

A LOST LATIN AMERICAN LEGACY OF THE FIRST AMERICANS: THE GARIFUNA OF BELIZE¹

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Introduction

This paper considers the Garifuna of Belize, a Central American nation with Caribbean affinities that too often is omitted or marginalized in discussions of Central America and Latin America, as well as the Caribbean. The Garifuna were formerly called the 'Black Carib' in the anthropological literature. Many Garifuna people objected to the term, and have now finally succeeded in getting others to call them what they call themselves. Belizean Garifuna provide a very useful empirical case for exploring:

- 1) the entangling of racial, ethnic and national aspects of social identity,
- 2) the confusion of conventional terminology, demographic terminology and anthropological terminology,
- 3) how 1 and 2 combine to make 'hard facts' such as census data much less 'objective' and 'reliable' than they at first appear.²

As we know here in the United States, having most recently transformed "Afro-Americans" into "African Americans" in ordinary discourse, a rose by any other name does not always smell as sweet. In other words, it *does* make a difference what we call one another; our choice of terminology may have far-reaching consequences. For example, I have always thought that the term "Negro" while viewed by some as an advance over the term "colored," remained tainted by its hapless similarity to the pejorative terms "nigger" and even worse "nigra." In a similar vein in the case of the Garifuna, the term "Carib" bore a comparably unfortunate similarity to the derisive terms "Kerob" and "Kerobee."

Interestingly, these terms of contempt in Belize were wielded most often not *across* a racial gulf as they have been in the U.S. and elsewhere, but rather *among* Black Belizeans, the Afro-Indian Garifuna and the African American Creoles. In the Belizean setting, these corrosive epithets etched differences *within* the Afro-Belizean racial category.³ In the process

of evolving more comfortable, more autonomously inspired modes of reference, however, the term “Garifuna” obscures—for the casual observer at least—one of the most significant aspects of the Garifuna identity: namely their descent racially, culturally, and linguistically from the Carib Indians first encountered by Columbus upon his arrival in the Caribbean 500 years ago.

The Garifuna are the most striking living legacy of the Amerindian population of the Caribbean to have survived into the late twentieth century. The so-called Island Carib Indians assume extraordinary importance because they were among the first of the First Americans encountered by the Europeans. How is it that most of us do not know that at least 200,000 people are still speaking that Amerindian language throughout the Americas five hundred years later? Why are the Garifuna so often overlooked in our discussions of Native America? Can this oversight be related to the marginalization of Belize in regional Latin American discourse? What does this tell us? Where is this leading? What can we conclude from this discussion of:

- 1) the omission of the Garifuna in the consideration of indigenous Americans?
- 2) the marginalization of Belize in Central and Latin America? ⁴

Do we dare at this point to “play the race card?” Is this simply about Belize being historically a Black country and the Garifuna appearing African American? I would respond to my own question with a qualified “yes.” Yes, because race in the Americas is always an issue, whether we want to admit it or not, and yes, because the Blackness of Belize makes it atypical in the region and makes the Garifuna unusual among Native Americans. But I would qualify this strong affirmative response, because this treatment of Belize and the Garifuna is neither simply nor solely about race in some essential or absolute sense. It is a much more complex, dynamic, pervasive, and stubborn snarl.

Demographic Data: Playing the Numbers

Let’s look at some statistics that illustrate this vexing problem. I am drawing my figures from apparently ‘progressive’ journals that take seriously issues of self-determination, sovereignty, individual’s rights and people’s rights. We shall see, however, that even in such publications the attempt to discover the facts by examining demographic statistics—the numbers—is more often part of the problem than it is part of the solution. The two most recent editions of *Report on the Americas* (Volume 25, Numbers 3 and 4) concern themselves respectively with the region’s indigenous population—25(3)—and its peoples of African descent—25(4). Interestingly enough, the issue entitled “The First Nations 1492-1992” has a red cover; the next issue entitled “The Black Americas 1492-1992” has a black cover. This color contrast also highlights another important distinction between the two issues. The designation of ‘first nations’ refers to history, politics and sovereignty among other things. The designation ‘black Americas’ appears to invoke a historically and culturally decontextualized racial or color category and little else.

