

Carmen Hutchinson Miller



The province and Port of Limon:

metaphors for
Afro - Costa Rican
black identity



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GLOSSARY OF TERMS IN VERNACULAR * ENGLISH

A.....	I
Afta	Later/ After
A seh.....	I said
Baal	to showt
Betah	Better/best
Buay	Boy
Cyan	Cannot
Do.....	Do not
Duo.....	Do not
Eada.....	Either
Fa.....	For
Fada.....	Father
Gwen.....	Going to
Kinda.....	Kind of
Lieyad	Lier

Mada Mother
Neva Never
Oonoo..... You
Them the were
Wa Want
Wid..... With
Wouda Would
(*) Brief expl.

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To the province of Limón, -my birth place-, and to all the people representing the different and rich ethnic cultural expressions in this region of Limón Blacks, Mestizos, Chinese, and Amerindians; for their resilience in making this piece of Costa Rica their home despite the geographical, political and racist odds.

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Eleven years ago, in 2002, as a History Master's student I attended a conference at the University of the West Indies in Mona, Jamaica to make a presentation along with established Costa Rican, Caribbean and other international scholars on the theme of Caribbean migration to Costa Rica.

I was thrilled to meet Costa Rican scholars like Quince Duncan who I did not see in years and who was, without a doubt, one of the positive influences for Afro-Costa Rican young people of my generation. While living in San José among other Afro-Limonenses, we organized activities that would have helped in strengthening the regional bonds, meeting other Afro-Costa Ricans with similar interest, and developing relationships that would last for years to come as was in the case of Quince Duncan who would have been invited to many activities and with whom we would have become friends.

During this conference I got the opportunity to meet other Costa Rican scholars like Dr. Lara Putnam, Dr. Carmen Murillo Chaverri, Dr. Manuel Monestel, and Dr. Rony Viales. Dr. Ronald Harpelle from Canada and Dr. Royce Bryce Laporte originally from Panama were other scholars who I was privileged to meet, both later becoming my mentors for my Doctorate, and Harpelle was chosen as the external examiner for my dissertation.

This conference did more than reuniting me with advocates for the Afro-Costa Rican cause and introducing me to new scholars who later became colleagues. The conference motivated me to continue on project dissertation doing a PhD that would make Afro-Caribbean immigrants and their Afro-Costa Rican descendant subjects of my investigation.

This book is the result of that journey which began in 2002 until the completion of the dissertation in 2011. Despite the distance, and through the trips 'home' to Costa Rica and the province of Limón to collect the data, the journey helped me to feel closer to my country giving me a better understandings about the immigrant reality through my own experience as a Costa Rican living in Barbados.

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* Died in December 2015

*** Died in 2015

** Died in 2016

**** Died in 2017

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Last but not least special thanks to my entire family in Costa Rica (mom, dad, sisters, brothers, nieces and nephews), especially my son who understood that the time spent at libraries, archives and conducting interviews was not an indication of neglect. To the Almighty Goddess, and God for giving me the life, health, time, resources, and opportunities that helped in the realization of another personal dream.

INTRODUCTION

During my years as a student of the discipline of History, I became concerned that within both Costa Rican and Caribbean historiography there was insufficient scholarship where late 19th century Afro-Caribbean immigrants in Costa Rica were subjects of history. Equally there was a dearth of scholarship on their Afro-Costa Rican descendants.

This concern motivated me to do research to make this scholarly neglected population the focus of my investigation. Being born and bred in the province of Limón equipped me for this interesting historical journey to document and leave evidence on the pages of history the active involvement of Afro-Caribbean immigrant and their Afro-Costa Rican descendants in Costa Rican, and Caribbean scholarship.

The interesting combination of insider/outsider brings richness to the narrative since as an insider I can un-apologetically explore, examine, and explain in detail many experiences of discrimination, target of stereotypes and invisibility shared with the rest of my Afro-counterparts, particularly Afro-Limonenses. As an outsider I am equipped with the academic tools acquired through years in academia to tell the story and analyze these narratives objectively.

This exploratory account used oral history techniques, archival investigation along with other documentation highlighting some of the

reasons why 19th century Costa Rican administration conveniently accepted Afro-Caribbean immigrant labour despite their racist ideological position against Chinese and Africans.

The investigation demonstrates the difficulty Afro-Caribbean immigrant workers had to face in this society and subsequently the struggles and triumphs of their descendants, Afro-Costa Ricans within the country of their birth.

✂ This book analyzes, from the perspective of history and of everyday life, some of the reasons why the province and the Port of Limón are considered metaphors for Afro-Costa Rican black identity. It also highlights the region's importance for Afro-Costa Ricans, and explains how they have managed to maintain aspects of late 19th century Jamaican immigrant culture within Costa Rican society.

This publication will contribute to the present historiography in presenting one of the first studies that try to explain the importance of the province of Limón to its Afro-Costa Rican population, showing a different and empowering image of both Afro-Caribbean immigrants and their descendants. It will shift the main focus of other scholarly works which mention Afro-Caribbean immigrants solely within the context of the construction of the railroad, and of banana cultivation, and contribute to scholarship on people of Jamaican descent in Costa Rica.

It is hoped that the information be useful not only for historians in Costa Rica and the Caribbean but also for primary and secondary school educators in Costa Rica to contribute in shifting negative ideas around Afro-Caribbean immigrants and their Afro-Costa Rican descendants.

The first part of the book examines the construction of a national Costa Rican identity during the colonial period, while establishing the presence of Africans in Costa Rica. It gives a brief historical account of the establishment of the province and Port of Limón, and analyzes some of the reasons behind that province development and the convenience of accepting especially Afro-Caribbean and Chinese immigration; additionally it investigates the attitudes of both mainstream Costa Rica and Afro-Caribbean born Costa Ricans and their right to citizenship.

Part two examines and exposes the forms and manifestations of racism practiced within the Costa Rican society, establishes the period in which Afro-Costa Ricans were officially recognized as citizens, highlights the late 19th century Jamaican immigrant legacy which contributed to the development of an Afro-Costa Rican black identity focusing on every-day

life activities of 1929-30s Afro-Costa Rican involvement, and explores some of the reasons for identifying this area as the black region of the country, and analyses its importance for Afro-Costa Ricans.

PART ONE

FALSE PERCEPTION OF A 'WHITE' COUNTRY: INDIGENOUS AND AFRICAN PRESENCE IN COSTA RICA

Early Costa Rican historiography¹ has given a mistaken idea that has created contested thoughts on “los hijos de la tierra” (“the “sons and daughters of the soil”)², as well as on the African presence in Costa Rica. At the popular level many believe that the number of indigenous people had been greatly reduced at the time of Spanish arrival and the racial mixture between them and the Spaniards was therefore not significant. Many also believe that slavery was not practiced in Costa Rica and are therefore not surprised that they are not any identifiable African traces within the country.³

While there are still remnants of these beliefs among some Costa Ricans, some scholars have tried to demonstrate that in fact there was a significant number of *indigenas* divided into their respective groups before, and after Columbus arrived on these shores. The historical research of Elizabeth Fonseca Corrales, et. al, *Costa Rica en el Siglo XVIII* extensively examines the topic of *indigenas* in Costa Rica.^{4 5}

1 The historical research of Aguilar Bulgarelli and Aguilar, Alfaro evidence this gap. The authors questioned the concept of rural democracy in the work of historian Monge Alfaro, *Historia de Costa Rica*. 1996

2 The indigenous people of Costa Rica.

3 See Carlos, Sojo. *Igualitarios: La construcción social de la desigualdad en Costa Rica*. 2010

4 See the work of Thiel one of the first works about indígenas in colonial Costa Rica. 1900

5 See also colonial bibliography found in Meléndez, Duncan, among others.

The work of Bulgarelli stimulated national debate about the presence of Africans in colonial Costa Rica.

Fig. 1. Bulgarelli's publication made an impact in the Costa Rican imagination. Ivan Molina Jimenez. "Esclavos en la Costa Rica Colonial."



Source: *La República*. Tuesday 19, August, 1997: 11A

Some of these reactions appeared as comments in some of the main newspapers of the country. Interestingly these were no negative reactions, only reactions of surprise, and in some cases affirmation of the presence of Africans during the colonial period.

Fig. 2. Victor Hugo Murillo. “La historia oculta.”



Source: *La Nación*. Wednesday February 24, 1999. 13 A.

What was also interesting for a racist society such as Costa Rica was that some of the comments appearing in the newspapers, acknowledged the invisibility of that part of Costa Rican history.⁶

This chapter aims to achieve two objectives: first, to demonstrate the existence of indigenous and African population during the colonial period and second, to explore and analyze the ideological construction of “whiteness” from colonial Costa Rica. The analysis will help in understanding the negative attitudes of contemporary Costa Ricans toward the descendants of these groups, and particularly those of African descent.

During the colonial period, Costa Rica, along with other Central American countries⁷, was part of what at the time was called ‘El Reino de Guatemala’ (the Kingdom of Guatemala). Present day Guatemala was the capital of the Kingdom and the administrative centre for Spain.

In the case of Costa Rica, according to Héctor Pérez Brignoli in *Historia Contemporánea de Costa Rica*, “La PROVINCIA de Costa Rica

6 See some national discussion about slavery in newspaper clippings at the National Library in Costa Rica Chacón Naranjo, Chacón, Jiménez, Molina, Murillo, and Bulgarelli.

7 These other countries include Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, British Honduras and Mexico. For in-depth information, see Woodward.

quedó bien establecida en la década de 1570” (13) (“the *PROVINCE* of Costa Rica was already well established during the decade of 1570”; 13) and settled in the central part of the country called the Central Valley.⁸ After more than two centuries under Spanish rule on September 15, 1821, the provinces under the Capitanía General in Guatemala gained their independence from Spain.⁹

Fig. 3. Map of Central America¹⁰



Source: Free internet.

Presently Costa Rica is one of the seven countries¹¹ located in geographical Central America. Costa Rica has borders to the North with Nicaragua and to the South with Panama, and with the Pacific to the West and, the Caribbean Sea to the East. It has a land surface of 51,100 Km², 1, 290 Km. of coastline. Costa Rica is divided into seven provinces San José, Alajuela, Cartago, Heredia, Guanacaste, Puntarenas, and Limón. According to the 2011 census, the total population was about 4,301,712 inhabitants.¹²

8 The provinces in the Central Valley are San José, Alajuela, Heredia, and Cartago.

9 For in-depth study on colonial Central America and independent Costa Rica see Bulkholder and Johnson, Bushnell and Macaulay, Bethel, Cerdas Cruz and Fernández.

10 This map was retrieved September 9, 2010 from GraphicMaps.com.

11 These seven countries are Belize, Costa Rica, el Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panamá.

12 Costa Rica is also considered as Caribbean.

Before the European conquest, Central America was inhabited by indigenous people "Sons and Daughters of the Soil". Despite reduction in population during colonization, a significant number of their descendants are presently living in countries like Guatemala, Panamá, Nicaragua, Belize, Mexico, Perú, Ecuador, Colombia, Brazil, and Bolivia.

Burkholder and Johnson, in "Discussion of Central America, Mexico and South America before Colonial Conquest" state, "The hemisphere's indigenous population at the moment of contact in 1492 was probably between thirty-five, and forty-five million" (1). Relating specifically to Central America, Cáceres, in "Indígenas y Africanos en las Redes de Esclavitud en Centroamérica," explains that:

En el momento de la conquista por parte de Castilla, la región tenía una población cercana de los tres millones y medio de habitantes,¹³ al final del período colonial ésta quedó reducida a un 10% aproximadamente (83).

At the Castellians conquest, the region had a population close to three and half million inhabitants, at the end of the colonial period this was reduced to approximately 10%.

Despite the debate over the reduced number of indigenous people, there is no agreement among scholars and government officials as to the exact number of indigenous people before, during and after the colonization period in Costa Rica.

As to the admixture of the indigenous, Spanish and African populations Burkholder and Johnson comment that, "Miscegenation among Spaniards, Indians and Africans produced a large racially mixed stratum in colonial society" (204).

Unlike some of the South and Central American countries, Costa Rica's main population is largely *mestizo*, meaning that the *mestisaje* was more prevalent between the indigenous people and with the Spanish during colonial times.¹⁴ Stuart F. Voss in *Latin America in the Middle Period 1750-1929*, discussing demographic change during the mid-eighteenth century affirms, that, "In what is today Costa Rica the Amerindian Population was largely replaced by those of European descent..." (2).

The use of some population census data will help in further evidencing this *mestisaje* in Costa Rica.¹⁵ Thiel in *Monografía de la población de*

13 Author quoted Lovell and Lutz.

14 See the work of Meléndez Obando.

15 The first population census for post-independent Costa Rica was done in 1864. Population data were also collected in the years 1883, 1892, 1927, 1950, 1963, 1973, 1984 and 2000.

Costa Rica en el siglo XIX presents a table that shows the population of colonial Costa Rica up to the turn of the 19th century (1522, 1569, 1611, 1700, 1720, 1741, 1751, 1748 and 1801). See table 1.1.

From this table we can appreciate that by 1801 the higher figures for the mix of Amerindians and Spaniards, known as *ladinos* and *mestizos*, were higher than the figures for Amerindians and Spaniards. These colonial figures are a clear indication of the strong *mestizaje* in Costa Rica by the early 19th century.

Because of this *mestizaje* between the indigenous people and the Spaniards which reduced the numbers of indigenous people in Costa Rica, as Voss indicated, the discourse of a 'white' Costa Rica was strengthened.

This discourse is not unique to mainstream Costa Rica as it was one perpetuated by the Europeans. According to Malik,¹⁶ the race discourse was developed during the Victorian Era, with the entrenchment of the positivism, and scientific racism ideologies. He argues that the concept of race as racism was not used before this time but only emerged during the scientific period with the development of Social Darwinism.

For the Latin American situation Graham, in his introduction of *The Idea of Race in Latin America* explains how leaders of Latin American countries after their independence, and during late 19th and early 20th century would have adopted their racist thinking from Europe. While independent Costa Rica, as well as the other Latin American countries would like to ignore its indigenous genes, Thiel cautions:

Por fin, si bien las razas indígenas *puras* casi han desaparecido, ó están representadas en el día sólo por pocos individuos...sin embargo, no debe creerse que la sangre india se haya disminuido en Costa Rica (24).

Finally, if indeed the *pure* indigenous races have almost disappeared, or are represented today only by a reduced number of individuals, one should nonetheless not believe that the Indian blood is diminished in Costa Rica.

The *mestizaje* between the indigenous and Spanish population ensured that 'Indian' blood continued to flow through mainstream Costa Rican veins. Based on the 30, 413 figures for *ladinos* and *mestizos* given by

16 See his chapter III "The Making of a Discourse of Race".

Table 1.1
Population Census for Costa Rica from 1522 to 1801

<i>Component of the population from 1522 to 1801 according to race</i>	<i>Population in 1522</i>	<i>Population in 1569</i> <i>47 years after</i>	<i>Population in 1611</i> <i>42</i>	<i>Population in 1700</i> <i>89</i>	<i>Population in 1720</i> <i>20</i>	<i>Population in 1741</i> <i>21</i>	<i>Population in 1751</i>	<i>Population in 1778</i>	Population in 1801
SPANIARDS	-	113	330	2,146	3,059	4,687	7,807	6,046	4,942
AMERIDIANS	27,200	17,166	14,908	15,489	13,269	12,716	10,109	8,104	8,281
LADINOS and MESTIZOS	-	-	25	213	748	3,458	3,057	13,915	30,413
BLACKS	-	30	25	154	168	200	62	94	30
MULATTOS, ZAMBOS and PARDOS	-	170	250	1,291	2,193	3,065	2,987	6,053	8,925
TOTAL	27,200	17,479	15,538	19,293	19,437	24,126	24,022	34,212	52,591

Source: Traslacion from Augusto, Bernardo. Thiel *Monografía de la Población de la República de Costa Rica en el Siglo XIX Tomo I, 1900*. <http://www.sinabi.go.cr> 20 June 2010.

Thiel's table for 1801, it is inconceivable the belief of mainstream Costa Rica as a pure 'white' genetic stock.

Oscar Aguilar Bugarelli embarked on a 22-year scholarly research in order to demonstrate that there are African genes running through Costa Rican veins.¹⁷ He comments that the mix was immediate between the Africans and the Spaniards that they ended up calling them 'mulatos blancos' (371).

Scholars like Robinson A. Herrera in "'Por qué no sabemos firmar'", and Mathew Restall in "Black Conquistadores", have demonstrated that Africans accompanied the Spaniards during the period of the conquest, participating in the colonial process in the initial stages, as well as performing other activities.¹⁸

According to Restall, "Black Conquistadores," Africans during the 16th century, were 'armed auxiliaries'. "Whenever Spaniards set foot in the Americas as members of conquest companies they were accompanied by black conquistadores" (175). Others were brought "not only to work but to help keep the indigenous population subdued" (176).

Herrera demonstrates that slaves resisted and formed maroon societies. "African slaves worked in agricultural enterprises and as skills artisans, although most laboured primarily in urban settings as domestics" (258). Therefore their presence cannot be denied as the conquest progressed, and African slavery grew full blown, resulting in an African racial mix in the New World. The comments of Burkholder and Johnson help to strengthen this point, "The importation of black slaves also added to the genetic pool of Latin America and the multiracial and culturally complex society that characterized the colonial era" (132).

Costa Rica at the time of colonization was not as sought after province like in the case of Méjico, and Perú for their so called riches. Despite that, it was still colonized by the Spaniards who also enslaved Africans after exploiting the indigenous population. According to Burkholder and Johnson "between the early sixteenth century and 1810, Spanish America received nearly 1 million African slaves" (127).

A total figure is not given for the number of slaves in Costa Rica, but Cáceres indicates that "the purchase and selling of slaves was done on a small scale and continuously during the XVII and XVIII centuries as demonstrated in the case of Costa Rica" (97).

17 See also Mauricio Meléndez Obando. "Presencia de Africa" and "El Día de las Culturas" and Gudmundson.

18 See Meléndez and Duncan, Burkholder and Johnson.

Despite the fact that there is no total figure of slaves entering Costa Rica, during the colonial period, Bulgarelli's research has demonstrated that:

Que era errónea la afirmación tradicional que considera que en Costa Rica hubo pocos esclavos negros y que su empleo estaba reducido a las plantaciones de cacao en Matina y al servicio doméstico en Cartago. Se ha comparado que su número fue alto, con respecto al volumen de la población y que los esclavos fueron empleados como mano de obra en diversas actividades, pues su labor estuvo ligada permanentemente a las haciendas agrícolas y ganaderas que poseían los sectores privilegiados de la Provincia (444).

The traditional affirmation was erroneous in considering that in Costa Rica there were few black slaves in Costa Rica, and that their labour was employed only in the cacao plantations in Matina and in domestic work in Cartago. It has been shown that their numbers were high with respect to the total population, and that the slaves were employed as labour in several -duties activities because their labour was permanently linked to the agricultural *haciendas* and stockbreeding owned by the privileged sectors of the province possessed.

Bulgarelli's research which, as mentioned earlier in the chapter stirred heated debate, and surprises as it shows not only a significant number of slaves in colonial Costa Rican society but also their participation in the economic development of the country. This publication also shows that reduced or increased, the fact is that there were Africans on Costa Rican soil from colonial times.

Using the same figures presented in Thiel's research but interpreted differently Bulgarelli, in his publication, demonstrates, among other things, that there were sufficient Africans during colonial Costa Rica to justify an African heritage. Bulgarelli's numbers (373-374) show for the 1801 census the following distribution:

RACE	TOTAL	PERCENTAGE
Espanoles	4,942	9.45%
Indios	8,281	15.74%
Ladinos y Mestizos	30,413	57.82%
Negros y Mulatos	8,955	17.02%

Ladinos are indigenous people or African descendants who spoke Spanish during colonial period.¹⁹ *Mestizos* are the mix between the indigenous people and the Spaniards. *Negros*, are pure Africans, and *mulatos* is the mix between the Africans and the Spaniards.

Based on Thiel, the 1801 census shows,

RACE	TOTAL
Espanoles	4,942
Indios de raza pura	8,281
Ladinos y Mestizos	30,413
Negros	30
Mulatos y Zambos, llamados también <i>pardos</i>	8,929 (5).

Zambos are the mix between Africans and the indigenous people. Note the grouping of both authors, and their intentions. Thiel's objective was to "present a monographic work of the Costa Rican population of 1801, the censuses, and movements of the population during the XIX century and of the 1900 population" (5). *Indios de raza pura* are the indigenous people not subjected to miscegenation.

Indeed, in Thiel's treatment on the Costa Rican population of the period, almost no attention is paid to this group except for a short reference at the end of the chapter about the 'negros' where he commented that:

En los pueblos de la costa del Pacífico, Nicoya y Esparza, los negros traídos del Africa é importados desde Nicaragua se fusionaron con los indígenas y formaron en los primeros decenios de la conquista una raza nueva, la de los llamados pardos y zambos, la cual ya existía cuando se dieron las primeras leyes que prohibían los matrimonios entre Africanos e indios. Estas dos razas mixtas se multiplicaron constantemente doblando su número cada 25 á 33 años, y constituyen en la actualidad un elemento poderoso de la población de Costa Rica (24).

In the towns of the Pacific coast, Nicoya and Esparza, the blacks brought from Africa or imported from Nicaragua mixed with the indigenous people and formed in the first decades of conquest a new race, called *pardos and zambos*, which was already in existence when the first laws prohibiting the marriage between Africans and Indians was passed. These two mixed races multiplied constantly doubling in numbers every 25 or 33 years, and make up a powerful element of the Costa Rican population.

19 For more details on these classifications and meanings see Quirós, Vallejos.

Based on Bulgarelli's figures, counting the blacks, mulatos and *zambos* there are close to 9,000 African individuals and their descendants. Before discussing some of the reasons why Thiel paid insufficient, or no attention to the growing population of African descent population in colonial Costa Rica, I want to draw attention to evidence found in the National Archive of Costa Rica which speaks to the powerful element that the *zambo* Miskitos were becoming during colonial times as mentioned by Thiel.

In 1724 in an official letter the Governor of Costa Rica complains to the King for not sending the requested armaments to fight the Miskitos who are aided by Jamaicans. Archivo Nacional, Sección Histórica, 1724 reports:

El Governador de costarrica (sic) da quenta (sic) a...en su Real y supremo de las Indias no ha dado el armamento para inbadir (sic) a los Mosquitos, que mas de cuatrocientos (sic) de dichos Barbaros saquearon de sorpresa el Valle de Matina auxiliados de los Jamaycanos (sic) llevandose seis sientos quintales de cacao, dose esclavos y veinte y dos prisioneros libres que por los testimonios adjuntos se reconocera lo dicho, otras circunstancias y como se hallan situados: pide a ...dicho armamento de Panama, Portovelo y Cartagaena (5274).

The Governor of Costa Rica informs ...your Supreme Royal of the Indies, has not given the armament to invade the Miskitos, that more than four hundred of those barbarians sacked without warning the Valley of Matina, helped by Jamaicans. They took six hundred quintals of cocoa, twelve slaves and twenty two free prisoners who through the testimonials attached can attest to the same, and other circumstances, and how they are situated...we are asking for such armament from Panama, Portovelo and Cartagena.

It can be seen from this quotation that there were inhabitants in another region of Costa Rica other than in the Central Valley as indicated by Brignoli. The quotation also provides evidence of agricultural activities taking place in that part of the country, which strengthens Bulgarelli's argument of the economic participation of enslaved Africans.

The reference made about the freeing of twelve slaves does not indicate if these were Africans or indigenous people, and gives an idea that slavery in Costa Rica was extended to other parts of the country and was not

concentrated only in the area of Cartago. Finally, it indicates that there were other people of African descent in the region, like the Jamaicans²⁰ mentioned.

The figure given in the reference to the number of the so called barbarous individuals that were causing them grief attests to a significant ethnic representation of this group within colonial Costa Rica. Based on Thiel's 1720s table mulatos, *zambos*, and *pardos* numbered over 3000, their numbers increasing by 1801 to almost 9,000.

What could explain why they did not leave any descendants behind as did the indigenous population that shows a slightly lower number than this group of African descent. By 1801 the Indigenous population was 8, 281 and mulatoes, *zambos* and mosquitos together were 8, 925. Some scholars argue that it was due to the reduced number of African slaves, and others that it was due to the process of miscegenation.²¹

Thiel recognizes the importance of the growing number of people of African descent in the country during colonial times but still, in line with his objective does not give the subject the required attention. The argument here is that Thiel, even when he was a Bishop, was a product of his time and was apparently strongly influenced by racist ideologies.

This racist ideology will be evident in the subsequent invisibility of people of African descent within official documents, the educational system, legislation, and the daily attitudes of present main stream Costa Rica. This discussion will be analyzed in further detail in Chapter 4.

As indicated by Elaine Pereira Rocha in a discussion of Brazilian historiography in *Racism in Novels*, "The absence of the black population in many works on Brazilian history can be considered a 'whitening' of the Brazilian historiography..." (24).

The same is true for the Costa Rican case. Therefore it can be argued that, based on that 'whitening', that Thiel saw it as irrelevant to group the figures for blacks, and the African mix with those for *indigenas* because he probably did not consider them as descendants of Africans. Bulgarelli, on the other hand, was deliberate in establishing the larger numerical representation of the African slaves and their descendants. Using the same data, he grouped the figures for blacks, and for those mixed with blacks (or African).

20 Further research needs to be done in order to determine the reasons for the presence of Jamaicans in Costa Rica during the 18th century.

21 For more discussion on this see Olien and Gudmundson,

The results differ with their intentions. But it must be emphasized, as reduced as may be the numbers of the African presence in colonial Costa Rica and its rapid assimilation into the society; these secondary sources clearly demonstrate there were Africans in Costa Rica.

This discussion establishes the presence of indigenous people in the pre-Columbian era, and the presence of Africans during the colonial period. What follows is a discussion that will expose the reasons behind the mistreatment, abuse and the making invisible by mainstream Costa Rica of the descendants of these two groups, by explaining racist ideologies that position the "white" race as superior to any other.

After achieving their independence, Latin American countries wanted to ensure their future social, cultural, and economic development by associating whiteness with progress and civilization. Therefore, every country embarked on the process of '*blanqueamiento*' (whitening). With the terrible and inhumane treatment of the indigenous and Africans and their descendants they signaled to the creoles,²² and to the privileged mestizos that the best way to enjoy power, and privilege was to be part of the superior race, the "whites".

This belief in the white race as the superior race was not a novelty in independent Latin America. The ideology came along with the *conquistadores* during the colonial period and only grew stronger during the period of the enlightenment with the development of social Darwinism, and the entrenchment of positivistic ideas that gave rise to scientific racism.²³

According to George R. Andrews, "In order to be civilized, Latin America would have to become white" (118). One of the ways of achieving that goal within a multiethnic America was through European immigration. Andrews states that:

Immigration was the only step in whitening and Europeanizing Latin American societies, however not only did those societies have to be whitened racially and demographically; they had to be whitened culturally and aesthetically as well (119).

* Examples of the whitening campaign were evident in Latin America, especially after independence. Countries tightened emigration legislation against any group other than white and cultural expressions of other

22 In Latin America these are Spaniards born in the Américas.

23 For further information on this see Malik, Mama, and Gay.

see also Lowell Gudmundson "De 'negro' a 'blanco' en la hispanoamérica del siglo XIX: la asimilación afroamericana en Argentina y Costa Rica" 41
P.D.F. Google Scholar retrieved Dec 31st, 2016.

ethnic groups were repressed. When it was convenient, they pitted other marginalized groups not of African descent against Afro-Latin Americans.

Two examples will suffice in explaining this process within post-independent Costa Rica. Forty one years after independence in 1862 a law, "*Ley de Bases y Colonización*" was passed to encourage immigration of European whites and prohibit the colonization by any other race. The law states in *Gaceta* 8 November, 1862:

Se prohíbe la colonización del territorio nacional por parte de las razas Africana y china, e incluso faculta al gobierno para prohibir el ingreso de esas poblaciones no deseadas al país. Se estimula y protege la inmigración europea, destinando un fondo considerable anual al presupuesto nacional y ofreciendo diez manzanas de terreno a cada individuo y veinte a cada matrimonio, y por cada hijo menor de dieciocho años cinco manzanas más (191).

The colonization of the national territory on the part of the African and Chinese race is prohibited and the government may prohibit the entry of these undesired populations into the country. European immigration is to be encouraged and protected, and a considerable sum is to be set aside annually from the national budget and ten acres of land offered to each married, and five acres for each child under the age of eighteen.

Another example of the pitting of one marginalized group against the other is found in a letter sent to the Costa Rican leader of the time to allow the entry of Chinese over blacks. In a letter written in 1869, North American business man Federico Alberding makes a case to introduce Chinese into the country by exalting their virtues, and denigrating those of the coolies.²⁴

The letter is written within the context of procuring labour for the coffee plantation. We should be reminded that he is writing this letter six years after the 1862 law was passed. It can be seen that he was knowledgeable of the law, making his case without entertaining the idea of European or North American immigrant labour. Alberding argues:

No puede pensarse en una inmigración europea o de los E.E. U.U., mientras no exista la comunicación directa y específica con la costa atlántica, y por otra parte rechazaran las leyes de Costa Rica la colonización de la raza Africana. Más aún cuando se pudiera contar con tal inmigración,

24 See, Archivo Nacional de Costa Rica. Congreso No. 8423.



esta no llenaría el fin apetecido pues solo una parte de los inmigrantes trabajaría al jornal (10).

One cannot think of European or North American immigration, as long as there is no direct and specific communication with the Atlantic coast; on the other hand, the Costa Rican laws reject colonization by the African race. Even so if one could count on such immigration it would not achieve the goal for only some of the immigrants would work for a day's wage.

Alberding's letter deals with a number of issues that were evident at that time. He refers to the inaccessibility of the Atlantic coast, which is today the province of Limón. He is trying to resolve the problem of insufficient labour. He is also trying to adhere to the law as it relates to contracting black immigrant workers.

It can be argued based on the first line of the quotation, the immigration he was referring to from Europe and North America was of Africans or their descendants born in Europe or North America.²⁵ Since the law clearly prohibited their entry, he argues against it saying that they would not be enough anyway.

Neither colonial nor post-independent Costa Rica escaped racism, and the false perception of being part of a white ethnic group and thus ideologically constructing a white national identity. The concept of whiteness denoted progress and industry, and early independent Costa Rica therefore needed to ensure that this new country was seen as white.

According to Sojo:

Lo propio de la etnofobia costarricense se manifiesta en la pretendida ausencia del mestizaje. La pureza racial es definida como rasgo de identidad afirmando que la mayoría de la población del altiplano, la "Tiquicia pura" de Masferrer (citado por Molina, 2005 20), es blanca: "*pura raza española de Galicia*" (22).

Costa Rican ethno-phobia is manifested in the pretense of an absence of *mestisaje*. Racial purity is defined as a feature of identity that affirms the majority of the population of the plains, the "Pure Tiquicia" of Masferrer (quoted by Molina, 2005 20) is white: "*pure Spanish race form Galicia*".

25 Meléndez, and Duncan state that in 1862 when the Law was passed 'Abraham Lincoln emancipated blacks from the Columbia District and thought that it was ideal to send the free blacks who wanted to migrate to Chiriquí'. This suggests that Post-colonial Costa Rica was protecting its borders, and barring the entry of blacks.

Their reasoning for this is based on the false illusion of the Spanish that they were in the majority, ignoring their mixing with the indigenous population. Sojo continues:

La historia ha informado extensamente sobre el decurso de la construcción social de esta condición étnica definida como Blanca, como un proceso más o menos contemporáneo con la formación de la república liberal, entre los setenta del Siglo XIX y los veinte del Siglo XX. Esa construcción echó mano, sin embargo, de numerosos referentes históricos que confirmaron las causas de la pretendida homogeneidad “blanca” de lo costarricense. Básicamente dos fueron exploradas y esgrimidas: la escasa población indígena originaria y la ausencia de mestizaje... la población es blanca (española) porque había pocos indígenas con los que se mezclaron los españoles (22).

History has spoken extensively on the process of the social construction of this ethnic condition defined as white, as a process more or less contemporary, with the formation of the liberal republic, between the 70s of the XIX century and the twenties of the XX century. This construction looks to a number of historical references that would confirm the causes of the supposed “white” homogeneity of Costa Ricans. Basically two were explored and used: the limited indigenous population and the absence of *mestisaje*...the population is white (Spanish) because there were few indigenous people with whom the Spaniards would mix.

Harpelle also demonstrates this white construction with reference to the content of the Ley de Bases y Colonización stating that ‘for the framers of the national identity, the issue was clear; Costa Rica was a “white-settler” society, and the government had to ensure that it remained so (7).

In the work of Ricardo Fernández Guardia, *Costa Rica en el Siglo XIX*, evidence of this belief in white ethnicity in Costa Rica is clear as compared to the other Central American States. He comments:

El país de Costa Rica tiene una proporción mayor de Españoles de pura sangre, con menos mezcla de negro e indio que los otros países de Centro América, y si ha logrado mayor prosperidad, demostrando más actividad y espíritu empresarial materialmente, y en otros aspectos es justo atribuirle a esta circunstancia (285).

Costa Rica has a larger proportion of pure blooded Spaniards, with less mixture of black and Indian than the other Central American countries, and if it has achieved greater prosperity, showing more activity and

entrepreneurial spirit materially, and in other aspects, it is fair to attribute it to this circumstance.

Here is a trait that is still existent up to the present day, the arrogance of Costa Rica with respect to the other Central American countries. Most importantly the quotation makes reference to the fact that Costa Rica is more prosperous than its sister countries because it has more 'whites', therefore industry and progress are synonyms of whiteness.

Munro and Kinley, in *Republics of Central America*, strengthen the point when making a comparison between the inhabitants of Costa Rica and the rest of the Central American countries stating:

The inhabitants of the central plateau are distinctly Spanish in race and civilization. The white families, moreover, do not seem to be the same type as those of Guatemala and the other countries. The majority of the people of Costa Rica, it is commonly said, are descended from Gallegos, one of the most law-abiding and hard working of the numerous races that occupy the Iberian Peninsula, while those of the other countries are predominantly Andalusian (139).

The use of language is another way to reproduce ideologies, discourses, and construct identities. Using Rosemary Thong's *Feminist Thought*, in explaining postmodernist feminism, and their use of the de-constructivists approach advances Jacques Lacan's explanation of "The Symbolic Order", referring to the rules and regulations set by societies. Thong writes:

For a child to function adequately within society here he or she must internalize the Symbolic Order through language; and the more a child submits to the linguistic rules of society, the more those rules will be inscribed in his or her unconscious (220).

This explanation serves well as it helps to explain how colonial, post-independent, and contemporary Costa Rican society has internalized the 'Symbolic Order' of the concept and image of "white" as the bedrock of civilization, progress, purity, and beauty. This ideological construction of whiteness works effectively through the Spanish language with the terminology, and the images that depict 'blanco' (white).

What follows are some examples of how the construction of a "white" Costa Rica is internalized through the use of the term 'blanco'. In 1909

a photographer, Fernando Zamora, in his compilation *Album de Vistas de Costa Rica*, described the Costa Rican population as ‘The type of Costa Rican is polite, **white** (my emphasis), tall and of robust constitution as shown in the photographs’ (1).

Analyzing the photographs, the ideology of racial superiority among the same group of mestizos is also noticeable. While the photographer does not use the term *white*, the language used in the organization of some of the photographs evidences a class difference. In one section of ten photos representing four different groups of people, the embedded ideology of a ‘white’ Costa Rica is clear. Based on contemporary ethnic group readings, all of the people in the photos look *mestizo*.

On page 3 there are faces of elegantly dressed women, referred to as ‘group of young ladies’, with the same language used on page four for elegantly dressed men, referred to as ‘group of Gentlemen’. On pages five and six the individuals, both males and females, not as elegantly dressed are referred to as ‘group of peasants’. From close observation of the four groups of pictures the only difference is in their clothing.

Of the total of seventy photographs, which include buildings, rivers, bridges, and parks, in none of these images is there a photograph of an Afro-Costa Rican descent. In the seventy images, two Afro-Caribbean can be spotted in one image which features a banana plantation and one other, featuring the province of Limón, shows some African faces in the background but they are not the subject of the photo.

