

Radicalize Multiculturalism? Garifuna Activism and the Double-Bind of Participation in Postcoup Honduras

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R E S U M E N

En este artículo analizo la resistencia Garífuna ante el golpe de estado contra Manuel Rosales Zelaya. Me baso en entrevistas y conversaciones con activistas y observación participante en las protestas contra el golpe de estado en Tegucigalpa con el fin de explorar el significado y los objetivos de la resistencia cultural Garífuna en el periodo post-golpe. Argumento que la etnopolítica sirve para reforzar y desafiar las representaciones dominantes de la subjetividad folklórica Garífuna, las cuales son ampliamente diseminadas por la propaganda turística y la construcción de la identidad nacional por políticas multiculturales. También subrayo la forma en que los activistas Garifunas articularon sus demandas para la autonomía y los derechos territoriales con los objetivos del movimiento de resistencia nacional. Participación Garífuna en la Resistencia brindó la oportunidad de ser reconocidos como sujetos políticos—no como objetos—y para aspirar a otra Honduras dentro de este movimiento multiétnico emergente. [Afro-Latinoamericanos, Honduras, movimientos sociales, pueblos indígenas, raza]

A B S T R A C T

This article analyzes Garifuna resistance to the 2009 coup against Manuel Rosales Zelaya. It draws on interviews and informal conversations with activists and participant observation in the anticoup protests in Tegucigalpa in order to explore the significance and aims of Garifuna cultural resistance in the postcoup period. Garifuna ethnopolitics reproduce and challenge dominant representations of Garifuna folkloric subjectivity, which are widely disseminated through tourism propaganda and statist constructions of multicultural national identity. The article also highlights the ways in which Garifuna activists articulated longstanding demands for territorial autonomy and land rights with the goals of the national resistance movement. For many, participation in the Resistance

provided an opportunity to be recognized as political agents—not as objects—and to aspire for a different Honduras within this emergent multiethnic movement to remake the nation. [Afro-Latin Americans, Honduras, indigenous people, race, social movements]

AT DAWN ON A HUMID AUGUST MORNING, thousands of demonstrators began congregating at the Universidad Pedagógica Nacional (National Pedagogical University). Protest chants filled the air as groups of varied size and composition marched triumphantly onto the university grounds. A small group of Garifuna began playing the *tambor*, a hand-carved wooden drum that has come to symbolize Garifuna ethnic difference, as expressed through music and dance.¹ Owing to the growing national and international market for Garifuna musical forms, the drummers drew a lively crowd.

A short distance from the drum circle, Carlos, a *buyei* (spiritual guide), prepared a concoction of medicinal herbs inside a metal tin. He set the herbs on fire, producing a thick smoke, with a distinctive yet pleasant aroma. Like the *tambor*, the *humo* (smoke), is an element of Garifuna spiritual life and a key feature of Garifuna political struggles. Carlos invited the non-Garifuna protesters to “bathe” in the billowing smoke. “In the past our ancestors used the *humo* when addressing problems facing the community; it is an important spiritual and social manifestation of the Garifuna people,” he explained. Some of the non-Garifuna protesters began gyrating erotically over the tin, laughing in mockery and delight, and pleading with the Garifuna to dance. Irritated by their behavior, Carlos stepped aside. Eventually, another *buyei* signaled for him to rejoin the Garifuna delegation. “*¡Imbeciles!* (Idiots!),” she muttered under her breath.

The tension between Garifuna and non-Garifuna demonstrators at the protest illustrates the extent to which racialized representations of Garifuna blackness are circulated and consumed, even within radical political spaces. These representations—widely disseminated through tourism propaganda and statist constructions of multicultural national identity—tie Garifuna subjects to eroticized and objectified notions of blackness. This article analyzes Garifuna resistance to the June 2009 coup² against former president Manuel Rosales Zelaya and demonstrates how emerging forms of Garifuna political subjectivity in the post-coup period interacted with and challenged the dominant cultural and political tropes ascribed to black and indigenous Hondurans. At the time of the coup, I was living in the Garifuna community Triunfo de la Cruz (henceforth Triunfo) in Tela Bay. I draw on interviews and informal conversations with Triunfeños—Garifuna inhabitants of Triunfo—and participant observation in the anticoup protests in

Tegucigalpa in order to analyze the significance and aims of Garifuna ethnopolitics in the postcoup period.

Orchestrated by members of the Honduran oligarchy and sanctioned by the U.S. State Department, Zelaya's violent ousting sparked a massive groundswell resistance movement, dubbed *la Resistencia* (the Resistance). In the days immediately following the coup, OFRANEH (Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras) was the only Garifuna organization supporting *la Resistencia*. OFRANEH has a long history of organizing for black and indigenous land rights in Honduras. In addition to challenging the displacement caused by the expansion of agribusinesses and mestizo³ encroachment on Garifuna ancestral lands in the Honduran Moskitia (Mollett 2006), OFRANEH has worked to thwart the privatization of communal lands in Tela Bay, which are under siege by national and international tourism developers. Between August 2009 and June 2010, I accompanied several delegations from Triunfo to Tegucigalpa, where we joined other OFRANEH activists and the *Frente* (National Front against the Coup d'état) in pursuit of an immediate return to democratic rule.

The politics of ethnic difference enacted by Garifuna activists in *la Resistencia* and in other spaces of public protest has the dual potential either to disrupt or to reinforce the dominant racial logics that are implicit in state multiculturalism and related tourism propaganda. I refer to this as the double-bind of Garifuna ethnopolitics. This political and ontological impasse sheds light on a series of provocative contradictions that may be useful as we attempt to understand the processes by which alternative political imaginaries become articulated through the public assertion of ethnic difference. On the one hand, Garifuna political expression through cultural performance reproduces folkloric representations of Garifuna subjectivity, but it also makes visible nonnormative political desires⁴ that cannot be accommodated by simple legal recognition of difference as enshrined within multicultural legislation. Within the context of *la Resistencia*, Garifuna activism does double work: (1) it furthers the state's attempt to subsume a plurality of cultures within the framework of multicultural national identity (Gupta and Ferguson 1992), and to harness cultural plurality to the state development agenda; and (2) it claims a place for Garifuna coastal communities by creating a platform from which to challenge official multicultural politics. Through public protests on the streets of the nation's capital, Garifuna articulated local struggles for territorial autonomy as part of the national struggle to "refound"⁵ Honduras.

