants on Feb. 22. Choc is accused of inciting people to invade land and natural reserves “Guatemalan”.)
- Feb. 26*            *El Ministerio Publico* names 13 accomplices.
- March*            Mario Caal is captured in Izabal with three other people.
- March 14*            Encuentro Campesino holds four Belgian tourists hostage to demand Choc’s freedom.
- March 14*            Mario Caal Bolón and others previously captured are exchanged for the tourists.
- March 15*            Encuentro Campesino stops negotiating and hides in the forest. The Vice President of Guatemala Rafael Espada declares that the government will not negotiate with “delinquents.”
- March 17*            Mario Caal Bolón is said to be killed by a tear gas bomb, but it is suspected that the *Especiales Policiales* beat him to death (*el Ministerio de Gobernación* denies it).
- March 18*            250 peasants (with Choc’s brother-in-law and the priest Daniel Joseph Bogt) go to the town of Chichipate but do not take it.

*March 18* The Vice President announces that those who kidnapped the tourists must pay the consequences of the crime.

In the 1990s, *concientización*<sup>46</sup> grew throughout the western hemisphere about issues of biodiversity and natural resources. By creating reserves and protected areas, Central America participated in the movement for conservation. Guatemala ratified the international environmental agreement, the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD), in 1995 and enacted it with two frameworks: the *Ley de Áreas Protegidas* - Decree 4-89 and its Reforms 18-89, 110-96 and 117-97; and the *Política Nacional y Estrategias para el Desarrollo del Sistema Guatemalteco de Áreas Protegidas* (Loyo 2003).

While the State attempted its own version of conservation in the 1990s, the indigenous held a different view, and there were two very different cosmovisions in play concerning land use and sustainability. The way the Kekchí Maya view and use the land is drastically different than the way land is assessed by others. The Maya use the land in intimate ways, directly connected to daily living, while foreigners seek to extract specific resources for alteration, manufacturing, etc. (ex. pharmaceuticals) or not at all (ex. some environmentalists) *The Maya Atlas: the Struggle to Preserve Maya Land in Southern Belize* was produced by the Toledo Maya Cultural Council and Toledo Alcaldes Association in 1997 in effort to show the struggles of the Kekchí and the Mopan Maya to maintain control over their land. In southern Belize, the Maya historically knew no borders, and the concept of one ethnic group being superior to another arrived with the Europeans (2). As cited in this text, a report for

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<sup>46</sup> raised consciousness

the Supreme Court of Belize by Dr. Leventhal explained the geographic variance of the Kekchí before the Spanish arrived, “Peoples of the Kekchí Chol ethnicity may have been moving in and out of the area long before the well-known migrations from Guatemala during the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century” (3). And the boundary between British Honduras and Guatemala wasn’t placed until 1934.

According to the Maya Atlas, Kekchí land has historically been communal. Individual farmers could use new plots of land by marking the territory with a post and a line cut surrounding the plot. There were other land use rules such as adequate fire lines before burning and 7-year minimum work time on virgin forest. Land was passed down from father to son, while women could cultivate anywhere around the village. Natural features of the land (caves, hills and rivers) served as demarcation lines, and disputes were solved through community leaders and joint solutions. Both *milpa*<sup>47</sup> and *matambre*<sup>48</sup> were used to produce corn, the staple of Maya diet and culture, including spirituality. In addition, beans, rice, plantains, cocoa, pineapple, and meat from hunted animals and fish make up important parts of their diet. The Kekchí faced difficult decisions as their population grew and resources (specifically wood for heating, cooking, and house framing) dwindled in the 1990s (19-24, 34).

The Maya have historically believed in communal land use and shifted their population centers according to their needs and available resources, and the Ladina/os have capitalistically looked at land for production and profit, which often results in repression of Mayan rights and the same lack of justice even after the conservation

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<sup>47</sup> slash and burn farming

<sup>48</sup> planting along rivers with mulch

movement. The unequal land tenancy and enslavement of workers that existed on *encomiendas* in the 1500s “remains much the same today as it was in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.” (Ignosh and Kilgore 2005, 24). Sustainability measures have been competing with capitalist goals, which have beat out the former. For example, even though Guatemalan political leaders saw and could have learned from the economic and environmental collapse of rural Mexico after NAFTA<sup>49</sup>, they bore deaf ears to Guatemalan anti-free trade protests by: Cnoc, CUC, y Uvoc, whose leader Carlos Morales warned that free trade “provocará mayor explotación de los recursos naturales”<sup>50</sup>

On May 28, 2004, the president signed CAFTA-DR with Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, and the USA, just three years before Guatemala would have 7 biomes and 14 eco-regions protected under 199 protected areas that covered 3,359,280.24ha, or 31% of the national territory (Diversity 2008). The Natural Protected Areas are managed by CONAP and can be seen in the map below (CONAP “Sistemas”). The reserve areas, as geographer Dr. Peter Herlihy notes, “no dan solución a los problemas de tenencia de la tierra, autonomía política, y manejo de los recursos...” because “las áreas protegidas fueron establecidas sin tomar en cuenta a las poblaciones nativas que en ellas residían”<sup>51</sup> (256).

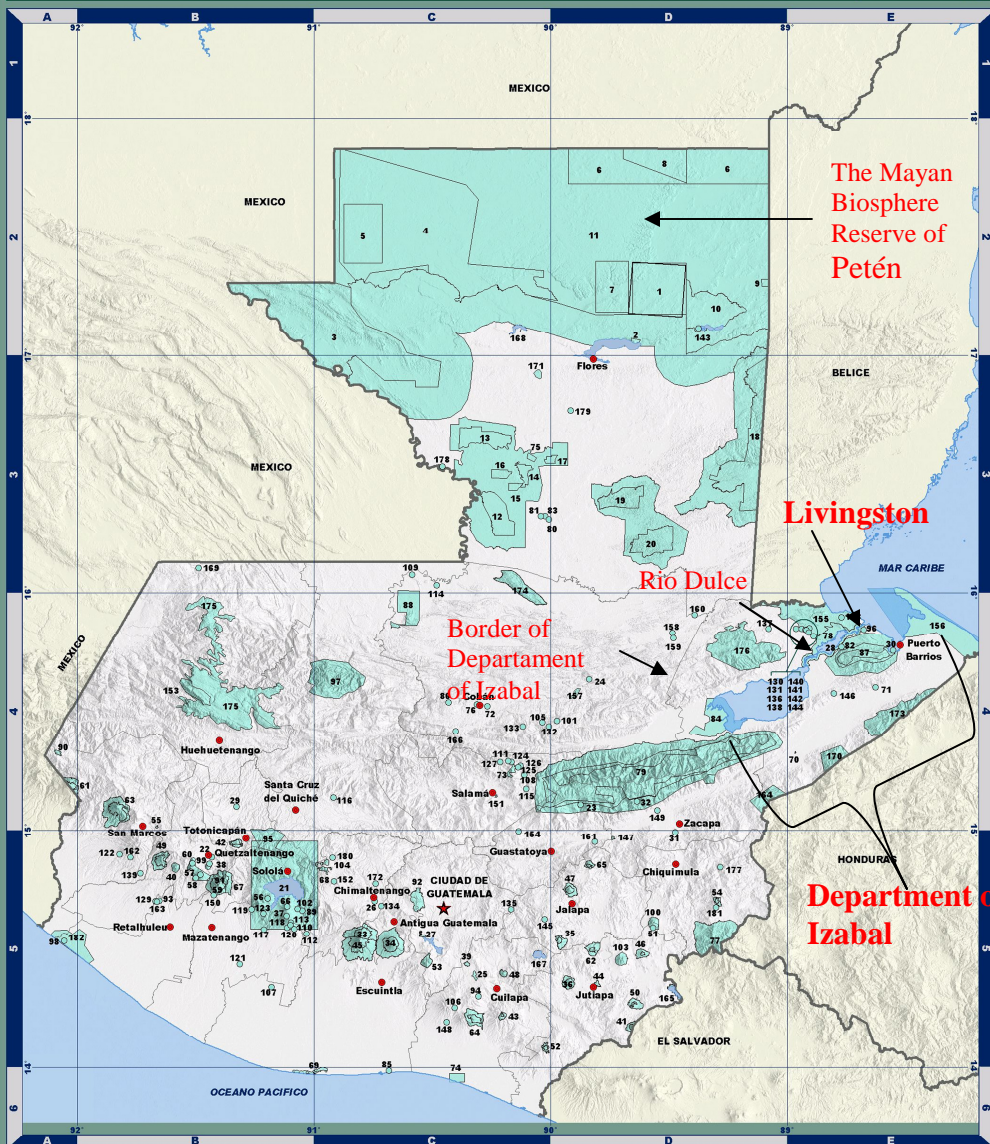
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<sup>49</sup> North American Free Trade Agreement

<sup>50</sup> “would provoke worse exploitation of natural resources.”

<sup>51</sup> “do not provide a solution to land tenancy problems, political autonomy, and control of resources” because “the protected areas were established without taking in to account the native populations that reside in them” (my translation).

# SISTEMA GUATEMALTECO DE AREAS PROTEGIDAS, 2005



## LEYENDA

- ★ Ciudad Capital
- Cabecera Departamental
- Limites Departamentales
- Áreas Protegidas (representadas como punto)
- Áreas Protegidas (representadas como polígono)



Escala 1:1,750,000



Proyección Geográfica, Datum WGS84



Foto: Luis Escamez  
Parque Nacional-Yohá-Nakum-Naranjo, Petén



Foto: Víctor Hugo Baines  
Zona de Uso Múltiple, RBM, Petén



Foto: Jaime Escobar Orellana  
Zona de Veda Definitiva Volcán Chicabal, Quetzaltenango



Foto: David Rímolo  
Reserva Protectora de Manantiales Cerro San Gil, Izabal



Foto: David Rímolo  
Parque Nacional Laguna Lachua, Alta Verapaz

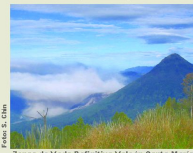


Foto: S. Chay  
Zonas de Veda Definitiva Volcán Santa María y Santiaguito, Quetzaltenango

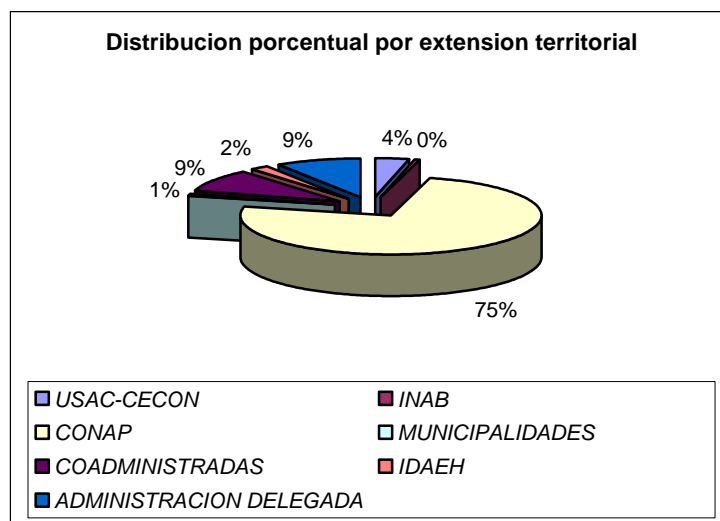


## Consejo Nacional de Áreas Protegidas

Management of this protected land is complicated because of all the parties involved and interested. The 2003 Convention on Biological Diversity report on Guatemala analyzed the state’s participation in the multilateral agreement. It acknowledged that the management of diversity is complicated because of the diverse roles of actors who are involved. “Existen...áreas protegidas establecidas y administradas por organismos no gubernamentales, grupos de ciudadanos, el sector privado y personas individuales y están reconocidas oficialmente”<sup>52</sup> (CONAP 2003, 11).

### Administración del Sistema Guatemalteco de Areas Protegidas (SIGAP)

Distribucion porcentual por extension territorial



4% USAC-CECON  
 0% INAB  
 75% CONAP  
 1% MUNICIPALIDADES  
 9% COADMINISTRADAS  
 2% IDAEH  
 9% ADMINISTRACION DELEGADA

- USAC-CECON: Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala-Centro de Estudios Conservacionistas (Autonomo)
- Alcaldías Municipales,(autónomos)
- Instituto Nacional de Bosques –INAB- (autónomo)

<sup>52</sup> Protected areas exist that are established and run by non-governmental organizations, citizens’ groups, private sectors, and individuals, and they are all officially recognized.

- *Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia –IDAEH (Estatal)*
- *CONAP: Consejo Nacional de Áreas Protegidas (Estatal)-*
- *Organizaciones No Gubernamentales (coadministración con CONAP)*

There are different perspectives on the land reclamations. According to *La Prensa*, a national newspaper, Encuentro Campesino’s land *invasions* are *illegal*. One columnist wrote that, “Empresarios de Turismo y campesinos piden que se aplique la Ley, para no fomentar las mafias dedicadas sembrar el terror y la anarquía en la provincia”<sup>53</sup> (Orantes 2008). Others believe the Kekchí have a right to *reclaim* land that was historically theirs and is now being used illegally for its resources (Herlihy 2003, 244).<sup>54</sup> A video on YouTube , “Áreas Protegidas Izabal,” asks, “Por qué el despojo y la apropiación indebida de tierras por parte de empresas nacionales y extranjeras no son catalogadas como ilegales?”<sup>55</sup> Others argue that it is simply unfair for the government and its entities to prevent the Kekchí from living off the land when the land is being used for profit off its natural resources such as nickel and other metals. The community of Ensenada Puntarenas, Livingston, Izabal, recognize the monoculture plantations of biofuels and industrial cattle industry as exploiting the land and people, and they cite ten multinational companies that have licenses or are in the process of paperwork for mining (Comunidad 2008, 4, 21). They look at land reclamation as reclaiming land for sustainable use by the Kekchíes, explaining how the Ladina/os and foreigners (who own 40% of the 500 chalets in the area) live less

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<sup>53</sup> “Tourist businesses and peasants ask that the law be held up so that mafia groups are not allowed to seed terrorism and anarchism in the province” (my translation).

<sup>54</sup> My own perspective is apparent in my use of the term “reclamation”.

<sup>55</sup> “Why is [sic] that the appropriation of land from [sic] national and foreign businesses is not called illegal?” (video’s translation).

sustainably (eg. chalets use at least 5 times the amount of trees as a Kekchí family dwelling). Oil is also taken from the Maya Biosphere Reserve via the Xan field inside the Petén forest, and the majority of this oil is exported to the USA (Ignosh and Kilgore 2005, 28). From the beginning of Chapter II, section C, we know that corruption is high in Guatemala. So when there are State or international decisions made, even to protect and preserve the land for sustainability, which seem like they would lead to justice and the natural, there is probably also corruption of that “help.” And when the State says in the 2003 CBD report (see Appendix A) that it will promote “aspectos específicos y relevantes de la cultura kekchí,”<sup>56</sup> it is necessary to ask, “How?”

Attempts to make progress in Guatemala by conserving biodiversity (the natural) have created more problems in social relations. As evidenced by the killing of Mario Caal, protectors of neoliberalism (including the State) have not always chosen to engage in dialogue and perspective sharing to find a common understanding and move toward the real and the good. According to one of my anonymous Garifuna interviewees, the Garinagu do not get involved in the Kekchí land situation because they know it is risky because the government is not working through dialogue or peace, even though Guatemala is post- Peace Accords. Some people advocate a shared management system like what exists in Petén, which is still complicated. However, many geographers know that without negotiation and justice, there is no peace or sustainability. Geographer Peter Herlihy admits that if the

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<sup>56</sup> “specific aspects relevant to Kekchí culture.”



indigenous do not have the right to govern their own ways of living, there is little hope for the conservation of protected areas (2003, 264). The State and the Kekchí are in gridlock. There are possible sources to shed outside perspective on the land use and give support, such as the Global Environmental Fund through the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and bioprospecting.<sup>57</sup>

However, if the diversity of this land were protected, in the long run, it could benefit all of humanity. Also, the development in relationships among the Kekchí, Ladina/o, and Garinagu via dialogue around this land could be progress in itself, but not everyone is at the table for dialogue. The table has a meaning of power dynamics and not peace and equality. When the Kekchí have not been able to get to the table, or are lied to at the table, or are kicked beneath the table, and they risk their lives to speak at the table, it is apparent that the discussion table is not working and not difficult to see why other places are being sought out and created.

#### **4. Begging the Question: What Can Be Done?**

My task in this chapter was to uncover the ways in which progress is and is not happening in Guatemala based on the criteria of the moral geographic framework and intrinsic judgments. Through the Peace Process, some legal progress has been made, but the true variety and complexity of Guatemala is still buried in racism and dualist thinking. The State, through the Ladina/o dominated society and control of

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<sup>57</sup> Email me for a paper on this topic: smgorres@hotmail.com.

public opinion and the economy, continues to produce symbols and images that give false meaning to the actual status of inter-ethnic relations and environment in the nation. Neoliberal multiculturalism is not working for those on the bottom of the ladder, and therefore will not produce stability and security for those on the top or sustainability of the nation. That which is unjust is not sustainable. Both international discourse and the proposed laws written by the indigenous peoples themselves have moved toward moral progress but lacked the variety and complexity of Guatemalan indigenous cultures. The 1999 Referendum to implement indigenous rights as guaranteed in the Peace Accords of 1996 failed because the idea of the multicultural nation-state wasn't fully developed. It wasn't developed because free and open access to information was lacking (about to which extent the rights of indigenous people would be protected), as was an appreciation for varied and complex reality (the thought of indigenous people with power was threatening). While Professor Arrivillaga has made contributions to education about the Garifuna culture, more than a decade has passed since the Peace Accords and not much else has been done on a national level. The state is still not interested in financially supporting Garifuna culture (or bilingualism) any more than it needs to in order to claim itself as "multicultural" and "providing equal opportunity for all" while keeping financial resources and economic power in the hands of the Ladino elite who control the state. There are two major fears that prevent Ladina/os from working toward true equality: one, Ladina/os do not want to lose their racial privilege, and two, they have internal doubts about Maya power and fear a war of revenge (Hale 2006, 81-82, 146).

This image of the “insurrectionary Indian” who will kill the Ladina/os is deeply seated in Ladina/os of all classes, and it prevents intercultural dialogue from making large progress (146). Hale does not rule out the possibility of a major ethnic conflict (when the *cuentazo*<sup>58</sup> comes, 142) in the near future, because so many people believe in it, but he thinks a new Ladina/o hegemony is much more likely (136).

I believe Gerardo Mario Ellington was right when he stated that Guatemalans needed to improve education about ethnicities, because it is only when we become as aware as possible of a place’s reality and meaning (Guatemala’s varied and complex indigenous identities) that we can progress. We must break through ignorance, stereotypes, and racism to uncover the truth. What could lead to the most unveiling of truth in order that reality can be understood and then improved?

One of the ways Guatemala could become more aware of its reality is by engaging more with the Garinagu. The nation could learn from the Garinagu on the Caribbean coast as they live peacefully with the Kekchí Maya, Ladina/o, and Kuli populations, and make progress through truth-revealing inter-ethnic relations. Guatemalans could reframe what it means to be Guatemalan and deepen their own analysis of what it means to be Ladina/o or Maya in the context of a multicultural Guatemala. For this to happen the Garinagu need to continue to speak up and others need to listen.

The Garinagu should assert themselves in this neoliberal multicultural State because of the consequences to the real and the good in their own experiences. First,

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<sup>58</sup> Day of reckoning

if real progress is not achieved in Guatemala, another war and/or extreme economic suffering that would affect the Garinagu becomes more possible. Second, they are in a great position to break the binary, and the Maya and Ladina/os have not been able to do it alone. Some Ladina/os have tried, and Charles Hale addressed the reasons for and dissects the limits of Ladina/o solidarity.<sup>59</sup> Individual acts of solidarity are important for the context and aggregate effects, but if they are not organized in collective political action they lack transformative power (170).

Charles Hale advocates a newly “transformed Ladina/o-mestizo identity” with the divestment of racial privilege and collective political direction (2006, 170).<sup>60</sup> But those “ladinos solidarios” who proclaim alliance with the Maya do not engage much in what Hale sees as true solidarity work (169). Hale says he found no Ladina/o-led anti-racist movements, though there were individuals who worked hard. Understanding these individuals’ actions (in the place-making loom) is the key to understanding how hierarchy is reproduced or is challenged (213). Places, through reconstructed meanings or changed social relations, can be created anew. Hale says that Ladina/o ambiguity exists because there is much egalitarian rhetoric combined with the belief that assimilation could be the best for Guatemala, an assimilation that means everyone would assimilate to Ladina/o culture. But according to the criteria of moral progress, massive assimilation should not be valued unless it will clearly lead to real and the good, which is not likely.

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<sup>59</sup> Many went through a phase of work with the Left, then stopped participating because it was hierarchical and racist itself (170).

<sup>60</sup> Those “in solidarity” often self-identified as “mestizo,” acknowledging their indigenous mixture (168). The problem with the political-economic analysis is that data are charged with meaning and there is no “mestizo” category on questionnaires (214).