In 1909, at the time when Zamora compiled this album, there were already Afro-Caribbean and their descendants living and loving in Costa Rican society. Making this group invisible ideologically strengthens the false ideology of the “white” Costa Rica which is also fed by the belief in “white” superiority which has embedded in it not only race, but also class inequality.

The 1950 census states that, “the distribution of races by urban and rural zones demonstrates that for the Republic the percentage of the **white** (my emphasis) race is ‘33.4%’”(Censo de Población 1950, 82). In analyzing the table, reproduced here as Table 1.2, it is interesting to note the merging of the numbers for mestizos and whites in one category. This merging makes it difficult to determine the real figures for each group, making a stronger case for the false perception of ‘white’ Costa Rica.

Table 1.2.

Cuadro XXV COLOR O RAZA DE LA POBLACION DE COSTA RICA, POR PROVINCIAS, 1950

PROVINCIAS	TOTAL	BLANCOS Y MESTIZOS	NEGROS	AMARILLOS	INDIGENAS	OTROS
REPUBLICA DE COSTA RICA	800.875	782.041	15.118	933	2.692	91
SANJOSE	281.822	280.987	694	129	---	12
ALAJUELA	148.850	148.683	46	---	121	---
CARTAGO	100.725	100.148	146	28	378	25
HEREDIA	51.760	51.736	22	1	---	1
GUANACASTE	88.190	87.967	20	203	---	---
PUNTARENAS	88.168	86.594	441	211	915	7
LIMON	41.360	25.926	13.749	361	1.278	46

Source: Dirección General de Estadística y Censos. *Censo de Población de Costa Rica 1950*, 82.

The L. A. Public Bureau in, *Blue Book* 1916 states, “of the 27 000 Indians who inhabited the country at the time of the conquest, there are still 2,500 between Guatusos, Talamanca, Terrabas and Borucas. The **white** (my emphasis) race predominates, and is descended from the Spanish provinces of Castilla, Extremadura, Andalucía” (44).

The embedded use and meaning of the term *blanco* for mainstream Costa Rica is exemplified by some of the mestizo interviewees. For some, the internalization is so profound that they react emotionally when referred to otherwise. Some mestizo Costa Ricans never questioned their “whiteness” as in the case of one of the mestizo interviewees who almost had an emotional meltdown when referred to as *mestiza* in the course of the interview.

Others, while at some level realizing that they are not “white” readily accept the nomination out of convenience. When Kathleen Vázquez Arce was asked what would be some of the most influential ethnic characteristics in the province of Limón, she replied, “El de los que nos llamamos blancos, aún cuando en realidad no lo somos pero bueno...” (Vásquez Arce, personal interview, 2 July 2010). “The case of those of us who call ourselves white, even when in reality we are not but well...” (Vásquez Arce, 2010).

The concept of ‘whiteness’ needs to be problematized within the Costa Rican society, and within the Costa Rican academia to avoid the tension between the ideological construction and the reality which is noticeable in Kathleen’s reply. She knows that she is not ‘white’ but has no problem in embracing this designation, first, because it is nationally accepted and, second, because she could pass as white, based on the stereotype.

Fig. 4. Kathleen Vásquez Arce



Source: Photo by author, 2 July 2010. Used with permission from the interviewee.

Within the general Costa Rican social context, Kathleen is perceived as white. As to how she really see herself would require further investigation. Others like Esperanza Sánchez Echeverría accept and embrace their mixed heritage. Note her response to the same question,

Uno de los grupos étnicos, o el grupo étnico que más ha influido en nuestra provincial de Limón es el negro. Desde pequeña hemos convivido mestizos y negros, se da una buena relación en ciertos casos (Sánchez Echeverría Personal Interview, 16 June 2010).

One of the ethnic groups or group that has mostly influenced our province is the blacks. From the time I was young we lived together mestizos, and blacks, and in a good relationship in certain cases (Esperanza Sánchez Echeverría).

Note that Esperanza did not use the term *white* as a designation for the majority population, and it could be argued that not fitting the ‘white’ prototype makes it easier for her to accept her mixed ancestry. Two other arguments can be advanced to explain the different responses of these two Costa Rican *mestiza* women.

Fig. 5. Esperanza Sánchez Echeverría

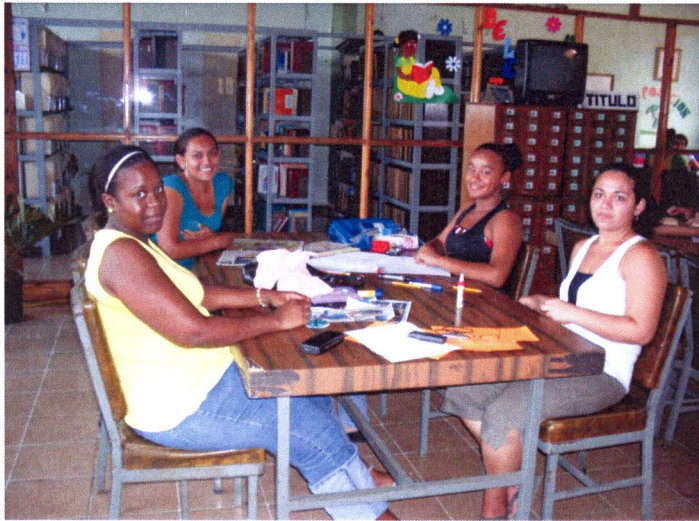


Source: Photo by author, 16 June 2010. Used with permission from the interviewee.

Kathleen Vasquez was born and raised in San José. She has interacted for the most part with other people like herself. Only in her twenties did she begin visiting the province of Limón. Esperanza, on the other hand, was born and raised in Limón and is accustomed to the multi-ethnicity of the province, situation which helps her see herself as the *mestiza* that she really is. She knows about her indigenous ancestry, and spoke of it with pride unlike the other *mestiza* interviewed who almost had a meltdown when confronted by that fact since, as she commented, she thought of herself as white.

Based on statistical references and contemporary phenotypes, mainstream Costa Rica cannot be considered a ‘white’ country because from as far back as the colonial period the miscegenation was not only between the Spanish colonizers and the indigenous people but also between African and African descendants, and indigenous and whites.

Fig. 6. Multiethnic Costa Rica. Group of female students at the Library in the Port of Limón



Source: Photo by author, 16 June 2010.

‘LIMON LA LLAVE DEL PAIS’: ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PROVINCE AND PORT OF LIMON, AND CARIBBEAN IMMIGRATION From 1871

After independence in Costa Rica in 1821, the Costa Rican elite made efforts to build a national identity through discourses based on racial homogeneity, as addressed in Chapter I, and later as the Latin American gem. The province and the Port of Limón became important based on both their geographic and strategic positioning, and their economic potential; however as the province grew, it went in opposition to the national identity, as it concentrates the Costa Rican black population.

Fig. 7. Map of the Province of Limón



Source: Map

The province of Limón, and in particular the Port of Limón became relevant to 1870s administration because of its geographic location on the Caribbean Sea, and its economic potential as the main avenue for exporting coffee. This chapter highlights and analyzes the importance of the province and Port of Limón for 1870s administration.

The need for labour force took the central government to invest in importing workers from foreign countries for the construction of a railroad during the 1870s. The following is a sample of the propaganda discourse used that time, presenting Costa Rica as the civilized land. *El Ferrocarril* 6 April 1872 informs:

El exterior mira á (sic) Costa Rica como modelo entre todos los países de origen español desde la Baja California hasta la frontera de Patagonia; y por su situación geográfica es el corazón, por decirlo así, de la América española.- No estaría esta República de Costa Rica destinada por la Providencia para derramar la luz y los beneficios de la civilización sobre los demás pueblos homogéneos por religión, forma de Gobierno, costumbres é idioma. Lo creo; pero para ser capaz de cumplir esta tarea, preciso es que Costa Rica misma haya llegado á tal altura de superioridad intelectual y bienestar material, que obligue moral é irresistiblemente á los demás Estados á reconocerla, apreciarla, y á entrar en emulación (2).

Foreigners see Costa Rica as a model among all the countries of Spanish origin from Baja California to the border of Patagonia, and because of its geographic situation is the heart; so to speak of Spanish America. Would not this Republic of Costa Rica be destined by providence to shed its light and the benefits of civilization on the other peoples similar in religion, type of government, customs, and language. I believe it; but to be able to achieve this task, it is necessary that Costa Rica itself must have achieved a level of intellectual superiority and material wellbeing, that will make it morally and irresistible for the other states to recognize, appreciate and emulate her (2).

The discourse of this 19th century Costa Rican is carried on in the context of the various political and popular arguments for and against the construction of a railroad from the capital San José to the eastern part of the country that was then entirely rural.

Arguing for this national project, the writer expresses some of the ideas of regional and international opinion of Costa Rica. The argument goes on that to maintain this image, or even improve on it, the country

should accept immigration to show the level of its intellectual development which would be demonstrated through the type of industry they would then undertake, as in the case of the construction of a railroad.

The reality of 1870s Costa Rica, despite those favourable arguments, was that it would require, besides political will, great economic investments. Though the idea of progress was put forward as the great refrain, it was not well received by the majority of the 19th century population and, therefore, stimulated much debate among the public, and among political representatives.²⁶

The main stimulus to the construction of a railroad came as a direct result of the coffee boom that began right after independence, and by the 1870s, alternate and more effective routes were needed for the transportation of the produce to increase Costa Rica's competitiveness in the international market.

According to Woodward in relation to the coffee cultivation:

Costa Rica led the way in 1830s, but all five republics eventually went into production of the crop. The conservative caudillos promoted coffee exports, but it was under the Liberals' dictatorships of the latter part of the century that coffee reached its position of preeminence among exports. Coffee best represents the most successful aspects of the Liberals' approach to economic development...many of the characteristics of the coffee industry developed first in Costa Rica, setting the pattern for other Central American states and Colombia (149).

As Woodward pointed out, it was under liberal leadership that the coffee cultivation exploded. In the Costa Rican case, it was under the leadership of the president General Tomás Guardia Gutiérrez²⁷ that coffee cultivation was given a boost with the idea of the construction of a railroad to the east of the country. Guardia Gutiérrez, despite resistance, managed to convince the country, and secured foreign investment for the project to be materialized. This perseverance as previously noted was as a result of his liberal ideological position. According to Chomsky:

26 For in dept information on the challenges to the construction of the railroad see Harpelle, and Murillo Chaverri. See also newspaper *El Ferrocarril* March 23, April 6, 13 and 27, May 4, June 29, and July 13, all of 1872.

27 Tomás Guardia Gutiérrez was president of Costa Rica for the periods 1872-1874 and 1874-1876. See Brignoli Pérez, for more on Costa Rica's Liberal democracy, and the Guardia Gutiérrez dictatorship.

He was right in line with the liberal dictators of the time, such as Rufino Barrios in Guatemala and Porfirio Díaz in Mexico, who were presiding over the expropriation of communal lands, the capitalization of agriculture, and the development of export economies that would make Latin America the supplier of European and North American markets (17).

Guardia Gutiérrez's ideological position made him insist on such a national project. Woodward explains:

All of the projects that the new Liberal dictators fervently promoted to develop their states, railroad ranked first. The leaders could not conceivably bring about the sort of economic advantages they envisioned without the advantages of the rapid and large volume transportation which railroads could provide (177).

Guardia Gutiérrez, convinced of the importance of having this type of structural development, steered the country towards it. His plans not only included the construction of a railroad, but also the establishment of a port in the Atlantic (as the region was called during that time), to which this railroad would give easy access.

Limón is the seventh province of Costa Rica, with a land area of "9,188 km², 17.98% of the national territory" (35).²⁸ The canton of Limón has an extension of 1765.79 km². The province of Limón is 166 kilometers away from the capital, San José. The Province of Limón has 339,295, the total population for the city of Limon is 60, 298. Since 1871, Limón has been the most important port of the country.

According to Lefebvre "Urbanization characterizes modern societies" (63). This is true of Costa Rica which was in the process of modernization during the 19th century. According to L.S. Stavrianos, *The World Since 1500*, "Economists define modernization as the process by which humans have increased the control over their physical environment as a means to increasing per-capita output" (49).

Stavrianos's explication is applicable to what was happening to the Central American countries and in particular Costa Rica, after independence from Spain in 1821, where all the countries from the Capitanía

28 The province of Limón is divided into six cantons and 27 districts. The cantons are Limón, Pococí, Siquirres, Talamanca, Matina and Guácimo. The canton of Limón is divided into four districts, the City of Limón, Valle la Estrella, Río Blanco, and Matama.

General²⁹ started to develop their own national and economic identities. Woodward, referring to Costa Rica's economic development explains that, "Immediately upon independence, the town councils of Cartago and San José began to encourage coffee cultivation, and, by 1834, Costa Rica production had reached 50,000 pounds annually" (150).

According to Stavrianos, some of the effects of industrialization in Europe included "diffusion of industrialization, increase of population, urbanization, increase of wealth, and distribution of wealth" (178-184). Coffee cultivation was the catalyst for Costa Rica's industrialization which would then be translated into population growth, the expansion, and creation of other cities within the Central Valley,³⁰ and later, the construction of the railroad whose establishment would put the province of Limón at centre stage.

For 19th century Costa Rica some of the elements of industrial diffusion, increase population, and urbanization are noticeable. In terms of increase in population for Costa Rica after independence, Gary S. Elbow "Costa Rica", quoting Hall ³¹ notes that:

By 1821, the year of independence, the population of Costa Rica had reached 65,000, of which 84 percent was in the Valle Central and 9 percent in the area around the Gulf of Nicoya in the Pacific lowlands (Hall 1985:99). The population continued to grow slowly reaching about 100,000 by 1850 and nearly 250,000 by 1900... A steady expansion of settlement frontiers accompanied this population growth. Initially, settlement extended from the old centers around Cartago and San José into previously unoccupied parts of the Valle Central. This process accelerated after 1840, when commercial coffee production began in Costa Rica. Grecia,³² Atenas,³³ San Ramón,³⁴ and other towns it west of Alajuela were established between 1846 and 1866. Toward the end of the century, coffee production spread eastward along the Reventazon Valley in the vicinity of Turrialba (163).

29 For in-dept study on the Capitanía General see Woodward. Chapter 2.

30 See Pérez Brignoli, chapter I for details on the establishment of the Costa Rican territory in the Central Valley from 1570, and Cerdas Cruz,

31 Hall.

32 Grecia is the third canton of the province of Alajuela.

33 Atenas is the fifth canton of the province of Alajuela.

34 San Ramón is the second canton of the province of Alajuela.

It is clear that the administration of post-independent Costa Rica was making the necessary efforts to be considered an industrialized country, which is further evidence in the fourth element of diffusion as explained by Stavrianos:

During the nineteenth century the industrial revolution spread gradually from England to the continent of Europe. The pattern of diffusion depended on various factors such as a supply of natural resources and the existence of a free and mobile working population (178).

For Costa Rica the gradual spread occurred within the country. In the 19th century coffee was the main natural resource, but Costa Rica did not have sufficient workers to succeed with this aspect of its industrial development.

Evidence of the shortage of labour is found in archival documents from the mid 19th century³⁵ when the then administration was presented with a proposal for bringing in Chinese workers³⁶ for the cultivation of the coffee due to an insufficient labour force. This situation arose again during the period of the construction of the railroad, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Despite the shortage of labour for the construction of the railroad, 19th century Costa Rica administration was spreading eastward to the Reventazon into the vicinity of Turrialba, thus clearing the historical path for interest in and establishment of the province, and port of Limón in the region where the Reventazón is located and where it borders with Turrialba, so contextualizing Elbow's reference.

Before focusing on the province of Limón, I will look first at two other important cities for Costa Rica - San José, the present capital, and Puntarenas the primary Pacific coast Port.³⁷ It is important to mention both cities at this point because they highlight some of the elements posited by Stavrianos.

Relating to the increase of population long before independence Elbow, quoting Carballo noted that:

35 See Archivo Nacional de Costa Rica. Congreso No. 8423, 1869.

36 It should be borne in mind that this is out of economic convenience since Costa Rica's racial politics were clear as to the type of immigrants wanted. Based on the Ley de Bases y Colonización Chinese were one of the banned races. This will be further developed in this chapter.

37 See also Salguero.

San José was founded in 1737, as population expanded from the original center of Spanish settlement at Cartago. This movement was in response to a new crop, tobacco, which became commercially important toward the middle of the eighteenth century (Vega Carballo 1981:3)³⁸. By 1801, the little settlement had “a parochial church, a calle real that passed by the church, five tobacco warehouses, a house for the tobacco factor, a military post, a jail, and a city hall that was completed in 1799” (Vega Carballo 1981:5) 169).

By the time of independence San José was positioned to become the capital of the new Republic because it had begun to transform itself into a modern society due to the tobacco cultivation. Two main circumstances contributed to the economic and political progress of the city of San José, the disintegration of colonial rule, and the imminent boom of coffee production. Elbow explains that:

At the beginning of the nineteenth century San José was an incipient commercial center. As San José became more prosperous, Cartago declined. One cause of this decline was the collapse of the cacao trade at Matina, which had supported the town during most of the colonial period. The final blow to Cartago came when Spanish colonial rule collapsed in 1821, and the Captaincy General of Guatemala, of which Costa Rica was a part, was annexed to the short-lived Mexican empire (169).

It is important to note that Matina³⁹ which seems to have played some kind of important role in the economic development of colonial Costa Rica is located in the area that is known today as the province of Limón. Another point worth noting is that, when sometimes regions lost economic importance as in the case of Matina, every so often with the shifting of interest, potential opportunities are lost. This happened to Matina with the boom of coffee production, with no understanding at the time, of the potential that that region had for the marketing of the coffee crop. Elbow comments:

In 1838 the United Provinces of Central America broke up, and San José became the capital of the independent republic of Costa Rica. This assured its future political predominance in the country. Then, beginning

38 See Vega Carballo.

39 Matina today is the fifth canton of the province of Limón.

in the 1840s, commercial coffee production began to develop as the mainstay of the Costa Rican economy. San José was located in one of the most important coffee-producing areas, and it gained economic power to match its political importance (169).

The other city of importance is the Port of Puntarenas. Elbow, quoting Creedman adds:

The primary Pacific coast port of Costa Rica, Puntarenas was established in the latter years of the eighteenth century (Meléndez 1977:178-180),⁴⁰ but its official opening as a port occurred by royal decree in 1814 (Creedman 1977:165).⁴¹ The main export from the early port was tobacco. Puntarenas began to emerge as the dominant Pacific coast port in the 1840s, as coffee became an important export and a cart road was constructed to move the product to that port from the highlands (167).

The relevance and connection of this port to the development of the coffee production during the mid 19th century in Costa Rica is evident. These examples strengthen the argument that places become important based on their economic potential as in the case of San José, and their geographical positioning as in the case of Puntarenas. With the development of the coffee production came the need for better means of transportation in order to market the product.

The boom of the coffee industry and the need for proper transportation were the catalysts that propelled Port Limón into existence, and for its becoming the most important port in the country. This importance came about because the route for transporting coffee to the Port of Puntarenas was inefficient for getting to international markets. Administrative Staff of the Northern Railway explains:

During the years before the Atlantic railway was built, coffee was exported by hauling in ox carts to Puntarenas and then by ship to the market, principally in Europe. The cost from Puntarenas to Europe was five pounds sterling per ton and took five months; while the rate from Matina was 30 to 40 shillings and took about six weeks. The difference, of almost four times in length of voyage and more than double the cost came out of the pockets of the coffee planters and, eventually, out of the standard

40 See Meléndez.

41 See Creedman.

living of the whole Republic. Clearly, the answer to the problem was a railway to the Port of Limón (5).

The importance of a railway to the Port is also highlighted by Harpelle, who explains that:⁴²

Without a port on the Atlantic coast and a railway linking it to the Central valley, Costa Rica's exports and imports went through the Pacific coast of Puntarenas and around South America to get to Europe. While a roundabout trade route might have been adequate when Costa Rica existed as an insular backwater within the Spanish empire, an independent country with a national orientation had to look for competitive advantage (10).

This competitive edge that independent Costa Rica was seeking would be materialized under the leadership of President Tomás Guardia Gutiérrez during the late 19th century. Under his leadership the establishment and urbanization of the province of Limón, and particularly the Port of Limón for the export of the coffee was consolidated.⁴³

Recognizing the importance of being competitive in the international markets, there were earlier plans for the construction of a railroad before Guardia's leading role. The Administrative Staff of the Northern Railway Company continues to explain:

During the years between 1854 and 1871, various plans for a trans-isthmian railway in Costa Rica were considered. The plan given most consideration was to follow the route, proposed by don Francisco Kurtze, from Limón, on the Atlantic coast, to Caldera near Puntarenas on the Pacific. This plan was never undertaken because it was considered to be too large and undertaken (5).

While they were unsuccessful on the first occasion, it speaks to Stavrianos's explanation of diffusion of industrialization, with efforts by post-independent Costa Rica (1821-1871) to modernize.

42 See also Nelson,

43 For in-depth information on this see Meléndez and Duncan and, Murillo Chaverri, "The Railroad and Afro-Caribbean Migration to Costa Rica".

Fig. 8. Photo of Limón city 1922



Source: Used with permission of the Public Library in Limón

In the 18th century before the political establishment and settlement of the Port of Limón as scholars such as Hector Pérez Brignoli and Harpelle demonstrate, there was a high level of economic activity in the area of Matina with the production of cocoa.

The constant raiding by English pirates and Zambo Mosquitos of the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua forced the production of cocoa to be abandoned. This economic activity that was taking place in Costa Rica's Atlantic region during the 18th century was an indication of the potential of the area's capacity for trade.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, the province of Limón was a region of difficult accessibility. The Administrative Staff of the Northern Railway Company explains in a historical background of the region:

The Atlantic littoral was first visited by Christopher Columbus; in the year 1502, he anchored at Caray, the modern Port Limón, and remained there for 17 days. He was so impressed with the coast that he called it "Costa Rica"...no important colony was ever established by the Spaniards at Limón or elsewhere on the Atlantic coast of Costa Rica. The healthful highlands of the Central Plateau were originally settled by Spaniards coming up the West coast from Panamá. Later, some communications were established by way of trails to the San Juan river and still later overland down the Reventazón river valley to the mouths of the Matina and Moín rivers. The trails were hazardous affairs usable only by mules or men on foot. The heavy rains on

the steep slopes of the mountains, the swamps and dense forest, prevented them from becoming arteries of trade and they were valueless except for the occasional traveler who had no alternative (5).

It was not only difficult to access because of its mountainous terrain but also because of the resistance of the *Indígenas*, and *Zambo Mosquitos*. A piece of correspondence found in the Archivo Nacional of 1724 speaks to some of the difficulties Costa Rican leaders based in the Central Valley would have encountered with the *Zambo Mosquitos*⁴⁴ in the Matina region. This same reference is used to demonstrate that it was in this area, today called the Province of Limón, where the *Zambo Mosquitos* were located and put up constant resistance.

The document speaks of the leaders from the province of Costa Rica asking the president in Guatemala to heed them in sending arms which they had requested a year before to fight against the *Zambo Mosquitos* and the *Indígenas*. It is important to notice that at that time there were also Jamaicans in the country.⁴⁵

The alliance between the three groups identified in the quote against the Colonial leaders of the time is not surprising. All of these were being exploited by the Spaniards, first with the enslavement of the indigenous people and possession of their lands, then with the enslavement of the Africans and later discrimination against these and their biological reproduction which resulted in the mix: the *Zambos*. What needs to be investigated, as mentioned in the footnote in chapter one, is the presence of Jamaicans during that period in the region of Costa Rica, and their involvement with the *Zambos* and the indigenous people.

With the process of diffusion of industrialization and urbanization according to Stavrianos 'the industrial revolution led also to an unprecedented urbanization of world society (180). Costa Rica, specifically during the 1870s administration, focused its attention on urbanizing the eastern part of the country that became the province of Limón. Bear in mind that, during the period of colonization, this area was already used for tobacco cultivation but because of the importance that San José was gaining politically and economically with the development of the coffee crop, the region was abandoned and neglected.

44 Zambo Mosquitos are the mix between Africans and indigenous people. During the period in discussion they were also located in Nicaragua.

45 See Palmer.

Because of the economic interests of the 19th century administration, which was adamant in marketing its ‘grano de oro’ (coffee) the region was revisited as Limón was geographically strategically positioned facing the Caribbean Sea and was just right for the construction of a port.

Before the Tomás Guardia Administration there was interest in developing this region. Harpelle mentions a report that was presented to the administration of mid 19th century Costa Rica, alluding to the potential for economic development of this area. Harpelle states:

In June 1864, after making his way through the dense forest that blanketed the Atlantic region, Juan Mechan submitted his first report on the route from the Central Valley to Limón on the Atlantic coast... Two months later Mechan submitted a second report on the region, giving details of water supplies, the potential for port construction, and the prospect of its incorporation into the highland economy (9).⁴⁶

From this report there is implication of the geographical difficulty of the area because of its dense forest. According to Harpelle, Mechan’s 1864 report, convinced the administration of the mid 19th century Costa Rica of the need to develop this area. “His recommendation was that if Costa Rica wanted to develop its full potential, then the country needed to harness the wealth of the Atlantic coast”⁽⁹⁾.⁴⁷

The wealth to be harnessed would be dependent on the development of that region. Therefore, with the heightened interest of early independent Costa Rica’s administration in developing the Atlantic coast strengthened by Merchan’s report is laying the foundation for the urbanization and establishment of the province and of Port of Limón during the late 19th century. Hence the argument for how places become important for their economic potential.

Based on the Limón region’s inaccessibility, it is argued that probably this territory would have been the last one to be urbanized if it were not for the economic interest in competing in the international markets that propelled this region into existence.

Stavrianios, in explaining some of the reasons for urbanization notes that:

46 Harpelle, 9, quoted at Archivo Nacional de Costa Rica (National Archives of Costa Rica), Fomento series, no. 1853.

47 Ronald, 9, quoted at Archivo Nacional de Costa Rica (National Archives of Costa Rica), Fomento series, no. 1854.

Technological and medical advances eliminated the plagues that previously had decimated cities, and even made city living relatively endurable and pleasant. The most important of these advances were plenty of pure water, the perfecting of centralized sewage and waste-disposal systems, insurance of the adequate food supply, and the prevention and control of contagious diseases (181).

As was mentioned, Costa Rica was in the process of urbanizing the Atlantic region as it was called⁴⁸ and, while not having all the technological and medical advances of that time, certainly was making a great effort to come up to par.⁴⁹

Combing through an official document from the Asamblea Legislativa, *-Breves Apuntes Históricos-*, the process of converting Limón into a place for business, is observed.⁵⁰ An analysis of the document makes us aware not only of the interest in the economic potential of the region pointed out by Harpelle, but it takes us through the political and administrative processes of the development of the province of Limón.

Based on this document, we note the interest in this region 31 years after independence. On October of 1852, under the presidency of Don Juan Rafael Mora,⁵¹ a decree was passed to make Port Limón accessible for commerce (57). Accessibility meant creating a post of Port Commander in order to have a legal administrative body in place, and making available from the Public Treasury the necessary funds of 'cinco mil pesos' (five thousand pesos) for the design of a road leading to the interior of the Port of Limón.

Harpelle's reference to the Merchan report ten years later in 1862 is understandable, there was a precedent. Limón was declared the Principal Port of the Republic on the Atlantic Coast on 'November 9, of 1865' (58), and President Castro⁵² officially opened the bay of Limón to exterior commerce in September 1867 by executive decree (58).

48 Today it is called la zona del Caribe because indeed the province is facing the Caribbean, and not the Atlantic Sea.

49 See Municipalidad de Limón, for more on sanitation in 19th century Limón.

50 See González Vasquez, and newspaper clippings found in the national library in Costa Rica Morris Gray, *La Prensa Libre*. Tuesday June 6, 2000. 2, Naranjo Chacón, *La Prensa Libre*. Saturday May 12, 2001. 4, *La Prensa Libre*. Friday 28 September 2001. *Al Instante*. Thursday March 14, 2001. 2, Cascante, *Diario Extra*. Saturday August 23, 2003. 16.

51 Juan Rafael Mora Porras was the first president of Costa Rica from 1849 to 1852, 1853 to 1855, and 1855 to 1859. He was imprisoned, and brought before a firing squad in Puntarenas on September 30, 1860.

52 José María Castro Madriz was president of Costa Rica for the periods 1847 to 1848, 1848 to 1849, and 1866 to 1868.

Check newspaper clipping *El Atlántico* 19 de Noviembre 1949
page 1 for a reference on Decreto XXV II by Dr José María Castro
Madriz declaring Limón open for commerce.

Such was the belief in the economic viability of this area that administrative and political interest was aroused. This development was not limited only to the area they assigned as the port but, extended also to surrounding areas within that region. As a result five years after the establishment of the port, on “June 6, 1870, the province of Limón was established as a province by decree No. XXXVI.” A Governor⁵³ for the Port of Limón was appointed in 1871, according to *Municipalidad de Limón Luchas y Esperanzas*, with one of his responsibilities being to begin the process of urbanizing the area with the help of soldiers.

It is important to note that it took 18 years (1852 to 1870), and nine different administrations to transform and prepare the Atlantic coast of Costa Rica for its economic venture. One of the reasons for the constant change in administrations was the staging of *coups d'état*, common early in the independence of Costa Rica.⁵⁴ However for all these different administrations, the development of the Atlantic region always remained a priority.

After the port and the province were established, the other step was to populate the city. It is important to note at this point that indigenous groups like the Huetares, the Suerres, the Pococís, the Taiacas, the Viceitas and the Terbis⁵⁵ already occupied this area called Cariari or Cariay,⁵⁶ from the name of the indigenous groups that inhabited this region⁵⁷ during the pre-Colombian era. It was in this part of the country where Christopher Columbus stopped on his fourth trip in 1502.

It is obvious that both the Spanish colonizer during the colonial period and 19th century administrators did not find an empty space in the region of the Caribbean. Archival evidence from the 1870s attest to the fact that there were *indígenas* and other inhabitants in the region the then administration was planning to urbanize.

Correspondence sent to the Government of Costa Rica referring to difficulties in the area of Talamanca and Matina gives evidence of that fact. The correspondence in Archivo Nacional May 1st, 1870 reads:

53 The first Governor for the province of Limón was Federico Fernández Oreamuno brother of the President Próspero Fernández. His appointment was made on November 2nd, 1871. See *Municipalidad de Limón*, for more information.

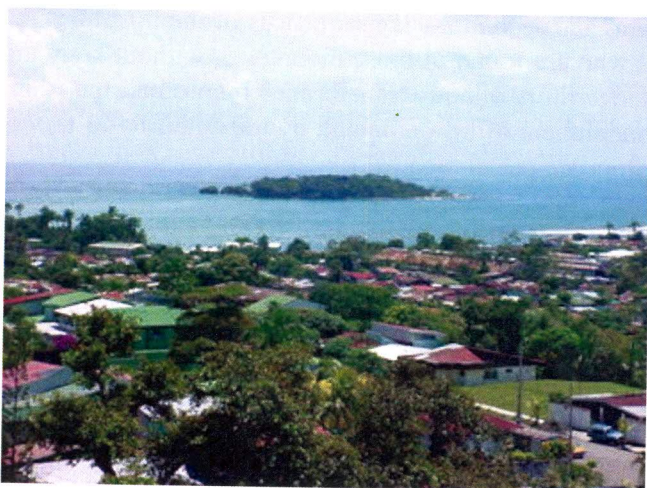
54 See Brignoli for more information on this.

55 See *La Prensa Libre*: September 28, 2001. 654.

56 Located facing the Port of Limón is La isla la Uvita where Christopher Columbus landed for the first time in Costa Rica. Presently this island is uninhabited.

57 For in-depth study see, Salguero.

Fig. 9. Isla la Uvita⁵⁸



Source: Photo taken by Alfred Butcher. Sept. 2014

El Sor. Juan Umaña vecino de esta unidad i (sic) venido anoche del valle de Matina ha informado a este Gobno. (sic) que el Comandante Gobernador de la Comarca del Limón Sor. Don Pedro... que expedicionaba con el Sor. Don Eusebio Figuerroa sobre las montañas de Talamanca, había mandado orden al Alcalde de Matina para que se le auxiliase con gente armada... Que en tal virtud habían salido 24 hombres armados de dicho valle de Matina, i que de la Aldea de Parismina supo que igualmente se remitía un número considerable de hombres. Esta noticia a mi modo de ver abraza varios puntos que el Gobno debe considerar, uno de ellos levantamiento de fuerzas sin orden especial del Gobno: y segundo las consecuencias de la ostilidad que sufren los indios que se encuentran en esas montañas, sin saber si estas pueden tocar el territorio de la nueva Granada y comprometer al país, i (sic) ultimamente el abandono que hace aquella autoridad de la Comarca de su mando sin el permiso correspondiente (22).

Mr. Juan Umaña, resident of this unit and returning last night from the Matina Valley has informed the government that the Commander Governor of the region of Limón Mr. Pedro... who had gone on expedition with Mr Eusebio Figuerroa in the mountains of Talamanca, had requested the mayor of Matina to send armed support... In response 24 armed men had left from the valley of Matina and from the small village of Parismina heard that a considerable number of men were being sent. This news to my way of seeing, presents several points that the government needs

⁵⁸ Photo taken by Alfred Butcher. Sept. 2014.

to consider, one the raising of forces without special order from the government, and second the consequences of the hostilities suffered by the Indians who are found in those mountains, without knowing if these can affect the territory of new Granada and compromise the country, finally, to the abandonment of his command by the authority of the region without the appropriate permission (22).

While this quotation does not deal directly with the present discussion on the development of the province of Limón, it serves to demonstrate that there were people inhabiting the region. It is clear that this group of people was not part of the plans of the 19th century administration who wanted a specific type of individuals to populate the area.

On May 3 1872, with the objective of increasing the population in the new port with a different type of individuals, an executive agreement was passed by, in which the Government would make it easy for individuals to get plots in the Port of Limón. According to Asamblea Legislativa, the regulation explains:

The plots should be divided into eight spots and offer for free with the condition that those who wanted these plots would have had to build houses or buildings for businesses within a period of two years. Those who failed in complying with this condition would lose the spots, and would have to pay a fine of 500 pesos (58-59).

Evidence of the type of population they wanted for the newly urbanized province is found in some newspapers of the period, and evidence of the kind of people who settled in the Port is found in the 1916 *Blue Book*. As to the type of individuals the then administration welcomed *El Ferrocarril*, 2 December, 1872 reports:

INMIGRACION.- Están de camino para el interior de la República algunas familias de trabajadores españoles.- Sean bien venidos. (sic) Brazos son los que necesita el país para su mejora i (sic) engrandecimiento; para el cultivo de sus feraces tierras; para centuplicar sus producciones, i (sic) llevar á (sic) sus empresas (1).

IMMIGRATION: Some families of Spanish workers are on their way to the interior of the Republic. They are welcome. Arms are what the country needs for its improvement and enlargement for the cultivation of its wild lands, to multiply its production and take its enterprises forward (1).

In the *Costa Rica* newspaper from June 22, 1893 comments are made about the greatness of European foreign immigration. It reports:

Mucho debemos al elemento extranjero que nos ha traído sus industrias, a esta tierra productora de café: Y mas aún, los hijos de otros países, se han enlazado en este, formando familias altamente respetables...Respetamos mucho esa colonia alemana, esa colonia española compuesta de hijos de nuestra madre patria, esa colonia francesa compuesta de pocos individuos, pero productivos y respetables; en fin todas las agrupaciones de extranjeros, ligados á nosotros, ya por vínculos de familia, ya por sus capitales bien ganados e inscritos en el registro de la propiedad (2).

Much is owed to that foreign element that has brought its industries to this coffee producing country. And even more, the sons of other countries have embraced this forming highly respectable families...We greatly respect that German colony, that Spanish colony made up of the children of our mother land, that French colony made up of few, but productive and respectable individuals; in fact all the groups of foreigners linked to us by family ties or by well-earned capital registered in the Registry of Property (2).

This quotation also gives evidence of the ethnic group that Costa Rica wanted to emulate, embrace, and internalize ideologically as the hegemonic national ethnic majority. This will be dealt with in more details in Chapter IV.

The process of conditioning and setting up the administrative structures for the establishment of this city took over 20 years (1852-1872) highlighting the importance of this region for the economic development of the country. After the initial conditioning of the region, other official agreements cemented the importance of Limón.