The article begins by analyzing the racial geography of Honduras, and the specific ways in which state multiculturalism is manifested through tourism development politics. Inclusion hinges upon embodying a particular version of state-sanctioned cultural alterity—one that is welcoming to white tourists and that contributes to the growth of the national economy. The article then addresses

the significance of Garifuna political praxis in the anticoup resistance movement, especially as it relates to official policies of inclusion and the emergent Left. In concluding, it examines the paradoxical outcomes stemming from Garifuna organizational politics, which emerge from a deeper pattern in Honduran political culture, beginning with the emergence of mestizo nationalism and subsequent iterations of Honduran national identity after the rise of multiculturalism.

Multicultural Exclusions

The systemic exclusion of Garifuna from dominant political imaginaries in Honduras is evinced by early historical accounts of the North Coast. The region was geographically and politically peripheral to the nation state until the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when North American fruit companies usurped large tracts of land for the mass production and export of bananas. Although historians have addressed the political and economic dominance exercised by North American banana companies (Argueta 1992; Buchard 1997; Soluri 2005), this history either neglected to address the Garifuna presence, or they were simply grouped together with foreign black laborers brought in to work on the plantations (Euraque 2003). Historian Dario Euraque contends that the construction of a unified Honduran national identity was contingent on the notion of a homogenous mestizo race, which excluded “the West Indian immigrants brought by the banana companies but also the indigenous North Coast Garifuna populations” (1998: 152).⁶ Honduran *mestizaje* was defined in opposition to blackness (Portillo 2011: 211), and thus negated the racial heterogeneity of Honduran society. Due to its sizable West Indian and Garifuna populations, the North Coast was imagined as both black and foreign.

It was not until the early 1990s, in the aftermath of mass indigenous mobilizations and with the advent of state multicultural reforms, that the discourse on national identity began to shift, creating a space for conversations on the racial and cultural diversity of the nation (Euraque 2002; Barahona 2009). Multicultural reforms sought to redress past social exclusion through the recognition of ethnic difference and the bequeathal of special rights to nonnormative cultural groupings (Taylor 1994; Kymlicka and Norman 2000). To that end, there has been a marked shift from the historical practice of manufacturing political consent through coercive policies of assimilation to the recognition and accommodation of cultural diversity (Van Cott 2000)—a testament to the vigor of indigenous and Afro-descendant social movements (Yashar 1999; Hale 2002; Anderson 2007, 2009; Brondo 2010; Paschel 2010).

In 1994, the government of Carlos Roberto Reina officially recognized the pluricultural and multiethnic makeup of Honduras in Executive Order No. 0719, which

established a policy of Intercultural Bilingual Education (EBI) for the country's indigenous populations.⁷ The following year, Honduras ratified ILO Convention 169 Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries.⁸ The government went on to establish a post for a public prosecutor assigned specifically to Honduras's ethnic peoples.⁹ These official concessions signaled the ascent of state multiculturalism and constituted new political terrain for the negotiation of rights at national and international levels.

However, as indigenous and black Hondurans slowly transitioned into rights bearing citizens, the multicultural state and the market subjugated these peoples in new constellations of liberal hegemony. Povinelli (2002: 6) demonstrates the ways in which "multicultural domination" encourages subaltern subjects to identify with the "impossible object of an authentic self-identity" in order to attain rights. Aside from policing the boundaries of communal identity and reifying categories of ethnic authenticity (Conklin 1997), multiculturalism is entangled with neoliberal economic policies.

Hale's analysis of "neoliberal multiculturalism" illustrates how, in the context of neoliberal economic reforms, the state endorses indigenous cultural rights as a means to circumvent more radical political demands and opposition to neoliberal capitalism (Hale 2002, 2004). He illustrates the ascendancy of neoliberalism, not only as an economic model, but also as a system of logic for understanding emerging cultural politics and for "social adjustment." Multiculturalism opens spaces for certain forms of political participation "so long as it does not go too far" (Hale 2002: 490).

Anderson (2009: 140), building on Hale's analysis, argues that participation "provides a compelling arena to analyze the ways in which ethnic activists both engage with state and multilateral institutions and combat the politics of these institutions." He elaborates on the diverse strategies Garifuna organizations have used to engage the state and multilateral institutions following the advent of multicultural reforms in the 1990s, but more research is needed on how Garifuna ethnopolitics operate in relation to diverse social sectors, including oppositional movements. This lens is necessary in order to demystify the exclusions provoked by state multiculturalism and to illuminate how these policies contribute to the racialization of Garifuna.

