

Authentic African Culture in Honduras? Afro-Central Americans Challenge
Honduran Indo-Hispanic Mestizaje

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In April of 1997, the Garifuna commemorated the 200th year anniversary of their arrival to the shores of Central America with the Garifuna Bicentennial Celebration in La Ceiba, Honduras. The week-long event included cultural performances, art exhibits, and symposia meant to display the unique origins of the Garifuna as maroons who escaped slavery to mix with native Caribs on the Caribbean island of St. Vincent, forming an Afro-Indigenous culture in the 1600s that existed outside of the Caribbean plantation slavery system. The Garifuna were exiled from this island homeland in 1797 by the British, who shipped them to the Caribbean coast of Central America where they established villages in Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. The arrival of these Garifuna ancestors to the shores of Central America was re-enacted on the final day of the Bicentennial, along with the erection of a statue of the "paramount chief" Satuye, who perished while resisting the British on St. Vincent. Like many of the Bicentennial events, this final substantiation in metal of a founding father/hero served to emphasize the roots of the Garifuna as a people in St. Vincent, uniting them as an ethnic nation through a common culture, language, and ancestral homeland that is both of the Americas and deeply connected to Africa.

Though this history on St. Vincent allows the Garifuna to claim both Native American and African ancestry, the Bicentennial was clearly a celebration of blackness. The pervading aesthetic of the event was an identification with the African Diaspora as evidenced in the abundance of dreadlocks, cowry shell earrings, Senegalese clothing, and Bob Marley T-shirts, alongside the usual Nike high tops, basketball jerseys, Tommy Hilfiger shirts, and other attire associated with the African American youth culture already popular among Garifuna transmigrants returning from the US. Participants traveled from Central and South America and the US representing Garifuna, Afro-Latino, and African-American organizations to speak on panels dealing with issues of racism, land expropriation, economic development, and political empowerment. In his opening address the president of the National Coordinator of Black

Organizations in Honduras (which co-coordinated the event with the Bicentennial Committee of the US, based in New York City) told the audience that the Bicentennial served as an opportunity for Garifuna to recognize a common history of discrimination and marginalization with other blacks in the Americas, and to form economic and political alliances that would empower them in the current era of globalization. Within this call to political and cultural affinity among blacks of the Americas however, the Garifuna were often represented as being the most "authentic" blacks in the Americas due to their history as a free people whose culture had not developed under the yoke of slavery. Indeed the featured report on the Bicentennial appearing in *Diaspora: A Global Black Magazine* (published in New York City) consistently lauded the Garifuna as having "authentic African culture in its untouched and undiluted form" (John-Sandy 1997:27), a bastion of cultural, spiritual, and linguistic conservation, a shining example to all members of the African Diaspora looking for real African culture in the Americas.

Two days after the grand finale of the Bicentennial an editorial appeared in the Honduran newspaper *El Tiempo*, written by Rodolfo Pastor Fasquelle, the Honduran Minister of Culture. In response to the obvious afrocentricity of the Bicentennial he wrote:

(I must) remind the Garifuna where they come from. One cannot invent oneself according to ones whim or preference. To try to pass as African is just as questionable for a Garifuna as it would be for [President] Carlos Roberto Reina to dress like a Lenca or for me to presume to be a Briton or a Pech Indian just because I have these ancestors. Like all other Hondurans, the Garifuna are mestizos, from the Arawak Indian and the African black. To pass as the product of just one of these ancestors is to falsify ones identity, to forget the other complimentary component, to betray the ancestors which they are trying to erase from their collective historical birth certificate. To locate ones identity in history is easy but absolutely insufficient (Monday, April 14, 1997).

In the current moment in which Latin American states are espousing a politics of multiculturalism that celebrates cultural difference, why would the Minister of Culture be concerned with the growing tendency of Garifuna organizations to identify with blackness, while minimizing their indigenous heritage? Why does it matter whether the Garifuna locate their identity in Africa, St. Vincent, or Central America; as black, indigenous, or mestizo? What are

the political stakes involved in this excavation of history and construction of identity for Garifuna social movements?

These comments must be understood as taking place at a time when both black and indigenous organizations in Honduras have become increasingly vocal in demanding the legal protection and titling of community lands, bilingual education, economic opportunities, political representation, and the protection of basic human rights. The most dramatic displays of this activism have been a series of marches on the capital, in which indigenous and black organizations (sometimes jointly and sometimes separately) have mobilized busloads of protesters from their villages, camped for days in the central plaza, burned effigies of Columbus, and carried out religious rituals for the ancestors in front of the presidential palace. Indeed the Bicentennial was much more than a celebration of ethnic nationalism, but was also a time to make public the political and economic demands of Garifuna organizations *vis-à-vis* Central American states. This activism and these spectacles of cultural difference have brought the issues of racial discrimination and multiculturalism to the fore of national debate, challenging the formerly hegemonic elite, academic, and state ideology that Honduras is a homogenous mestizo nation, where race is not an issue of social concern. Pressured by indigenous and black activism from below, and by an international political arena from above increasingly sympathetic to the plight of "indigenous and tribal" peoples in the world, the Honduran state has responded with a series of gestures towards recognizing Honduras as a multi-ethnic nation and towards protecting the economic, cultural, and human rights of ethnic peoples.

Though "ethnic rights" have been extended to all of the eight groups considered to be ethnic in Honduras (this includes six indigenous groups, the Garifuna, and the Bay Island Black Creoles), the place of blacks in the ideological debate around cultural difference and national identity in Honduras has been ambivalent and contradictory due to the persistence of an ideology of mestizaje that has tried to erase blackness from the national identity. Though Honduran mestizaje recognizes Africans as one of the three racial confluence present in the colonial period contributing to the modern mestizo, this element of the national racial/cultural subject is

minimized. Rather, the Honduran national subject is presented as primarily a result of the fusion of the indigenous with the Spanish, generating an "indo-hispanic mestizaje" that promotes a celebration of the indigenous/autochthonous as the roots of the national identity. This notion of being the original inhabitants, the roots of the nation is currently the basis upon which ethnic groups in Honduras are able to claim rights to land and cultural autonomy vis-à-vis a state that is trying to reinscribe multiculturalism into a new nationalist project. This has interesting consequences for Afro-Hondurans who are organizing alongside indigenous peoples, claiming rights as ethnic "nations" with roots in the nation-state of Honduras, while simultaneously stressing their alliance with a global racial identity of blackness. As the Minister of Culture's comments imply, locating Garifuna roots in Africa or St. Vincent proves risky for claiming rights in a country where blackness is still located outside of the national identity. Consequently, the way that Garifuna organizations have articulated their identity vis-à-vis Honduran national society and state reactions to these discourses of identity provide an interesting case for understanding the multiple and contradictory ways that mestizaje operates as a nationalist discourse in Honduras.

In this paper we trace the politics of identity among Honduran Garifuna social movements, comparing it with those of indigenous groups and other Afro-Hondurans. We argue that the debates around Garifuna identity reveal tensions between the tropes of "indianness," "blackness," "mestizaje," and "hondureño" as metaphors of sameness and difference, state nationalism and ethnic nationalism, belonging and exclusion. Each of these tropes is mobilized at different moments in the negotiation of rights vis-à-vis the Honduran state and international organizations. We argue that because state discourses of Honduran mestizaje have tried to erase blackness from the national identity, Garifuna and other Afro-Honduran social movements have been forced to articulate their demands vis-à-vis the state in terms of "autochthony." At the same time, the experience of being racialized as "black" throughout the transnational space of the Garifuna diaspora, has contributed to the persistence of an identification with a global racial blackness. This leads to two competing notions of blackness among contemporary Garifuna: that

of a traditional people, bearers of an authentic tradition inherited from Africa; and that of a modern people, participants in a global black popular culture. Both versions challenge Honduran indo-hispanic mestizaje, but carry different political implications in the struggle for empowerment in an age of globalization in which local identities and political consciousness are formed within both national and transnational spaces.