There are many ways the indigenous, including the Garinagu, could and do educate themselves and others on improving Guatemala. One way is to expose the lack of intrinsic values of truth, justice, and the natural in current national reality. Another way would be to rely on more traditional geography of maps and numbers. Charles Hale recognizes that the redistribution of material resources is important but does not exist in the "*trato de iguales*"<sup>61</sup> discourse (130), and that those who have risen to power are used as examples of the possibilities of successful rise to the middle class (129) (like Oprah is used in the United States to exemplify successful "black ascendancy"). The indigenous could use maps to show their needs and to convey the proportion of power. For example, maps that show the loss of land owned by Israelis to Palestinians from 1948 to 2005 clearly show land ownership change ([www.thepeoplesvoice.org](http://www.thepeoplesvoice.org)). Charles Hale does explain that the power of the indigenous people is not proportional to their weight in population (121) and gives the percentage of *manzana* and *caballería*<sup>62</sup> owners, which would be more powerful with a visual of a map.

I also believe that much more could be done today to increase awareness of the reality of Garinagu existence and cultural identity (such as including their history and culture in school text books, supporting their political participation by making travel to the capital affordable, etc.). Increasing awareness has the potential to combat racism against people of darker skin color, improve the laws to reflect declarations of

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<sup>61</sup> Treated like equals.

<sup>62</sup> Blocks of land with specific measurements: one *manzana*, or 16 *tareas*, is 7,000m<sup>2</sup>, equivalent to 1.73 acres or 8373 square yards. A *caballería* is 64 manzanas.

state values of democratic equality, and improve inter-ethnic relations in Guatemala. The next chapter focuses on this topic.

Along with the question, “What can be done?” I ask “How?” Could Guatemala make progress on its own, without the Garifuna perspective, or without the perspective of outside description and argument? Maybe yes. But outside perspectives help shed light on the truth. As an outside analyst of Guatemalan progress (toward peace, egalitarianism, and sustainability) I respond in this thesis to Hale’s pronouncement that “Analysts must be able to distinguish between the two guiding premises in the neoliberal multicultural discourse- preemptive strike and egalitarian coexistence- and find ways to wrench them apart encouraging the latter to develop and flourish” (135). This chapter has explained some of the ways in which the expansion of neoliberal multiculturalism has kept the indigenous from rising up the social and economic hierarchy, via the preemptive strike of a discourse that says “all people are equal and already being treated equally since the Peace Process occurred.” The next section describes my process of analyzing Guatemala and my own research perspective. Chapter III is devoted to ways the Garinagu do and could help the latter- true egalitarian coexistence- flourish. By making their place-making efforts more known, the Garinagu could further reveal the actual social and economic diversity of the nation along with the racism and inequality that persist. Charles Hale also said that Ladina/o racial ambivalence is a local variant of a global process of neoliberal multiculturalism (218), in which racial categories and meanings have been changed through political struggle while racial hierarchy, racial privilege and racism

have remained (208). I address this in context of my own international participation as a White person from the “North” some in the next section and more in the Epilogue.

#### ***D. Research Methodology for Progressive Fieldwork***

*We will all continue to struggle with who we are,  
the places we inhabit, and what that means.  
Truth is an ever-receding horizon, and I will pursue it.*

##### **1. Starting in the North**

My research methodology started from pre-field work inquiry process, and in a way, from my pre-graduate school life. It comes from deep within my spirit, then formed and shaped by my experiences at the University of Kansas (KU) to be specifically tailored to this research project about the Garinagu. Because of the influence of my earlier life experiences, I invite you back to my childhood to understand how I arrived at my research methodology in graduate school. My mind has always played with basic human inquiry and “research.” As a child I questioned why my schoolmate did not have clean clothes, as a teenager I tested the waters by writing letters about injustice to the town newspaper, and throughout my life I constantly observed the world around me. My father taught me how to really engage people when I watched him strike up friendly conversations with strangers at our home-town swimming pool. He brought out of me my own beliefs, goals, and

ideologies when I retorted back to his, “Shannon, life isn’t fair,” with the demand “Then make it fair!” and later on in my adolescence, a resolved “Then I’ll make it fair.” My learning and research at KU has indeed revolved around a methodology for “making life fairer” by seeking equality through justice. This process is based on revealing the collective truth, gathered from many perspectives, which I believe is the decreed academic practice, but often denied as having a direct link with consequence. Unfortunately, the act of actively seeking out exposure to lesser understood perspectives most often gets labeled as bias.

After starting graduate school in August, 2006 and beginning to formally research ethnic relations in Guatemala, a place I had experienced over three years, I took a class on moral geography. Throughout the class I applied what I was learning to my research plans. I realized that I had no solidified hypothesis regarding the Garinagu in national politics; however, I felt that increasing awareness of the Garinagu’s existence would add to the variety and complexity of the Maya-Ladina/o dichotic struggle and possibly stimulate ideas for new paths to peace, stability, and equal rights. I realized that my voice was not just historical or reproofing, but one of inquiry and hope. I became aware of my own voice by examining my passions and process of intellectual growth. I was passionate about the possible effects of U.S. imposed infrastructure on the Garifuna community through Plan Puebla Panama.<sup>63</sup> I

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<sup>63</sup> Though this Plan is actually Mexican, I understood it to be intimately linked to the NAFTA Superhighway plan further connecting Canada, Mexico, and the US for US business benefits through quicker free trade. See NASCO (“North America’s SuperCorridor Coalition” Inbound Logistics. November 2007. [www.nascocorridor.com](http://www.nascocorridor.com)) and “Resistance to the Interstate-69 ‘NAFTA Superhighway’” by Eco-anarchists from Indiana and Colectivo Incendio. [www.anti-politics.net/incendio](http://www.anti-politics.net/incendio).



was tempted to “head south” in June, armed with maps and resistance propaganda, and speak more than listen. To keep myself true to collaborative and decolonizing research, I had to re-examine my original intentions to work with the Garinagu as stated February 21 for our geography class:

As their Diaspora continues, I wonder what their sense of place is like, and how thin or thick meaning may be for them. How firmly are they tied to the land? How central are their spiritual beliefs? What would moral and ethical development look like for them? Safe for the environment? Tourism, but not degrading?

As a cultural anthropologist I would be mostly interested in how they see themselves. However, as a critical realist and moral geographer, I can ask myself how the way in which they see themselves *and* how others see them...make up the reality in which they make decisions and how those decisions have consequences.

It is these key areas, however, on which I focus my critical analysis. Goal, method, outcome... Will my method be interviews alone? Or will I attempt to add some empiricism? I seek to go with an open mind and patience. I want it to be a joint process.

I rewrote my summer research grant application several times, each time swaying between a more detailed plan of some research question and a focus on the collaborative methodology I wanted to embrace as my decolonizing research.<sup>64</sup> Reading bell hooks and Paulo Freire in class, I sought out other material and found *Decolonizing Methodologies* by Linda Tuhiwai Smith. I hoped to decolonize in a way that indigenous education professor Linda Tuhiwai Smith requests: we allow ourselves as researchers to be “researched back.”

#### Colonizing research

Extracts resources (pictures, theses, information)

Uses subjects for researcher’s gain (award, degree)

Treats subjects as a less important sub-group of humans

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<sup>64</sup> For more ideas, see also Sutherland, Dawn. 1994. Speaking Truth to Power: Oppositional Research Practice and Colonial Power (Guatemala). *Resources for Feminist Research* 23 (4):42.

Imperialistic disciplinary research methodology on indigenous peoples (Smith 1999, 2)

Decolonizing research

Deconstruction (“taking apart the story, revealing underlying texts, and giving voice” Smith 1999, 3)

Help people improve their current conditions (by increasing awareness of reality, my addition)

*I received competing messages about what should be done with my research and was pressured to fall in line with traditional research, so I compromised. I provided a detailed proposal of a project on bilingual bicultural education in order to show I was competent of doing serious research, because I was worried that if I did not give an example of more traditional research, I would not receive funding. Afterwards I felt that I was only partially successful in sticking to my goal of complete honesty and challenging northern imperialist mindsets about research. These are typical challenges in the university system that I have experienced in terms of professors and papers. But after the more instrumental stress of grant application writing was over, an intrinsic stress fell upon me. After putting in a lot of time compiling a bibliography and reading sources about formal and informal education, I felt tied to the issue. More and more I wanted to do what was most relevant to me, and what would be easiest for me. At the same time I recognized that this desire might exclude the Garifuna voice (once again) and their desires. Additionally, I received feedback on a paper about the Garifuna that challenged my terminology and me to be more careful about not “re-colonizing” them. Ah! It is such a bumpy road to progress.*

I wrote and then talked to Dario Raymundo Lopez Flores, a Garifuna bilingual education supervisor in the Department of Izabal. I wrote him “Pre-trip questions” to inquire about his research area interests (see Appendix B). He asked if we could capture the culture on camera, and while I was not interested in photography, I said yes because it was an opportunity to “give back” and participate in a decolonizing methodology. It was to serve my “subjects” by sharing more of my resources. It was an attempt to validate their perspective on what is necessary for their community.

I prepared to be researched back as much as possible. I made available for them as much information as I could; I even brought down a video about my life that I had created over one year. I brought down stories and was ready to share about my experiences with racism and indigeneity in the United States. I was also ready to keep quiet when my voice is not desired, which was a majority of the time. I sought to level the playing field as much as possible. I wanted to disclose my previous erroneous thoughts and actions and invite them to criticize me, my culture, ideas, research, and actions. For example, I was ready to confess that I had toured an indigenous area in Panama through capitalist means that deprived the very people I went to visit. Finally, I made it a goal to translate of my thesis into Spanish and Garifuna, so Garifuna scholars can read it and critique it, and while I was in the field I asked around for translators.

*As I finished the final drafts of my thesis, I had become so involved in other social justice projects that I needed to revise my goal of translating my work into Spanish and Garifuna. I had to evaluate whether it was the most effective way to give back to the Garifuna community, or if I should spend my time and energy organizing for social change, teaching, and caring for the marginalized. I am currently thinking of hiring someone else to translate it for me, because I continue to hear from Garifuna students that they want to be able to access the work in Spanish*

With one of my goals to be decolonizing, another goal was to self-critique my relativist anthropological mind-set with geographical analysis. I asked myself many times, “What goal will lead to the most uncovering of truth, so that reality can be improved?” I drew this question from what geographers Victoria Lawson and Lynn Staeheli said,

Our task as critical social scientists is to uncover structures and processes operating on humans and to understand how individual agents are constrained and empowered... the implications of processes such as racism, sexism, and oppression, *compel* committed research. [...] [W]e seek to reduce illusion and change people's perceptions of what is possible so that they may change their 'reality'. (1991, 233)

My ultimate goal is always to uncover the truth, which- if shared in a compelling way so its heard- will lead to justice and sustainability through moral progress. I seek to learn the truth and reveal it to those unaware. If all humans seek truth and goodness,<sup>65</sup> then upon learning how to attain it, they can pursue it. Those who are aware can relate to those who are less aware in various ways, such as: 1. Being too open and brash (preaching) and creating cognitive dissonance (geographical dissonance) in which the reality of another place is rejected because it is much too different and asking for too much change at once, or 2. Ignoring those individuals, or 3. Step by step coaxing individuals out of their place by sharing alternative glimpses of truth, and compelling them to want to see more. The last option is like personal self-disclosure while dating; we reveal reality slowly and with respect, so we do not get cut off. I have had greatest success with this last option. Thus my methodology involves gathering information from people (who are products of places) while keeping in mind that I am myself a product of many places, and then revealing that information in a descriptive way that allows people in that place to come to greater understanding of their reality and improve it.

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<sup>65</sup> Sociopaths would be an exception.

We, the researcher and researched, need to understand that we are both products and agents of place.<sup>66</sup> If we understand our roles in producing the cultures of places, then we know that research can be a circular process, in which we give and receive (not take). Research, through this process, should reveal reality (which is varied and complex), and if it does not, then it's not good research. If research is merely done to get results published in an elite and difficult to access journal, then it is likely not helping us as the greater human community to understand our reality at all. There should be little difference between theory and practice if they are true and accurate reflections of reality. Similarly, the difference between description and argument is minimal because argument should be about uncovering the truth, which is sometimes a just description of what was previously not known. Uncovering the truth may be to show what was previously understood or believed was "not necessarily the case."

And I constantly reminded myself that to get to "the real and the good," I had to have real and good intentions about what WE would want to investigate together. While I am seeking the truth, I must be seeking it not alone, but in collaboration with others. Paulo Freire (1993) explained liberation as a communal process, and bell hooks (1994) described the way true learning takes place with in dynamic and equal relationships. So once again, this I sought: to embark on a research project this summer that would be critical and collaborative, and as decolonizing and truth-

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<sup>66</sup> The reflections in the first two paragraphs mostly came from a conversation with Dr. J. Chris Brown, my mentor and thesis advisor (November 5, 2007).

revealing as possible. I planned to ask, “What is the Garifuna culture? Is it changing? Are you losing it? What are the threats? What are the methods of preservation?” and from there, go into politics, education, language, religion, or wherever they lead me. (See Appendix C for complete list of questions.) I knew that even after I returned home, my project would still not be perfectly defined, just as I know that turning in my thesis and printing off the “final” copy will never be final. The diverse and complex Garinagu will continue to change, and I as a critical thinker will continue to develop my analysis. The relationships that were built last summer between the Garinagu and me will continue to change. But they were built to improve the awareness and the lives of the researcher and the researched- a collective liberation.

## **2. Going South**

I traveled to Guatemala in June of 2007. Initially my idea was to research in the community of Livingston, Guatemala, where the Guatemalan Garifuna culture is said to pulsate. Once in the field, however, it became apparent that one cannot learn about Livingston without also learning about Puerto Barrios, the twin town across the mouth of the Rio Dulce on the Caribbean coast. The two communities are very different; residents will tell you that Puerto Barrios is a dirty port town, while Livingston is a laid-back tourist town. However, many of my interviewees in Puerto Barrios grew up in Livingston, and vice versa, so I included members of both

communities in my pool of Garifuna interviewees.<sup>67</sup> The flow of people between communities is recreated by family relations and job opportunities. Likewise, many people had family from or living in Punta Gorda, Belize. The Garinagu of Honduras were also frequently mentioned as “brothers”, but not as close family relations or job connections.<sup>68</sup>

I worked diligently to utilize the best research ethics I knew, because all human individuals and peoples deserve respect, autonomy, and the right to decide about participation in ethnographic studies. I drew many of my ideals (see Appendix D) about ethical research from Priscilla Cunnam’s article in *Geographies and Moralities* (2004). Because the Caribbean Coast of Guatemala endures incredible amounts of tourist examination, I was especially concerned with collaborative research. “The most elemental methodological principle of activist anthropology: talk over research ideas with the people with whom you are primarily aligned, in hopes of producing knowledge that might be useful to them” (Hale 2006, 4). My pre-field work instrumental goal was to learn more about the under-studied Garifuna community and identify ways their cultural identity could be used to make progress for themselves and for the nation. In the field, I gathered my information from interviews, observation, participant observation, and occasionally making a fool of myself. Many of my first interviews were either arranged by Darío Raymundo Lopez Flores or Ocelia Flores, who were compensated for their work. Other interviews

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<sup>67</sup> A comparative study could be done between the two towns, how Garifuna identity is portrayed differently, used differently, how meaning of each place is different because of the difference in social interactions and natural resources, etc.

<sup>68</sup> For more on the culture of Honduran Garinagu, see Davidson, William V. (1982), González, Nancie (1969, 1997), and Martínez Montiel, Luz M. (1993).

were done with people in the street (with some people who approached me and some whom I approached) or at the headquarters of organizations such as ONEGUA and ASOMUGAGUA. Some requested their real names be used in my thesis. For others I have used pseudonyms or non-identifying descriptions of their role in the community. Out of respect for each interviewee's time and personal interest, I allowed each interviewee to talk about what interested him/her the most, which means I did not ask the same questions to every interviewee, though the discussions generally revolved around the same topics. Most of the pictures taken were done so upon invitation, and since I prioritized respect for others over capturing scenes to be used for my personal gain, in this thesis I share the relatively few photos I took with permission for the purpose of supporting their culture.

Between June and August, 2007, I observed the culture and interethnic interactions in Guatemala, and I interviewed 60 people about lives of the Garinagu. I was continually thankful for everything they shared with me, a white researcher from the USA, a country whose CIA supported coup d'états and military repression in their nation. I struggled daily with my position as a White US citizen, as well as a person with relative economic privilege in communities where tourists often abuse their privileges. In spite of this, the Garinagu expressed to me the following ideas: it was really good that I lived with a Garifuna family so that I would be truly immersed in their culture; it was necessary that I researched what interested me, even if I took into account the desires of others; it was imperative that I share my thesis results with them; and that I must realize that the research would be been better if done by a



Garifuna person. Not one person told me I should not be there. I accepted their acceptance of me and continued to research, always as open and honest as possible about my perspective. I hope that if I misrepresent them in some way, it will be corrected in the future. Lastly, in accord with ethical anthropological research, I promised that I would allow the Garifuna educational community to revise my thesis before its final production to allow for addition of new information and correction of errors. Final versions in English and Spanish will be kept by members of the Garifuna community.<sup>69</sup>

My perspective of my role also changed after I was on the Caribbean coast. First, I quickly realized that neither I nor my research would be the “voice of the voiceless”, since the Garinagu were NOT voiceless, but rather mostly misquoted and unheard. Second, I came to understand that a person cannot learn about a community and be an activist there in just two months. This has given me reservations about the ability to conduct non-colonizing short-term research. I received more than I gave, again taking out renewable resources (knowledge) and success (a master’s degree) and leaving mostly disposable ones (money paid for rent, etc.). My hope is that some of my gifts will be more renewable (a camera I provided to Darío to document his work and Garifuna culture) and that this thesis will share back some knowledge.

Upon return to the U.S., I sought to engage perspectives by sharing papers and presentations about Garifuna cultural identity and inviting reaction and critique. I emailed papers down to Garifuna individuals in Guatemala. I attempted to write

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<sup>69</sup> I originally wanted to translate my thesis in to Garifuna, but the time and resources it would take do not seem to justify the worth it might have for very few people who could understand it.

papers and give presentations, including this thesis, without being wholly imperialistic, by allowing the Garifuna voice to dictate who they are, who they want to become, and what their existence means in Guatemala. Though the Guatemalan Garifuna voice is present in this thesis, there is still considerable absence of it both in this text (due to a short research time period, distance, and slowly built relationships) and in accessible sources. Thus I have put forth my best effort to fulfill the first of geographer David Slater's six possible elements of thinking critically about the political world, "Analyzing presence and absence," in which he points out the absence of voices coming from the South (2004, 26). What I have to offer in this thesis is the geographic analysis in the next chapter, which is my best effort at increasing the presence of and access to Garifuna voice.

### III. Garifuna Places of Hope

#### A. *Uniqueness of Garifuna Communities in Guatemala*

*We are not on a journey with no destination;  
we are not stuck in a circle.  
We make progress toward truth.*

-from conversations about Critical Realism and research  
between Dr. J. Chris Brown and myself, November 5, 2007.

Guatemalans have been struggling for more than a decade to experience more fully the Peace Accords, and its citizens could benefit from new perspectives on the real and the good. While scholars in recent decades have begun to point out the influence of the “other” population groups: Garinagu and Xinka, as well as the Korean and German minorities that live in Guatemala, the possibilities that these groups could provide examples toward progress remain under-researched in North American literature.<sup>70</sup> The Garinagu and the places they make are unique communities in Guatemala. Because of the uniqueness the Garinagu bring to Livingston and Puerto Barrios, these places (and places within them) are great places from which to learn. I argue that revealing the success- even with struggle- of people in the Garifuna communities in constructing and reconstructing places in a way that leads to moral progress could provide hope for the rest of the “hopelessly dichotomous” Guatemalan nation. First I describe what hope for geographic progress

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<sup>70</sup> Even in the 2004 book *Racismo en Guatemala?* (Arenas Bianchi, Clara, et. al), the Garinagu and others are mostly ignored.

can look like, and then I provide historical background on the Garinagu and their communities. In Sections B and C, I share my analysis of specific Garifuna-made places.

Geographer David Harvey, in the first chapter of his book *Spaces of Hope* (2000), addresses the hopeless state of our ideologies today.<sup>71</sup> His experience teaching Marxism to students, activists, and faculty for 30 years revealed to him the drastic change that took place between 1968 and 1998. From the '68 protests, revolutions, and outcries for a better world, to the '98 disillusionment with globalization, post-structuralism, and “fragment[ed] and sever[ed] connections,” intellectual minds have begun to wonder where the world is headed, and if the destination is a place of doom, if it is inevitable.