According to Asamblea Legislativa, in 1892 Limón was constituted into a Cantón.⁵⁹ Finally on August 1st 1902 the Port of Limón was elevated to the category of city (62), maintaining its position as the most important Port of the country until today.

This historical record strengthens the importance this geographic area held to the different governments in the newly independent Costa Rica, and shows the political and administrative efforts that were intentionally poured into developing this port and this province for the benefit of the nation of Costa Rica and for its economy.

⁵⁹ See *La Nación* Wednesday May 9, 2001. 6C.

Some evidence found in the *Archivo Nacional de Costa Rica* helps to underscore the importance that this region played to 19th century Costa Rican administrations. The document found in the National Archive dated between January and June 1897 gives an idea of the daily activities in the 19th century Port of Limón.

These activities are included in official correspondence dealing with the administration of the port, schools, hospital, assignment of political leaders, and policemen, prostitution, and vagrancy laws, among others. One of these correspondences is reproduced below.

Fig. 10. Correspondence to the Governor

San José 7 de Junio 1897

Sr. Gobernador de Limón

Tiene conocimiento esta Secretaría que el médico del Pueblo de Jiménez se niega a reconocer y a dar la papeleta correspondiente a las mujeres públicas que viven en aquel lugar. Sírvase prevenir al referido funcionario que está en la obligación de hacer ese servicio de un modo regular sin cobrar derechos de ninguna clase.

Dios guarde a U. Firma ilegible.

San José, June 7, 1897

To the Governor of Limón

It has come to the attention of this Office that the doctor of the village of Jiménez refuses to acknowledge and to give the appropriate papers to the public women living there. Please caution the said civil servant that he is obliged to give this service in the usual way without extra charge.

May God keep you. Signature ilegible.

Source:

The activities mentioned in the reference give us a glimpse into the everyday lives of the people living in the province of Limón during the late 19th century. The research was unable to identify who were the 'mujeres públicas' and from which ethnic group they belonged.

For General Tomás Guardia the importance of this region was noticed in his zeal for constructing a railroad. Initially this enthusiasm by Tomás Guardia and his government received limited support from the Costa Rican society.⁶⁰ Despite this *Administrative Staff of the Northern Railway Company Ltd* announced that:

...on the 18th of August 1871, the Government, under the presidency of General Tomás Guardia, entered into a contract with Mr. Henry Meiggs Keith for the construction of a railroad between Alajuela and Limón for the sum of eight million pesos (6).

Notwithstanding the lack of popular support the President secured financial resources and was present at the beginning of the project. According to *El Ferrocarril* from March 23, 1872:

El lunes 18 de Marzo á las ocho de la mañana, El Sr. Presidente General Guardia clavó en la estación de Alajuela el primer clavo de la línea que ahora se sigue poniendo de Alajuela á Heredia (2).

On Monday March 18 at eight in the morning the President General Guardia [drove the first stone nail] at the Alajuela station of the track running from Alajuela to Heredia... (2).

Sixteen months later constructions began with the Northern Railway Company. *Administrative Staff of the Northern Railway Company Ltd reports*:

Construction was started simultaneously in Limón and Alajuela. The first locomotive was operated from Limón to Camp One, a distance of one mile, on July 4th 1872, from Alajuela to Río Ciruelas on March 31st 1872; and from Alajuela to San José on December 30th 1872 (6).

Such was the lack of national support that twenty two years later, supporters of the project were still putting forward arguments in favour of

⁶⁰ See Murillo, Chaverri Chapter I, and Meléndez and Duncan.

it. This is seen from the explanation found in an 1893 newspaper *Costa Rica* from June 13, 1893 which reports:⁶¹

Los que en la República han hablado de la Compañía ponderosa del ferrocarril, y se han asustado con el pago de los ocho millones de pesos porque fue contratada la construcción, ya irán viendo que la obra antepone gran acumulación de esfuerzos y trabajos de todo género; y que, el Sr. Meiggs, Mr. Keith y su infatigable colaborador D. Guillermo Nanne, no son simplemente unos negociantes, sino unos infatigables obreros del porvenir de la República, en la lucha que sostienen palmo a palmo para coronar sus compromisos para con la nación(2).

Those in the Republic have spoken about the weighty railroad company, and were frightened by the payment of eight million pesos for which the construction was contracted, will see that the Project foresees a great accumulation of effort and work of all kinds; and that Mr. Meiggs Keith and his tireless collaborator D. Guillermo Nanne, are not simple businessmen, but tireless labourers for the future of Costa Rica in their struggle inch by inch to achieve their commitments to the nation (2).

Based on the archival evidence found in 19th century newspaper, one of the main reasons why many Costa Ricans were against the construction of the railroad was economic. They considered that it was too much an expensive project the government was undertaken.

After this anticipated start *El Ferrocarril* continues reporting on the progress of this national project in terms of expansion, building of bridges, celebrations, milestones reached, and other administrative details.⁶²

By the end of 1870s the port was established, the city was urbanized, and the construction of the railroad advanced, but not without its challenges. The first great challenge was insufficient finance, then insufficient national labour which ignited debates about procuring European foreign labour, but having to settle for Chinese and Caribbean labour, specifically Afro-Caribbean, despite earlier legislation which forbade their entering the country,⁶³ and about fires, strikes and other unwanted labour situations.⁶⁴

61 See also *El Ferrocarril* March 23, May 4, 1872, July 13, 1872 and March 8, 1873.

62 See also *El Mensajero* May 21, and May 30, 1881. *El Ferrocarril* April 20, May 25, August 3, August 31, and December 2, 1872.

63 This will be discussed in greater details in chapter IV.

64 For suspected fires see *Gaceta Oficial* January 9, 1875 3, *Gaceta Oficial* June 16, 1875 2, for complaints from Afro-Caribbean workers see correspondence found in the Costa Rican National Archive

When the construction began, it utilized only native workers but the magnitude of the project demanded a far greater labour force. This stimulated debates and arguments in favour of allowing immigrant labour but labour had to be specifically from Europe and from a particular part of Europe.

In a three-part comment in favour of immigration in *El Ferrocarril* Abril 27, 1872, one individual listed the type of immigrants that should enter the country, recommending that: ♣

Solo los *Alemanes*, y entre ellos cuento parte de los *Belgas y Suizos*, reconocen el principio: *Ubbibene, ibi patria*. Ninguna otra nacionalidad se asimila y se amalgama con igual facilidad. El alemán reúne, a pesar de sus instintos aristocráticos, todos los elementos que se necesitan para la colonización; y por consiguiente doy mi voto a favor de la inmigración alemana (2).

Only the Germans, and among them I include some Belgians and Swiss, who recognize the *Ubbibene, ibi patria* principle.⁶⁵ No other nationality assimilates and amalgamates with such ease. The German encapsulates, despite his aristocratic instincts, all the necessary elements for colonization and, therefore, I vote in favour of German immigration (2).

Despite his vote based on the evidence, the Europeans did not come in droves as they were expected. Instead, those who answered the call were Caribbean labourers, who, according to Meléndez and Duncan, officially migrated in December 1872.

Going through *El Ferrocarril*, it is suggested that before that date, probably other smaller migration movements were taking place. For example, *El Ferrocarril* reports on June 29, 1872, "en breve estarán en el país doscientos trabajadores chinos, y otros más que se esperan de la isla de Oruba" (1), ["in just a short time two hundred chinese workers will arrive in this country, along with others expected from the isle of Oruba"] (1).

Previously, in April 1872, another group of labourers was recorded. *El Ferrocarril* April 20, 1872:

Se han pedido a California 200 trabajadores chinos que ya hayan trabajado por lo menos dos años en el ferrocarril del Norte. De las islas de Cabo Verde han sido contratados 500 hombres de la isla de Oruba; y como

April 21, 1877 15,17, and September 20, 1877 10-11, and for strikes see Sibaja Barrantes.

(Translation): Wherever I am well, there is my home.

1000 de Belice, Trujillo etc. Es probable que en Mayo la empresa cuente con 1500 a 2000 trabajadores en el Limón. Han llegado últimamente a ese puerto, procedente de Belice, 172 trabajadores, y tan pronto como el vapor "Juan G. Meiggs" regrese de Belice, a donde ha ido de nuevo en busca de los peones allí contratados, se dirigirá á Uruba a traer los 300 hombres que están listos a embarcarse con destino a los trabajos del ferrocarril (2).

Two hundred Chinese labourers were sought from California where they had previously worked for two years on the Northern railroad. From the islands of Cabo Verde 500 men were contracted, from the isle of Uruba; and around 1000 from Belice, Trujillo etc. In May the company probably had 1500 to 2000 workers in Limón. Recently 172 workers arrived in this port from Belize and as the steamship "Juan G. Meiggs" returns from Belice, where it has gone in search of peons contracted there, it will head to Uruba to bring 300 men who are ready to embark with destined for the railroad works (2).

La Ley de Bases y Colonización [Law of Bases and Colonization] was passed forty-one years after Independence, in 1862. This law was intended to prohibit certain ethnic groups from entering Costa Rican territory. Duncan and Powell *Teoría y Práctica del Racismo* present the legislation:

Pero es la ley de Bases y Colonización (*La Gaceta*, No. 191, 8-11-1862) la que prohíbe la colonización del territorio nacional por parte de las razas africana y china, e incluso faculta al gobierno para prohibir el ingreso de esas poblaciones no deseadas al país. Por el contrario, en la misma ley de bases y colonización se estimula y protege la inmigración europea, destinando un fondo considerable anual del presupuesto nacional y ofreciendo diez manzanas de terreno a cada individuo y veinte a cada matrimonio, y por cada hijo menor de dieciocho años cinco manzanas más (67).

But it is the law of Bases and Colonization (*La Gaceta*, No. 191, 8-11-1862) that prohibits the colonization of the national territory on the part of African and Chinese races, and empowers the government to forbid the entry of those unwanted populations to the country. On the contrary, in the same law of bases and colonization it encourages and protects the European migration, setting a side a considerable annual fund from the national budget and offering ten acres of land to each single person, and twenty to each married couple, and for each child under eighteen five acres more (67).

This research was unable to find when this legislation was changed to allow entry into the country by the “undesirable races,” but the historical evidence has shown that they were, and were even encouraged, as in the case of the Chinese, to enter the country. Of course, because of the racism embedded in the country, attitudes were more favourable to them than to the Africans. This will be demonstrated in chapter IV.

Note how the discourse changed in trying to justify the immigration of the Chinese. *El Ferrocarril* from October 12, 1872 reports:

Trabajadores chinos.

Los Sres. D. Enrique Meiggs Keith i (sic) Hübbe & Gryzell nos anuncian la llegada á Puntarenas de trabajadores chinos en el mes de noviembre, i avisan á los Sres. hacendados que pueden disponer de un sobrante de ellos para los que quieran aun tomarlos. Recomendamos la adquisición de estos trabajadores, principalmente para los beneficios del café, por su reconocida habilidad é industria en los trabajos de esta clase; i nos congratulamos con la importación al país de tan útiles brazos, cuya carencia paraliza i hace perecer la agricultura, que constituye hoi (sic) en día nuestra única riqueza (1).

Chinese workers

Mr D Enrique Meiggs Keith, Hübbe & Gryzell announce the arrival in Puntarenas of Chinese labourers in the month of November and alerts the owners of haciendas that they may acquire the surplus if they so desire. We recommend the acquisition of these workers especially for the sake of the coffee, for they're known ability and industry in tasks of that kind; and we are pleased to have imported into the country such useful arms, in the lack of which, agriculture, maybe paralyzed or killer (1).

This argument, exalting the abilities of the Chinese, was put forward earlier in a correspondence with the government in 1869 by a North American by the name of Federico H. Alberding. This will be further discussed in Chapter IV.

Before entering to discuss the immigration of Afro-Caribbean to Costa Rica, it is important to note that immigration to Central America of Afro-Caribbean or as Velma Newton, in *The Silver Men West Indian Labour Migration to Panama 1850-1914*, terms: ‘British West Indian’ (23) was taking place since the 1850s.

Unfortunately people of African descent were considered “undesirables” in post Independent Central American countries; despite their

need for foreign labour because of their racial background they were not welcome by the host countries. Newton demonstrates that ‘the arrival of the first batch of Jamaicans in mid-1850 would hardly have pleased the proud, allegedly racist, white population of Panama (104).

The situation is the same in Honduras during the same historical period and their attitudes towards people of African descent particularly Afro-Caribbean. Jorge Alberto Amaya “*Los Negros Ingleses o Creoles de Honduras...*” mentions that the present Afro-Hondurans are descendants of two contingents of Caribbean immigration. He notes:

...la población actual descende de dos contingentes que llegaron en dos oleadas diferentes: la primera a raíz la introducción de esclavos negros de Jamaica, Belice y Caimán, y Belice por parte de los británicos entre finales del siglo XVIII y mediados del siglo XIX, y luego, el segundo contingente con la llegada de obreros negros procedentes de Jamaica y otras islas anglófonas arribados en los albores del siglo XX para laborar en las empresas transnacionales del banano (10).⁶⁶

The present population descends from two contingent that arrived in two different waves: the first as a result of the introduction of black slaves from Jamaica, Caiman and Belice from the British from the end of the XVIII and mid-XIX century, then the second contingent with the arrival of labourers from Jamaica and other English speaking islands at the beginning of the XX century to work with transnational banana companies (10).

For Costa Rica there is similarity with both references. Like the situation of Honduras, the second ‘wave’ of Afro-Caribbean immigrants, in particular, Jamaicans was the ethnic group that provided the present Costa Rican demography of people with Afro-Caribbean descent. The similarity with Panama is that during the late 19th century when Panama was constructing the canal Costa Rica was seeking labourers for the construction of their railroad and their attitude was the same as it relates to racism.

Despite these countries racism, the need for “any” foreign labour forced them to accept the undesirables sending agents to the Caribbean to recruit workers⁶⁷ where they advertised attracting a large number of Afro-Caribbean labourers conveniently changing restrictive racist

66 See also Elisavenda, Echeverri-Gent.

67 See Newton chapter four for discussion on the role of recruiting agents in the British Caribbean.

legislation. Some examples are reproduced from the *Colonial Standard and Daily Dispatch* of December 1872 in Jamaica.

The Colonial Standard and Daily Dispatch 1872 advertizes:

LABOURERS WANTED

The undersigned is authorized by the Costa Rican Railroad Company to contract with labourers to work on their Railroad at Costa Rica under agreements for a year- the terms and particulars of which can be obtained on application at the Wharf of Messrs McDowell and Barclay, - East Street; Kingston - from 10 o'clock A. M. to 2 o'clock P. M.

C ABRAHAMS

Agent of Costa Rica Railroad Co


(*The Colonial Standard and Daily Dispatch*; December 4, 1872)

Fig. 11. This newspaper clipping of an ad to recruit Caribbean Labourers was found in the library at the University of the West Indies in Jamaica

Dec. 23, 1872

NOTICE.

The Steamer



General Sherman

Will leave Kingston for

PORT LEMON COSTA RICA

On Saturday the 28th inst. all laborers engaged for the

COSTA RICA

Railroad Company

will present themselves at the Subscriber's Office, at Messrs. McDowell and Barclay's Wharf in East Street, to-day, the 24th, from the hour of 9 a.m. to 3 p. m.

CHARLES ABRAHAMS
AGENT

Dec. 23 1872 The Colonial Standard & Daily Dispatch

RECEIVED for Ann Lee, from London and

40 Casks each 4 d 25 Quarts
60 ditto each 8 doz 1 quart
and One and One's ALE,
McDOWELL and BARCLAY.

Source: The Colonial Standard and Daily Dispatch, Dec. 4, 1872.

Other references report more contracts as in the case of administrator Guillermo Nanne reporting on the progress of the construction of the railroad in Limón including, “contraté además 600 negros del interior de Jamaica...” [(“I contracted besides 600 negros from the interior of Jamaica”);] *El Ferrocarril*, Noviembre 16, 1872 1).

The advertisement proved effective as recorded in *The Colonial Standard and Daily Dispatch*, 1872:

THE COSTA RICAN RAILWAY

The American Steamer “General Sherman”, Captain Gordon, leaves this morning with one hundred and forty labourers for the Costa Rican Railroad Company (*The Colonial Standard and Daily Dispatch* December 31, 1872).

In Costa Rica an official report appeared in *Gaceta Oficial*, January 15, 1873:

A las dos de la tarde de hoy fondeó en este Puerto procedente de Jamaica, la Goleta “Lizzie” de 177 toneladas al mando de su capitán Crighir, 7 hombres de tripulación, y 123 trabajadores del ferrocarril, y además 3 mujeres...(4).

At 2 this afternoon 177- ton schooner Lizzie docked in this port arriving from Jamaica under captain Crighir, with a crew of 7 and 123 workers for the railway, along with 3 women... (4).

Based on these quotations, during 1872, there were several ships bringing Jamaican labourers with varying numbers of workers for the construction of the railroad. According to Meléndez and Duncan, between December 20, 1872 and May 6, 1874, there were 1,396 Caribbean immigrants including 21 females (72).

Fig. 12. Costa Rica 1900. Afro-Caribbean immigrant workers for the construction of the railroad⁶⁸



Source: Archivo Nacional, Costa Rica.

Aviva Chomsky, *West Indian Workers*, on the other hand, reports that “between 1900 and 1913 some twenty thousand Jamaicans, along with much smaller numbers of other West Indians migrated to Costa Rica” (34). The other small number of West Indians included Cubans, St. Lucians, Barbadians, and Kittitians.⁶⁹ Still others included Curacao and mainland Belize as referenced by Meléndez and Duncan (68).⁷⁰

Verene Shepherd speaks to the pull and push factors which would have motivated Caribbean immigration after emancipation. As to Caribbean migration, in general she notes:

After the abolition of slavery, some freedmen and freedwomen engaged in intra-Caribbean migration. Later, people emigrated to foreign (non-Caribbean) territories like Central, South and North America, and the United Kingdom (141).

⁶⁸ This photograph was purchased by the author from the Archivo Nacional in Costa Rica. The photograph can be found under the signature Fondo de Fotografía 3198. These are 1900 Caribbean workers in the construction of the railroad.

⁶⁹ These are confirmed by the interviewees Afro-Caribbean parents, grandparents and great-grandparents.

⁷⁰ See other works on Caribbean migration to Central America Insanally et al., Newton, and Thorpe, chapter 2.

Shepherd goes on to explain some of the push and pull factors for this post-emancipation emigration. As to the push factors, she comments:

Low wages, poor economic conditions, the dramatic increase in population, the decline in the sugar industry in places like Jamaica, - and the failure of diversification to meet the need for alternative jobs, were the push factors...A principal pull factor was that of wages in the receiving countries...(141-142).

There is no focus on the specific jobs done by Afro-Caribbean immigrants and Afro-Jamaicans in particular, but general discussion on railroad construction work helps in deducing some of these. One of the tasks of Afro-Caribbean/Jamaicans based on the archival photograph above was the moving of earth to open the way for the railroad.

Carmen Murillo Chaverri, in *Identidades de Hierro y Humo*, explains that, at the beginning of the construction of the railroad, workers and officials would live in camps because of the absence of people in the areas where the construction was taking place (95).

In discussion on the hierarchy in living conditions and food in these camps, she also describes the type of work the workers were involved in.

La gran mayoría de los hombres se dedicaban a las labores generales de la construcción, como mover tierra y piedras y efectuar terraplenes para formar la "calzada" así como colocar los durmientes y fijar los rieles a lo largo de esta. Como complemento a lo anterior, algunos otros grupos de trabajo se encargaban de labores específicas como la detonación de rocas con pólvora o dinamita, la fabricación de ladrillos, el decantado de bloques de piedra o la extracción de madera de los bosques contiguos y su respectivo labrado según las piezas requeridas para la construcción de puentes (103).

Most of the men concentrated on the general work of the construction like moving soil and stones and raising embankment to form the "roadway" and also laying the sleepers and fastening the rail along them. Complementing this, other work groups would be in charge of specific jobs like the blowing up of rocks with gun powder or dynamite, making bricks, digging out blocks of stones or cutting wood in nearby forest and working them based on the required shapes for the construction of the bridges (103).

At the initial stages it can be suggested that Afro-Caribbean immigrant labourers were involved in all the general grueling work of the construction of the railroad project. Searching through an 1888 archival document, there is a list of jobs for railroad workers in the Pacific. While no English names appeared on this list as an indication of Afro-Caribbean/Jamaican workers, it can be suggested that some of these would have also been done by Afro-Caribbean/Jamaican immigrants. It is clear that more extensive research needs to be undertaken to uncover some of these issues pertaining to Afro-Caribbean immigrants in Costa Rica during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

New
Research
needed

According to Archivo Nacional the jobs listed are:

conductor, maquinista, brequero, fogonero, maestro mecanico, ayudante, bombero, guarda, carpintero, reparador de carros, mandador, peon, clavador, barbero, herrero, foguero, pintor, hojalatero, almaceros (Fomento No 8083).

Tram conductor, machinist, brakeman, chief mechanic, helper, fireman, guard, carpenter, car repairer, foreman, labourer, nailer, barber, blacksmith, stoker, painter, metal bender, store room clerk (Fomento No. 8083).

Beside the grueling work, early Afro-Caribbean immigrant workers faced racism both from Costa Rican society and the railroad company administrators. They had three main stripes against them - the wrong colour as descendants of Africans; they spoke a different language, English; and worshiped in Christian denominations other than the Catholic Church.

At this point, the research will show some evidence of Afro-Caribbean/Jamaican immigrant labourers protesting during the early stages of the construction of the railroad. Some of the quotes are long but are deemed necessary since enough scholarly work on Afro-Caribbean immigrant in Costa Rica is not available.

These pieces of evidence are found in archival documents, and from some newspapers of that period. A letter written to the Governor of Port Limón at the end of the 19th century, found in Archivo Nacional 21 April, 1877 states:

Fig. 13. Letter to the Governor from the Commander

HMS "Bullfinch"

At Port Limón Costa Rica

21st April, 1877

Your Excellency

You are doubtless (sic) aware that during the past few days, several British Subjects (Jamaicans) have been on board the "Bullfinch" to make complaints to me which in the absence of a British Consul it has been my duty to investigate. 2. I have selected one or two cases that your Excellency might be pleased to give a hearing to and should it be convenient I would name 3. O'clock tomorrow afternoon (Sunday) to bring them before you. List of persons whose complaints are submitted for the consideration of his Excellency the Governor of Port Limón. Alexander Mc Goody, Henry Cameron, colored, rubber cutters. Samuel P. Bell, colored, writer, I have no wish to go further into this man's case. J. W. Wallace, colored, complains of arbitrary treatment and imprisonment. Henry Paul, colored, complains of having been imprisoned. Samuel Evans, colored, complains of having been cruelly treated by the police and not being paid money due to him. C.H. Williams, colored, complains of having been imprisoned and flogged. Cecilia Simpson, colored woman, complains of having been sent in the calaboose 10 days without trial. 3. There is also a case in connection with Rubber cutting, where two men (Alexander McCarthy and Henry Cameron, Jamaicans) complain of being forcibly interrupted in their occupation and illtreated by a man called Nicholas Gonzalez. As I understand that the cutting of Rubber in Government property is free to all alike I should be glad your Excellency would look into this also. 4. Most of the other complaints are of a trivial nature and I do not think it necessary that they should be further considered. 5. The source of nearly all the alleged grievances appears to be the backwardness of the payments made on account of the railway which unfortunately compels the men to accept credit at varios merchants. Sign Commander (15, 17).

Source: Archivo Nacional. April 21, 1877, Costa Rica.

This quote gives a glimpse into some of the everyday realities Afro-Jamaicans, including women, had to face during the late 19th century in Costa Rica. These quotations are suggesting that having to deal with racial and labour discrimination Afro-Caribbean labourers had different forms of defense mechanisms.

One of these mechanisms was individual and collective protest making complaints to whom they considered the higher authorities. Another mechanism was the support by the women which, in this case, is remarkable since especially during this historical period women's active participation was expected only in their traditional roles within the private sphere as wives, mothers, and housewives.

In relation to the different jobs performed by Afro-Jamaicans during the construction of the railroad, the reference mentions that of rubber cutter, which would strengthen Murillo Chaverri's reference to complementing jobs during that period of railroad construction.⁷¹

In September of 1877, there is evidence of problems facing labourers in another letter, this time written to the Governor in Limón by a Government official. In this letter, this official referred to a communication sent by Mr. Sydney Lacost, a representative of Britain in Central America about complaints made by some Caribbean labourers. In this letter he recognized the seriousness of the complaints, and is ensuring within the letter that even when these acts sound exaggerated they call for concern. The letter in Archivo Nacional, 20 September, 1877, states:

71 See chapter Lara Putnam, *The Company they Kept: Migrants and the Politics of Gender in Caribbean Costa Rica, 1870-1960*. Chapter IV for discussion of the different everyday activities Afro-Caribbean women were involved in during the construction of the railroad.

Fig. 14. Letter to the Governor from a Government Official
(in Spanish and translated below)

San José, Setbre 20 de 1877

Sr. Gobnor de la Com^a

Del Limón

El Sr. Sydney Lacosk encargado de negocios de su Majestad Británica en Centro América me ha dirigido con fecha del corriente el oficio que sigue. "Siento tener que informa a usted que han llegado a mi algunas quejas de casos de mal tratamiento por las autoridades del Puerto de Limón y de Matina sobre varios súbditos Británicos naturales de Belice y de Jamaica los cuales no han residido largo tiempo en la República. Confieso a usted que los informes que me han llegado son de un carácter tan serio, que aunque aparentemente quedan en realidad autorizados yo puedo difícilmente creer que ellos no son exagerados. El informe que he recibido es al efecto: que en dos ocasiones separadas, una de ellas la fuerza para exigir el impuesto sobre la destrucción de la langosta y la otra, el atentado de forzar algunos negros á servir como agentes de policía sin ninguna remuneración; ambos actos de inaguantable naturaleza que han sido perpetrados por las autoridades; que algunos de los negros recibieron heridas de cuchillos ó ballonetas, uno de ellos fue gravemente herido y que siete personas negras inclusive dos mujeres fueron por fuerza puestos sobre un pequeño buque de vela y despachadas del Limón. Tengo el honor de repetir á usted que encuentro dificultad en creer que tales actos hayan sido realmente cometidos ó que hayan tenido lugar, bajo cuales quiera circunstancias de orden del Coronel Comandante, quien si otro informe que he recibido es exacto, goza en el Pto del Limón del concepto de justiciero y moderado. Firma Machado (10-11).

San José, Setbre 20 de 1877

Sr. Gobnor de la Com^a

Del Limón

Mr. Sydney Lacosk, charge d'affaires of Her British Majesty in Central America, has directed me to the office of the current date below. "I am sorry to inform you that I have received complaints of cases of mistreatment by the authorities of Puerto Limón and Matina against several British nationals from Belize and Jamaica recently arrived in the Republic. I confess that the reports I have received are of so serious a nature that even though they appear to be factual I can hardly believe that they are not exaggerated. The report I receive is to the effect: that on two separate occasions, one of them the use of force to collect the tax on the destruction of lobsters and the other, the attempt to force some blacks to serve as police officers without pay; both intolerable acts that have been perpetrated by the authorities; that some blacks receive knife and bayonete injuries, one was seriously injured and seven negroes including two women were forcibly placed on a small sailboat and shipped out of Limón. I have the honor to repeat that I find it difficult to believe that such acts were actually committed or had taken place, under whatsoever circumstances by order of the Commandant Colonel, who if another report received is accurate, enjoys in Port Limón a reputation for justice and moderation. Signed Machado (10-11).

Source: Archivo Nacional, September 20, 1877.

This correspondence serves to continue highlighting some difficulties, and labour injustice confronted by both male and female Jamaican laboures. The correspondence did not clarify where they were shipped to.

Another violent incident is recorded in the *Gaceta Oficial* of 1875 which suggests ways of resistance, and protest. The *Gaceta Oficial* 1875 reports that a fire occurred on December 29 of 1874 in a 'bodega' (warehouse) of a Mr. Rafael. The report suggests that the fire was intentional based on the inquiry. The Governor took charge immediately, and adopted measures to avoid another attempted fire.

Gaceta Oficial Enero 9 1875 reports:

Por cartas particulares se ha tenido noticia de un incendio verificado en la noche del 29 de diciembre último en la casa de bodegas de Mr. Raphael. Si se ha de dar crédito á los informes que se nos suministran, este incendio ha sido intencional. Sin prejuicio de proceder á las pesquisas correspondientes para averiguar quién haya sido el culpable, si, como se sospecha, el incendio ha sido ocasionado por una mano criminal, el Gobernador de acuerdo con los principales vecinos se ocupó enseguida de adoptar disposiciones para prevenir un nuevo atentado (3).

From private correspondence known we have been aware of a fire on the night of last December 29 at the warehouse of Mr. Raphael. If we are to credit the reports we receive, this fire was intentional. Without wishing to pre-empt the relevant inquest into who is responsible, if, as suspected, the fire was caused by a criminal hand. The Governor in accordance with the principal inhabitants immediately acted to adopt measures to prevent a future attempt (3).

The report does not mention the measures taken by the Governor. It may be argued that within a hostile working environment, the measures would hardly have been soft, especially for the Caribbean migrants who had to live not only under terrible working conditions but also with racism.

The fire received lots of coverage in the official press. Five months later there was still speculation as to who could have caused it. According to the report of *La Gaceta* of June 16, 1875, those who believed the fire was intentional did so on vague reports, of a Black person who during the burning of the building that contained the materials of the railroad was lighting a store house from the side of the beach. *La Gaceta Oficial* Reports:

El apoyo de los que juzgan el hecho como premeditado, no tiene otro origen que la Noticia vaga de haberse visto a un negro que, durante el incendio del edificio en donde estaban hacinados los materiales del ferrocarril, ponía fuego á la bodega de un particular por el lado de la playa (2).

The only support for those who judge the act to be premeditated is the vague news of having seen a negro who, during the fire in the building where the materials for the railroad stored, was setting fire to a private warehouse from the beach side (2).

There is another report of another fire three months previous to that mentioned above in the same news report which, while there is still only speculation, it is mentioned that the perpetrators could be railroad construction workers. *Gaceta Oficial* June 16, 1875 reports:

El incendio que tuvo lugar en este puerto en la tarde del día 11 del mes de Marzo Ppdo (sic), ha dado origen á diversos comentarios sobre la naturaleza del suceso. Según unos, el hecho aparece como intencional y premeditado haciendo responsable de él á los trabajadores llevados allí por la empresa del ferro-carril. Según otros, el acontecimiento ha sido enteramente casual (2).

The fire that occurred in this port on the afternoon March 11 has given rise to various comments on the nature of the event. According to some, it appears to be intentional and premeditated attributing responsibility to the laborers brought there by the railroad company. Others say the event is entirely accidental (2).

Such incidents could be based on either of the two situations put before us, but within situations of labour injustice, there is always the possibility that the fires could have been intentional, especially given that they frequently occurred.⁷²

Another reason within the discussion of the fire being intentional, even when it was only a rumor that a black man was sited is based on the negative stereotypes assign to people of African descent, as in this case Afro-Caribbean labourers, they are black, and “aggressive” therefore, one of them must have done it.

⁷² Both Murillo Chaverri and Chomsky give other examples of Jamaican protests during the railroad construction.

Fig. 15. List of likely jobs for Afro-Caribbean immigrant Workers

**Extract of list of likely jobs of Afro-Caribbean immigrant workers
taken from literature of the late 19th century**

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| -Moving of land/soil | -Detonation of rocks |
| -Fabrication of bricks | -Decanting of blocks |
| - Extraction of wood | - Laying of tracks |
| - Rubber cutters | |

Source: List constructed by author.

Finally in 1887, the 19th century administration was able to attract one of their desired European groups, the Italians. According to Rita Barriati:

...el 12 de diciembre de 1887 fondeó en Limón el vapor *Australia*. Los Doctores Calneck (medico de ferrocarril) y Castro (médico de pueblo en Limón) visitaron el barco y encontraron 762 italianos seis mas de los que esperaban y se alegraron que los inmigrantes se encontraban “...en perfecto estado de salud...son jóvenes y bien desarrollados, de manera que será esta una inmigración de importancia para el país. Los equipajes fumigados (Barriati 3)⁷³

...on December 12, 1888 the ship *Australia* docked in Limón. Drs. Calneck (railroad doctor) and Castro (public doctor of Limón) visited the ship and found 762 Italians, six more than expected and were pleased that the immigrants were found “in perfect state of health...they are young and well developed, and therefore this will be an important source of immigration will be of importance for the country”. The luggage was fumigated (3).

Unfortunately for the Costa Rican administration, their stay in the country lasted only one year. They staged a strike complaining of unfavorable labour conditions and breach of contract over the agreed salary.⁷⁴ This leads to comment on other challenges the railroad construction project faced.

73 Barriati is quoting from a letter found in Costa Rican National Archive ANCR, Guerra, N. 6826. Carta desde Limón, firmada F. Ulloa, al Ministro de Marina, December 14, 1887.

74 For more details on the strike and the decision to leave on the part of the Italians see *Gaceta* 24 May 1888. 598, *La República* 26 October, 1888. 3, November 3, 1888.3, November 8, 1888.3, November 28, 1888. 3, December 11, 1888.3, March 12, 1889. 2, March 13, 1889. 2, March 16, 1889. 2, *Gaceta* March 20, 1889.

As was hinted, construction of the railroad faced challenge after challenge, and at every step of the way president General Tomás Guardia tried to justify its value by reporting constantly on its progress. In fact, the project not only faced difficulties in procuring the funding and foreign labour, it also faced strikes, like that involving the Italians, diseases such as malaria and yellow fever, and death.

Yellow fever was one of difficulties encountered in the construction of the railroad. *Costa Rica* 17 de Junio 1893 reports:

En el puerto de Limón continua haciend^o estragos la fiebre; amarilla para algunos, y de otros colores, al juicio de otros; pero el resultado es que todos van cancelando sus cuentas uno en pos de otro, sin exceptuar á los negros. Hemos visto que se han dictado todas las medidas que en semejantes casos aconseja la higiene, y el socorro necesario (2).

Fever continues to ravage the port of Limón yellow for some, and other colors, in the opinion of others; but the outcome is that everyone, the Negroes included, is cancelling their account one after the other. We have seen that all the measures required by hygiene and necessary relief have been passed (2).

El Ferrocarril Junio 15, 1872 reports some deaths:

Desde que principiaron los trabajos del ferrocarril, no han muerto sino tres personas en el Limón; un Chino, un Norte americano (sic) i (sic) un Inglés, el 1ero de excesos en el uso del opio; el 2do de un ataque de *delirium tremiens*; i el 3ro de resultas de un golpe recibido en un muelle de Colon. Por lo demás, *las calenturas* han estado siempre, i están ahora mas que nunca, a la órden del día. Pero nuestras calenturas, como todos sabemos, á nadie matan; i solo atacan a las jentes (sic) del interior, las que por ese motivo estan desertando por mayor, lo cual no causa grave perjuicio á la Compañía, provista ya de mil trabajadores *costeños* i extranjeros (2).

Since works on the railroad began, there have been only three deaths in Limón; a Chinese, a North American and an English man, the 1st from excessive opium use, the 2nd from *delirium tremiens*; and the 3rd as result of a blow received on the pier of Colon. For the rest fever has always been, and is now more than ever, the order of the day. But our fevers, as everyone knows, kill no one and only attack the people from the interior, who are therefore deserting by the droves, which does no great damage to the company, which has one thousand Costa Rican and foreign workers (2).

In this scenario of deaths, strikes and other labour challenges, it was not only from those administrating the project who were arguing in favour of its construction. Others in the province of Limón were also ensuring the authorities took note of its importance.

El Ferrocarril 1872 carried a long letter to the editor on November 4, 1872 telling of the good conditions of the Port of Limón, and requesting that Nanne⁷⁵ visit to confirm his arguments, and report favourable to the government. Dr. Zanety explains:

...por este puerto evidentemente la llave del Atlántico por donde á la República le vendrá un positivo porvenir en el desarrollo de sus riquezas, i (sic) entonces, abierta al centro de operaciones esta vía, podrá estrechar mas i mas las relaciones del hombre con el hombre,(sic) i el país sabrá premiar á los que con tanto celo y abnegación trazaron la marcha de su engrandecimiento. En otra ocasión, Sr. Redactor, podré dar á U (sic) nuevos detalles; i entre tanto me suscribo su atento S. S. (1).