The reported percentages of native peoples range from a high in Bolivia of 71.2 percent to a low in Uruguay of zero. Belize's Indian population is listed as 9.1 percent (Varese 1992:16). These figures are even more revealing when compared with the equivalent figures for the black population. The report on "The Black Americas"—25(4)—contains a caveat concerning percentages of black population which the author suggests can only be estimated within a range for the following reasons:

Statistics on the Black population in most countries of the Americas are by no means based on uniform criteria. The undifferentiated use of terms like Black, Afro-American, Creole, Mulatto, Garifuna, Black-Indian, African Negro, Afro-East Indian, Zambo, Bush Negro, Antillean Negro, and Black-Carib can lead to serious discrepancies. Brazil's census for example, lists the black population at 5.84 percent, while the *Britannica Yearbook* places it at 33 percent, with similarly drastic gaps for Panama and the Dominican Republic. (Oviedo 1992:19)⁵

The previous issue of this same journal ranks the Brazilian native population at 0.2 percent (325,000) without feeling a comparable need to warn us about the unreliability of these particular statistics (Varese 1992:16). Again we note a disparity in the treatment of demographic features in the "red" issue and in the "black" issue.⁶

The overall figures for black population range from a high in Haiti of 100 percent (some 'white' Haitians might be startled to discover this!) to a low in countries like Mexico (0.5 percent), or Chile and Guatemala where "the presence of Blacks is acknowledged but no figures are given," or Argentina where the vagaries of census and conventional categories have obscured the African presence altogether (Oviedo 1992:19). Significantly Guatemala's indigenous population is listed at 60.3 percent (Varese 1992:16)—does this include Garifuna? In the 9.1 percent Belizean indigenous population figures—which appear to be drawn from the 1960 census!—Garifuna were clearly omitted. They make up almost half of the 17 percent indigenous people reported in the statistics presented in the important issue of *Cultural Survival* on "Central America and the Caribbean" (Palacio 1988: 49). According to the figures used by Davidson and Counce, who have devised a map of Central America showing the distribution of Indians in the region (1988:38-39), out of a grand total of 3,100,000 Indians in Central America, 23,500 of these Indians live in Belize. This includes 11,000 Garifuna, 4,000 Kekchi, 2,700 Mopan, and 5,700 Yucatec. The head of the Caribbean Organization of Indigenous Peoples (COIP) claims an additional 1,000 Garifuna in Belize ten pages later in the same journal (Palacio 1988: 49). The thousands of Garifuna living in the Guatemalan town of Livingston make up the bulk of the 4,500 Garifuna in Guatemala reported in Davidson and Counce's figures (1988: 38). However, they are not represented in Oviedo's Guatemalan data at all despite the explicit discussion of terms referring specifically to the Garifuna.

We can see here exactly how the concern over terminology that began our discussion becomes even more consequential when it is extended to the collection and analysis of census and other demographic data. In addition, certain groups of people, like Garifuna, who fit into neither the conventional nor the scholarly assumptions underlying our notions of identity also

have difficulty being accurately represented in demographic data. In fact, this specific example highlights some of the general problems bedeviling this material and mentioned at the outset of this discussion. Yet, it is possible at least to begin to untangle this snarl a bit.

Untangling the Snarl: Race, Language, Culture, and the Rest

One of the fundamental tenets of American anthropology was introduced over fifty years ago by Franz Boas (1940). His basic injunction is to remember the importance of distinguishing rigorously among these three: race, language, and culture. On the quincentenary of Columbus's incursion into the so-called "New World," we must be mindful of these distinctions as we look for the legacies of the First Americans among the societies, peoples, languages and cultures of the late twentieth century. Even as analysts, our own scholarly images of the "other" are too often hobbled by conventional images which assume simple and unproblematic relationships among the race of the "other," the culture of the "other," and the language of the "other." When the nationality of the "other" is added to this list of relationships, our task as scholars becomes even more daunting.