Today there are pockets of hope to be seen in intentional place-making endeavors to make progress toward equality, sustainability, etc, which I express in this thesis in terms of the truth, justice, and the natural. Throughout Latin America (and the world) one hears “Otro mundo es posible” (“Another World is Possible”), the slogan of World Social Forums, where people take on the reconstruction of the “earth as home of people.” In the United States, movements protesting the 2008 national partisan conventions called activists to “Recreate ‘68” to illuminate the truth about the injustices with the two-party system, with the ultimate goal of changing the place that is the United States. In Guatemala, people resisting neoliberalism and

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<sup>71</sup> For hope in Latin America, see Butwell, Ann, Kathy Ogle, and Scott Wright, eds. 1998. *The Globalization of hope: Central America, Mexico and the Caribbean in the new millennium*. Washington, D.C.: Ecumenical Program on Central America and the Caribbean (EPICA).

supporting alter-globalization<sup>72</sup> gathered loudly at the America's Social Forum in October 2008, stating their intentions to change the place of the western hemisphere. Through all these gatherings, people have and foment hope for better places. These people may be a minority, the few that have not been convinced like the masses that "there is no alternative" or possible utopia (Harvey 2000, 155). Yet while "the ideology and practice of competitive neoliberalism" quietly lull many imaginations of alternate realities to sleep, other people continue to awaken them via place-making efforts (ibid. 155). Inside Guatemala, alternative ideas and places of hope (not yet utopia) are present in the Garifuna communities.

The Garinagu are not just unique because of their African descent and black skin, but because of their history of *mestizaje*, journey, and liberation while living with other ethnic groups. Garifuna interviewee Peitra Arana described how her people have historically struggled for equality and worked toward truth, justice, and the natural. The truth has been passed down in their culture, not always with formal education or books, but through oral tradition. The natural has been preserved through non-commercial fishing and farming for family survival, where families plant what they receive from the earth. The struggle for just social relationships is seen in their fleeing from enslavement and incursion in armies to fight wars that were not theirs. The places they inhabit in Guatemala were historically isolated from national politics, which forced them to organize locally. At the same time, their littoral position confronted them with international challenges and opportunities before many

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<sup>72</sup> Proponents of alter-globalization argue that international integration can be good if economics are not prioritized over democracy, economic justice, environmental protection, and human rights.

Guatemalans living in the interior. Moreover, they have developed their communities not in isolation, but with the Kekchí Maya, the Ladina/os, and the Kulí.

The hope the Garinagu can provide lies in the distinct interculturality of their communities. Interculturality is more than the existence of different ethnic groups. The *Proyecto Multiplicador de Educación Maya Bilingüe Intercultural*<sup>73</sup> conceives of interculturality as a positive interaction of ethnic groups that comes from “*el espacio permanente de equilibrio y armonía entre culturas*”<sup>74</sup> (187). Some places promote interculturality better than others. In Livingston, school programs like “*Un voto*”<sup>75</sup> promote conversation and equality among students of different ethnicities. In some community settings, conversation and understanding is encouraged to flourish, while in others adults get along through respect but do not outwardly focus on interethnic relations. For example, I witnessed on the soccer field and in the market, the goal is to win something from the other person, and interethnic respect was not discussed, but existed.

National interculturality is weak, and within it, the Garinagu are often forgotten, ignored, or used to give the appearance of inclusiveness in national and international politics. However, they have a unique history and culture that sheds different light on identity struggles and inter-ethnic relations. Their lineage is heterogeneous and detailed in *The Rise and Fall of the Black Caribs (Garífuna)* by I. A. Earle Kirby and C. I. Martin (see Appendix E for map). The Garinagu are a mix of

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<sup>73</sup> Multiplying Project of Bilingual Intercultural Maya Education

<sup>74</sup> “a permanent place of balance and harmony among culture groups,” my translation.

<sup>75</sup> “One Vote”

Amerindians and Africans. The Carib and Arawak indigenous peoples lived on an island in the Caribbean (now called St.Vincent) before the arrival of the Europeans and captive Africans. After the Africans escaped from neighboring islands, saved themselves from shipwrecks, and/or were captured by the indigenous people, they mixed with the indigenous people. A Black Carib community grew throughout the 1600s on the island they called Yurumein. The French and the Dutch attacked Yurumein, and the English repetitively claimed it. Pablo Mejilla García, Garifuna storyteller in Livingston, told me proudly how the Black Carib leader, Augusto Satuyé<sup>76</sup>, tricked the English when they came to attack. García said that Augusto Satuyé's wife, Juana Baracuta, knew that commissioned pirates were coming to attack and wanted him to defend the island. When he did not mobilize the Black Caribs, she called him weak and asked for his pants so she could fight. That gave him the idea to dress the men up in bras and pretend to be women, luring the male pirates to the shore, and then surprise them with a pre-emptive attack. García continues on, saying,

The English brought 20 cases of wine and the French brought 15 cases to get the women drunk so they could rape them. Then they went to the shore of the beach. [...] The Blacks prepared "takatakatakataka tuka" with their drums. A big Black attracted the captain with his big "chichas" (hahaha), who then cut the jugular vein of the French captain. Then fighting broke out, and not one Garifuna died.

While Satuyé's efforts were successful in this story, eventually the Black Caribs were forced to leave their island. In 1773 the Black Caribs and the English made a treaty, but peace was not kept (Kirby and Martin 2004, 35). In 1796 the

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<sup>76</sup> In most academic accounts, he is referenced as Joseph Chatoyer.

English sent the Black Caribs to be deported to the Island Balliceaux, just north of the island of Yurumein. Half died of an epidemic, so only 2,500 were then sent to the Island of Roatán, off the coast of Honduras. Then on May 19, 1797, depending on the source you consult, either the Spanish took the Black Caribs from Roatán to use their labor to cultivate land on the mainland near Trujillo (Gonzalez 1997, 61), or “due to the lack of primary material for the construction of houses, the recently arrived Garifuna in Roatán *decided* to move themselves to firm land” (*Pueblos Étnicos de Honduras* 9; my emphasis). After moving to the mainland, the Garinagu migrated north to Belize and south into Nicaragua, settling on the future Guatemalan coast from 1802 to 1806. Marcos Sanchez Diaz founded La Buga, naming the mouth of the river in their African-based language as a connection to their history (see figure below) (Arrivillaga 2006), which would later become and be renamed Livingston after a U.S. legislator. Later the sister-city and port town of Puerto Barrios was constructed on the other side of the river mouth and populated by Garinagu.





Graffiti drawing on side of building in Livingston (my photo, artist unknown, 2007).

Historically the place of Livingston and its inhabitants have been used for trade to benefit Guatemalan people. The river, Rio Dulce, provided a transportation route and access in to the interior. In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries traders used the ports to export products from the western part of the mainland. In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, that State gave people labeled as “black” more “rights.” These rights included involvement in military defense and the residential/commercial development of the coast (Anderson 2002, 13). Logwood and mahogany were major exports all along the coast of Central America, from present-day Belize to Nicaragua (Gonzalez

1997, 61). During this time period, Garifuna men were known to demand fair wages and refused “to compromise on matters related to their own political and economic interests” (Anderson 2002, 114). Besides transporting wood, they smuggled, and carried messages for revolutionaries and counter-revolutionaries while fishing (Gonzalez 1997, 61). Between 1821 and 1832 the Spanish were still using Garinagu as soldiers to try to overthrow the Central American Federation president, Francisco Morazán.<sup>77</sup>

A. L. Anderson (2002) described the changing economy of eastern Guatemala at the turn of 20<sup>th</sup> century, which I use to describe the major turning points here. First, people improved transportation by building a railroad in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Their main objective was for coffee (grown by Germans) to be exported out of Livingston (115).<sup>78</sup> The State encouraged development on the coast in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century not just for economic purposes, but so the military could defend the area from other imperial powers (101). Around 1900 fruit replaced wood as a major export(60), and the United Fruit Company (UFCO) developed the coast of Guatemala to be an area for banana exportation (18). UFCO encouraged privatization and wage labor (118). Since Puerto Barrios began to flourish in 1920, the town was expanded in 1940s to include a railroad to Guatemala City, the capital (137). When the banana boom busted in the 30s, migration from Caribbean coast of Guatemala started its flow to the north (119). In the 1940s WWII closed railroad operations and US and

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<sup>77</sup> The Federation dissolved in to the present-day Central American countries in 1840.

<sup>78</sup> Kekchi land owners lost their land.

European soldiers went to war, so Garifuna men emigrated and became sailors to replace those US and European men (Gonzalez 1997, 60).

Until the 1960s the Garinagu had considerable control over their land and travel, and they kept economic and familial contacts with Garinagu living in other Central American littoral communities. After coastal authorities applied strict documentation laws for international travel, the community of Livingston became more isolated from the larger Belizean<sup>79</sup> and Honduran communities (Gonzalez 1997, 65). As the community of Livingston became isolated from international ties it became more vulnerable to exploitation by the Guatemalan state. For example, Mario Gerardo Ellington (native of Livingston) describes the privatization of communal land held by the Garinagu in the 80s. He explains that people “without scruples” came to take the land and title it, and then he asks the question, “Why wouldn’t we defend our traditions when with them no one dies of hunger, no one is without land?” (Solares 1993, 84)<sup>80</sup>.

The Caribbean Coast location of the Garinagu in Guatemala has historically forced them to work on their own place-making. Most Garinagu live in the Department of Izabal in the towns of Livingston and Puerto Barrios. They have often been absent from national discourse, partially due to geographical and cultural isolation from the indigenous Maya and Ladina/o (mestizo) populations concentrated in central and western highland Guatemala. Also, the national legal system is

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<sup>79</sup> Formally a British colony, Belize gained independence in 1981, though some Guatemalans still feel it should be a part of Guatemala.

<sup>80</sup> “¿Cómo no vamos a defender nuestra costumbres si dentro de ellas nadie se muere de hambre, nadie se queda sin tierra?”

centralized, though efforts have been made to decentralize it, and this creates unequal access to state government (Sieder 2001, 211). The community of Livingston, which has the largest Guatemalan Garinagu population, exemplifies Garifuna life and culture. However, it is incredibly isolated from Guatemala City and only reachable by boat from Puerto Barrios, on the 30 miles of Guatemalan coastline between Belize and Honduras, which on a perfect day without accidents, livestock, or weather delays, is a seven-hour bus ride from the capital. Instead of spending two days traveling to Guatemala City and back, many Garinagu decide that energy could be better spent in community meetings and on local projects.

This in turn makes improving inter-ethnic relations for Garinagu on a national level challenging. Though the Vice Minister of Culture and Sports is a Garifuna, Ladina/os and Maya often assume that *morenos*<sup>81</sup> they see in the capital are citizens of Belize, and many Guatemalans think that Livingston is in Belize<sup>82</sup> (Anderson 2002, 26). Garifuna Peitra Arana reported to me that in her experience, other Guatemalans did indeed guess she was from Livingston, or Cuba, the U.S., Africa, or Honduras, before they guessed Belize. In any case, the Garifuna is seen as “other” or foreign. A. L. Anderson (2002) describes Livingston’s distant geography from Guatemalan power and politics as an obstacle to Garifuna participation in national politics:

...struggles to address ‘local’ problems in terms of ‘national’ questions  
obscure a coterie of complex, overlapping relations of unequal access

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<sup>81</sup> Dark-skinned people

<sup>82</sup> This could be do to the long border disputes between Guatemala and Belize, or because English is spoken in Belize and Livingston, and/or because the town’s name is English.

to the institutions and discourses of power that create cultural political and economic regions and inevitably marginalize the *pueblo* or town of Livingston. (141)

The answer to “who are the Garinagu today?” depends on the literature and individuals consulted. “Indigenous people,” “blacks,” “*morenos*,” “Black Carib descendents,” “apolitical beach dwellers” or “matrifocals” might come up in the reply. Who the Garinagu are is important to understanding how their identity and lifestyle are portrayed and could be uncovered to make progress. I will begin by summarizing the views of Garifuna Mario Gerardo Ellington and supplement his perspective with non-Garifuna ones<sup>83</sup>

Garifunas tend to view themselves as a Garifuna nation that stretches from Nicaragua to Belize. But they are also Guatemalans. They pay their taxes and they perform military service. But if Guatemala plays soccer against Honduras, they’ll cheer for Honduras because they have more blacks on their team. Garifunas are different from Black English people. An important part of their identity is their transient identity-moving from St. Vincent to the Central American Coast to the United States. (Solares 1993, 41-46)

In a 2007 interview, Mario Gerardo Ellington said their identity is in their black skin, their transient history, their religion, their language, the food they eat and the traditional dances, especially the *punta*.

Nancy Gonzalez’ 1969 work on Garifuna culture and identity is well known. In 1997 *La historia del pueblo garifuna* updated scholars on life in Garifuna communities. In describing the Central American Garinagu, Gonzalez writes “in addition to the traditional occupations of farming, and fishing, some sell lottery

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<sup>83</sup> While I use the work of anthropologist Nancy Gonzalez, geographers John Paul Ignosh and Michael Kilgore, and Earle Kirby and C. I. Martin, sociologists and anthropologists Virginia Kerns, A. L. Anderson, Maren Mohr, and Guatemalan ethnomusicologist Alfonso Arrivillaga, there is also work done by Tokyoite Jun Ishibashi, and Belizan Joseph Palacio, among others.

tickets, cold drinks, and fruit, make clothing for their neighbors, tend small stores, or make and sell bread. A very few still make traditional wood and basketry items” (Gonzalez 1997, 61). Plantains, yucca, yams, mangos, avocados, rice and beans, and fish are common foods. They are also known for their work in food service (60). Many Garinagu are multilingual. Those who have migrated north send remittances back to their families, many of whom now have TVs, toilets, and the like. Those abroad often keep Garifuna traditions of socializing (cards, drinking, soccer, traditional dances) and return home for Christmas and Easter and family crises (e.g. death). To pay for the trip they might take back cheap things from the US and sell them in Central America (61-63).

James W. Dow describes the Garinagu familial and political structure: Kinship descent was matrilineal before European contact. Today they have “non-unilineal kin associations, active primarily in religious activities and in mutual aid for domestic purposes.” Many families are matrifocal<sup>84</sup>, and many grandmothers take care of young grandchildren. Young women are expected to learn household duties at a young age, while young boys are less disciplined until they hit puberty and are suddenly expected to get a job and support the female household members. More men were in charge of spiritual ceremonies until they migrated north; today women do a lot of curing rituals and ceremonies. Legal or religious marriage is not valued except by high class educated Garifuna (Dow 1995, 114). Traditional social control was exercised through public criticism of song, proverb, or chastisement from a dead

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<sup>84</sup> Matrifocal is a family structure centered on a head woman.

ancestor through a living person during a religious ceremony. On their political organization, James W. Dow says the Garinagu take political action within each separate country, but they do not block vote. “Few have achieved either elective or appointive office at any level, but recent revitalization efforts may change this” (Dow 1995, 115). In Livingston 2007 people knew that even with a block vote, they could not elect “one of their own” in the Department of Izabal, not even in the municipality of Livingston, because of the percentages of Kekchíes and Ladina/os. In 2008 Garifuna interviewee Peitra Arana argued that marriage was important in Garifuna culture, as evidenced by lyrics in Garifuna songs. She also ranked the order of familial chastisement for social discipline to be from sisters first, then from parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, and lastly from the ancestors during a dügü.

The Garinagu have their own religion and believe that life can be controlled by a higher god and/or by ancestors. Spiritual leaders are called “buwiyes” and are trained via dreams and other shamans. They can protect the community from outsiders. Ceremonies in honor of their ancestors include traditional prayers along with: sacrificing animals, dancing and singing to drums, and drinking alcohol. In the 1800s most Garifuna also accepted Catholicism, replacing nature spirits with saints and angels. The Catholic calendar is also observed. “‘John Canoe’ is an important dance performance during Christmas and the New Year” (Dow 1995, 115). Both modern Western medicine and natural medicine is used, with uncured illnesses sometimes attributed to the wrath of ancestors.

Many Garinagu came to the United States to make a living in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. A large part of the Livingston economy today comes from remittances of relatives living in the U.S. Pressures from the competition of capitalism that emphasizes individual profit over community collaboration and the return of cheap consumer goods from emigrant laborers has created economic struggle for the Garinagu in Livingston, and some Garinagu see their way of life threatened by U.S. cultural imperialism.

Garifuna individuals have different perceptions on what being “Garifuna” means. Most acknowledge that Garifuna cultural identity varies as it is described from person to person, and many recognize a Garifuna “sense of being” or right to self-declaration. When I asked about the Garinagu, many Maya and Ladina/os said what they knew about Garifuna people was that they were black, lived in Livingston, and danced *punta*<sup>85</sup>. While mostly true, this description leaves out the complexity and diversity of Garifuna culture, and thus the complexity and diversity of Guatemalan cultures. It also leaves out the changes that are taking place in Garifuna culture through the construction of specific places.

Anthropologist Charles Hale did not claim that he has the answer or solution as to how to achieve collective Maya rights in Guatemala (2006, 44), and like any other individual person, I cannot know the answer for the Maya or the Garinagu. But I do have proposals based on the observation and participatory experiences I have had and data I have collected in interviews and a moral geographic analysis of those. In

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<sup>85</sup> Punta is a type of song and dance from Garifuna culture.



the next section, I share what the Garinagu have taught me about their cultural identity, how they have used it in specific places by encouraging changes in meanings, and how they related to other ethnic groups to make progress for their community. Drawing on U.S. and Guatemalan literature, observation of and participation in Garifuna communities, and 60 ethnographic interviews I conducted from June to August 2007, I examined the complex identity of the Garinagu, including their roots in transient history/indigenous-blackness, language, and spirituality/religion, as well as other aspects of their cultural identity that were less emphatically mentioned, like food and music/dance. Then in section C, I explore new territory by looking at the places that are still largely “under construction,” and I offer a geographic perspective on how those places could be created for greater moral progress. The community members together can process their options and decide together how they want to be involved in the intense place-making process occurring in their nation.

## ***B. Existing Places***

### **1. Schools- Formal and Informal**

In such a widely attended public institution dedicated to the “real and good” as the public school system, the qualities revealing progress- truth, justice, and the natural- should prevail. Schools are especially such transformative places because teachers engage with young people who will be in control of progress in the future. To learn about truth, children had access to information and perspectives in Spanish via their teachers and peers. Now that many Garifuna children learn Spanish before

they get to school, it is less obvious a problem that most instruction is in Spanish. For social relations to be based on equality and justice to exist, all ethnicities and their cultural aspects (such as language use) must be respected. The huge lack of teaching and learning materials, which is the “nature loop”, weakens the progress of the place. Because of multiple barriers to working toward the real and the good, many Garinagu choose to practice their culture, especially one of its main embodiments- language, outside of the formal classroom.

If language is the second most important identity marker, then why is the Garifuna community not more interested in bilingual education to preserve the use of their language and make schools better places? First, they and non-Garifuna must believe that it would help bring about truth, justice, and the natural to learn/use the Garifuna language in schools. If they believed this, they must also believe that it is worth the energy spent on changing the place of the classroom rather than using other places to make progress. I hypothesize there was no voiced collective concern in 2007 about the lack of instruction and use of Garifuna in public schools because of the interplay of other aspects of Garifuna cultural identity and local and national economic interests that were viewed as better roads to progress. First, I will describe the language and its use. Then I will describe the teachers’ position toward bilingual education, as well as the parents. Then I will address other community concerns that are prioritized over bilingual education and relate them to national neoliberal economic interests. Finally, I will give an example of what the Garinagu are doing outside of the formal education system to support their language via informal places.

The Garifuna people said it was still important for them to know their roots, and to speak their language, but fewer and fewer children do. Five year-olds go to school where instruction is in Spanish and come home speaking Spanish with siblings and friends. Native Garifuna language is a mix of Carib, Arawak, African languages, Spanish, French, and English. Many of my interviewees mentioned language as the most defining Garifuna cultural trait, and, if not the most important, second to knowing the historical roots. It is spoken by roughly 50% of the Garifuna population (“Primera Encuesta” 23), and fewer Garinagu speak Garifuna because few children receive bilingual education and Spanish dominates school, work, and sometimes home life. Language use and preservation is a contentious topic when cultural identity is at stake. There is a play between three languages in Garifuna life. Their native language, Garifuna, started to become peppered with more Spanish loan words until the movement to “purify” it and preserve the culture. Other loan words that came from English, like “tankey” or “tenki” (“thank you”), were replaced with new ones (“*seremein*,” Arrivillaga “Personal Interview”). English words are also mixed into their Spanish.<sup>86</sup>

In the classroom, teachers who want to teach the Garifuna language or teach other subject materials in Garifuna face various challenges. First, both teachers and administrators told me there was a widespread lack of didactic materials. There are no

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<sup>86</sup> I heard the words “fock” (*fuck*) and “come here” from adults 20-40 years old. This influence could be from English-speaking family members who live in Belize and frequently visit Livingston and/or from U.S. movies and TV shows. The movies I saw being watched and sold in Livingston featured actors of dark skin color who spoke Ebonics, and the youth emulated their speech. Nevertheless, I heard considerably fewer English words in their Spanish than I do in other Guatemalan Spanish-speakers.

texts that teach the language, not to mention texts that teach sciences and other subject areas in Garifuna. Ariel Moisés Peria Calderón, principal of the school Escuela Oficial Urbana p/varones No. 2 “Ernesto R. Lara” in Puerto Barrios, argued that privatization of the education system is such a great threat that it is difficult to survive. “No tenemos el magisterio, ni el material. El material que tenemos es un libro de matemática. De allí para allá, no nos han dado nada. Pero si usted pregunta allá, van a decir que hay materiales. Pero no hay.”<sup>87</sup>

For didactic material to exist, a language has to have a standardized orthography and language planning has to be done on a state level. This is still in process in Guatemala. Salvador Suazo has written the only widely published Spanish grammar book (*Conversemos en Garifuna*) on the Garifuna language, and while in Honduras it is used, it is difficult to find in Guatemala.<sup>88</sup> Cayetano Rosales had been working for DIGEBI MINEDUC (The Department of Bilingual Education at The Ministry of Education) since 2000 as supervisor for the process of creating a text for teachers to use when teaching the Garifuna language. But many teachers are Ladinas who do not speak Garifuna, and when I interviewed seven of them, they said they barely taught Garifuna history and were uncomfortable with the strange sounds of the Garifuna language. The Garifuna teachers who did speak it lacked confidence (and probably respect from their coworkers). DIGEBI of the Department of Izabal did publish a booklet in 2002 “Transference of reading and writing from Castilian to

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<sup>87</sup> We don’t have the teachers or the material [for bilingual education]. The material we have is one math book. From there to here [the capital to Puerto Barrios], they have not given us anything. But if you ask there, they will say that there are materials. But there is not.

