

Belizean Racial Project:

A PRELIMINARY EXPLORATION OF A BLACK RACIAL PROJECT

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Abstract

This preliminary Belizean racial project connects how Black identity was used as a political platform through a Pan-African framework to overthrow colonialism and neo-colonial aspects of what developed into a contemporary nationalist outlook. This project utilized a subjective outlook derived from historiographical materials, memoirs, periodicals and journal articles to show how Black collectivity as a tool for liberation (Pan-Africanism) was used as a racial project and later developed into a national project in Belize. According to Michael Omi and Howard Winant, a racial project is “simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial dynamics, and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular racial lines. Racial projects connect what race means in a particular discursive practice and the ways in which both structures and everyday experiences are racially organized, based upon that meaning.”¹ This thesis adapts their notion of a racial project to a Belizean context by substituting Omi and Winant’s theoretical limitations that position their understanding of racial dynamics through the lens and activity of intellectuals with a subjective approach that highlights the intersection between grassroots agency and the development of a politicized Black identity. This is done to demonstrate what race is doing given the context of racial dynamics as it relates to the developing Belizean political system.² This shows how Pan-Africanism in the historical process of Belizean national development and its application as a contemporary nationalist framework.

1. Michael Omi and Howard Winant. *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*, (New York: Routledge, 1994).

2. Michael Omi and Howard Winant describe a racial project to be a system of events that empowers racial uplift from positions of entrenched subordination. A racial project specifically aligns the group with the state for redistributive efforts by way of political efforts toward equality. This is done through groups finding mobility through political organization that is attached to racial meaning; which is the emotional attachment to race. That meaning then creates momentum toward a desired collective outcome.

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Methods

This is methodologically an interdisciplinary study. First it relies on secondary historical literature and narratives to understand how race has politically and historically developed in Belize. Secondly, it relies on primary archival documents in order to provide analysis of the Belizean subjective experience. Articles from the *Amandala* newspaper, ranging from 1969-1989, were used to show how its founder and the framework provided by Evan X Hyde, aided in shaping a Black-Belizean and national political consciousness. This study thirdly uses limited primary ethnographic interview data conducted Devon Lee in the summer of 2010 in Punta Gorda, Mango Creek, Baranco, and Belize City to show how Black, as a political identity, took root in Belize and transformed its national consciousness.

Most interview subjects were of African descent, between the ages of 25 and 52. Research subjects were found through methods of random selection, word of mouth and primarily snowball.¹ This age group was chosen specifically because I viewed them as they were the brokers of national social culture, the generation in charge of educating and socializing the majority of Belizeans 18 and under.

In the interview portion of my research, I used Exponential Non-Discriminative Snowball Sampling. In this type of sampling, one subject led me to the next one with characteristics.² Interviews were collected between May 27 and July 5, 2010.

The interview questions were fashioned to fit the respondents' social background (most questions were asked outside of the general survey): Older (above 40) interview subjects were

1. Leo A. Goodman, *Snowball Sampling*, "Annals of Mathematical Statistics," Volume 32, Number 1 (1961), 148-170.

2. "Experiment-Resources.com," <http://www.experiment-resources.com/snowball-sampling.html> (accessed March, 15, 2012).

asked about post-colonial transformative culture, teachers were asked about the educational experience, politicians and politicians were asked about political representation, and parents were asked about the educational experience and representative politics; along with questions that pertained to their personal socio-political experience in Belize. Most respondents were asked variations of all of the above. Tailoring questions to the respondents' experience allowed me to make the interview experience more personal and also be respectful of my respondents' time, as most of them gave me a portion of their workday.

This open-ended interview strategy was employed in order to investigate where Black people in Belize saw themselves within Belize's socio-political and economic structure, how they viewed their individual identity and how they affirmed it. Although an open-ended interview strategy was employed to make interviews more like conversations, interviews did adhere to a theme of questioning that attempted to derive an understanding of what it means to be Black in Belize. This was done in an effort to utilize the hermeneutic approach to ethnography that highlights subjective meaning and provides context for racial meaning according to Omi and Winant's framework.³

3. H. Russell Bernard, *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative*, (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2000), 440.

Map of Belize.⁴



4. History.com, “Map, History from Answers,” (accessed April 4, 2011).

Map of Central America.⁵



5. Maps.com, “Central America,” (accessed June 22, 2012).

Introduction

Belize is a small country in Central America bordered by Mexico, Guatemala and the Caribbean Sea. On September 10, 1981, Belize became a parliamentary democracy after receiving its independence from the United Kingdom, making it the second to last British Caribbean colony to achieve national independence after the twin islands of Antigua and Barbuda; and the last country to receive independence in the continental Central American region.

I came to this project in 2008 after I was accepted to KU's Department of African and African American Studies. My original intent was to study racism in the U.S. However, that soon changed as I became aware that race, as an ideological construct, held different meanings for many different people and how they constructed their self-identity. Given different geographic, cultural and political constructs and contexts, race is perceived and used differently. When it was time to begin my thesis, I knew I wanted to study Black identity and its relationship with national identity. After discussing this with family members, my brother Desean and cousin Philip suggested that I go to Belize because as they saw it: Black identity in Belize was under-studied and should be an interesting study. I took some time to consider their idea, did some background research on Belize and decided to take their advice. Belize was unique because it has historically been known as a Kriol nation as Kriols have been the dominant group within the borders of what was to become Belize for most of the region's history. According to C.H. Grant, by 1826 Belizean Kriols, (as the progeny of slaves and British settlers) was consolidated as a group positioned between the British colonizers and African slaves were the majority land owners prior to British emancipation process between 1833-1838.¹ What then makes Belize unique is how

1. C.H. Grant, *The Making of Belize*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 45.

Pan-Africanism as a liberatory framework is woven in the political fabric of the nation through its historical construction from a settlement to nation. This is especially the case with Kriols being the primary political power brokers throughout Belize's developing history.

When I flew to Belize in the summer of 2010, I went with only a basic knowledge of Belize's complex history. My goal was to find how local Black people saw themselves. By instruction by Professor Laura Herlihy, I began a journal to record my thoughts, conversations, and experiences. This journal became a significant factor in organizing and analyzing the trends of my interviews and observations on what it meant to be Black in Belize. When I returned to the United States, I wondered what would come next as I continued to do further research on Belizean history and Black identity in Latin America and the Caribbean.² I additionally began reading the writings of Evan X Hyde, the founder of the *Amandala* newspaper and the Belizean Black Power Movement. This gave me key foundational background as I attempted to formulate a thesis on Belize and Black identity.

I found Michael Omi and Howard Winant's *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s* an inclusive organizational framework as I delved deeper in my studies on racial identity as it relates to political participation, coercion and race identity. Their theory is essentially an approach to understanding how race is used and what it means in discursive practice. Omi and Winant then use the understanding of how race is used and what it means to further demonstrate the notion of race is "formed." As such, I have organized my thesis in three chapters that explore the use of Black identity in Belize in light of Omi and Winant's discussion of racial formation.

2. Evan X Hyde brought aspects of the Black Power Movement in the U.S. to Belize via a strong projection of Black pride through the organization United Black Association for Development and its newspaper organ *Amandala*. Through these platforms, Hyde criticizes neo-liberal and plutocratic government practices and policies that do not seem congruent with the needs of the people.

Chapter 1 explores the concept of Michael Omi and Howard Winant's notion of a "racial project," a key concept found in their study of *Racial Formation* that illustrates how race is used as a source of political capital to empower and change social policies. This chapter highlights the limitations of Omi and Winant's *racial project* concept and provides a more practical version of their concept for use in a Belizean context. This chapter also shows the historical trajectory of racial projects in Belize from settlement leading up to nationalization. This chapter emphasizes the appropriation of the Garveyite racial project to a Belizean national project.³ As such, this chapter introduces the application of a Pan-African lens to a racial project.

After coming back from Dartmouth in 1968, Evan X Hyde formed UBAD as an agent for Black social and political empowerment. Hyde was a Black Nationalist who saw Black Nationalism as "everybody coming together to do their own thing as one for the benefit of all."⁴ Chapter 2 takes the adapted racial project of chapter 1 and demonstrates how Evan X Hyde, UBAD and the *Amandala* utilized Black Power to transform pre and post-national consciousness through his appropriation of Black Power to a Belizean context. It focuses on how Evan Hyde's presence in Belize shaped a politicized Black sense of self, thereby creating a racial project geared toward Black Power as a form of national consciousness. This chapter explores Hyde's presence in Belize and the re-formation of a Pan-African racial project through UBAD; which later transformed into a beacon of political consciousness for all Belizeans through the *Amandala*.

Chapter 3 explores the continuing legacy of Evan X, and the resulting political awareness

3. Michael Omi and Howard Winant describe a racial project to be a system of events that empowers racial uplift from positions of entrenched subordination. A racial project specifically aligns the group with the state for redistributive efforts by way of political efforts toward equality. This is done through groups finding mobility through political organization that is attached to what Omi and Winant call racial meaning; which is the emotional attachment to race and the organizing medium behind Pan-Africanism. That meaning then creates momentum toward a desired collective outcome.

4. Evan X Hyde, *X Communication*, (Belize City: Angulus Press, 2001), 181.

brought by the *Amandala*. Chapter 3 explores how Hyde's presence in Belize both influences Black pride and representative politics. It investigates the influence of Evan X Hyde through the *Amandala* newspaper; and the support of third party politician Wil Maheia to discuss the legacy of the *Amandala*. Finally, chapter 3 outlines the contemporary influence and use of Pan-Africanism in Belizean politics and society as it relates to national consciousness.

The concluding chapter summarizes chapters one through three as well as provides insight into the differences of individual adoptions of a racial project between chapters. This summary demonstrates the limitations of the concept of a racial project as well as highlights the limitations of this thesis' adaptation of Omi and Winant's racial project. The conclusion also discusses what can be taken from this thesis in adding to the discourse on Africana studies, and also detail suggestions for future research.

Chapter 1: A Belizean Adaptation of Racial Projects

The way in which Black identity shapes a political struggle is a racial project. Michael Omi and Howard Winant argue, in *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s* that, “race is shaped and has been shaped by U.S. politics.”¹ Their theory of *racial formation* is defined as: “the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed.”² They position this as a two-step process that involves historically situated racial projects and an evolution of hegemony. For them race is not a physical or biological reality, but created under conditions of power whereby historically one group dominates others politically, economically and socially. A racial project is then how race is used under conditions of power brokerage, whereby hegemony operates the allocation and compliance with the distribution of power. Through this theoretical framework, race forms through groups’ use of race as a political platform, and the use of power for groups to be dominant and or subordinate other groups. Given that this thesis analyzes events that took place after the formation of races, through slavery and colonization, was regionally appropriated into the cultural lexicon, only the racial project aspect of racial formation will be focused on. Considering that an exploration of hegemony is outside of the scope of this study, an elaborate exploration will not take place.

Omi and Winant describe a racial project as “simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial dynamics, and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular racial lines.”³ Omi and Winant situate their discussion of a racial

1. Michael Omi and Howard Winant. *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*. (New York: Routledge, 1994), 138.

2. Omi and Winant, 55.

3. *Ibid.*, 59.

project within the theoretical concept of *Racial Formation* using the term hegemony. The theory of hegemony is borrowed from the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci used the theory to explain why working class Italians gave their consent to the ruling class despite having conflicting interests. To the working classes, the ideas of the ruling class appeared to be common sense whereby ruling ideas were internalized through ideological formation.⁴ For Omi and Winant, hegemony is “a popular system of ideas and practices—through education, the media, religion, folk wisdom, et...”⁵ Omi and Winant relate this back to race by saying “Race becomes common sense—a way of comprehending, explaining and acting in the world. A vast web of racial projects mediates between the discursive or representational means in which race is identified and signified on the one hand, and the institutional and organizational forms in which it is routinized and standardized on the other.”⁶

Notions about race and racist practices are woven into the social tapestry of the American social order according to Omi and Winant. These ideas validate racialized, if not racist, practices in many institutional settings. The framework established by a racial project then shows the relationship between race and policy. To this regard, hegemony is represented as public policy and the conflict between political policy and racial projects. This conflict is shown through discourse...the battlefield of ideas. For Omi and Winant, racial projects “include large-scale public action, state activities, and interpretations of racial conditions in artistic, journalistic, or academic for a, as well as the, seemingly infinite number of racial judgments and practices we carry out at the level of individual experience.”⁷ Projects are movements that “come into being as the result of political projects, political interventions led by intellectuals. These projects seek

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid., 67.