... through this port clearly the key to the Atlantic through which will arrive a positive future for the Republic through the development of its riches, and then, open to central operations this rail way, would forge closer relationships between men, and the country would know how to reward those who with such zeal and devotion, defined the progress of its growth. Mr. Editor, I could provide you with further details at another time, mean while I remain your attentive S.S (1).

It is interesting to note that the expression used 'la llave del atlántico' during the late 19th century, is the same one used today by all Limonenses when referring to Limón and its importance to the rest of the country. In the context of an impending strike in 2005, union leader Alberto Knight stated:

Nosotros tenemos la llave del país de Costa Rica, está aquí, en Limón. Nosotros tenemos la llave y no podemos cedercela a nadie más, la llave es de nosotros, principalmente la llave pertenece a Limón (Knight, 2005).

We have the key of this country of Costa Rica, it is here in Limón. We have the key and we cannot give it up to anyone else, the key is ours, the key belongs first of all to Limón (Knight, 2005).

75 Guillermo Nanne was a German, General Director for the construction of the railroad.

The province of Limón became 'la llave del país' because of its importance for the economic development of 19th century Costa Rica administration. During that period individuals living in the province also saw its potential like in the case of Dr. Zanety.

In the end the province and the port of Limón also became of special relevance for Afro-Caribbean immigrant workers and later for their descendants, Afro-Costa Ricans, who like Alberto Knight recognize its potential for the rest of Costa Rica and its importance for Afro-Costa Ricans whose Afro-Caribbean fore-parents culturally and ethnically transformed this region into what it is today.

‘I BORN AND GROW HERE’: AFRO-COSTA RICANS AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

‘I born and grow here, so I feel it belong to us.’
Dora Grainger, 2006⁷⁶

In the above quotation there is no ambiguity in the affirmation of Dora Grainger about her nationalism and ownership of her country Costa Rica. Her affirmation voices the sentiment of present-day Afro-Costa Rican born, legal citizens, within a country which at times overtly wants to ignore their rights to their nationalism. Her affirmation expresses a sense of belonging which is not unique to present Afro-Costa Ricans.

Carmen Bertran in “Entre Pueblo y Plebe...” discusses ‘la emergencia del ‘pueblo’ como categoría ideológica y política, a partir de ejemplos concretos sobre la población de color...de la Nación de Buenos Aires’ (60) (“the emergence of ‘pueblo’ as an ideological and political category out of concrete examples about the colour population from Nation of Buenos Aires”; 60).

This ‘pueblo’ concept was understood, according to Bertran, as the collective of marginalized people, which worked as a double edged sword after independence since these were considered savages and plebs who were not included in nationhood.

During the 19th century, when Latin American countries were getting their independence, the issue of who should be considered a citizen,

⁷⁶ 86-year-old Dora Grainger was interviewed in Limón on Tuesday May 2nd, 2006. Ms Dora is of Jamaican and St. Lucian descent. *Died Dec 6-2015.*

was evident. Reid Andrews' chapter on "Our New Citizens, The Blacks" speaks of the tension between post-independence Latin American elites' acceptance and the demand of born Latin Americans descents as citizens.⁷⁷

This tension is also evident in post-independent Costa Rica after Afro-Caribbean Costa Rican-born children demanded to be accepted as citizens of that country. In Chapter II, the establishment of the province of Limón began the discussion of the entry of Caribbean immigrants, mainly Afro-Caribbean who were part of one of the banned 'undesirable' ethnic groups.

These 'undesirable' Afro-Caribbean people entered the country for economic reasons. The Costa Rican government of the time conveniently overlooked the racist legislation they had in place in order to achieve their goal of the construction of a railroad. But the construction of the railroad unexpectedly took close to twenty years to be completed, during which period the 'undesirables' who had been allowed entry and were expected to be temporarily⁷⁸ in the country began a biological reproduction which resulted in the present Afro-Costa Rican population.

Going through 1929-30 copies of *The Limón Searchlight*, one cannot but notice jumping from the pages the sense of belonging, and national entitlement of Afro-Costa Ricans from that period. Their attitude was not one of pleading for acceptance, but of demand. They felt that they had the right to this entitlement, and the privileges which came with it by virtue of the contribution made by their Afro-Caribbean parents, and grandparents who were allowed entrance for the construction of the railroad, and of their birth within this country.

The 1929 editorial in *The Limón Searchlight* Saturday November 30 gives evidence of the acknowledgement with a tinge of arrogance and sarcasm, of Afro-Caribbean immigrant labour contribution. *The Limón Searchlight*:

...and having watched the growth of this city from a settlement of huts in a swamp jungle unfit for the resistance of the white race due to the natural prevalence of yellow and other malignant fevers, coupled with smallpox and such like deadly infectious diseases as are the common lot of swampy regions until its merged into a fine, modern little city ...brought

77 See Dyn, Roberts and Gordon.

78 This temporality is specified in the advertisement of jobs in Costa Rica for Jamaicans. Some of these can be found in the *Colonial Standard and Daily Dispatch* December 4, 1872, where the jobs offered in Costa Rica was for one year.

into possibility by the industrious determination of an English speaking populace; one wonders how it is possible that such a community could have existed since the year 1880...(1)⁷⁹

This reference gives an idea, first of the natural geographic conditions that 19th century Afro-Caribbean immigrants had to work under. Second, it shows their pride in the contribution of their fore-parents and third, even if the terms “blacks” or “Caribbean” are not mentioned, it is implied a black racial, and Caribbean superiority of their fore-parents.

Let us remember that Afro-Caribbean immigrants, including Jamaicans, at the time they migrated to Costa Rica were from countries still colonies under English rule, therefore manifesting some of their regionalism. Meléndez and Duncan (1989) also make reference to this attitude of superiority.

Another editorial in the 1929 *The Limon Searchlight* Saturday November 23, 1929, clearly states the demand for privileges for themselves and the province of Limón.

We have seen Alajuela, Grecia and other places where roads are being built, praying the President to give all the labour to their local workmen why cant (sic) Cartago and Limón demand a portion of this loan and seek to employ our surplus labour. Of course the majority of these are coloured labourers and the government does not seem to realize that she has an obligation to these men, but it must be recognized that she permitted the United Fruit Coy (sic) to immigrate these people here by the thousands when the sanitary conditions of Limón was not conducive to the residence of white labour, now that they have made it habitable, and these thousands have propagated other thousands who are born & bred Costa Ricans, it is time now that they should be considered as Costa Ricans and dealt with as other provincial residents are being considered (2).

This reference speaks to the issues of state responsibility and national participation. These born in Costa Rica of Afro-Caribbean immigrants up to the 1950s were not recognized as legal citizens of this country. This

⁷⁹ See other examples in *The Limón Searchlight*, Saturday November 30 1929 page 3 about the right of Afro-Limonenses to sit national examinations, Saturday June 28, 1930, about unjust discrimination in Siquirres. This is a long report, in which the complaint makes sure to emphasize how their fore-parents came to this country, and worked because the nationals were not able, and therefore their right to be treated with dignity, and respect as the rightful citizens that they were.

legal non-recognition did not prevent them participating in the national debates on issues that were affecting them direct or indirectly.

They did not have the right to vote, but they voiced their opinions forcefully. They felt it was the obligation of the country's administration to pay attention to their needs, and the needs of the province of Limón. They spoke of inequalities between the other provinces and the province of Limón, and made their demands on the basis of their fore-parents' contributions.⁸⁰

The previous quotation also highlights racial inequality, when mention is made of the coloured labourers as well as the demand to treat these 'colored labourers' as legitimate citizens; first because their fore-parents contributed to the development of the country by transforming the region into a 'sanitary' place to live in and second and more importantly, they had reproduced biologically in that country; therefore their children's birth rights should be recognized.⁸¹

Despite 20th century Afro-Costa Rican attitude of entitlement, they also had to face the fact that they were born within a country which, from its inception, did not accept people of African descent as an integral part of its nation.⁸²

Afro-Caribbean born Afro-Costa Ricans found themselves immersed within a 20th century contradictory Costa Rican society which, on one hand developed a discourse that all Costa Ricans are "equal", while its common thread of racist ideology made it difficult to accept as rightful citizens people of African descent born in the country.

Based on this underlying racist ideology that resulted in the neglect of the province of Limón and the marginalization and invisibility of the Afro-Costa Rican population, this chapter will focus on the situation of Afro-Caribbean born to Costa Ricans and their unapologetic attitude and sense of entitlement as Costa Rican nationals.

By the early 20th century Afro-Caribbean born Afro-Costa Ricans had a sense of nationalism even before their legal recognition as Costa Rican citizens. This is so because they were participating, while not fully recognized, in mainstream Costa Rica in the development of the province

80 See English newspapers circulated in the province of Limon during the period in discussion.

81 See also the Front page of *The Limón Searchlight* Saturday November 2, 1920, which reports on some of the development problems facing the province of Limón.

82 For more discussion see Harpelle, and Sojo.

of Limón and insisted that it was because of their fore-parents that the economic development of the country took place.

While there is recognition that there was social and economic development before Caribbean immigration, it was Caribbean labour that helped in the economic development with late 19th century railroad construction and the development of the province of Limón.

The main argument of this chapter is that the children of Caribbean immigrants born in Costa Rica regard themselves as citizens of the country they were born into, therefore expecting to be treated as citizens with all the rights, responsibilities and privileges that come with that right, while at the same time maintaining some aspects of their immigrant parents' culture because of the pride in their Caribbean, particularly Jamaican ancestry.

Main argument

According to the Oxford Dictionary, the definition of nation is "a large aggregate of people united by common descent, culture, or language, inhabiting a particular state or territory" (949).

Based on this definition, Afro-Costa Ricans born in early 20th century Costa Rica could have chosen to be considered a nation in itself, but decided otherwise. Murillo Chaverri in "La Identidad Costarricense" in some ways agrees with this definition when she describes some of the elements that helped in the development of a Costa Rican national identity. She explains:

La conjugación de valores y lealtades, sentimientos y memoria, vivencias y proyectos compartidos...Ante todo, supone la convocatoria a un sentido de unidad que, a manera de espejo, busca reflejarnos como colectivo (159).

The conjugation of values and loyalties, feelings and memories, lived experiences and shared projects...above all, assumes the calling to a sense of unity which, as with a mirror, seeks to reflect us as a collective (159).

For hegemonic Costa Rica their national identity is cemented on those referents which unite them as Spanish descendants, joined by a history of Spanish settlers who managed to survive and develop in an inhospitable region that was colonial Costa Rica. Therefore, they see themselves as a collective that share those ancestral memories and cultural values.

Murrillo Chaverri in, "La Identidad Costarricense" explains that it was during the three last decades of the 19th century that these elements

were clearly defined and states that the arguments for the development of these elements reflected the interest of the liberals (162).⁸³

The intersection between national identity and political power is noticeable. Therefore, national identity will have embedded in it those characteristics based on the ideology which those in political power want to construct. One of the ways of constructing these elements, according to Murillo Chaverri, was based on two fundamental myths.

First, on selective recovery of the historical memory where “la experiencia colonial en la pobre y olvidada provincia de Costa Rica, es recuperada a través del mito de la democracia rural” (162), [the colonial experience in the poor and forgotten province of Costa Rica is recovered through the myth of rural democracy”].⁸⁴

The second, “de los mitos fundacionales de la nación remite a la cuestión de la “blanquitud” de la sociedad costarricense. La comunidad de sangre constituye un argumento con una fuerte carga emotiva que contribuye eficazmente a convocar un sentido de unidad y destino compartido” (162), [out of the foundational myths of the nation emerges the issue of “whiteness” of Costa Rican society. The community of blood constitutes a strong emotional argument which contributes effectively to convoking a sense of unity and shared destiny].

According to Murrillo Chaverri, these two main ideological constructs, rural democracy and “whiteness” constitute the main elements of the Costa Rican national identity. In agreement with Murillo Chaverri, in the same way Sojo, presents other elements that constitute this national identity, including the two mentioned by Murillo Chaverri along with, that of a peaceful, tolerant, simple pacific society.

Based on Murillo Chaverri’s discussion on the main elements that constitute a Costa Rican national identity, the attitudes of mainstream Costa Ricans born in the early 20th century are understandable when specifically defined though not acceptable.

During the 19th century, when Costa Rican national identity was being defined, people of African descent were excluded from that definition. What mainstream Costa Rica was not counting on, was a biological reproduction of people of Afro-Caribbean descent within its territory.⁸⁵ Costa Rica justified its unwillingness to recognize Afro-Costa Ricans born in

83 See also Sojo chapter I.

84 See also Munro, and Kinley, and Cruz.

85 The Caribbean immigrant labour was expected to stay only one year and then return to their islands.

the country as legitimate citizens on the grounds that they did not, based on Murrillo Chaverri's explanation, share those values, loyalties, colour, language, and experience of hegemonic Costa Rican society.

While it is true that immigrants do not share the national identity of the host country; if they stay long enough to bear children, those children will share a double culture and will certainly share the values of the country of their birth, which will also form part of their national identity.

The Afro-Costa Ricans born of Caribbean ancestry would share a double culture and, especially for the first generation, would have displayed some or other of the elements that identified their parents' Caribbean national identity. Nonetheless, by virtue of being born and living within Costa Rica, they would also embrace and display some elements of Costa Rican national identity, such as speaking Spanish.

The place of birth becomes an important point of discussion in determining who should be considered a national. Murrillo Chaverri strengthens this point in noting that:

Partamos de un hecho histórico irrefutable: las personas nacen en un lugar y época determinadas. Ello constituye la materia prima del arraigo y de la construcción de un "nosotros", sobre la base del reconocimiento de los coterráneos y contemporáneos. De hecho, los orígenes del término nación, aluden al lugar de nacimiento (168).

Let us begin from an un-refutable historical fact: people are born in a determined place and time. This constitutes the prime material for taking root and the construction of an "us", on the basis of recognizing compatriots and contemporaries. In deed, the origins of the term nation alludes to the place of birth (168).

Based on the above explanation, 20th century first generation Afro-Costa Ricans are Costa Rican nationals who, based on the circumstance of being descendants of the "undesirables" and not sharing a national history, memory and culture constructed, an "us" that was different from mainstream Costa Rican society while being part of that society by birth.

The *Constitución Política* clearly defined who is a national. Title 1 section 2 states:

Art. 3^o Los costarricenses (sic) lo son por nacimiento ó por naturalización. Art. 4^o Son costarricenses por nacimiento: 1^o Todos los hombres nacidos en el territorio de Costa Rica: 2^o Los nacidos fuera del territorio de

Costa Rica, de padres costarricenses, ausentes en servicio de la República, ó en asuntos propios, con tal que no se hubiese domiciliado en país (sic) extranjero (sic) (2).

Art. 3rd Costa Ricans are such by birth or by naturalization. Art. 4th The following are Costa Rican by birth: 1st All men born in the Territory of Costa Rica. 2nd Those born away from the territory of Costa Rica, of Costa Rican parents, who are abroad on service of the Republic, or on personal business, as long as they did not live in any foreign country (2).⁸⁶

According to the Constitution, Afro-Costa Ricans born of Afro-Caribbean parents during the late 19th century and up to the mid 20th century were Costa Ricans by virtue of being born in the national territory of Costa Rica.

While early 20th century Afro-Costa Ricans did not share a hegemonic historical memory, they did share a memory originating from their grandparents and parents, and a present history that is shared with mainstream 20th century Costa Rica.

It can be argued that even when early-20th century born-Afro-Costa Ricans probably did not have any knowledge of this political constitution, their sense of belonging by birth and their demand to be accepted as Costa Ricans led them to this sense of nationalism even before they were legally recognized as citizens.

Despite mainstream, Costa Rica's attitude of not legally recognizing early-20th century Afro-Costa Ricans, they unapologetically behaved as nationals. This means that they were actively ensuring they were at least informed of the general affairs of the country and in so doing, used mechanisms like newspapers to achieve this goal.

During the early 20th century there was a significant circulation of newspapers in the province of Limón which is indicative that the population was being fed relevant information, not only about the province but of the society at large. This also indicates that people were busy living within the province of Limón and were organized as a mixed society.

Evidence from these newspapers indicates that during that period the mestizos held political power and Afro-Costa Ricans were living alongside them, going about their everyday lives and organizations.

86 According to Costa Rica Political Constitution, Costa Rica has had 14 constitutions since independence in 1821. See *Constitución Política de la República de Costa Rica*. In this Constitution in its Article 13 it echoed the same that was said in the art 3 of the cited 1850 article that those born in the Republic territory are Costa Ricans.

Some of these early 20th century newspapers include the *Limón Weekly News*, 1903-1906, *El Heraldo de Limón*, 1909, *El Heraldo del Atlántico*, 1911, 13, 14..., *La Linterna*, 1913, 16-17, *El Limonense*, 1914, 1959, *El Pueblo Limonense*, 1915, *El Relator*, 1923-24, 29, 1962, *La Voz del Atlántico*, 1934-1946, 49-51, *The Atlantic Post*, 1949-51, *Limón Express*, 1942.⁸⁷ Of these most information about the Afro-Costa Rican population was found in *La Voz del Atlántico* and *The Limón Searchlight*.

The Limón Searchlight Saturday November 30, 1929 reports:

...Your aims as set forth therein, that is, to keep the English speaking people in the country posted with everyday occurrences around us are most beneficial, because really from the lack of knowledge of the Spanish language we are kept in gross ignorance of these occurrences which at times lead us into conflict with the authorities. I must therefore wish for your journal every success & (sic) will hope that your determination and interest will be chained continually of that column of enlightenment and social uplift of our people and sincerely hope that your efforts will be crown with success...(2).

This quotation shows the importance of this newspaper for early 20th century people of African descent living in Costa Rica. Through these newspapers, the opinions were heard not only of born Afro-Costa Ricans but also, I argue, those of Afro-Caribbean residents who, following from the reference, were interested in knowing about the affairs of the country so as not to commit sin by omission.

We must remember that as immigrants living within a racist society, even if covertly so, Afro-Caribbean residents wanted to be inconspicuous and make sure that they did not infringe any law and so jeopardize their stay in the country.⁸⁸ The newspapers carried news in English and Spanish informing them of national and international issues.

In terms of some of the elements which constitute Costa Rican national identity, early 20th century Costa Ricans also aspired to and made sure their children internalized them. *The Limón Searchlight* Saturday November 30, 1929 reports:

⁸⁷ This information was found in the National Library of Costa Rica. This research collated only those newspapers found on the province of Limón for the first half of the 20th century. See Quezada, Camacho.

⁸⁸ During the 1930s and '40s there were a number of restrictive laws which affected people of African descent in Costa Rica. See Soto, Quirós.

Limón School Work

The masters and schoolmistresses of the Limón elementary governmental schools are sparing no pains to bring up the standard of their school work to the highest efficiency to meet the test of their examination by the inspectors. We note that on the 29th and 30th inst (sic) will be an exhibition of manual labour and Arts in the *Rafael Iglesias* School of this town when the girls and boys will view with each other, in showing what they can do in handicrafts, paintings, drawings, etc. All parents and guardians are invited to see what their children have been doing for the past year (3).

This reference demonstrates that Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Costa Ricans were very involved in the everyday life of the province of Limón and interested in being involved in the wider Costa Rican society. The *Rafael Iglesias*⁸⁹ was a state school, which suggests that Afro-Costa Ricans were sending their children to receive the nation's education and internalize those values that represented their national identity.

Early 20th century Afro-Costa Ricans had organized their own English schools, thus by sending their children to the state Spanish school they wanted to ensure their children's future, and hopefully full acceptance and participation not only in the province of Limón, but in the entire country.⁹⁰

This interest in involvement in the wider society created, based on the evidence shown in this news report, some tension among some of the Afro-Costa Rican descendants in adopting some of the national identifiers over those of their Afro-Caribbean ancestry. The report from *The Limón Searchlight* Saturday November 30, 1929 continues:

What of the U.N.I.A. and other private schools? Are they doing nothing? This was always an idea of ours, that the exams should be held periodically in the school of the U.N.I.A. and prizes awarded for best work done in the school, and a government teacher be allotted to the school for a few hours each day the Spanish subjects; but no cognizance was taken of our advices.

No matter what may be said and done all these children born here are C'. Ricans (sic) born and are liable to call for their papers free of cost when so desiring; so I have always insisted that they should be educated in the Spanish lines as well as that of the country of their parentage, one may be classified as a prejudice fool by other fools but there'll (sic) come a day

89 This school was named after the 17th Costa Rican President Rafael Yglesias Castro, 1894-1898/1898-1902.

90 This would be achieved first through their legal recognition as Costa Rican citizens and by present Afro-Costa Ricans' full participation in the affairs of their country despite ideological racism.

when that rejected stone may be needed for the key of the arch. Parents look to educate your children with common sense (3).

The reference highlights a number of things. First there is a vibrant community dealing with issues of national, cultural and local interest. Second, it is noted that there were leaders in the community voices coming from specific institutions like the United Negroes Improvement Association (UNIA). Third, they had an awareness of the need to learn the Spanish language because they were Costa Rican nationals, therefore ensuring that their children had one of the elements that constituted their national identity. Fourth, clarifying that embracing the Costa Rican national identity did not signify that Afro-Caribbean ancestry would be eroded.

It is not surprising then the affirmation of 86-year-old Dora Granger when she declares unapologetically that she is a Costa Rican by virtue of being born in this country despite being of Jamaican and St. Lucian descent.

It is clear that the architects of Costa Rica national identity did not envision having to accept as nationals, people of African descent. When designing their 1850s political constitution, they never thought it would have compromised them into accepting people of African descent based on their definition as to who a national is.

Afro-Costa Ricans felt strongly that they were entitled as nationals, based on the essentialist reason of belonging by way of being born in this country, and by reminding of the contribution done by their fore-parents in the development of Costa Rica.

Clear manifestations of this intangible citizenship is seen in the social involvement among Afro-Costa Ricans within the province of Limón as a preparation for their legal recognition and their full incorporation in the rest of the country.

They were active participants in ensuring that their children obtained all the necessary elements which would form part of their national identity like that of the national Spanish language. They ensure that the necessary measures be in place so that their children receive also the education from mainstream Costa Rica.

Fortunately for them, future generations of Afro-Costa Ricans would be allowed full participation in the society with the legal recognition obtained under the leadership of José Figueres Ferrer during the mid 20th century.

Afro-Costa Ricans had pride for the country they were born into and that of their fore-parents. The connections, many still maintained with the country of their Afro-Caribbean ancestors, are strengthened through the overt and covert racism experienced by both them and their Afro-Caribbean fore-parents who came as immigrant workers to this country another reason for making them hold on to the tradition of their ancestors.

PART TWO

‘NO BLACKS TO THE INTERIOR’: PAST AND PRESENT RACISM AGAINST AFRO- CARIBBEAN AND AFRO-COSTA RICANS

In *The Searchlight* of Saturday 22 February, 1930, under the title “No blacks for the interior” a very upset individual reacted to a comment that appeared in the newspaper *The Tribuna*:

There is much complaint on the par (sic) of some thoughtless Costa Ricans of what is considered “Encroachment of Coloured People beyond the Tunnel” in a complaint by some “egoist” to the correspondent of *The Tribuna*”, he claims there is a law forbidding the entry of coloured people Beyond the Tunel; (sic) does that gentleman forget that Don Thomas Guardia contracted those colored people here to do the work that could not be done by him and, after those people fulfilled their mission, it is fair to tell their progeny “Costa Ricans” by birth, that they cannot have free access to any part of the country in which they were born? Is that gentleman suggesting the Division of the Country from the Tunel to San José white, and Tunnel to Limón governed by blacks?’ (2).

This complaint about discrimination is in contrast to the popular image constructed internally, and projected internationally, of Costa Rica as a paradise. Expressions like ‘Costa Rica no tiene ejército, nuestro ejército son

los maestros y los estudiantes.⁹¹ 'Somos la Suiza centroamericana',⁹² and 'Costa Rica es el diamante de la America Central', are popular phrases constantly used as a way of maintaining that image.⁹³

Parallel to this constructed image is also a second image of a 'white' Costa Rica within which is embedded the ideology of white superiority over other ethnic groups like the *indigenas*⁹⁴ and Afro-Costa Ricans who are also parts of this 'paradise' called Costa Rica, contradicting another national discourse of 'somos iguales'.⁹⁵

Based on these contradictory images, and on discourses of progress, equality and ethnic hegemony, the main objective of this chapter is to give historical and contemporary evidence of racism in Costa Rica particularly against Afro-Costa Ricans, the majority of whom are descendants of Afro-Caribbean 19th century immigrant workers.

Despite the national discourse of 'equality', there is an ideological discourse of ethnic hegemony within mainstream Costa Rica which is manifested in overt and covert racism particularly against people of African descent.

In order to understand Costa Rican attitudes towards people who are not 'white', it is important to explore and analyze the ideological discourses on race and racism inherited by Costa Rican leaders during and after the colonial period.

According to Kenan, the race discourse was developed in the Victorian era with racism as we know emerging during the Positivist scientific period with the development of Social Darwinism. During this time a number of ideas were developed about scientific racism. These ideas stimulated and found support in the development of a number of medical fields like eugenics,⁹⁶ monogenics,⁹⁷ polygenists, phrenology,⁹⁸ and craniometry⁹⁹ to rationalize their prejudices, and discriminations against women, Africans, indigenous, and working class people.

91 Costa Rica does not have an army; our armies are our teachers and students.

92 We are the Switzerland of Central America.

93 Costa Rica is the diamond of Central America.

94 These are the descendants of the aboriginal people living in Costa Rica at Spanish arrival in 1502.

95 We are equal.

96 The study and practice of selective breeding applied to humans, with the objective of improving the species.

97 The study of a single gene disorder.

98 The study of personality and character.

99 The study of skull size, shape, and weight.

Gay explains that this scientific racism had its proponents and ardent supporters. The most influential was Compté de Gobineau whose 'essay *L'inégalité des races humaines*, published in the early 1850s, was widely admired' (74). This essay helped in giving validation to racist attitudes.

Racist attitudes with the scientific push from Gobineau were manifested in the rationalization of prejudices, license to aggression, and the construction of pathologies towards groups other than white.¹⁰⁰ Scientific racism also constructed stereotypical images for the 'Other', and gave negative meaning to terminologies, as in the case of the term 'Negro'.

The assignation of the term 'Negro' began with naturalist classification of the races into colours, one of its main exponents being Carl von Linné.¹⁰¹ Later, other professionals would rank these classifications giving importance only to people who fell within the category 'white'. The term 'Negro' became a word carrying negative connotation, ascription for people of Africa and African descent.

Scholars like Richard B. Moore researched the term and concluded that:¹⁰²

The Spanish, and the Portuguese were the ones who coined the term "Negro" as an adjective meaning black... The first use of the word "negro" as a noun or name in relation to African people is to be traced back to the period after 1441, when the Portuguese explorers went down the African coast until they reach below the Senegal River. They had referred to the people above that river, as Moors or "Azeneques" (36).

Winthrop D. Jordan explains that England was the place where the term Negro was first loaded with negative connotations. He notes:

In England perhaps more than in southern Europe, the concept of blackness was loaded with intense meaning. Long before they found that some men were black, Englishmen found in the idea of blackness a way of expressing some of their most ingrained values. No other color except white conveyed so much emotional impact. As described by the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the meaning of *black* before the sixteenth century included, 'deeply stained with dirt; soiled, dirty, foul... having dark and deadly purposes, malignant; pertaining to or involving death, deadly; baneful,

¹⁰⁰ For in depth information on this see Gay chapter I and Mama chapter II.

¹⁰¹ See Gay, and Duncan and Powell.

¹⁰² See Forbes.

disastrous, sinister..., Foul, iniquitous, horrible, wicked..., Indicating disgrace, censure, liability to punishment etc.” Black was an emotional partisan color, the handmaid and symbol of baseness and evil, a sign of danger and repulsion. Embedded in the concept of blackness was its direct opposite- whiteness. No other colors so clearly implied opposition, “being colours utterly contrary”; no others were so frequently used to denote polarization...(35).⁷

The definition of ‘black’ in the 1999 edition of *Concise Oxford Dictionary* still includes “deeply stained with dirt, relating to a human group having dark-colour skin, especially of African or Australian Aboriginal ancestry, full of anger or hatred.” It also contains phrases that use *black* with a negative connotation, like a ‘black eye’, (140), indicating that the concept has changed little since the sixteenth century.

The background to where and when the concept of race, and with time the negative meaning of the word ‘negro’ arose was briefly explained. What follows are the details of how racist ideology entered the New World and how it affected and continue to affect especially those of African descent.

After gaining their independence, Latin American countries wanted to ensure their future social, cultural, and economic development by associating whiteness to progress and civilization. Every country embarked on the process of ‘blanqueamiento’ (whitening). The previous inhumane treatment of the indigenous people and Africans and their descendants signaled to the creoles,¹⁰³ and to the privileged mestizos that the best way to enjoy power and privilege as independent nations was by being part of or being associated with the superior race: the “whites”.

This belief in white as the superior race was not a novelty in independent Latin America. The ideology arrived along with the *conquistadores* during the colonial period, and only grew stronger during the 18th century with the development of social Darwinism, and 19th century scientific racism.

Contrary to Kenan, who argues that racism emerged during the scientific era, Duncan and Powell argue that racism began from the very first time the Spaniards set foot on America as a justification for colonial domination. This justification fueled furious theological discussion in

103 In Latin America these are the Spaniards born in the Americas.

Europe with positions in favour of and against the question of the human nature of the inhabitants found in the New World.

With this ideology of white European ethnic superiority over the inhabitants of the new world, and later the Africans, it is not surprising the harsh treatment the indigenous Americans encountered along with the African slaves. The focus of this publication does not allow for in-depth examination of the details of slavery in the Americas. The objective is to lay the basis for understanding the treatment experienced by the descendants of the indigenous population of the Americas, the *indigenas*, and the Africans and their African descendants in post-independent America.

After the Latin American countries became independent they were determined to construct an America as close to 'white' as possible, even when the majority of their population was of mixed heritage. Examples of this effort are revealed through ideological discourses which appeared in writings of some of the new prominent citizens of Latin America, one of them being Argentinean Domingo F. Sarmiento with his publication *Facundo*.¹⁰⁴

According to Reid Andrews, "immigration was only the first step in whitening and europeanizing Latin American societies; however, not only did those societies have to be whitened racially and demographically, they had to be whitened culturally and aesthetically as well" (119).

The question in the discussion that follows is not if there is racism in Costa Rica, despite the national discourse and the international image of Costa Rica as a land of paradise. For many officials and ordinary citizens, this is a known fact.¹⁰⁵ The question is how to demonstrate the ways in which the racism is manifested within Costa Rican society.

Afro-Limonense interviewee María Johnson, (2006) commented on the question of racism in the country with mark bit of sarcasm:

Please! It is the most racist country that I know in the whole Latin America. Please! But it is a covert racism it is not an open racism. It is that subtle that they have a lot of us black people fooled who dare to say that in Costa Rica there is no racism (Johnson, personal interview, 2 May 2006).

¹⁰⁴ For in-depth explanation on Sarmiento and Facundo see Helg.

¹⁰⁵ See other comments by Gueren, Catepillán, *La República*. June 13, 1999. 2, Morales, Ujueta, *Diario Extra*, Wednesday November 5, 1997. 13, Paris Steffens, *La Nación* Monday January 5, 1998. 15. A.

While it is not certain if Marcia has evidence of Costa Rica's racism compared with that of the rest of Latin America, her response introduces and confirms the discussion on the types and manifestations of the practice and experience of racism within Costa Rican society, which include the false national discourse of equality and the covert racism that is most often experienced in Costa Rica.

Gloria Yamato argues that there are four forms of racism. With aware/blatant racism, "outright racists will, without apology or confusion, tell us that because of our color we don't appeal to them" (72). With aware/covert racism, "apartments were suddenly no longer vacant or rents were outrageously high, when black brown, red and yellow persons went to inquire about them. Job vacancies were suddenly filled or we were fired for very vague reasons" (72). Unaware/unintentional racism... 'has lead white people to believe that it's just fine to ask if they can touch my hair...to assume that bending over backwards and speaking to me in high-pitched..., condescending tone would make up for all the racist wrongs..., (72). Un-aware/self-righteous racism, 'The "good white" racist attempts to shame blacks into being blacker (72). The first two forms identified by Yamato are better applied to the Costa Rican situation.

During the 19th century the leaders of post-independent Costa Rica were unapologetic about their racism. They thought, based on their racist ideology and false discourse of a 'white' Costa Rica as discussed in Chapter I, that every action was justified in order to maintain their 'pure white' ethnicity. Based on its early racist belief Costa Rica passed the 1862 racist law, *La Ley de Bases y Colonización*, which restricted people of Africa and African descent from entering the country while at the same time encouraging Europeans to do so. The blatant racism is even further noticed in the treatment given to the Italian immigrants who came 15 years after the Caribbean contingent, as discussed in Chapter II.¹⁰⁶

Another example of this form of racism is in conveniently pitting one of the 'undesirable' groups against another. This strategy is found in an 1869 letter sent to the Costa Rican leader of the time requesting the entry of Chinese over Coolies by a North American by the name of Federico H. Alberding. One of his arguments goes:

106 For in-depth discussion on this, see the work done by Bariatti. To follow the discussion on their strike and returning to Italy see *Gaceta Oficial* 24 May 1888, 598, *La República* 26 October, 1888, 3, November 3, 1888.3, November 8, 1888.3, November 28, 1888, 3, December 11, 1888.3, March 12, 1889, 2, March 13, 1889, 2, March 16, 1889, 2, *Gaceta Oficial* March 20, 1889.

Para este objeto sirven solamente los chinos, muy superiores en fuerza, inteligencia, laboriosidad y moralidad a los llamados *Culies* de la raza Malaya o Hinduh. Con una nación como la china que se calcula en doscientos millones que habitan un terreno sumamente variado y se compone de distintas razas y confesiones, es natural que haya individuos de distintas cualidades, buenas y malas, de consiguiente dependerá de la habilidad y del bien entendido interés...del empresario escoger las buenas(10-11).

Only Chinese are good for this objective; they are superior in strength, intelligence, industry and morality to the so called Coolies from the Malay or Hindu races. With a nation like that of the Chinese counting at some two hundred millions who live in an extremely varied and is made up of different races and creeds, it is natural that there will be individuals of different qualities, good and bad; therefore, it will depend on the ability and clearly understood interests of the employer to choose the good ones (10-11).

Alberding's letters¹⁰⁷ are written within the context of procuring labour for coffee plantations. The letters come six years after the 1862 legislation hence his efforts to exalt the Chinese, and make a case about the feasibility of selecting the right elements among this group. It can be argued that one of the reasons why Alberding was successful in getting the permission to bring one of the banned groups into the country was that the Malays and Indians are of a darker complexion than the Chinese.

Again, in the 1870s, discussions on the types of migrants were evident in the nation evidenced by a series of letters by an individual who was arguing strongly for the immigration of foreign workers for the construction of the railroad. These foreign workers based on the suggestion of the writer, should be Germans.¹⁰⁸

When some Europeans entered the country they were received with open arms as observed in the following reference. *El Ferrocarril* Diciembre 2, 1872 reports:

Están en camino para el interior de la República algunas familias de trabajadores españoles.-Sean bienvenidos,-Brazos son los que necesita el país para su mejora i (sic) engrandecimiento; para el cultivo de sus feraces tierras; para centuplicar sus producciones, i (sic) llevar á cabo sus empresas (1).

¹⁰⁷ Francisco H. Alberding sent three letters to the 1869 leaders insisting on his request which was granted after the third piece of correspondence.

¹⁰⁸ These discussions are found in the newspaper *El Ferrocarril* April 6, 1872, April 13, 1872, April 27, 1872.

Several families of Spanish workers are on their way to the interior of the Republic. They are welcome, hands are what the country needs for its improvement and growth, for the cultivation of its wild lands; to increase its production a hundredfold and carry out its enterprises (1).

Reference was made in chapter two to the Italians. So strong was the desire to have white European immigrants that the government overlooked the situation with vagrancy,¹⁰⁹ choosing rather to reinforce the laws against Afro-Caribbean workers. This blatant difference is evidenced in a short correspondence to the Governor of Limon.