This confusion continues today despite Boas' recommendation. The scientific notions of these distinctions—race, language, culture (or ethnicity), and nationality—are positively protean, the definitions of the terms frequently fuzzy.⁷ In her 1988 review article, "A Class Act: The Race to Nation Across Ethnic Terrain," Brackette Williams notes the pronounced confusion over the scholarly and analytic uses as well as the conventional lay uses of such terms as race, ethnicity, nationality, and class. Banton also notes a similar leakage between analytic and folk conceptions of race in his *Racial Consciousness* (1988: 1-16). In *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (1986), Anthony Smith explores the epistemological miscegenation between ethnicity and nationality. One of the lessons this Garifuna and Belizean material can teach us is that as analysts we must be able to distinguish between contrasting features of race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, or region (for example) in our analyses while at the same time attending to the way that non-specialists insist on using these terms in a much less rigorous fashion.⁸ In other words, we must account for conventional lay conceptions and the behavior produced by these conceptions while simultaneously remaining aware of the important formal and substantive analytic distinctions that make these related aspects of identity far from identical.

I propose that we look at the Garifuna people as modern day representatives of indigenous Americans, and that we explore the source of the consternation engendered by the phenomenon of Black Americans claiming to be among the autochthonous Americans. Some of the questions we must ask include: Why has so little attention been focused on the interaction of Africans and indigenous peoples in Latin America and throughout the Western hemisphere? Why do we segregate our discussions of race and ethnicity in the Americas so that the nature of ethnic or cultural differences within the African American racial category has received such scant attention? Why has the full significance of Creolization—arguably the single most distinctive and pervasive aspect of all American cultures—been so conscientiously overlooked? Obviously I am raising more questions than I can answer in this brief discussion, but I think there is still much value in asking new and hard questions. It will take *all* of us

much time and thought to come up with mutually satisfying answers that also make sense of our data.

Garifuna are a transnational Afro-Indian people dispersed throughout North America and Middle America, but concentrated along the Atlantic coast of Central America, the Caribbean islands of St. Vincent and Dominica, and several communities in the United States. Of a total population between 200,000 and 300,000, about two-thirds live in the Central American and Caribbean homelands and approximately one-third live in the United States.⁹ Phenotypically, most Garifuna appear Black, but their language and culture proclaim their descent from the original Island Carib Indians encountered by Columbus. A spokesperson for the Caribbean Organization of Indigenous Peoples (COIP) points out that:

Many people assume that the indigenous people in the Caribbean were completely wiped out during the invasion and conquest. However, the populations of Guyana, St. Vincent, Dominica, and Belize contain thousands of indigenous people in addition to many thousands of mixed ancestry. (Palacio 1988)

The COIP was formed by representatives from these four countries "to help coordinate the activities of indigenous people of the English-speaking Caribbean. More specifically, it will inventory information on the cultural aspects of indigenous groups of the region; mobilize groups at the local level ... and establish a communication network" (Wilk 1988: 44). Ignorance about Caribbean indigenous peoples is especially unfortunate because when we eradicate these people from our discussions we repeat Columbus's crime. Speaking generally about indigenous people throughout the Americas, the North American Congress on Latin America echoes the sentiments of the COIP:

Common wisdom holds that Native American cultures are relics of the past, destined to survive only as museum pieces. Underlying this unfortunate meeting point of many on the Left and Right is the belief that Indians are bound to abandon their ethnicity as modernity spreads its tentacles into the outer reaches of the Western world, eradicating the rural, the peasant, the illiterate.... Indigenous peoples have not been assimilated nor have they died out. Nearly forty million are alive today, by most estimates significantly more than in 1492.... Native peoples are hardly passive. In 1990 a nationwide indigenous uprising paralyzed Ecuador. That same year in Canada, Indian activists blocked a constitutional accord and used armed confrontation and civil disobedience to thrust their demands into the center of national debate. [The authors go on to mention that effective Native American resistance movements have also been launched in Bolivia, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Colombia, and Brazil.] Hardly irrelevant to modern life, these movements may be articulating the political struggles of the future. (Report on the Americas 25 (3): 12)

Although we must acknowledge the destruction and subsequent absence of large numbers of indigenous peoples in the Caribbean and many other parts of the Americas, we cannot subsequently proceed to ignore the First Americans or their lasting impact in contemporary discussions of North, South, and Central America, or the Caribbean. Moreover, the example of the Garifuna shows we must also be open-minded and wide-ranging in our search for the lasting impact of these First Americans. We cannot simply round up "the usual suspects"!

The Lesson of the Garifuna

My work on the construction of Garifuna identity has revealed how members of this dispersed community have fashioned their identity in ways that have assured the viability of that identity for centuries and over great distances. The focus of my research is the symbolic construction of identity in both religious and secular ritual settings. One of the foci of my research is an ethnic holiday called Garifuna Settlement Day that falls into the category of so-called "invented traditions." This fifty year old event has become an important national holiday in Belize where it originated, but has also spawned numerous offshoots, including North American celebrations. My work includes comparisons of the Los Angeles and Belizean holidays. During these Settlement Day celebrations, Garifuna assert their claims as indigenous Americans, diasporan people, African Americans, and full-fledged citizens of the various nations in which they reside.

I can only touch on the substance of this research here, but will try to detail some of the insights I have gained during my experience with Garifuna people, because these examples provide potent correctives to some of the oversights of Latin American and Western hemisphere research. For example, my analysis of identity has necessarily evolved to include eclecticism, dynamism, and transnationalism (Macklin n.d.). It is especially difficult to understand the process of identity construction among an Afro-Indian people because our theoretical conceptualization is often handcuffed by an inability to acknowledge blended or syncretized identities as legitimate and authentic. In addition, for both Native Americans and African Americans in many countries throughout the Americas, legal definitions of racial and ethnic classification have also relied on percentages of identity and concepts of pure-bloodedness or full-bloodedness (resulting in notions such as the one-drop definition; labels such as octoroons, quadroons, mulattoes, and Black versus White Creoles).

Just like the blended Afro-Indian quality of their identity, transnationalism challenges the usual conceptualizations of identity. The construction of a truly transnational identity also proves too slippery for the usual analytic grappling hooks. As a diasporan and transnational people, the Garifuna live in different polities in North America, Central America and the Caribbean, but embrace a shared heritage that transcends these national boundaries. All Garifuna claim a common origin on the island of St. Vincent in the early seventeenth century. Belizean Garifuna migrants in Los Angeles, for example, acknowledge their affiliation with other Garifuna from Nicaragua, Honduras, and Guatemala through formal and informal associations. This transnational straddling of political borders has proved to be a wellspring of vitality for Garifuna people.¹⁰ For analysts, however, transnationalism is often a problem too difficult to contain within bounded, territorialized definitions of identity and culture (see

Cultural Anthropology Volume 7, Number 1). Once theory begins to tussle with transnationalism in a sustained manner, however, that same transnationalism so debilitating to neat theoretical constructs may eventually prove to be as much a 'fountain of youth' for our analysis as it has been for people like the Garifuna.