6. Ibid., 60.

7 Ibid., 60-61.

to transform (or rearticulate) the dominant racial ideology.”⁸ Omi and Winant explain that: “politicians attempt to negotiate racial disparities, how political appropriations challenge and reinvent systemic oppression and how subjectivities stimulate racial movements.”⁹ Intellectual led discourse is then used to transform racial and social order through re-shaping racial ideology through cultural empowerment, stimulating activism, urging constituencies to utilize the vote on behalf of the group, etc...

Omi and Winant see racial movements as racial projects represented in the conflicting relationships between race and state. *Racial Formation in the United States from the 1960s to the 1990s* then represents the context of racial projects as the conflict between race and state. “The racial upsurges of the 1950s and 1960s were among the most tempestuous events in postwar American history. The struggles for voting rights, the sit-ins and boycotts to desegregate public facilities, the ghetto rebellions of the mid-1960s, and the political mobilizations of Latinos, Indians, and Asian Americans, dramatically transformed the political and cultural landscape of the U.S.”¹⁰ In the process of racial formation, racial projects are the use of the a group conscious through similar situatedness in the context of colonization, slavery, descendants thereof, marginalization, stigmatization, political and economic oppression, etc...to use what has formed as a social force to work on behalf of the wellbeing for marginalized, stigmatized and subordinated.

One thing to note is that social practices (racism, economic oppression, white supremacy) are direct influences of and not divorced from a racial project. Omi and Winant’s *racial project* relates to what race does and how that creates the notion of what race is, therefore intertwining the political and the social. Omi and Winant’s scope between the 1960s and the

8. Ibid., 86.

9. Ibid., 113-136.

10. Omi and Winant, 95.

1990s shows the analysis of how views toward Blacks as subordinate (enforced physically and ideologically) helped to shape the political climate and social fabric of the United States during that time period. Blacks' efforts to circumvent political and physical domination in the given time period that Omi and Winant present offers a series of racial projects that illustrate the nuances of what race was doing given the political and social constraints of the time period.¹¹ Through their discourse based racial projects, they show the interrelatedness between conflict, compromise, and political concessions within the continuum of race relations as groups and institutions vie for equilibrium.

“Racial movements come into being as the result of political projects, political interventions led by intellectuals. These projects seek to transform (or rearticulate) the dominant racial ideology....The result of this ideological challenge is a disparity, a conflict, between the pre-existing racial order organized and enforced by the state, and an oppositional ideology whose subjects are the real and potential adherents of a racially defined movement. When this conflict reaches a certain level of intensity, a phase of crisis is initiated.”¹² Racial projects show how marginalized groups seek to obtain empowerment while organizations and institutions implicitly and/or explicitly seek to maintain or subvert the power structure of social dominance. Within this sequence of events, Omi and Winant describe this as a conflict attempting to reach equilibrium.¹³ Likening the role that public policy plays in race relations to a balanced chemical reaction sets an understanding of a continuum where libratory agency stands toe to toe with coercive policy to create a stasis where both mutually exist; however, stasis never achieving that mutually beneficial “happy place.”

11. Blackness is an ascription used to denote the subjectivity of being Black. As such, it can be used interchangeably with Black identity, however it mainly refers to a state of being whereas Black political identity tends to denote the use of Blackness.

12. Omi and Winant, 86.

13. Omi and Winant, 85.

A basic understanding of a racial project is simply the narrative of the events that take place in the faceoff between public policy and race. Like vinegar and baking soda, the events rise, expand, get heated, cool and continue to react even when no bubbles and reacting products seem to exist as new forms take existence and continue to react. Similar to reactants creating products, group agency and systemic coercion work to tilt equilibrium. The force behind the effort to establish equilibrium is what Omi and Winant consider meaning. Meaning in context of a racial project is simply why race does, or the motivating factor that causes racial groups to collectively act using race as a political platform. Omi and Winant construct the racial project under the limitations of time, space, discourse and institutions. Meaning and the thereby racialization of social structures and forces are then based on the properties that consequently dictate actions and reactions to those social structures.¹⁴ There in-lies the story of what race does, a racial project.

This thesis focuses strictly on the racial project aspect of racial formation. The proper analysis of hegemony would require an evaluation of media, legal and judicial policy, social action and ideation, political discourse, public and socio-cultural practices; along with the consciousness of the marginalized and mainstreamed that would make for a project in itself. In an effort to show how Omi and Winant's concept of a racial project can be adapted into a Belizean context, this chapter also demonstrates degrees of limitations that are not applicable to a Belizean context. As such, this chapter adapts Omi and Winant's idea of a racial project to a Belizean context in an effort to illustrate historic Black racial projects used throughout Belize's history.

The use of a limited racial project adapted to a Belizean context that engages pragmatic physical and ideological agency enables the analysis of how a racial project influences the state

14. Ibid., 59.

through group agency in a more practical sense than what can be offered by Omi and Winant's original inception. Rather than rely heavily on political discourse and public policy, experiential data obtained from the connection between secondary historical sources and primary newspaper and interview sources were utilized as the controlling factor of a project. Limiting my discussion to an interpretation of public policy and racial discourse by politicians would inhibit an understanding of what race does by omitting an analysis of the agency of powerbrokers, ad-hoc and official organizations, and movement from the grass-roots: perspectives that provide a subjective experience, key to the hermeneutic approach.

The framework employed by a racial project in this thesis diverges from Omi and Winant by substituting their controlling factor of political discourse by intellectuals and its intersection with public policy with historical details of social movements from the perspective of intellectuals and historians as they specifically relate to the use of race as a political platform in chapters 1 and 2. That is then synthesized with interview data in chapter 3. This pragmatic adaptation of Omi and Winant's *racial project* also makes an analysis of what race is doing and why more practical than what can be offered by Omi and Winant's original inception by simply focusing on the intersection between the Black subjective and historical narratives as it relates to race and politics. It helps to guide an understanding of what is happening on both the ground and its relationship with what is going on at the institutional level. In a conversation about Belizean politics on June 20th 2012, Wil Maheia said: "we're pretty rootsy out here." Belizean political understandings revolve around what goes on at the ground level. As a result, a discussion of a racial project in this body of research uses a more simplistic scope and approach in an effort to

encapsulate the use of race in a way that works for Belize better than what was originally prescribed by Omi and Winant's *Racial Formation*.¹⁵

Kurt B. Young, in *The Case for a Belizean Pan-Africanism* notes Pan-Africanism to be the: "Fusing of affirmations of African identity with libratory efforts at the level of the masses. It functions simultaneously in the various centers of the African world in ways that are not limited to states or only formal unity politics among Black people in those sates."¹⁶ As Pan-Africanism applies to a racial project in Belize, Black Belizeans had political capital that allowed Pan-Africanism to work in concert with libratory efforts against colonial exploitation and the articulation of nationalism. The application of Pan-Africanism is then the use of race as a libratory political platform and framework. Pan-Africanism, as an ideological topic of racial discourse calls for the transnational dismantling of racial subordination and the creation of democracies that recognize subordinate racial identities.¹⁷ Juliet Hooker notes that democracies work in a way that subjugate the marginalized through the body thereby creating a platform of collective agency through racial solidarity; thereby positioning solidarity to be used for both survival and for the purposes of upward mobility.¹⁸

A Black Belizean racial project is important for Belize in order to highlight the momentum carried from one political event where Black identity is used as a political platform and organizing factor. Wolfgang Gabbert in *In the Shadow of the Empire: Afro-Caribbean Groups in Nicaragua and Belize* notes the long existence of African groups in Belize after

15. The simplistic scope of this thesis is a racial project based on a Pan-African framework as defined by Kurt Young in the next chapter. The approach that is utilized is an analysis of what race does and how (grass-roots) power-brokers/intellectuals dictate that.

16. Kurt B. Young, "The Case for a Belizean Pan-Africanism," *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 9, March (2009): 4.

17. Pan-Africanism by this definition will be shown to set the nationalist framework in chapters 2 and 3 (primarily).

18. Juliet Hooker, *Race and the Politics of Solidarity*, (New York: Routledge Press. 2010), 38.

emancipation.¹⁹ Assad Shoeman also follows up on this point giving reference to examples of African survivals and groupings, along with the “creolization” of African and European elements in Belizean culture.²⁰ O. Nigel Bolland also writes about African culture in Belize prior to and after emancipation in *Colonialism and Resistance in Belize: Essays in Historical Sociology* as it relates to an organizing factor in subversion efforts throughout the chapters of that particular book.²¹ The African presence in Belize exhibits an organizing platform for liberation. It essentially represents groups giving up their ethnic identity to be represented by a larger group that is similarly situated under the ascription of slaves, Blacks, ect...in an effort to create and maintain their own ideal of freedom through the parameters of the ascriptive and social forces that brought them together: i.e. colonialism and slavery.

Maroon societies are an example of the use of Pan-Africanism as libratory agency as African groups unite to obtain freedom and forge an existence in spite of their uprootedness and ethnic differences. The libratory agency of Pan-Africanism is also exhibited in the Garvey movement as different groups across ethnicities and class united against common oppression. Pan-Africanism can then be seen as a tool for social justice that stood against slavery and the colonial system alike. To that regard and given the context of slavery and colonialism, racial projects operating under the framework of Pan-Africanism represent Omi and Winant’s *racial formation* as African ethnicities/groups combined to form race. Considering that this formation was not directed primarily through discourse, but through agency, this body of research also demonstrates the pragmatism of a racial project through grass-roots efforts: essential to a Pan-African outlook. The application of a Pan-African framework to Black Belizean racial project(s)

19. Wolfgang Gabbert, *In the Shadow of the Empire-The Emergence of Afro-Kriol Societies in Belize and Nicaragua*. (Indianapolis: Indiana Press. 2007), 40.

20. Assad Sohoman, *13 Chapters of Belize*, (Belize: The Angelus Press Limited. 2003), 127-31.

21. O. Nigel Boland, *Colonialism and Resistance in Belize: Essays in Historical Sociology*. (Belize: Cubola Books. 2003).

then utilizes instances of an African/Black interaction with and control of the governing body of what was to become Belize in an analysis of what race was doing to circumvent oppression.

Omi and Winant's *Racial Formation in the United States From the 1960s to the 1990s* presents a framework for evaluating race agency and the periodic circumstance that it took place in. Their two-fold theory on racial formation considers hegemony and the use of race as a political platform (a racial project) that shapes and is shaped by hegemony. Omi and Winant show what race is doing and how it is interacting with the U.S. political and legislative system between the civil rights and "post-civil rights" eras. They chose an examination that lies between the 1960s and 1990s in order to show how the liberatory agency of the Civil Rights Movement shaped race politics and the legacy of that movement in terms of how it was represented in public policy and political discourse as a (or concerted) racial project(s). Using the same type of periodization, this thesis will begin to historicize Belize as a concerted Pan-African racial project given its own eras. This will later be detailed by events where the presence and/or agency of Blacks influenced socio-political realities of what was to become and is Belize. The summation of this chapter will briefly detail how race shaped the socio-political development from settlement to nationhood, then segue onto later racial projects. These projects will be represented as the legacy of Belizean Garveyite Pan-Africanism, which was an appropriation of Marcus Garvey's *African Redemption Movement*. Pan-Africanism will then be used as a theme to segue onto the next chapter which details the racial project created through the presence of Evan X Hyde, ending with the final chapter which details the legacy of Evan X and the newspaper *Amandala*—which is Xhosa for Power! Belize makes a unique case in terms of a nation being constructed by a Pan-African framework and concerted racial projects; because of the impact that Black identity had on the region from settlement to nationhood. This impact created a

quintessentially Pan-African nation surrounded by Latin America.²² Mauricio Obando in *Afro-descendants in Costa Rica and Nicaragua* shows how Black identity is written out of the narratives of national identity in Latin America in his essay that asks the simple question: “what happened to the descendants of slaves”.²³ Obando’s essay demonstrates process of writing slavery and consequently Blackness out of national histories of Latin American nations, and how that coincides with Blacks being marginalized and thereby not identifying with their Black identity. Under the modus of “One Nation, One God, One Religion,” Pan-Africanism and Black identity alike are usually written out of the cultural lexicon of continental Central America. As such, Pan-Africanism is inherently an important concept to equip a Belizean racial project with. Pan-African Belize is also a unique concept given how Black identity is marginalized and omitted from existence in the region.