With reference to Garifuna Hondurans, state multicultural policies are put into practice through two distinct, yet interconnected, processes. First, Garifuna are recognized as a racially and culturally distinct minority population through the provision of special rights. Then, Garifuna cultural difference is transformed into a marketable commodity for tourist consumption, under the rubric of cultural tourism.¹⁰ They become subjects of development through their participation as elected officials, cultural ambassadors, or as beneficiaries of productive projects funded by multilateral development agencies. The provision of rights to previously

excluded populations helps to redefine indigenous and black civic membership in ways that advance the mandate of the state and the market. Moreover, multicultural inclusion has been harnessed to superimpose economic value onto indigenous and black bodies—national resources yet to be adequately exploited by the growing tourism industry.¹¹

Concomitant with the growth of tourism, blackness emerged as a resource for nation-building and economic development.¹² Paradoxically, this form of inclusion hinges upon repackaging coastal culture as uniquely Caribbean, black, and erotic. I suggest that the escalating value of Garifuna cultural difference was realized through a neoliberal appropriation of the racial geography outlined above and a growing consensus that Garifuna blackness could be harnessed to realize coastal tourism development imaginaries (Loperena 2016). This process of “racialization” (Omi and Winant 1986) reconstitutes the coast as a space of geographic and cultural alterity, positioning blackness as a central component of national development schemes, while ensuring that black people remain on the fringes of economic and political life. These shifting meanings of place and geography are embedded in racial ideologies that place black Hondurans in subordinate social and cultural positions in relation to white tourists and the mestizo majority. To explore more fully how folkloric subjects are produced through state multiculturalism, I now turn to an analysis of tourism propaganda.

Consuming Garifuna Blackness

In her analysis of black women’s oppression in the United States, Hill-Collins (2000) demonstrates the extent to which stereotypical representations, or “controlling images,” serve to normalize racism, sexism, and other forms of social inequality. Hill-Collins’s concept of controlling images helps us to think through the ways in which the Honduran state and international financial institutions manipulate representations of Garifuna cultural and racial difference to advance development imperatives, particularly within the booming coastal tourism industry. These representations bind black Hondurans to soccer, *punta* music,¹³ and entertainment, thus providing the basis for the debasement and objectification of the black body; they are widely consumed and redeployed for commercial purposes by the mestizo majority.

Figures 1 and 2 represent two poles of black subjectivity in Honduras, as defined and consumed by the mestizo nation state. In Figure 1, Garifuna are represented within the cultural script of international black politics. The demand for “10 percent” of public office positions is a reference to the kind of affirmative action policies in place in the United States and in parts of Latin America, and which the Organization for Ethnic and Community Development (ODECO) has



Figure 1 We demand 10 percent of public offices. Source: *El Tiempo*, April 8, 2006.

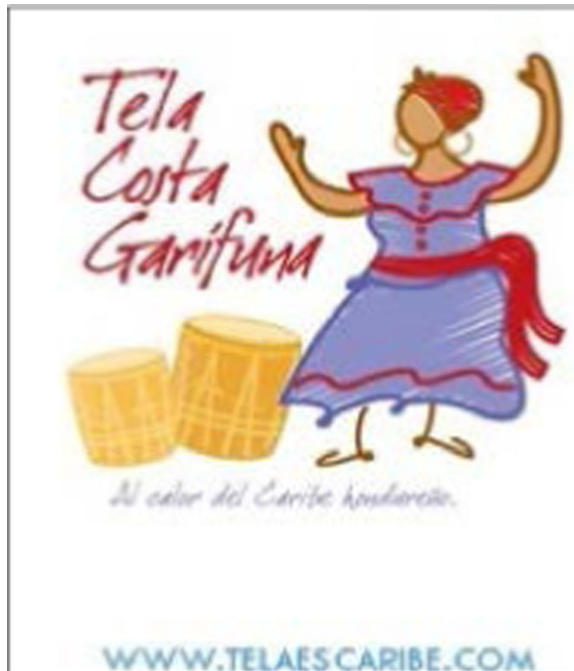


Figure 2 To the beat of the Honduran Caribbean. Source: Tela Tourism Board, image obtained on December 2, 2008.

lobbied for in Honduras. Moreover, blackness is aggressive and gendered as male, but devoid of any explicit cultural otherness. The caricature is racially demarcated by the Afro hairstyle, which also serves to tie Garifuna to radical black politics in the United States. The Afro, however, stands in tension with the business suit, which demonstrates class and educational privilege, and the potential to accept and accommodate the norms of the modern Honduran citizen-subject. This form of political subjectivity is tolerated and accommodated by the state—as illuminated by Hale’s discussion of the “*indio permitido*” (2004)—since demands for recognition and institutional representation can be met through bestowing rights and making reforms to existing institutional practices.¹⁴

The Garifuna woman (see Figure 2), in contrast, is wearing a traditional dress with a red hair wrap—a common feature of coastal dress—and positioned alongside a set of *tambores*. Her arms are spread wide in a welcoming gesture, and she appears to be dancing. Her large hoop earrings and the shawl around her waist are also important signifiers of blackness. Her attire is a reference to the private sphere—the space of the community—which the female subject is said to dominate. Although the male subject is tied to the public sphere—the business suit suggestive of his status as negotiator with the outside world and the state—the Garifuna woman is the face of the Honduran Caribbean. The image is a brand used by the Tela Tourism Board in collaboration with international financial institutions to promote cultural tourism. This form of multicultural inclusion is nonthreatening to state sovereignty and the privileging of whiteness in state discourses on national identity.

Blackness is rendered valuable to the state vis-à-vis its commercial appeal, and thus Garifuna cultural difference is brought into public view through tourism propaganda and tourism development initiatives. State institutions, including the Honduran Institute of Tourism, play a vital role in the mediation of Garifuna visibility and its subsequent incorporation into the national imaginary.¹⁵ However, as explained below, the folkloric representations sanctioned by the state through tourism development flatten the political subjectivity of black and indigenous peoples and reinforce a notion of the nation as indivisible (Tambar 2010: 662), underscoring the dominant narrative that tourism is good for all and that ethnic and cultural diversity could be profitable for the state. However, the notion that Garifuna lands and culture are for sale has generated contentious debates within Garifuna communities (Kirtsoglou and Theodossopoulos 2004), where many oppose the profit-driven appropriation of Garifuna culture by the state and private investors.