I have also had to look at the complex relationships between language, culture, and race exemplified by the Garifuna. The Garifuna language is so similar to that of the Island Carib speech recorded in the seventeenth century that "with the proper phonetic adjustments" contemporary Garifuna were able to understand a dictionary of Dominican Carib recorded by a French priest between 1635-1653 (Taylor 1951: 38). Culturally—most strikingly in the area of the technologies of fishing and manioc preparation—the legacy of the Amerindian ancestors of the Garifuna is equally irrefutable. In Belize Garifuna also share with Mayans, the other recognized indigenous population, lands set aside under the 'reserve' policy.¹¹ Yet Native Americans, African Americans and European Americans have all objected to the inclusion of groups like the Garifuna in the category of indigenous Americans. In most cases these objections entail some direct or indirect recourse to race, and the sheer blackness of Garifuna people proves to be a stumbling block that cannot always be removed either by their Amerindian language, or their legal and political treatment as indigenous, or the Amerindian elements of their culture.

The Lesson of Belize

Belize is striking in its own right, because of its racial and ethnic complexity as well as its self-conscious construction of and celebration of an explicitly multicultural nation. There are numerous examples of the forthright official Belizean promotion of pluralism that contrast sharply with the more assimilationist history of official U.S. attitudes toward diversity. The Belizean policy on diversity may also be compared to that of her Central American neighbors, although here the contrast is not quite as sharp as with the United States. One of the most obvious contrasts springs from Belize's British colonial past and its history as a Black country. Thus the ideology of "*mestizaje*" must deal not only with the Belizean Amerindian population as well as Spanish speaking (*mestizo*) Belizeans, but, in this setting, racial blending and pluralism must also include the other important ethnic and racial elements in a total population of well under two hundred thousand (see Figure 1: Belize Population by Ethnic Groups).