Afro-Hondurans in Historical Perspective

Before discussing the specifics of Garifuna social movements, it is helpful to understand the complexity of Afro-Honduran history as a whole. Though the word "*negro*" is usually assumed to denote the Garifuna because they are the largest and most visible group, Afro-Hondurans are actually quite diverse representing several different histories of arrival to Honduras, levels of assimilation to mestizo society, and current configurations of culture and language.

The first Africans to arrive to Honduras were brought as early as 1540 as slaves to replace the rapidly declining population of indigenous slaves working in the mines of the interior (Leiva Vivas 1987). By the 1600s, many of these African slaves had escaped and mixed in with other "uprooted" elements of the population (indigenous peoples dispossessed of land, poor whites, and freed blacks) to form a group the colonial administration referred to as the *castas*- a range of all the possible mixtures of these three races including *ladinos*, *mestizos*, *mulatos*, and *zambos* (McLeod 1973)¹. This free-floating population was generally hired as muleteers, plantation overseers, cattle-herders, and other positions that placed them on the margins of both the colonial power of the Spaniards and the "closed corporate communities" of the remaining indigenous peoples. Honduran historians have generally used this uprooted condition to explain both the "natural" miscegenation of the population during the colonial period and the eventual formation of a homogeneous mestizo culture (cf. Arancibia 1991, Barahona 1991, Otero 1963).

¹ "Ladino" referred to the mixed population in general that had acculturated to the Spanish language and culture. "Mestizo" referred to a mixture of indigenous and Spanish, "mulato" to black and Spanish, and "zambo" to indigenous and black.

Though these early arrivals from African are assumed to have assimilated completely, today there are a sizable number of people in the department of Olancho (a center of gold mining and cattle ranching) that would be considered black by US standards. They do not however identify as such but rather as mestizo (Bueso in Centeno 1997, Lang 1951).

A second important stream of Africans arriving to Honduras were brought by British settlers to the Bay of Honduras in the 1600 and 1700s. Though British activity in the Bay of Honduras was mainly centered around trade with the indigenous population and logging, there were a few attempts at settling on the islands and the Caribbean coast for plantation and subsistence agriculture (Naylor 1989). This introduced slaves onto the north coast, many of whom mixed with the Miskito Indians, forming a group referred to as the Zambo Miskito. Today the Miskito consider themselves to be purely indigenous, denying this African heritage (Helms 1977). A more important group arriving as a result of Anglo presence were the ancestors of the people today referred to as the Negros de Habla Ingles (Black Creoles) inhabiting the Bay Islands. These blacks were freedmen from the Cayman Islands who migrated to the Bay Islands in the 1840s, following on the heels of a number of white Cayman Islanders (Davidson 1974). In 1860 Honduras was given sovereignty over the Bay Islands by the British, but it was not until the middle of the 1990s that the islands began to be "hispanicized" through state assimilationist policies and mestizo migration to the islands (Davidson 1984). The Black Creoles of the Bay Islands are today distinguished as an ethnic group for their racial difference from the mestizos as blacks, and their cultural difference as English-speaking Protestants. There has been practically no ethnographic research conducted with this population.

The third major stream is that constituted by the Garifuna. Born of the fusion of African maroons and Carib Indians on the Caribbean island of St. Vincent in the 1600s, the Garifuna (or Black Caribs as they were known) were exiled from that island in 1797 by the British. They were then dumped on Roatan, one of the Bay Islands, from which they made their way to the mainland and established villages all along the coast from Belize to Nicaragua. In the 1800s, Anglo travelers described Garifuna villages as "jealously guarded" spaces of cultural autonomy where

the economic and cultural life of St. Vincent was reproduced (Young 1971[1847]). Women cultivated plantains, manioc, and other tubers, while men engaged in fishing and artesanry. On this relatively isolated coast, Garifuna were able to continue to speak the Garifuna language, practice polygyny, ancestor rituals involving trance and possession, and other cultural practices that Honduran state functionaries and missionaries evidently found distasteful and primitive (Beaucage 1970, Coehlo 1955, Alvarado Garcia 1958, Gonzalez 1988).

At the same time, however, Garifuna men were increasingly drawn into wage labor in British logging camps in the Mosquitia and Belize, and later in the 1900s to the banana plantations and ports of the multinational fruit companies in Honduras. In the 1940s many Garifuna men were hired as merchant marines by the United Fruit Co. which took them to countries around the world and to such US port cities as New Orleans, New York, Boston, and Houston (Gonzalez 1988). In the 1960s many Honduran Garifuna settled in these cities, primarily New York, and later brought their wives and children, initiating the current transnational migration circuit between the US and Central America. Today the majority of Honduran Garifuna transmigrants live in Black Harlem and the Hispanic Caribbean-dominated South Bronx. Many men in Honduras continue to work on tourist ships and fishing boats that travel throughout the Caribbean and the north coast port cities. As a result, Garifuna society has generally been more outwardly oriented towards the Caribbean and the US than inwardly towards Honduran national society (Beaucage 1989), forming a part of what Gilroy (1993) calls the Black Atlantic.

Despite this historically outward orientation, Garifuna are more hispanicized and integrated into national life now than before the 1950s when only a handful of Garifuna lived in the capital city and before much state infrastructure had reached the villages. Today more men and women reside in the cities of Honduras where they work in the service sector and increasingly as professionals as more are able to seek higher education financed in large part by remittances sent by family in the US. Similarly, villages are much less isolated as they become connected to the rest of the country through infrastructure, increasing mestizo migration to the

north coast, and the growing Caribbean coast tourist industry. Yet this integration into national society has not resulted in the disappearance of Garifuna language and culture nor in an erasure of an aesthetic and political identification with blackness.

The final stream contributing to the Afro-Honduran population is that of the West Indian Blacks brought to work on the plantations of the multinational fruit companies at the turn of this century. Like Bay Island Creoles they speak English and are Protestant, but unlike Creoles and Garifuna they were present in Honduras as temporary workers, vulnerable to the immigration policies of the Honduran state. These workers were protected only by the Anglo companies that had brought them there, companies famous for mobilizing racial ideologies in order to segregate the racially diverse work force and prevent worker unity (Bourgeois 1989, Echeverri-Gent 1992). During the 1930s world depression when production was reduced, many of the West Indian workers were repatriated. Some, however, settled in the port towns of Tela, Cortez, and La Ceiba, and a few settled as farmers and ranchers around Garifuna villages. In the 1950s many migrated to New York City through fruit company connections, leaving few remaining in Honduras.