Archivo Nacional de Costa Rica. Sección Administrativa 1897 notes:

San José 5 de Abril 1897

Sr Gobernador de Limón

Para su conocimiento y efectos transcribe a U. la resolución que dice "Palacio Nacional San Jose, a las tres de la tarde del dia veinticuatro de febrero de mil ochocientos noventa y siete...declara vagos a los Jamaiqueños, Juan Caliente, Juan Thomas, Santiago Mathus y Ricardo Alfredo.... en consecuencia, sirvase dar cumplimiento a lo transcrito, debiendo embarcar a los mencionados vagos en el primer vapor que salga para Colon.

Dios guarde a usted

Pedro García.

San José April 5, 1897

Mr. Governor of Limon

For your information and action the following resolution is copied to you National Palace of San José, at three this afternoon, the twenty fourth of February of eighteen hundred and ninety- seven...the Jamaicans Juan Caliente, Juan Thomas, Santiago Mathus, and Ricardo Alfredo...were declared vagrants. Accordingly please comply with this request that the above-mentioned vagrants embark on the first steam ship which leaves to Colón.

God keeps you

Pedro, García

The investigation was unable to find follow up correspondence on the reasons these Jamaicans were considered vagrants and sent home. But

109 See *La República*, October 26, 1888. 2, 4, Saturday November 3, 1888. 3, Wednesday November 28, 1888. 3, Tuesday December 11, 1888. 3, Tuesday March 12, 1889. 2, Wednesday March 13 1889. 2 and Saturday March 16, 1889. 2.

the example serves to show how the racism is played out in the treatment given to European as opposed to Afro-Caribbean immigrants. And how the Chinese, considered undesirables are elevated and pitted when it is convenient, against groups of darker complexion.

In terms of this form of racism, Yamato suggests that it is the type of racism which restricts access to legal and material goods and benefits like jobs, good housing, and proper health insurance etc. for groups other than whites.

During the late 19th century aware/covert racism was the kind that was more evident when the 1870s leaders were expecting to attract a certain type of immigrant workers for the construction of the railroad, but who were unsuccessful. Instead they drew on workers from the 'undesirable' groups¹¹⁰ identified in the 1862 racist legislation, conveniently allowing them entry into the country.¹¹¹

As discussed in Chapter II, this migration to Costa Rica attracted workers from the Spanish, French and English speaking Caribbean. That the larger contingent was of African descent would pose a problem for them very early into the construction of the railroad,¹¹² in contrast to the treatment Italian immigrants received from the Costa Rican authorities fifteen years later. Both groups were hired by the railroad and government administrators.¹¹³

The railroad project was faced with unexpected economic constraints that forced large numbers of these immigrants to settle in this country for longer than expected. According to Meléndez and Duncan:

Es indudable que en los principios, la relación entre el negro inmigrante jamaicano y el Estado costarricense, fue una relación circunstancial y con carácter no permanente. La idea del inmigrante fue simplemente la de acumular algún dinero y regresar para disfrutarlo en Jamaica (87).

Without doubt in the beginning the relationship between the Black Jamaican immigrant and the Costa Rican state, was a circumstantial and

110 These would be the blacks and Chinese.

111 For works on Caribbean migration for the construction of the rail road, and for the banana Industry see some works, Harpelle, Purcell, Murillo Chaverri, Chomsky, Putnam, Koch and Hutchinson Miller.

112 See correspondence sent from the British representative in Central America to the Governor in Limón about the ill-treatment of immigrant workers from Belize, and Jamaica in Archivo Nacional de Costa Rica September 20, 1877. 10-11, *Gaceta Oficial*, January 9, 1875. 3.

113 In 1872 Chinese immigrants also traveled to Costa Rica and received the same considerations as did the Afro-Caribbean. For more information about the Chinese in Costa Rica, see Cohen.

temporary relationship. The immigrant's idea was simply to accumulate some money and return to enjoy it in Jamaica(87).

This economic circumstance is more evidence of the existence of the awareness of and blatant racism by prominent and not so prominent mainstream Costa Ricans towards Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Costa Ricans through the hostility shown. The convenient 'other'¹¹⁴ was no longer needed and the country was therefore showing its true racist face.¹¹⁵ According to Meléndez and Duncan:

El estado levantó la prohibición de la inmigración negra y china, decretada en 1862, porque pensaba que una vez concluida la obra del ferrocarril estos inmigrantes ocasionales saldrían hacia otra parte (87).

The State lifted the prohibition of black and Chinese immigrant, decreed in 1862, because they thought that when the railroad project was concluded those occasional immigrants would have left anywhere else (87).

During the earlier years of the 20th century, particularly during the 1930s¹¹⁶ Afro-Caribbean and their descendants experienced both overt and covert forms of racism, with the rehashing of old racist laws,¹¹⁷ some of which restricted their movement to the Pacific side of the country.

In the 1940s the discussion re-emerged with prominent Afro-Costa Ricans lobbying to change the restrictive racist laws.¹¹⁸ During the national debate the aware/blatant racism showed its face once more through the voice of a Costa Rican citizen from the province of Puntarenas¹¹⁹ carried in one of the country's newspapers.

La Prensa Libre 10 de Diciembre de 1940 reports:

...la zona bananera del Atlántico fue monopolizado, por los negros, desplazando al trabajador costarricense; si acaso se conseguía algún trabajo era el de simple peón; los capataces, apuntadores, brequeros, maquinistas, empleados del comisariato todos eran negros; la misma suerte habrían corrido los trabajadores ticos en la Zona del Pacífico si no hubiese sido

114 See Gay 68-95 for an explanation of the convenient 'other'.

115 See other examples of situations of racism with the Bribris indígenas workers by Bourgois, chapters III and IV.

116 See research done by Soto Quirós.

117 See Appendix I.

118 This is in reference to the 1935 racist law which prohibited the Afro-Caribbean from seeking work on the Pacific side of the country.

119 The area where Afro-Costa Ricans were prohibited from working.

esa ley, que de un tajo apartó al elemento Negro. Negros costarricenses no hay, aunque don Ricardo diga que sí hay; los negros no se asimilan a nuestras costumbres, ni les gusta aprender el castellano; los negros nacidos en Limón hijos de padres antillanos no son costarricenses.... (14).

...the Atlantic banana zone was monopolized by the blacks, displacing the Costa Rican worker; if by chance they got any work it was that of a simple peon, the foremen, time keepers, brakemen, machinists, employees of the commissary all were blacks; the *ticos*¹²⁰ would have had to face the same fate in the Pacific zone had it not been for that law, that with one sweep separated the black element. Black Costa Ricans do not exist, even though Mr. Ricardo say they do, the blacks do not assimilate to our custom, and they do not like to learn Spanish, blacks born in Limón, of Antillean parents are not Costa Ricans...(14).

This discussion only reproduced part of the article to demonstrate this form of racism in 20th century Costa Rica. The comment makes reference to Afro-Caribbean immigrant workers and the resentment towards them for taking away jobs from Costa Ricans.

It also highlights xenophobia and explicit rejection of Afro-Costa Ricans as legitimate citizens of that country by virtue of being born in it as stated by Murillo Chaverri in the previous chapter about national identity.

While the commentator of the reference above is adamant that 'Black Costa Ricans' do not exist, these affirmations are erroneous based on the discussion in the previous chapter where Afro-Costa Ricans were actively participating in the province of Limón.

During early 20th century Afro-Costa Ricans integration within the Costa Rican society was partial in first instance because they were not considered citizens therefore they could not fully participate in the affairs of their country. Their restrictive political participation impeded their cultural assimilation in mainstream Costa Rican society.

Another reason for their partial assimilation was simple because they did not want to let go of the cultural traditions of especially their "Jamaican" fore-parents. This is reflected in the present expression among Afro-Costa Ricans 'Somos ticos pero sin pérdida de nuestra identidad cultural'. 'We are Costa Ricans without losing our cultural identity'. The cultural identity they are referring to is that of those traditions preserved from their Afro-Jamaican ancestors.

120 Costa Ricans refer to themselves as *ticos*.

Another example of the aware/blatant racism is found in 1939 during the presidency of León Cortés Castro.¹²¹ Dr Clodomiro Picado a prominent Costa Rican botanist, alerted readers of the danger of not maintaining the whiteness of the country. He sent a letter to historian Ricardo Fernández Guardia in the daily newspaper *El Diario* de Costa Rica under the title “Nuestra Sangre se ennegrece” (“Our Blood is Blackening”). *El Diario De Costa Rica* 20 May, 1939, reports:

¡NUESTRA SANGRE SE ENNEGRECE!, y de seguir así, del crisol no saldrá un grano de oro sino un pedazo de carbón. Puede que aún sea tiempo de rescatar nuestro patrimonio sanguíneo europeo que es el que posiblemente nos ha salvado hasta ahora de caer en sistemas de africana catadura, ya sea en lo político o, ya enaficiones que remedan el arte o la distinción, en tristes formas ridículas Quizás usted. Cuya voz prestigiada es oída por los humanistas de valer que aun quedan en estas regiones, logre ayudar a señalar el precipicio hacia el cual nos encaminamos’ (20 May 1939 1,6).

OUR BLOOD IS BLACKENING! and if it continues this way, it will not be gold coming from the melting pot but charcoal. We could be still in time to rescue the European heritage of our blood which might possibly be what has saved us thus far from falling into African systems, be it political or in activities that mimic the arts in sad and ridiculous ways. Maybe you, whose prestigious voice is heard by the humanists that are left in these regions, could succeed in helping to show us the precipice we are heading for (20 May 1939).

It is clear from Picado’s letter that he was concerned about protecting his ‘white’ European heritage, and that he was afraid of the biological and cultural contamination of the ‘white’ country by Afro-Costa Ricans, and Afro-Caribbean. Within the context of a racist society this is understandable. It is arguable that by that time¹²² in the history of Costa Rica there had already been mixture between Afro-Caribbean descendants with mainstream Costa Ricans resulting into what are called ‘mulatos’.¹²³

The following discussion will concentrate on the ways in which this racism is manifested. Duncan and Powell argue that racism is manifested

121 León Cortés Castro was President of Costa Rica from 1936 to 1940.

122 Afro-Caribbean have been in the country for over sixty years.

123 Between May 30, 2005 and November 16, 2006 *Nacion.com* in its Raices section published a series of articles focused on the African presence in Costa Rica.

in various ways including “Racist psychocide, systematic destruction of an individual identity” (37-48).

Duncan and Powell explain that this manifestation of racism:

El psicocidio mata la identidad del individuo. Hace creer que las formas culturales blancas son las únicas válidas, y que por el contrario las formas culturales de los demás grupos son “primitivas”, “salvajes” o simplemente no valen la pena. Se omite toda referencia a la historia, o a la cultura de los negros o de los indígenas, de los aborígenes australianos; se pone mala fama, se trata de lograr un blanqueamiento ideológico, es decir, convertir a los no-blancos en mentalmente blancos, se crean estereotipos según los cuales el negro o el indio son buenos para tal o cual cosa, pero no para otras cosas (45).

The psychocide kills individual identity by making them believe that the cultural forms of white people are the only valid ones, and that on the contrary theirs are “primitive” and ‘savage” or simply put, worthless. Reference is never made to their history or culture of black people, of indigenous peoples or of Australian aborigines or they are given bad names, they are submitted to ideological whitening, or put otherwise, turned as non-whites into mentally white, and stereotypes are created against them in which the blacks, Indians are good only for some things and not for others (45).

Duncan and Powell comment that this racist manifestation is more evident in multicultural societies such as Costa Rica. One 20th century newspaper which carries news of the interest particularly to the Afro-Limonense population reveals examples of this type of racism. In a letter to the editor under the heading “The People’s Forum,” an Afro-Costa Rican in *The Searchlight* Saturday 18, January, 1930 complains:

You will permit me space to call the attention of your readers to what I consider a well considered burlesque on the Negro by a caricature in la Tribuna of the 7th inst (sic) there are those of my race who believe they are so appreciated and esteemed by the white race because they may be in a position of accommodation, so as to be utilized in one way or another, and they are so blinded by an apparet (sic) cordial shake or pretentious smile, that when such sarcasms are cast at us, they take no notice of the unpleasantness intended, but there are some of us who cannot but notice these occasions of ridicule....(1).

This complaint came out of the context of a liquor license that the Governor of Limón received for the province. *La Tribuna*, a newspaper circulated in San José, ran a stereotypical story with Afro-Limonenses portrayed as drunkards in a cartoon.¹²⁴

The reference is used as a demonstration of how national newspapers perpetuate the racism within the country by depicting Afro-Costa Ricans in stereotypical ways.

This Afro-Costa Rican is protesting the way his community is portrayed by people who pretend to like them, but use every opportunity to ridicule them. The writer also raised other issues: suspicion of so called good mainstream Costa Rica, a mistrust which is still evident among contemporary Afro-Costa Ricans, the internalization of racism by some members of the Afro-Costa Rican society, and the demand for respect for this group born Afro-Costa Rican.

One last example from this century is another piece of evidence¹²⁵ found which could explain the root of the popular belief among Costa Ricans in general, about Afro-Costa Ricans being restricted from going beyond Turrialba.¹²⁶ At Turrialba, it is popularly believed, Afro-Caribbean or Afro-Costa Rican train conductors change over to the 'white' conductors who take the train into the capital, San José.

According to Meléndez and Duncan, there was no legal evidence of such restriction:

Una revisión concienzuda de las contrataciones del ferrocarril y aún las bananeras, no permiten sacar conclusión alguna acerca de que las mismas se hubiese querido ya limitar el área de desplazamiento de estos grupos en el país (88).

A thorough review of the railroad and even banana contracts do not allow for drawing any conclusion, that either wanted to restrict the movement of these groups in the country (88).

The Limon Searchlight of Saturday 22 February, 1930, under the title "No blacks for the interior" portrays the upset reaction of an individual to a comment which appeared in another newspaper.

124 I was unable to locate and consult the *Tribuna* while conducting this research because the newspaper was being digitized. *La Tribuna* Enero 9, 1930 ^{Es que en tiempo de elecciones aumenta la periferia? Carcatura}

125 Senior Angulo makes reference to this article only as another example of racism.

126 Turrialba is Cartago's fifth canton or county.

There is much complaint on the par(sic) of some thoughtless Costa Ricans of the what is considered “Encroachment of Coloured People beyond the Tunnel” in a complaint by some “egoist” to the correspondent of *The Tribuna*, he claims there is a law forbidding the entry of coloured people Beyond the Tunnel; (sic) does that gentleman forget that Don Thomas Guardia contracted those colored people here to do the work that could not be done by him and after those people fulfilled their mission it is fair to tell their progeny “Costa Ricans” by birth that they cannot have free access to any part of the country in which they were born? Is that gentleman suggesting the Division of the Country from the Tunnel to San José white, and Tunnel to Limón governed by blacks? (4).

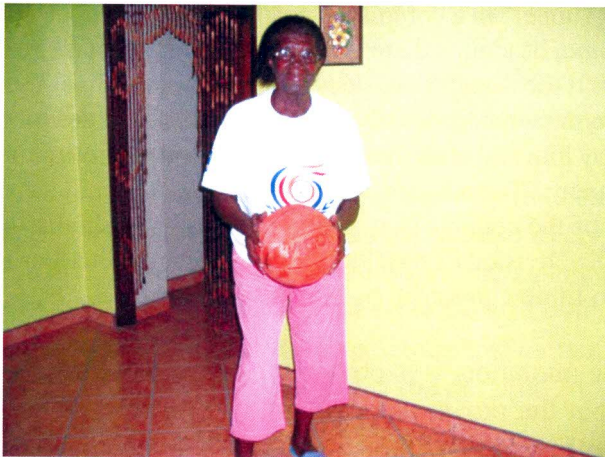
From the quotation, it is obvious that at the national level there was discussion about the movement of ‘gente de color’ as Afro-Costa Ricans are called, to other parts of the country. This is understandable based on the restrictive 1930s law to the Pacific, which would have stirred concerns among other members of the society who were interested in keeping the ‘negros’ marginalized in the province of Limón, and who would have made affirmations like the above even if they had no proof of an existing law.

A closer reading of the quotation indicates that it is the writer who is asking if the suggestion is that blacks and “whites” should live in different parts of the country. A thorough examination of the two newspapers: *The Limón Searchlight* and *La Tribuna*, during the 1930s it is suggested will help in clearing up this question and confirm Duncan and Powell’s argument that this manifestation of racism is resisted and denounced through individual or collective protests. Especially in the last quotation, it is evidenced the forcefulness of the objection which is justified by making reference to the contributions of his fore-parents and his right to the country by birth.

The popular saying, ‘*los negros no pasaban de Turrialba*’ or from the Tunnel as the quotation states, can be discredited. Despite racist legislations and attitudes, especially during the 1930s, Afro-Costa Ricans were living, loving, and enjoying themselves all over the country. Some of them travelled as athletes during the referred period to the capital San José to represent the province of Limón.

Handwritten notes in the right margin: "Tribuna Searchlight" and "La Tribuna" with a bracket pointing to the text above.

Fig. 16. Mrs. Lillian McLennan after the interview on 19 June 2010 in Port Limón, Costa Rica.



Source: Photo by author.

Mrs. Lillian McLennan,¹²⁷ a member of the *Path Finders* female basketball team in Limón, shared some of her travel experiences to play with other teams in the capital San José¹²⁸ during the 1930s.¹²⁹ Mrs. McLennan, a 91 year old is the only living member of that team.

Fig. 17. Path Finders female basketball team, 1930s



Source: Photo courtesy of Mrs. Lillian McLennan.¹³⁰

127 Also known as Ms Lillian Smith.

128 Ms Lillian Smith's team played against the Orion, Tres Rios and Libertad teams in San José.

129 Mrs. Lillian McLennan. Interviewed in Port Limón, Costa Rica on June 17 and 19, 2010.

130 The *Path Finders* team from left to right Lillian McLennan, Cecilia Williams, Mary Edith Topin (Captain), Ida Robinson, and May Edwards.

Marva Fennell tells about her Jamaican grandmother who lived in San José, in the 1940s:

I have my doubts about blacks not passing from Turrialba because my grandmother was there Huh!!! A long time before 1948 (2 July 2010).

Population census of the time would have helped in clearing up that perception. The 1927 population census listed 431 'negros' living in San José and others spread all across the country suggesting that this trend of Afro-Costa Ricans living in other parts of the country continued until the present day. See Table 1.3.

As was mentioned, Costa Rica is a country subject to contradictions especially in relation to ethnic politics. What is interesting is that from the mid-1950s up to the early 21st century a number of discriminatory laws were changed, including the law 2694 of 1960¹³¹ that prohibit any forms of discrimination.¹³²

Table 1.3

Cuadro 7. RAZA DE LA POBLACION TOTAL, POR PROVINCIAS, INCLUYENDO PORCENTAJES, 1927

PROVINCIA	TODAS LAS RAZAS	BLANCOS	MESTIZOS	NEGROS	INDIOS	OTROS
Números absolutos República de Costa Rica	471,524	377,994	66,612	19,136	4,197	3,585
San José	153, 183	133, 089	17, 807	431	1,334	522
Alajuela	97,577	90,820	6,519	24	126	88
Cartago	70,198	66,223	2,969	309	411	286
Guanacaste	51,142	16,380	34,285	67	17	393
Heredia	38,407	36,828	1,546	1	---	32
Limón	32,278	11,060	1,073	18,003	1,065	1,077
Puntarenas	28,739	23,594	2,413	301	1,244	1,187

Source: Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos, 1927. Google.co.cr 17. Sept. 2010.

Policy makers know about certain changes in legislation but the information is only in rare cases made available for public consumption, unless it is a piece of legislation that the leaders consider of interest to the

¹³¹ See Colección de Leyes y Decretos. San José, Costa Rica. 1955, 1960.

¹³² See appendix I and II.

whole population. Within Costa Rican society racism is not a subject that is dealt with seriously, only on occasion when it raises its harmful head is it given any attention, at least until the situation is appeased. Such is the case that erupted in 1995. An Afro-Costa Rican model, Carolyn Markland Francis, denounced racist practices within the modeling institution she was working with, which led to reactions from political leaders, all the way to the Catholic Archbishop, who responded very diplomatically.¹³³

Fig. 18. Newspaper article depicting overt manifestation of racism in Costa Rica.



Source: *Nacional*. Lunes 12 junio 1995.

The government and national clergy held very guarded discussion on the matter making reference to the constitutional right of equality. Asked about the existence of racism, the then President Ing. José María Figueres, along with Monseñor Román Arrieta from the Catholic Church in the Monday June 12, 1995 *Nacional* news report replied that:

...el Presidente de la República, Ing. José María Figueres aseguró que “siempre hemos vivido en una gran y hermosa convivencia, a mi me parece que la mayoría de los costarricenses apoya esa convivencia.” El Arzobispo de San José, Monseñor Román Arrieta, coincidió con Figueres al afirmar que “pueden darse practicas racistas, que responden a actitudes de

133 This information is found in the newspaper *Nacional*. Monday June 12, 1995. 3.

personas que se sienten racialmente superiores, pero el 95% de la población repudia esas manifestaciones” (3).

...the President of the Republic, Ing. José María, Figueres asserted that ‘we have always lived in a broad and beautiful togetherness. Archbishop of San José, Monseñor agreed with Figueres while stating that ‘there can be racist practices coming from those who consider themselves racially superior to others, but that 95% of the population refutes such displays’ (3).

Note the two discourses echoed in these official replies of Costa Rica as the diamond of Central America and as the country of ‘iguales’. Montoya Arias, in her “Estudio sobre los Derechos Fundamentales de las Minorías,” on the acceptance of racism comments:

En el ámbito legal es muy común que se utilice la siguiente versión: Como la discriminación racial está prohibida en nuestra legislación, nuestro Gobierno jamás la admitiría y, por lo tanto, no pudo ocurrir (235).

This version is commonly used in legal circles. Since racial discrimination is prohibited in our legislation, our Government will never admit to it, and therefore it could not occur (235).

This makes eradicating racism from the Costa Rican imagination almost impossible even when it is legally unacceptable. On the other hand, the reactions of Afro-Costa Ricans within to the same news were totally different, with them using the opportunity to express the ways in which the society discriminated against them. This is the reply from an Afro-Costa Rican Sherman Thomas in the same news report:

Thomas señala que “siempre he creído en la existencia del racismo, este se da en muchas formas: está en el susto que uno observa en la gente cuando nos conocen personalmente, en la omisión de los negros en la enseñanza, negándonos la oportunidad de sentirnos parte de este país, pese a que estamos acá desde el siglo XVI. El catedrático dijo saber del caso de un diplomático negro a quien no le negaron el ingreso como miembro a un club social, pero tampoco recibió respuesta a su solicitud. “Cuando llegamos a un lugar, a todos les dicen ‘señor’ pero a nosotros ‘moreno’. Es una falta de respeto (3).

Thomas points out that, “I have always believed in the existence of racism, it is seen many forms; in the surprise that one observes in the people who get to know us on a personal basis, in the omission of blacks from education, denying us the opportunity to feel part of this country despite

the fact that we have been here since the XVI century. The university professor said that he knew of the case of a black diplomat whose request to be member of a social club was never denied, yet he never received a reply. When we go anywhere, they refer to others as Mr, but to us as 'black'. It is a lack of respect (3).

Another national upheaval resulted from two Afro-Costa Rican women being denied entry into a popular pub in San José. The news report, unlike in the previous case stated the racism blatantly. *La República*, November 17, 1997 reports:

Yo soy racista porque no considero a los negros como iguales., y mientras ellos no ese metan conmigo, yo no los determino. Para mí son invisibles, no existen," confesó Juan Chávez uno de los cientos de costarricenses que cargan en su mente la barrera de la ignorancia por el racismo. "No quiero ofender a nadie es una actitud mía porque siento que los negros son muy diferentes a los blancos en sus costumbres y forma de pensar" agregó este hombre de 42 años. Chávez nacido en san José reconoció abiertamente su sentimiento contra los negros de una forma despectiva y cargada de ofensas (por razones de respeto no las transcribimos completamente (5A).

I am racist because I do not consider blacks as equals, as long as they do not mess with me. I have nothing to do with them. For me they are invisible, they do not exist' confessed Juan Chavez one of the hundreds of Costa Ricans who bear the mental barrier of ignorance due to their racism. "I do not want to offend any one, that's my attitude because I believe that blacks are very different from whites in their customs and way of thinking.' he added. Chavez 42, born in San José, acknowledged dislike of blacks with contempt and many expletives (which out of respect they will not be reproduced) (5A).

Chavez, who boldly expressed his real feelings about Afro-Costa Ricans, is voicing the sentiments of many others. This quotation contradicts the image of a Costa Rica of equals, a Costa Rica where racism does not exist as the national discourse would have us believe.

Chavez' intervention speaks also to the aware/blatant racism, and to the racist psychocide manifestation of that racism with his admission of Afro-Costa Rican invisibility, and perception of their different cultural expression. Chavez echoes the sentiment of quotation from the 1940s.

The racism in 21st century Costa Rica is a combination of all the forms of racism listed by Yamato. But the manifestation of these types of racism continues to be the racist psychocide, which is obvious through the several stereotypes, use of stereotypical language, racist jokes, racist popular expressions, and invisibility through the exclusion from the official history of the country.

What follows are some practical everyday life experiences of Afro-Costa Ricans of the racism in Costa Rica. In terms of stereotypical images and language, one of the interviewees had this to say with respect to the stereotypical use of the colour black in reference to Afro-Costa Ricans. Hermelinda McKenzie Williams explains:

Por ejemplo un anuncio que había de Clorito White. Era un Negro en el anuncio cantando feo y enseñando la palma de la mano...significando como un ejemplo digamos del cloro, ¡que la única parte que el tiene blanco del cuerpo es la palma de la mano! ¡Anuncios tan estúpidos! (McKenzie Williams, personal interview, 2 May 2006).

For example there is an ad about Clorito White. There was a black man in the ad singing ugly,¹³⁴ and showing the palm of his hand...meaning that the only part of his body that is white is his hand palm! Stupid ad! (McKenzie Williams, personal interview, 2 May. 2006).

This racist commercial was shown on national television advertising Clorox (a bleaching agent).¹³⁵ The underlying discourse is ideological whitening which speaks strongly to the psychocide which the dominant group forces on other groups, in this case suggesting the denial of their essential dark colour.

Another aspect is that of ethnic invisibility. Hermelinda, after recounting the 'Clorito White' situation with disgust, uses an ad for pap smear tests to highlight other ways in which mainstream Costa Rican society treats Afro-Costa Ricans. Hermelinda continues:

Por ejemplo hay un anuncio actualmente sobre el papanicolao donde un chiquito blanco llega con un chiquito Negro a la casa. Van a ir a la escuela juntos, entran a la casa, la mamá del chiquito blanco ni siguiera saluda al niño negrito que vino acompañando a su hijo. Le prepara un

¹³⁴ She means 'terrible', and the stereotypical way they mimic Afro-Costa Ricans speaking the Spanish language.

¹³⁵ After protests from the Afro-Costa Rican community, the ad was withdrawn.

sandwidge a su hijo y ni siquiera hace uno para poder, digamos, que el chiquito comparta. Entonces yo digo, ese anuncio, para qué el chiquito negro está allí?... la mamá habla únicamente con su hijo blanco... ni siquiera vuelve a ver al chiquito Negro; eso es un mensaje subliminal (McKenzie Williams, 2 May 2006).

For example, there is currently an ad about pap smear testing where a mestizo child takes an Afro-Costa Rican child to his home. In the house, the mestizo mother doesn't say hello to the black child with her son. She prepares a sandwich for him, and doesn't even make one that the other child could share. So I ask, why is the black child there?...the mother talks only to her white son...she doesn't even turn to look at the black boy that's a subliminal message. (Mackenzie Williams, 2 May 2006).

Within the context of the ad, Hermelinda is bothered that even when the black boy appears in the ad he is totally ignored, treated as if he were invisible. This invisibility is also shown in the absence of statistical data on the situation of Afro-Costa Ricans and other ethnic groups in the country,¹³⁶ in the virtual invisibility and stereotypical representation of Afro-Costa Ricans in the educational system,¹³⁷ and token representation of Afro-Costa Ricans in politics.

Another example is related to stereotypes. Hermelinda also makes reference to the stereotyped negative images in the media portrayals of Afro-Costa Ricans, making fun of the way they speak.¹³⁸ Other stereotypes include '*el negro es ladrón*', [*Blacks are thieves*], '*el negro es agresivo*', [*Blacks are aggressive*], '*el negro es fuerte*' [*Blacks are strong*], '*el negro es bailarín*', [*Blacks can dance well*], '*el negro es bueno para los deportes*' [*Blacks are good at sports*], '*el negro es bueno para el sexo*' [*blacks are good for sex*], '*el negro es bembón*' [*blacks have thick lips*],; '*toda mujer negra tiene el culo grande*', [*every black woman has a big bottom*], '*todo hombre negro tiene el pene grande*', [*every black man has a big dick*], '*los negros cocinan bien*', [*all black people are good cooks*].

These stereotypes are designed to reinforce racist ideologies and justify the legal and other social mechanism perpetuated to keep people

136 The only three population censuses which provided population distribution by ethnic groups were the 1927, 1950 and 2000 censuses.

137 See the work of, Sawyers Sawyers, and Hutchinson Miller.

138 One item of heritage from Afro-Caribbean fore-parents is speaking English language with a Jamaican accent. Historically older generations spoke a mix of English and Spanish which until today is used as material for comedy on radio and television programs.

other than whites marginalized ideologically and geographically, as in the case of Afro-Limonenses.

While the stereotypes are heavy with negative meanings, some of these are used by Afro-Costa Ricans as a way to defend and protect themselves. The stereotype '*los negros son agresivos*' [*blacks are aggressive*], is re-enforced by Afro-Costa Rican men especially who are not afraid to get involved in a brawl with other men, especially with mestizos. The underline message is 'do not mess with me because I am black and aggressive'.

Racism is so perverse that it is also manifested in specific imagery found in the Spanish language. Some examples of racist language in Costa Rica include '*si es Negro, hágallo trompudo*' (if he is black show his thick lips) making a negative reference to the thick lips of Afro-Costa Ricans.

'*Hoy trabajé como negro*' (today I worked like a nigger), is an expression used after a long day of hard work, which contradicts the stereotype that blacks are lazy. If one "works like a negro", it is making reference to the hard work performed by especially African slaves and later immigrant Afro-Caribbean labourers.

'*Que suerte más negra*', (What black luck!), '*Aguas negras*', (literally *black waters*, meaning sewage), '*la vimos negra*', are other expressions used within the Costa Rican context to mean negativity, parallel to the use of the literal word black as designation for both Africans and people of African descent.

Both mainstream Costa Rica and Afro-Costa Rican are adversely affected by the incorporation of stereotypical language and meanings. For mainstream Costa Rica, the internalization makes use of these terms normative, and for Afro-Costa Ricans its effects are painful, causing silent or aggressive reaction by their offensive meanings.

One specific and powerful way in which the racist language is more evident and powerful is within the Costa Rican literature where unaware/intentional racism is the form of racism that is most evident. Yamato explains:

With the best of intentions, the best of education, and the greatest generosity of heart, whites operating on the misinformation fed to them from day one will behave in ways that are racist, will perpetuate racism by being "nice" (Yamato 73).

Contained in Costa Rican literature is the perpetuation of this racism manifested through racist psychocide in the stereotypical portrayal of Afro-Costa Ricans as grotesque, as buffoons, with animal-like characteristics, and their ideological whitening. Some examples are found in such works as *Cocorí*¹³⁹ ¹⁴⁰Joaquín Gutiérrez, and *Negro Desgraciado* by Alfonso Potocarrero.¹⁴¹

The authors of these two publications in particular are perfect examples of Yamato's unaware/intentional racism. These authors, in their patronizing of the Afro-Costa Rican subject whom Yamato calls "being "nice", continue to perpetuate their racism through the stereotypical images they portray.

By way of example, evidence of racism is clear when one of Portocarrero's white characters, in comparing Mr. Watson, an Afro-Costa Rican, to the main character, the deceased Mr. Bully, attributes Watson's "good" graces to his lighter complexion and "white"- like (read civilized) habits while implying animalistic traits to Bully. The novel reads:

Bueno. Eso es diferente, ¿Acaso has visto que mister Watson tenga trompa, o sea color de caimito como ese otro?- continua la voz que había comenzado a criticar a los negros (26).

Well. That is different. Have you seen that Mr. Watson has a *trompa*, or that his complexion is like *caimito*, like that other one?...Mr. Watson is not a *nápiro*, it's as if he were white without being white. He is not a *nápiro* because he is not that *chumica*,¹⁴² and because he has white ways (26).

The manifestation of the racist *psychocide* is glaring in this quotation. The stereotype of Afro-Costa Ricans as animal-like are clear with the use of the word *trompa*,¹⁴³ the negative connotations of the colour black with the example of the colour of the *caimito*¹⁴⁴ fruit, and the term *nápiro*,¹⁴⁵ along with the ideological whitening of Mr. Watson for not behaving in the stereotypical "black" way.

139 This is the most controversial of all the books because it is a children's book and is one of the required texts in primary school. Afro-Costa Rican society has protested, demanding its removal from the list on more than one occasion (2004 and 2006), but without having been successful.

140 See Powell Bernard.

141 When this book was launched in 1990 the Afro-Costa Rican community protested.

142 Meaning Jamaican.

143 An elephant's trunk, referring to the thick lips Afro-Costa Ricans.

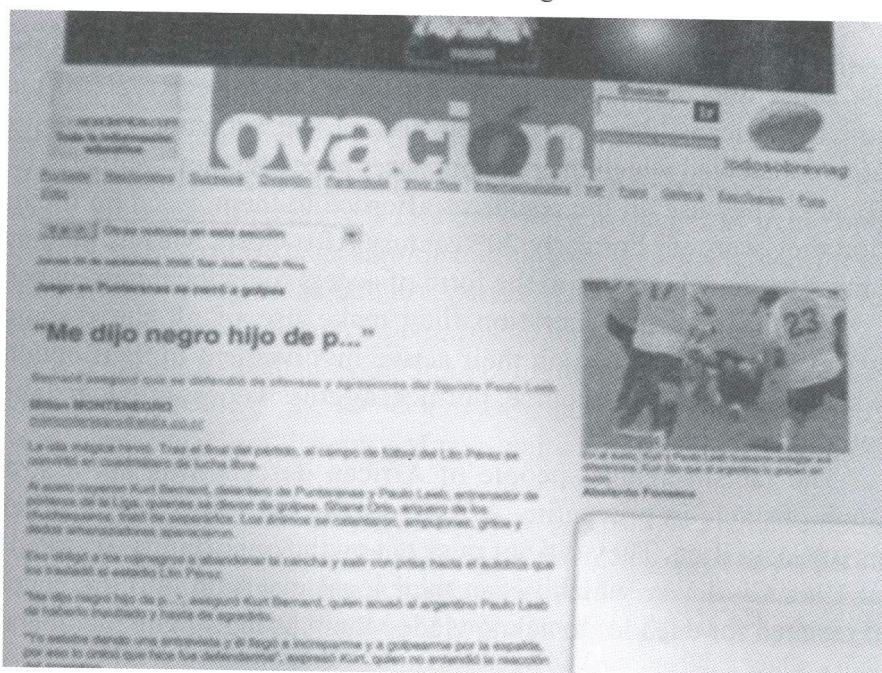
144 The fruit called star apple.

145 Meaning black like charcoal.

Montoya Arias “Estudio sobre los Derechos Fundamentales”, analyses the various laws that should be in place to eliminate racism in the country, and mentions a complaint by a group of Afro-Costa Ricans against a commercial for a cleaning product, ‘La Negrita’, that portrayed negative images particularly of Afro-Costa Rican women. The community won, and the racist commercial was taken off the air (242).

During the 2006, World Cup in Germany, many Central American organizations like ONECA¹⁴⁶ and ODECO¹⁴⁷ were vigilant about verbal racist manifestation in the media. In Costa Rica, the Asociación Proyecto Caribe made sure that it denounced this racism, and in June 2006 the association circulated an e-mail protesting the use in the local and international press of the term “Negro” to describe negative situations in expressions like ‘*la vimos negra*,’ [“We saw it black,”] and ‘*Jóvenes con negro porvenir*’ [“a black future for the youth”], to mention a few.

Fig. 19. An online newspaper article portraying an insulting use of the word ‘Negro.’



Source: Milton Montano. Web. Al Día 28 sep. 2006.

146 Organización Negra Centroamericana.

147 Organización de Desarrollo Étnico Comunitario.

Another example of the insulting use of the term 'Negro' can be found in Milton Montenegro report in the electronic edition of *Al Día* in the section, OVACION on Thursday September 28, 2006, where a soccer trainer cursed an Afro-Costa Rican player, calling him "black son of a bitch" while in the middle of the field.