Omi and Winant discuss Pan-Africanism in terms of Black Nationalism/internal colonialism where there is almost no interaction with governing bodies and therefore cannot serve as racial project through its inability to generate political discourse.²⁴ They see its interaction with the political system as a mutually exclusive cultural position. In Omi and Winant’s view Black Nationalism (through Garveyism and Black Power) was a separatist response to the lack of representative politics within an American democracy.²⁵ Omi and Winant argue that: “The power of the Pan-Africanist perspective remains its ability to link the specific

22. Kriols in particular have historically been the power-brokers responsible for the development of the Belizean nation. However, considering the operation of the Pan-African framework central to this study, that group’s effort is representative of a larger and encompassing effort. Maroon societies challenging the power-structure of slavery by uprooting crops along with human capital, the presence of the Garifuna who fought British domination for over a century, and the impact of a Black transnational experience are seemingly separate instances that helped to empower Kriol. Maroon societies along with other Black groups also found themselves among the Kriol by national independence.

23 Mauricio Melendez Obando. *Afro-Descendants in Costa Rica and Nicaragua*. In *Blacks and Blackness in Central America: Between Race and Place*. Edited by Lowell Gudmundson and Justin Wolfe. (Durham: Duke University Press. 2010), 334.

24. *Ibid.*, 37.

25. *Ibid.*, 36.

forms of oppression which Blacks face in various societies with the colonialist exploitation and underdevelopment of Africa. The impact of this theoretical current had in the U.S. stemmed from its argument that Black identity conferred membership in a single worldwide Black “nation”—the African diaspora itself.”²⁶ Social movements organized through the framework of Pan-Africanism in Belize had a greater ability to effect the national political climate than in the U.S. as Pan-Africanism through Garvey was further divorced from a white supremacist framework than what was “common sense” for Blacks in the U.S.

Black groups in regions that traditionally have Black powerbrokers, or where Black identity is more closely aligned with national identity than in the U.S. have had the opportunity to enjoy more meaningful provisions of Pan-Africanism than available in the U.S. Although this thesis focuses primarily on the Pan-Africanism as the result of Garveyism, Pan-Africanism comes before Garvey and Black Nationalism as a galvanizing political platform that has the ability to unite Blacks of different groups and socio-political positions. Omi and Winant disregard Pan-Africanism despite its powerful use to unite Blacks globally, initiate nationalization projects, challenge systemic oppression, and the international relationships that were fostered based on a connection to Africa. Their frame of reference also does not do Pan-Africanism justice, as they only understand it only by name and use by intellectuals, and not by theory or historical context.²⁷

26. Ibid., 39.

27. Omi and Winant’s view that Pan-Africanism is more symbolic than anything unfortunately undermines the political role of Pan-Africanism being globally utilized in colonies that had majority populations that consisted of people of color. Omi and Winant therefore discount the global impact of Pan-Africanism and its use by Kwame Nkrumah in obtaining Ghana’s independence along with promoting Pan-Africanism as a liberating tool to thwart colonialism, Franz Fanon’s global impact on the creation and maintenance of social democracies and Steve Biko’s use of Black Consciousness to dissemble the Apartheid. Pan-Africanism in Ghana was used as an anti-colonial racial project to liberate and unite Africa, similar to South Africa’s Black Consciousness being deployed as a tool to politicize culture to unite ethnic groups against apartheid oppression. Nationalism and Black Consciousness descending from a Pan-African. framework represent events that took on the same role in given contexts. However, Omi and Winant discount the impact Pan-Africanism in context to Black racial projects.

Omi and Winant's interpretation of Pan-Africanism as having a limited foothold in the U.S. and being fractured through leadership conflicts underscores the value of Pan-Africanism as it manifested itself in social and political institutions.²⁸ By framing Pan-Africanism with Black nationalism, and DuBoisian ideology, Booker T. Washington and Marcus Garvey's pragmatism and socio-political contributions, along how they are controlling factors in a number of racial projects, is underscored by Omi and Winant. Their analysis of a racial project in many respects undercut the value of grass-root organization and the subsequent social awareness that it spawns from: which ironically leads to the policy and political discourse that is the root of their analysis. Their level of analysis is similar to an egg giving birth to a chicken, discourse is usually the result of action and/or unrest, almost never initiating the further.

As Pan-Africanism and solidarity relate to a racial project, it is important to recognize what each racial project is doing as it relates to specific events in Belizean history. From slave revolts to maroon societies, to Garveyism, Black Power, workers riots, and nationalization- racial projects were active in shaping social and political tapestries. A Black presence was a large contributing factor to the formation of the settlement that was to become Belize. Its beginnings as a lookout for Buccaneers to raid Spanish ships as a tool weaken the Spanish influence in the Caribbean inevitably ended by 1670 through the Goldophin Treaty, which gave British sovereignty over settled lands in the Caribbean, therefore making slavery a fortuitous alternative.²⁹ This treaty, inevitably initiated the racial formation of the settlement. Later, the 1763 Treaty of Paris gave British settlers insurance that they could cut logwood without Spanish interference.³⁰ The cutting of logwood and later mahogany created the need for slaves, and the

28. Omi and Winant, 39.

29. Wolfgang Gabbert, *In the Shadow of the Empire-The Emergence of Afro-Kriol Societies in Belize and Nicaragua*. (Indianapolis: Indiana Press. 2007), 40.

30. Assad Shoeman, *13 Chapters of Belize*, (Belize: The Angelus Press Limited. 2003), 28.

power dynamic necessary for racial formation. Wood-cutting became more profitable than looting due to the increased demand for logwood, then between 1638 and 1724 mahogany became the primary occupation of the settlers who would later become colonists.^{31, 32} In other words, through international treaties, the settlement needed slaves in order to exist, and those treaties acted as insurance for the settlement to develop. This insurance lasted until 1779 when a number of British settlers, slaves and Kriols were driven out of St. George's Caye by the Spanish.^{33,34} However, St. George's Caye was recaptured by the British and their slaves, along with free Blacks in 1798.³⁵

Black Belizean racial projects were initiated as a result of the process to garner provisions through political agency and the responses of the governing body. In 1798, the slaves that fought on the side of their British masters against the Spanish were granted manumission; thereby creating a group of Blacks whose successors would be eligible to partake in the 1832 voting and civil rights.³⁶ This also goes along with the progeny of slaves and masters being granted manumission. The narrative of liberation found within St. George's Caye and equal rights for propertied Kriols created a society of free Blacks (outside of the Maroon societies). The longstanding legacy of the Battle of St. George's Caye is significant to Belizeans for two reasons: it prevented Spanish rule over the territory, along with creating a demographic situation that allowed Kriols to be the arbiters of nationality (that battle is still celebrated as a national holiday).

31. Barnett et. al., *A History of Belize: A Nation in the Making*. (Belize City: Sunshine Books. 1984), 15.

32. According to the J. Burdon, *Archives*, Vol. I, p. 5, the British demand for logwood expanded with the textile industry. Logwood sold for 100 pounds per ton in 1655.

33. According to Assad Shoeman, an eyewitness account counted 100 whites, 200-250 slaves and 40 mixed/Kriols. (Shoeman, *Thirteen Chapters of a History of Belize*, 28).

34. Barnett et. al., *A History of Belize: A Nation in the Making*, 15.

35. Shoeman, 31.

36. Equal rights were the result of a joint effort from "Mulatto" West Indian British subjects throughout the Caribbean, including Belizeans.

In both a contemporary and historic sense, the period between 1798 and 1832 represents a racial project geared toward Black amalgamation through collective agency. 1832 redefined freedom with the promise of an equal vote and rights with whites.³⁷ The emancipation process beginning in 1833 was a response to slave revolts, abolitionist appeals, and the growing efforts to end the institution by religious and philosophical leaders of Britain in a growing sentiment of slavery being an immoral institution. The advent that free Blacks took advantage of that sentiment to garner rights before emancipation further demonstrates the political influence Blacks had on the developing colony. The efforts of former slaves and Kriols garnered rights along with emancipation before the settlement became the official British colony of British Honduras in 1862.³⁸ Under the framework of Pan-Africanism, this event serves as a racial project that worked to empower Blacks to take a stand and gain political provisions through the political and social challenge of slavery and racial oppression. The preceding events of maroon societies defying colonial rule and propertied Kriols obtaining political equality with their white counterparts defined liberation through the access of provisions never previously acquired. They redefined freedom and liberation in ways that also related to race. To that effect, those events represent a concerted racial project or rather a Pan-African legacy. The existence of maroon societies in Belize along with Kriols obtaining equal rights are examples where race was directly involved in shaping political outcomes and events that were organized under the framework of Pan-Africanism.

Within this sequence of events Kriols and their concerted efforts to achieve equality and citizenship placed a racial value on equality. In a Belizean context, the driving force behind these efforts was then what Omi and Winant call racial meaning. “Racial projects connect what race

37 Shoeman, 136.

38. C.H. Grant, *The Making of Modern Belize*, (New York. Cambridge University Press. 1976), 33.

means in a particular discursive practice and the ways in which both social structures and everyday experiences are racially organized, based upon that meaning.”³⁹ Thus, the discursive practice between race and state in this situation shows that “meaning” is a process by which value is placed on racial mobility. In the case that social forces impede mobility, meaning shapes a force to be used to circumvent that impediment.⁴⁰ Simply, meaning is the use of race as a political platform.

Pan-Africanism in Belize is an important aspect of study, especially considering the impact of Marcus Garvey through his *African Redemption* movement. Garvey first visited Belize in 1920; stimulating the already present racial unrest in a way to catapult a collective racial project.⁴¹ On July 22, 1919, returning WWII veterans serving the British Empire disembarked off the shore of Belize City from the British ship *Veronj* on July 8th to find themselves treated like second class citizens. They were unable to partake in the gainful employment promised to them and barred from joining the all-white golf club; initiated a large scale riot stimulated by the already prevalent unrest.⁴² This civil unrest caused by white racism was a means for solidarity among Blacks and created a galvanizing historic event for the contemporary development and reification of Black as a politicized identity through the framework of Pan-African Garveyism. The collective forces of Garveyism undermined the division of Black groups. The circulation of Marcus Garvey’s *Negro World* prior to the riot (circa fall 1918), was also an ideologically organizing factor, as the publication aroused anti-

39. Omi and Winant, 56.

40. In this case, social events are used as text to illustrate discursive practices.

41. Peter Ashdown. *Garveyism in Belize*, (Belize City: Society for the Preservation of Education and Research.1990), 17.

42. Peter Ashdown. *Race Riot, Class Warfare and ‘Coup d’etat: The Ex-Serviceman’s Riot of July 1919*, (Belize City: *Amandala Newspaper*, April 14, 1989).

white and anti-colonial sentiment as it called for self-determination and racial pride as a means to end white oppression.⁴³

Samuel Haynes once said: “Garvey sold the Negro to himself.”⁴⁴ Samuel Haynes was the founder of UNIA British Honduras and also the writer of the Belizean national anthem. The thought evoked in the previous statement by Haynes shows the mission of Garveyism: to empower Blacks to withstand social and political domination and be proprietors of their own diligence. “The white man taught that the best of the world was intended for him, and we now teach that all the beauties of creation are the Black man’s, and he is heir to all that God has given man.”⁴⁵ Marcus Garvey evokes psychological empowerment along with a sense of ownership, similar to the proprietorship that Haynes spoke of. The framework that Garvey set was that of self-empowerment and proprietorship, as a countervail, against the political and economic oppression of white supremacy. Psychologically empowered Blacks then saw discrimination in the labor market as an aberration. Garveyism essentially provided the springboard for the labor movement, which led to the anti-colonial/nationalization movement in Belize and later served as a framework for post-colonial projects.

The Belizean branch of Garvey’s Harlem based Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) was chartered in Belize City in March 1920 and served as a catalyst for formalized Black political organization in Belize.⁴⁶ The ban of UNIA’s publication *Negro World* by Governor Eyre Hutson in January 1919 fueled racial discontent, however, did not decrease readership as it was smuggled in through Mexico and Guatemala from the U.S.⁴⁷ Garvey’s visit

43. Peter Ashdown. “Garveyism in Belize.” *Society for the Preservation of Education and Research*. (Belize. 1990). 17.

44 Tony Martin, *Race First: The Ideological and Organizational Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1976), 89.