Today the Garifuna and the Bay Island Black Creoles are the only Afro-Hondurans considered to be ethnic groups who have preserved a racial and cultural difference from the mestizo and are associated with particular "ancestral" territories. In the realm of identity politics, the relation of the Garifuna to the Black Creoles has been one of affinity *and* distance revealing the "inescapable difference of the black subject" despite ideas of essential racial affiliation (Gilroy 1991). As Afro-Hondurans the two groups have a history of organizing together against racial discrimination. Indeed the seeds of Afro-Honduran activism can be found as early as 1958 when workers active in the north coast unions founded La Sociedad Cultural Abraham Lincoln in La Ceiba in order to defend the rights of students and workers who felt they had been the victims of racial discrimination. In the 1970s some of the prominent members of La Sociedad Lincoln founded La Organización Fraternal Negro Hondureño (OFRANEH) (Fraternal Black Honduran Organization) which is still active. Both La Sociedad Lincoln and OFRANEH articulated

Garifuna identity clearly in terms of being black and were heavily influenced by the US Civil Rights movement and later African-American struggle (Centeno 1997).²

Despite this common experience of being consistently racialized as blacks, relations between the two groups have also been ambivalent. As plantation workers and stevedores in the port cities, Garifuna and Black Creoles often competed for jobs and the favor of the fruit companies. In both Honduras and Belize, ethnographers have noted the persistence of ethnic stereotypes among the two groups, where the Black Creoles consider the rural lifestyle, indigenous language, and religious practices of the Garifuna to be more primitive than their own Anglicized culture. The Garifuna, on the other hand, see the Black Creoles as inauthentic blacks who have taken on the culture of the colonizer (Beaucage 1989, Coehlo 1955, Cosminsky and Scrimshaw 1976). Though both groups have suffered racial discrimination in mestizo nation-states whose erasure of blackness from the national identity has led these organizations to locate their roots and identity in Africa rather than within the national societies of their residence, the Garifuna consider their connection to Africa to be more direct than other blacks. In fact some Garifuna leaders, influenced by the work of Ivan Van Sertima (1976), have argued that the Garifuna are actually the descendants of Africans who arrived to the Caribbean in the 1300s of their own accord, thereby placing them squarely within pre-Colombian history and bypassing the creolization process suffered by other Africans in the Americas. In this way they can claim to be both of the African Diaspora, and yet models of African cultural authenticity.

Ironically it is this very same ability to claim "pure" culture and language, conserved and unassimilated, what Garifuna leaders refer to as a "cultura autóctona" as opposed to a "cultura adquirida" (which is what they claim Black Creoles and mestizos have) that has also enabled them to claim autochthonous status in Central America. Unlike other Afro-Hondurans the

² This is probably due to the fact that many Garifuna merchant marines in the 1950s and 1960s were based out of the US southern ports like New Orleans and Mobile where they experienced segregation and the milieu of the civil rights movement. Later, many of these same Garifuna settled in Harlem in the 1970s during the time of Malcolm X and the Black Panthers. Most of the older Garifuna migrants and merchant marines I interviewed said they never were directly involved in these struggles, however information about the racism of the US and African-American struggle necessarily spread.

Garifuna have been classified as indigenous at least since the 1860s when they are listed (as *morenos*) along with other "*indios selváticos*" of the north coast and the Mosquitia in legislation promoting their integration into national society (Alvarado Garcia 1958: 19-20). At the same time, however, their blackness, history of association with the British, orientation towards the Caribbean, and involvement in wage labor in the plantations and abroad differentiates Garifuna from the model of the isolated and primordial Indian. As a result they have an ambivalent place within Honduran national ideology of mestizaje where "indianness" and "blackness" carry different connotations for national identity. Garifuna slip in and out of these two categories, sometimes inscribed within nationalist discourse and sometimes excluded, revealing the multiple and contradictory meanings of mestizaje.

Blackness, Indianness, and Mestizaje

The Honduran is, ethnically, the result of a total and complete fusion of the three races: Spanish, autochthonous, and African, who have populated the territory of Honduras, which has contributed to giving the Honduran a great racial and spiritual homogeneity, and, as a consequence, has favored national integration, without there being, as in other iberoamerican countries, an 'Indian problem', that is to say, the assimilation of the autochthonous race. [The results of mestizaje have been] that race has stopped being a differential factor not only in the political arena, but also in the economic arena and also in the social arena such that the pigmentation of the skin as a means of differentiation is something totally alien to the Honduran mentality (Otero 1963: 21-22).

Hay pues en la historia primitiva ocultos tesoros mentales, que hoy debemos buscar como diamantes perdidos entre los despojos aletargados de tan ilustre prosapia. Tal elemento indígena, que encierra una interrogación aún no contestada por los etnólogos, es en nuestro país el *elemento predominante de la constitución de la Patria Hondureña* (original emphasis). Por otra parte, la sangre española, hidalga, valiente y generosa, que ha escrito páginas inmortales, gloriosas e inimitables en la cultural mundial, *constituye la otra columna* (original emphasis) en que descansa en Honduras y en la mayoría de los países hispano-americanos la estructura de la nacionalidad (Dr. Aguilar Paz, Decano de la Facultad de Farmacia y Ciencias Químicas de la Universidad Autónoma de Honduras, quoted in Lang 1951:210).

No contentos [las compañías bananeras] con arrebatar el salario y hacer vivir en pésimas condiciones a nuestros hermanos, nos vienen a introducir una raza inferior y nociva a nuestra causa; por el honor, por patriotismo y por el bien de nuestro hermoso suelo que en breve será todo negro, si no se toma enérgicas medidas. Deben los poderes públicos tomar medidas drásticas, a fin de rechazar esos inmigrantes onerosos en todo sentido para el país. El sindicato de "Zapateros y Talabarteros" celoso defensor de los intereses del trabajador nacional protesta enérgicamente contra semejante atentado, y nos disponemos, si para ello hubiera necesidad a lanzar esa langosta negra (quoted in Posas 1981:7).

As in other Latin American countries, mestizaje is the dominant nationalist ideology in Honduras, constructed by elite at the turn of the 20th century embroiled in the process of nation-

building. The mestizo is posited as resulting from the "natural" miscegenation of the three races (European, Indian, and African) during the colonial period leading to the formation of a racially and culturally homogeneous nation long before the formation of the Honduran state. Though this mestizaje includes Africans as having contributed to the racial make-up of the population, the ideological place of "blackness" and "indianness" within this nationalist ideology is different due to hegemonic European notions of race, nation, and modernity.

Latin American elite saw both Indians and Africans as embodying savagery and lack of civilization, living in a permanent state of backwardness as opposed to the image of the rational, civilized, progressive European. These characteristics were seen as connected to blood, inherited and unchangeable except through a miscegenation that would lead to the gradual whitening of the population (C. Smith 1997, Wade 1993, Williams 1991). In the wake of debates about the effects of this racial diversity on national identity, Latin American elite initially argued for white immigration to improve the nation with the blood of a people who they accepted as naturally inclined towards modernity and progress. Yet this blatant mimicry of Anglo ideologies of racial superiority came to be contested in a post-colonial era of nation formation where it was understood that to be legitimate, each nation-state should arise from a primordial cultural and racial identity corresponding to the territory of the state (A. Smith 1986, Chatterjee 1986). As Wade (1993) has argued, the challenge for the Latin American elite was how to be considered modern within the international hierarchy of nations in which modernity is considered to be innately linked to European blood and culture, while at the same time to have an autochthonous identity that arises from the very national territory itself. This modernist dilemma was resolved in many Latin American nations by promoting the idea of *mestizaje*- a racial and cultural identity that is uniquely Latin American where "blacks and especially indians were romanticized as part of a more or less glorious past, but the future held for them paternalistic guidance towards integration, which also ideally meant more race mixture and perhaps the eventual erasure of blackness and indianness from the nation" (Wade 1993: 11). Thus mestizaje is both an ideology of racial democracy, inclusive of all races in the formation of a homogeneous nation; and

simultaneously an ideology of discrimination as this homogeneous nation is to ideally be whiter rather than darker, with indigenous and black racial and cultural difference reduced to mere emblems of the nation, relegated to a distant past superseded by the modern mestizo.