Against these types of verbal attacks Afro-Costa Ricans invariably will defend themselves by responding aggressively, ironically playing into the other label that '*los negros son agresivos.*' ["blacks are aggressive"]. This type of racism is experienced mostly by the Afro-Costa Rican athletes as a way to upset them in a game. Needless to say, in Fig. 19 above, the Afro soccer player defended himself.

Both overt and covert racism with its different forms of manifestations against especially people of African descent was exposed from the period of colonization up to the present 21st century, showing the contradiction between the national discourse of equality between all the members of the society, and the existence of racism with its blatant manifestations every so often within the society.

Both 20th and 21st century Afro-Costa Ricans were not passive about racist abuse and discrimination against them. As for early 20th century Afro-Costa Ricans, they voiced their disapproval and concern about the treatment received which they did not accept because they were also Costa Ricans. They use all the resources afforded to them based on the time period they were in. For early 20th century Afro-Costa Ricans, they used the mass media which was in the form of access to national newspapers.

For the present generation they make use of all the resources they have available based on their active involvement in their country: newspaper, academic discourse, politics, aggressiveness and legislation, among others.

The racism against people of African descent was not a strong enough obstacle in preventing Afro-Costa Ricans to become legal citizens of Costa Rica. They did not miss out on the opportunity afforded by post 1948 Civil War which began their legal insertion into the country that resisted for decades to acknowledge them as legitimate members of their society.

AFRO-COSTA RICANS AND LEGAL RECOGNITION 1948-1955

By early 20th century, when the first generation of Afro-Caribbean immigrants children born in the new country were turning into adults, these then Afro-Costa Ricans believed they were entitled to remain in the country where they were born, and to be recognized as citizens. However, the reality is that they were in danger of being uprooted every time Costa Rican administration saw it fit to tighten its grips on non-whites living in the country, part of that policy denied them legal rights and they were not granted citizenship until the 1950s.

According to Ronald Soto Quirós “Inmigración e Identidad Nacional” in every decade of the 20th century, Costa Rican administrations put laws in place to restrict the entry of non-white immigrants. He notes:

El “ruido de las puertas que se cierran” en Costa Rica se han empezado a escuchar a finales del siglo XIX con la prohibición de entrada a los inmigrantes chinos se volvió a escuchar con mayor fuerza en la administración de Ascencio Esquivel,¹⁴⁸ cuando por decreto No. 1 del 10 de junio de 1904 la prohibición de ingreso a inmigrantes se hizo extensivo a árabes, turcos, sirios, armenios y gitanos de cualquier nacionalidad (224).

The “noise of doors closing” in Costa Rica began to be heard at the end of the 19th century with the prohibition of entry of Chinese immigrants. It

¹⁴⁸ Ascencio Esquivel Ibarra was president of Costa Rica from 1902 to 1906.

was heard again even more loudly in the Ascencio Esquivel administration when prohibition of immigrants was widely extended to include Arabs, Turks, Syrians, Armenians and Gypsies of all nationalities through decree No. 1 of June 1904. (224).

Afro-Caribbean immigrants who were still living in the country at the turn of the 20th century and for their Afro-Costa Rican born children would have been made uneasy by these laws, especially those who, during the 1930s banana crisis, saw their movements in search of jobs restricted to other regions in and out the country.

The migration measures put in place to restrict entry included the need for acquisition of an immigrant identification card, and a complex process for the naturalization for those immigrants living in the country for over five years.¹⁴⁹ It was not until the mid 20th century that Afro-Costa Ricans gained legal recognition after a process which started with the 1948 Civil War.

The main character during 1948 was a popular figure known as ‘Don Pepe’ (José Figueres Ferrer) who, according to Perez Brignoli, made his debut on the political stage on June 8, 1942 on a radio program with a challenge to the then president Rafael Angel Calderón Guardia,¹⁵⁰ which resulted in his exile to El Salvador (127). Two years later, he returned to continue his political campaign establishing the Democratic Party and becoming President for the first time in 1948.¹⁵¹

Although it was not President José Figueres Ferrer’s main intention to give legal recognition to Afro-Costa Ricans, this recognition came about as a result of the measures put in place under his new socialist democratic leadership.¹⁵² The context for the development of the 1948 civil war had nothing to do with Afro-Costa Ricans and their legal status. Costa Rica as a country was battling its development issues while transitioning through several different political leaders, and also enduring the effects of international economic pressures.

One of those leaders was Dr. Rafael Angel Calderón Guardia who came to power in 1940 through the National Republican Party as a representative of the Costa Rican oligarchy who, because of his Republicanism,

149 Soto Quirós and Senior Angulo deals extensively with this issue.

150 Rafael Angel Calderon Guardia was president of Costa Rica during 1940 to 1944.

151 José Figueres Ferrer was President of Costa Rica during 1948-1949, 1953-1958 and 1970-1974.

152 See Guerra, and Harpelle “The Social and Political Integration”

thought that he could have represented their interests. Instead, he focused on the serious social issues of the time, encountering strong opposition from the same oligarchy that he should have been representing.

The Calderon administration was not only under pressure from its supporters, it also faced opposition from José Figueres Ferrer who became the leader of the 1948 Civil War. Figueres Ferrer also made certain to highlight, and magnify, the difficulties facing the Calderon administration through disregarding political international pressures. By the time Calderon's administration took office, the national and international landscape was in political and economic turmoil. Addressing the international scene Pérez Brignoli notes:

Las décadas de 1930 y 1940 fueron de crisis profunda. La depresión de todo el mundo capitalista primero, y la Segunda Guerra Mundial después trastornaron profundamente el comercio internacional. El valor de las exportaciones de café y banano cayó drásticamente y la contratación de las importaciones se hizo sentir (112).

The 1930s and 40s decades were of deep crisis. The worldwide capitalist depression followed by the Second World War profoundly upset international trade. The value of coffee and banana exports dropped drastically and imports contracted (112).

At the national level, Calderon's administration had to face, according to John Patrick, Bell,¹⁵³ *Guerra Civil* population increase, housing problems, extreme poverty, and neglect of the region of Guanacaste and Limón, among many other social ills.

Added to the national problem was the Second World War that was creating more pressure for the government among the middle classes, no longer able to enjoy their accustomed privileges, especially in the area of housing. As noted by Patrick Bell, the housing situation was bad among the poor in the city, and was also affecting the middle classes (37-38).

Despite the adverse national and international situation, Calderon's administration made important contributions to the country during the early 1940s in relation to social security, labour legislation and amendments to the constitution (45).

Schifter Sikora, in "Los Partidos Políticos", detailed some of the measures put in place by Calderon and his administration. He promulgated

153 Please note that this author specifies his name in lower case.

social legislation, social guarantees, and an administrative body that became the Costa Rican Social Security in 1942 (83). Besides, the social guarantees included legislation on minimum wages, a work day of eight hours, and the legal recognition of trade unions. Other guarantees comprised the rights of workers to decent homes, the obligation of the state to supervise the education of the labourers, and priority for national labour over foreign (83).

It is important to note that not all these measures applied to or benefited Afro-Caribbean immigrants and their children born in the country. During his campaign, Calderón Guardia promised to pay attention to areas like Guanacaste and Limón that had been abandoned by the United Fruit Company and by previous administrations. According to Bell:

Calderón Guardia respondió a la demanda de reformas cuando asumió la Presidencia en 1940 y, a la demanda de reformas cuando asumió la Presidencia en 1940 y, al hacerlo, ofreció al electorado una alternativa viable a las soluciones propuestas por los comunistas para resolver los problemas sociales. Su discurso inaugural planteaba medidas por medio de las cuales su gobierno se proponía fomentar el desarrollo económico, social y cultural del país. Prometió poner particular atención en las regiones menos desarrolladas de Costa Rica, tales como Guanacaste y la zona Atlántica, que había sido en gran medida abandonada por la United Fruit Company (42).

Calderón Guardia responded to the demand for reforms when he assumed the presidency in 1940, and in doing so offered the electorate a viable alternative to the proposed solutions put forward by the communists to solve the social problems. His inaugural speech established measures through which the government proposed to stimulate the country's economic, social and cultural development. He promised to pay particular attention to the least developed regions in Costa Rica such as Guanacaste and the Atlantic zone which had in large measure been abandoned by the United Fruit Company (42).

Afro-Costa Ricans were not considered within these political promises because of the racism already dealt here. The promises came as a result of problems inherited from his predecessor, León Cortés Castro¹⁵⁴, who prior to becoming President, was Secretary of State and had to deal with labour unrest organized by the communist party in 1934,¹⁵⁵

154 León Cortés Castro was president of Costa Rica from 1936 to 1940.

155 See Sibaja Barrantes.

in protest against inhumane working conditions for the labourers on the banana plantations. He had also been signatory to the 1934 discriminatory immigration law¹⁵⁶ which prohibited people of African descent free movement to the Pacific region of the country in search of work.

Calderon, in his speech, promised to pay attention to the two least developed regions of the country among them the province of Limón, in the context of the banana economic crises as mentioned previously by Pérez Brignoli. But, in the case of the province of Limon, this concern was not favourable to its population of African descent.

Indeed as Soto Quirós has already highlighted, during the 1940s more discriminatory laws were put in place to rid the country of 'undesirables' and keep them out. In June 1940 Calderon passed another discriminatory law reinforcing the 1934 law rejecting entry of non-white groups, including people of African descent into the country. (See Appendix VI table 2.2).

This attitude towards people of African descent on the part of Calderon and his predecessor shows that there was no recognition that Afro-Caribbean immigrant children were also Costa Ricans. In the context of the 1934 strike, it shows how some sectors of the Costa Rican society viewed Afro-Costa Ricans. According to Bell:

El fenómeno se expresaba quizá más claramente en un informe periodístico que describía la hilaridad con que los ciudadanos de San José observaban "a los estibadores negros y comunistas", algunos de ellos sin camisas o sin zapatos, pretendiendo resguardar las calles de la ciudad como si fueran ciudadanos con algo que defender. No se les veía como costarricenses en pleno derecho (41).

The phenomenon is expressed perhaps most clearly in a news report which described the hilarity with which the citizens of San José observed "the black communist stevedores" some of them shirtless and barefoot, pretending to safeguard the streets as if they were citizens with something to defend. They did not see them as Costa Ricans with rights (41).

It is important to note that after the railroad project was completed, banana cultivation absorbed many of the Afro-Caribbean labours who migrated for the construction of the railroad. According to some newspaper reports, there were few Afro-Costa Ricans participating in the 1934 strike.

¹⁵⁶ This law can be found in *Colección de Leyes y Decretos*. San José, Costa Rica. 1935. 490.

One of the main reasons for the almost complete non-participation was the reality that they were not accepted as Costa Rican, as mentioned in the previous quotation, and many did not want to take risk of being deported to any of the Caribbean islands that they did not know. Philippe Bourgois, in *Banano, Etnia y Lucha Social* comments on the attitude of Afro-Costa Ricans born during the labour unrest:

Los negros no podían permitirse correr riesgos y asumir posiciones de liderazgo en el movimiento laboral por temor a perder no solamente sus empleos, sino también el derecho a vivir en su país natal (144).

Blacks could not afford to take risk or assume leadership positions within the labour movement out of the fear of losing not only their jobs, but also the right to live in the country of their birth (144).

Beside the caution of some Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Costa Ricans, there is the implication in the reference that some were interested in participating in the labour unrest and even to play leadership roles.

Ronald Harpelle, in *The West Indians in Costa Rica*, gives more detail of the lack of full support by Afro-Costa Ricans and Afro-Caribbean. He comments, 'the strike in 1934 was conducted by Hispanic workers with little West Indian support (78). The 'little' support was due to a number of reasons as highlighted by Harpelle:

...the people on the picket lines in 1934 who destroyed crops and who became involved in altercations with the Costa Rican authorities were primarily newcomers, and West Indians had grown to fear Hispanic immigration to Limon. After years of relentless attacks on the community, people of African descent were reluctant to throw their lot in a group that displayed so much animosity toward them. Also, because they were long time residents of Limon, many West Indians enjoyed a higher degree of economic security than their Hispanic counterparts [...] Another significant reason for West Indian abstention from the strike was that the local leaders of the UNIA worked with the fruit company to manipulate community members and keep them from participating in the strike (78).

Afro-Costa Ricans and especially Afro-Caribbean immigrants were aware of their vulnerable position as non-nationals compounded with the racism. Therefore, many opted to continue to remain invisible within this national upheaval conveniently ignoring, I argue, the power played

between the United Fruit Company and their organization the UNIA to remain marginal to the 1934 labour unrest.

The discussion on the participation of Afro-Costa Ricans and Afro-Caribbean highlights the fact that previous administrations before the 1940s, despite their racism, allowed 'illegal' Afro-Costa Ricans born in the country to remain. Some remained because they went through the naturalization process, and it can be argued that others just took advantage of the marginality of the province in terms of immigration cracking down. It is after the 1948 Civil War that they are recognized as legitimate citizens of Costa Rica.

Despite the innovative measures put in place by Calderón and his administration, he could not avoid the 1948 Civil War. Some scholars argue that one of the main reasons for the outbreak of this war the deterioration in the social situation of the country. Others like Pérez Brignoli argue that the war occurred because of the annulment of the elections of 1947. Agreeing with Brignoli, Bell notes that "the electoral dispute precipitated the crises that gave way to the revolution" (151).

Certainly, it was a combination of the deteriorating social and political conditions, the impact of international events like the Second World War on the national economy, and the emergence of who was to become a very important figure in the national politics of Costa Rica, José Figueres Ferrer.¹⁵⁷ Figueres Ferrer took advantage of the social and political turmoil of this period to gather strength in opposing Calderon and his party, and contributed to the Civil War. He took advantage and capitalized on the social problems that Calderon's party was facing, adding to them the resentment he harbored against Calderon for extraditing him in 1942.

It is important to note that in the lead up to the 1948 Civil War, the Republican Party was still in power, and Calderón was running again for the 1948 elections as a member of the party. He and his party were therefore the direct target for Figueres' machinations. It is fair to say then that Figueres was successful in his 1948 campaign because the political time was right, and as a result of Figueres' exploiting Costa Rica's legacy of staging coup d'états.

Pérez Brignoli gives an account of the different processes that Costa Rica went through in matters of leadership from independence in 1821 until the development of the Second Republic in 1948. He argues that

¹⁵⁷ For discussion focusing on José Figueres Ferrer, see Guerra, Castro Vega, and Figueres Ferrer.

Costa Rica's politics was characterized by a series of coups, the last one in 1917, and later by electoral frauds. It should not come as a surprise then that, thirty one years later, Figueres would use this as a means to overthrow Calderon and his party.¹⁵⁸

Fig. 20. Newspaper clipping of the 1948 War



Source: From *El Clarin*.¹⁵⁹

Fig. 21. Newspaper clipping of the 1948 War



Source: From *Campus*.¹⁶⁰

158 For in-depth study on the 1948 War see Cerdas Cruz, Schifter, Ministerio de Cultura y Deportes. See also other comments in some 1998 newspaper clippings found in the Nacional Library in Costa Rica which ran stories in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the 1948 Civil War De la Cruz, *El Clarin*, Formoso Masís, Vargas Muñoz, and De la Cruz Muñoz, Oviedo. "Escenarios de la Historia". *Al Día*. Thursday March 12, 1998. 12-14, Muñoz, Oviedo. "Plazo de Ocho Días para que Civiles Entreguen Armas: Figueres Rechaza Dictadura". *Al Día*. Saturday May 8, 1998. 14, Ortuño, Solano, and Tovar.

159 This newspaper clipping is from *El Clarin*. April 18, 1994. 5. Found in the National Library in Costa Rica.

160 This newspaper clipping is from *Campus*. July 1997. 7. Found in the National Library in Costa Rica.

Fig. 22. Newspaper clipping of the 1948 War



Source: From *Al Día*.¹⁶¹

As previously discussed, Afro-Costa Ricans born at the turn of the 20th century were not considered legal citizens, therefore, not allowed to participate in the political affairs. They themselves were not openly involved for fear of deportation to the islands of their parents.

Conveniently, during the 1948 Civil War Calderon acknowledged, not legally, Afro-Costa Ricans born in the country, demanding their participation in the war. According to Meléndez and Duncan:

El Gobierno Calderonista, de pronto, alega que todos los negros nacidos en el país tienen la obligación de defender el orden establecido en contra de los subversivos figueristas (134).

The Calderon government suddenly argues that all blacks born in the country have an obligation to defend the established order against subversive Figueres followers (134).

It is clear that the Calderon government was aware of the presence of these ‘illegal’ citizens, and it can be argued then that despite the racist ideology manifested in the discriminatory laws, these Afro-Costa Ricans were perceived as convenient reserves. This attitude of the Calderon administration showed up the racism by not embracing these ‘illegal’ citizens with the knowledge that they had all rights to be in the country by virtue of their being born in it.

There were two reasons for the non-participation, or virtually no-participation, of Afro-Costa Ricans in the Civil War. The first is that mainstream Costa Rica racism impeded their full participation in the society. They were illegal and therefore could not openly form part of political organizations, even when they had their personal affiliations.

¹⁶¹ This newspaper clipping is from *Al Día* April 19, 1940. 14. Found in the National Library in Costa Rica.

One of the interviewees suggests that some Afro-Costa Ricans' parents were safe guarding their sons especially from participating in the 1948 Civil War. Sixty-six year old Lucetta Miller Blake shares some of her memories:

Well, about 1948 War I really can't say much because I was only four years old. And what I remember is afterwards I realize that, that was what I was seeing. And it was, well they say that Figueres was coming in because there was problem, Figueres was coming in to tek [take] up young men to go and fight, to fight along with them, to fight with that partido. So what I can rememba even though I was small [young] a do rememba [I do not remember] where my big [eldest] sister was, but I rememba my mada [mother] left us inside and tell Ruby¹⁶² not to come out, and she put a long bench on the pieza [front gallery], and we went behind the bench peeping out while my mada gaan and look for my brothers, two eldest brothers Botty and Basil, because she neva [never] want then to tek [take] them and carry them to fight no war. I rememba seeing the people going up a hill, and the people wid [with] fowl, and the Spanish¹⁶³ people wid foul them bag on them shoulda [shoulder] and every body climbing going to the mountain. We stood there looking, a [I] know they say war, I know they say people was coming in with guns, but that is what I rememba (Miller Blake, personal interview, June 21, 2010).¹⁶⁴

Based on Lucetta's recollection from memory, there is a suggestion that this war probably took both Afro, and mestizo Costa Ricans by surprise. This takes us to the second reason, the ignorance of most of the population of the province of Limón as to what was about to happen.

Another interviewee, 91-year-old Ms Lillian confirms the surprise factor. She said:

The war, the 1948 Revolution was, Marcia born the 11, and it come out [stated] five days or so. She born... the 11th of April. Yes, the 15, when the Revolution start. I live before [in front] the hospital, and one morning we hear the noise outside and went to the door, and we see two men coming from out the hospital, and then another two coming from town, and the other one holler to those set and say 'alli lo mete, allí lo mete'. That was the house next door, and them throw the shot through the woman house,

162 Ruby is one of Lucetta's elder sisters.

163 Read mestizos.

164 Her story is situated in Siquirres which is the third canton of the province of Limón.

and it come right through to me, and that time I had baby outside by the door, and I then run in now to get under the bed. But if I was too fast it would get me because it knock right on the bedside, the railing part there! And fire back, I had a potty there and it disappear (Lillian McLennan AKA as Lillian Smith, Personal interview 19 June 2010).¹⁶⁵

From the accounts of the interviewees, this war had no great impact in terms of their everyday lives or even caused major damage to the province, certainly not in the port itself. Based on the comments of interviewees, there were no reported civil casualties despite the population being taken by surprise.

This area also needs further research because Federico Gibbler Jiménez in “La Guerra Civil de 48”, argues that the attack in the province was not a surprise since:

Federico Gibbler Jiménez

Se puede decir que Limón fue el eje central del conflicto armado; era una región estratégica como vía de comunicación y exportación de productos al mercado internacional: funcionaba como Puerto principal en la región Atlántica. Este movimiento armado no fue sorpresivo, fue algo planeado, bien estructurado días antes, tanto fuera del área como internamente (118).

It can be said that Limón was the central axis of the armed conflict, it was a strategic region as a route for communications and the exports of products to the international market, serving as the principal port in the Atlantic region. This armed movement was not unexpected it was something planned, well put together days before, in and out the area (118).

The assault probably was planned among the ‘legal’ supporters of Figueres, who probably did not include working class Afro-Costa Ricans. It could also have been an underground strategy ensuring that the information did not leak as there were also supporters of Calderon in the province of Limón. Even recognizing this, I argue based on the interviews gathered, that it was a surprise to the majority of the population of the province of Limón, particularly Afro-Costa Ricans. *check old newspapers - Limón for that period*

Gibbler Jiménez mentions that during that period in the province of Limón there were at least three political parties, bearing in mind that

¹⁶⁵ Her story is situated in the city of Limón where the Port is located.

Afro-Costa Ricans could not have been openly affiliated to any of these because of their illegal status. Gibbler Jiménez notes that:

...estos grupos eran en su mayoría de corte personalista, tal fue el caso del partido Republicano, encontrándose en el poder. El partido Unión Nacional representando a la oposición (grupo rebelde participante en la toma de Limón). Además del Partido Vanguardia Popular, que en esa región contó con el apoyo de una parte de la población afiliada a los sindicatos de la Compañía Northern Railway Co. (101).

...those groups had in the main of a personal slant, as was the case of the Republican Party that which was in power. The National Union Party represented the opposition (the rebel group participating in the taking of Limón). As well, there was the Popular Vanguard Party, which in that region had the support of a part of the population that was affiliated to the Northern Co. Unions (118).

Based on this reference, there was political involvement in the province of Limón with groups choosing sides. At least in the province of Limón, it seems that the rebel movement was specifically a political one and based on Lucetta's comments about some *mestizos* seeking refuge in the mountains, did not count on the support of the masses.

This argument is supported by Gibbler Jiménez on the role of the media and the older respondents who indicated that they did not know about rumors of war from the radio or the newspapers.¹⁶⁶Gibbler Jiménez notes:

En cuanto a la radio, medio que fue de poco acceso a las mayorías, existía en Limón la radioemisora "Casino"¹⁶⁷ que transmitía programas de índole político...en el momento mismo del conflicto se dio un tipo de persecución con este medio para evitar la difusión de las noticias (122).

Regarding the radio, a means of communication to which few people had access, the radio station "Casino" in Limón transmitted political programs...during the conflict; this radio station experienced a level of persecution to stop it broadcasting news (122).

166 Meléndez and Duncan, and Hernández Cruz also made reference to this almost non-existent participation of Afro-Costa Ricans in this war.

167 According to Mario Bourne radio casino was founded in 1945. The station went on air for the first time on August 18, 1945, during the Second World War, and three years before Costa Rica's Civil War. Presently it is the main radio station in the city of Limón.

On the participation of Afro-Costa Ricans in the 1948 Civil War, much research still needs to be undertaken. While the preliminary evidence points to no participation, the comments of Lucetta Miller Blake in a follow up phone interview gives some indication that some Afro-Costa Ricans were involved in this war. Miller Blake comments:

When I was very young I see a picture of one my friends' oldest brother in a uniform, and I ask ar [her] and she tell me that him was in the 48 War. Him was young then. Him name is Fernando Henri. In that time a lot of black people was going wid [with] Calderón even though them couldn [could not] vote (Miller Blake 30 June 2010).

For the majority of Afro-Costa Ricans who did not participate in the 1948 Civil War either because they were not informed or chose not to do so, their lack of participation is understandable given the legal uncertainty surrounding Afro-Costa Ricans in mid 20th century Costa Rica.

Interviews carried out in Costa Rica during 2006 reveal that contemporary Afro-Costa Ricans still carry resentment at the denial of rights to their parents and grandparents.¹⁶⁸ While they are proud to be Costa Ricans, with all its challenges of living in a racist country, and generally accept the political constitution, they have difficulty with the idea of defending their country in the event of war, based on the racism shown to them and their fore-parents. The 18th article of the 2003 *Constitución de la República* states that:

Los costarricenses deben observar la constitución y las leyes, servir la Patria, defenderla y contribuir para los gastos públicos (6).

Costa Ricans must respect the constitution and law, serve and defend the country, and contribute to public expenses (6).

While Afro-Costa Ricans are today recognized as legal citizens of their country of birth and accept the privileges and responsibilities that come with such, many find this part of the constitution hard to comply with because of all that has been discussed about the racism against the descendants of Africans.

¹⁶⁸ It is just sixty years ago (1950-2010), that Afro-Costa Rican got legal recognition therefore some of them are still around to tell the tale.

In discussions regarding national responsibility, the majority of the responses were emphatic and passionate to the question, “Would you be willing to die for your country?” One such is that of interviewee Miller Blake who responded:

No, yo no voy a dar mi vida, mi vida se la doy a Cristo. Y esa cosa y ese patriotismo y esa cosa que yo daría mi vida, quizá si nuestra gente, si nuestra cultura era diferente...yo soy y seguiré siendo Limonense, costarricense pero ellos no van a dar la vida por mí, yo amo a mi país pero no hasta la muerte (Miller Blake, 3 May 2006).

No, no I am not going to give my life, my life I give to Christ. And that thing, and that patriotism and that thing that I will give my life for, perhaps if our people, if our culture was different...I am and will continue to be a Limonense, a Costa Rican, but they are not going to give their life for me, I love my country but not to death (Miller Blake, 3 May 2006).

Other such responses are noted below:

Them gwen [they are going to] really have to push me like Juan Santa María,¹⁶⁹ wid [with] all them se [say] him step up, lie! Them push him! Them cian [cannot] come and tell me that! Because he was negrito them push him!, bout [about] him put one foot in front no! I wouldn't be deading [dying] fa [for] no Costa Rica. I dead fa me son, me madda [mother]...no situation in Costa Rica can make me I dead fa them...I not going and dead fa no country, no! (Hutchinson Miller, 20 April 2006).

That's a difficult question. I don't know how to answer it. I do defend my country, don't believe in violence but...it would have to be a special event to risk my life in anything. Is very difficult question for me to answer (Barton, 3 May 2006).

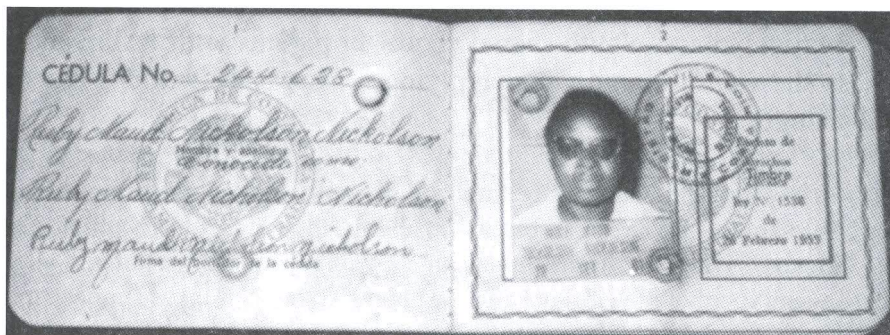
One of the main benefits for Afro-Costa Ricans after the Civil War was their legal recognition as citizens. While in power, among other reforms, José Figueres modified some of the existing discriminatory laws allowing Afro-Costa Ricans and Caribbean people who were still living in the country to fully participate in the national life of Costa Rica.

He ensured that they had a *cédula de identidad* (National Identity Card) so they could vote and to participate fully in the national affairs.

169 Juan Santa María is Costa Rica's National Hero. During the Batalla de Rivas on April 11, 1856 he was in charge of burning the meson which helped Costa Ricans to win the fight against William Walker. According to popular saying, because he was mulatto (half indigenous half white), when it was asked that volunteers to burn the meson take one step forward, all the others took one step backward, leaving poor Juan who was mulatto in front by himself.

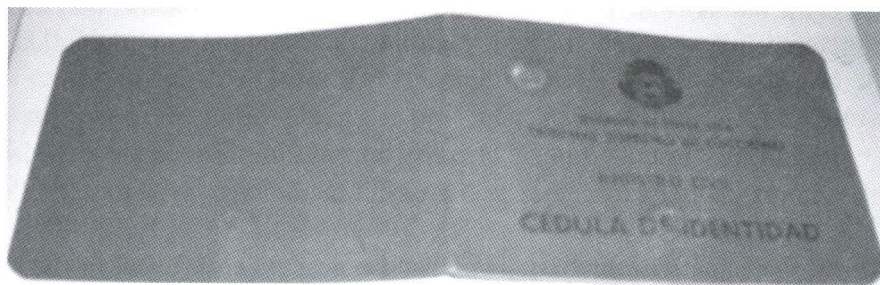
For this to happen, through law 1902 of 1955, Figueres ensured that all the legal and administrative structures were put in place to guarantee easy acquisition of the *cédula de identidad*, especially for those living in the country for over twenty years.¹⁷⁰¹⁷¹

Fig. 23. *Cédula de identidad* de Ruby Nicholson 1953.



Source: Photo by author courtesy of Ruby Nicholson. 21 June 2010, Port Limon.

Fig. 24. Cover of Ruby's 1953 *Cédula de Identidad*.



Source: Photo by author courtesy of Ruby Nicholson. 21 June 2010, Port Limon.

It is an assumption that where laws are in place, certain inequalities are banished. Such was not the case for some Afro-Costa Ricans who went to apply for their *cédula de identidad* when they came of age, some of whom shared their experiences. Some were asked to opt for either the Costa Rican or Jamaican citizenship as in the case of Miguel McClymont who shares that, “A mi mamá y a mi me tocó decidir por la nacionalidad de Costa Rica o de Jamaica (McClymont, personal interview, 20 April

170 See *Colección de Leyes y Decretos, Acuerdos y Resoluciones*. 1955. 25.

171 This law also appears in the *Gaceta Oficial* No 157 of July 16, 1955.

2006); (“My mother and I, we had to decide between Costa Rican or Jamaican citizenship”; McClymont, personal interview, 20 April 2006).

Based on conversation with Mr. McClymont both his mother and him decided for the Costa Rican citizenship for the simple fact that they were born in this country and had no intention to opt for a country they weren't born into and knew very little about.

Marva Holness Smith shared about her parents' citizenship and the process she went through when applying for her *cédula* after Figuerres' legal changes:

My fada [father] was a Jamaican, my mother was born from Jamaica. Yes she was Costa Rican but in those days they didn't have you as Costa Rican, if your parents are Jamaican, so you become Jamaican wid all you [even though you were] born in the country. So when I was suppose to get my first *cédula* I had to go to ahm...to a lawyer and make out the, I don't know what them call it in English, *la opción de naturalización*. Por cierto, [as a matter of fact] Winston Gray did it for me. He used to work at the *Registro Civil*, so he made out the papers, and after that I got me *cédula*. Inclusive. I thought my *cédula* would come out with a nine or something like that, because nine, been I had to make naturalization. But no, it did not come out like that, it come out wid seven. You had people that they *cédula* come out with nine¹⁷² for some reason or the other, but a do [do not] know how that work' (Holness, 26 June 2010).

For others, the Jamaican citizenship was imposed. Lucetta Miller Blake shares:

Well, that was the problem I had because when I put in fa [for] my *cédula* [When I applied for my identification card], and when I went and them telling one heap a things, [they were telling me one heap of things] them neva [they never]tell me naturalize, them se por opción, [they said 'by option'] so I ask them what it is, and them start explaining to me that because my, and look my father was a Costa Rican! and,that because the parents is Jamaican and them telling me about the law and everything. And I se, [and I said] look at my birth paper, it se, [it says born in

172 According to Senior Angulo in chapter VII of her research the numbering on *cédulas* de identidad was systematized in 1949. Number 8 is for foreigners and 9 is for Afro-Costa Ricans who had registered late. Currently the province in which a Costa Rican is born can be identified based on the first number on his/her identity card. For those born in San José the number is 1 and for those born in Limón the number is 7, indicating that these are the first and seventh provinces.

Siquirres, province of Limón] nació en Siquirres, provincia de Limón! Ah! País Costa Rica, a se how it is you gwen tell me, [I said how you are going to tell me] nacionalidad Jamaicana, [Jamaican nationality] a se, pero como yo voy a ser Jamaicana? [I said how am I going to be a Jamaican?] And him start to explain, so a se, pues mándame a Jamaica porque yo no voy a firmar' [So I said, send me to Jamaica because I am not going to sign] (Miller Blake, 3 May 2006).

Based on the interventions of interviewees, the difficult attitudes they encountered from officials who should have helped them make their transition from illegal citizens, it can be argued because of resistance to accepting them as Costa Rican nationals, since while many were proud of their Caribbean ancestry they did not see themselves as particularly Jamaican citizens by virtue of their having been born and raised on Costa Rican soil.

For mid 20th century Afro-Costa Ricans who obtained legal recognition after the 1948 war, some are filled with mixed emotions. The positions are divided over the question whether Figueres' was genuinely for the legal outcome for Afro-Costa Ricans or if this was just one of the indirect results.

There are those who genuinely believe that his main intention was to enfranchise Afro-Costa Ricans, telling of his presence, and his affable treatment of some people in the province. Paula Palmer, in *Wa'apin man'* captures some of this in her research, which is focused on the inhabitants of the county of Talamanca.¹⁷³ Meléndez and Duncan note:

Triunfan los insurrectos, José Figueres llega a Limón y recorre los pueblos hablando en inglés, besando a los niños negros, bailando con las negras. Nunca antes ningún presidente de Costa Rica había hecho tal cosa (135).

Once the insurrectionists triumphed, José Figueres arrives in Limón and goes to the towns speaking in English, kissing black children, dancing with black women. No Costa Rican president had ever done such a thing (135).

This attitude would certainly have a positive effect on a group of people who had been treated with neglect within any society. Dora

173 Talamanca is the 4th county of the province of Limón.

Granger, now 90 years old, is one of those who believed not only in Figueres, but in his party. Her response when interviewed in 2006:

Coming back to Figueres, was the first president in my days because I wasn't much a political eada [either]. But when I hear him coming and I start to follow him, rub up wid him shoulda to shoulda and everything like that, until him come and the first thing him do was to build the college, because they didn't have any college, they didn't have any college. And it was a wood land, and through mud, you want to see him fighting into that, and him going down into the mud to put the first stone (Granger, 3 May 2006).

Fig. 25. Dora Granger with José María Figueres Olsen



Source: Photograph courtesy of Dora Granger

Fig. 26. Pictured with José María Figueres Olsen, son of José Figueres. He was president of Costa Rica during the period 1994-1998. On this visit he was inaugurating the Amphitheater in Limón



Source: Photograph courtesy of Dora Granger

Delroy Barton shared a similar sentiment to those of Dora Granger when he commented:

Básicamente yo personalmente creo que José Figueres Ferrer es un Estadista fuera de serie, partiendo del hecho de que aún teniendo el poder rompe y deshace el ejército ya lo ubicó en un renglón muy aparte y genuinamente buscó la integración del Negro a la sociedad costarricense. Las pocas oportunidades que tuve de conversar con él antes de su fallecimiento, yo lo sentí muy sincero (Barton 3 May 2006).

Basically I personally believe that José Figueres was a statesman in a league by himself, starting from the fact that even when he had the power he dismantled the army, which alone puts him in a different league and he genuinely sought the integration of blacks into the Costa Rican society. The few opportunities I had to speak with him before he died, I felt he was sincere (Barton, 3 May 2006).

Others like a 35-year-old Afro-Costa Rican man viewed his intentions with suspicion, and let it be known that he was not that convinced that Figueres was that concerned about Afro-Caribbean, and Afro-Costa Ricans. Rather, he opines that Figueres' being an advocate for Afros was something that was sold to the future generations. He thinks that it was a political strategy that worked for him at a historical juncture. He comments:

Yo no estoy completamente convencido verdad de que en él hubiese esa conciencia, a tal punto como de que el fuera el defensor de los negros. Así en ese sentido me parece que es lo que nos han vendido y es lo que nosotros nos hemos encargado de venderle a las otras generaciones. Que los negros siempre han votado por Liberación verdad, que dejó una deuda eterna, o había una deuda eterna con él por haber dado ese paso. Pero yo me imagino que como en todo había una estrategia política, eso era. Fue una coyuntura especial y fue muy inteligente en ese sentido y vio que había un grupo importante de personas que pudieron, que valdría la pena tenerlos de nuestro lado, entonces creo que por allí era, fue más una estrategia que una cuestión de conciencia y de solidaridad realmente con los negros. Quizás ahí peco de ser un poco, quizás cínico o desconfiado, pero como que nos han enseñado que aquí no se saca pelo sin sangre y todo se hace con una doble intención, creo que no. Le doy el beneficio de la duda si en realidad había algo de conciencia a ese nivel, pero me imagino que era más lo otro (Grant Young, May 1, 2006).