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid.

was then in response to the success and successful organization of the British Honduras UNIA. In an April 29, 1920 speech to the Philadelphia Academy of Music, Garvey held British Honduras UNIA to high esteem by saying: “Those of you who have been reading the *Negro World* will remember that about six months ago the government of British Honduras, through its legislature, voted to suppress the *Negro World* to prevent it from entering into British Honduras, where it had a circulation of 500 copies weekly. We had not yet organized a branch of the U.N.I.A., but the moment that the government closed down the *Negro World* the Negro people in British Honduras - In the city of Belize - organized a branch of UNIA.”⁴⁸

Tony Martin makes reference to the Belizean columnist of the *Negro World*, Samuel Haynes, in his conclusion that Garvey demonstrated that Black people could be organized, and were eager to support sincere Black leadership.⁴⁹ Garveyism was the springboard for labor organization through its ability to centralize anti-oppression and self-determination efforts. Unrest, along with formal organization that stood against white and colonial oppression created a basis for labor union organization that then led toward nationalization efforts. Succeeding UNIA, laborer unions served to meet the needs of the Belizean unemployed and underemployed through striking and collective bargaining. This then served as a the nascent stage for organizing on behalf of nationalization. It can be reasonably deduced that the presence of UNIA created an organizing background and platform that led to the labor movement of the 30s and 40s. Garveyism called for Blacks to take a hold of their social, political, and cultural position. From the cartoons calling Blacks to vote and make a stand to not be denied, to poems and publications advocating for self-determination, Garveyism empowered Blacks to organize for the benefit of

48. Young, 2.

49. Martin, 58.

themselves as a group.⁵⁰ The result, in Belize, was the organization of a Black racial project that worked under the framework of Garveyism and in the form of labor unionization, whose legacy represented itself in a labor and later nationalization movement.

Labourers and Unemployed Association (LUA), established in 1934, helped to create the first trade union the British Honduras Workers and Tradesmen Union in 1939.⁵¹ The General Workers Union (GWU) followed this movement of unionization in the 1940s, which ultimately brought together thousands of working people from different parts of the country.⁵² In 1947, the GWU won a 60% wage increase for sawmill workers in Belize City after a two-week strike.⁵³ This success then showed the merit of collective organizing, thereby substantiating the practicality of Garveyism as a political framework. UNIA's organizing constituents used the momentum of Garveyism to catapult Belizean labor organization. A series of demonstrations, strikes and protests helped to stimulate the movement towards nationalization under the guise of the Pan-Africanist framework provided by Garveyism.⁵⁴ The level of activity established by Garveyites created a sort of anti-establishment fervor that worked for the marginalized (not limiting itself to Black people).

Trade unions were illegal in Belize until 1941.⁵⁵ In 1941, Antonio Soberanis created the British Honduras Workers Trade Union (BHWTU) because "trade unionism is...the only medium by which the working class can get a square deal."⁵⁶ In 1941, there were still master-servant ordinances that made it illegal for an employee to breach contract.⁵⁷ This, along with

50. Tony Martin, 217-219.

51. O. Nigel Boland. *Colonialism and Resistance in Belize: Essays in Historical Sociology*, (Belize: Cubola Books. 2003), 207.

52. Ibid.

53. Shoeman, 162-82.

54. Ibid.

55. Boland, 169.

56. Shoeman, 174.

57. Ibid.

poor wages created living conditions that were similar to the working conditions of the 19th century where slaves had extremely limited rights.⁵⁸ One of the conditions that caused the riot on July 22, 1919 was that whites almost solely occupied administrative and ministerial positions.⁵⁹ Direct action by Soberanis and others then worked to amend that sense of economic oppression by empowering the working class generally and Blacks specifically. In 1943, the Employers and Workers ordinance lifted most of the legal penalties that stood in the way of unionization, especially “breach of contract” laws which made it illegal to strike.⁶⁰ This was due in most part by concerted by a mostly Kriol demographic. By 1947, the General Workers Union had drawn so much support that in 1947, it was able to win all elected seats in Stann Creek, thereby setting a precedent as the first political organization in Belize.⁶¹ The mobilization of UNIA created the organizational background for the formation of the GWU and later the People’s United Party (PUP) in the 1950s.⁶²

The momentum of the Garveyite that transitioned into the labor, then nationalization movements organized Black identity into racial projects that used Black identity as a political platform to challenge white and colonial oppression. More importantly, that countervail to white supremacy became definitive to Black liberation. Liberation as a framework further set the direction for nationalization in a multi-racial sense. Although arbitrated by Blacks for Blacks, it was something that was more national than a Black thing. The premier of Belize in 1950 and first Prime Minister in 1981 George Price was a proponent of national unity. On January 6th, 1950 he said:

58. Ibid., 168.

59. Peter Ashdown. *Race Riot, Class Warfare and ‘Coup d’etat: The Ex-Serviceman’s Riot of July 1919.* (Belize City. *Amandala Newspaper.* April 14, 1989).

60. Shoeman, *Thirteen Chapters of a History of Belize*, 174.

61. Ibid., 175.

62. Bolland, 189.

“National unity! That is the keynote of this phase of our history. This unity is welding our people into a united, solid front. From the districts come assurances of support in our fight against devaluation... We must continue this movement towards national unity. We must unite and organize ourselves in strong labour unions, strong credit unions, cooperatives, to present a solid front against the possible invasion of any exploiting capital.”⁶³

In the same vein, Soberanis coined the phrase: “British Honduras for British Honduraneans... We interpret government as only an executive for the people.”⁶⁴ The result of Garveyite organization created a basis for continuity under the Pan-African framework of liberation. This proprietorship of liberation extended beyond racial codification as its appropriation found viability in a political atmosphere. The racial project during the nationalization process (extending from Garveyite and Labor organization) transformed itself in a way to be appropriated by the PUP as a national project. In a longitudinal sense, Garveyism then served as a canon for nationalization.

In *The Making of Modern Belize*, C. H. Grant notes the appropriation of a racial project into a labor and political by way of unrest transforming itself into a political mechanism by saying: “The leaders of several Black middle class groups took advantage of the situation to exert pressure upon the colonial system not only in their own interests but also on behalf of the disadvantaged and oppressed. This marked a new phase of political evolution in the region in that it created a dichotomy by which economic power remained in the hands of a white managerial class and politics was opened to a variety of black elements.”⁶⁵ The oppositional force that Grant denotes was not something that was just carried by the middle class, but also “a variety of Black elements,” which demonstrates the inclusion efforts of the Garvey movement and its transition into a labor movement. These movements used race as an organizational

63. Shoeman, 184.

64. Ibid., 169.

65. Grant, *The Making of Modern Belize*, 67.

platform that collectively advantaged the disadvantaged against the white managerial and elite classes. In this sense, the Black Belizean racial project, at its most basic understanding, is race serving the political need to bridge the gap between perceived needs and racial subjugation. Omi and Winant construct a racial project as a intellectual tool forged from discourse in an effort to redistribute resources on behalf of the oppressed. In a world where talk is cheap, I argue that a racial project should be interpreted through the experience that generates intellectual discourse, rather than being viewed through the discourse of intellectuals. As words are delivered by powerbrokers, supporters breathe life into those words through action. While unrest happens on the streets, the relationship between discourse and agency becomes one and the same. For Belize, then, their Black racial project(s) happened on the ground being organized by “rootsy” people. The following chapter discusses this further by showing how the grass-roots agency of Black youth associated with Evan X Hyde created a racial project of empowerment.

The next chapter focuses on the nascent development of the United Black Association for Development and its transformation into an organization that aimed to change “oppressive condition under which Black people were living in the colony of British Honduras” through the cannon of Black Power.⁶⁶ As an offshoot of Pan-Africanism, Black Power was adopted as an aggressive libratory framework that utilized political discourse, violence, protest, narrative and counter narrative in a concerted effort to both undermine and usurp subjugating political and cultural authority. Through the activities of UBAD and the discourse provided by the *Amandala* (originally created as the voice of UBAD), the racial project injected Black Power into political agency and cultural activities in a way that challenged oppressive political forces. Black Power thereby established a youth oriented racial project geared toward representative politics and cultural affirmation. The UBADers wanted to redirect the burgeoning national culture in a way

66. Evan X Hyde, *X Communication*, 26.

that acknowledged Black cultural subjectivities divorced from white supremacist narratives.

Black Power challenged the political system to distribute wealth in a way that provided for its citizens that could not provide for themselves; while at the same time, creating accessible economic and educational opportunities for all citizens.

Chapter 2: The Influence of Evan X Hyde

On 30 June 1968, Evan X Hyde returned to Belize after attending Dartmouth College in New Hampshire USA. While not necessarily involved in Black Power politics in the US, Hyde found himself inspired by the Black Power Movement.¹ The sense of Black empowerment that he evoked in Belize was provoked by a feeling that Blacks qualified themselves according to Eurocentric value systems that undermined a collective appreciation of self and group consciousness of political and racial oppression. He began his influence in Belize with the sole ambition to bring Black Power to Belize “to unite the Black people of Southeast Asia, Latin America, the United States and Afro Honduras”... “To fight against the white imperialists of America, Russia and Great Britain. Black Power is to neutralize white power...Black Power is not confined to those of African descent but also to the peoples of the Black nations of Latin America and Southeast Asia.”²

This chapter extends from the previous by showing how the presence of Evan X Hyde shaped a racial consciousness within the process of building Belizean national independence from British rule. It demonstrates the impact of United Black Association for Development (UBAD) and its Pan-African legacy through *Amandala* newspaper. This chapter is based on the primary sources of Evan X Hyde’s memoirs and historiographical research found in the collection entitled *X-Communications*, along with the *Amandala* newspaper with articles ranging from 1969 to 1989 respectively.³ In an email response to the purpose of *Amandala* on May 16, 2012, Evan X Hyde wrote that the newspaper was “the voice of UBAD which would allow me to write with freedom. After 1977 I saw the newspaper's main role, apart from, again, allowing me

1. Evan X Hyde. *X Communication*, (Belize City: Sunshine Press, 2001), 201.

2. Evan X Hyde, *X Communication*, 38.

3. Most *Amandala* articles were retrieved from the Benson Latin American Collection from the University of Texas at Austin.

to write (I am a writer by profession) with freedom, as creating jobs for our people.” UBAD and *Amandala* were foundational to the dissemination of Black Power as a tool in reframing Belize as a nation-state. This chapter shows how the framework of UBAD was developed into a racial and later nationalist project.

Michael Omi and Howard Winant outline a racial project as something that does: an intellectual cannon that works through discourse to shape the economic, political and social climate in favor of its representative agents. For Omi and Winant racial projects “connect what race means in a particular discursive practice and the ways in which both social structures and everyday experiences are racially organized, based upon that meaning.”⁴ As a part of Omi and Winant’s *Racial Formation Theory*, racial projects are the historically based fixtures that work to establish racial equilibrium through conflict. The previous chapter outlines how Belizeans appropriated Marcus Garvey’s “African Redemption” into a racial project that ultimately developed into a labor movement and national project.^{5,6} To this degree, the development of the Garveyite use of race as a political platform to obtain political, economic and social freedom into a platform for national independence sets the stage for momentum that ultimately nationalized race based agency.

Race based agency accompanied with discourse finds itself re-vitalized from Garveyite Pan-Africanism with the Belizean Black Power Movement and its legacy through the *Amandala* newspaper. The social engineering of this movement utilized racial discourse as an empowering tool through UBAD’s deployment of the *Amandala*. “*Amandala* means Power to the people. That’s what we’re working on. We have to be able to decide our own destiny, to do our own

4. Michael Omi and Howard Winant. *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*. (New York: Routledge, 1994), 56.