<sup>88</sup> Roy Cayetano has published English-Garifuna material in Belize, such as a 1992 textbook, according to Peitra Arana.

Garifuna” so that teachers could better learn the language and use it in the classroom, but not a single teacher referenced the booklet when I asked about bilingual education.

Many teachers reported that the State did not provide what they should in order for them to be better educators. Principal Sharon Duarte of the Escuela Oficial de Parvulos Natalia Gorriz in Puerto Barrios echoed the cry for badly needed funding. She said her teachers did not even have books for the appropriate levels of instruction for each grade. The government pays for the teachers’ salaries, and that is it. She believed that the Peace Accords were a greater help to the people in the western part of Guatemala than to those in the eastern part. Her solution to surviving and progressing within the multicultural neoliberal mode of the state was to look internationally for help. And it was successful: Texaco gave money for a restroom building and playground, and a Rotary Club gave desks.

Principal Ariel Calderón shared pointedly with me that the lack of financial support from the state was accompanied by lies.

MINEDU does not give money to help, so parents have to raise it themselves with raffles. The teachers use their salary to buy materials... We need negotiation, the solution is dialogue, but there hasn’t been any in the last four years... We have snacks for the kids, but we need food. 70% of the kids come to school without breakfast. The government gives 1Q [13 cents) per child per day to buy food. They asked for 3Q. It is a shame for the country, when *diputados*<sup>89</sup> buy lunch for 60Q...The government shows propaganda on TV, radio, so the parents think the kids are getting milk. But when they do not, parents think the teachers steal the money. So we have meetings for the parents and teachers to know what’s really happening.

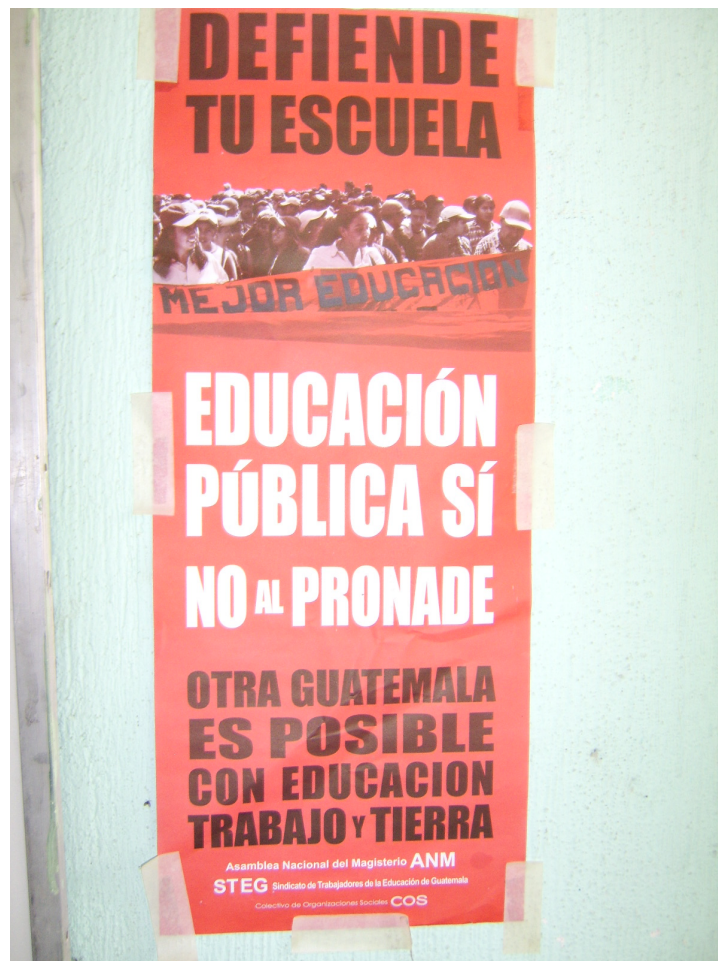
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<sup>89</sup> Representatives in congress

I asked, “What is really happening?” and Calderón informed me,

The government is all part of making business out of education; as capitalists, their goal is to privatize. The Ley Marco was an initiative to do so, and to privatize health as well. There is only hope if the next government is more flexible, but all the candidates are neoliberal; since 1954 the country has suffered from the government. Kids are not encouraged to go to school so they can be kept working in the fields. Teachers will continue their struggle with the next government; they will keep demanding... There will be revolution in the street for justice, until the last drop of blood... The constitution says the government should support education and health.

On his office wall hung the poster in the figure below.



“Defend your school (Better Education). YES to Public Education, NO to PRONADE. Another Guatemala is possible with education, work, and land” (my photo, 2007).

In February of 2006, some parents and teachers took the streets in Guatemala to protest the lack of funding for education across the nation. I saw a photo of teachers standing in the streets in Puerto Barrios, asking people to donate for education. They also boarded buses to ask for money. Many parents who were not previously aware were angered because they thought the government should be paying for schools. When I asked the director of the Department of Education of Izabal, Lic. Rudy Ramirez Cayetano, he towed the state line, saying he did not know why fathers and mothers were demonstrating in the streets because the government was doing what it promised. When I asked him about teachers needing more support for teaching Garifuna, he – though a Garifuna man with an impressive vision of education – still proclaimed that the teachers should be more creative and find a way to teach Garifuna without materials. Nicolasa Gotay Norales, the only practicing bilingual teacher I could find in Puerto Barrios or Livingston, taught six year-olds at a girls' school and created her beautifully decorated classroom and bilingual prayers and songs from her own salary and her own heart (see figures below). Ms. Norales is a shining example of how “teachers could get more creative”, yet her success is celebrated in solitude. Other teachers have not found it beneficial to take the risk of bilingual teaching without an official assigned bilingual position from the state or without local support.



Ms. Norales and her creative bilingual art (my photo, 2007).



Garifuna, Kekchí, and Ladina children praying together in a bilingual classroom (my photo 2007).



When the neoliberal multicultural state responds to demands for adequate funding of basic educational materials (not to mention bilingual education materials) with, “We have already given you what you need,” people are strategic about turning their attention and energy elsewhere. Ms. Duarte was successful in getting a non-profit organization, Fundación el Camino, to give them computers, which seems like an easy answer, but it obligated them to employ a guard at night because of thieves. So the parents had to pay 10Q/month [\$1.30] for the guard, again having to provide for what the state should have. Some parents accused the teachers of lying about the hire of a guard and pocketing the money, which causes more difficulties. But it is not unusual for discrepancies to arise about who is paying for what in Guatemalan education because the State lies. July 4, 2007, MINEDU ran a full page ad in the *Prensa Libre* that announced a 50% increase in bilingual teacher positions and a 43% increase investment in Intercultural Bilingual Education (Guatemala, Gobierno). At the same time, supervisors in the Department of Intercultural Bilingual Education had not received their wages for four months.

Some parents and teachers believed that working toward interculturality (tolerance and mutual respect, or living together peacefully) was more important than learning other languages.<sup>90</sup> This is what the state promotes. Teachers are under pressure to follow curriculum requirements that do not include Garifuna history or language, and the new workshops given across the nation are focused on a new hands-on pedagogy that incorporates multicultural education but emphasizes support

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<sup>90</sup> Several teachers noted that interculturalidad and language learning went together.

for the child's creativity and skill building, not their maternal tongue. Although one of the eight sections of the instructional booklet used at the week-long workshop was on bilingualism, it was not addressed formally at any point during the trainings in Puerto Barrios (DICADE 2006, 29). The trainer, Rudy, said there were too many subjects and too little time to be able to talk about it, and preparing the majority of the teachers (non-bilingual) was more important.

I only talked with a few non-teaching parents of school aged children, and they were not too focused on bilingual education. They told me that the children should learn to respect each other's cultures, but they did not necessarily need to learn other languages to do so. Mabelyn Bermudes<sup>91</sup>, a 25 year-old Garifuna who does hair and nails for a living, has two kids who speak only Spanish with their friends. She does not think Garifuna should be taught in schools because she believes it is a dialect and hard to write and pronounce because it has mixes of French, English, etc. She also does not believe there is much discrimination between kids. Like other parents, she grew up speaking Garifuna in the home and learned Spanish in school, where the white teachers did not understand her and it was tough. She believes that now that Livingston has modernized in the last ten years, it is much better, but still the greatest struggle is the lack of good jobs.

This interculturality can be morphed into a discourse that says equal rights for all already exists, fitting perfectly into the multicultural neoliberal ideology. Instead of emphasizing different cultures and languages in the school systems, they are

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<sup>91</sup> Name changed

mentioned as respectable, and then cast aside for focus on harmonious inter-ethnic interaction. In one program sponsored by Save the Children and various businesses (such as Pollo Campero, Banco G&I Continental, and Quick Photo), with the support of MINEDU, school children were given lessons on the importance of citizenship and voting because of the upcoming presidential elections. They would then participate in a “children’s vote” at the local bank or grocery store (Niños 2007, 14), mixing good citizenship with good consumerism in the western neoliberal mentality. Wilson Trigueño, a 22 year-old Garifuna, was relieved to find a decent-paying job teaching the program “Niños and Niñas con voz y voto” for six weeks in Livingston schools, thus making an individual choice to participate in the formal labor economy structured by international neoliberalism. In a school for young boys, he taught that “hombres de bien” provide food for the house and do not do drugs. Young men can choose to be winners or losers...It is normal not to like some people, but we still respect them. Todos Somos Guatemala. Todos somos políticos. Todos. Partidistas pertenecen a un partido. Democracia requiere a todos, con puntos de vista diferentes...”<sup>92</sup> The different points of view allowed, however, are limited, and must fit within neoliberal multiculturalism. Thus you can have your opinion on who to vote for, and we respect that, but you cannot propose an alternative government. You can have your culture, but you must behave in certain ways. Trigueño used gender neutral language to include the women, but did not speak in Garifuna. This is the

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<sup>92</sup> All of us are Guatemala. We are all political. All of us. Partisan people belong to a party. Democracy requires everyone, with different points of view.

new mestizo: let us respect our residual differences while we become the same by participating in the same economic-political system.

Just as Wilson Trigueño made a choice to participate in neoliberal multiculturalism for insurance of his own survival (instead of trying to subsist from fishing or volunteer teaching the Garifuna language to school children), the community is also wrought with the struggle of supporting itself economically. Economic matters take priority over multicultural and bilingual education. For example, in town meetings facilitated by a PNUD (Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo) member, Raul Diaz, the following issues were addressed: lack of health services, violence, unemployment, poor administration skills, environmental degradation, need for a community plan, racism, and limited education.

	Problem	Cause	Effect
3	Educación Poco acceso y falta de recurso en la educación formal e informal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bajo presupuesto municipal para la ejecución en educación</li> <li>• Insensibilidad y desinterés por la inversión en la problemática educacional del municipio (analfabetismo)</li> <li>• <u>Ninguna promoción por la educación bilingüe</u></li> <li>• Personal nombrado para el área rural se queda en la cabecera por compadrazgo</li> <li>• falta de un instituto politécnico municipal</li> <li>• falta de centros de capacitación juvenil</li> <li>• falta de una telesecundaria</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Escuelas deterioradas con escasos de mobiliario y de recursos materiales didácticos</li> <li>• Escuelas cerradas en el área rural</li> <li>• Maestros y maestras sin vocación (suelderos)</li> <li>• Estudiantes truncados por no poder continuar sus estudios diversificado</li> <li>• Vagancia, vicios, alcoholismo,</li> </ul>
	2.EDUCACION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crear programas municipales de educación informal,</li> </ul>	

Proposed solutions:	<p>(manualidades, pastelería, educación física, horas culturales,) (Escuela de artes y oficios).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promover escuelas de reforzamiento para alumnos con problemas de aprendizaje en cada barrio.</li> <li>• Promover campañas de alfabetización en coordinación con CONALFA.</li> <li>• Promover capacitaciones para miembros de los COCODES.</li> <li>• Dar apoyo económico para remozamiento y mantenimiento de escuelas.</li> <li>• Coordinar con los COCODES la prestación de vigilancia para las escuelas.</li> <li>• Promover y gestionar campañas de sensibilización sobre la problemática de VIH-SIDA.</li> <li>• Promover y gestionar la creación de un instituto técnico vocacional en la cabecera municipal y en el sector de frontera Río Dulce.</li> <li>• Gestionar una escuela de artes y oficios ante el INTECAP.</li> <li>• Gestionar becas para todos los niveles educativos, además de apoyo económico para la movilización de los mismos.</li> <li>• Promover y gestionar la creación de una casa de la cultura multicultural.</li> <li>• Promover y gestionar la implementación de bibliotecas municipales con acceso a Internet.</li> <li>• Promover el consejo municipal de educación con el objeto de regular el sistema de educación del municipio.</li> <li>• Gestionar la separación de jornadas de estudio en el local que ocupa la escuela de niñas, para separar a la escuela de párvulos.</li> <li>• Gestionar la creación del Instituto Nacional de educación diversificada.</li> <li>• Promover que el MINEDUC supervise mensualmente las escuelas de las comunidades. (ver necesidades y problemas)</li> <li>• Promover y gestionar la contratación de más maestros para suplir las necesidades de la comunidad educativa.</li> <li>• Retomar las horas culturales en el parque</li> <li>• Programas radiales municipales dirigidos por jóvenes</li> </ul>
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Within education, there were seven problem areas to be addressed, of which bilingual education was one (under lined above), but was trumped by the need for materials and opportunities for higher education in proposed solutions. When I asked about the importance of combating racism and improving education, many people were worn out from discussing the lack of progress on those issues and wanted to focus their energy on improving job opportunities and holding elected officials accountable for

poor administration skills. Their partial surrender and other experiences said to me: Why work toward and demand what you will not get? Besides, Garifuna can be learned and taught in the home or on the street, while formal education should give us opportunities to get ahead.

Perhaps the Garinagu do not need to fight for bilingual education when there are other places such as Catholic Church<sup>93</sup> and out-side-of-school programs like Ahari<sup>94</sup> that keep the Garifuna language alive and promote inter-ethnic respect through non-formal education. Ahari is a Saturday school in Puerto Barrios. Francisco Marcial Garcia told me that he started the school in 1997, where 69 students now learn about Garifuna language, music, and cultural traits. It currently costs 25Q/month for each student, and Francisco Garcia is waiting for government approval so the school can become official. In Livingston, Garcia's younger brother visits four public schools to teach Garifuna culture, and his salary is paid by all parents making a small contribution. Garcia has formally requested didactic materials from the government but has not received any. Meanwhile, funding for musical instruments (see figure below), and his salary, have been provided by the German embassy. Again, to practice Garifuna culture and keep Garifuna language alive, activists have to look outside the multicultural neoliberal state.

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<sup>93</sup> I describe the Church's role in moral progress in section two of this chapter.

<sup>94</sup> "Ahari" is Garifuna for *spirit*.



Francisco Marcial (right) teaching me (left) basic rhythms taught to children (photo taken by Marcial's daughter, 2007).

Ahari is one example of how the Garinagu have already chosen to employ other strategies geared toward cultural survival instead of collectively demanding bilingual education in public schools. At town meetings, ideas for promoting cultural identity via informal places were discussed, such as improving multicultural education in Livingston through “Promover y gestionar la creación de una casa de la cultura multicultural,”<sup>95</sup> and at the same time, ideas for economic opportunities were heavily discussed in solidarity with the other three ethnic groups (Kekchi Maya, Ladina/o, and Kulí). These ideas were to take advantage of the neoliberal economy that had already taken over by working to create opportunities within the system (instead of outside of it) and at the same time, hold those within the system

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<sup>95</sup> Promoting and managing the creation of a multicultural culture center.

accountable for their place in the hierarchy. The list of proposed solutions to the problem “Unemployment: Lack of jobs” follows:

<p>6 DESEMPLEO FALTA DE OPORTUNIDADES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emplear personal del municipio</li> <li>• Exigir perfil para los cargos de Juez de asuntos Municipales, coordinador de OMP, y otros cargos de toma de decisiones</li> <li>• Negociar con las empresas que ejecuten proyectos municipales que no traigan personal de afuera y no dejar solo los trabajos de peón para el personal de Livingston.</li> <li>• Promover y organizar una escuela de guías turísticos.</li> <li>• Promover el espíritu de empresariedad de los y las jóvenes.</li> <li>• Promover y gestionar capacitaciones en administración de empresas para los y las jóvenes de livingston.</li> <li>• Promover y gestionar en las entidades bancarias créditos para asociaciones de jóvenes que promuevan proyectos de desarrollo.</li> <li>• Promover y gestionar apoyo para jóvenes emprendedores e inventores de livingston.</li> <li>• Promover una cooperativa de jóvenes lancharos y pescadores</li> <li>• Promover y gestionar ante organismos de cooperación y universidades diplomados en liderazgo y auto estima.</li> <li>• Apoyar la industrialización del casabe</li> <li>• Promover que en las organizaciones gubernamentales y no gubernamentales se contrate a personal técnico del municipio, con pertinencia de género y multiculturalidad.</li> </ul>
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## 2. Religious and spiritual places

There are two types of formal religious/spiritual places that Garinagu use to reflect on their lives and improve them. Both are part of the real and the good because they provide information to others and increase diversity. The Catholic Church has open doors and is inclusive of all ethnicities, and with such permeable boundaries becomes a place that shares the meanings of different cultures and their faith practices. The *chugu* is generally a place for Garinagu to gather and worship with other Garinagu, and the boundary is a lot tighter, though outsiders are not



excluded.<sup>96</sup> Diversity is increased by the existence of a place that is primarily for Garinagu to practice their beliefs so it is not rapidly overrun by dominant culture but continues to offer another way of interpreting the world. In this section I will discuss how these spiritual places support Garifuna cultural identity, so you as the reader can understand how these places contribute to diversity and provide open access to information about the Garinagu for other ethnic groups, which leads to understanding and better decision making for justice and the natural.

Spirituality and religion is important for some Garifunas' cultural identity. Many Garinagu practice their own religion and/or Catholicism (fewer practice Protestantism or Rastafarianism). The Garinagu have their own religion based on the belief that life is controlled by a superior God and the ancestors. It is an oral religion, learned through participation as a child and young adult (Kerns 1997, 176). The main practice is the celebration of the *chugu*, which is the worship the ancestors (Arrivillaga 2006, 59). Along with singing and dancing to drum beats, celebrations involve eating and drinking (especially rum). According to Virginia Kerns, the ancestral spirits require worship in return for blessings and valuable advice given in dreams. The ancestors depend on the living to take care of them, and if they do not receive offerings through a *chugu*<sup>97</sup>, the living can be punished. On the other hand, if the ancestors receive a respectable celebration, the living can be assured of good health (Kerns 1997, 177-179). Rituals that satisfy the ancestors ensure the protection

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<sup>96</sup> I was invited to eat at a site where worship building was under construction, and others who show respect and genuine interest in the Garifuna religion have been welcomed, for example, Dr. Alfonso Arrivillaga who has written many articles and books on Garifuna culture.