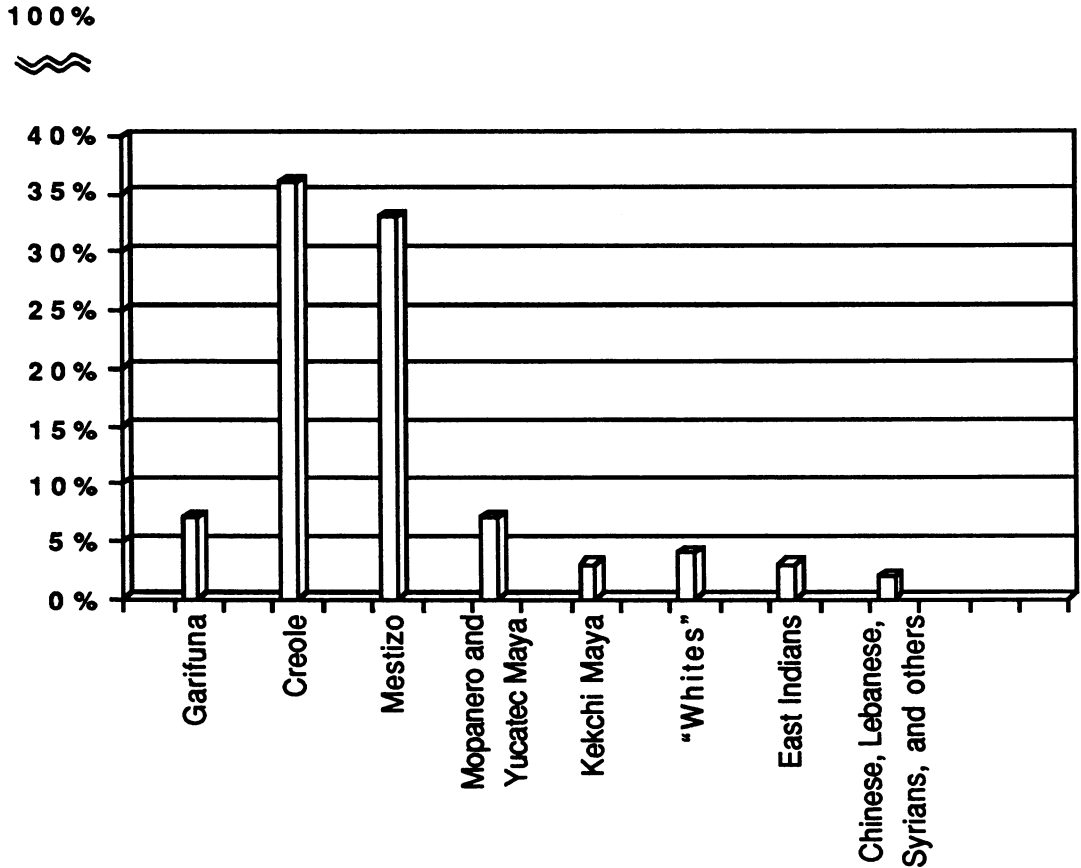


Figure 1: Belize Population by Ethnic Group*

* Since I have not yet obtained the results of the 1990 census, these figures are based on Bolland's figures from the 1980 census (Bolland 1986) and what I believe to be reasonable adjustments reflecting the demographic trends of the past ten years. The "White" category includes Belize's traditionally isolated German-speaking Mennonite communities as well as very fair-skinned Belizeans who might be differently classified in categorizations such as ours in the United States. The Mestizo category includes not only the descendants of long term Spanish-speaking residents of Belize, but also the recent Spanish-speaking arrivals fleeing the conflicts in neighboring Central American countries (especially El Salvador).

The new Belizean capital, Belmopan, makes liberal use of Mayan monumental architectural themes and patterns in a manner similar to the Mexican use of Mayan motifs, especially in museum architecture. In Belize, as in other parts of Central America, the

glorification of the ancestral Maya does not yet necessarily reflect any corresponding elevation of contemporary Belizean Maya. Statues were commissioned representing the five (!) major ethnic groups of Belize and installed on the road that runs from the international airport into Belize City just barely in time to welcome visiting dignitaries arriving for the tenth anniversary of independence in 1991. Belizeans explicitly compared these figures to similar ones in Mexico. Of course, with representations of Mestizo, Mayan, Creole, Garifuna, and East Indian Belizeans, international visitors are already encountering a veritable swarm of statuary even without the inclusion of the numerous other Belizean ethnic and racial groups such as the Chinese, 'Arabs,' or Mennonites! If all the different Belizean groups were represented, this gaggle of sculptures would probably force the traffic off the road!

The concept of racial mixing in Belize must include the African component along with the Amerindian and Spanish elements; the concept of creolization would be invoked more frequently than that of *mestizaje*. For Belize, however, mixing is also used to describe the very nature of the particular Belizean brand of pluralism itself, as well as the romantic and conjugal relationships among contemporary men and women from distinct Belizean groups, and the allegedly unique character of Belizean social life and interaction. Many Belizeans believe this mixing process is accelerating.

In addition, since three of these five major Belizean groups are of blended identity by definition—Creole, Garifuna, and Mestizo—the quality of being mixed, blended, or syncretized can metaphorically stand for Belizean nationality. Moreover, any one of these mixed groups, their language, or cultural heritage, can (at least potentially) metonymically stand for the whole country as well. For example, the official motto of the 1981 independence celebrations was the Creole English phrase "Ya da fu we"—basically a down home Belizean version of "this land is our land." The use of Creole provided a point of contrast with the Queen's English and encoded the dissolution of colonial status. Interestingly, although the roots of Creole are specific to a particular Belizean ethnic group and emphasize African and British heritages, Creole's status as an informal lingua franca superseded the specific provenance of the language. Thus "Ya da fu we" becomes a folksy, generically, authentically *Belizean* way of asserting sovereign claims to territorial integrity through the medium—the Belizean Creole language—as well as the message that this is their country¹².