Wade also points out that even though both Africans and Indians are accorded a place in mestizaje, the indigenous is usually privileged as the primary emblem of the roots of national identity. This is useful to nation-building because it unites the autochthony of the Indian (linking the nation to the national territory), with the culture of the European (linking the state to the culture of western civilization and modernity). Blacks were more problematic as national symbols because at the time they were neither seen to represent modernity nor autochthony, and their history of dislocation from Africa means they have no great pre-Colombian civilization in the Americas to call upon as symbols of a glorious past. Thus Latin American states often end up with a primarily "indo-hispanic" mestizaje where the Indian is privileged as the roots of the nation and blackness is either minimized (as in Colombia cf. Wade 1993) or erased completely (as in Mexico cf. Knight 1990).³

Dario Euraque (1997) argues that government efforts to present the Honduran population as a homogenous mestizo nation with little racial and cultural diversity began in the late 1920s and early 1930s in the context of the growing economic and political power of the Anglo-dominated multinational fruit companies. He shows that the 1910 national census included a wide range of racialized categories such as *ladino* (61.1%), *indios* (16.2%), *mestizos* (9.6%), *blancos* (5%), *negros* (3.4%), *mulatos* (3.3%), and *amarillos* (1.3%) reflecting both the racial diversity inherited from the colonial period and the growing number of immigrants attracted to the north coast by employment and entrepreneurial opportunities in the enclaves of the fruit companies (Euraque 1997:154). In the 1920s this racial diversity became an issue of national debate, especially around those races perceived of as undesirable. Black West Indians especially bore the brunt of an incipient racialized nationalist discourse articulated by both mestizo

³ The main exceptions to this are Brazil and Cuba, where there has been more glorification of African ancestry and integration of blackness into national identity in a manner parallel to indigenismo in other Latin American countries (Wade 1993: 34).

plantation workers with whom they competed for jobs, and by Honduran elite balking at the imperialistic power of the fruit companies. Both sectors argued that blacks were not only a threat to employment opportunities for "Honduran" (mestizo) workers but also were a threat to the "blood" of the nation and to the image of Honduras in the "world community of nations." This resulted in strikes lead by mestizo-dominated unions demanding the repatriation of West Indians workers and to restrictions on further immigration of blacks, Arabs, and "coolies" often stated in explicitly racist language (Argueta 1992, Echeverri-Gent 1992, Euraque 1997, Posas 1981).

In 1930 this racial diversity was "sanitized" by removing the categories of *ladino* and *mulato* and collapsing those who had been in those categories into the category of *mestizo*, such that the term *mestizo* came to represent the majority of the population. Euraque argues that the term *ladino* originally meant anyone of any mixture of races who had been acculturated to Spanish culture and language, but in collapsing it into the category of *mestizo* (hegemonically understood as combination of indigenous and Spanish blood), the two terms become synonymous. He sees this as evidence of the elite promotion of an indo-hispanic *mestizaje*, where *indígena* becomes the only officially recognized signifier of racial difference from the *mestizo*, effectively erasing blackness and other racial diversity from the national identity. This indo-hispanic *mestizaje* is clearly articulated by Dr. Aguilar Paz in the quote above in which he presents indigenous peoples and Spaniards as the two columns of Honduran national identity, leaving no space for the African element. Indeed the primary national symbols of Honduras have until recently been the indigenous cacique Lempira who is presented as having died valiantly fighting the oppressive Spaniards (and for whom Honduran currency was named in 1926) and the Mayan ruins of Copan. These symbols of indigenous identity are obviously glorifications of an indigenous past, not a recognition of an indigenous present. Indeed most histories of Honduras represent indigenous peoples as a purely pre-Colombian and colonial phenomenon, disappearing before the Republican period through miscegenation, and subsumed into the poor *campesinado*. (In 1984 Cruz Sandoval wrote that the last time indigenous peoples had been included in the census was 1945!). Even indigenistas arguing for the continued presence of

"pure" and isolated indigenous communities and the predominance of Indian blood and culture in the make-up of the mestizo nation (minimizing that of the Spanish) see the persistence of these communities as problems of national unity (cf. Lang 1951).⁴

There are, however, other formulations of mestizaje in which Africans are included as contributing to the racial make-up of the population, especially where arguments are being made for the existence of racial democracy (cf. Otero 1963). In this instance, the term *mestizo* can simply mean "mixed" which may or may not include blacks. The implication is that no matter what the particular mix, race is not an issue in Honduras, because everyone is mestizo. Though this may seem to be evidence of racial democracy in that it accepts all racial confluence, it actually reinforces intolerance to cultural and racial difference by implying that the existence of "pure" ethnic groups would "naturally" lead to conflict. Unity of the nation can only be achieved through homogeneity (cf. Barahona 1991:64). The important point then is that the inclusion of blacks in Honduran national identity generally refers to those who assimilated to the mestizo population during the colonial period, not to those who continue to identify with blackness. African blood may be recognized as flowing in the veins of Hondurans, but blackness (as in black culture, music, affinity with Africa) has not been celebrated as part of the national identity.

The primary representation of Honduras as an indo-hispanic nation has had consequences for the current mobilization of indigenous and black organizations where any cultural and racial difference from the mestizo has come to be conflated with autochthony. In other words, the notion of "ethnicity" is hegemonically understood not only as racial, cultural, and linguistic difference from the mestizo national subject, but also carries the connotations of a population that has a primordial link to the territory of the nation, occupying land "ancestrally" (that is continuously

⁴ For example in 1951 Honduran anthropologist Julio Lang argued for a recognition that many indigenous communities still remained, their isolation contributing to the conservation of a pure race and culture where the "lost diamonds" of a glorious past could still be found. Yet he simultaneously represents their cultural purity and isolated communities as evidence of a static, ahistoric past existing outside of modernity, reminders of the lack of development of the Honduran nation, that need to be "incorporated into the cultural environment of the nation so that they will have a clearly defined feeling that they belong to this nation and not just to their community" (Lang 1951: 217).

from the pre-colonial era to the present). Thus the terms "pueblos autóctonos" and "pueblos étnicos" are synonymous in Honduras (cf. Wade 1995 on similarities in Colombia). Within this hegemonic construction of ethnicity, the Garifuna are legally and anthropologically defined as a "pueblo autóctono," though their blackness is generally noted as making them an exceptional kind of "pueblo autóctono" that can claim indigenous heritage but simultaneously identifies as black (Cruz 1984, Rivas 1993).

The ability of Garifuna to claim autochthonous status has important implications in the current era of ethnic mobilization in the Americas where Latin American states are being pushed from above and from below to confer special rights to indigenous peoples with "primordial" ties to the national territory. This is challenging assimilationist models of *mestizaje* and leading to reconfigurations of nationalism that recognize ethnic difference as part of the national identity. Once again, however, the place of blacks within this political moment is ambivalent because they do not neatly fit into models of autochthony which are used to justify the special status of indigenous peoples as "nations" within the nation-state. In the next section we show how discourses of autochthony and blackness are negotiated by Garifuna organizations mainly around issues of land and state recognition of multiculturalism. We argue that the careful use of the term autochthonous *as opposed to* indigenous- with its connotations of biological sameness- allows Garifuna to make primordial claims to rights isomorphic to indigenous groups, while maintaining a racial distinction as black.

Challenging the Mestizo State through Autochthony

Analysts of "new social movements" mobilized around ethnic identity in Latin America argue that despite the assimilationist rhetoric of *mestizaje*, Latin American states have largely failed to integrate the nation economically, politically, and culturally, thus creating the space for alternative identities to arise and take on political force (Escobar and Alvarez 1992, Stavenhagen 1992, Varese 1994). These movements are based on struggles, not only for rights to cultural difference, but also to land, territory, health care, education, and economic self-sufficiency.