<sup>97</sup> Belizean Garifuna Peitra Arana argued that in Livingston, many spiritual celebrations are called *chugus* when in fact they are *dügüs*, which are multiple (as opposed to one) day events.

of children (and others) as well. While either a man or a woman can be a *búyei*, or spiritual guide (186), Kerns explains that most of the work done by women to preserve Garifuna culture (such as the female leadership of *chugu* organization) functions well because their society is matrifocal (190).<sup>98</sup>

Garifuna religion is a part of Garifuna cultural identity even as it changes due to globalization. Most of the religious practitioners I interviewed were from the upper class. This could be because they have time and money to devote to the long and expensive processes of making a *chugu*, while the poor spend their time constantly looking for work. The upper class tends to have relatives living abroad and can financially support the celebrations. Emigration north and subsequent return has mixed U.S. culture into Garifuna language, food, music and dress, but remittances have helped maintain Garifuna religious practices. *Chugas* take place in buildings erected just for the spiritual celebration, and so they are costly one-time constructions and support from abroad is welcomed. Money from abroad can also be used to buy more rum, so more people can be invited or the celebration can last longer, either of which gains respect among the community and more blessings from the ancestors. Belizean Garifuna Peitra Arana, who has lived in Guatemala City for years, argued that the celebrations are not shows but sacred experiences where reunions between the living and non-living provide bases for renewal and return to the traditional. Gerardo Mario Ellington, the current Vice Minister of Culture and Sports in

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<sup>98</sup> While other anthropologists are also quick to note the matrifocal social organization of the Garinagu, no Garifuna interviewee referred to the importance of women as a characteristic of Garifuna religion or cultural identity.

Guatemala, explained the significance of the Garifuna religion, “To be Garifuna, culture is important, but the practice of spirituality encompasses everything.” According to Ellington, Garifuna religion expresses the cosmivision of the Garifuna people apart from Catholicism. But he recognizes that coordination exists between Catholicism and Garifuna religion.

Tension between the practice of Garifuna religion and Catholicism has diminished greatly since Catholicism first arrived. In the 1800s most Garinagu accepted Catholicism, understanding saints and angels to be like Garifuna spirits (Dow 2005, 115). Kerns confirms that in the 1990s the Garinagu in Central America were practicing both Catholicism and their ancestral religion, and using both western medicine and local medicinal practices. According to “the First Sociodemographic and Political Survey of the Garifuna Community in Guatemala” in 2003, the majority of Garinagu in Livingston were Catholic (23). Yet Mario Gerardo Ellington says that a Garinagu might say, “I’m Garinagu because I have my own religion, the worship of the ancestors (we believe that first comes God, then the ancestors, and then us), because I have my own dances, countless Garifuna dances, our own social organization that is the base of clubs and brotherhoods” (Solares 1993, 43)<sup>99</sup>. The clubs pray to a saint, but some Garinagu believe that if you become fully Catholic, you reject your Garinagu identity. I knew a few women in Livingston who participated in Catholic mass and in *novenas* (ninth day celebrations for the recently

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<sup>99</sup> “Soy garífuna porque tengo mi propia religión, el culto a los ancestros (consideramos que primero está Dios, luego los ancestros y luego nosotros), porque tengo mis propias danzas, infinidad de danzas propias, nuestra propia organización social la que es a base de clubes y hermandades.”

deceased). These syncretistic practices did not appear to be a problem for other people in either group. (See Epilogue for an update on recent shared spiritual practices.)

The Catholic Church is a realm within the communities of Livingston and Puerto Barrios where different ethnicities engage in growing awareness about their cultures and improve inter-ethnic relations.<sup>100</sup> Though it has not always supported Garifuna cultural identity, the Catholic Church has been helping people learn and improve relationships more than the Peace Accords do, according to Garifuna teacher Vilma<sup>101</sup>. The Human Rights Office of the Archbishop of Guatemala published a book, *Formas Tradicionales De Resolver Conflictos Por La Población Garífuna, De Livingston, Izabal*,<sup>102</sup> in which they declared the importance of Garifuna traditions and knowledge of these traditions by both adults and youth (Morales 2003). They also believed in the promise of improving inter-ethnic relations by increasing awareness of cultural differences, “May the present study be a reference on the customs and traditions of the population so that it contributes to a better intercommunication with people not of this population” (ibid. 38; my translation). They note the importance of the Peace Accords in opening the door for conversation and for the formation of Garifuna organizations to participate on the state level (ibid. 8): “...al pronunciarse el reconocimiento de los diversos pueblos que habitan en Guatemala, también se

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<sup>100</sup> I felt that most Garinagu only shared their Garifuna religious practices with other Garinagu. Living with a Garifuna family, I was taken to the building site of a future chugu and fed in the communal lunch, but I was not welcomed in to conversation and did not pry.

<sup>101</sup> Last name withheld upon request.

<sup>102</sup> *Traditional Forms of Resolving Conflict by the Garifuna Population of Livingston, Guatemala*

reconoce la existencia del pueblos Garífuna, promoviéndose en ese marco una participación más activa en la vida social y política del país.”<sup>103</sup>

The Church, an entity that includes the people who form it, including the Garinagu, Ladina/os, and Kekchí Maya, is an example of how learning about other cultures can improve inter-ethnic relations. Moral progress has been made through valuing native languages, native music, baptismal practices, and homilies. In Livingston, the *Pastoral Garífuna*<sup>104</sup> inside the Church has done a lot to develop and support these Garifuna-involved activities.

The Church supports variations of cultural identity by offering mass in various languages. Each Sunday individuals of several ethnicities attend Spanish mass. The last Sunday of each month mass is celebrated in Garifuna language, and the second Sunday it is celebrated in Kekchí. In the Parish Office, there are booklets with the order of the mass in both Garifuna and Kekchí. Although few can read their native language, the booklets are available for those who would like to learn or follow along. Garifuna Enrique Alvarez said that less discrimination existed in Livingston because of these masses.

The Church also supports Garifuna cultural identity with Garifuna music. I attended masses where Kekchíes and Ladina/os read scripture and prayers while Garinagu played drums and lead songs communally sung in Spanish. But it is not always segregated; a Garifuna singer invited three Ladinas to learn the songs and sing

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<sup>103</sup> “Upon recognizing the diverse people that live in Guatemala, the [Peace Accords] also recognize the existence of the Garinagu people, promoting in this framework a more active participation in the social and political life of this country.” (my translation)

<sup>104</sup> Garifuna leaders

with the Garifuna choir during mass. When I spoke with the Ladinás, they were excited and nervous (because they did not know if they could grasp the different rhythms). During the mass they smiled while they sang and appeared to have fun. The Ladinás and the Garifuna women formed a friendship afterward; they went to the beach together the following Saturday.

Baptismal practices are another way ethnic groups learn about each other and make progress with inter-ethnic relations. Within the Church, baptism is a sacrament that welcomes a child into the Christian faith with the pouring of water and the promise of parents and godparents to raise the child in the faith community. It is an important practice in Livingston because if the parents are absent in the future (possibly from emigration), the godparents would take care of the child (Méndez Nelson 1999, 126). Interviewee Garifuna Mariano is the godfather of twelve Kekchí children and considers himself their spiritual father. They see each other two times a week if they live in the same community or two times a month if they live in a neighboring rural community.

The Church supported the Garifuna community in Puerto Barrios by building a new church (see figure below) in the Garifuna neighborhood and celebrating an inauguration mass June 30, 2007. Numerous Garinagu, quite a few Kekchíes, two Spanish nuns and I attended the mass in which two priests spoke powerfully about Garifuna culture and inter-ethnic relations. Father Sam was Kekchí, and he preached

that living their culture was an act of loving Jesus Christ. Bishop Gabriel<sup>105</sup> preached, “We are all equal in the eyes of God,” and “Say no to racism! Yes to equality! If we do not share with each other, we destroy ourselves. If we share, we enrich ourselves. Let us not destroy Garifuna culture. Let us celebrate it.” And it was evident that the Garifuna felt their culture was accepted during the mass because two prayed openly in Garifuna. Individuals of different ethnic groups also joined together physically by holding hands to sing the “Our Father” together.



New Catholic Church built in the Garifuna neighborhood of Puerto Barrios (my photo, 2007).

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<sup>105</sup> Bishop Gabriel told me after mass that he had come from Jutiapa two years prior and loved the Garifuna and Kekch'és, which he had exemplified by speaking in Garifuna during his homily and by dancing while the Garifuna women sang in Garifuna and the men beat the drums.

After the mass, the priests affirmed the Church's affection for culture and inter-ethnic relations by referring to the Latin American Bishops Conference in Medellín, 1968, where they recognized the "seed of God" in indigenous people and Africans in America before Christianity was spread. This is important for affirming the part of Garifuna cultural identity that values its transnational and indigenous-black history and afro-indigenous spirituality. Perhaps the Church has been successful in building inter-ethnic relations because it recognized that harmony and progress would come through inter-cultural awareness and understanding twenty years before the State did. However, for those who do not practice religion or spirituality in formal settings, there are more secular places to discuss and build values of interethnic harmony. Community meetings are some of those places.

*There are also Garinagu involved in other religious practices in Livingston and Puerto Barrios, such as Protestantism and Rastafarianism. I did not have as much contact with these but did not want to deny their existence, and more research could be done to evaluate how they increase or decrease the real and the good. I visited a Protestant church and among 30 congregants, I only identified one as Garifuna. While the congregants were welcoming to both the Garifuna and myself, the focus of the service was on salvation after death and not present day inter-ethnic relations. Just the presence of a Garifuna probably increased the diversity of conversation in the refreshment hour after the service. However, the set up of the natural elements (the chairs, pulpit, and signs) pointed to a focus of hearing one perspective of reality, which indicated that only one version of "the truth" was respected. I did not have enough experience to assess whether or not the semi-permeable boundary of the church, as indicated by open door policy yet narrow definition of "acceptable belief" was a place that contributed to diversity in a positive way. Recall from Chapter III on Uncovering Progress that not all places are good just because they are diverse; if a place causes more human suffering than flourishing, then it is bad.*



### 3. Community Meetings

When I was in Livingston, I was grateful to be invited to attend two, several hours long community meetings about improving the quality of local life. These meetings were obvious places of progress because of the open and free access to information, as well as the diversity of the locations and people themselves. They enhanced the truth, justice, and the natural. While at times the discussion swayed toward neoliberal progress (prioritizing capital accumulation over cultural survival), it mostly showed signs of moral geographic progress. These meetings were facilitated by a trained outsider, from PNUD (*Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo*, United Nations Program for Development). The meaning of the meetings was fairly clear to everyone present: to improve the community of Livingston. The top issues addressed were lack of health services, violence, unemployment, poor administration skills, environmental degradation, need for a community plan, racism, and limited education. The spatial arrangement of the meetings was intentional. The first meeting was held at a Kekchí run restaurant, in a separate room with many open doors and tables arranged in circle. The second meeting was held at an old Garifuna hotel where break-out groups brainstormed on the porch, in the kitchen, and in the entryway. Both meetings were welcoming to participants from different ethnic groups because they were held at different locations and were both on main streets of the town.

The meetings were truly open for diverse participation, which resulted in intrinsic progress. At least 20 people participated, from various ethnicities:

Ladina/os, Kekchí, Garinagu, Kulí. The Kekchí Maya mostly live in the rural and urban area, while Ladina/os mostly live in the town centers, controlling much of the business and tourism. Members of the Garifuna community work with Kekchíes and Ladina/os in community meetings and on local projects. I knew many of those involved to be professionals, but there were at least two youth at the first meeting and one jobless man at the second meeting. I was welcomed as a foreigner and given a PNUD book from which to learn. In these meetings, people openly critiqued one another's ideas and were heard. They got the town talking, as well. For example, I interviewed Salina Rodriguez<sup>106</sup> who had not been at the meetings but was familiar with the idea of building a *malecón*<sup>107</sup> off the shore (see figure below), and she had not only heard of it but quoted me arguments for and against. When people of different backgrounds come together to engage openly and honestly with each other, and learn from one another's struggles of captivity and needs, people find their collective liberation with a way to build a better community.

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<sup>106</sup> Name has been changed upon request.

<sup>107</sup> tourist dock



Touristy beach area where *malecón* building is proposed (my photo, 2007).

Together they revealed perspectives to better see the truth by creating a “Shared Vision” statement (see Appendix F), then proceeded to identify the problems in the community (and causes and effects, as seen in the table on the next page), followed by a beginning discussion about solutions. Most of the solutions involved working together to achieve their collective desires, in some direct ways and via some indirect ways. One idea to create more jobs that promoted local cultures within the neoliberal system was to create a cassava industry in which the Kekchí would grow mass quantities of cassava (building on their agricultural background and spiritual land connections) and then the Garinagu would process it in town (their geographic home and cultural practices of cassava preparation). The goal would be to sell to the

international market and improve the job opportunities and income of both Kekchí and Garinagu, since Ladina/os dominate most of the current tourism industry. These social relations were being formed for purposes of justice.

Of course, it would be most beneficial to engage in adequate exploration of environmental and economic effects of a major cassava industry to ensure the care and the quality of the natural, but just the fact that conversation is taking place that is based on inter-ethnic cooperation for survival is hopeful. When we can see past skin and blood lines, but not reject cultural values, and critically examine our choices as individuals and as cultural groups, working together can lead to moral progress.

In his analysis of the Maya-Ladina/o binary, Charles Hale pointed to collective liberation as the way out of oppressive hierarchy, racism, and cultural obliteration.<sup>108</sup> He suggested that Ladina/o dissidents can make a difference by supporting the Maya instead of fleeing from tense places and by using *chapin*<sup>109</sup> humor (224). It takes actors on all levels to change society. In the epilogue, the key informants Yolanda and Genaro critique the book's failure to address what needs to be done about racism, and they respond with their own activism! They planned to start a Ladina/o anti-racist organization that works across generations because the youth are most open to learning. Similarly, the Garinagu of the Caribbean coast will be most successful in improving their communities with moral progress if Ladina/os in their communities get on board, such as through the PNUD meetings.

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<sup>108</sup> Though Hale attempted to describe the ladino perspective on Maya rights in a way that would allow for different perspectives of the ladino other than the typical invisible or oppressor (118), I think he ended up painting many of them as oppressors, anyway, but ignorant ones instead of purposefully controlling.

<sup>109</sup> Slang term for "Guatemalan"

In the 2007 PNUD meetings I attended, the four ethnicities came together to identify various problems in their community, one of which ethnic discrimination. The table below shows the long list of negative effects that economic pressures and lack of education has had on inter- ethnic relations.

	Problema	Causa	Efecto
1	Discriminación entre etnias	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ignorancia</li> <li>• Baja escolaridad</li> <li>• Por cuestiones culturales</li> <li>• Desconocimiento de educación religiosa</li> <li>• Poder económico</li> <li>• Poder político</li> <li>• Sistema nacional</li> <li>• Etnocentrismo</li> <li>• Adopción de otras culturas</li> <li>• Sobre-estima</li> <li>• Analfabetismo</li> <li>• Pobreza</li> <li>• Prostitución clandestina</li> <li>• Tener VIH Sida</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desconocimientos de los valores culturales</li> <li>• Racismo</li> <li>• Sociedad excluyente</li> <li>• Indígenas sin opciones ni oportunidades (garífunas)</li> <li>• Desempleo</li> <li>• Trabajo de peón o sirvienta</li> <li>• Prestar servicio militar</li> <li>• Poco acceso a servicios públicos</li> <li>• Mala atención en instituciones</li> <li>• Estereotipos culturales</li> <li>• Malos entendidos</li> <li>• Perdida de valores culturales,</li> <li>• No se interactúa</li> <li>• Irrespeto</li> <li>• Desigualdad</li> </ul>

### *C. Places under Construction*

*Good activism and good research remind us of our role in being both products and agents of place-making.*

-from conversations about Critical Realism and research between Dr. J. Chris Brown and myself, November 5, 2007.

In this section I explore places that are under construction in eastern Guatemala. Of course, according to place-making theory, all places are constantly under construction as we modify physical components through replacement or upkeep, work to sustain interpreted meanings or to change them, and adjust our social relations from individual desires or outside pressures. Place-making occurs throughout time and across space, and includes the places we create mentally and verbally. So this section analyzes places that have recently been made physically visible or newly verbalized in their construction.

There are examples of intentional place-making efforts that may work toward the intrinsic progressive goals of valuing diversity and increasing open access to information. As the Garinagu continued to engage in re-creating and place-making, I continued to strive for good activist research by examining their place-making decisions and possibilities for the future. The ideas expressed in this section are a product of the places in which I have participated by building relationships and crafting meaning, including: my childhood community, the university community, and the Garifuna communities. Just my presence in the Garifuna communities gave a little different meaning to them (another intrigued tourist, an outsider who cares, the sharing of capital resources). I hope my perspective encourages more intentional agency in North Americans who read it and change their own communities, and in Guatemalans and the Garinagu who are the focus of this work.

## 1. CODISRA and the Garifuna Cultural Institute

Two places have been newly created on the Caribbean coast to support ethnic diversity and provide information about ethnicities, specifically in regards to the Garinagu and their darker skin. The Garifuna Cultural Institute and CODISRA are being constructed, and as they form, the meanings given to these places greatly affect how they contribute to progress in the communities. While both places have a defined physical structure, the social relations that occur within them are in flux and thus shape them differently. CODISRA's goal (and the meaning given to that goal) is clearer than the Garifuna Cultural Institute's.

The State opened the first office of *La Comisión Contra la Discriminación y el Racismo* (CODISRA, The Commission against Discrimination and Racism) in Guatemala City in 2004. People living on the Caribbean coast were unable to get to the office to report discrimination, and so in 2006 the government built an office in Puerto Barrios to serve the Department of Izabal. According to Cinthia Fuentes Rodríguez, the director of CODISRA, the goal of the commission is to raise awareness and care through workshops and trainings for private and state institutions, youth, and everyone. For example, in October of 2006, 28 people attended the workshop *Educación e Identidad Dirigido a Organizaciones y Profesionales Garinagu*<sup>110</sup> as preparation for the *Seminario Internacional*<sup>111</sup> that took place a month later, November 22-26, in Livingston. The workshop had two objectives: understand

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<sup>110</sup> Education and Identity Directed for Garinagu Organizations and Professionals

<sup>111</sup> International Teach-in

the loss and the richness of the Garifuna identity, and “el hacer del conocimiento de las demás culturas que conviven con el pueblo Garífuna hacer suya la información de la cultura.”<sup>112</sup> People are aware that the Garinagu, as darker-skinned people, receive more discrimination and harassment and therefore it is appropriate to focus energy and resources on working toward Garifuna equality.

By increasing the amount of information available about Garifuna culture, CODISRA is making progress via the intrinsic quality of open and free access to information. If they are successful at supporting Garifuna culture by sharing information and addressing issues of discrimination, then the office where this work occurs is a place that increases diversity. The people who work in the office put significant meaning on who they are and the diversity of Garinagu as well. Of the three workers, I interviewed two who both identified as Garifuna, and one spoke Garifuna. One, Francisco Gonzalez, says it is necessary to get to know someone to respect them, and therefore we need to educate people about Garifuna culture. He said that the idea is to value a culture without stereotypes or snobbery. For example, he explained that if I were to meet a Garifuna in Los Angeles, I could say that I know another Garifuna person, so therefore I know a little- but not all- about their culture.

One of the major obstacles, Director Cinthia Fuentes Rodríguez explained to me, for this place to increase growing awareness was the lack of funding. With only three personal, not all the work necessary to combat racism and improve inter-ethnic relations can be done. Without more funding for trainings, fewer people can be

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<sup>112</sup> “make known to other cultures that live with the Garifuna people the information about their culture,” (CODISRA, my translation.)



adequately served. Another obstacle is that people have to go to Puerto Barrios for training, and there is no office in Livingston. However, ONEGUA<sup>113</sup> is working to increase awareness of Garifuna culture in Livingston.

The Garifuna Cultural Institute was formed by *La Organización de Negros Guatemaltecos* (ONEGUA, The Organization of Black Guatemalans). It was also initially supported by the government, which gave 1.760 million Quetzales (about \$234,000) to construct it. Its physical location was again an intentional place-making choice; the institute was constructed on a very visible hill in Livingston (see figure below). The social relations and meanings that are woven in to create the place, however, are fuzzy. Before and after the inauguration in June 2007, people from all the ethnic groups in Livingston discussed how the place should be used. Even among the Garinagu opinions varied, and my ONEGUA interviewee did not give me exact answers about the goals of the Institute. In a few community meetings, people expressed contempt for a building that would only be a place used to support Garifuna culture and insisted it be used to support all four ethnicities in Livingston. The Garinagu present responded that they had never had anything just for their own culture, and that it should be used just for promoting Garifuna art, dance, food, and more.

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<sup>113</sup> There was a non-governmental organization in Puerto Barrios called HEFEGACHU that was similar to ONEGUA.



Garifuna Cultural Institute building (my photo, 2007).

The theoretical framework of moral progress would guide this conversation by asking, “What will bring the most diversity to Livingston? What will increase awareness from open and free access to information?” Because there is no place that is specifically for Garifuna culture to be supported so it can flourish (while there is Aktenamit, a cultural center for the Kekchí Maya), it would most benefit the community for the Garifuna Cultural Institute to be used primarily to support Garifuna culture, consequently sustaining diversity by its uniqueness. Having semi-closed boundaries would not go against the qualities of truth, justice, and the natural if the place: focused on Garifuna culture but allowed non-Garifuna to learn and participate in the activities, was not absolutist in its teachings about culture or

degrading other cultures but rather supported an inquisitive arousal in persons from all cultures, and sought to sustain the natural. If the boundary was too permeable and other ethnic groups also used the space to teach their cultures, then the place would not add to diversity but be like many of the other places already in existence (the schools, churches, etc.) The institute also could be used to teach Guatemalans from the rest of the state about Garifuna culture. People told me that Maya and Ladina/o teachers from western Guatemala used to tour Livingston in groups, but they do not anymore. If this visiting program was revised and reinstated, the Garifuna Cultural Institute could be a great place of diversity training. So besides the Garinagu needing a place where they can solely discuss their culture, it would be useful to have a place where the Kekchí and other Maya, along with international visitors, could learn about the Garifuna roots and present day Black experience.