Garifuna has become synonymous with the multicultural nation, the symbol and representative of the Honduran Caribbean, and the face of the Honduran Institute of Tourism. Afro-indigenous culture is the foundation upon which tourism campaigns are built and promoted, and this embrace of Garifuna dif-



Figure 3 Source: Screen shot from the National Sustainable Tourism Strategy website, Honduran Institute of Tourism (<http://ents.iht.hn/index.php?id=24>, accessed April 19, 2013).

ference is a signifier of the modern liberal nation. This is most clearly illustrated by the images of Garifuna drummers and dancers abundantly displayed on the glossy pages of tourism brochures, websites, and magazines, such as *Honduras Tips*.

In Figure 3, two shirtless Garifuna men and three Garifuna women wearing colorful head-wraps are pictured alongside a young white couple. The white woman—presumably a North American or European tourist—is also wearing a head-wrap, which is both a sign of her affinity with Garifuna culture and her ability to embody these signifiers of ethnic and racial difference. Her close proximity to the Garifuna drummer hints at an element of sexual and racial desire, because tourism entails more than the commodification of culture: it also commodifies bodies. In this rendering, the body is objectified, and eerily fungible. As Hartman (1997: 21) notes, “The fungibility of the commodity made the captive body an abstract and empty vessel vulnerable to the projection of others’ feelings, ideas, desires, and values.” Similarly, the racial desires propagated by the national tourism industry in Honduras serve to strip the black body of subjectivity and agency. The body becomes a vessel for the fulfillment of state desires, as well as the desires of visiting tourists.¹⁶ The role to be played by Garifuna is as object of desire, cultural entertainment, or marginal service worker. This is precisely what Garifuna protesters in *la Resistencia* sought to challenge.

It is through the commodification of indigenous and black cultures and territories that these groups are included into the multicultural state, and this has powerfully influenced the ways in which Garifuna are understood by non-Garifuna. These multicultural appropriations are incongruous with the political activism of

Garifuna activists who employed cultural performance as a means to reassert their humanity vis-à-vis the state and the multitude of actors propelling *la Resistencia* into a new social movement. Public protests of this nature sought to destabilize the racial logics that position Garifuna as passive agents of state development plans.

Radicalize Multiculturalism?

In some measure, Garifuna activism in *la Resistencia* echoed the folkloric representations of blackness harnessed by the multicultural state to sell Honduras as an international tourism destination. However, as an instrument in the fight for democracy and constitutional reform, Garifuna cultural difference had ceased to be an asset for the state, threatening the national tourism imaginary that the Honduran oligarchy holds in such high esteem. Garifuna activists mobilized the same markers of difference used to brand the North Coast as a tourism destination to defend against the state's tourism development agenda. Furthermore, OFRANEH's decision to maintain a presence on the streets of Tegucigalpa following the coup was part of a larger project of radicalizing, or rejecting, multiculturalism—a refusal of the official multicultural policies advanced by the state and neoliberal capital. Instead, Garifuna activists in the anticoup movement asserted their capacity for self-representation, which, following Fanon (1967), is a central feature of movements for self-determination, in particular those waged by racially subjugated populations. In this vein, we can reinterpret their activism in the anticoup resistance movement as an effort to contest the erasure of black ontologies that do not adhere to hegemonic tropes of blackness.

Conversations¹⁷ with Triunfeños subsequent to Zelaya's ousting demonstrated an array of perspectives on the coup and helped to clarify what motivated Garifuna to participate in *la Resistencia*. The decision to support the anticoup movement was not purely an expression of solidarity with Zelaya. Indeed, some Triunfeños expressed reservations about Zelaya's close alliance with Hugo Chavez (former president of Venezuela) and apprehension regarding allegations that he wanted to convert Honduras into a communist regime.¹⁸ However, the majority of Triunfeños I spoke with, even those who were critical of Zelaya, were opposed to the coup, which indicated that there were deeper issues underlying support for *la Resistencia*.

At the time of the coup, land rights activists from Triunfo were embroiled in a longstanding conflict with municipal authorities and tourism entrepreneurs who were working to promote Tela Bay as Honduras's next big tourism attraction. Zelaya, who became president in January 2006, did not intervene to mediate conflicts over authority and land use between the Municipality of Tela and Garifuna communities located within the municipal jurisdiction. His government had a *laissez-faire* approach toward the municipality's dealings with private investors

who, with the backing of municipal authorities, were slowly appropriating and privatizing communal lands for the purposes of tourism development. Nevertheless, Zelaya's sudden removal from power sparked an outpouring of emotionally charged commentary from people in the community.¹⁹ Moreover, a steady flow of Triunfeños joined OFRANEH-sponsored delegations to support la Resistencia in Tegucigalpa. These reactions revealed the local import of the national political crisis, which had immediate consequences within the community, placing strains on local livelihoods and exacerbating communal conflicts over land rights.

On the day of the coup, a Garifuna man, who appeared to be in his mid-forties, stopped at the edge of the patio where I was discussing the latest developments with a friend. Disturbed by the increased military presence in Tela, he interjected, "This is a return to the past, a very worrisome situation." His comment linked Zelaya's sudden overthrow to the violent legacies of military-backed coups in Honduras and throughout Latin America. "We are poor, and Zelaya was taking measures to help the poor. They [wealthy Hondurans]," he said, rubbing his thumb against his index and middle fingers, "were scared that the people would vote 'yes' to the *Cuarta Urna* (Fourth Ballot Box), which would not be favorable to elite interests" (Personal communication, June 28, 2009). The *Cuarta Urna* was an effort to determine whether or not the electorate wanted to call for the establishment of a constituent assembly. Zelaya was planning to administer a preliminary poll on June 28, 2009 to find out if voters wanted the fourth ballot box to be included in the upcoming November elections. The Constituent Assembly was widely popular among the poor, including black and indigenous peoples, because it was perceived as an avenue to seek new constitutional guarantees, such as land rights and full consultation on projects to be developed within indigenous and black territories. This was one of the principal factors that motivated Triunfeños to support the resistance movement.