Though there is a long history in Latin America of peasants and the urban poor struggling for land and basic state infrastructure, the difference in recent mobilizations is that rather than legitimate claims to these rights only as citizens of the state, ethnic social movements legitimate their claims also through their *difference* from the nation-state. In other words, indigenous and ethnic peoples claim their rights to land through their "primordial" ties to that territory *prior to* the existence of the state; they claim their rights to cultural sovereignty and bilingual education precisely due to their cultural *difference* from the national subject; and they claim their rights to economic sufficiency, health care, and other social benefits as *universal* human rights, rather than only as the rights of citizens of a particular nation-state.

Such a recognition of "ethnic rights" has not only grown out of local experiences and contexts of struggle, but has also been legitimized in the international arena through a multitude of NGOs, international organizations, and international accords that are pressuring nation-states to protect the territory and human rights of indigenous and ethnic populations (Mato 1996, Rogers 1996). Much of this was given international force and attention in the wake of the anti-celebration of the Quincentenary of 1992 that brought together pan-indigenous and pan-African-American organizations throughout the Americas demanding recognition of their particular histories of cultural and racial oppression from both the political left and right (Hale 1994). Though these movements have been in the name of "*lo indígena, negro, y popular*" (indigenous, blacks, and popular movements, i.e. peasants and workers) indigenous identity has had the most political salience thus far due to their "primordial" link to the Americas as an "autochthonous" population.

For example, the 1996 *Convention concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries #169* of the International Labor Organization (ILO) was written to pressure nation-states to enact special legislation for the rights of "indigenous and tribal peoples" to land, bilingual education, political and economic autonomy, and fair labor practices. Article 1 defines the beneficiaries as "tribal peoples" and "peoples regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country...at the time of the conquest or

colonization or the establishment of present state boundaries and who,...retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural, and political institutions" and with "self -identification as indigenous or tribal" (ILO 1996:325). Here cultural conservation and consciousness of cultural difference are criteria for special rights, coupled with the notion that this difference is linked to geographical separation in a territory occupied "ancestrally" or pre-colonially.

This image of autochthony is especially critical around issues of land. Both indigenous and black communities have experienced a long history of encroachment on their agricultural lands by peasant *colonos* escaping land concentration in other parts of Honduras, cattle ranchers, agribusiness, and most recently on the north coast, the tourist industry. This encroachment has been facilitated by Agrarian Reform laws favoring the titling of lands to those who engage in market production as opposed to subsistence (such as the swidden horticulture of the Garifuna) and more recent neoliberal agrarian laws favoring large-scale investment and production by individuals. Article 13 of the ILO Convention states that indigenous and tribal lands must be understood as "territories" reflecting the collective spiritual relationship of the people to the land, in contrast to individualist, capitalist models of land ownership and production (ILO 1996: 328). In Honduras organizations such as the Consejo Asesor Hondureño para el Desarrollo de las Etnias Autóctonas (CAHDEA) (Honduran Counsel for the Development of Autochthonous Peoples) (within which Garifuna are represented) and the Confederación de Pueblos Autóctonos de Honduras (CONPAH) (Confederation of Autochthonous Peoples of Honduras) argue for the rights of autochthonous peoples to receive titles to territories that would include space not only for capitalist agricultural production, but also their "functional habitat" - that is (in the case of the Garifuna) the rivers, swamps, lagoons, forests, and beaches necessary for the "traditional" extraction of resources for the construction of houses and artesanry (canoes, implements of making cassava bread⁵), fishing, hunting, and the collection of medicinal plants. This is supported by programs such as the United Nations Rescate Cultural Ecológico in which

⁵Cassava bread is made from the cassava root and is similar to that made by the peoples of the Caribbean islands and South America. In Garifuna it is called *ereba* and is considered to be an ethnic marker of the Garifuna in Honduras.

Indigenous and autochthonous peoples are represented as naturally "rooted" to the land and as such are "natural conservationists" of the local resources.

Throughout many centuries, we ethnic autochthonous peoples have lived in our communities in permanent harmony with each other, with those who visit us, and with nature; maintaining the ecological equilibrium that our mother nature wisely gave us, and for which our natural resources have awakened the greed of cattle ranchers, the military, and economically powerful people, who, using all kinds of deceit are trying to remove us from the lands that historically and legally belong to us (Public Letter to the President of the Republic, signed by 36 Garifuna community leaders at a meeting of Rescate Cultural Ecológico, 1995).

Throughout the decade of the 1990s Garifuna grassroots organizations in Honduras have stressed this indigenous trope of the autochthonous, timeless culture and primordial link to the land, consciously counterpoising this identity to the image of the culturally and racially mixed, mobile and "rootless" (*desarraigado*) mestizo population who have been settling around Garifuna villages, and who they see as treating the land as a mere commodity to be exploited:

The problem with ladinos is that you can't trust them, because they don't love the land, they don't have any roots. They sell their own land and then they come here to the North coast and take our land and sell it to just anybody. If you ask a ladino where they're from, they can't even tell you because they move around so much. They are rootless so they don't care about *la madre tierra* (President of the Garifuna movement Iseri Lidawamari at a seminar on indigenous rights violations in Tegucigalpa sponsored by CAHDEA, 1993, my translation).

Though Garifuna organizations often present themselves in the language of autochthony and claim rights isomorphic to indigenous peoples, blackness is still a differential factor such that current Garifuna organizations rarely claim to be indigenous, even though their history could allow them that claim. For example, in 1992, the year of the Quincentenary, the Organización de Desarrollo Etnico Comunitario (ODECO) (Organization of Comunal Ethnic Development) organized a protest march in La Ceiba on October 12, Día de la Raza, uniting Garifuna, indigenous, and popular groups in demanding the ratification of the ILO Convention #169 and protesting the celebration of the Quincentenary. The flyer listing the demands of the march reveals the multiple ways that ethnic terminology is used to connote political affiliation and

racial difference between indigenous and blacks, and racial affiliation and cultural difference between Garifuna and other "negros." Note that when referring to primordial rights to land, Garifuna are specified, however when referring to multicultural education, the more inclusive word "negros" is used.

After five centuries, we continue without social, political, or economic justice. 12 of October 1492- 12 of October 1993. The injustice continues...and the struggle continues.

In the International Year of Indigenous Peoples. To the government of the republic we demand:

- 1) The ratification and implementation of the Convention 169 of the ILO, for the rights of indigenous (*indígenas*) and tribal (*tribales*) peoples.
- 2) The return of all the lands that have been plundered from the Indians (*indios*) and Garifunas (*garifunas*) of Honduras, because they are the legitimate owners.
- 3) The effective reform of Article 6 of the Constitution of the Republic, so that the languages of the ethnic groups (*pueblos étnicos*) be considered official languages.
- 4) Our participatory representation in the different powers of the state.
- 5) That the human, cultural, historical, and linguistic values of the Indians (*indios*) and Blacks (*negros*) be inserted into the plans of national education.
- 6) Modify the economic measures that sharpen the poverty of the popular sectors.

Such mobilizations of indigenous and black groups in Honduras have brought these issues of land tenure, bilingual education, racism, and multiculturalism to the foreground of public debate, eroding the hegemony of mestizaje as a national identity, and seriously challenging integrationist economic and political policies as human rights violations. Since the United Nations declared the Decade of Indigenous Peoples in 1993, indigenous groups and Garifuna have marched on the capital many times demanding the titling of indigenous and Garifuna lands, the resolution of land conflicts with mestizo settlers, and the conviction of the assassins of indigenous and Garifuna leaders. This mobilization, combined with pressure from international organizations, led to the signing of the ILO Convention #169 by President Carlos

Roberto Reina in 1994; to the establishment of an Attorney-General of the Ethnic Groups (*Fiscal de las Etnias*) whose purpose is to represent and protect the rights of ethnic groups *vis-à-vis* the state and powerful private interests in accordance with the Convention #169; and to the formation of programs such as *Nuestras Raizes* (Our Roots) that channel international funding into autochthonous communities for small development projects. This has reinforced the political salience of being "indigenous" or "tribal" or "autochthonous" as defined in the Convention #169.