The Black experience is important and yet difficult to bring to light because it is complex as it sits within ethnic and economic experience. When I asked interviewees, “What makes someone Garifuna?” the most commonly defined answers were “knowing one’s roots” and “speaking the language.” “Knowing one’s roots” is mostly about knowing the complex Garifuna history and the transnational migratory practices, though it can include specifically identifying the black African roots in one’s history.<sup>114</sup> “Blackness” was often described as a present day experience of Garifuna identity that was separate, yet stemming from, Garifuna African roots. Oral

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<sup>114</sup> More than in Livingston, in Puerto Barrios, where fewer Garinagu speak the language, skin color was mentioned to me by interviewees as an important trait in addition to just knowing one’s roots.

tradition is valued in Garifuna culture, and when there are discrepancies in written versions of history recorded by academics, it is worthwhile to remember that Garifuna identity lies in its stories of liberation and preservation ("Pueblos étnicos de Honduras", 8). Active participation in their destiny is representative of the Garifuna people, and no academic analysis can, or should attempt to, take it away. So in Chapter I, section C, I narrated a mixed version of their history, from historical documents and the Livingston storyteller.

Garinagu now claim many of their cultural practices to be a mix of their indigenous and African mixed descent. When indigenous rights are addressed in national and international political documents, they describe and protect indigeneity in the context of very Mayan practices and exclude Afro-descended practices. The Garinagu are protected as indigenous people, but still suffer from racism as people of dark skin color that others read as "slave." Garifuna Gregorio Sandoval explained that many "brown skinned" construction employers will not hire a "Black" Garifuna. In addition to their indigenous heritage, the Garinagu also recognize their African descent and dark skin color, and they feel the discriminating effects of the social construction of race. This is vividly expressed by Garifuna Mario Gerardo Ellington's statement, "We can never *ever* say that we are Ladinos because we are black," (Solares 1993, 43)<sup>115</sup>. It used to be said that Garinagu wanted to be "read" as indigenous (Whitehead 2005, 223), but today they proudly claim African heritage, although separate themselves from others of African descent. When telling the story

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<sup>115</sup> "Jamás podemos decir que somos ladinos porque somos negros."

of their history, some Garifuna place emphasis on the fact that the Garifuna “were never enslaved.” For example, Enrique Álvarez (2007) said that racism comes from parents who falsely teach their children that the Blacks were slaves, and this believed racism leads to discriminatory actions like how Garinagu will get their bags checked before leaving a hotel room in the capital under the presumption that “Black people steal.”

Adjective choice for skin color also varies. Many Garifuna refer to themselves as *negro* or *negra*,<sup>116</sup> The main organization in Livingston is the *Black* Guatemalans Organization. However, others reject the color black as appropriate adjective for skin tone and prefer *moreno*.<sup>117</sup> Most of the individuals I interviewed that preferred to be called *moreno* had been through workshops on racism and understood race to be a social construction. They admitted that even though they did not believe in race or blackness, they were treated as if these categories were real.

These categories, like the Maya-Ladina/o dichotomy, also become real when taught in school. One FLASCO conference interviewee, Garifuna Gerardo Mario Ellington, explained his belief that denial of Garifuna identity happens because of ladinoization<sup>118</sup>:

A Garinagu might ask, “Why am I black?” or resent it, because in schools they learn about Tecún Umán [Mayan leader] and Christopher Columbus and not about their own leaders, like Marco Sánchez Díaz. (Solares 1993, 43)

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<sup>116</sup> Black (for male or female)

<sup>117</sup> Dark-skinned

<sup>118</sup> The process of becoming a Ladino

If they and others could learn about Garifuna culture and black experiences, more truth and justice could flourish.

## **2. ASOMUGAUGA and the Hair Salon**

The Garinagu have a unique opportunity to create places that support women and their organizing and familial leadership. In the matrifocal Garifuna culture, the work of cultural and genetic reproduction is also on women as they pass the language and stories down to their children. Interviewees did not express the matrifocality of the culture, but it was apparent in household set up and every day conversations about work and relationships. Women from other cultures (ie. Maya and Ladinas) could come to the Caribbean Coast and learn about the role of Garifuna women in their communities. Through women and the symbol of their dress, the Garinagu could show other Guatemalans the diversity that exists in national cultures. Dress has not been as important of a symbol in Garifuna culture as language and ancestral roots, but was used in the Livingston tourism information shop to show the differences between Garifuna, Kekchí, and Kulí culture (see figure below). By stepping out of their culture and in to the Garifuna culture, other women could understand better the roles they play and want to play in their own cultures.



Kekchí, Kulí and Garifuna clothing in tourism information shop (my photo, 2007).

The women's group ASOMUGAGUA (Asociación de Mujeres Garifunas de Guatemala, or the Association of Guatemalan Garifuna Women) already reaches out to Garifuna women and supports their cultural and gender dynamics. I interviewed Coordinator Dilia Palacios, who explained to me how ASOMUGAGUA has made progress. The non-governmental organization started in 1997, and in 2001-02 a Spanish organization provided funding for a secretary, telephone, fax, computer, office, which is located in Puerto Barrios. These physical elements (ie. pieces of "nature") allowed the place to engage in more outreach, such as: a program on sexual

and reproductive health in Livingston and Puerto Barrios<sup>119</sup>, a Pap smear fair, and a kiosk of information about HIV and AIDS at the park by the dock. They increase awareness by providing open and free access to information, and diversity by promoting views that are often silenced. When they asked 5 schools about doing a program, 2 principals asked them to change some of the teachings (ex. condoms vs. abstinence), but they said no because their intention was to provide a new perspective. They are also clear about their purpose, meaning of their group, and the boundaries of their work place. Though they collaborate with the *Defensoria Garifuna*, which addresses issues of domestic violence, they do not focus on that work. In 2003 PNUD financed a joint project between ASOMUGAGUA and ONEGUA, *Participación Ciudadana*<sup>120</sup>, to talk about voting and supporting garifuna candidates. Then, in 2006 they offered workshops for Garifuna women about financing and administration, with the social climate focused on strengthening ties with Hondurans and getting more Garifuna candidates elected to local office. In 2007 they continued to train women for political office, youth for participating in community, and *operadores de justicia* to work with the *Defensoria Garifuna* to teach others patience with 2nd language learners.

Are the qualities of the truth, justice, and the natural present in ASOMUGAGUA's place? They increased the amount of learning and sharing perspectives, which is one of the main ways we can start to know the truth (which is

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<sup>119</sup> This program was financed by a Christian group, a population that tends to hold conservative views on sexuality education, which speaks to the progress that is being made in building social relations.

<sup>120</sup> Citizen Participation



never completely knowable because it is always changing), through offering a high-school equivalency program at the *Instituto Agust Blanco* with classes on Saturdays for kids, adults, men and women, Garifuna, Ladina/os, Kekchí, and anyone interested. ASOMUGAGUA made it very accessible by paying for the educational costs (texts and electronics). Palacios mentioned that more could be done to value diversity, because at the Saturday school there was no time to teach Garifuna language, though culture was addressed. Though there was no physical place (like a school or office) in Livingston, they worked through social relations, making connections with Garifuna women Maria Lambe, Claudet Sandoval, and Sabina Ramirez, to work toward creating this “place” for women’s organizing in Livingston. They worked toward justice by providing women with opportunities to access information, see the real and the good, and participate in changing their own lives and communities. Palacios said that Garifuna women needed self-sustaining projects because they worked in the home with braiding and sewing, but studying and training would allow them to get other jobs. ASOMUGAGUA helps all people but gives priority to Garifuna women. The meaning of their work is acknowledged in various ways. They can measure progress in numbers and attribute positive meaning for the 35 people who received degrees through their program: 18 Garifuna, 5 Kekchíes, and 12 Ladina/os. They know women feel supported. But they also know that while Garifuna women can be strong leaders, they struggle to win a political position. So the work of increasing the real and the good goes on through this place in Puerto Barrios.

In Livingston, a specific, public place for women's work and organizing is still under construction. At a community meeting and during informal conversations, people in Livingston talked about constructing a community hair salon for the 47 professional braiders. Garifuna women and girls braided their mostly black hair with creativity and pride,<sup>121</sup> and it is important for building social relations of who participated proudly in Garifuna culture.<sup>122</sup> They braided family members and closer friends' hair in kitchens and patios, while acquaintances and tourists got their hairdos done in the park and on the beach. There are diverse ways to manage the "natural" of our human selves; there are diverse patterns of corn rows and loose braids of varying sizes. This place, if constructed physically and open to others' participation, would increase others' awareness of the possibilities of hairdos and of the meaning of hair braiding. Various meanings could be discussed and understood about the body art of hair braiding: artistic value, practicality labor exchange, sharing space, and/or methods of intimate interaction. These all seem to contribute to progress over a "splendid material world" as Yi-Fu Tuan described (see Chapter 3, section B).

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<sup>121</sup> Occasionally a male would get his hair done in *bolitos*, little balls of hair tied by rubber bands.

<sup>122</sup> I did not observe obsession with relaxers or many efforts to "whiten" looks.

*As a foreign researcher, I resisted getting my hair braided until the day before I left, because I felt it would be “less touristy” to have straight hair. When I finally got my hair braided, it was by my neighbor, who was also a relative to the woman I stayed with. We struggled to negotiate payment, since I was kind-of like family, yet distinctly not, and obviously had access to more resources. Neither person wanted to feel used, but our social positions were more clear than helpful. Oh, the joys of anthropological research.*



On the national scene, women display their cultural identity and perceived sexuality in their clothing and career choices, and Garifuna women could challenge the binary nature of meanings applied to these choices. Rigoberta Menchú Tum, a vociferous Maya activist, has been the victim of jokes about her indigenous dress and sexual availability, because women are supposed to be silent so that nationality can be built on them (Nelson 1999, 193). However, in her defiance of traditional female

silence, Menchú has brought Guatemalan issues to international attention (Montejo 1997). Menchú's womanhood became labeled as unsuitable for national political leadership (Rubin 2004, 132), though in 2007 she courageously ran as a presidential candidate. Her resistance to the Ladina/o conquest won her a Nobel Peace Prize,<sup>123</sup> but it did not win her a role as an official state hero, like Tecún Umán. Her participation, like that of many other women, in the male dominated resistance has not always been welcomed. Similarly, a famous *k'exelon*<sup>124</sup> Germana Catú, challenged Mayan gender norms with her economic control and freedom in her job, which also challenged Ladina/o perceptions of indigenous women (Carey 2006). Though a widely remembered and referenced midwife by Maya women, she is not an official national symbol. And while male Ladino doctors asked Catú for advice, Maya men do not talk about her (32). Many Garifuna men, however, do talk about Garifuna women and respect their strength and if a Garifuna woman ran for a national political office, perhaps it would open up a wider dialogue about ethnic and gender roles in the nation. Perhaps a campaign or a successful election of a woman would contribute to a decrease in violence against women around the state. Many women in power often have different agendas, like inter-ethnic harmony and peace.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> See her book: *Rigoberta, and Elisabeth Burgos-Debray. 1984. I, Rigoberta Mencháu : an Indian woman in Guatemala. London: Verso.* This gendered issue could be compared with the success of Oscar Arias in Costa Rica whose Nobel Prize gave him enough popular respect to get re-elected in a country where the constitution still says reelection is not allowed.

<sup>124</sup> *Comadrona*, or midwife

<sup>125</sup> For example, when the Zapatista women took on stronger leadership roles, physical fighting diminished.

### 3. The Rest of Guatemala and International Places

Places are not isolated but are connected to other places. As people move from one space to another, they change the place and its social relations and meanings. People also use natural resources and products from one place in another, affecting the landscape of the natural. Though historically the Caribbean Coast has been isolated, nowadays Garifuna places could interact with other places in the nation to reveal their local progress. Though geographical distance of the Garinagu from the hub of the political realm in the capital and the Western highlands makes revealing the truth (and the changing truth) about Garifuna cultural identity difficult, progress could be- and is being- made toward breaking the Maya-Ladina/o dichotomy. Already a few Garinagu have State political positions, which “puts the Garinagu on the Guatemalan map” and allows for other politicians and citizens in general to learn about the Garifuna culture through them. The Garinagu could start to build more awareness of ethnic diversity by promoting their African roots through the meanings of national symbols. They could also promote their “uniquely peaceful” cultural attribute in a nation that struggles with continued violence between the Maya and Ladinos. The Garinagu could also help the Maya and Ladina/os work toward resolution in their differences of lifestyle and *cosmovisión*<sup>126</sup>, because the Garinagu have worked intensely on balancing their afro-indigenous values with Western opportunities to modernize. Through building international places of Garifuneness,

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<sup>126</sup> Worldview

they have negotiated the hybridization of their cultural lifestyle. Allow me to explain in a bit more detail.

First, the Garinagu could call for the nation-state to recognize its complex cultural identity by promoting African based national symbols. They could lobby for the drum to become another national instrument and more frequently use the black, white, and gold flag (see figure below). It could be done through a project that gets a national symbol law passed, a process through which more Garinagu could learn about the legal arena in Guatemala (Garifuna interviewees said that most other Garinagu did not know how the laws worked). In addition to increasing others' cultural awareness, this project could build political skills. As Maya and Ladina/o Guatemalans struggle to build a national identity, ethno-sexual symbols and images are often used to foster an imaginary identification with the state that is considerably more diverse than the Ladina/o-Maya binary recognizes, and the Garinagu could educate others about the diverse roles that women can play in society as well.



Garifuna flag with cultural identity markers on top (my photo, 2007).

Second, though only two interviewees mentioned tranquility as an integral part of the Garifuna culture, it was brought up many times in conversations about tourism and the bi-ethnic conflict between the Maya and the Ladina/o. In answering the question, “What could improve inter-ethnic relations in Guatemala?” which would be an improvement toward the inclusion and security aspects of moral progress, an elderly Garifuna man told me that others could learn from the peaceful way of Garifuna life. They live in tension but peacefully with the Kekchí, Kulí, and other minority ethnic groups living on the Caribbean Coast. When we examine diversity and value aspects of diversity that lead to moral progress, living peacefully with other ethnic groups seems to be one of the best traits to value because it creates

civility. Civility, in turn, can allow for good dialogue about food security and other parts of progress. Conversations and debates about building a stable and peaceful Guatemala post-civil war unfortunately have left out this reality and example for progress that exists in Livingston. In a nation that is still facing domestic terrorism, high kidnapping and murder rates, and abuse, Garinagu could share why and how part of their cultural identity is their peaceful interactions with others. Research from the inside perspective (by a Garifuna investigator) or outside perspective (by a non-Garifuna) on Garifuna “peacefulness” could be done and then used to increase awareness of this unique cultural identity trait. As explained in the section on Moral Progress in Chapter II, different perspectives are needed to understand the truth. If more perspectives on peacefulness were revealed from within Guatemala, perhaps the rest of the nation could learn from them.

Third, through my observation and interviews, I learned that they had adopted many cultural practices of the USA, but they continue to practice many parts of their afro-indigenous culture as well.<sup>127</sup> Consumption of specific food and music were frequently mentioned as aspects of “what makes someone Garifuna.” Their food and material consumption has changed due to the Free Trade, immigration, and tourism associated with economic globalization. It was evident that Garinagu were aware of the commercialization of their culture and importation of other cultures, and they work to preserve parts of their culture. This selectivity about cultural hybridization (the combining of two cultures) can be an important tool that other Guatemalans

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<sup>127</sup> It is important to note that Garifuna immigrants to the USA have also enriched and changed the cultures in the communities where they live in the USA by sharing their music, food, and vitality.



could learn as CAFTA-DR<sup>128</sup> and other aspects of globalization increase the pressure to commercialize, capitalize, and homogenize the production of goods that we use in life. First I will tell you about how the cultural exchange between Garinagu in the USA and in Guatemala has occurred, and then I will talk about some of the ways an international place of solidarity is formed.

The Garinagu of Guatemala have immigrated in large numbers to the USA since the 1960s, when they were looking for other economic opportunities. “In 1961, according to [Clifford] Palacio, the destruction of hurricane Hattie in Central America opened the doors to legal immigration,” (Swain 2000, 1). Interviewees told me that the Garinagu went to the USA both legally and illegally in the 60s, and anthropologist Maren Mohr says this trend continued in the 80s and 90s (2001, 133). Though the US Census does not have an option to mark “Garifuna” ethnicity, people have attempted to estimate the number living in the USA. Interviewees told me that Guatemalan Garinagu live in New York, Los Angeles, New Orleans (then Houston after Hurricane Katrina) and Florida. In 2001, Garífuna Maria Elena Máximo estimated that 300,000 to 800,000 Garinagu (total, not just from Guatemala, but from Honduras, Belize, and Nicaragua, too) lived in the USA (Weil 2001).

The Garinagu in the USA have organized to preserve their culture (Mohr 2001, 141), while they also adopt some US cultural attributes. When the Garinagu return to Guatemala to live or to visit, they bring with them new values and practices from cultures in the USA. They return during Christmas, Easter, and during family

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<sup>128</sup> Central American Free Trade Agreement-Dominican Republic with the U.S., signed by Guatemala in 2006.

crises such as *novenarios*<sup>129</sup>. To pay for the trip, they bring products from the USA and sell them in Central America (Gonzalez 1997, 61-63). The Garinagu in Guatemala and in the USA are still very connected and much like one fluid community. In both countries, they have considerably Westernized their clothing while mixing their music and religion and keeping the matrifocal family structure. They speak more of their language in Guatemala than in the USA<sup>130</sup>, and in Guatemala they try to keep Western food from edging out their traditional food.

Interviewees informed me that the production and consumption of traditional foods were still an integral part of Garifuna cultural identity, though they coexisted with new foods. Nancy Gonzalez' works about the Garinagu are well known and provide insight into the historical significance of food in Garifuna culture. Gonzalez and other anthropologists note that plantains, yucca, ñames, mangos, avocados, rice and beans, and fish are typical Garifuna food. Her 1969 book was updated in 1997 with her book *La historia del pueblo garífuna* that describes economically forced changes, "in addition to the traditional occupations of farming, and fishing, some sell lottery tickets, cold drinks, fruit, make clothing for their neighbors, tend small stores, or make and sell bread. A very few still make traditional wood and basketry items" (61). I found that the Garifuna household economy functioned similarly in 2007, with women selling coconut bread, bags of juice, and lottery tickets, or braiding tourists' hair for additional income while men looked for work in the more formal sector: on

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<sup>129</sup> Ninth-day celebrations after a death

<sup>130</sup> For example, Victorina Cayetano, a Garifuna grandma who I interviewed, went to live and work in the USA when she was young. She raised her children in the USA speaking English, which she now regrets because they speak English and Spanish and not Garifuna, and their children only speak English.

ships at port, as police, or as semi-formal tourist guides. According to Mariano, a middle-aged Garifuna fisherman, since industrialized fishing (by Ladinos) cleared the sea of catch, fishing no longer provided a sustainable income or living.

There is more diversity in food production and consumption, and we need to analyze if it is all good. Because of the geographic isolation, the port, free trade agreements, and abundant tourists, there was more diversity of food than in other rural areas of Guatemala, but most food was also twice as expensive, leading to economic and health struggles for many families. When I visited in 2007, the Garinagu had not stopped eating fish or beans and rice, but they have added to their diet cheaper food (like chicken) and faster food such as Raman noodles, Mac and Cheese, pancakes, packaged soup, yogurt, and chocolate Ovaltine. Some children occasionally ate cereal in the morning, but bread and coffee (and sometimes eggs) were still the norm. One could buy domestically sold bananas, which are 4-6 inches long and dark yellow, or pay a little more for export-quality bananas, which are 6-8 inches long, green, and firmer. Fast food was available in Puerto Barrios at Pollo Campero (a national chain), but so were gingerbread cookies, a Garifuna dessert.

Garifuna music is unique and coexists with non-Garifuna music. Sung in the Garifuna language, songs tell of their transnational voyages and present-day discrimination by others. Pumped out of houses, vehicles and bars, various styles of music can be heard in every inch of Garifuna neighborhoods. Common types of Garifuna songs include: yancunú, junguguju, chumba, sambay, and parranda (Arrivillaga 2006, 256). The most recognized and prided style of song is the *punta*,

with a specific drum pattern and hip shake. “Puntarock,” a combination of *punta* and modern rock, can be heard from clamorous house stereos and nightclubs. Music in English from the U.S., especially 80s music, has been somewhat popular, but it is not as bejeweled as music by Takía and Paula Castillo, Garifuna women, that is bought, sold, and sung on the street. In 2007 I saw foreign tourists paying for drumming lessons and buying replicas of the African-based instruments (see figure below), or, if really enamored, they bought a real leather covered wood drum. Sometimes they learned or attempted to dance *punta*; sometimes they watched others from their seats at the bar while sipping mojitos and cuba libres, while Garinagu sipped on the local drink, güifiti. Tourists from other areas of Guatemala were more familiar with the *punta*, but knew little else about Garifuna music (or culture) when I asked them about Garifuna culture, such as the African origin of the marimba (Arrivillaga 2006, 251).