In her assessment of the political crisis, Leticia, a single mother in her thirties and a native Triunfeña, clearly identified the *golpistas* (those supporting the coup) as the primary actors behind efforts to privatize the coast:

The powerful groups, the elite—as they say—don't support [the constitutional assembly], because they consider themselves to be the owners of this country. They are the ones that have large companies, profitable businesses, and they consider themselves the owners of our Garifuna communities. (Personal communication, August 13, 2009)

Her fears were echoed by Agule—another collaborator from Triunfo. Agule is a member of a dance troupe that has received critical acclaim for its representations of Garifuna music and dance. On January 22, 2010, Agule's group performed at the inauguration of the Los Micos Beach and Golf Resort.²⁰ After the invitation-only event, I caught up with Agule. He told me that the people from

Tornabe—the Garifuna community where the project is being established—received poor treatment. They were not allowed into the high-profile event. They had to wait outside, and were not able to participate in the banquet offered to invitees, which included several ministers of state and leading investors in the project. He said, “They [the project developers] took the land for themselves. Blacks to the *monte* (bush),²¹ and they, the whites, remain on the beach. That is what they want, but the beach is ours!” (Personal communication, January 22, 2010).

Thus, the coup heightened longstanding communal concerns about land loss and autonomy, at the same time that it highlighted class-based concerns, marking a shift in how Triunfeños articulated their identities, not just as a culturally and racially distinct people, but also as poor and underserved. In this manner, the crisis sutured perspectives on national politics in the community. Class consciousness, as well as the desire for an alternative vision of democracy, served to bridge local and national struggles, presenting a unique opportunity for intercultural and multiethnic solidarity in the resistance movement, which was one of the most significant features of the postcoup period.

The coup underscored the elite’s boldfaced disregard for poorer and socially marginalized sectors of society. Antisystemic political desires emerged as an axis of identification that was capable of bridging barriers among differently situated social actors (e.g., rural peasants, black and indigenous organizations, feminists, LGBTI²² activists). Antiracist struggle was perhaps the key feature of Garifuna activism, along with demands for territorial autonomy, but Garifuna were equally invested in responding to the denial of basic rights to the poor, lack of access to key economic resources, and a growing awareness of systemic dispossession.

Many of my interlocutors expressed their desire to be visible as actors in this embryonic space of resistance, to clamor for the rights of Garifuna not to be left out of political institutions and juridical norms that emerge from this process, and to demonstrate solidarity with other social groupings that had been victimized by the state. Participants, Garifuna and non-Garifuna alike, believed that a new constitution would alleviate some of the systemic exclusions that have plagued Honduras’s fragile democracy and provide new avenues for the redistribution of economic and political power.

In 2009, the vice president of OFRANEH, Miguel, described his motivations for supporting la Resistencia:

We believe that as a people we have rights that necessitate more equity in the country, and that necessarily implies that they respect our property, that they recognize the pluri-cultural and multilingual character of our country, the differences among peoples, languages, and other situations like the autonomy of the people that is implicit in that new constitution we are dreaming of. (Interview, July 9, 2009)

Miguel's call for autonomy posits a different form of multicultural society, which is in essence plurinational. It is not a call for token inclusion within the state apparatus, but rather a fundamental reconfiguration of the state, a position (explained below) that differed sharply from the political stance taken by another prominent Garifuna organization, ODECO. La Resistencia, therefore, created a platform from which to make these demands and to articulate struggles across difference for the *refundación* (refoundation) of Honduras.

On July 7, 2009, at the weekly meeting of the Territorial Defense Committee of Triunfo de la Cruz (CODETT), Miguel reflected on his experiences in Tegucigalpa and explained to the participants why it was important for Triunfo to struggle in solidarity with *la Resistencia*. He also attempted to allay the fears of those who were hesitant to participate in the protests due to the threat of violence: "We are not there to fight with the police; we are there to attend a peaceful protest." Carla reinforced his statements:

We have to support this struggle, or Triunfo and the Garifuna communities will lose. There are no rights now. We have signed many agreements with the government, and we need these to be resolved, which is why we must support [it]. We have to support in order to *reclamar después* (make demands later).

Carla's words sparked affirmative shouts from the group. "That's right! We cannot stay here with our arms crossed!" said one of the women. The indeterminacy facing community land claims and a number of pending legal cases against the state gave force to Carla's statements. She also reiterated the parallels between the struggle for popular sovereignty in Tegucigalpa and the local struggle for territorial autonomy. Moreover, she emphasized that Garifuna must provide support now in order to "reclamar después."

Through their involvement in this movement, Garifuna activists—historically excluded from national politics—became visible as active agents of transformation, and, in turn, they worked to combat rampant antiblack and anti-indigenous racism. Yet, the *longue durée* of racism and colonialist constructs of "the Other" continues to feed their current stereotypical representation in the mestizo imagination, as objects of consumption or simply entertainment for the national culture.²³ This is evidenced by the marginal roles Garifuna are assigned within the state apparatus—as well as in spaces of resistance by their subordinate position in relation to other political movements. Indeed, for many mestizos, the politics of ethnic difference employed by Garifuna in the anticoup movement was a form of entertainment, which served to reinforce stereotypical notions of Garifuna otherness.

I observed this tension play out again at a protest on August 13, 2009. It was around midday, after we had walked several miles through the center of Tegucigalpa, when the protesters took over Boulevard Morazán, an important commercial thoroughfare. With traffic stopped, three Garifuna drummers started

playing traditional punta beats in the middle of the street. A large crowd of mostly mestizo protesters gathered around the drummers. They clapped enthusiastically to the music, as one of the musicians got up from his position and moved into the center of the circle. He began dancing rhythmically in dialogue with the drummers. Several mestizos entered the circle and delighted in the playful atmosphere as they tried in earnest to mirror his moves. Some of the Garifuna protesters encouraged them to continue dancing, but others looked on despairingly, resigned to the fact that this form of cultural resistance was lost on the mestizo audience. As I watched the performance, a friend from Triunfo leaned over to me and said, “They don’t understand that we’re sharing something sacred with them.”