5. For Omi and Winant, racially organized movements are (or are representative of) racial projects.

6. On page 13 of Kurt Young’s *The Case for a Belizean Pan-Africanism* calls Garvey’s movement “African Redemption.”

thing.”⁷ As the voice of UBAD, *Amandala* was the response to the disempowerment and marginalization by the developing government that Black youth and common Belizeans felt. In a Belizean context, discourse does not stand alone; it is representative of what goes on at the ground level. Talk is cheap when the mantra UB UMBRA FLOREO (I flourish in the Shade) represents a people.⁸



When the light of liberation is dulled by the existence of political and ideological oppression, the horror of the shade brings forth neocolonial realities that overshadow the liberation sought in the fight for independence. Evan X Hyde was a response to a situation whose actions were supported by Belizeans who did not see their liberation as complete during “self-rule” and after nationalization.⁹ Evan X Hyde’s version of Black Power utilized discourse, as a medium to challenge the burgeoning government to represent the needs of the people. Evan X’s racial project was an antithesis of neo-colonialism and whitewashing; that worked through empowering rhetoric, political activity, and activist agency. Hyde believed that Blacks should know their history and be represented by a government that represented their needs.

UBAD consequently came in as a source of education and empowerment that developed into racial discourse and political critique.¹⁰ It began as an organization that was focused on empowerment through education. Hyde and the supporters of UBAD felt that Blacks were not in

7. Evan X Hyde. “Amandala.” *Where We are Coming From*. August 13th 1969.

8. The Silver Torch. “Belize’s Symbols of Nationhood,” (accessed April 11, 2012).

9. Economic oppression along with the production of Eurocentric values that undermine the presence of a predominantly African descendent population created fertile ground for Black Power to grow. Blacks wanted their history and the empowering aspect of the story of how their people contributed to civilization and modern thought to manifest itself in representative politics where their presence contributed to a vote that a large portion of the population out of the trenches of poverty.

10. Evan X Hyde, *X Communication*, 53.

the position to know about themselves and appreciate their history as empowering. Hyde began teaching literature at the University of Belize. This later changed to him delivering Black Power messages from the classroom and developing a following. However, Hyde found that political empowerment was more useful and powerful than education alone. In *X-Communications*, which is a volume of memoirs and periodicals and a collection of historical research done by Evan Hyde and edited by Assad Shoeman, Hyde outlined this transition from Afrocentric education to political advocacy by saying “It seemed to me as president that the United Black Association for Development, as constituted, was only cultural, yet it was attacking the soci-political fabric of the society. As soon as I became president, we had started ignoring the constitution of UBAD; it was not a guideline for progress, but an obstacle.”¹¹ Evan Hyde highlighted this point by saying: “Instead of us trying to teach African history from the rostrum, why shouldn’t we work for the power to make African history mandatory in our schools so that Black children would not have to suffer the psyche-fracturing brainwashing of white power schools? The role of UBAD should then be to create the conditions under which a Black government dedicated to freedom, justice, and equality could come to power. We decided to suspend the UBAD cultural constitution.”¹² The *Amandala*, as the voice of UBAD, followed suit by introducing discourse that supported the mission of the organization.

The first issue of the *Amandala* that went into circulation on August 13th, 1969 introduced racial, cultural and political discourse by introducing its mission as: “we believe a knowledge of the past, a knowledge of self and kind, will give us a mandate to revolutionize this corrupt whitewashed society in which we live.”¹³ In this regard, discourse was introduced alongside political agency and agitation. Public rostrum meetings held regularly also coupled

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Evan X Hyde, “Amandala,” *Where We are Coming From*, August 13th 1969.

this. The stance of the organization was that the Black masses were disempowered through the denial of economic concessions through a lack of job creation and teachings on Black and African history. They saw white supremacy as a Eurocentric model that denied Black people a sense of self and mobility. In the process of nationalizing the Belizean government, political slant directed at governmental officials caused them to be opposed to agency that could be labeled as divisive.

The People's United Party (PUP), as the first political party of Belize, adopted the Westminster model of government. As a result of this political model being based on a system descendent from a society that maintained extreme social divisions, the Westminster model of government also integrated Eurocentric systems of domination into its political tapestry.¹⁴ This adopted model was not adapted to the social context of Belize, and was therefore similar to the systems that existed prior to the opportunity of limited self-government in 1964. The common critique of the PUP government [especially by UBAD] was all the PUP did was reinvent the colonial system with Black and Mestizo faces. Black youth responded by seeking empowerment through activism by directly targeting political and economic institutions through discourse, violence, and non-violent protest. The powers that be saw their "defiance" as an abomination that stood against a desired acquiescence to social order. This was especially the case when the UBAD riot of 1972 drew the biggest following in Belizean history, rivaling its Garveyite predecessor in 1919.¹⁵ As UBAD stood against the PUP's lack of representative democracy, the PUP saw UBAD as an impediment to nationalization.

As it stood, the PUP national project ignored the racist design of white supremacy imbedded within their adopted system of government and economics in favor of an anti-

14. Mark Nowotny. *'No Tyrants Here Linger': Understandings of Democracy in Modern Belize*. (MSc dissertation, Institute for the Study of the Americas, 7th September 2007).

15. Evan X Hyde, "Amandala," *87/78 Decade of Changes Chapter 1 From Fists to Guns*, April 7, 1978.

colonial/anti-oppression stance. O. Nigel Bolland in *Colonialism and Resistance in Belize: Essays in Historical Sociology* notes: “political party affiliation constitutes an identity that often cross-cuts rather than reinforces ethnic identity because party politics is not organized along ethnic lines.”¹⁶ By 1969, the stance of multi-cultural inclusion by the PUP government created a situation where a disenfranchised Black youth population found itself distressed, marginalized, and voiceless to a set of Black politicians whose core focus disregarded their plight. Essentially, the form of self-government did not revolutionize design, but rather assumed that replacing colonial administrators with national ones would inherently eliminate colonial oppression. The complexity of a reciprocal contention between UBAD and the PUP was that the PUP saw UBAD’s particular form of opposition as deconstructive to the decolonization effort while UBAD saw the decolonization effort as an enactment of neocolonialism.

The PUP’s process toward nationalization substituted the recognition of the [then] contemporary plight of the Black people by the white colonial administration in place of a focus on working class oppression by the colonial administration. To this regard, race as a base for political mobilization was set aside in place of representative democracy as Belize was in rout toward national independence. PUP developed as the voice of the people in 1950, sprouting from the General Workers Union and The People’s Committee.¹⁷ In this sense, the PUP was the political representation of the labor movement that advocated against colonial oppression through an anti-colonial framework.¹⁸ The PUP also aligned with the Central Workers Union to

16. O. Nigel Boland. *Colonialism and Resistance in Belize: Essays in Historical Sociology*. (Belize: Cubola Books, 2003), 211.

17. Assad Shoeman, *Thirteen Chapters of A History of Belize*, (Belize: Angelus Press. 2000), 184.

18. Bolland, 211.

advocate for workers' rights as a collective voice for the people.¹⁹ By standing at odds with this, the PUP saw the organization of UBAD as standing against their progress.

The first public contention between the PUP and UBAD began with UBAD's development of the Ad Hoc Committee for The Truth About Vietnam (Ad Hoc). Their first demonstration was against the premier of the movie the *Green Berets*, as it was seen as a "racist and imperialist John Wayne picture."²⁰ The protest lasted for "3 or 4 nights" beginning January 1, 1969.²¹ At that time, the U.S. was under global scrutiny as investigations of maiming, torture, and the killing of unarmed men, women and children were mounting. The protest generated scrutiny that led to the discovery that "Evan X was Black Power."²² In a town hall meeting in response to the demonstration and the Vietnam War, Hyde responded to the war by saying: "The Vietnam war was one more example of U.S. global racism against Black, brown, red and yellow people. The same man killing the Vietnamese people was the same man brutalizing the Black people in Amerikkka was the same man starving us in Belize. The white man-the Caucasian."²³ At this time, the PUP was developing a political relationship with the U.S., a critique and association of the PUP with white supremacy did not bode well. This is especially with its corporate ties with the U.S. as allies against British domination.²⁴

Politicians were then opposed to Black Power rhetoric considering that Black Power would make the social atmosphere in Belize seem adversarial to Belize's white economic and religious power-brokers who found the condemnation of white supremacy by Black Power advocates threatening. The PUP saw Black Power as something that needed to be put down; or

19. Lawrence Vernon, *A History of Political Parties in Belize*, (Unpublished Text), 9.

20. Evan X Hyde. *X Communications*, 225-226.

21. *Ibid.*, 26.

22. *Ibid.*, 29.

23. *Ibid.*

24. Barnett et. al., *The History of Belize: A Nation in the Making*, (Belize: Sunshine Books, 1984), 60.

as Evan X put it: “The Negro punks in government decided they were going to crush me.”²⁵ The empowering and cultural aspect of his purpose was “to explain to people just how much brainwashing the white man has given and was giving us - to communicate to Afro Hondurans the knowledge that was given to me by Afro-Americans and African students in America about ourselves as Black people who were beautiful and above all should be proud.”²⁶ The PUP government found the rhetoric and purpose of UBAD as threatening because if accepted as appealing to the masses, the message would inherently undermine the economic concessions and political compromise that empowered government officials through corporate and religious ties and institutions. In a PUP effort to destroy UBAD, police officers were deployed at UBAD breakfasts; spies at meetings and charges of seditions were filed in response to government officials being accused of “playing politics.”²⁷

Although Evan X found himself to not be political, he also found the PUP government to be “a stooge for white power and neocolonialism.”²⁸ The national project directed by the PUP and relatively unchallenged by the later UDP (circa 1973-) was preceded by a type of neo-colonialism that allowed 60% of exports and 35% of imports to go to and come from the U.S.; while U.S. nationals owned 80% of private land in 1949.²⁹ To this regard, the economic market was dominated by U.S. supply and demand. This began their participation in what was to become a neo-colonial legacy. In an *Amandala* editorial entitled *The Merchant of Venice* published on March 25, 1988 Evan X Hyde shows how the allure of neo-colonial concessions undermine democracy; causing both political parties to fall into temptation, selling the Belizean

25. Evan X Hyde, *X Communication*, 29.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid., 63.

28. Evan X Hyde. *X Communications*, 21.

29. Barnett et. al., *A History of Belize: A Nation in the Making*, 67.

people dreams and being bought off by corporations.³⁰ This critique of government officials falling into corruption through corporate concessions and the use of political power to proliferate that trend was also alluded to in an *Amandala* article published On April 14th, 1978 entitled “From Pine Resin to Black Gold.”

The socio-political climate between self-rule and nationalization in Belize revolved around US and British foreign investment and aid, which create a psychological condition that attached race to capital.³¹ The PUP government was not in the position to offer a vast jobs plan outside of the ministry up until the late 80s when tourism and oil began to dominate the Belizean economy due to the seller’s market of cane in particular prior to nationalization.³² The ministry was the largest provider of “middle-class” jobs.³³ This created an apologetic middle class that was not in the position to challenge socio-political issues. In an interview on July, 5 2010 Evan X Hyde expanded on this point by saying: “The electoral political system is so powerful because of the amount of jobs that are involved. You looking at thousands of jobs which an elected political party controls and I’m talking about jobs that does very little...just a simple thing like a driver’s job, a lot of jobs that change when the parties change. The struggle is so intense because there is a huge impact on an underclass of people who are often unemployed or semi employed.”³⁴ During the time of UBAD, this meant that the majority of youth and under-employed, were a “non-factor” in consideration to representative politics.³⁵

The actions of UBAD in line with the discourse of the *Amandala* worked to create a framework whereby Blacks could be empowered. On page 181 in *X-Communications*, Evan X

30. Evan X Hyde, “Amandala,” *The Process of Democracy*, March 25, 1988.

31. Grant, *The Making of Modern Belize*, 236.

32. Grant, 236.

33. *Ibid.*, 267.

34. Evan X Hyde. Interviewed by author. Belize City, Belize, July 5, 2010.

35. This is also the case considering the fact that the voting age was 21 and up until 1978.

quotes Malcolm X saying “it’s the same man in power doing the oppressing – the white man – so if all us Black, brown, red, and yellow people understand that we have a common enemy, unity is possible on the basis of a common oppressor we have to purge.”³⁶ In doing so, Hyde evokes a sense of racially inclusive nationalism that stands against oppression. This is similar to the national project that evokes a sense of national unity against colonial domination. In this vain, Hyde resurrects the libratory framework of the Garveyite project, which ultimately aligned Blacks [along with reds, browns and yellows] against white colonial oppression through labor unionization and the beginnings of political organization and uses it against the political oppression that was seen as representative of the developing political system. This is the same framework that catapulted the PUP into power as an anti-colonial political body. The interaction and relationship [considering they all descended from Garveyism] links Garveyism, UBAD and the political bodies of the PUP. In other words, the original Garveyite project finds itself appropriated to a PUP national and reified through a UBAD racial and *Amandala* political project. Despite contentions, it is to no surprise that Hyde joined the PUP in 1975.