For example, in the opening address of a 1996 ceremony celebrating the accomplishments of *Nuestras Raizes* attended by leaders from all of the ethnic groups and President Reina, the minister of the Fondo Hondureño de Inversión Social (FHIS) (Honduran Fund for Social Investment) that administers the *Nuestras Raizes* program, justified the program in this way:

Here we encounter many indigenous groups, Miskito, Garifuna, English-speaking Natives⁶- the autochthonous peoples of Honduras. Here we are gathered for the first time in history with precise instructions from this administration because we know that you represent the most genuine and authentic element of our nationality because your communities and your ancestors were the first inhabitants of this continent. The highest levels of illiteracy, lack of income, lack of access to markets and production are all common factors facing the autochthonous peoples. These peoples by right of possession are historically the owners of the best of the nation, yet today they are the poorest peoples in the country. If any people have rights in this country, here they are this morning (Manuel Zelaya 1996, my translation).

Though Garifuna were unproblematically referred to as part of "our roots," fitting them within this indigenous/autochthonous discourse has not always gone uncontested. The Attorney General of the Etnias, Eduardo Villanueva told me in an interview that there are those who have tried to discredit Garifuna claims to "territory" because they are not actually indigenous to Honduras.

⁶ English-speaking Natives (*Nativos de habla inglesa*) was the term used to refer to the Black Creoles at this meeting. This is the first time I had ever seen them referred to in this way. The use of the term "nativos" for a population that has no claim to indigenous heritage is further proof of the ideological conflation of ethnicity with autochthony.

It doesn't seem just to me to say that blacks are not indigenous because their primordial antecedents are in Africa. Indigenous is that which is original to this country, and the origins of this country are when it gained independence and set up its actual borders. So the Convention 169 favors those peoples who were already here before the formation of the state. In 1821 the Garifuna had already been here for many years. They came against their will, uprooted from their original country. This is a historical fact, and we cannot change that. But when I say indigenous I mean to include the Garifuna in the concept because they were here when the state was organized. So even the Garifuna and Black Creoles are just as Honduran as any mestizo (1996, my translation).

This kind of explanation reflects the way that "ethnic" (understood as culturally and racially different from the mestizos) and "autochthonous" (understood as being the original inhabitants of the Americas) are conflated. Because Garifuna were present before the formation of the state, he argues that they are just as Honduran as any mestizo or Indian. This then establishes their right to be represented equally by the state of Honduras. But having existed "on the margins of mestizo society" and having "conserved their own social, economic, cultural, and political institutions, or part of them" as outlined in the Convention #169 is also the basis for a set of special rights. Both representatives of the state (Villanueva and Zelaya) are simultaneously claiming the rights of ethnic peoples based on sameness (Honduran citizens, roots of national identity) and difference (ethnic, marginalized by mestizo society) couched in the hegemonic language of autochthony. This newer vision Honduran national identity that the state refers to as multicultural, recognizes difference, but still contains this difference within the bounds of Honduran nationalism.

As in previous formulations of mestizaje, blacks are recognized as part of the national society, but blackness itself is not celebrated as part of the national identity. The Garifuna, and even the Black Creoles are recognized in this new state discourse of multiculturalism based on their ties to the land and territory of Honduras, as autochthonous, not based on a cultural and racial identity in St. Vincent or Africa. This is because blackness as an identity is still seen as emanating from elsewhere, it cannot be contained within the "roots of the nation" framework unless it is subsumed under the category of the mestizo (*todos somos mestizos*, we all have a little African blood) or the category of autochthonous.

Challenging the Mestizo State Through Blackness

In the 1990s Garifuna organizations in Honduras have used the language of autochthony and allied themselves with indigenous groups, yet an identification with blackness has also always been present. In daily practice Garifuna mainly self-identify as blacks and have certainly adopted a self-conscious African-American aesthetic in their style of dress and music, jarring common assumptions of what an "autochthonous" population "conserving their native culture" ought to look like. This has as much to do with their persistent racialization as blacks in Honduras, as with their experiences as transmigrants in the US where they have come to identify as "ethnic immigrant blacks," associated with the modernity of global Black popular culture. This aspect of blackness has actually become quite popular in Honduras, especially on the north coast among Garifuna and mestizo youth. At the same time, Garifuna organizations are beginning to stress a greater identification with the Black diaspora and with Africa in political terms, emphasizing common experiences of colonization, slavery, and racism. Both the popular and political emphasis on blackness pose a challenge to mestizaje not only by pointing to a racial difference from the mestizo, but also by locating this difference within a global arena of racial identification with other Blacks that cannot be contained within the bounds of Honduran nationalism in the same way that autochthony can. In the struggle for rights vis-à-vis the Honduran state, however, blackness as a political identity is still precarious and as a result often continues to carry connotations of primordality and autochthony, even while popular blackness identifies Garifuna as standard bearers of a modern global culture.

Despite the complexity of notions of autochthony and mestizaje, for most Garifuna not involved in organizations being black is a simple affair. That is, in Honduras being Garifuna and being black are generally understood as being the same thing, constructed in contrast to the main "other" who Garifuna deal with on a daily basis- the mestizo (or who the president of OFRANEH calls "los dicen ser blancos.") Garifuna is almost universally acknowledged as the correct and proper term used to refer to themselves as an ethnic group, to differentiate themselves from other blacks when necessary. "Negro" is seen as more highly charged because it

can be used as a derogatory term by mestizos (or even worse “negritos”), yet it is a term of sisterhood and brotherhood when employed among the Garifuna themselves. When asked which term was preferable one young male informant replied:

“Negro, that’s my color and that’s how I am represented at the level of the world. I’m of the Black race. You know. That’s my representation...I’m of the Garifuna race but I’m black. I’m Black. My color is Black. My language is what changes...Garifuna is my language. My color is Black.”

While he uses the word "race" to denote both Garifuna and Black, Garifuna is understood as one kind of Black, that is a member of the global black race who happens to have Garifuna language and culture. His preference to define himself as Black is echoed by many other young men and women who say the color represents “all the Black race of the world” and that they identify with other blacks “for the simple fact of being Black.” Through what they call color, Garifuna articulate a sense of diasporic identification, linking their sense of self in Honduras and imagined sense elsewhere to the status and fate of Blacks everywhere.

At the same time, it is clear that the focus of much of their attention is the United States and the Black American, especially the hip hop style. From the Malcolm X and Free Mike Tyson t-shirts worn by young men and old women alike, to the reggae, hip hop, and soul music blasting from palm-thatched homes, to the video collections that include *Boyz in the Hood*, *Menace II Society*, and *New Jack City*, to the peppering of conversations (even those in Garifuna) with English phrases such as “chillin” and “nigga” and “bro”-- an identification with "things Black American" is prevalent especially among the Garifuna youth. This heavy “traffic in blackness” is not merely the logical outcome of the fact of heavy migration to Harlem, the South Bronx, and other US inner city neighborhoods, but is also an assertion of difference from the racial/cultural norms of mestizo nationalism. In appropriating the signs of Black America, Garifuna participate in its first world modernity and thereby elevate their own individual and collective status within Honduras. Garifuna, particularly young men, eschew the old image of a most backward people in a backward land for a cosmopolitan image as the standard bearers of a modern popular. That they make this modern popular decidedly black can be seen as the result of many things: the

increased predominance and marketing of US Black culture within national and global circuits; a yearning among Garifuna to both preserve and transform their own racial and cultural identity; and their embrace of postures of defiance and resistance characteristic of so much of African-American style and gesture. The affirmation of a first world blackness thus allows Garifuna to claim a status as modern and to assert their racial and cultural difference against the normative presumptions of both mestizo Honduras and the White west.