Leticia, who joined the resistance movement in Tegucigalpa the day after Zelaya’s ousting, spoke to the double-bind of participation and even critiqued Garifuna in Tegucigalpa for “rejecting their culture.” In a critical affirmation of her roots, Leticia explained to me that she had become more Garifuna since arriving in the capital to support the resistance:

In the time I have spent away [from my community] I have looked around me, and I see other Garifuna that would like, if they could, to wash away the dark color from their skin, the color God gave us. It would be wonderful [for them], since they live in the city and they have tried to modernize as much as possible, but without being able to take away one thing, which is their color. (Interview, October 10, 2009)

She felt as if Garifuna living in the city looked down upon Garifuna from the coastal villages; this was demonstrated by their rejection of the coastal style of dress, and more importantly, by their refusal to speak Garifuna. She told me these Garifuna felt the need to distance themselves from the life and culture of their ancestors in order to make it in the city. Leticia said, “So, I began to think that [their rejection] makes me adamant about wanting to dress more in the Garifuna style, to always carry something, a head-wrap . . . something that from afar will identify me, and say, ‘Here comes a Garifuna.’” Thus, a counter-hegemonic politics of ethnic difference emerged through the performance of an officially sanctioned cultural script. This political strategy critiqued the empty folkloric representations of blackness, which have been used to transform the coast into a modern Caribbean paradise, and relentless pressures to accept and accommodate to the norms of the modern Honduran citizen-subject.

Leticia’s assertion of ethnic pride resonated with my observations of Garifuna political protest in Tegucigalpa and in other spaces of resistance. Garifuna participation was distinct in many ways from that of other social movement activists in la Resistencia. The symbols mobilized by Garifuna included musical instruments (maracas and tambores, e.g.), distinctive clothing, the *humo*, the tricolor Garifuna flag, and distinctive linguistic practices and chants. By highlighting these markers of difference, Garifuna made their concerns for autonomy and antiracism visible

to their compatriots, forcing them to reckon with urgent political matters on the coast and to understand these struggles as central to the broader political aims of the resistance movement.

OFRANEH activists also assumed leadership roles within the Frente and the Espacio Refundacional.²⁴ Here too they asserted the issues of displacement and respect for the collective property rights of indigenous and black peoples, linking the fight for popular sovereignty and against neoliberal domination with the fight for autonomy on the coast. This was illustrative of a unifying desire for a more democratic Honduras. In this way, Garifuna articulated their political desires as being part of the desires of other social sectors to confront the supremacy of the political, economic, and military elite.

Garifuna activists in the resistance movement waged a battle on several fronts. They demanded an immediate end to the de facto regime and publicly declared their support for a constitutional assembly, and they confronted the definitional power of the state and the embedded racism of their newfound comrades. Finally, they used the social movement as a staging ground to denounce the intentions of tourism investors on the coast. Thus, activism in la Resistencia provided an opportunity to be recognized as political agents—not as objects—and to aspire for a different Honduras within this emergent multiethnic movement to remake the nation. However, what have been the results of this activism, and how has the new regime responded to the demands outlined by OFRANEH and their allies?

Postcoup Multiculturalism

In January 2010, following a widely contested electoral process, Porfirio Lobo took office as president of Honduras. The elections—held in November of the previous year—took place under the mandate of the coup regime led by Roberto Micheletti.²⁵ Due to the controversy surrounding his election, the Lobo administration initially faced a crisis of democratic legitimacy. However, the United Nations and the Organization of American States eventually recognized Lobo as the democratically elected president of Honduras.

Under the banner of multicultural inclusion, Lobo backed the creation of a new Ministry for the Promotion of Racial Equality and the Economic Development of Indigenous and Afro-Hondurans.²⁶ He stated that the new ministry was created to “strengthen all of the processes to give opportunities and full recognition of rights for indigenous and Afro-Hondurans” (*El Heraldo*, April 12, 2010). Lobo’s prodiversity mandate was reaffirmed in September 2011, following Honduras’s readmission into the Organization of American States, when he addressed the 66th Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. Lobo stressed Honduras’s achievements since he came into the presidency and assured the

assembly of his commitment to democracy, in part through an explicit embrace of cultural diversity:

Although insufficient, my government has made important steps in support of the historically legitimate claims, the rights and the visibilization of indigenous and Afro-descendent peoples, following the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.²⁷ We have initiated actions and adopted public policies in line with these commitments. Among these, I will mention: the ratification of the International Convention Against All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the inauguration of African Heritage Month in Honduras; the creation of the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, and the creation of the Ministry for the Development of Indigenous and Afro-descendent Peoples.²⁸

He also mentioned his desire to reform the national constitution: “One aspiration of my government is to carry out the constitutional reform to define Honduras as a multicultural and multiethnic country.” His address shows the extent to which liberal democratic legitimacy is entangled with multicultural reforms and respect for diversity, critical features of modern statecraft, and a means of “acting like a state,” which, according to Wedeen (2003), is constitutive of “stateness.” Lobo’s speech at the General Assembly signaled the various concessions his administration was willing to make in response to the demands set forth by black and indigenous organizations from across the political spectrum.