The UBAD racial project, through the *Amandala*, challenged the forces of oppression that were relevant to Belize at the time. Although UBAD found itself in a decline by 1973 and ultimately dissolved by 1977, it stood the test of time as the first formidable group to challenge the PUP, Eurocentricism and neocolonialism.³⁷ As a result of UBAD fulfilling its purpose to serve the needs of the people, UBAD began to disintegrate when the PUP began to have formidable opposition (UDP was formed in 73) and was dissolved by the time the voting age was changed from 21 to 18 in 1978.³⁸ As such, UBAD fulfilled its purpose in providing a framework

36. Evan X Hyde, *X Communications*, 181.

37. Shoeman, *Thirteen Chapters of a History of Belize*. 228.

38. National Assembly of Belize, <http://www.nationalassembly.gov.bz/index.php/history-legislature>. (accessed May 4, 2012).

for political inclusion and social empowerment for Black youth and the nation as a whole. The *Amandala* as the voice of UBAD, operated under the same framework of empowerment and anti-oppression on a larger scale. One of the main reasons why *Amandala* outlived UBAD was that it became an inclusive nationalist voice for the people. After the 1977 disbandment of UBAD, *Amandala* was transformed into a unitary beacon of free speech that attempted an unbiased approach to chronicling and critiquing the political and social events that it felt most relevant to its Belizean people.³⁹

In an *Amandala* article titled *Beating the Man means Hard Work* published in 1983, the editor makes the point to say that a politically dispossessed youth represent a politically marginal group that ultimately see representative government as a pipe dream clogged by the disregards of a democratic design that was seemingly based on greed.⁴⁰ Hyde makes the point to say that in order to make the Belizean government responsive to the needs of the people, the youth have to be represented; however, the PUP has not registered the youth for fear of tilting the ballot toward the opposition.⁴¹ Evan Hyde noted this by saying: “While it is ominous, it is certainly not accidental. Most youths are not registered because 85 per cent of them are believed to be anti-PUP government and it is better for the PUP for the young people not to be on the voters list.”⁴² The article insinuated that the majority of the PUP’s constituency was foreign born by saying: “now since the present lists are loaded with PUP registered aliens (who are believed to be 90 per cent PUP), it is clear that for the UDP to have a chance come election time it must spark a massive registration campaign city wide.”⁴³ This took a nationalist stance to make the point that in order for a country “for the people” to be created, the hard work of people triumphing over the

39. The competing newspaper *Beacon* was at that time, a part of the PUP machine.

40. Evan X Hyde. “*Amandala*.” *Beating the Man Means Hard Work*. September 30, 1983.

41. *Ibid.*

42. *Ibid.*

43. *Ibid.*

PUP machine needs to happen. The beginning of that hard work was to start with the mass registration of Belizean youths.⁴⁴ This evocation of youth based nationalism shows itself to be a manifestation of what UBAD stood for. It effectively challenges the marginalization of Blacks in an attempt to stimulate youth agency against political oppression. This article stands to show that the political climate that was effective in 1969 was still relevant in 1983. This even transcends Evan Hyde's affiliation with the PUP, even further demonstrating the paper's role as a beacon of nationalism. The discourse also puts the racial element of Mestizo immigration in the 1980s in political context in terms of how it displaced representative politics. To this degree, discourse evoked national interests while at the same time aimed at providing the momentum for change by simply providing information and stimulating consciousness and mobilization. Discourse was not just a conversation between power-brokers and politicians, but a voice of the people.

In a December 31, 1984 article entitled "Not Racist, Nationalist," the *Amandala* defended its purpose as a nationalist newspaper by making the point to demonstrate its legacy as a newspaper that promoted Black and Hispanic politicians as well as redirect a tide of violence on the streets toward the embrace of community.⁴⁵ *Amandala* developed alongside the needs of the people and as a bastion of social justice. Between 1969 and 1973, the newspaper dedicated itself to opposing the neo-colonialism that it saw represented in the PUP and supported the UDP. *Amandala* also promoted community over the forces that caused socio-cultural degeneration such as Americanism, transnational migration, crime and poverty. Between 1975 and 1984, the *Amandala* found itself disseminating discourse that called the government to the task of representative politics and analyzing social matters, especially concerning ones such as the

44. Ibid.

45. Evan X Hyde, "Amandala," *Not Racist, Nationalist*, December 31, 1984.

negative aspects of an American influence and the Guatemalan claim on Belize.⁴⁶ In 1975 in particular, Evan X Hyde announced his support of the PUP, thereby ending a long effort of harsh critiques on the party while at the same time ushering in a softer and more unbiased style of reporting. Then from the mid 80s up until (1989 from my sources at UT Austin) recently, the shift of the newspaper has been on the legacy of absentee parentism since the 80s hurricane Hattie and outmigration to the U.S. due to a national recession along with the devastation drugs and violence caused by deportees shipped from the U.S., the rise in the drug market as it relates to agricultural competition and international commerce, the crack epidemic and a renewed interest by Guatemala in its “claim” on Belize.⁴⁷ All these were hot topics in the mid and early 70s, however showed to present stark realities by the late 80s in particular. The *Amandala* then worked to answer the questions that its readership was asking about socio-political status while at the same time attempting to be a catalyst of social change through advocacy and nationalism.

As the representation of UBAD’s legacy, the *Amandala* stands as a newspaper that publicly represented the needs of the mass of politically and consequently economically disenfranchised people. As such, the racial project of the *Amandala* was finely integrated with the national project as Blacks were seen as the national people. *Amandala* thereby used Black proprietorship as a cannon for nationalism. Through the challenging social forces of high unemployment rates, low job creations, violence caused by deportations, a rise in drug activity stimulated by US deportees and a fragile agricultural market: a torn sense of a national sense of self due to transnational migration along with immigration, and an adapting to an ever-change social tapestry while conflicted by a desire to maintain a national cultural value system of

46. Evan X Hyde, “Amandala,” *From PUP to UDP*, May 9, 1978.

47. See *Amandala* Smokey Joe articles from September 20, 1989, June 22, 1990, along with *The Decade of the 80s* editorial published December 29, 1989.

community while at the same time seeking to empower Black and Mayan people through the dissemination of their history is only a small part of the UBAD racial project.

The racial project initiated by Evan X Hyde through UBAD and the *Amandala* can be summed up by Belizean mantra: UB UMBRA FLOREO (I flourish in the Shade) under the coat of Arms. The fight for Black empowerment conjoined to national empowerment was done under the over-cast shadow of neo-colonialism, economic marginalization and political bullying. Although the UBAD organization lost that battle, the *Amandala* still continued and ultimately won the war as the late (Premier at the time) George Price signified “You know, I am Black. We are not white, therefore we are Black.”⁴⁸ The legacy of Black Power, then nationalized the liberatory framework of the UBAD, a legacy of Pan-African Garveyism that was articulated into a racial project by the *Amandala*. The next chapter deals with the legacy of this racial project found through the interviews of Belizean people taken in the summer of 2010 and an analysis of representative *Amandala* articles.

“Belize was Black, it would live or die Black because it was not white.”⁴⁹

48. Evan X Hyde, “Amandala,” *68/78 Decade of Changes: Preface*. March 31, 1978.

49. *Ibid.*

Chapter 3: Hyde's Legacy

This chapter shows Evan X Hyde's contribution to contemporary dialog on racial and national politics in Belize. It is based on the primary sources of the *Amandala* with articles ranging from 1978-1989 and excerpts from 11 interview respondents from a research trip to Belize in the summer of 2010. This chapter also utilizes the framework of Omi and Winant's racial project, as it is adapted in chapter one. *Amandala* means Power to the people. As the development of UBAD, the *Amandala* was a project in itself to be and empowering source to the people. Through the forces of neoliberalism, Americanization, and neocolonialism, the *Amandala* has applied the Pan-African framework as a nationalist project. The framework of Pan-Africanism where the needs of the collective Black self are championed by organizations and individuals can then be seen to guide publication of the *Amandala* as continuing the legacy of UBAD. This legacy is then adapted to a multi-cultural context of contemporary Belize. The nationalist appropriation of the *Amandala* project represents a movement from racial politics to national politics as commonly situated people have had a history of uniting under the mantra of: UB UMBRA FLOREO.

Under the overcast shadow of neocolonialism, and entrenched poverty, the *Amandala* serves as a liberating platform reminiscent of a Pan-African framework. In a January, 1986 speech to Belizeans, Minister Louis Farrakhan responded to the Belizean condition of neocolonialism by saying:

Did we suffer under colonialism? Did we catch hell? Did the colonial powers give us hell? Did they happen to be white? Well then tell it! And be on the lookout for a Black man who is a colonialist in Black skin! Because, We don't want to kick out one colonialist and get another one in; with a colonial mentality, sick like hell, and don't want to lift the people because it might offend Mr. Reagan, or America. You don't care who you will offend, lift your people up! You know, a man who don't offend nobody aint

doing nothing. If you don't want to be offensive, die! The worms will be happy to meet a non-offensive person, like you.¹

The following interviews and articles show the discourse provided by the *Amandala* and how it is reflective of contemporary sentiments. Omi and Winant argue “racial movements come into being as the result of political projects, political interventions led by intellectuals.”² Discourse from the *Amandala* under the framework of Pan-Africanism, created a project that aligned race with nation, thereby creating a national consciousness under a Pan-African framework.

The agency of the people that cause institutions to consider the demands of the intellectuals is something of great importance in understanding the significance of a racial project. Along with agency, there is also meaning to why people would mobilize under the banner of a project and abdicating group power to a representative intellectual. The subjective analysis of group agency and mobilization is lost in Omi and Winant's analysis. As such, this chapter focuses on racial and political consciousness generated through the *Amandala* and represented in contemporary dialog.

Through the *Amandala*, Evan X Hyde has argued against white supremacy and the legacy of British colonialism. The *Amandala* has been the legacy of Evan X Hyde's influence in Belize and the product of a longer project whereby racial politics found itself integrated with national politics. To this regard, the *Amandala* acts as the defending shield and attacking shaft of social justice in an effort to stand against the exploitation of the political and economic oppression of Belizeans by a political and corporate power block. On August 2, 1985, Hyde wrote: “But in Belize, there are some who are more American than the Americans. They want so-called free competition to be sacred even when Goliath is crucifying David. They want those with the head

1. Louis Farrakhan, 15-Day Royal Princess Caribbean Tour: *Address to the Belizean People*, January 1986.

2. Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*, (New York: Routledge, 1994), 86.

start in colour and money to dominate the economy even to the point of creating monopolies. Such colonial mentalities bless the body of injustice with the incense of free enterprise.”³ The *Amandala*, as a transformative social force, also operates on a social justice platform that integrates racial politics with national consciousness: building on pre-existing nationalist frameworks.

Samuel Haynes, a founder of the Belizean branch of UNIA, wrote the national anthem under the pretense ‘no tyrants here linger’. This continues to hold true for a nation that finds itself in a situation where freedom (in another context) is still something sought after in an economically oppressive social context. Belize then finds itself in a situation where racial projects of the past reinvent themselves in the present where colonial tyrants find themselves replaced with political oppression.

“The new leaders, by and large, were descendants of serfs and slaves, but when they went to Belmopan they found the chairs of power and the domineering system of rule that the PUP had built over 25 years of popularity. The new leaders had a powerful mandate, but they were frail and gullible and tempted by money and the flesh. They ignored the mandate they were given to reconstruct Belize for the good of the people, and they chose the easy road of neocolonialism. They grew to love the chairs of power and the domineering system of rule they had inherited.”⁴

The sentiment of this Evan X Hyde quote lends itself to a neo-colonial trend that undermines representative democracy by a tradition of the wills of politicians being bent toward the dollar, turning eyes, ears, and hands away from the people. Although the previous article was written in 1988, the situation of neo-colonial political corruption and resulting poverty still resonates in the hearts and minds of Belizean citizens.