I am not totally convinced that he was committed enough to be considered the defender of the blacks, to be an advocate. I think that is what was sold to us, and this is what we continue to sell to the next generation. That blacks have always voted for the Liberation party, that he left an eternal debt, or that they owe him for forever for taking that step. But I imagine that as in everything else, there was a political strategy. That was it. It was a special juncture and he was very intelligent in that regard and saw that there was a significant group of people that could be and were worth having on his side, so I think that there he was, more a strategy than a question of conscience or solidarity. Perhaps here I am guilty of being a little, perhaps cynical or suspicious, but we are taught here that you can't pull hair without drawing blood, and everything is done with another motive, I don't think so, I would give him the benefit of the doubt if in fact he had some conviction but I suspect it was more of the other (Grant Young, 1 May 2006).

A 51-year-old Afro-Limonense woman also agreed with the last respondent stating that the historical time was right, and that Figueres did not have another option. While she admires Figueres, she does not believe that it was anything that he did, that marked this success. She continues to comment that the task had already been achieved by the leaders of emancipation movements all over the world. She remarks:

No tenía otra opción, no tenía otra opción. Era el momento. Si usted ve la historia internacional, era el momento que ya estaba la emancipación de los negros y los negros estaban siendo incluidos en casi todos los países del mundo. Entonces con la ayuda y el entusiasmo y el deber de Alex Curling no le quedó otro camino a Don José Figueres. Yo lo quiero, lo respeto como tal, pero la verdad es que pasó en el momento adecuado donde él estaba. Y si lo admiro, pero no es del todo un trabajo que él hizo. Es un trabajo de todos nuestros dirigentes a nivel internacional (Johnson, 3 May. 2006).

He had no other option. He had no alternative. It was the right time. If you look at international history, it was the moment for emancipation of for blacks and blacks were being included in almost all the countries of the world. Then with the help, enthusiasm, and commitment of Alex Curling there was no other way out for Figueres. I love and respect him as such, but the truth is that he came at the right time. It is the job for all international leaders (Johnson, May 3, 2006).

The fact is that Blacks were only integrated in the United States during the 1960s; in Mozambique after 1980, in South Africa after 1990. In the Dominican Republic, it is still an issue about the Haitians children's right to citizenship in that country. In Bolivia the issue is still sensitive.

Figueres was simply responding to the political environment within the country. He and his followers thought it was time for change from the liberal leaders. The time was right for him in acquiring leadership of the country, and he capitalized on the neglected and marginalized Afro-Costa Rican population.

Despite the critical analysis of Figueres' intentions, the evidence shows that, apart from their legal recognition, another benefit for Afro-Costa Ricans was their incursion into party politics. A very important figure within the Afro-Costa Rican community during Figueres' first period in office was Mr. Alex Curling Delisser.

Alex Curling¹⁷⁴ rose to prominence because he was the first Afro-Costa Rican elected as *diputado* (Minister of Parliament) within a party in Costa Rican history. During his time in office, 1953-58, he pushed the project that resulted in la Ley Curling (Curling's law), Law No. 1902 of July 1955 making all Costa Ricans born of Jamaican parentage legitimate Costa Ricans.

Unfortunately laws do not change culture and Afro-Costa Ricans would continue to face, endure and protest overt and covert racism as legal citizens of Costa Rica.

Despite the manifestation of racism against this group of Costa Ricans, legal recognition allowed many to fully integrate in the wider Costa Rican society, of course still maintaining elements which constituted their black identity and set them apart from the rest of Costa Rican society.

174 For in-depth information on Alex Curling see Curling.

AFRO-COSTA RICAN BLACK IDENTITY

As was discussed in Chapter II, the success of coffee cultivation was the catalyst for Costa Rica's economic development, and the need for an alternate route to effectively bring this product to market was the main reason for the construction of a railroad. The country would require additional immigrant labour to complete the construction of this major undertaking.

The main immigrant labour force the project attracted were workers from the English-speaking Caribbean, with the largest number coming from the island of Jamaica. The immigrant workers, based on archival newspaper reports were hired to work for a period of one year.¹⁷⁵

However, the railroad construction project took over 19 years to completion causing some of the immigrant workers to settle in Costa Rica, especially in the province of Limón. In reference to the length of the railroad project Harpelle notes that:

Henry Meiggs, the pre-eminent railway builder of the time, was contracted to build the railway, and construction began in 1871...it was a task that required greater resources than the country could marshal, and, as a

175 See *Colonial Standard*.

result, the 170 kilometre railway link begun in November 1871 was not completed until December 1890 (11).

The point of arrival for Caribbean immigrant workers would have been at the Port of Limón, which faces the Caribbean Sea. The construction of the railroad began in the Central Valley and routed to the eastern province of Limón. Many workers settled not only in the Port but along the routes used for construction work within the province.¹⁷⁶

The unintentional settlement because of labour constraints, along with the hostility of mainstream Costa Rica against people of African descent forced most¹⁷⁷ of the immigrants to remain in the province of Limón, imprinting this region with a particular and distinct characteristic different from other parts of Costa Rica.

The cultural difference of Afro-Caribbean immigrants, especially of the Jamaicans, was noticeable from the beginning of the railroad construction project. Murillo Chavarri, in *Identidades de Hierro*, notes that:

A partir de 1873, la presencia mayoritaria de jamaquinos, respecto a otras personas provenientes de la cuenca del Caribe, posibilitó que sus referentes culturales cimentaran la matriz cultural básica de la población en el Atlántico costarricense...(78).

From 1873, the majority presence of Jamaicans, with respect to others coming from the Caribbean, made it possible for their cultural references to come to be served as the basic cultural matrix of the Costa Rican Atlantic population...(78).

This Jamaican cultural matrix was evident in the types of food they grew and ate, the language they spoke, the religion they practiced, the sports they played, the music they listened to, the songs they sang, the leaders they followed, the way they danced, the way they dressed, their superstitious beliefs, the type of literature they read, and their allegiance to the Queen of England.¹⁷⁸

It is important to note that during the railroad construction economic crisis, Afro-Caribbean immigrants were offered lands along the railroad

176 See Murillo, Chavarri chapter on the "El Mundo en el Trabajo del Ferrocarril".

177 The research argues that they must have been Afro-Caribbean and their descendants living in other parts of country. More studies need to be done which focus on different aspects of the life of Afro-Costa Ricans to clarify some of these assumptions.

178 See Meléndez and Duncan.

construction route, and this helped to overtly showcase their difference in culture with their subsistence farming and the way they built and kept their houses, among other cultural references.¹⁷⁹

It is this immigrant Jamaican cultural background that would form the basis of constructing a Costa Rican black identity. This chapter will highlight some of the late 19th century Jamaican immigrant cultural legacy which contributed to the construction of an Afro-Costa Rican black identity.

The main argument in this chapter is that early 20th century Afro-Costa Ricans did not fully assimilate into mainstream Costa Rican culture because of its racism against people of African descent; therefore, these immigrants only felt comfortable in the eastern region of the country, which worked to their advantage as it strengthened aspects of their Jamaican culture.

Afro-Caribbean parents perpetuated and strengthened some of the cultural values they considered important to preserve, thus helping to construct a distinct Afro-Costa Rican identity out of a combination of elements from mainly Afro-Jamaican immigrants, and mainstream Costa Rica.

I borrow Hall's definition of identity to explain those elements which constitute Afro-Costa Rican black identity. He explains identity as:

...the point of *suture*, between on one hand, the discourses and practices which attempt to 'interpellete', speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses and, on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be 'spoken' (19).

For Afro-Costa Ricans the positive construction of a black identity is being disrupted constantly by racist discourses that attempt to keep them in their place. Yet, despite those racist interruptions originating from the status quo, Afro-Costa Ricans have managed to maintain their inherited Jamaican cultural subjectivities and thus are able to have their own voice as an ethnic minority.

In discussions about Costa Rican national identity, the shared history and memory, loyalties, and feelings were singled out as some of the

179 See Meléndez and Duncan chapter III, for detailed information.

elements in the construction of that identity. In the case of an ethnic identity, there are also specific elements that help in that construction.

Duncan and Powell note that “La etnia tiene que ver con la cultura. Es decir, un grupo humano que se distingue por tener ciertas características culturales comunes entre si pero diferente de otros grupos” (19). (“Ethnicity has to do with culture. This is to say, a human group that is different for having certain common cultural characteristics but different to other groups”; 19).

Afro-Costa Ricans can be considered an ethnic group because of the different cultural experiences and practices they inherited especially from their Jamaican fore-parents. The problem they face is that this Jamaican cultural inheritance is not accepted by mainstream Costa Rica and its manifestation is interpreted in negative or stereotypical ways.

Marcia Burrowes, in “*Collecting the Memories*”, highlights race relations for Barbadian immigrants in Britain, noting that:

In recording their narratives, several migrants reflected on the ways in which white British communities constructed images of them as migrants. The discourse was usually characterized by the use of a stereotype in the effort to demean and dehumanize the female and male migrant (146).

Costa Ricans have constructed a negative image of Afro-Caribbean immigrants and their Afro-Costa Rican children which has helped in perpetuating the stereotypes used as justification to deny people of African descent access to material resources, and social, political, and economic opportunities.

A recent report coming out of a study done in collaboration between the National University of Costa Rica and UNICEF of perceptions on Afro-descendants, demonstrates one of the negative identity construct of Afro-Costa Ricans as an aggressive group of people. The study gives an example found in one of Costa Rica’s main newspapers *La Nación*, 2008 which reports on a non-Afro female response:

Un grupo de negros parados en una esquina es, a los ojos del tico promedio, un cuento de terror. Evito decir “un grupo de afro-descendientes”, como obligan la corrección política y la buena conciencia. Si he de respetar los antecedentes de este reportaje, solo puedo ser fiel a estos describiendo a “un grupo de negros parados en una esquina”, es decir, jauría

amenazante que en cualquier momento puede abalanzarse y destrozar algo indefinido e indefinible. Tal vez algo como la inmaculada blancura de nuestro ser interior” (UNICEF, IDESPPO 73).

A group of blacks at a street corner is, for the average Costa Rican a horror story. I avoid saying “a group of Afro-descendants”, as the political correctness and good consciousness required. If I am to respect the precedents of this report, I can only be true to these by describing them as ‘a group of blacks standing at a street corner’, in other words a menacing pack of hounds that at any moment can rush towards us and destroy something un-defined and un-definable. Probably, something like the immaculate whiteness of our inner being (UNICEF, IDESPPO 73).

In this 21st century opinion about Afro-Costa Rican citizens, the underlying idea that people of African descent are to be feared because of their innately violent nature can be observed. The comparison to a pack of hounds feeds into the stereotype of Afro-Costa Ricans as animals as discussed in Chapter IV on the images portrayed in Costa Rican literature. Once more, the dichotomy surfaces of black is bad/white is good in reference to mainstream Costa Rica’s false construction of a hegemonic ethnic whiteness.

Another negative or stereotypical construct is that of blacks as only party people. Ruby Miller Blake, discussing the perception of the rest of the country of the province of Limón and its people, said “lo único que dicen sobre Limón es ‘esos negros de Limón solo huelga y carnaval.’” (“The only thing they say about Limón is ‘those blacks of Limón, only strikes and carnival’”; Miller Blake, 20 April 2005).

In her brief complaint she confirms one of the findings of the report with references about Afro-Costa Rican being an aggressive pack, adding to it the stereotypical image of a “happy go lucky” set of people interested only in partying. Ruby was vexed¹⁸⁰ when she expressed this opinion, indicating that she does not accept that construct.

An earlier example of this negative construct of people of African descent as aggressive is found in a series of newspaper reports on a fire between December 1874 and June 1875. *La Gaceta Oficial* June 16 reports:

El apoyo de los que juzgan el hecho como premeditado, no tiene otro origen que la noticia vaga de haberse visto a un negro que, durante el incendio

180 As Afro-Limonenses would say.

del edificio en donde estaban hacinados los materiales del ferrocarril, ponía fuego á la bodega de un particular por el lado de la playa (2).¹⁸¹

Those who think the incident was premeditated, base this solely on unreliable sources of having seen a Negro during the fire in the building where the railroad materials were stored, setting fire to the store room on the beachside (2).

Based on this and other reports on the fire there was never any confirmation that someone of African descent had set fire to the building in question. The conjecture was based on the negative construct of Blacks being aggressive.

Chomsky, discussing labour organizing during the construction of the railroad, based on information gathered from the 1903 and 1906 *Weekly News* paper, notes that, "...the UFCO's laborers were able to join together, quickly and repeatedly, to protest their work conditions" (149).¹⁸²

Both Afro-Caribbean immigrants, and later their Afro-Costa Rican descendants, always demonstrated their dissatisfaction when they considered that they were being abused. This attitude would gain them the reputation of being an aggressive bunch even up to the present century.¹⁸³ See tables 1. 4 - 1. 5.

Table 1. 4.
Strikes in the Province of Limón during the 19th and 20th Century

YEAR	REASON FOR THE STRIKE
January, 1879	Unjustified deduction of a week's salary of the Black workers
June, 1888	Discontentment among Italian workers for not complying with the agreements in the contracts that Minor Keith signed
1913	Protest for the long working hours and pay reduction
1921	This strike paralyzed 2,500 banana workers for the massive destitution of labourers and a raise in salary of 30% for those who did not join the strike
August 9, 1934	The deplorable socio-economic conditions of the banana labourers

Source: Extracted from Sibaja Barrantes, Emil. "Ideología y Protesta Popular: La Huelga Bananera de 1934 en Costa Rica." Diss. U Nacional de Costa Rica, 1983. Print.

181 Other examples can be found in *La Gaceta Oficial* December 29, 1874, January 9, 1875. 3.

182 Other recorded examples included protests against low wages and ill-treatment. See Archivo Nacional 1877.

183 See Marrochi Castañeda, and Barquero and Martínez. S., on strikes in Limón during the 20th Century.

Table 1. 5.
 Strikes in the Province of Limón in During the 20th Century

YEAR	DURATION	NUMBER OF SUPPORTERS
October 29, 1976	10 days	2,000 workers from Japdeva begin the strike
June 19, 1978	9 days	Work is paralyzed in Frutería Atlántica y Bandeco
August 14, 1979	10 days	7 thousand employees declared a strike in various companies
October 18, 1979	5 days	3 thousand workers in Río Frío and La Estrella halted labour
December 21, 1979	29 days	1,400 employees of the Standard fruit Company began a strike in la Estrella
January, 1980		Workers from 30 farms joined the December 21 st 1979 strike
April 7, 1980	25 days	Strike from the workers of Zublin- Carrez
September 21, 1981	16 days	Strike in BANDECO farms in Siquirres and Guapiles
December 10, 1981	37 days	Strike in Standard farms
December 28, 1981	14 days	Strike in BANDECO farms in Siquirres and Guapiles
September 18, 1982	63 days	Strike in BANDECO
September 30, 1982	51 days	Strike in BANDECO
August 29, 1983	One month	Strike in Limón Municipality

Source: Barquero, Marvin, and Mauricio S. Martínez. "Se Mantiene Amenaza de Huelga: Una Zona Conflictiva." *La Nación* 18 Aug. 1989: 4A. Print.

As a way of a general comment, the question may be asked as to the survival of the men and their families during this period of strikes. The survival of the Afro-Caribbean families was cemented on the invisible work of women. Some worked in the farms, others had kitchen gardens, and the majority was knowledgeable of the different types of herbs growing within their natural environment which they use to nurse to health and feed their families; besides the traditional role as home-maker which includes the preparation of food.

Continuing with the negative constructions of Afro-Costa Ricans, others include them being thieves, buffoons, not intellectually inclined, interested only in sport, having no culture, ugly, and unable to speak proper Spanish. However, Afro-Costa Ricans some times use some of these stereotypes to their advantage.

Many young Afro-Costa Ricans and Afro-Limonenses, particularly males use football as an avenue for personal, social and economic mobility. Their successes have made the Afro-Costa Rican community proud, helping to debunk the other negative stereotype that Afro-Costa Ricans are lazy. Success requires not only skills but having to work doubly and harder than the mestizos if these athletes are to excel. This is true not only in football but in other professions as well.

Some outstanding Afro-Limonenses football athletes include Errol Daniels, who holds two sport records.¹⁸⁴ Others include Winston Parks, Austin Berry, Alvaro Grant McDonald, Enrique Díaz, Julio Fuller, Guillermo McKenzie, Oscar Marshall and Danilo Anderson.

From the mid-nineteen eighties into the 1990s, and the new millennium, a new crop of Afro-Limonenses football sport personalities emerged in the likes of Juan Cayasso, Hernan Medford, Jervis and Gerald Drummonds, and Paolo Cesar Wanchope. Recently Nery Gomez, a sprinter made the Afro-Costa Rican community very proud when he participated in the 2008 Olympics.

Local anecdotes speak about how most Afro-Costa Rican women flaunt, and are the envy of the mestizo women for their natural curves and stereotypical big buttocks. Both women and especially men also use the stereotype of being aggressive to intimidate those who get in their way.

The flip side of the coin as it relates to black identity shows a very different picture to the one mainstream Costa Rica wants to perpetuate. This speaks to Hall's definition of the 'processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects' (19).

Afro-Costa Ricans especially within the province of Limón, managed to construct an 'us' through a process of retention and re-creation of their Jamaican inheritance facilitated through the geographical isolation of the province of Limón.

One of the reasons why Afro-Costa Ricans counteracted the negative construct was that their fore-parents had faced negative constructs within the Caribbean. Patrick Bryan, discussing the ranks of society in late 19th century Jamaica in *The Jamaican People 1880-1902*, notes that "Being white in the Caribbean means, above all, *not* being black" (67).

'Not being black' carries with it a negative connotation which Caribbean immigrants to Costa Rica were already aware of and, therefore, able to

184 See *La Prensa Libre*. May 2, 2006.

identify negative constructs and fight against them by embracing what they considered positive elements to constitute their Jamaican black identity.

The construct of a black identity that Afro-Costa Ricans were developing in opposition to mainstream Costa Rica's was that of a proud, hard working, intelligent group of people. This sense of pride came out of a sense of superiority of Afro-Caribbean immigrants over the mestizos, interpreting their hiring as an inability on the part of the mestizos to undertake the work, added to the fact that they spoke English which gave them a slight advantage in better communicating with the managers of the railroad company.

This attitude was interpreted later by their Afro-Costa Rican children not as being superior but with admiration for their survival in a foreign country and thus the sense of pride as clearly stated by some of the interviewees. Marcia Johnson expresses:

Yo me siento super orgullosa de ellos, de todos porque a pesar de todas las vicisitudes que hemos pasado, son gente que han sido valiosas y con mucha moral y con mucho orgullo, yo me siento orgullosa de ellos (Johnson 2006).

I feel extremely proud of them, of all of them because despite all the vicissitudes we have been through, they were worthy, with high morale, and a lot of pride, I feel proud of them (Johnson 2006).

Hermelinda McKenzie Williams says similarly:

Orgullosa porque cuando las personas preguntan sobre la historia por ejemplo de los diferentes grupos en Costa Rica uno se siente orgulloso de poder decir la contribución que hizo sus ancestros... (McKenzie Williams, 2006).

Proud because when people ask about the history for example of the different groups in Costa Rica one feels proud to be able to tell of the contributions of our ancestors (McKenzie Williams, 2006).

This sense of pride is also noted by others who, like Ana Cristina Rossi, interpret it as an excess of identity. In a newspaper report referring to the 80 years of the Blacks Star Line building in Limón, she makes reference to Afro-Costa Ricans having an excess of identity, noting:

Exceso de Identidad. Nunca que yo sepa, han tenido los costarricenses respeto y devoción por la lengua como tuvieron las personas de origen afroantillano. Mientras que los costarricenses padecieron o padecen de

falta de identidad, los negros sufrían de un exceso de identidad que resultaba incomprensible para los ticos: eran británicos y hablaban inglés, eran jamaquinos y guardaban lealtad a esa cultura, y eran africanos y querían conservar también esa marca. Pero los ticos rechazan lo que no comprenden (17 A).

Excess of Identity. As far as I know, Costa Ricans have never had any respect or devotion for language as do the people of Afro-Antillean origin. While Costa Ricans suffered from a lack of identity, blacks suffered from an excess of identity which was incomprehensible to the ticos: they were British, and spoke English, they were Jamaicans and were loyal to that culture, and were Africans and wanted to preserve that brand also. But ticos reject what they do not comprehend (17A).

Fig. 27. Newspaper clipping on Excess Black Identity



Source: Rossi, Ana Cristina. "Los 80 años del Blacks" La Nación. August 30, 2002. 17A

Rossi, while trying to make a case for the strong black identity of Afro-Costa Ricans, inadvertently introduces two aspects of this group of Costa Ricans, its multiethnic and cultural characteristic along with its ethnic arrogance that could lead to reverse racism. Trevor Purcell in *Banana Fallout*, also comments on this feeling of superiority.¹⁸⁵

185 Meléndez and Duncan, also make reference to this attitude of superiority of Afro-Caribbean towards mestizo Costa Rica.

When Blacks and Hispanics competed for jobs on the United Fruit Company's plantation, Blacks saw advantage in portraying themselves as culturally superior to Hispanics. They used their British-derived culture and values as a banner of legitimacy, particularly such aspects as language, education and political attachment to Great Britain...(158).

Purcell's comments follow Rossi's argument in terms of the 'excess' of identity among Afro-Caribbean immigrants and which was passed on to their children. It can be argued that the struggle for power between colonizing European countries like Spain, Portugal and England was being acted out among the immigrants who, despite their rejected ethnicity, felt superior because they were coming from a region that was under British rule and, therefore, considered superior.

The sense of superiority of Afro-Caribbean immigrants, the 'excess identity', and the sense of entitlement of Afro-Costa Rican born were combined elements which helped in the construction of an Afro-Costa Rican black identity. Despite the covert and overt racism that was evident within early 20th century Costa Rica, it is within everyday life that elements of an Afro-Costa Rican identity were reinforced. This re-enforcement came about through the immigrant population utilization of cultural tactics, which, according to Michel de Certeau are used by individuals who are seen as 'the other'. Afro-Caribbean immigrants who were considered the 'other' were able to use 'tactics' of survival within 19th century Costa Rica which were evident in their everyday lives interaction based on their collective cultural memory. Some of these 'tactics' include the speaking of the English language with Jamaican flavor, the practice of the Protestantism, the preservation of some aspects of Jamaican culinary among others. Interesting to note, that some of these 'tactics' became important elements of Afro-Costa Rican black identity.

What follows is an unpacking of some of the everyday life activities/'tactics' of 19th century Afro-Costa Ricans which would have helped in the construction of their black identity. In the analysis, the public and private spaces are identified as sites for the development of these elements of identity construction. I argue that an individual's identity is constructed by a set of layers which are spread within the private and public space. The first layer which is spread in the private space is found within the family into which one is born and carrying primary information received from caregivers. This primary information will be evident in the way the

individual starts to know and experience the world, and will inform the individual of her or his ethnicity and racial composition. The individual will learn basic cultural practices that are in some instances unique to her/his ethnic group—the way of dressing, language used, religion practiced, choice of political party, preferred type of food, preferred type of music etc. Some identifiable elements found in the identity construction of Afro-Costa Ricans in the private space will be noticeable in the perpetuation of the English language. Afro-Costa Ricans, especially Afro-Limonenses, will say that they are trilingual, because they speak Spanish, English and the Jamaican Vernacular Dialect.

Both Standard English and Jamaican Vernacular Dialect known as patois¹⁸⁶ by mainstream Costa Rica are learned in first instance within the private space. Early 20th century Afro-Costa Rican children would have spoken English or patois in their houses, and Spanish in the public sphere. Within the context of a racist society, mainstream Costa Rica wants to devalue this element which Afro-Caribbean parents considered as a positive one to pass on to their children. Nora Gordon shares an experience:

A Spanish buay [boy] one day say to me, you duo [do not] speak English verdad! Oonoo [you] speak patua [patois], a se [I said] the same way that you all duo speak Spanish, is the same thing [laughter]. I tell him I do [do not] know we [where] oonoo get that from, I do talk patua (Gordon 2006).

Nora is defending her ancestral language as legitimate English while, at the same time, recognizing that it has some variations just as when she sarcastically makes reference to the Spanish that he speaks which is not the same Spanish as might be spoken in Spain. She deflects his intention to make her feel badly about the English she speaks. She also recognizes that what she speaks is not the true patois¹⁸⁷ which she confirms in her next expressions:

Those people that come from Jamaica, they speak patua because we use to hear them you know, but is a thing I don't even understand...really they use to speak it, but like them do [do not] talk to us that we could understand it...maybe they wanted to say things that they don't want us to hear...(Gordon 2006).

186 Afro-Costa Ricans and Afro-Limonenses in particular do not refer to the English they speak as patois but as Limón English.

187 See Hill on Creole language pgs.32-35.

With this last expression, Nora is giving a peek into the everyday life of Afro-Caribbean and family relations between adults and children. The things that adults did not want the children to understand were said in patois.

Language is an important element of an individual's identity because it carries within it certain meanings, linguistic flavours, and flares that are only identifiable and appreciated by the group that uses the particular language. By way of example, Afro-Limonenses especially, will always begin a conversation using the expression 'mek a tell you' an expression identified along with the greeting 'wapin man'¹⁸⁸ as one of the main expressions within the Limón parlance.

Beside this colloquial expression, Afro-Costa Rican parents ensured that their children received education additional to the Spanish education by sending their children to English schools, which gave them an advantage later in their education and in other areas of their lives. This will be discussed below. Anita Herzfeld in *Mekaytelyuw*, explaining in her introduction her curiosity about Afro-Limonense students in her English course whom she considered were above the others noted that:

Al pedirles a mis alumnos limonenses que me explicaran el por qué de su presencia en una clase que yo consideraba superflua para sus necesidades-ya que en un primer encuentro su nivel de fluidez en el idioma parecía estar muy por encima del de sus compañeros-me revelaron, con un poco de picardía y con mucho buen humor, que su "inglés era diferente" y que de veras necesitaban la clase para "mejorarlo" (xiii).

When my Limonense students were asked to explain their presence in a class which I considered superfluous for their needs-since in a first encounter their level of fluidity in the language seemed better than that of their classmates-they revealed to me, with a some craftiness and with great good humor, that their "English was different" and that they really needed the class to "improve it" (xiii).

The reason the teacher realized that the English of black Limonenses was better than that of their classmates was that while their parents used the Jamaican English as an identifying element, they recognized that this English was also considered as 'improper English' by the ruling class. This was also true in the 19th century Jamaica their fore-parents had left behind.

188 See Palmer.

According to Patrick Bryan, in *Jamaican People*, in his discussion about dress and speech in the late 19th and early 20th century in Jamaica comments:

The language of the Jamaican masses was the conduit through which they expressed their folklore, proverbs and song...the ability to speak 'good English' was a measure of the extent to which a citizen was conversant with British culture (84).

Afro-Costa Ricans speak the language of the masses which was brought by their Jamaican fore-parents but are also able to speak 'good English' when the situation required as in the case of the previous reference. The mass language that Bryan makes references to is also a language that descendants of immigrants want to preserve for its meaning and flavours, and as an identity marker. A case in point is the recent information received via e-mail on December 5, 2010 from Afro-Limonense Roberto Edwards Nicholson stating that:

Te comento que estoy integrado a una comisión que está formulando una propuesta interesante respecto al lenguaje propio de Limón, se va a convertir en lengua oficial por ley y se llamará LIMON TAAK. Es un proyecto de las dos universidades estatales, UNA, y UCR. Imaginate, con esto pretendemos darle identidad propia a los afrodescendientes y respeto a los valores culturales de nuestra etnia. No es un sustituto al ingles gramatical ni nada por el estilo, es un valor de lo nuestro, lo propio, así podemos comenzar a exigir respeto a lo que culturalmente nos representa y que nos distingue del resto de los ciudadanos del país. Imaginate, palabras que antes decíamos eran malas, ahora he descubierto que son palabras de origen aficano, ejemplo: POTOPTO significa varo en un dialecto africano, FENQUE FENQUE FENQUE, es algo debil, NIAM significa comer, GUGUJAGA, tambien es de origen africano y así por el estilo. Sin saberlo, hemos destruido valores propios de nuestra identidad cultural (Roberto Edwards Nicholson, 2010).

I am informing you that I am part of a commission that is formulating an interesting proposal with respect to the language of Limón; it is going to be an official language by law and will be called LIMON TAAK. It is a project of the two state Universities UNA and UCR. Imagine, with this we want to give proper identity to Afro-descendants and respect to the cultural values of our ethnic group. It is not a substitute of the grammatical English, or anything of the sort, it is valuing what is ours, in that way we can begin to demand respect for what represents us culturally and

distinguishes us from the rest of the country. Imagine, words we thought before were wrong, now I have discovered that they are words of African origin, for example, POTOPTO means dirt in an African dialect, FENQUE, FENQUE, FENQUE, is something weak, NIAM means eat, GUGUJAGA, is also of African origin, and so is the style. Inadvertently we have destroyed values of our cultural identity (Lic. Roberto Edwards Nicholson 2010).

This information reinforces Afro-Costa Rican linguistic identity. Those expressions and words that were considered 'not proper English' are being recognized nationally as an important element of Afro-Costa Rican culture and, therefore, have become another positive element in the continued re-creating of their Jamaican cultural legacy and strengthening of their black identity. Edwards Nicholson went on to say an alphabet and sounds used in the province of Limón had already been defined, and believed that while it would be an extraordinary achievement for the country, it would also have a positive impact on Limón and its people.

Another element which was furnished both in the private and public spaces was the Anancy stories known as 'the Breda Nancy stories'.¹⁸⁹ According to Harold Courlander, *African Folklore*:

Ananci, the spider, sometimes called Kwaku (Uncle) Ananci, is the paramount trickster hero of the Ashanti and related Akan peoples. He is also a culture hero and frequently, a buffoon. He is endlessly preoccupied with outwitting the creatures of the field and forest, men, and even the deities. He is an adversary in endless contest with his community. Sometimes seen sympathetically, even as wise, he is more generally characterized as cunning, predatory, greedy, gluttonous and without scruples...A great many ananse men are told today in the Caribbean and in other afro-American communities (135-136).

One of these Afro-American communities where these stories are told is found in the province of Limón. Third and fourth generation Afro-Caribbean descendants can attest to the fact that their knowledge of the Anancy stories was received in the private sphere from their grandparents, particularly grand-mothers, and mothers. They are transmitted as stories of hope for communities who are marginalized. These stories

189 See Annot, Salkey and Hill.

entered not only the Afro-Costa Rican imagination but also mainstream Costa Rica's.¹⁹⁰ Joice Anglin Edwards, in *Anancy en Limón* contributes to the transitioning of some of the elements present in Afro-Caribbean private sphere by collecting and publishing of Anancy stories. Anglin Edwards, in her introduction, explains the importance:

Anancy ha sido y sigue siendo importante para la cultura limonense. Por lo que considero que se deben conocer sus orígenes y su aporte a dicha cultura. Para ello recomiendo que se incluya los cuentos dentro los programas de estudio de los colegios de la provincia de Limón y como material de investigación en la educación superior' (prologo).

Anancy was and continues to be important to Limonense culture. As such I consider that its origin and contribution to such culture should be known. For this I recommend that these stories be included in the study programmes of the high schools of the province of Limón and as research material for tertiary education (prologue).¹⁹¹

Another element in furnishing an Afro-Costa Rican black identity is games, among them brown girl in the ring, riddles that begin with the expressions 'cric, crac, riddle me this, riddle me that', and moonshine dolly. Some of these are transmitted from the memory and experiences of fore-parents who lived in 19th century Jamaica. Bryan, in his discussion of the daily life of children notes that, "There were home games, guessing games, ring games. Children shared the folk songs and stories of adults, for singing was an important way of passing time" (115). Afro-Caribbean parents transmitted some of the guessing and ring games to their Costa Rican children, especially during that period when the province was in its early stages of development and did not have electricity. Many families would sit under candle lights or on full moon nights to play games and tell duddy stories. This activity was also common when the churches held special activities. These games helped not only to keep the community together but to strengthen its black identity.

Another constituent element of black identity for Afro-Costa Ricans was the use of herbs, especially ceracee (*Momordicacharantia*) for tea, called 'bush tea' used for morning beverages as well as for medicinal

190 See literary work of Chang et al.

191 Like Anglin, other Afro-Costa Ricans see its importance and are making its dissemination nation-wide. Minott produced a DVD "Raíces: Derechos Humanos" in which some of the Anancy stories are captured told by an elderly Afro-Costa Rican woman.

purposes.¹⁹² The use of these herbs speaks also to their economic reality since many could not afford to purchase other type of groceries.

Fig. 28. Ceracee bush, still found and used in the province of Limón



Source: Photo by author, 20 June 2010. Taken in Port Limón.

The public spaces are also sites for identity reinforcement especially for immigrants who are isolated from the mainstream as in the case of Afro-Costa Ricans living in the province of Limón. When Afro-Caribbean immigrants traveled and settled in Costa Rica, they brought with them their Christian religion.¹⁹³

Many belonged to one of the at least three main denominations; Anglican, Baptist, and Methodist.¹⁹⁴ The perpetuation of the Christian denominations brought from Jamaica is another element which formed part of Afro-Costa Rican black identity, and was nourished both in the private and public spheres.^{195 196}

Bryan, in his discussion on religion in Jamaica highlights the recognition of what he terms eminent colonial figures of the importance of religion, especially for the working classes. He states, "...religion was inseparable from the daily life of the Afro-Jamaican working classes" (33), and the religion he was speaking about was that brought by the slaves. By the time of 19th century Afro-Caribbean immigration to Costa Rica these were already being syncretized into the Christian religion.

192 For discussion on bush medicine see Hill pg. 21.

193 See Edmonds and Gonzalez

194 In Costa Rica the Roman Catholic Church is the State Church.

195 See also Meléndez and Duncan chapter III.

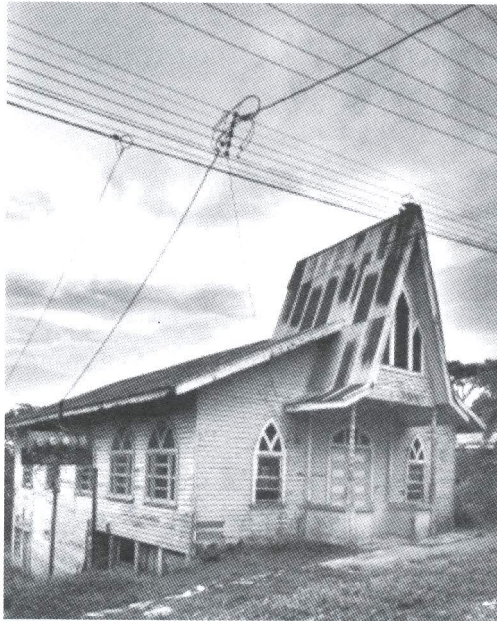
196 These churches are still present in the province and Port of Limón and still worship in the English language.

Fig. 29 First Baptist Church



Source: Photo courtesy of the Public Library in Limón.

Fig. 30. Church of God, Anderson Indiana



Source: Photo courtesy of the Public Library in Limón.

Wilton, in *La Historia del Protestantismo en Costa Rica*, in regards dealing with the establishment of the protestant church in Costa Rica, mentions that the first denomination that began a formal mission among Afro-Caribbean immigrants in Costa Rica was the Jamaican Baptist Union, which later became the Jamaican Baptist Mission Society.