That this identification with blackness is not merely a result of “afroamericanization” (acculturation and mimicry of African-Americans) as some have suggested (Ghidinelli and Massajoli 1984, Gonzalez 1988), is further evidenced by the relation that Garifuna have to blackness in the US where that identification is not defined in a binary relation of Black and white (mestizo) but rather vis-a-vis multiple others, including multiple other blacks. Whereas in Honduras, being black and Garifuna are easily coterminous, in New York City, being black and yet speaking Spanish and being from a Hispanic country, makes this identification less simple. The mestizo is no longer the main “other” against which their identity as Black is defined. Rather, in New York City they encounter a multitude of ethnic/racial categories against which and within which they define themselves, including Caribbean Hispanics, West Indians, Africans, African-Americans, and Whites. In this milieu, Garifuna slide in and out of the racial and ethnic categories of Black, Hispanic, Afro-Latino, and Garifuna.

Whether Garifuna choose to classify themselves as Black, Hispanic, or Other on official forms again reveals the ambiguity of notions of race versus ethnicity. During interviews, transmigrants who identified as African-American (41%) often articulated their reasoning in the language of race-- “we are black no matter what language we speak”-- whereas those who claimed hispanic identity (38%) justified it as a matter of language, culture, and national origin-- “African-American is just for those blacks who are from here, we are from Honduras so we are hispanic.” Those who mark “other” and write in “Garifuna” (16%) also justified it as a matter of language, culture, and origin- but pointing to a Garifuna ethnic nationalist identity located in St. Vincent as opposed to Central American citizenship.

Garifuna identification with blackness in the US as a racial affiliation results from many of the same processes occurring in Honduras: experiences of being racialized as blacks on the streets of New York where they are assumed to be African-American until they speak, experiences of discrimination from mestizos-hispanics (in addition to whites and Asians), and an identification with Black leaders as icons of struggle against discrimination. On the other hand, like many other immigrant blacks, Garifuna often seek to avoid the low status that assimilating to African-American culture carries with it (Basch 1987, Waters 1994). The proliferation of Garifuna organizations in New York City targeted at "conserving" the culture and language among the youth can be seen as an attempt to differentiate themselves from other blacks by emphasizing their ethnic identity as Garifuna. At meetings of youth groups, members often counterpoise the goals of the Garifuna youth as against the stereotype of the African-American as being lazy, living only off welfare and crime, and blaming all their problems on the system. Older Garifuna often use references to the baggy pants and other attire of the hip hop, African-American look donned by Garifuna youth to indicate their degeneration/debasement in the inner city environment, questioning the hegemonic discourse of all localities in the US as representing development and modernity.

Culturally, the Honduran Garifuna have much in common with their Puerto Rican and Dominican neighbors, sharing favorite foods, musical styles, and the Spanish language. For those Garifuna who speak little English, these neighbors and co-workers are often their primary social circle outside of the Garifuna community. One interviewee affirmed "we are here (in the South Bronx) like all other Latinos without good jobs, not speaking English, and living in decaying neighborhoods." For this man, it is the experience of being non-English-speaking immigrants that makes the Honduran Garifuna part of the hispanic community. Indeed, Garifuna activists prevalent at *Vamos a La Peña del Bronx*, a community center established and run by a Chilean couple to cater to the social needs and cultural events of the South Bronx hispanic community. Here Garifuna dance troupes joined with Dominican, Puerto Rican, and Ecuadorian groups in street fairs and parades organized to represent the hispanic cultural mosaic of the South

Bronx. Garifuna organizations met with South Bronx hispanic politicians (mainly Puerto Rican and Dominican) to be included in programs for documented and undocumented immigrants.

However, once again, their physical blackness intrudes on this cultural affinity, marking them as "*negritos*" and "*morenos*" within a Caribbean hispanic population that has historically had very ambivalent feelings about their Afro-Hispanic history and identity. Relations with other Hondurans are similarly ambiguous as Garifuna and mestizo Hondurans actually have very little social contact in New York City. There are moments that Garifuna and mestizos unite under the banner of Honduran nationalism (as in Central American Independence Day parades on September 15, Catholic mass on the Dia de la Virgin de Guadalupe, and for nationality-based soccer leagues) but most of the time their social and organizational activities are separate. This is due in part to the historic relations of animosity between the two groups (resulting from racism in Honduras) that has carried over into their relations in NYC. It is also a result of the fact that the mestizos actually are a minority of the Hondurans in NYC (estimates say Garifuna are about 70%)⁷ and are more dispersed throughout the city, less organized, and tend to melt into the general hispanic immigrant population having, as many lament, no cultural peculiarities to distinguish them from other Central Americans.

Ironically, this gap between Garifuna and mestizo transmigrants is being bridged by a the increasing popularity of Garifuna culture as icons of Honduran nationalism in NYC, especially Punta Rock-a genre of music made popular by NYC-based Garifuna bands that combines traditional rhythms and drums with electronic instrumentation and lyrics sung (or rapped) in Garifuna, Spanish, and English. This music, which is both decidedly Black (influenced greatly by Soca and other Anglo-Caribbean music) and Hispanic (also influenced by Salsa and

⁷ Calculations of the number of Hondurans and of Garinagu in New York City vary tremendously due to the complications of counting a population that is mobile and often undocumented. Even the statistics of the Immigration and Naturalization Service are not very helpful because they only classify by country of origin and not by internal ethnic categories. Whatever the total number may be, most who are familiar with the New York Honduran community, such as those involved with the Federation of Honduran Organization in New York (FEDOHNY) and the Honduran consulate, estimate that the Garinagu form 70% of Hondurans in New York City. The percentage of Garinagu versus ladinos is different in New Orleans and Los Angeles where ladinos are the majority of the Honduran community.

Merengue) is becoming popular among Hondurans, serving as a marker of cultural difference from other Central Americans. The manager of one particular band- Garifuna Kids- said that they had been called the "cultural ambassadors of Honduras," surprising even themselves that their ethnic nationalist lyrics (invoking the youth to remember their Garifuna culture) and performance style of Black masculinity (Perry 1998) had become so popular among the mestizos.

This more recent popularity of Garifuna culture as the national "folklore" (especially in the context of the expanding tourist industry on the Caribbean coast where Garifuna are common postcard material) is even more ironic in light of the fact that punta and other elements of Garifuna culture simultaneously serve as ethnic nationalist symbols of resistance against racism and mestizaje, and are claimed by some Garifuna activists to come straight from Africa (cf. Crisanto Melendez 1995, Arzu 1995). This vision of the Garifuna "race," language and culture as emanating from primordial Africa places Garifuna very much outside of Honduran nationalism and mestizaje. Even those activists who recognize the Garifuna as a product of the New World and as African/Carib hybrids, still see Garifuna roots as emanating from St. Vincent, identifying much more with the Caribbean than with Central America. They refer to the Garifuna of Honduras, Belize, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and St. Vincent as one Garifuna Nation in Diaspora, united by a common culture, language, and ancestral homeland despite their current geographical dispersion and fragmented citizenships. They are of the ethnicity Garifuna, within the larger racial category of Africans in the Americas. Within this celebration of blackness and political identification with the African Diaspora one is more likely to see dashikis and kente cloth than Nike, videos about Nelson Mandela rather than Eddie Murphy, and references to Marcus Garvey and the Garifuna leader Satuye as icons of black resistance.