Two-inch drum replicas for sale in the market (my photo, 2007).

The rest of Guatemala has also experienced increased tourism, trade, and technology and will continue to experience more of it since CAFTA-DR passed in 2006. There are many opportunities and challenges with food and product production and consumption, and understanding all the realities and consequences of a globalizing world is crucial in making choices that lead to moral progress. As the meaning of nature's resources rapidly changes for Guatemalans, they should increase their awareness by learning from one another's experiences. Living in port cities (see figure below), the Garinagu have historically experienced the benefits and disadvantages of trade and commercialization and have a unique story that should be heard.



Export ship of Dole bananas leaving Puerto Barrios' port (my photo, 2007).

As mentioned in Chapter II, section B: The Geographic Framework of Moral Progress, place-making in one place affects place-making in other places, because all places are connected through nature, social relations, and meaning. For the Garinagu, international “space” has long been transformed into “place” through emigration, remittances, and family and cultural ties. People and goods have traveled from Livingston and Puerto Barrios to the United States and vice versa, creating new landscapes of the natural. Social relations via phone, internet, and Western Union have increased in frequency with the rise of more affordable technology, and they have been used a little to bring about justice. The meaning is an international family of Garifunanness, or a state of being what I call “Guateunidense.”<sup>131</sup>

The Garifuna experience can inform practices of international solidarity and outreach among similar groups such as the Maya, who have constructed international solidarity differently<sup>132</sup>. The Garinagu could do more to use their international identities and connections to improve Garifuna life at home and abroad, and contribute positive examples to healthy globalized living. They could build on their international ties to create international awareness of their struggles and successes. They could build more alliances with organizations to work for human rights and land and food security. But what they have done so far through international space is impressive, and their work has contributed to increased diversity in our world.

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<sup>131</sup> I combined “Guatemalan” and “Estadounidense”, which is Spanish for *United Statesan*, to form “Guateunidense.”

<sup>132</sup> The Maya often work with non-Mayan organizations in the USA for support.

In the United States of America, there are various Garifuna organizations that work on promoting Garifuna culture. Liz Swain (2001) lists: Garifuna Coalition USA, Garifuna Settlement Day Group, MUGAMA (that focuses on the value of women) and the Progressive Garifuna Alliance. There's also La Fundación unida de patrimonio garífuna americano (or GAHFU, English acronym for Garifuna American Heritage Foundation United), a non-profit organization that works on culture, history, language, music, art, children's health programs, and other values. Below is a photo from their website showing their musical participation in a parade (which increased others' awareness of their culture).



Garífuna Movement is a youth movement that worked with the Templo Night Club, Honduras Sports Club, SHANY, Garífuna United and members of Garífuna Media, to have a fundraiser festival after Hurricane Katrina. It was called "Life, Liberty & the Pursuit of Garífunaness"<sup>133</sup> (C. Ivan 2005).

The Garinagu are already sharing their culture internationally, and my research did not reveal to what extent they gave significant meaning to their

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<sup>133</sup> "La vida, la libertad, y la busca para la Garifunidad" en español.

international relationships. I believe it would lead to progress if they would send teachers or other specific individuals between the countries to make the Garinagu in the other country more aware of the economic and political changes going on that affect their people. They could also consider using the New York Times to tell about international Garifuna struggles and successes- for example, health changes due to changes in diet from international trade- to a wider U.S. audience. Increasing awareness can help us make better choices in recreating or creating new places through laws, funding, etc. They could also use their international ties to invite Garifuna women from Guatemala to teach other women in US about female leadership and rights.

From my interviews with Garifuna organizations such as HEFEGACHU in Puerto Barrios, I know that members of Garifuna organizations are very aware of the progress that can be made when international space is used to build fruitful relationships. The Guatemalan Garinagu build alliances with Garinagu from other Central American countries and with other afro-descendants is strategic in learning how to combat racism and take pride in their African roots. Also, afro-descended groups have organized to get funding from the World Bank and other organizations.

We all make decisions about how we will practice our identity, and whether to spend time and energy fighting for the right to collectively practice one part of it or another. The Garinagu know how to manage well-being of their own communities and maintain a distinct identity through Garifuna supported places, instead of being swept up by economic homogenizing globalization. Yet they also realize that cultural



identities change over time. When I interviewed the Vice Minister of Culture and Sports in 2007, Garifuna Gerardo Mario Gerardo Ellington, he recognized that identities are dynamic and change from globalization processes that make it impossible to plan to maintain an identity the same. For the Garinagu in Guatemala, cultural identity is deeply rooted and historical, but also dynamic, and they are finding ways to practice their changing identity within the neoliberal multicultural state. As I previously explained, while their language is important and a few individuals are dedicated to its preservation, it is acquiring more English and Spanish and in some cases, being replaced completely without collective concern or protest. So while one could focus on the Garifuna teachers who gather every Friday afternoon with Maria Lambe to learn their own language in hopes of bringing it into the classroom, and call that story “resistance,” or write about the women’s rights groups like ASOMUGAGUA in reference to their historically matrifocal culture, I conclude this chapter with the words of Gerardo Mario Ellington, “Our culture is not bound! We are a dynamic people!” There are many other options for the Garinagu to explore and weigh in their continued efforts to make progress in their communities, in the nation of Guatemala and internationally. With their ancestral history and present-day passion, the Garinagu will continue to be creative in ways that reflect their ingenuity for survival in this crazy, globalized world, while rejecting the sale of their culture in neatly-packaged boxes constructed by Guatemalan neoliberal multiculturalism. Awareness of their ability to do this could greatly help the Maya and Ladino see their own struggles in new light.

## IV. Conclusion

*We cannot be static and never act. We must act.  
But we cannot act all the time and not reflect. We must reflect.  
We must find the balance. And somewhere in there, slow down.*

### A. *Collective Liberation*

Fifteen years ago Mario Gerardo Ellington closed his statement on Garifuna participation in Guatemalan politics with his hopes that when the indigenous people come to rule Guatemala some day (and he believes that they will), they will not seek revenge but treat everyone- Ladina/os and Garifuna- equally. He said fulfilling the *cosmovisión* would be equivalent to the way future black leaders in Africa would treat white men [sic] as their brothers. He added that they were waiting patiently to be treated as humans, but patience was running out (Solares 1993, 87).

While consistently slighted in political discourse, the Garifuna way of politically organizing has its own community strength that is not reflected or acknowledged. With their historical roots as migrant workers and defenders of their rights, I believe that the Garinagu will continue to put their effort toward defending their rights in ways they find successful and beneficial. But since the rest of Guatemala and most of the powerful states in the world are looking at political documents to determine what rights should be defended, it is worthwhile for these national and international actors to understand and acknowledge Garifuna

indigenous-black identity and clearly protect their way of life. Gerardo Ellington, a Garinagu, shares,

We have to end all this devaluing, or how will it be possible to talk about progress in Guatemala if we don't love our roots? We need to achieve Guatemalan education about ethnicities, so they know how to value it, so they know what their culture is. And the Ladinos, who are the real antagonizers, need to know that inside their veins runs indigenous blood and we can't talk about Guatemalan progress if we don't love our own roots that are indigenous. (Solares 1993, 46)

Ellington provides valuable information about his own culture and obstacles to peace in the nation-state, so why do we not solicit more perspectives from the Garinagu about making progress in Guatemala?

So I went to Guatemala to seek to expose reality, and as I have shown in this thesis, other Guatemalans could look to the Garifuna communities and find hope for progress in the way they are engaging in place-making. We all need to hear each other's perspectives to help ourselves expose reality and find hope. As a critical realist I believe that one perspective cannot shed all the light necessary to see and understand the truth. Thus I believe we all share the task of acquiring knowledge and sharing our perspectives with others, but I emphasize that with more respect and autonomy from outsiders, the Garinagu and other Guatemalans are in the best positions to become more aware of and change their own reality. In this thesis I gave my intrinsic contribution in by focusing on analyzing some of the ways the Garinagu and their identity within Guatemala have and potentially could play a role in local and national place-making efforts for progress. This thesis is just one perspective on how a collective liberation could be achieved in Guatemala.

Collective liberation can be achieved through moral progress when diversity and truth (seeing through to the good and the real) are valued by those at all points on the many spectrums (conservative-liberal, rich-poor, young-old, etc.). Collective liberation is not just about freeing the oppressed or helping the minorities like the Garinagu gain more rights. It is about freeing the oppressors from their incarcerating lives as oppressors. It is about showing them the chains they put not only on the oppressed, but on themselves. To engage in moral progress and work toward collective liberation, dialogues need to happen between the oppressed and the oppressors, and those seemingly in-between or on the outside. Multiple perspectives are needed, and multiple open ears are crucial. Then the systems that lock us in to unhealthy, unjust, and unsustainable living patterns can be challenged and changed by actors aware of their embedment in a shared humanity (my synthesis of main arguments by Paulo Freire, bell hooks, and Noelle Damico with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers). Through various means of awareness building, collective liberation can take many forms.

Resistance to false progress and the push for real progress also takes many forms. In this thesis I have offered some of the ways in which the Garinagu practice their cultural identity and engage in place-making to make progress, along with other possible ways for them to contribute to the progress of the nation. As previously explained, humans are all engaged in geographic “place-making” by weaving three components together: nature, social relations, and meaning. In an epic time of concern for our environment, I explored the nature aspect by discussing options for

increasing sustainability and protecting biodiversity. I addressed social relations by examining laws and educational patterns. I also analyzed symbols such as dress, artifacts, and signs, some of the ways we emphasize cultural affiliation and the meaning we give to belonging to a certain group or place. I teased the question, “How might the Garinagu express their culture and engage in place-making that leads to moral progress?”

In his book about neoliberal multiculturalism and neoracism in Guatemala, Charles Hale saves the best for last: his recommendation. He says that he cannot tell Maya and poor Ladina/os and petty merchants and *maquila* workers and transnational migrants to join together and fight because the State has been repressive in very recent history, and it would be irresponsible to advocate such a move (2006, 223), but that they should work on easing the transition, assuaging the fears, and lessening the polarization (ibid. 224). I, similarly, am cautious to advocate methods of forceful physical resistance, and I am even wary of endorsing any specific place-making effort explored here. It is the Garinagu that must live with the consequences of their actions much more than myself. I do argue that structures must be well utilized to continue to deepen the dialogue, whether they are the State, the Church, international environmental agreements, or non-governmental and non-profit organizations. The Garinagu have many other options, such as the use of symbols to reach national and international recognition, singing songs about their existence in Guatemala, and/or joining with Garinagu in other countries. If they continue to work on finding

effective and intrinsic ways to increase the awareness of Guatemala's geo-cultural diversity, they will add to the real progress of Guatemala.

### ***B. Toward the Ever Receding Horizon***

Since the 1996 Peace Accords, the political atmosphere in Guatemala has been rife with cultural clashes between the Maya and Ladina/os, two distinct cultural groups that struggle to shape the nation and rarely think about the Garifuna Guatemalans. Including the Garinagu in the national political scene is one step toward progress, but the "real and good" is an ever receding horizon. We must all go further in our quest for truth, justice, and the natural. As ethnic clashes and globalization rapidly tumble forward, Guatemalans will continue to be under pressure from many sides to assimilate in to a specific view of progress defined by neoliberal multiculturalism. In the age of globalization and transnational effects, Charles Hale's analysis of global hegemonic culture and its resistance relies on the principle critique that besides not opening up enough space in the political arena for indigenous participation, neoliberal multiculturalism does not allow for political alternatives (2006, 223). Economic-political alternatives could be explored through examination of the economically hybridized Garifuna lifestyle, in context of the drastically different paradigm of indigenous life from Ladina/o life. For example, Hale discusses the economic advance of the country and how it increases the loss of indigenous customs like their dress, pushing toward a Guatemala with "one type of person" (ibid. 125), but in what other ways is the very basic principle of indigenous life being changed? Is the green revolution or the fair trade movement going to promote

indigenous rights from within their own paradigm, or further bring them into neoliberal multiculturalism? And can this idea of “identity-based rights” that drives “development with identity” (neoliberal multiculturalism) be challenged so that all human beings have rights to live in economic-political systems of their own paradigm, regardless of how “indigenous” they may be? This might help reduce fear of indigenous sovereignty and its challenging counter-argument of a “pure indigenous identity” that is based on the theory of complete Maya-Toltec-Chichimec pre-Spanish hybridization (ibid. 162). The Garinagu are certainly threatened by measures of “pure” indigeneity and could help Ladina/os and Maya move beyond this.

Guatemalans could gain much from inter-ethnic relations with Garinagu. As Garifuna cultural identity slowly changes, Guatemalans of all ethnic backgrounds should learn about Garifuna history, language, food, music, religion, and experiences of indigenous-blackness. If Maya and Ladina/os stepped into and out of the Garifuna experience, they might understand and reframe their own cultural practices and better understand their collective relationships with the “other.” The Garinagu’s dark skin and the difficult experiences of racism that accompany it reignites the question of Guatemalan racism in the ethnic-class debate that has been blurred under neoracism. The Garinagu could push for their history and culture to be taught in school curricula, because understanding the reality of the complexity of Garifuna culture will help other Guatemalans stop discriminating against those of dark skin color and help them more accurately see Guatemala as a multicultural state. When cross cultural understandings grow, multiple perspectives on state-wide issues can be shared. This

could stimulate moral progress toward the Peace Process proclamations of democratization, equality, and rights for all people.

Many Garifuna people are aware of Guatemala's intense need for open access to information and true appreciation of diversity. Libio M. Centino B., a Garifuna psychologist, believes progress could be made through increased access to information and understanding among ethnic groups. He explains that all cultures change, but that the neoliberal capitalist system kills cultures most rooted in the natural environment so that there is not mass development for everyone but rather just for the few high-up. Citing the six or seven families that dominate the state, he says they are always under pressure from the U.S. His ideal would be for Guatemalans to realize they are all a part of the human race and defeat U.S. imperialism. An elderly Garifuna man told me that others could learn from the peaceful way of Garifuna life. Garifuna fisherman Mariano believed that besides knowing *punta*, other Guatemalans could experience and appreciate the Caribbean environment and Garifuna food. Vilma believed that Garinagu could also learn positive values through inter-ethnic relations, such as learning to work hard for success in education like the Kekch'ies do.

As various ethnic groups in Guatemala are under pressure from free trade agreements to homogenize production, lifestyle, and culture, they could learn from the Garifuna communities about the positive and negative effects of trade and globalization. As tourists look for places to splurge their wealth, many restaurant and hotel owners are embracing the opportunity to capitalize. Globalization has offered more than fast food and non-autonomous jobs for the Garinagu. In the stores on the



*calle principal*<sup>134</sup> of Livingston, North American consumer culture was quite present in t-shirts, plastic jewelry, and imported household products. In the houses of Garifuna who had traveled to the U.S., there were more decorations, more trinkets, and more electronics. In the house of a couple who had lived in the U.S. for decades, a freezer kept food available that the market ran out of, though buying fresh is the norm in Guatemala<sup>135</sup>.

Garifuna individuals and community also choose to actively conserve their culture in various ways. Besides passing down the story of their history and talking to their children in the Garifuna language, a dozen Garifuna teachers meet each Friday to improve their Garifuna orthography. Garifuna women continue to braid their mostly black hair with creativity and pride and talk of building a community hair salon for the 47 professional braiders. In community meetings there were also brainstorming about future uses of the Garifuna Cultural Institute for promoting Garifuna art, dance, food, and more.

The Garinagu know the struggles and benefits of inter-ethnic relations. From the beginning of the arrival of the Garinagu to *La Buga*<sup>136</sup> in the early 1800s, they have been living in close relationships with other ethnic groups. Though Garifuna cultural practices have adapted, nothing has completely changed them, not even dominating U.S. culture that has intensely penetrated the coast through its capitalism,

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<sup>134</sup> main street

<sup>135</sup> Some of these changes are clearly related to class. The upper class obviously has more means to consume U.S. culture, but the lower class also acquires U.S. culture via leftovers. Second-hand clothes are shipped in packs to Puerto Barrios and sold for cheap at local stores, and donated clothes are also available. I saw a distribution of clothes at the Catholic Church that included shirts, pants, and tennis shoes.

<sup>136</sup> *La Buga* is Garifuna, and means *La boca* in Spanish or “the mouth of the coast” in English.)

free trade commercialism, and materialism. Alfonso Arrivillaga Cortés, researcher at the Universidad de San Carlos, Guatemala, ascribes both positive and negative effects from material and ideological influences of U.S. culture (“Marcos” 53). When I interviewed the Vice Minister of Culture and Sports in 2007, Garifuna Gerardo Mario Ellington, he did not hesitate to say that while spirituality and language are the most important practices, what is more important is that the Garinagu form their future together. In doing so conscientiously, I believe they can also continue to contribute to the moral progress of the nation in which they live.

## **V. Epilogue “I Returned”**

*From September 26, 2008 to October 20, 2008, I returned to Guatemala and...*

My goal was to participate in making Guatemala a better place by contributing to its progress. I sought to continue to develop the social relations I had begun to build in central and western Guatemala 5 years ago and with the Garinagu in 2007. I wanted to “give back” to Guatemala by volunteering to interpret at the 3rd Americas Social Forum and by sharing my research analysis with the Garinagu and listening to their feedback. I felt that once again the dialogues I engaged in with Guatemalans enlightened me greatly. I cannot measure if my conversation partners also felt intrinsic growth or if I gave back enough. I start this epilogue by describing my experience and my interpretation of some Garifuna experiences at the 3rd Americas Social Forum. Then I provide an update from Livingston about the women’s hair salon, the Catholic Church, the Garifuna Cultural Institute, and teachers’ progress toward bilingual education. I conclude with my latest reflections about my research.

*I returned to Guatemala and...*

From October 7-12<sup>th</sup> I participated in and volunteered for the 3rd Americas Social Forum in Guatemala. Tuesday, October 7th, began with a Maya ancestral ceremony blessing the anti-capitalist Forum, organized to promote the values of human dignity and earth sustainability. From there, the social-political-cultural gathering exploded into a 5 day series of seminars, workshops, discussions, talks, panels, artistic expressions and cultural activities in which over 6,000 participants from all over Latin America, the US, and Canada continued to struggle and work together to build another world. Discussion of the current US financial crisis, along with the food crisis, energy crisis, global warming crisis, not to mention the ethical crisis, persisted in consistent examples of proof that neoliberalism is not working for the majority of life. As a master's student in Latin American Studies and frequent traveler of Central America, I found this to be the most dynamic and powerful space I had experienced in Central America. From discussions about strengthening transnational communities with immigrants via radio programs to supporting women's knowledge of condom use to resistance against foreign mining, Latin American organizations were articulating their political movements in impressive ways!

Yet, even though there was a lot of work being done to build a world of equality, and "afro-descendant peoples" was listed in the 6th main theme of the forum (see Appendix G), there was not one single organized workshop or presentation on afro issues. The few afro-descended people present were active in workshops.

Perhaps others were not adequately encouraged and supported to participate, which is still what often happens in Guatemala. For example, a group called Hamalali Garinagu, made of 10 young adults who drummed, danced, and sang Garifuna music, were asked to come and dance at the Forum's inauguration. However, they were not offered the support to stay for the rest of the Forum. Isabel Bermudes, a member of the group, said she would like to have been able to stay more time and share with other Latin Americans in the Forum. Juan Lopez, a group member said that it felt similar to what INGUAT (the State tourism institute) does: exploits the Garifuna people by inviting them to dance for tourists but not compensating them well. Sadly, their partial invitation to participate in the Forum as spotlight entertainment but not in workshops seemed like just another example of multiculturalism "in name, but not in practice." Sabina Ramirez echoed this sentiment in Livingston, saying that the Garifuna community had been invited to participate in the Forum, but, as always, it was too little too late, and she felt that the other Guatemalans did not realize the difficulty (time, money, and travel) for Garinagu to get to the capital.

*I returned to Guatemala and...*

Peitra Rudi Arana blessed me with five hours of her time sharing her critique of my thesis. A Garifuna medical student working in the capital, her English (not to mention her Spanish and Garifuna) was better than mine. Her knowledge of Garifuna spirituality was much more personal than mine. Her commitment to rebuilding Garifuna way of life, embodied by the sharing of skills and work within a community oriented family structure, burned like a strong, steady fire that fed my own fire

equally burning in the face of my culture's deteriorating community values, increasing individualism, and prioritization of profit over people.