Obviously such official pronouncements only go so far, and some would argue that they simply obscure the real inequities that *do* structure Belizean society. Nevertheless, even these official pronouncements contrast with the United States' history of institutional racism and genocide, and ambivalence about pluralism. There are also significant contrasts with other Central American nations, although here the rhetoric, at least, often acknowledges *mestizaje* more explicitly than the U.S. attitude toward racial admixture. In addition to the previously mentioned distinctions between Belize and some other Central American nations—the inclusion of African elements, the greater number of acknowledged distinct groups, the more faithful espousal of a Belizean identity with a mixed identity—Belizeans explicitly describe themselves and their country as more tolerant and less racist than other Central American neighbors.

For example, Garifuna and Maya Belizeans who frequently have ties of kinship and friendship with their counterparts on the Guatemalan side of the border, are among the first to detail the relative advantages of their status as Belizeans. Much of the opposition to

Guatemalan irredentism came not only from fears about threats to Belizean sovereignty and self-determination, but also from the perception that Guatemala was marred by a climate of brutal racial intolerance and discrimination. The specter of Guatemalan domination was seen as especially disastrous for Black Belizeans who feared that the Guatemalan mistreatment of Amerindians foreboded even worse prospects for people of African descent.¹³

In newly independent Belize, the sins of institutionalized racism and genocide are assigned to the era of colonial history and British and/or European control. The blame for contemporary legacies of these transgressions also redounds to the erstwhile colonial masters, and one of the most important tasks of the “new” nation of Belize is to right these wrongs and heal the wounds. Both the official policies of Belize and the level of diversity—so many distinctions of an ethnic, racial, religious, regional, and linguistic nature contained within such a small population—create a national setting that contrasts in many important ways with Belize’s Latin American and North American neighbors.

Conclusions

The Belizean Garifuna example has exculpated certain of the ‘etic’ sins of our investigation of the identity of the First Americans by revealing how vital it is to tease out race, culture, language, and nationality so that each is a discrete unit of analysis. The inclusion of the Afro-Indian Garifuna also corrects the myopic habit of omitting African Americans when we look at Native America and at the processes of racial and cultural syncretism in Latin America—whether we focus on *mestizaje* or creolization. The Belizean example also provides important points of contrast and similarity to the ways in which other Latin American countries handle these African and Amerindian identities in their national policies. How significant are these findings to issues of broader concern in the region? Is Belize so atypical that its marginalization or omission in the regional Central and Latin American discourse can be justified? Are the Garifuna so unique that they have nothing to teach us?

At first glance the Garifuna of Belize might seem unlikely candidates to represent typically Latin American themes with their “odd” amalgamated non-white identity, their so recently independent, relentlessly plural home nation, their unusual mixed, syncretized, and transnational heritage. Yet for exactly those “odd” reasons, I would argue that the Garifuna and Belize can be more productively viewed as prototypically Latin American rather than atypical. They embody the processes of culture change, culture contact, and culture creation that are truly the hallmark of the Latin American region. Belizean Garifuna are unusual primarily in the accessibility they provide in documenting these processes, not in their manifestation of the processes themselves. The addition of African Americans to a discussion which in Latin America usually concerns itself with the interplay among indigenous (Amerindian), European, and mestizo elements must come as a welcome and appropriate acknowledgment of the importance of including peoples of African descent in our analyses (see Bryce-Laporte 1992; Whitten 1976; Whitten and Torres 1992).

These same cultural processes that give us Belize, Garifuna, and Belizean Garifuna may sometimes be harder to detect, but are widespread throughout the Caribbean, Central America, and all the Americas. Until we begin to acknowledge the fundamentally eclectic, syncretic

nature of the entire Western hemisphere, we will be impeded in our understanding of the most interesting phenomena in this most interesting and truly novel "New World."