However, a recent act of repression carried out against OFRANEH’s President Miriam Miranda lays bare the shortcomings of the government’s commitment to racial inclusion. On March 28, 2011, during a peaceful protest in the City of Tela, just beyond the entrance of Triunfo, Miranda was shot with a teargas canister at close range. In her testimony, she described the violence that ensued:

In the process of getting arrested, they shot at me various times with teargas bombs, hitting me in the abdomen, which caused burns on my stomach; later I was dragged on the cement while the police continued to hit me and berate me with racial slurs. (March 29, 2011)

Nearly two hours after her arrest, the police, who identified her as a leader of the resistance movement, finally read her her rights, and she was charged with sedition:

In Honduras the chaos that engulfed the country as a result of the 2009 coup—perpetrated by the judiciary, the legislative, and the armed forces—continues . . . In spite of the plastic smiles of state officials and their enthusiasm to obtain international recognition, the criminalization of social protest has worsened under Porfirio Lobo’s regime. (Miranda 2011)

The repression carried out against Miriam Miranda and the accusation of sedition demonstrates the ways in which unassimilable black and indigenous subjects are excluded from the sphere of multicultural citizenship, revealing the limits of inclusion in Honduras. Ultimately, those forms of sociality that challenge prevailing neoliberal ideologies and concomitant market reforms are excluded from the protections guaranteed by the law, despite proliferating discourses of respect for diversity.

Significantly, the violence perpetrated against Miranda happened when Honduras was preparing to host an international conference for Afro-descendants. La Cumbre Mundial de los Afrodescendientes was organized by ODECO with support from most of the major international aid organizations operating in Honduras and the national government. Aside from OFRANEH, ODECO is the most important Garifuna organization in the country. ODECO has collaborated on numerous initiatives with the state, including the creation of the Secretary of Indigenous and Afro-Honduran People (SEDINAFROH). ODECO's accommodation to state developmental goals has been met with ire by OFRANEH, which has publicly questioned their commitments to defending the collective property rights of Garifuna.²⁹

In response to the international summit organized by ODECO, the leaders of OFRANEH organized a counter-summit that was held concurrently with the ODECO-sponsored event. The Forum on Land Grabbing in Latin America and Africa spoke directly to the loss of coastal territory affecting Garifuna communities in Honduras, and included participation from COPINH and the Miskito federation MASTA (Mosquitia Asla Takanka). The celebration of blackness and black culture has its limits, and OFRANEH was taking a stand against a top-down politics of visibility advanced through state multicultural policies. Miranda argues:

The participation and insertion of marginal populations in politics and making of decisions are contingent on the submission to strategies of displacement, which have increased under Plan Puebla Panama³⁰—the one that has destroyed the biodiversity of the region and contributed to the displacement of indigenous peoples from their ancestral territories. (Miranda 2011: 33)

The government was not present at the OFRANEH-sponsored event because it posed a direct challenge to the sovereignty of the state and the official politics of recognition. Multiculturalism, as a form of statecraft, “attests to the ways state actors and multilateral institutions can accommodate cultural rights into dominant political projects” (Anderson 2012: 71), but it falls short of addressing more substantive demands—for territorial autonomy and redistributive justice—of the indigenous and black peoples it purports to include. The OFRANEH event demonstrated participant awareness of the potential menace lying below state concessions to black and indigenous Hondurans and the critical limitations of nascent

cultural rights regimes. The concurrent events also highlight important cleavages between forms of ethnic organizing, and the mechanisms by which organizations, such as OEDCO, enter into a partnership with the state (Brondo 2013: 105), while further marginalizing OFRANEH's persistent demands for territorial autonomy.³¹ Hale (2011: 189) analyzes this distinction in organizational cultures, and describes OFRANEH's approach as one of antisystemic critique, whereas ODECO focuses on "pragmatic daily problem solving."

So, why continue to participate, if, as I have suggested, Garifuna political agency is so easily misinterpreted by their allies and co-opted by state institutions? To answer this question, we must return to the community narratives outlined in the previous section: Garifuna must participate now in order to "make demands later." Further, OFRANEH activists were motivated by the potential for creating solidarity across difference within the emergent Left. This is most clearly illustrated within the Espacio Refundacional, a platform established by actors and groups within the Frente, but that pushed the opposition movement to acknowledge issues of racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination that are not often included within the framework for liberation mapped out by the traditional Left in Latin America.

Conclusion

Mestizo responses to Garifuna participants in la Resistencia highlight the hegemony of folklorized representations of black and indigenous subjects, which have been carefully fashioned and disseminated by the multicultural state and multilateral development agencies for the purpose of expanding the burgeoning tourism industry. The power of these representations is diffuse throughout Honduran society and leads to what I term the double-bind of Garifuna ethnopolitics.

Given the now ubiquitous sound of Garifuna punta music at dance clubs and on radio stations across the country, the irreverent response of the non-Garifuna protesters described in the opening vignette seemed almost appropriate. The sound of the tambores invoked the sound of the Caribbean Coast, the vibrant nightlife of the coastal city La Ceiba, "the bride of Honduras," and the white sand beaches of Tela. Thus, one can observe the power behind official representations of Garifuna cultural difference, and the ways in which their culture has been repackaged by the tourism industry for the consumption of tourists and the majority mestizo population. This is one level of multicultural inclusion, but in the context of the massive protests organized in opposition to the coup, Garifuna assertions of ethnic difference defy these politically vapid representations: "Unlike participants in the national agenda, who appropriate indigenous traditions as agentless symbols of indigeneity, members of resistance movements actively create relations between past and present, spirits and land claims [in the struggle for] autonomy"

(Bacigalupo 2004: 516). In this vein, the performance of cultural difference is not merely a reference to a folkloric past, but a complex negotiation of political subjectivity in relation to diverse social sectors, including oppositional movements.

The politics of ethnic difference enacted by Garifuna activists in la Resistencia became a vehicle to challenge official narratives of difference that are enshrined within contemporary forms of multicultural governance. This demonstrates a rejection of the dominant construction of Garifuna political and cultural subjectivity, which has tied Garifuna cultural symbols to the state development agenda. Through their activism, Garifuna articulated their demands for territorial autonomy as part of the national struggle for popular sovereignty, and in this manner they supplanted official discourses of cultural diversity with nonnormative political desires.

