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Living the Garifuna Heritage and Culture

ABSTRACTS

“The Race Leapt at Sauteurs’: Genocide, Narrative and Indigenous Exile from the Caribbean Archipelago” – Melanie Newton

This essay explores the historical importance of three acts of annihilationist violence committed between 1493 and 1797 by the Spanish, the French and the British against the indigenous people of the Lesser Antilles. The essay explores these three incidents as both acts of genocide, as well as the material for a genocidal historical narrative, which is a version of history that seeks to complete the work of the original act of genocide. The translation of military defeats into widely recognised symbols of racial annihilation helped colonial authorities to dispossess the descendants of Caribbean indigenous people of claims for legal redress or rights based on Carib ancestry. This paper illustrates that genocidal anti-Carib narratives survive because a diverse range of agents who engage publicly with the past reproduce them – historians, of course, but also filmmakers, visual artists, poets and government officials. The marginalisation of Carib survival narratives means that, in the Lesser Antilles today, indigenous rights are difficult to conceptualise or articulate effectively in most political and legal contexts.

A Landscape of Cultural Patrimony: Opportunities for Using Private Conservation Tools to Protect Balliceaux – Beth Rose Middleton

Native land trusts, tribes, and indigenous non-profits in the United States are successfully applying private conservation strategies to protect, access, and steward environmentally and culturally important places. This paper begins an examination of the possibilities for utilising such strategies to protect the island of Balliceaux, a Garifuna heritage site located within the territory of St. Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG). With reference to the use of land trusts and conservation easements in US eco-cultural conservation, the paper offers a preliminary discussion of how such tools, along with supportive UN designations, might facilitate Garifuna conservation within the jurisdiction of SVG.

Revisiting the Carib Story – Adrian Fraser

The 2002 declaration of Joseph Chatoyer, paramount chief of the Caribs, as St. Vincent and the Grenadines’ first national hero, has demanded a reexamination of the Carib story. Different eras impose new questions as the country tries to develop a better understanding of the life and times of their hero, beyond the traditional planter version that still persists. This paper points to areas that need to be looked at again. Moreover interest in the story of the Carib people seems to end with the exile in 1797, neglecting the fact that those who remained had to forge a life in a colonial society that even questioned their humanity.

Documenting the Garifuna: Thirty Years of Insider/Outsider Collaboration – Andrea E. Leland

Leland is a filmmaker involved in the creative process while exploring, celebrating and documenting distinct cultures. By developing a style of “insider /outsider” collaboration, she produces films whose primary responsibility is to the community being documented. This method becomes a dialogue between practitioners and tradition bearers of culture (insider), and the observer/filmmaker (outsider). The result of this dialogue is dialectical: able to hold and convey multiple perspectives, speak broadly to larger audiences, and create media that is more dimensional than either insider or outsider could produce alone. This paper focuses on working within the Garifuna and Haitian communities in producing several films, giving examples of this methodology during making and distributing the film. When differences arise, and the dialogue that ensues between filmmaker and community members, this leads to more nuanced portrayals (and understanding) of issues and people. The documentary film work is placed within the context of visual anthropology.

Performing Resistance: Memory and the Mobilisation of Afro-Indigenous Identity for Social Change in St Vincent – Kimberly J. Palmer

Until recently, St Vincent was largely imagined as the ancestral homeland of the Garifuna peoples – the historical place where the Garifuna culture was born, but not necessarily a place where it resided post-1797. In recent years, the island is being actively imagined as a Garifuna space once more. This paper thus explores questions of what it means to “be Garifuna” in St Vincent today, and analyses this mobilisation of Garifuna identity within a discussion of cultural and collective memory and forgetting. The central idea in this paper is that identity is a mutable construct strategically deployed in the colonial and postcolonial context, and is thus highly linked to ongoing projects of decolonisation and the (re)visioning of St Vincent’s future. A key point is that Garifuna identity has never been fixed, and has always been a fluid and highly political construct.

Music, Healing, and Transforming Identity in Lemesi Garifuna (the Garifuna Mass) – Oliver N. Greene

“Music, Healing, and Transforming Identity in *Lemesi Garifuna* (the Garifuna Mass)” explores how Garifuna indigenous music in the Roman Catholic Mass revitalises worship and aids in restoring spiritual health. It reveals how the mass functions as an example of the maxim, *la cultura cura* (culture heals) and answers three questions: (1) which research topics in religion and medical ethnomusicology address music’s potential to heal; (2) how have inculturation and intertextuality shaped the evolution of music in the mass; and (3) how does the mass aid in the maintenance of indigeneity and qualify as an expression of Garifunaduáü (the Garifuna way).

Family Continuity between Yurumein (St Vincent) and Belize, Central America – Joseph Palacio

This paper is a narrative in two ways. The first is how the author met a lineal descendant of Joseph Chatoyer from St. Vincent in Belize, who became his primary informant. The second is excerpts from oral tradition going as far back as Gulisi, a purported daughter of Chatoyer. Cultural identity and indigeneity are the two conceptual axes through which both narratives are

interwoven. The content and methods of research demonstrate how similar efforts can be carried to highlight family linkages that cross extensive generations and geographic spaces within the wider Caribbean.