This political identification with the African Diaspora has become apparent in the formation of several organizations that foreground the racial identity of blackness, and emphasize the historical and ideological particularities of Afro-Hispanics who have been "statistically invisible" and seen as outside of mestizo nationalism. In 1994 Garifuna became

active in a hemispheric network of Black organizations initiated by the Organization of Africans in the Americas (OAA) based in Washington, D.C., Mundo Afro based in Uruguay, and Cimarron based in Columbia (see Wade 1995 for a description of Cimarron). All three organizations were founded to meet the needs of Afro-Hispanics in the US and Latin America who have suffered a "hidden racial discrimination condoned by Latin American society and stemming from colonial practices" (from an OAA document). Aside from issues of political and economic empowerment, one of the first goals of these organizations is to make the hemispheric public aware that Afro-Hispanics do exist and are a sizable community, though they have been officially invisible. This network was instrumental in encouraging the formation of the Central American Black Organization (CABO) that unites Garifuna with Black Creole from throughout Central America, and played a significant role in the organization of the Bicentennial celebration in La Ceiba. Similarly, ODECO, which originally was formed to represent indigenous, black, and popular groups, now only claims to represent Afro-Hondurans (Garifuna and Black Creole), along with the National Coordinator of Black Organizations in Honduras.

Though these organizations privilege blackness as their main racial and political affiliation, this is still often done in the language of autochthony. That is, Garifuna are distinguished from other blacks as "authentic," as having maintained a primordial culture and language, a "cultura autóctona," as opposed to a "cultura adquirida." They have been uprooted from Africa, displaced from St. Vincent, but they have still conserved an "ancestral culture" in ways other Blacks have not. For example the director of the Ballet Folklorico Nacional Garifuna (also known as the Grupo Afro Hondureño) explained that this dance troupe has been internationally recognized as representing the only authentic African culture in the Americas: "In many countries we have been told that in all of Latin America, among all other Blacks, only the Garifuna have maintained their own language; and we have been told that we are good because we have maintained our own culture" (quoted in Lopez Garcia 1993). This dance troupe and a spinoff of it in New York City called Wanichigu Dance Company, are very afro-centric in their choice of costuming and social messages about rediscovering the roots of Garifuna dance

and music in Africa, while at the same time they perform internationally as representatives of national Honduran folklore.

In some ways, then, this connection of Garifuna culture to primordial Africa challenges Honduran mestizaje by identifying with blackness as a "pure" racial category and by locating their history and identity outside of Honduras. At the same time the invocation of notions of "autochthony" and "ethnicity" allow Garifuna culture to be somewhat appropriated by Honduran state projects of a new multicultural nationalism. Like autochthony, blackness as a popular and political identity is a challenge to mestizaje, but the need to frame it within a political struggle that ultimately takes place vis-a-vis the Honduran state, also must leave space for its partial cooptation into Honduran nationalism.

Conclusions

It has already become a maxim within the social sciences that racial and ethnic identities are not biological or primordial givens but are rather matters of social dispute (Omi and Winant 1994) constructed vis-a-vis multiple "others" within relations of power that have local, national, and transnational dimensions (Hall 1990, 1991). Race, with its connotation of biological and phenotypic sameness, and ethnicity, with its connotations of cultural and linguistic particularity are ambiguous categories that are at times conflated, and at others differentiated, but always connected to processes of inclusion and exclusion within political struggles. In this paper we have particularly focused on the many ways that mestizaje, blackness, and autochthony as both racial and ethnic categories are mobilized as ideologies of inclusion and exclusion within the context of Garifuna grassroots struggles vis-a-vis the Honduran state.

Mestizaje as a nationalist ideology is contradictory because it purports to be based on culture only (i.e. anyone of any race or any mixture of races can be mestizo if they acculturate to the "national" culture) yet is simultaneously racialized as mestizos of particular mixes (i.e. indo-hispanic) and colors (i.e. lighter) are considered more representative of the nation and modernity than others (C. Smith 1997, Wade 1993). Indigenous and black movements in Honduras arguing

for the recognition that autochthonous (ethnic) peoples have conserved a racial and cultural difference from the mestizo challenges the notion of the homogeneity of mestizaje and assimilationist and racist state policies. The state response to celebrate autochthony within a multicultural nationalism does not, however, invalidate mestizaje as a national identity because autochthony continues to be valorized and recognized mainly because it represents the roots of the mestizo and the link to the national territory. In other words, autochthony gains both its strength and weakness from being an essentially territorialized and racialized identity that can be used to argue for special rights due to primordial occupation to land and essential difference from the national subject, but can also be coopted by a territorialized state nationalism as symbolic of the nation. The idea of autochthony can be more radical when it is used to challenge the internal sovereignty of the nation-state as in movements for territorial autonomy (cf. Hale 1994b) or when autochthony is articulated as a hemispheric or transnational identity and political affiliation rather than nation-based (cf. Kearney and Nagengast 1990, Varese 1994).

Blackness, on the other hand, is a more radical challenge to Honduran mestizaje because it is a much less territorialized identity. Though blackness can at times be essentialized as a racial affiliation emanating from primordial African roots, it is not confined to the territory of Africa, because it is also an identity of displacement, the feeling of belongingness to a community that transcends national boundaries. Thus blackness can be understood, not simply as a racial entity, but also as common experience of racialization and discrimination throughout the diaspora that unites peoples of African descent who are identified as "black" (Gilroy 1993). The global "traffic in blackness" (literally the exchange of consumer goods and images) facilitates this identification across national borders and challenges the primacy of nationally-bounded affiliations. Yet as an effective political identity it must also recognize multiple ways of being black-- the difference of the black subject that leads to ethnic identities within the larger racial category of black. These identities form the basis of very particular local struggles that are often territorialized.

In both the US and Honduras Garifuna define themselves with global racial blackness, but also as particular kinds of blacks with a particular historical and cultural configuration that

links them to specific territories. This is especially crucial in the Garifuna struggle for land, and their need to negotiate vis-a-vis the Honduran state. The fact that in Honduras autochthony is, like mestizo, a slippery category that can be defined both racially (i.e. racially "pure" indigenous peoples) but also culturally (i.e. those of any race who have not assimilated to the mestizo national culture) enables the Garifuna to inhabit the ambiguous space between autochthony and blackness. Their inclusion as autochthonous, then, broadens the definition of who deserves "ethnic" rights, and creates a space for the inclusion of blackness in the national identity of Honduras.

To say that Garifuna negotiate these identities within their political struggles is not to say that these identities are not "real" to them. Garifuna leaders do not necessarily see being black and being autochthonous as contradictory or as contrived categories. Rather the multiplicity and ambiguity of Garifuna racial and ethnic identity can be more fruitfully understood as resulting from the complex intersection between daily experiences of identity construction vis-a-vis neighbors, state bureaucracies, and the media, with the ways that international organizations and nation-states decide the basis upon which to draw boundaries around groups and confer rights to them. This fluidity of Garifuna identity allows organizations to form alliances with a wide range of social groups, including peoples of the Black Atlantic, indigenous peoples of the world, and Hispanic immigrants in the US. Though the struggle for specific rights takes place vis-a-vis a particular state and nationalism, the identity politics involved in this struggle have local, national, and transnational dimensions. This points to the ways that globalization facilitates the articulation of broad racial categories and political affiliations that transcend national borders, while local struggles and peculiarities of identity still remain important.

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