In an interview with Paul Nabura on 12 June 2010 in response to the question: has anything changed since the end of the colonial system, he made reference to bread being more

3. Evan X Hyde, “Amandala,” *Belizean Capitalism, A Bastardized Version*, August 2, 1985.

4. Evan X Hyde, “Amandala,” *Process of Democracy*, March 25, 1988.

expensive now than it was then.⁵ He viewed a situation in Belize where it is hard for people to feed themselves. In that same interview he made reference to feeling as if he did not have the guitar and voice that brought him to the legendary status as one of the *Three Kings of Belize*, he would have a difficult time surviving. This may not be the case for the majority of Belizeans, however, this is a stark reality for an increasingly large minority of Belizeans especially in the poorest [Toledo] district. The Belizean Population and Home Census mark the unemployment rate in Belize at 23.1%.⁶ The Statistical Institute of Belize measured the 2010 poverty rate to be 43%.⁷ Belizean citizens see their condition as caused by political decisions that favor the free market over creating social safety nets and jobs. The exploitation disseminated from white hands of the colonial system reinvented itself in the image of economic liberalism packaged in private sector investments.⁸

Assad Shoeman, a former senator, lawyer, and former minister of foreign affairs responds to the development of neoliberalism by saying:

“These economic policies were accompanied at the political level by the shrinking role of the State. To an ever greater extent, the ‘private sector’ (including, increasingly, foreign firms) calls the shots, as even the planning functions of the State are taken over by the “invisible hand” of the market. The role of the State today is to facilitate the expansion of the private sector and to protect property rights. And since property is increasingly in fewer hands, the police function of the State assumes greater significance, while its former role of protecting the poor and providing comprehensive social services is diminished.”⁹

The contemporary Belizean economy is primarily dependent on Oil and tourism. These industries do not have the ability to provide jobs on a large scale with relatively little

5. Paul Nabura, Interviewed by author, Punta Gorda, Belize, June 12, 2010.

6. Statistical Institute of Belize. “2010 Population and Home Census,” *Main Results*.

7. United States Central Intelligence Agency, *Belize*, “The World Fact Book,” April 10, 2007. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bh.html>.

8. Deborah A. Thomas, *Modern Blackness: Globalization, Nationalism and the Politics of Culture in Jamaica*, (Durham: Duke University Press. 2004), 9.

9. Assad Shoeman, *Thirteen Chapters of a History of Belize*, (Belize: Angelus Press. 2000), 266.

development of raw material or national ownership over enterprise.¹⁰ When political concessions bring forth these corporate contracts that provide limited job prospects, a plutocratic form neo-liberalism is born. The Belizean government finds itself in a situation where tourism and oil are the primary means to stimulate the economy. In addition, imports from Mexico and Guatemala drive down the price of domestically produced goods and agriculture. This is happening in Belize while foreign land owners reap the benefits of private ownership of a land rich environment where they freely grow their cash crops for the world market that are tilled by impoverished immigrant hands.¹¹ Deborah A. Thomas, in *Modern Blackness: Globalization, Nationalism and the Politics of Culture in Jamaica*, makes a similar point by saying “Key economic ventures: mineral extraction, agriculture, offshore assembly production and tourism are dominated by foreign firms and are dependent on external demand or foreign consumers for their services.”¹² In Belize, neoliberal foreign invested firms generally impose market control and capital flow out of Belizean hands. The inability of the mass of Belizeans to access equitable markets in Belize creates a contemporary class system that works as neo-colonialism. “In Belize it is basically a class thing, the powerful versus the powerless, the haves versus the have nots...”¹³

The *Amandala*, then takes that narrative of political oppression, neoliberalism and Americanization to advocate for a seemingly voiceless people. In an April 11, 2012 email conversation with Evan X Hyde, he noted that one of the original goals for *Amandala* was to provide more jobs for people. In that same regard, the *Amandala* project works as a source of empowerment through critique and provision. *Amandala* then, reproduces the sense of a

10. “Current Oil Exploration in Belize,” <http://www.belize.com/articles/oil-exploration-in-belize.html>. (accessed April 25, 2011).

11. Shoeman, *Thirteen Chapters of a History of Belize*, 266.

12. Deborah Thomas, *Modern Blackness*, 10.

13. Mustafa, Interviewed by author, Punta Gorda. June 11, 2010.

collective self, inherent in the Garvey Movement while at the same time incorporating an awareness of exploitation experienced by the masses of Belizeans who find themselves underprivileged and their needs underrepresented through partisan politics.

The racial project of the past that was able to attach race to exploitation has thereby been transformed in a complex way in which race and class are conflated and the oppositional framework represents the collectively disenfranchised against an exploitative political system. In an interview with Flo Johnson, a store owner in Punta Gorda, she made reference to the Black Power Movement brought to Belize by Evan X Hyde and how it caused Blacks to just know who they were.¹⁴ Mrs. Johnson also noted how that sense of self is still prevalent in the Belize, reinforced by Pan-Africanism reified through reggae and Evan X Hyde's presence in the *Kremandala* (*Krem* radio and T.V., and the *Amandala* newspaper) broadcasting network. In a conversation with Evan X Hyde on July 5, 2010, he noted that: "Remember now, what the Europeans had done was to have our people to believe over generations that we were animals, we were ugly, we were etc...etc...so, we wanted to be as white as possible as opposed to Black. So when UBAD said Black is Beautiful along the lines of James Brown, there were brown families that have not....and then the situation here is complicated by the electoral politics. But there were definitely a lot of Black youth that embraced Black Power."¹⁵ This quote highlights a complex situation where empowerment is challenged by past ways of thinking and the relationship between social and electoral politics. In this sense, the project of *Amandala* is simply to empower the nation's people under the guiding framework established by UBAD.

Upon arrival in Belize, the one thing that I noticed the most was the wide occurrence of Belizean flags. The second thing that I took note of was how every household that I stepped foot

14. Flo Johnson, Interviewed by author, Punta Gorda. May 31, 2010.

15. Evan X Hyde, Interviewed by author, Belize City, Belize, July 5, 2010.

in had a picture of Malcolm X, Che Guevara, and/or Barak Obama. The adherence for agents of social change speaks volumes to the revolutionary atmosphere that is prevalent in Belize. These public figures stand as monumental symbols for social change. The result of Evan X Hyde's influence has thus far produced a mass of politically conscious individuals, whom are also aware of racial politics and political coercion as well as corruption. This can be found in everyday discourse from the *Amandala* and the Belizean citizens that I interviewed alike.

In a conversation, People's National Party leader, Wil Maheia, made the point that if the government were to use 10% from oil extraction overhead alone for public schools, Belizeans could enjoy free public education.¹⁶ Both the problems of equitable education and job creation could both be solved through a political design that earmarked funds that directly served the needs of the people and created employment through a larger investment in civil and social services. Oil excavation is one thing, but refineries are another. Exporting raw material does not have the ability to create too many jobs, but processing the raw material for use does. Most of my interview subjects made similar references to a political situation where they felt that their political representatives did not represent the needs of the people, especially in terms of job creation strategies and social safety nets.

In reference to representative democracy, Wil Maheia consistently used the term "play politics" in order to explain how politicians work to get elected, yet do not follow through with the promises of their platforms.¹⁷ He spoke of bridges not being reconstructed until after elections and materials not making it to construction, but laying on the side of sites in order to stimulate feelings of hope by allowing local residents to believe that construction would soon

16. Wil Maheia, Interviewed by author, Cattle Landing, June 20, 2010.

17. Ibid.

follow after seeing materials where they needed to be.¹⁸ Although he may be biased as a 3rd party politician, his sentiments are not unique. Most interview subjects in Punta Gorda, Mango Creek, Baranco, and Belize City felt the same way. In an interview with Sharay Gutierrez, she echoed the common sentiment that one party messes up, leaving the other to clean up and nothing gets done.¹⁹ A number of respondents felt as if both parties sell dreams, to gain support and votes to get in office, then never make good on their campaign promises. Darias Avila and Floyd Lindo of Punta Gorda said that is not the case for some politicians because they are well received by their constituency; however those few cases are not representative of the majority.²⁰
²¹ There in lies the question of: if this is the degree of awareness that is exhibited, why are Belizeans on a large scale up in arms demanding change?

When social forces challenges collective agency, it creates a transient nature that lacks the needed basis for mobilization. When Belizean youth internalize American culture, they position their identity abroad, distancing themselves from domestic issues. This imposition of national identity is also a disposition of patriotism that creates a case where domestic social bonds are weak.²² This is a trend in Belize that began with absentee-parentism caused by Hurricane Hattie era migration to the U.S. and the later and larger migration resulting in the recession and Latin immigration of the 1980s. This trend created a phenomenon where the colony was unable to “strike back” against oppressive means. Yaya of Krem Tv made the point by saying that “many people who went away to find an education...and when they come back

18. Ibid.

19. Sharay Gutierrez, Interviewed by author, Punta Gorda. May 28, 2010.

20. Darias Avila, Interviewed by author, Punta Gorda, June 23, 2010.

21. Floyd Lindo. Interviewed by author, Punta Gorda. July 1, 2010.

22. The migrations of the 30s, 60s, and 80s due to hurricanes and recessions caused large waves of migrations to the U.S. which created absentee parentism and a rift in the social fabric through the transnational identity of cultural power-brokers and poverty creating a dependency on remissions. This dependency was said to undermine self-determination.

find themselves disconnected from where they come from.”²³ Pirated television from California satellite T.V., along with transnational migration and identities also work to this same accord where people are distracted/distanced from the social bonds needed for people to mobilize and challenge political oppression.

In an *Amandala* article written September 20th 1989, Smokey Joe made references to Americanisms already being prevalent in Belize. The first one that he mentioned was crack cocaine, the second was U.S. T.V. (soap operas) dominating viewers’ choice over Belizean news, and the third was youth poverty. All these were brought as point of references to criticize rifts in the Belizean social structure caused by American influences. In the case of cultural erosion, most interview respondents felt that the internalization American media by Belizeans contributes to a sense of entitlement and individuality. For those that are marginalized, this is augmented by poverty. Respondents felt that communal culture was undermined by the Americanization of Belizean culture. A common sentiment was that people develop the propensity to take care of self and not each other

In the case where social bonds are weakened by poverty: media, drugs and violence, transient and transnational identities and other social forces that challenge the development and deepening of national culture have a stronger influence in setting social norms than domestic cultural powerbrokers. In Belize, the reflection of self causes the Black boys to be the most disenfranchised, stimulated by an internalized view of Blacks by American media culture and transnational remittances from America creating entitlement among Belizean youth. “De Blacks in de Back” is a Kriol saying that refers to Blacks falling behind in school. This is a new advent in contemporary Belizean history, which lends itself in a large part to an American influence both through the media and transnational migration. In an interview with Mr. Parnell, he made

23. Yaya, Interviewed by author, Belize City, July 4, 2010.

reference to Belizeans being confused not knowing whether they are half American or half Belizean.²⁴ Mose Hyde also made reference to American media impeding the production of Belizean culture by saying: “As the manager of K.R.E.M. T.V. we have never showed an American add. I complain to competitors that is the worse thing to do, even if you bootleg, is to show the adds. You are actually making these huge companies from America influence the taste of the Belizean public without the required compensation and contribution. These companies don’t have to pay social or advertising tax... there is a responsibility to be gatekeepers of the marketplace because trade is a form of war. Trade is war without guns and bullets.”²⁵

Blacks on American T.V. are usually presented through a white lens that looks at American Black culture with amused contempt. The current economic situation in Belize puts the masses of Black youth (in particular) in a position where limited means exceed material desire. A volatile climate in favor of criminality and incongruent with communal behavior is then created by competition for scarce resources without the ability to compete in legal and gainful commercial atmospheres because of a lack of job availability. This is also exacerbated by a high deportation rate of Belizean born US criminals who are deported back to Belize and participate in illegal and often violent activity.