Notes

- 1 In this paper, the following terms are used interchangeably: 'First Americans,' 'Native Americans,' 'indigenous Americans,' 'Amerindians,' 'Indians,' 'autochthonous Americans,' and 'first nations.' This egregious lack of rigor reflects both the plethora of terms used in everyday language as well as scholarly language, and the politically charged environment which assures that just as each of these terms has virtues which recommend it, each also has flaws and potentially negative implications for the groups it is used to describe. I intend no disrespect in my use of these various terms, and apologize in advance to anyone who may find any of the terms offensive, or who may prefer terminology not even included in this casual survey.
- 2 This paper is based on long-term fieldwork conducted among Garifuna in Belize and among Belizean Garifuna in Los Angeles. I began in 1971 with an investigation of aspects of traditional Garifuna religion (Macklin 1972), and have come to include the investigation of ritual and symbolic dimensions of identity formation and transnationalism. The many organizations that supported this research are acknowledged in Macklin 1972, 1986. A University of California at Berkeley Chancellor's Postdoctoral Fellowship has also facilitated the preparation of this article.
- 3 This discussion reflects the type of discourse that prevails when Afro-Belizean racial solidarity is at its nadir, but changes over time and space produce a highly variable degree of Black Belizean racial identification. The status of the Black Belizean racial category is actually quite complicated. In Belize, this potentially unifying racial identification must compete with crosscutting distinctions of ethnic, religious, linguistic, regional, and class differences that are encompassed by an Afro-Belizean categorization. In addition, these distinctions provide points of similarity with other non-Black Belizeans. Garifuna, for instance, share regional affinities with other non-Black groups in southern Belize such as Kekchi and Mopan Maya, who can embrace a common Amerindian heritage with these Afro-Indians. Garifuna also share a religious affiliation with other non-Black Catholic Belizeans such as the Yucatec Maya and 'Spanish' (mestizo) Belizeans. Recent demographic trends—especially racially specific patterns of in-migration and out-migration—have also changed the Belizean picture somewhat. As the proportion of Blacks in the total Belizean population appears to decline, to a certain degree, the sense of racial identification among the remaining Afro-Belizeans may be strengthened.
- 4 The Caribbean is likewise frequently omitted and excluded in the Latin American region. Similarly, the other Americas are often omitted from U.S. discussions of what is American.
- 5 Please note that three of the troubling terms—Garifuna, Black-Carib, and Black-Indian—all refer specifically to the people who are the subjects of this paper. Garifuna people provide the kind of real world examples which regularly and immediately expose the deficiencies in our 'scholarly,' 'objective,' 'theoretical,' and/or 'scientific' approaches!

- 6 It should be noted that Varese and Oviedo show some sensitivity to the contextualized social and cultural aspects of identity that may conflict with sometimes Eurocentric theory and assumptions. The particulars of demographic data appear much more problematic in the presentation of the African American material, however.
- 7 Cultural differences are being equated with ethnicity or ethnic differences for the purposes of this discussion. While there is most often significant overlap, in practice these terms may be used to refer to quite distinct phenomena.
- 8 Obviously there are other significant aspects of identity omitted from this list—most notably class and gender. While I cannot deny the crucial importance of these factors, I am unable to deal with these additional elements here.
- 9 These figures are compiled from estimates made by Davidson and Counce (1988), Palacio (n.d.), and Gonzalez (1979).
- 10 Obviously, the extensive migration involved in the creation of a transnational identity also entails real pitfalls and threats to the integrity of any such group. I do not mean to minimize these hazards. My aim here is to part company with the characterization of transnational communities as precarious and fragile, and look instead towards the supple resiliency, diverse options, and sheer potential embodied in these communities.
- 11 This set aside program is in many fortunate and unfortunate ways similar to the United States policy of reservations for American Indian peoples.
- 12 These claims of ‘authenticity’ reflect the perceptions and use of the concept as I observed it in 1981 among Belizeans during the independence celebrations. At this point, I am not tackling the thorny analytic problems of authenticity and national identity that must be handled in anthropological analysis, although I hope to wrestle with this very formidable opponent in future work.
- 13 This would, of course, include Creole as well as Garifuna Belizeans.

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