Notes

¹Garifuna are of mixed African and Amerindian ancestry, and one of nine federally recognized ethnic peoples in Honduras.

²On June 28, 2009, Honduran president Manuel Rosales Zelaya was detained by military officers and forcibly exiled to Costa Rica.

³Mestizo refers to people of mixed indigenous and European ancestry, and is used interchangeably with the term ladino to identify the dominant racial group in Honduras.

⁴Garifuna activism in *la Resistencia* pushed beyond the cultural rights paradigm enshrined within official multiculturalism, and beyond struggles for cultural recognition and land rights to critique neoliberal capitalism and the Honduran military, political, and economic elite.

⁵*Refundación* (refoundation) became a rallying cry for activists in la Resistencia, strongly supported by black and indigenous organizations, such as OFRANEH and the Lenca federation COPINH (Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras).

⁶Colby has analyzed similar processes in Costa Rica, where state politicians sought to halt the threat of “Africanization” by banning visas and visa extensions for the “negro race” (2011: 186–187).

⁷For more on bilingual education reforms in Honduras, see Jorge Alberto Amaya’s (2004) dissertation on the emergence of pluriethnic nationalism in Honduras.

⁸International Labor Organization Convention 169 is a legally binding instrument that protects the rights of indigenous and tribal peoples, and includes provisions for the collective ownership and management of ancestral lands.

⁹*La Fiscalia de las Etnias*.

¹⁰The appropriation of Garifuna culture for Caribbean tourism development dates back to the 1970s when the national government funded the Festival Caribe de Danzas Garifunas in order to promote tourism to La Ceiba (Anderson 2000). It is my contention, however, that this process of commodification was not fully realized until after the arrival of multicultural legislation in the 1990s.

¹¹For a more extensive historical account of tourism development in Honduras, see Stonich (2000).

¹²Anderson (2013) also makes this connection in a recent publication on the value of ethnicity in the tourism industry. This extends his previous analysis of multiculturalism, which overlooked the marketing potential of ethnic difference.

¹³*Punta* is a Garifuna form of music and dance. In recent years it has attracted a large national and international following.

¹⁴The creation of the Ministry for the Promotion of Racial Equality and the Economic Development of Indigenous and Afro-Hondurans is one example of how this type of institutional reform is implemented.

¹⁵UNESCO also contributed to the heightened visibility and touristic value of Garifuna culture, when the organization proclaimed Garifuna language, culture, and dance Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2001.

¹⁶Here, I am highlighting how the state and private investors promote Garifuna bodies as part of the touristic offering. It is a form of commodification that smacks of colonialism—practices that construct the other as an object of imperial desire (Alexander 2005; Gregory 2007; Williams 2014).

¹⁷These conversations were mostly impromptu, and thus not formal interviews. However, I did explicitly state my interest in understanding local perspectives on the coup for the purposes of research.

¹⁸The principal Honduran newspapers—controlled by a small group of media magnates—depicted Zelaya as a power-crazed, antidemocratic despot with intentions to eradicate private property and maintain power indefinitely. These media representations trickled down into community debates on the conflict and some Triunfeños expressed skepticism about Zelaya's long-term political agenda.

¹⁹Historically, Garifuna have supported the Liberal Party, which was due in part to the racism and repression they suffered under the dictatorial regime of Tiburcio Carías Andino (founder of the National Party) in the 1930s and 1940s. The de facto president Roberto Micheletti was a member of the Liberal party, as was Zelaya, but the prospect of renewed violence and displacement under a military regime was a concern for many.

²⁰Now the Indura Beach and Golf Resort, this is a massive tourism development in Tela Bay. The project has been met with much resistance from neighboring Garifuna communities and OFRANEH.

²¹*Monte* is used to describe idle, or uninhabitable, land. These lands are usually isolated from areas of economic activity.

²²Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, and intersex.

²³Anibal Quijano (2000) has referred to legacies of colonial practices, including the continued racialization of ethnic and racial minorities, as the “coloniality of power,” a concept further elaborated in Grosfoguel and Georas's work on Puerto Ricans in New York City (2001).

²⁴The *Espacio Refundacional*, of which OFRANEH was a founding member, rejected the elections and insisted on an autonomously organized constitutional assembly with broad popular participation.

²⁵Micheletti was the president of the National Congress at the time of the coup against Zelaya, and he was immediately instated as the de facto president.

²⁶This ministry was later merged with the office of the Secretary of Development and Social Inclusion by the current president, Juan Orlando Hernández.

²⁷Adopted at the 2001 Conference against Racism in Durban, South Africa.

²⁸Author's translation, “Discurso del Excelentísimo Presidente de la República de Honduras Sr. Porfirio Lobo Sosa, en ocasión de la 66 Sesión Ordinaria de la Asamblea General de la Organización de las Naciones Unidas.” *El Heraldo*, September 21, 2011.

²⁹After the Agricultural Modernization Law was passed in 1992, negotiations between ODECO and the government resulted in dozens of land titles for coastal Garifuna communities. However, these titles have been called inadequate by OFRANEH, because they do not include the full ancestral land claim.

³⁰Since renamed the Mesoamerican Project.

³¹Hooker (2005) argues that Afro-Latinos have been less successful than indigenous peoples in their struggles to achieve collective rights in the wake of multicultural reforms, because collective rights are typically adjudicated on the basis of ethnic difference. In Honduras, Indians and Afro-Latinos have been granted the same collective rights, but Garifuna demands for collective rights have yielded only paltry concessions from the state. In response, OFRANEH presented three international cases

against the state of Honduras. In October 2015, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights issued two judgments against the state of Honduras for the violation of Garifuna territorial rights in Triunfo de la Cruz and Punta Piedra.

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