In youth and adults, the situation of imported desires, individualism, entitlement and competition for scarce resources came as a reference point related to a lack of communal agency and the rise of drug related and violent crimes. Given that it is more lucrative for farmers to grow marijuana than to grow oranges and youths can easily purchase guns from Guatemala for \$75 (USD), poverty and crime create a volatile climate. This, along with a large occurrence of deportees from the U.S. for drug trafficking and violence [relocating in Belize city especially]

24. Mr. Parnell, Interviewed by author, Punta Gorda, Belize, June 28, 2010.

25. Mose Hyde, Interviewed by author, Belize City, Belize, June 2, 2010.

introduces a growing criminal element in Belize. This is added to by drug networks being pushed into Belize as Mexican officials crack them down in Mexico. This transformation is similar to what Mark Anderson found in *Bad Boys and Peaceful Garifuna* where stereotypes and images work like currency causing subscription to and beliefs in racialized stereotypes that generate realities that did not previously exist. In the case of drugs and violence in Belize City, the large number of deportees from the U.S. due to drug related offences is the largest contributing factor to drug related violence and distribution in the city. Cocaine especially, is something that was brought to Belize through American addictions.²⁶ Similar to 1989, the occurrence of drugs and violence is seen in Belize as an American influence as it is a product of America's drug addiction.

The criminal element, poverty, transnational migration and the accompanying identity do not represent the general populace of Belizeans, however these general themes do challenge the production and use of a Pan-African framework. That feeling of a lack of political representation creates a sense of voicelessness for the masses of Belizeans or what Franz Fanon would call the 'lumpen.' The sense of voicelessness as a result of a lack of representative politics is the platform that encourages third party politicians (especially the People's National Party) to challenge the status quo. This is why Wil Maheia's platform strongly resonates with Belizeans across the nation. This is also why the *Amandala* is the nation's leading newspaper.

Franz Fanon made reference to a spontaneous revolution in the *Wretched of the Earth*. In it, he evoked an understanding that a thirst for freedom would conjure a social revolution.²⁷ The case of Belize seems to have positioned itself in a way where this may be the case in the near future. As a young nation that is in the process of defining itself within the reconfiguration of

26. Smokey Joe, "Amandala." *Americanisms in Belize*, September 20, 1989.

27. Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, (New York: Grove Press. 1960), 107.

social-cultural structure, Pan-Africanism is positioned in a way that agents of change like *Amandala* and organic intellectuals like Wil Maheia are positioned in a way to instigate, if not initiate this change. The production of liberatory discourse has the ability to subvert the social forces that undermine and challenge the social forces of negative American influences, and poverty based on neoliberal and neocolonial realities.

The *Amandala* as a project is then in a process of reconfiguration post-1969's introduction of Black Power. Poverty being so deeply ingrained within the social fabric that it creates strong cross-racial alliances post-independence. Evan Hyde's rationalization that all non-whites are Black, along with the late Emritus Prime Minister Price's affirmation that Belize is a Black nation establishes the cannon of Belizean multi-cultural Pan-Africanism. The contemporary conflation of race and class works in a way that makes race have less relevance in terms of mobilization when at least 40% of the nation's populace lives in poverty. The naturalization of political oppression and poverty, positions youth to be less likely to take to the polls and the streets. In this sense, the *Amandala* Project in Belize is a sleeping giant waiting to be awakened. The discourse of the *Amandala* finds itself in contemporary dialog, but not direct action..

The cash-cow of tourism and influence of American media and lifestyle is stampeding Belizean culture through a corporate design that retrofits American acceptability into a Belizean context. As the majority of my interview respondents were dissatisfied with political representation, job accessibility/creation and the primacy of American value systems undermining community cohesion and collaboration, the *Amandala* project is in a position to mobilize behind a much needed change that will effectively uplift the Belizean people. As the *Amandala* calls for change, and individuals like Wil Maheia try to effectively challenge the

government or become a part of the government that changes, the *Amandala* works to change the sense of voicelessness that permeates Belizean citizens by advocating for a people that are seemingly disenfranchised by their governing bodies.

The *Amandala* response to the complex racial and political construction of Belize, that created the neocolonial realities of crime, poverty and joblessness, was to create a counter-valance of discourse. The legacy of the of *Amandala* is the continued advocacy and anti-oppressive actions and discourse that inevitably forces politicians to at least listen during campaign trails, and makes politicians' constituents aware of their integrity. The sentiments of the *Amandala*, both in terms of contemporary discourse and a past legacy, were reflected through interview responses. The empowering framework established by the *Amandala* challenges the series of political projects that undermine representative democracy and the production of Belizean culture less corrosive American influences. The thereby national consciousness that links the legacy of the *Amandala* with my interview data creates fertile soil for political opposition to again flourish in Belize in a way where politicians and people alike are forced to uphold the mantle of social justice. In this sense, interview respondents echoed the sentiment that they are aware and awaiting an organized effort for change.

Conclusion

Michael Omi and Howard Winant describe a racial project as “Simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial dynamics, and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular racial lines. Racial projects connect what race means in a particular discursive practice and the ways in which both structures and everyday experiences are racially organized, based upon that meaning.”¹ For their theory on racial formation, the racial project is the conceptual tool that shows what race means and does in a particular time and place. A racial project is then simply a way to understand the dynamics of racial politics.

Omi and Winant use a racial project to interpret, represent or explain racial dynamics on a political scope through the lens of political and racial discourse made by intellectuals in a conversation with politicians in an effort to explain socio-structural and inter-personal events. The flaw in this method of analysis is that it readily assumes that intellectuals represent the needs of the people and embody the meaning of race within the scope of given projects. This argument is similar to the egg giving birth to the chicken, given that intellectual ideas have to be supported by people in order to have any efficacy. Omi and Winant’s primacy of the intellectual undermines the circumstances that produce group support of individuals’ ideas and a sense of consciousness that is imbedded within that process. Consciousness is then omitted as the subjective value of their analysis is overshadowed by their “objective” analysis of discourse.

My argument is that: in order for a racial project to display an adequate examination of racial dynamics, one must start at the ground level. As borrowed from Wil Maheia, “we’re pretty rootsy around here.” From slave rebellions, the labor movement, universal suffrage to national independence-racial and political projects have been organized in Belize through the collective

1. Michael Omi and Howard Winant. *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*. (New York: Routledge, 1994), 56.

agency that began with civil unrest; not just someone talking about it. An analysis of a racial project, in order to show what race is doing in terms of how it interacts with the politic and what it means to the people represented by and through that codification must take the subjective context of those whom are represented by it into perspective in order for an understanding to take place.

Words by “intellectuals” are just words with no power if they are not supported by the people. Peoples’ support of them and the meaning that derives is more important than the words and intellectuals themselves. The subjective experience of the intellectual along with the climate and social context in which those words were born are more definitive of an analysis of discourse that produces an understanding of what someone said and how it gives us a glimpse of what was happening at that given time and/or event. For this reason, I have attempted to bridge the grass-roots subjective to intellectual discourse in an effort to give social and historic context in the construction of the Belizean racial projects within my three chapters. Although certain specificities that could have been foreseen as important such as a more detailed construction of Belizean political systems, the role of color in Black identity and class privilege, a deeper analysis of Belizean culture and a comparative analysis of past and present racial politics were omitted considering that they were outside of the scope of this thesis. The focus and generalizations of this project aim to provide a template for that upcoming work in progress.

This thesis utilized an adapted version of Omi and Winant’s racial project that shows how race was used as a political formation in Belize. This was done by examining “what race does” in the context of Belizean Black and national identity. As such, Chapter 1 frames the adaptation of Omi and Winant’s racial project for this thesis by highlighting context and subjectivities by which racial projects formed. This chapter shows how a Pan-African framework was used to

achieve political representation and national independence. Chapter 2 explored Evan X Hyde's use of race as a political platform through Black Power and how that was later developed into a nationalist framework. Hyde, through the UBAD and *Amandala* newspaper, sought to affirm Belizean identity through politicized Pan-Africanism. In this case, the use of Black Power to bring forth positive images and empower the disenfranchised with knowledge of the means of their marginalization was used to stimulate awareness and mobilize action. Chapter 2 shows how Hyde helped to transform the national conversation on race that sought to bring forth representative politics into a nationalist discourse. Chapter 3 discusses how Evan X Hyde has influenced everyday discourse on politics and social awareness. All three chapters display adaptations of Omi and Winant's racial project that are used to fit the social and temporal circumstance that it represents. They are linked through a Pan-Africanist framework operating under the definition: "Fusing of affirmations of African identity with liberatory efforts at the level of the masses. It functions simultaneously in the various centers of the African world in ways that are not limited to states or only formal unity politics among Black people in those states."² Black in place of African, then represents a politicized identity which was used as a political platform given socio-political and historical context. The adaptations of racial projects are then reflective of the context that they are presented in.

Considering the differences between chapters, the forms of racial projects also differ. Chapter 1 focuses on collective agency, Chapter 2 on a relationship between activism and discourse and Chapter 3 on the legacy of both with a somewhat heavier emphasis on discourse than the previous chapters. The reason for the shift from projects in Belize relates to social context and available resources. The *Amandala* set a precedent for discourse by providing a

2. Kurt B. Young, *The Case for a Belizean Pan-Africanism*, (The Journal of Pan African Studies, vol. 2, no. 9, March 2009), 4.

counter-valence for political oppression and uniting voters against a perceived trend of oppression, hence the shift in the increasing importance of discourse from Chapter 1-3. All three chapters introduced projects that were constructed with the available resources at the time. As discussed in each chapter, the use and creation of a project in a given circumstance can never be understood through discourse alone.

Omi and Winant write: “to recognize the racial dimension in social structure is to interpret the meaning of race.”³ Their focus on the interrelationship between racial discourse and socio-political institutions represents a theoretical weakness because it does not completely explain “the why” aspect of a racial project. To this degree, their focus almost ignores the subjectivities where meaning exists prior to the employment of discourse as representative of the cause. However, rather than conflate an error with an error, there lies a very similar weakness in this research. The role of institutions and their relationships with those whom challenged them along with oppressive social structures is somewhat lacking in this thesis. For a more full understanding of what race and politics are doing within a certain period or socio-political event both the relationships that people have with institutions and the circumstance that creates those relationships needs to be completely understood. The role of the church, NGOs, corporations, the transnational Belizean experience, along with a gambit of other items that can be analyzed as indices of social-political relationships would have to be analyzed in order for the weakness of this thesis to be offset.

This thesis adds to the discussion of “identity politics” in Africana studies by presenting a case where racial politics directly influences the construction of national politics and a national consciousness. Although similar studies have been done by Deborah Thomas in *Modern Blackness* and Juliet Hooker in *Race and the Politics of Solidarity*, this project uniquely analyzes

3. Omi and Winant, 57.

a political tapestry shaped by a Pan-African outlook while at the same time drawing an understanding of subjective meaning. While Hooker talks about racial inclusion/exclusion and Thomas discusses national cultural identity, this thesis integrates both by focusing on the relationship between the two frameworks. Further research on the Afro-Caribbean that details racial-political development will add to the discourse on Africana studies by providing a nuanced analysis of how past socio-political legacies create contemporary context and realities.

Further research on racial projects in Belize would then require a more nuanced approach to a racial project that fully considers subjectivities and micro-macro relationships along with an in-depth analysis of historic events and the roles in which groups, individuals and institutions play in those events. This would also require an in-depth analysis of culture and the role that plays in the above mentioned. Such research would eliminate the shortcomings of both this project and Omi and Winant's prescription of a racial project while at the same time creating a platform for a larger global or comparative analysis of racial projects that analyzes the legacy of past racial projects that operate in contemporary conditions.

Appendix A: Interview References

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Maheia, Wil. Interviewed by author. Cattle Landing, June 20, 2010.

Mustafa. Interviewed by author. Punta Gorda. June 11, 2010.

Leno, Floyd Interviewed by author. Punta Gorda, July 1, 2010.

Mr. Parnell. Interviewed by author. Punta Gorda, Belize, June, 28 2010.

Nabura, Paul. Interviewed by author. Punta Gorda, Belize, June 12, 2010.

Yaya. Interviewed by author. Belize City, July 4, 2010.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Typical interview questions are as follows:

1. What does it mean to be Black?
2. Do you think American culture effects Belize?
3. How has Belize changed since the migrations of Belizeans to the US in the 60s and the 80s?
4. Did the migrations cause a breakdown of culture?
5. Does the shift from Belize being predominantly Black in the 60s to predominantly Mestizo in currently change the meaning of Blackness in Belize?
6. How does American media influence Belize?
7. What has changed since the end of the colonial system?
8. What influence do you think TV has on the youth?
9. Is it hard to find a job in P.G?
10. Do you feel represented by your politicians?
11. What does Obama's Presidency mean to you?

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