Arana provided a critical update on the still-improving social relations between priests of the Catholic Church and Garifuna *buyei*<sup>137</sup>. According to Arana, historically the Catholic Church had excommunicated Garifunas who participated in "devil worship," and for that reason the main Garifuna worship centers, such as Milinda and Louba, were on the outside of town. Through decades of interculturalization, Garifuna spiritual practices were accepted as legitimate expressions of worship toward a loving God, and in August, 2008, history saw a miracle. On the 11<sup>th</sup>, Catholic priests and Garifuna *buyeis* together blessed eight Garifuna temples. Then on the 16<sup>th</sup>, three priests celebrated mass with the Garifuna at Milinda and Louba.

While she provided good insight and updates, Arana's main problem with my thesis was that it was written by me. This means that I told more than showed; my perspective was outside and not wholly accurate; a Garifuna person needs to do the research and writing. I do not strongly disagree with any of these statements, though I do believe that outside perspectives are helpful for examining one's own culture because they provide new insight and awareness. For example, when I presented my thesis to the Garinagu in Livingston, I spoke of my impression of their matrifocality and independent, strong female leaders (in comparison to the Maya culture or my

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<sup>137</sup> spiritual leaders

own culture), and many of them responded that they did not often think about female independence as a defining trait of their culture, though it was true.

Arana challenged me to think of my thesis differently. She wanted it to be so clear that someone who read it as the only access to Garifuna culture would get an accurate picture. She acknowledged my humility but felt the thesis was still too “I” focused. She also critiques both Guatemalan anthropologist Alfonso Arrivillaga’s work and Belizan Garifuna Dr. Joseph Palacio’s work for what she believes to be their misconceptions and misrepresentations of Garifuna culture and history. I felt and shared with her that I did the best I could to portray the Garifuna experience as accurately as possible, but of course I could only write from my experience and perspective. That’s how I began, once again, to understand my research and thesis more in terms of a relativist project.

*I returned to Livingston and...*

On the bus ride there, 9am to 3pm on October 13, 2008, I talked with Marleny Beltetón, a school teacher from los Amates, a community in the Department of Izabal not far from Puerto Barrios. She took an interest in my interest in the Garinagu because she, too, had “discovered” Garifuna culture and loved it. Her journey was personal; though she had grown up a “culture-less Ladina”, she found out that she was part Garifuna from her father’s side. She started exploring Livingston and learned to dance Garifuna dances- not just the Punta but Sambay and Parranda and others. She loves fish and coconut and talking about the amazing treasure of Garifuna culture hidden in Guatemala. She teaches her students to be proud of their

culture, and notes that the indigenous have a much harder time speaking their language and wearing their dress.<sup>138</sup> She organized a group of 12 university students to travel to Livingston and was disgusted by their racism as it showed in their fear of being attacked. She hopes it will lessen as more Guatemalans learn about Garifuna culture, but also commented that inter-marriage was still rare due to discrimination.

*I returned to Livingston and...*

A new priest had replaced the previous priest at the Catholic Church but was also preaching about harmony and sharing among the cultures. A 15 X 5 foot sign hung in the entrance of the church that read, “The Church is for interculturality.”

*I returned to Livingston and...*

In merely 3 days, three women (Mariana Leiba, Harleen Chimilio, and Yessenia Ciego) and I organized a workshop-presentation at the Garifuna Cultural Institute. On October 16, 2008, I lead a workshop called “*Taller: Intercambio de la cultura garífuna estadounidense.*”<sup>139</sup> Twenty-seven people came, and we spent three hours talking about our cultural exchange. I shared my theoretical analysis of the perseverance of Garifuna culture in their communities, specifically related to places mentioned in my thesis. They shared their reflections on my analysis and their perceptions of USA culture.

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<sup>138</sup> Beltetón was especially critical of the imitation of USA culture by Ladina/os who could look to cultures in their own country first.

<sup>139</sup> Workshop: Sharing Garifuna-USA Culture



Wilson Trigueño sharing his thoughts on Garifuna culture at the workshop (my photo, 2008).

We also discussed the research process done by foreigners, including their rights to manage that process and opportunities to use it to their advantage and to the advantage of humanity. We came up with several ways of making the process less colonizing and more just (see Appendix H). I donated all my research materials to the organizing committee of the Garifuna Cultural Institute. We wrapped them in plastic to keep them dry from the pouring rain that reminded us of the natural context in which we were creating meaning out of social relations. We also shared a lunch with tamarind juice and coconut bread...

I had a wonderful experience preparing the workshop set-up with the collaboration of ONEGUA (Black Guatemalans' Organization) because I felt we both put human progress before profit or individual success. I asked a member if they



would loan 50 chairs to me for participants to sit on. He said yes (because he understood that my goal was in line with their organization's), though normally they rented them. I asked how much they charged. When he told me, I told him I could pay it (because my goal was to support their organization's goals).

To my surprise, I learned that the Garifuna Cultural Institute had a board of directors and was awarded 1,000,000Q from the *Ministerio de Cultura y Deportes*. Eight people were employed for a period of 6 months to develop programs on arte, dance, food, song in this project called *Proyecto de Fomento y Salvaguarda*.<sup>140</sup> The place was revealing the truth about Garifuna culture and improving social relations between the Garinagu and the government, who followed through with funding to everyone's surprise. The windows of the building had been broken from storms, but otherwise the natural aspects were still in tact.

*I returned to Livingston and...*

The women's hair salon was still a theoretical place. Efforts had been made to find a physical place in nature, but the land across the street from the main park where organizers wanted the salon was privately owned and not for sale. Elena Supall Williams<sup>141</sup>, Coordinator of the Municipal Women's Office, explained that the municipality supported the idea of a hair salon, but because of the private land issue, the project had stalled.

*I returned to Livingston and...*

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<sup>140</sup> Project of Encouragement and Safeguard

<sup>141</sup> Elena Supall Williams identifies as part of the Hindu ethnicity, which is also a unique aspect of Livingston interculturality.

Garifuna teachers were still working on building a curriculum that would develop Garifuna cultural identity and the Garifuna language. Part of the challenge that was discussed was how to teach Garifuna language and culture as something lived and not just studied. To teach this way, some, such as Libio Centino B., advocated separate classes just for Garifuna children. He says they are creating the curriculum from within their community in order to have control over what is taught and how. There is no Garifuna person in the State's Ministry of Education. Others are critical of ideological and logistical separation of children. Betzy Moran<sup>142</sup> added other complexities: teaching oral language skills is much different than written language skills, and just because someone comes from the capital and is university-educated, does not mean that he or she understands the Garifuna community.

On October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2008, 19 Garifuna teachers gathered for what someone said was the 7<sup>th</sup> workshop on bilingual, bicultural Garifuna education. Tomás Sanchez challenged my criticism (and that of many Garinagu as well) of the long delay for bilingual, bicultural education to become a reality in a nation that promised it over a decade ago in their 1996 Peace Accords. He said, "I am thankful for the moment to be here now. Now is the time. We are making history," and spoke of the necessary spiritual connection and growth that led to the moment of Garifuna educators working to develop teaching from within their own community, and not given from the government. As a sign of internal movement, he also pointed to the new creation of a children's library and "friends of the library association" to support Garifuna culture

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<sup>142</sup> Name changed

at the library.<sup>143</sup> Ada Blanca, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher, closed the workshop with a practice of her Garifuna cosmovision as she gave thanks to the heart of the sky for life.

*I returned from Livingston and Guatemala to the United States and...*

I conclude this thesis with my latest reflections on this project. I wish I had not fallen in to the trap of many academics of focusing so much on discrimination and oppression instead of on resistance. At times I still had to challenge myself by asking, “Why am I bothered when all that some of them want from me is to practice English and come to the USA, when sometimes all I want from them is information on Garifuna culture?” While not an impossible feat, ethical research by an *extranjera*<sup>144</sup> is difficult to do well. I have attempted it, and one of the main ideas I actively hope results from this project is an opportunity for an intelligent young Garifuna adult to study his own culture while earning a university degree. I am privileged to work with him so he receives community and financial support. He seeks to become further educated and educate others, and then to return to Livingston and work for the respect of and support for Garifuna culture. The Garifuna people are the ones who have the most power to change the meaning of their social interactions and the nature around them, and I put my hopes in their dynamic struggle.

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<sup>143</sup> La Asociación de Amigos para el Desarrollo de Livingston “Marcos Sanchez Diaz” para la Biblioteca Ludoteca Infantil Comunitaria de Livingston “Beluba Luba Furendeí”, con sede en Barrio Capitanía.

<sup>144</sup> foreigner

## VI. Appendix

### A. CBD Report by Guatemala, 2003

¿Se promueve y fomenta en su país por conducto de los medios de información la comprensión de la importancia de la conservación de la diversidad biológica y de las medidas necesarias a esos efectos (13a)?

b) sí – amplitud limitada

- De manera aislada, CONAP, MARN y el INAB, dan a conocer al nivel de cápsulas informativas algunas tópicos acerca de la conservación de la biodiversidad.
- Se han realizado algunos programas aislados sobre temas de conservación de medio ambiente, en canales de televisión nacional y en canales locales de circuito cerrado de cable de igual manera en emisoras de radio, pero son muy aislados.
- Programa de educación ambiental del MARN, y todas sus delegaciones departamentales.
- Por al menos 8 medios escritos del país, se difunden noticias diariamente en materia de causas y efectos de la problemática ambiental, posibles soluciones, entidades afines e involucradas en el tema.
- Visitas con la iniciativa privada para gestionar apoyo en las campañas de conservación de ecosistemas acuáticos.
- Publicación de logros en biodiversidad por medio de revistas y sistemas de divulgación como; El cafetal (ANACAFE), Boletines informativos (PAF-G, IDEADS, Defensores de la Naturaleza, FUNDAECO, FCG, CALAS, MARN, MAGA, PNUD, FUNDARY, CECON, Fundación Solar, Gremial de Huleros, AGEXPRONT, CARE, CATIE, FAUSAC, Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala, Universidad Rafael Landivar, Del Valle, entre los más importantes.
- CONAP por medio de un boletín denominado “Noticias Bio diversas” y la página Web.
- INAB por medio de la revista Guatemala Forestal.
- Comisión de popularización del CONCYT, socializando información por medio de afiches abarcando temas de conservación y usos de la biodiversidad.
- Divulgación por medio de 8 emisoras (radio) de servicios locales en la Costa Sur promovidos por CONAP.
- Tiraje de volantes sobre áreas protegidas y parques nacionales en la costa Sur, apoyado por personas particulares.
- Divulgación de educación ambiental de CONAP en el cual se imparten charlas a maestros y alumnos sobre temas de Áreas Protegidas y Biodiversidad.
- Divulgación de spots en castellano y Kekchí en dos emisoras del Petén.
- Realización de eventos públicos con distintos formatos para dar a conocer temas relacionados con biodiversidad.
- Promoción de áreas protegidas por medio de divulgación vía terrestre diariamente con altoparlantes en la región de Sipacate, en la Costa Sur del país.
- Programa radial donde se aborda cada sábado temas de conservación y uso sostenible de biodiversidad, promovido por Madre Selva.
- Publicaciones con Comisión Interinstitucional de Seguimiento a la Educación municipal ambiental –CISEA-, en circuito cerrado, región de Petén.
- El ICTA divulga en Prensa Libre una sección de especias, cuenta con trifoliales

### ***B. Pre-trip Questions Letter***

Estimado Maestro Dario Raymundo Lopez:

Si le parece, favor de llenarme esta hoja de preguntas. Regrésemela en el sobre incluido.

1. ¿Cómo le parece que viniera yo este junio al Lívingson para trabajar con ustedes acerca del tema de la cultura Garífuna?
2. ¿Qué deseos y metas tiene para su comunidad?
3. Si tiene metas no realizadas, ¿qué falta para realizarlas? (ej. pasos de planes, bienes materiales, apoyo de otro grupo, etc.)
4. ¿Cómo podría yo asistirle en sus metas? La tesis que escribiría podría comunicar lo que usted y otros se consideran importante. ¿Qué quería que más Garífuna y más guatemaltecos y más estadounidenses entendieran de su cultura?
5. ¿Tiene preguntas para mí sobre el trabajo que quiero hacer? Podría comunicarme las preguntas o los comentarios antes de que llegue (en este papel, por correo electrónico, o por teléfono) o cuando llego en junio. Muchas gracias.

### ***C. List of basic interview questions.***

Interview Questions

Basic questions may include:

1. What identifies someone as Garinagu? What is the most important part of being Garinagu?
2. Do the Garinagu who live in Belize and Honduras have the same traditions, identities? Do the Garinagu who live in the U.S. identify in the same way?
3. Have the Garinagu always identified that way? How did they identify themselves in the past?
4. Can you be Garinagu and then stop being Garinagu? How does that happen?

5. What do the Garinagu want from Ladinos? From the State?
6. How do you want to be seen and treated by the Maya?
7. Are you losing Garifuna culture/traditions? Why? How?
8. Has Rigoberta Menchu's candidacy for president changed how Garinagu are treated? If so, how?

For teachers:

1. How do you teach Garifuna culture, values, traditions?
2. What struggles do you face in teaching them?
3. What are your goals for teaching them?
4. Why is it important that the youth learn them?
5. What support do you need in order to teach them better?
6. What is the most important understanding of Garifuna culture?
7. What teaching methods are effective?
8. How do you measure the effectiveness of teaching about Garifuna culture?
9. Do you change the curriculum given to you by the State?
10. Do you supplement Guatemalan history as told in textbooks with Garifuna history?
11. How can the government support your efforts to teach Garifuna culture?

For parents:

1. Do you want your children to keep Garifuna cultural traditions?
2. How do you teach them to your children?
3. What aspects of Garifuna culture do you not want to be passed down?
4. Is being a Garinagu different for boys than for girls?

For Worship leaders:

1. How is the Garifuna religion a part of the culture?
2. Are Garifuna people still Garinagu if they don't attend Garifuna worship?
3. (Other questions based on reading I will do in May.)

For tourism industry workers (hotel owners, renters, restaurant owners):

1. How have tourists and tourism changed Garifuna cultural identity/traditions?
2. If tourism grows, will Garifuna culture change more?
3. Is Garifuna identity accurately portrayed to tourists?

### ***D. Interview Approach***

1. Ethics first- Disclose my entire purpose to research participants (desire to learn about their culture and thesis project). Ask for informed consent. Inform them of their right to not answer any question they don't want to and to withdraw completely at any time.
2. Non-exploitative relationships, rapport building, reflexivity, considerations and the acknowledgement of the impact of the positionality of the researcher.

3. Word questions so they are not complicated or easily misinterpreted (and culturally appropriate); Use of triangulation or multiple methods to reduce misinterpretation.
4. Adapt my expression of my personality to the people I am interviewing
5. Adopt the role of supplicant- I am powerless without their input
6. Be transparent about my role- my research goals, short length of stay, and desire to return
7. Allow the interviewees to direct the interview
8. Be aware of the “public account” that reproduces accepted meanings
9. Consider professional dress for respect but not too much to intimidate
10. Build trust in relationships and build new relationships off that trust
11. Consider yourself responsible for the information (even anonymous) that you share
12. Remember people have nicknames, ask what they want to be called
13. Offer feedback but don't expect them to be interested in it

***E. Map of Garifuna history (Kirby and Martin)***

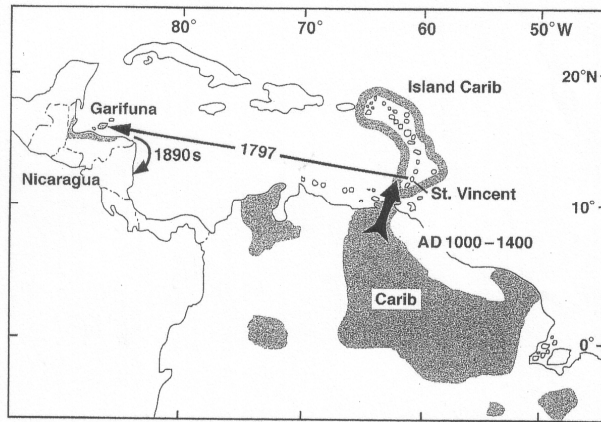


FIGURE 17 A visual reconstruction of the translocation of the Black Caribs from St. Vincent Island to the Bay Islands and finally to Honduras (Davidson, 1984).

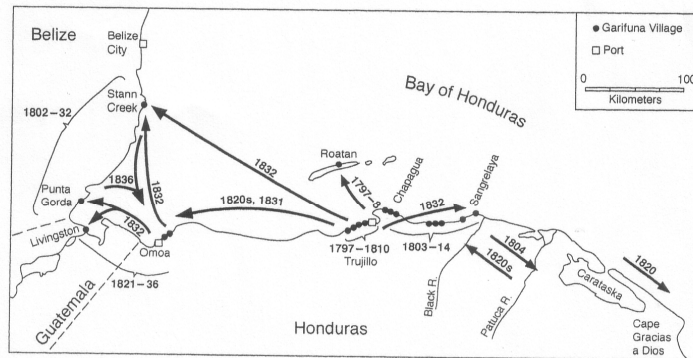


FIGURE 18 The pattern of the colonization of the coast of Central America followed by the Black Caribs (Garifuna) following their relocation in the Gulf of Trujillo in 1797 (Davidson, 1984).



## *F. Shared Vision of Livingston, Izabal*

### VISIÓN COMPARTIDA LIVINGSTON, IZABAL

Un municipio de Paz, donde las personas convivan pacíficamente y sin discriminación, con políticas municipales que impulsen el desarrollo integral, sin pobreza, además de que se respeten los derechos individuales, sociales, y culturales de sus habitantes, que promuevan la participación ciudadana pero con equidad de género (Departamento de la Mujer en la Municipalidad), un centro de capacitación y formación para mujeres, tomando en cuenta a las cuatro etnias, además de promover los estudios universitarios gestionando apoyos en becas, y promover, fortalecer e impulsar el turismo (ecoturismo y turismo comunitario), como medio de desarrollo (invitar a INGUAT para abrir oficina en Livingston e invertir en educación turística), impulsar la asociatividad de los jóvenes, y que se fomente la inversión de empresas procesadoras de peces (fauna de acompañamiento) para que se creen empleos bien remunerados, pero principalmente que las autoridades municipales trabajen con transparencia, que permitan la auditoría social.

En donde se promueva y se gestione la inversión en infraestructura educativa, para darle cobertura a toda la demanda de la niñez y juventud del municipio, que se impulse un instituto técnico para tener profesionales en diferentes áreas, para generar mano de obra calificada, e impulso a la micro y pequeña empresa, además de impulsar inversión en áreas deportivas, recreativas y culturales

Que ya no se sigan destruyendo los recursos naturales renovables y no renovables que el municipio posee (arena, piedra, y otros minerales, además de especies en peligro de extinción), que se desarrolle un proyecto que lleve agua potable a todo el pueblo, y área rural, que se gestione una planta de tratamiento de aguas negras y residuales donde los drenajes vayan a dar, una planta para reciclar desechos sólidos para el área urbana del municipio para que las playas estén limpias para los turistas y que se impulsen programas municipales de reforestación de cuencas y de la bahía, educación ambiental, conservación de la biodiversidad y de programas productivos pero con respeto a la naturaleza, (industrializar el CASAVE garífuna-Q'eqchi'), impulsar programas de concienciación ciudadana para apoyar lo que ya tenemos en el municipio.

Que se impulse y fortalezca la red de pescadores del Caribe Guatemalteco y lago de Izabal, además promover el manejo pesquero, su control y su vigilancia, así mismo motivar a las autoridades municipales para la búsqueda de mercados y fuentes de financiamiento para el sector pesca.

Que se promueva la inversión en infraestructura vial para el área rural, ampliación del muelle municipal para atender al turismo, un mercado terminal en río dulce, oficinas municipales en río dulce conectadas en red con la de Livingston, que se gestione ante el ministerio de salud un hospital o un centro de salud tipo A, equipado, con profesionales responsables, y con medicina para atender a la población más necesitada del municipio, y un centro de atención a los ancianos y una guardería infantil y la gestión de una extensión universitaria.

Un programa permanente de CONRED bajo la responsabilidad de la municipalidad con encargado de ejecutar un plan de contingencia ante cualquier emergencia

### ***G. 6 Main Themes of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Americas Social Forum, Guatemala 2008***

1. Scope and Challenges of the Changes in the Hemisphere: Post-Neoliberalism, Socialism(s), and Civilizational Changes
  2. Peoples in Resistance to Neoliberalism and Imperial Domination.
  3. Defending quality of life in the face of predatory capitalism
  4. Diversities and Equality: challenges for achieving them
  5. The ideological dispute: communication, culture, knowledges and education.
  6. Original, Indigenous and Afro-descendant Peoples and Nationalities: “Good living” and its keys for the future
- Cross-cutting Themes: Gender and Diversity

### ***H. Ideas for Better Cultural Exchange from Foreign Research***

1. Organize the Garifuna community now so that when the next researcher comes, requests can be made about what the Garifuna community wants the researcher to investigate and how they want to share and learn about it.
2. Look for ways to support a Garifuna individual to study Garifuna culture.
3. Seek reciprocity. What abilities can the researcher share with the community? Such as teach English classes, art, computer, etc.
4. Demand translation of texts in to Spanish and access to them, and ways to provide feedback to the researcher and the international community.

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