This society was concerned with the spiritual health of Jamaicans overseas. In 1887 the society sent the Rev. Joshua Heat Sobey, Baptist pastor of the church in Montego Bay in Jamaica to visit the area of Central America for a study of the situation. His trip also included a visit to Port Limón. As a result of his inquiry, a mission was established in Central America with Limón as the head quarters and Rev. Sobey as the missionary.¹⁹⁷ The establishment of other protestant churches like the Anglican and Methodist churches followed. Some Afro-Caribbean worshiped in the Catholic Church, especially those from St. Lucia.¹⁹⁸

Another element furnished in the private sphere and helping in the construction of Afro-Costa Rican black identity was Jamaican culinary practice. Some elements of this include the rice and beans cooked with coconut milk and scotch bonnet pepper especially on Sundays, the patties, plantain tart, grater cake, bon,¹⁹⁹ ackee and salt fish, red beans soup, coconut biscuit, johnny cake, run dong, and cut cake, among others. During the 20th century vendors, especially women, would wait at several train stations with their baskets of hot, recently made patties, plantain tarts, yucca roll, grater cakes, cut cakes and other goodies to sell to the passengers. Today some of these same products are still being sold at the bus terminal in Limón and other parts of the country.

197 In-depth study needs to be done on these denominations and their impact on the Afro-Caribbean population in Port Limón. There is an unpublished research by Carmen Hutchinson Miller "Traces of African Beliefs in Christian Practices by Worshipers of the First Baptist Church in Port Limón, Costa Rica. San José, Costa Rica, 1997, for Frontier Internship in Mission, Geneva, Switzerland.

198 Presently Afro-Costa Ricans are not only concentrated in these churches as their fore-parents were, but are members in all the existing denominations in the country. Non-the less there is still a large number of Afro-Costa Ricans who still worship at the Anglican, Baptist and Methodist churches.

199 Which is also known as pan bon.

Fig. 31. Afro-Limonense Cuisine, featuring ackee



Source: Photo by author, 20 June 2010.

Fig. 32. Afro-Limonense Cuisine featuring rice and beans



Source: Photo by author, 20 June 2010.

Fig. 33. Typical Sunday meal



Source: Photo by author, 29 June 2010.

Fig. 34. Patty seller



Source: Photo courtesy of the Public Library in Limón. Circa 1970s.

Fig. 35. Bus Terminal, Port of Limón



Source: Photo by author 21 June 2010.

Fig. 36. Vendor Claudeth Norman Scott, at the bus terminal of Port Limón selling bread, bun, cocadas and other items



Source: Photo by author. 16 June 2010.

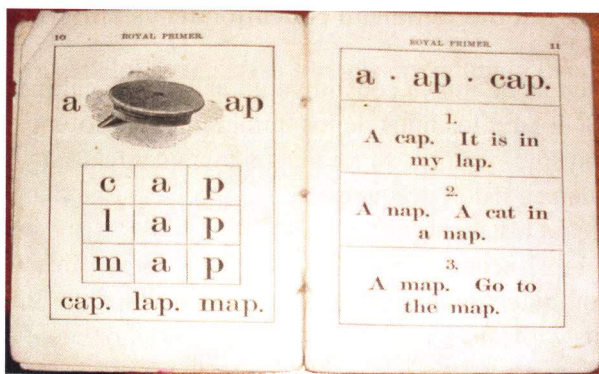
Another important black identity construct found both in the public and private spaces is education using some of the Jamaican educational materials. Afro-Caribbean immigrants, after settling in the Costa Rican foreign country and beginning to have families, did not depend on the educational system of the host country to educate their children but created their own school using the style of educational system from their homeland. Many Afro-Caribbean parents who could afford it sent their Costa Rican born children to Jamaica for formal education. In the video “La Historia tiene color”, produced by la Universidad Estatal a Distancia, 1989, Esther White, a teacher of English, shares that on turning 21 years of age her father sent her to Kingston to study English. On completing her studies, she returned to Costa Rica and started work as an English teacher in 1931. The first generation of Afro-Costa Ricans who did not assimilate to the Costa Rican society wanted to retain some ties with the country of their fore-parents. One of those ties was the preservation of the English and the English taught in Jamaica.

Fig. 37a. The Royal Primer



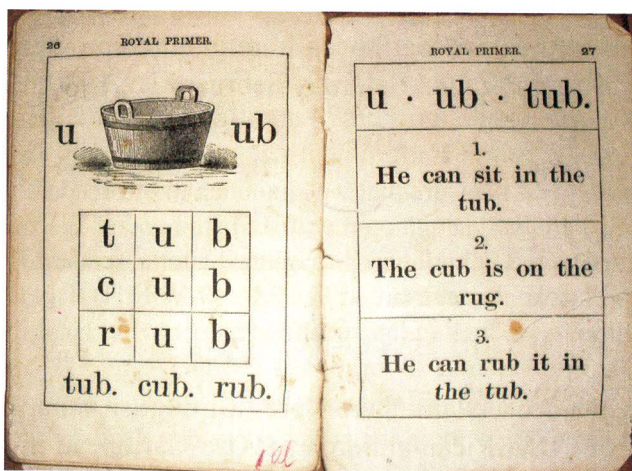
Source: Book courtesy of 86-year-old Ruby Nicholson. Photo taken by author, 21 June 2010, Port Limón Costa Rica.

Fig. 37b. The Royal Primer



Source: Book courtesy of 86-year-old Ruby Nicholson. Photo taken by author, 21 June 2010, Port Limón Costa Rica.

Fig. 37c. The Royal Primer was one of the materials used to teach the children



Source: Book courtesy of 86-year-old Ruby Nicholson. Photo taken by author, 21 June 2010, Port Limón Costa Rica.

Murillo Chaverri, while discussing the establishment of the province of Limón and the government's interest and difficulties encountered in establishing and maintaining a boys' school, mentions an English school that had been founded by a man by the name of Nathan Anderson since 1884. In the context of Murillo Chaverri's work, the mention of this school is to highlight the hardship that Mr. Anderson faced in maintaining the school (60). Chaverri also explains the importance of this school for the

English-speaking migrant labourers in their effort to preserve not only the English language but the Jamaican educational system. Chavarri writes:

Esta escuela de inglés constituye un esfuerzo local inédito en el país, tendiente a dotar a los hijos de los inmigrantes anglófonos de una educación que no sólo recupera su idioma en la modalidad “standard” o británica, sino además todo el esquema educativo formal jamaicano, inspirado en la tradición británica (61).

This English school constitutes an original local effort within the country, with the intention to equipping the children of the English speaking immigrants with an education that maintains not only their language in the “standard” or British modality, but also all the entire Jamaican structure of formal education inspired by British tradition(61).

During the 1930s, there is verification that the hardship encountered by Mr. Anderson was overcome in one way or another by the Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Costa Rican community to the extent that they were able to open schools in the Afro-Caribbean immigrant community of Panama also. *The Limón Search Light*, Saturday February 25, 1930 reports:

A NEW SCHOOL

It is with great pleasure that we announce to our readers that Mr. Morgan who we are well acquainted with and who was a Teacher (sic) at one time in the Baptist School here has opened another educational establishment in the city of Panama called The PANAMA TUTORIAL SCHOOL... We wish him good luck in his vocation (2).

More than a decade later there were still English schools catering to the education of Costa Rican children of Afro-Caribbean immigrants. In 1946 *Atlantic Voice* of January 26, in an article titled “Reopening of the authorized English Language Schools” reported on the re-opening of such schools in the city of Limón.

It was been announced that the officially recognized English language schools which are functioning in this city, Alpha Cottage Excelsior, operating in the Hall of the Universal Negro Improvement Association, the sacred Heart of the Roman Catholic Parish, the Progressive, in the Kingdom Hall, - Salvation Army, - the Alban’s primary in the Hall of

the St. Marks Parish are slated to commence the 1946 school year on Monday the 28th (N.499).

Fig. 38. This was one of the English schools operating in the port of Limón in Jamaica Town known today as Barrio Roosevelt, Circa 1970s.²⁰⁰



Source: Photograph courtesy of the Public Library in Limón.

Miller Blake mentions some of the English school teachers who taught at some of the churches as well as in their home. She remembers:

You had Ms Zylah Barton, Major Lynch school from the Salvation Army, teacher Thomas - a think him was by the Catholic Church but a not sure, Ms Jessie round by the Methodist Church, right beside, Ms Sutton used to teach advance English lesson at the Centro Cultural up Casino, Teacher Carnegie, and Ms Cummins in Limón Centro, the Progressive Baptist Church in San Juan, teacher Aldridge. We use to go by Randal Ryce in San Juan. When we was small there was schools around Jamaica town her apellido [surname] was Ms Ruby, Ms Gaynor. You had plenty a them but a do [do not] rememba now (Miller Blake, 27 Feb. 2011).

Schools were important places for the reinforcement of Afro-Costa Rican, and in particular Afro-Limonense black identity, thereby making

²⁰⁰ In the photograph is Ms Zylah Barton English School at her home. All the major churches had English schools with their respective re-known teachers, the Anglican had Ms DePass, the First Baptist had Ms Vera Sutton, the Salvation Army had Major Lynch, the Methodist, and some private home teachers like teacher Elena who lived closed to the girl school Rafael Iglesias Castro.

individual efforts like that of Ms Joycelyn Sawyers Royal²⁰¹ who founded a primary school known as La Escuela San Marcos²⁰² in the early 80s on the premises of the Anglican church, one of major significance.²⁰³ This school was established in order to help not only Afro-Limonenses but all Limonenses of all ethnic groups to appreciate black culture.

Sawyers' on-going contribution to the building of an Afro-Costa Rican black identity did not stop with this school. When she became diputada (Deputy), she was instrumental and successful in the lobbying for and the passing of a law that acknowledged Alex Curling²⁰⁴ as Benemérito de la Patria in 1998 (Founding Father). Maud Curling notes:

De una iniciativa de la diputada Joycelyn Sawyers, La Asamblea Legislativa lo declaró el “Padre de la Igualdad Jurídica entre los Costarricenses”, durante la Primera Semana Cultural Afrocostarricense, celebrada durante la última semana de agosto de 1998. Dos años después fue escogido como el “Ciudadano Afrocostarricense del Siglo” (125).

Out of an initiative by Deputy Mrs Joycelyn Sawyers, the Legislative Assembly declared him the “Father of Judicial Rights Amongst Costa Ricans”, during the first Afro-Costa Rican Cultural week held during the last week in August of 1998. Two years later he was chosen as the “Afro-Costa Rican citizen of the century (125).

Beside individuals like Sawyers there were always other interest groups formed with specific objectives at particular historical moments for the continuous development of Afro-Costa Ricans. The Asociación Proyecto Caribe presently works in the preservation of Afro-Caribbean cultural values. The Centro de Investigación Afro-Latinoamericana y del Caribe (CIAC) established on November 1995 and whose director is the former Governor of the province of Limón, Mrs. Marcia Johnson, has among some of its main objectives, ‘rescatar la cultura Africana a través de la investigación’ (“the rescue of African culture through research.”)²⁰⁵

201 Mrs. Joycelyn Sawyers was a Parliament Minister under the leadership of President Miguel Angel Rodríguez from 1998-2002. Under the leadership of President Abel Pacheco, she served as a Council to Costa Rica in Jamaica 2002-2006.

202 This school is still in operation in the city of Limón on the same premises where it began.

203 Another testament to the strong link with the church and its black Caribbean Identity.

204 Alex Curling Delisser was instrumental during the leadership of José Figueres, Ferrer for Afro-Costa Ricans to be recognized as legal citizens during the early 1950s.

205 Through oral history we learn that a number of interest groups were formed over the decades. A study that focuses on this aspect of Afro-Costa Rican history is needed.

Another important element that contributed to the preservation of Afro-Jamaican identity was the programming of Radio Casino in particular, beginning in the mid 20th century. According to Mario Bourne:

Esta emisora se fundó en 1945. Salió por primera vez al aire el 18 de agosto de 1945, plena guerra mundial. Estamos cumpliendo 65 años. Es una emisora que ha trabajado para la comunidad Limonense. Sus programaciones están dirigidas hacia toda la población cosmopolita que hay aquí. Tenemos música caribeña, tenemos música para negros... (Bourne, 18 June 2010).

This radio station was established in 1945. It went on air for the first time on August 18, 1945, right in the World War. We are celebrating 65 years. It is a station that has worked for the Limón community. Its programming is directed to the cosmopolitan population that is here. We have Caribbean music, music for blacks... (Bourne, 18 June 2010).

The music for blacks that Mario is referring to is a special programming that was directed by Mr Sydney Walters. Bourne goes on to say:

Hay un programa de 5 a 6 p. m. de Sydney Walters. Todavía se mantiene el programa. Don Syndey se retiró, está en su casa descansando, pero la tradición y la música de él sigue. Hemos mantenido eso también. Hay un muchacho que se llama Ernesto Sinclair, él maneja eso y hay una programación en las noches que se maneja en inglés, y los domingos (Mario Bourne, 18 June 2010).

There is a program from 5 to 6 p. m. by Sydney Walters. The program is still aired. Mr. Sydney is retired, he is at home resting, but the tradition and his music continues. We have maintained that also. There is a fellow named Ernesto Sinclair, he runs that and there is a programming in the nights and on Sundays (Bourne, 18 June 2010).

According to Mr. Sydney Walters's son Dr. Javier Walters, his father's full name is Sydney Walters Thorpes²⁰⁶ his grand mother was Louise Thorpe a Jamaican who spoke fluent Spanish. His father had returned from working on the Panama Canal around 1942 bringing his radio. During that time he met:

206 Mr Sydney Walters died in 2014 in his 90s.

‘one of the Garrón’ that was a radio technician, so when he heard him speaking English he invited him to go to Casino to try and see if he would like it to practice...he went and was there for 55 years at the same hour 5 o’clock in the ‘evening until he retired, for 55 years! (Walters, 19 June 2010).

It is particularly this programming directed to mid-20th century Afro-Costa Ricans, especially Afro-Limonenses that helped in the preservation of certain elements of their Jamaican heritage and the strengthening of their black identity. One the favourite programmes aired was the recordings of ‘the Auntie Roachie’²⁰⁷ stories.

Beside the radio programming there were organizers who would bring certain artist or bands to the port of Limón. During the late 1980s Byron Lee and the Dragonaires visited, and during the early 1990s Oliver Samuels, known as Olivah by the Limonenses visited port Limón and performed at what was at the time the main hall for important events, the Burial Scheme. Certainly the radio programming would have contributed to exposing these and other artists to the population. The same can be said today of the music of Vybz Kartel, Beenie Man, Buju Banton, I Obtain, Capleton, and Damian Marley among others.

Black leadership and institutions are other elements adding to Afro-Costa Rican black identity. The institutions they identified with and kept up to the present day are the burial scheme, and the lodges. These were created as a way to help the community socially and economically. Socially the lodges offered a space to be part of a prestigious group and the burial scheme aided those families who could not afford the cost of a funeral.

The most important organization which united the Afro-Costa Rican community was the United Negro Improvement Association under Marcus Mossiah Garvey.²⁰⁸ There is insufficient scholarly work on Marcus Garvey and his impact on the black community in Costa Rica.²⁰⁹ The publication of Rupert Lewis’s *Marcus Garvey* gives a glimpse of that impact

207 It was not until I came to Barbados and was closer to Jamaica that I learned that Auntie Roachie was really Louise Bennett. Along with many of my friends who listened to Sydney’s programming the favourite Auntie Roachie story was Mina, especially the part ‘vups him rip off the mini skirt afa mina, hay- yay-yay’.

208 Afro-Limonense, engineer Ramiro Crawford was instrumental among other interested people during the late 1980s in helping to get the Liberty Hall declared as a national heritage. For detailed information see Universidad Estatal a Distancia.

209 Scholarly work on the impact of Marcus Garvey on the lives of early 20th century Afro-Costa Ricans is lacking and is needed. See Ronald, Harpelle “Radicalism and Accomodation...” The other work which features Marcus Garvey is the novel of Ana Cristina Rossi’s *Limón Blues*.

on the lives of the people of Costa Rica on his visit in 1921. Lewis comments, "From Kingston he went to Costa Rica where he was greeted with "wild jubilation" by the fifteen thousand people at the Port Limon wharves to welcome him" (121). Newspapers circulated during the 1920s and 30s give evidence of the importance of Marcus Garvey and the UNIA and the role they played in keeping the Afro-Costa Rican community together. One of the roles was the establishment of branches throughout the province of Limón. According to *The Limon Searchlight* November 9, 1929, reporting on the U.N.I.A, branches could be found in the Port of Limón:

The election of Officers for The Limon Div. will come off on Monday 11th inst. (sic) The run for Presidency is between Mr. Cuning and Mr. Smith the present presiding officer. They are both good men, but there is nothing like a change and some of the members are thinking that Mr. Cuning may be able to bring back some of the members who are now out of compliance (3).

Branches were also found in the district of El Cairo, Siquirres and Pacuarito, as shown by *The Limón Searchlight* reports for November and December 1929.

From Cairo²¹⁰

The U.N.I.A. of this locality had a fine welcome meeting in honour of the visit of Mr. A. L. Stewart, President of the Siquirres Branch, who was the Delegate of Costa Rica to Convention in Jamaica. An inspiring address was given by the delegate, as re to the Aspirations of the Convention the back to Africa movement. Some fine recitals were rendered by a selection of children of the Community (*The Limón Searchlight*, 23 Nov. 1929, 2).

AT PACUARITO²¹¹

There will be a Carnaval held on Monday 9th inst. (sic) At Pacuarito by the UNIA all day & night sports of all kinds a Procession headed by the Limón Band to adjacent Section and Back (*The Limón Searchlight*, 7 Dec. 1929: 3).

The last, but not least, of the elements which contributed to the Afro-Costa Rican black identity was the type of sports these migrants transplanted from Jamaica. Bryan, discussing leisure and class in the late

210 Cairo is the fifth district of the third canton of the province of Limón, Siquirres.

211 Pacuarito is the second district of the third canton of the province of Limón, Siquirres.

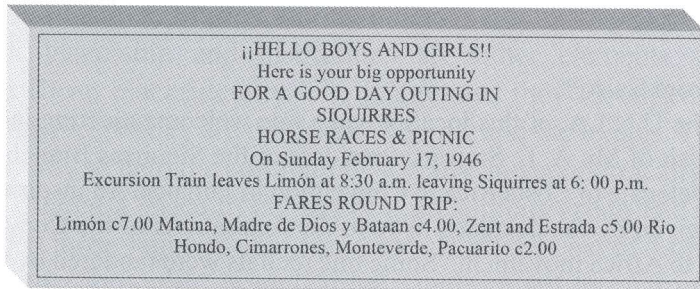
19th century, comments on how sports had class distinction, and how some were social equalizers like horse racing. He states that “racing day was a gathering of all social classes and colors” (194).

This social equalizer was also played out in 19th century Costa Rica among Afro-Costa Ricans. In *The Limón Weekly News* of September 19, 1903, in a letter to the editor J. S. Melbourne writes:

Port Limón, for a Republic city, should be congratulated on the numerous games and past- times, activities that have become popularized. Ten to twelve years ago, we had’nt (sic) a single sport of any importance, and now we can boast of numbers of past times. Above all racing stands unrivalled, and never in the annals in this a country; has a meeting been more successful, and interesting...(3).

In *The Atlantic Voice*, of February 9, 1946 there is an ad reproduced below, Fig. 39, which confirms the rivalry of horse racing 43 years after J. S. Melbourne’s statement.

Fig. 39. Advertisement showcasing the rivalry in horse racing



Source: *The Atlantic Voice*. Feb. 9, 1946: 5

The other game the immigrant brought over was cricket. According to Bryan “Cricket,...was among Jamaica’s most popular sports. It was during the late-nineteenth century that Jamaica’s cricket clubs came into being...” (196). It is no surprise then that it was widely practiced among Afro-Costa Ricans of the same period. In the *The Limón Searchlight* 8 February, 1930, reference is made to a cricket game. The paper reports:

A most interesting game of cricket was played at Estrada on February 4th. Lovers of the sport from far and near came to witness the game between the Britanic C.C. of this place and the Surprise C.C. of Limón. And all were highly pleased in the sportsmanlike manner in which the game was carried on and the spirit in which the losing team took their defeat. The game started at 9:15 under the guidance of Mr. W.L. Strachan of Martina and Mr. C.N. Malcom of Estrada...The homesters won the toss and sent the visitors to bat who could only muster 31 runs of which 10 were Extras, under the fine bowling of J. Spence and J. Johnson. Spence taking eight wickets for 8 runs...The Estrada team then went to bat and made 45 runs of which Johnson was responsible for 13 and Etras (sic) 6 thus winning the match by 14 runs (1).

In *The Atlantic Voice* March 30 1946, there is another reference to a cricket game, which also showed how long they maintained this aspect of the Caribbean culture. As Afro-Costa Ricans began to incorporate more into mainstream Costa Rican society this game was replaced by football soccer which is the main Costa Rican sport.²¹²

Horse racing, on the other hand, while not as popular as in the earlier days will re-emerge every so often especially in Siquirres,²¹³ and other rural communities of the province of Limón along with athletic meets, which also came with the Jamaican immigrants.²¹⁴

It is clear that Afro-Costa Rican black identity is an amalgamation of some of the cultural elements inherited from their Afro-Jamaican ancestors which they have managed to preserve with pride for over a century. Although mainstream Costa Rica have constructed a negative national identity for them, this has not affected this Black identity.

212 It could be argue also that another reason for the disappearance of the sport of Cricket was the emergence of football in Latin America during the late 19th century. See Miller.

213 Siquirres is the third canton of the province of Limón.

214 See *The Searchlight* November Saturday 16, 1929 4 for an announcement on athletic meet in the province of Limón.

CONCLUSION

THE PROVINCE AND PORT OF LIMÓN: METAPHORS FOR AFRO-COSTA RICAN BLACK IDENTITY

Fig. 40. A bird's eye view of the Port of Limón. Circa 1920s



Source: Courtesy of the Library of Limón.

As being discussed throughout the development of this book, the province of Limón became important for late 19th century Costa Rican administration for its economic potential. In some way it became also importance for Afro-Caribbean immigrants who because of labour circumstances settled in this province, and later found it more

comfortable to remain because of the country's racism against people of African descent. Later this region became a refuge for Afro-Caribbean immigrants when some decided or were forced to remain in the country after the economic constraints the railroad project faced, during which period it became the regional safeguard of those cultural elements brought and recreated especially from the Jamaican immigrants. The province of Limón became this regional and cultural safeguard for the immigrants I argue because of its difficult geographical accessibility for the rest of late 19th century Costa Rica as was discussed. It is the inaccessibility of this region which served as a regional shield which afforded Afro-Caribbean immigrant community the freedom to live within this region and develop aspects of their culture which help later in making this area a consideration as a metaphor for Afro-Costa Rican black identity.

The province of Limón will be considered a metaphor for Afro-Costa Rican identity based on some cultural 'tactics' utilized by the Afro-Caribbean immigrant in order to survive by taking advantage of the region geographical marginality. De Certeau comments that,

"Tactics" are procedures that gain validity in relation to the pertinence they lend to time - to the circumstances which the precise instant of an intervention transforms into a favourable situation...(38).

One of the tactics utilized by Afro-Caribbean immigrant was to impregnate the province with some aspects of the Jamaican culture. Within the circumstance of regional and racist marginality, this was the most pertinent 'tactic' to utilize since many of the Afro-Caribbean labourers had already decided to remain in Costa Rica. This circumstance in the long run would work as a double edge sword for their descendants, Afro-Costa Ricans, who would share a double culture, the one inherited by their Afro-Caribbean fore-parents and their national culture as Costa Rican born citizens.

By deciding to remain in Costa Rica and re-create their culture within the province of Limón, this decision created for the rest of the non-Afro Costa Rican population the covert perception that it is the 'black' region of Costa Rica. Covert perception because there is not an official identification of this region as the 'black' region of Costa Rica, but there is the general view that it is. I argue that there are two main reasons for this perception. The first reason is based on the fact that this province historically has had the largest number of people of Afro-Caribbean descent and

later Afro-Costa Ricans living in the country;²¹⁵ therefore, the perception that they are the majority of the population in the province of Limón. I continue to argue that this perception is fueled by the everyday practices of Afro-Caribbean and especially Afro-Jamaicans immigrants. By performing many of their everyday practices like the speaking of the English language with Jamaican flavor, observing their celebrations, maintaining their culinary practices and their religious worships among other everyday activities, they managed to give the impression that they are an ethnic majority in the province of Limón.

This perception of the 'black' province according to De Certau would be in this case 'victories of the "weak" over the "strong" (xix). Afro-Caribbean immigrants within the context of foreign labour relations are considered the "weak" ones but finding ways in their everyday lives within a foreign country to live out their culture and ideologically take over a region is definitely a victory over the "strong". This victory is demonstrated in Russell Leight Sharman "Black Art: Diaspora Aesthetics in Costa Rica". In his work, the perception of the province of Limón as the black province is confirmed by one of his mestizo Limonense interviewee who is an artist by the name of William Durán who expresses his frustration about the perception of Limón as a 'Black' city. He notes:

Throughout our conversations Duran expressed the frustration many whites feel in regard to the perceptions of Limón as a Black city. According to Duran, when the people of the Central Valley speak of Limón they say 'los negros' [the blacks]. We have now in Limón 60% whites, like 5% Chinese and the rest are Blacks (39).

The last population census done in Costa Rica that desegregated the groups by race was done in 1950. The total Costa Rican population in that census was 800,875. Living in the province of Limón was 41,360 representing 5% of the population.²¹⁶ Of that total 25,926 were whites, and *mestizos*, and 13,749 were *negros* (Blacks), these been the largest minority group between *amarillos* (Yellows) 361, and *indígenas* (Indigenous) 1,278.²¹⁷ The 2000 population census data show that the total Costa Rican population for that period is of 3,810,179 inhabitants²¹⁸, 72,784 are

215 See 1950s population census in chapter I, Table 1.2.

216 See Ministerio de Economía y Hacienda.43.

217 Ibid. 82.

218 See Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos. 37.

Afro-Costa Ricans,²¹⁹ of this total of Afro-Costa Ricans 54, 131 live in the province of Limón which highlights the region with the largest population of Afro-Costa Ricans. Based on both population census figures, *los negros* were not the majority in the province of Limón during the 1950s but it certainly housed the major concentration of Afro-Costa Ricans than the rest of the country even to the present day. For Durán his confirmation without any statistical verification saw this as something negative. Even when he is a Limonense himself, does not want to be identified as *'negro'* which can be attributed to the covert racism of this country.

Because of this perception that Limón is the 'black' province mainstream Costa Ricans identify every person of African descent within the country as a born and bred Limonense. This is exemplified by an account shared by interviewee Grace Cope Gordon who is an Afro-Limonense and registered nurse living and working in San José, she gave an account about one of her mestizo colleagues in a hospital in Heredia.²²⁰ She notes that, on a specific occasion there was an Afro-Costa Rican male patient who was discharged from this hospital. Within their system of operation, there is a male colleague who drives the discharged patients to their homes. Without asking the discharged Afro-Costa Rican male patient where he lives, he assumes that the man was from Limón, and drove him there,²²¹ then to realize when he got to Limón that the man was from the province of Heredia. She ended by confirming that, for the mestizos in Costa Rica, every person of African descent²²² is from Limón.

The other main reason to consider the province of Limón a metaphor for Afro-Costa Rican black identity is the imposition of their culture on the landscape, as mentioned by Murillo Chaverri, and in particular about the Jamaicans, from the early stages of migration into Costa Rica, they had impregnated this region with their culture, making it from the onset of the province development the distinct region that it is until today. Some of these differences are noted in terms of the scenery. Traveling from the Central Valley to the province of Limón it can be observed the change in vegetation as it began to approach this region. Along the way there are palm trees, cacao, bread fruit trees, among a variety of other type of fruits and vegetables which came with the Caribbean people. Also

219 Ibid 227.

220 Heredia is one of the seven provinces that forms the Costa Rican country.

221 This drive is approximately 2 hours and a half.

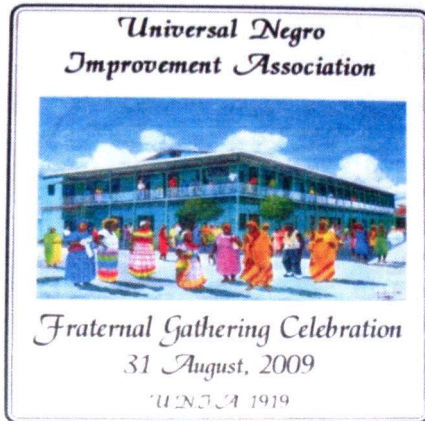
222 Read every person with dark pigmentation.

noticeable was the way the houses were built along the railroad tracks. In their chapter three Meléndes and Duncan discuss this in detail.

In terms of other cultural identifiers in the region, because of the immigrant strong cultural influence they spoke English, becoming the only province up to the present where the majority of its population speaks another language other than the official Spanish language. The other cultural difference is the worshiping of other religious denominations other than the official Catholic religion which was mentioned above.

Because of these main reasons Afro-Caribbean left a cultural legacy that is not only observed in the speaking of the English language with Jamaican flavor and the worshiping of Christian protestant denominations but also in celebrations and material legacy. These celebrations and material legacy were made possible to maintain because of the collective memory of the Afro-Jamaican immigrants. Halbwachs argues that every individual has their own personal memory but they also share one that is particular to the group they belong even when they themselves have not experience that memory. In the case of Afro-Costa Ricans they share a collective memory from the experiences of their immigrant fore-parents and they ensure that these memories do not disappear by commemorating some of these, as in the case of the celebration of El Día del Negro²²³

Fig. 41. Invitation to 2009 Día de Negro Celebration in Limón



Source: Courtesy of Interviewee Ms Ruby Nicholson. Limón, June 2010.

223 Presently it is called Día del Negro y de la Cultura Afro-Costarricense. *Died in 2015*

This is one of the most outstanding activities which identify the province, and the Afro-Costa Rican, especially Afro-Limonenses, the celebration of August 31st. This celebration began with Marcus Garvey. According to *Limón Roots*,

He visited this country on four different occasions and during his first visit in 1910 he worked as a time keeper with the United Fruit Company. He established August 31st as a special day when all black people around the world should respect, feel proud and celebrate the African cultural heritage (3).²²⁴

For Afro-Costa Ricans and for Afro-Limonenses in particular, this is one of the three main important celebrations of the year beside the Independence celebration on September 15, and the carnival in October. For the August 31st celebration there is a lot of preparation from the different organizations in the province of Limón. For the last years the celebration has expanded to include a colorful parade in the Port of Limón showcasing aspects not only of the Afro-Caribbean preserved legacy but also general aspects of African culture in that way publicly showing their pride for their ancestral culture. The parade presents floats depicting aspects of Afro-Costa Rican lives based on the yearly team. Women and men will dress in African attire. To continue strengthening especially the English speaking Caribbean ties the organizers will invite calypsonians to make guest appearance during these celebrations. Recently the celebration as expanded to the Capital San José where they have attracted a large number of followers. For 2010 the organizers invited calypsonian Mighty Gabby from Barbados who made guest appearances at the National Theater in San José, and in the Port of Limón.

Another collective memory that continues to connect Afro-Costa Ricans with their Afro-Caribbean past is the material legacy of the United Negroes Improvement Association building (U.N.I.A). The importance of this is that they still can be found in different parts of the province of Limón.

224 See Harpelle, "Radicalism and Accommodation..." for an in-depth discussion on the impact of Marcus Garvey in the province of Limón during the early 20th century.

Fig. 42. The U.N.I.A. building known as “The Blacks.”²²⁵



Source: Photo by author, 20 June 2010.

Individuals like engineer Ramiro Crawford who in the late 1980s among other interested people, was instrumental in helping to get the Liberty Hall²²⁶ declared as a national heritage²²⁷, he is also the director and editor of the magazine *Limón Roots*, where he and his staff highlights and promotes not only the achievement of Afro-Costa Ricans but also the unbroken ties with the Caribbean. In August of 2003, diputado Edwin Patterson Bent²²⁸ submitted to Parliament a proposal to declare the building that is presently called La Casa de la Cultura de Puerto Viejo²²⁹ (Puerto Viejo's Cultural House) as the “Casa de la Cultura Marcus Garvey” (Marcus Garvey's Cultural House). The rationale that Patterson Bent puts behind this proposal, is the historical fact that Garvey, with the support of Afro-Costa Ricans bought a piece of land in Puerto Viejo in 1935, where they could hold their meetings. The building was finished in 1937 and was called Liberty Hall, later it was used as an English school and presently it is the Casa de la Cultura de Puerto Viejo.²³⁰

Beside the effective ‘tactics’ of the different language spoken, different religious denominations practices and Afro-Caribbean material legacy in the province of Limón, the preservation of the collective memory played a very important role in maintaining Afro-Jamaican culture within

225 This is shortened version from the words The Black Star Line.

226 The Liberty Hall known as the Blacks, for Limonenses and people in general is a material legacy of the Marcus Garvey Movement around late 1920s early 30s in Costa Rica.

227 See Universidad Estatal a Distancia.

228 Mr. Edwin Patterson Bent was Minister of Parliament under the leadership of President Abel Pacheco 2002-2006.

229 Puerto Viejo is one of the communities in Limón fourth canton, Talamanca.

230 See Paterson Bent.

the province of Limón and its metaphor for black identity in Costa Rica. This is ideologically and culturally sustained by the collective memory of the family. According to Halbwachs:

Family recollections in fact develop as in so many different soils, in the consciousness of various members of the domestic group. Even when they live near each other, but all the more so when life keep them distant...(54).

For this discussion, family can also be referred to a larger group of individuals who are not related by blood but by culture. As Halbwachs explains about family when they get together after being apart, they tend to behave and assume the role they had played in the family before leaving. This is true especially for Afro-Limonenses who had left and lived in other parts of the country. Even their children, who were not born in the province of Limón share their collective memory and assume certain attitudes and behaviours even when they are not living in the province. One of these attitudes is the defense and protection of the image of the province from false accusations and stereotypes. One example will suffice about the attitude towards the province by one of the children of Afro-Limonenses born in other parts of the country. A Newspaper report of *Diario Extra* on June 15, 2004, evidence the negative identity construction of the province and its Afro-Costa Rican population due to racism. Esmeralda Britton²³¹ who is an Afro-Costa Rican born and living in San José comes out to defend the province and its people against negative stereotypes. Esmeralda Britton comments with concern in el *Diario Extra* 2004:

Duele. Es como un dardo envenenado de imprecisiones y generalidades que se disparan contra toda la gente de Limón, como si esta provincia fuera el territorio segregado para hipócritas, prostitutas, drogadictas y drogadictos, funcionarias y funcionarios públicos cuya única vocación es la ineficiencia (*Diario Extra*, Junio, 2004: 11).

It hurts. Is like poisonous degas of imprecision, and generalizations that are fired against all the people of Limón, as if this province was the segregated territory for hypocrites, prostitutes, drug addicts, public workers whose only vocation is inefficiency (*Diario Extra*, June 2004: 11).

231 Esmeralda Britton was at this time the Minister for the Condition of Women.

Then she continues to publicly defend the province by embracing it as her own. She declares ownership of the province of Limón:

Ser Limonense es un honor. Y tener a Limón en el corazón, es una inspiración constante y una responsabilidad urgente para construir la calidad de vida decente que todas y todos se merecen (*Diario Extra*, Junio 15, 2004:11).

Being a Limonense is an honour. Having Limón in one's hearth is a constant inspiration and urgent responsibility to build the quality of decent life that all deserve (*Diario Extra*, 15 June 2004: 11).

Esmeralda Britton comments are laden with both pain and pride. Pain for the way mainstream Costa Rica continues to perceive, and treat the province and the people of this region, and proud for the region and its people's struggle for a better life despite the economic, and racist odds. It is interesting to note that even though Esmeralda is not a born Limonense, being Afro-Costa Rican is enough to defend this region it is argued because of what it represents in terms of Afro-Costa Rican identity and the collective memory of her ethnic group.

As a result of the dynamic of representation and appropriation between the insider and outsider, the province and port of Limón became metaphors for Afro-Costa Rican black identity, a phenomenon identified in the national perception that the majority of Afro-Costa Ricans live within this region; therefore considering it the 'black' province. It is the conjugation of elements the un-intentional settling of Afro-Caribbean immigrants, the influence and impact of their culture, the larger population representation and the preservation of mainly Jamaican culture by the part of their Afro-Costa Rican descendants which help in making this region and particularly the Port of Limón, a metaphor for Afro-Costa Rican black identity. The influence of especially Jamaican has grown by not only Afro-Costa Ricans but the Costa Rican society in general through the popularity of the music of Bob Marley and other reggae artists, targeting the new generation. The great influence of the Jamaican culture among the immigrant families is noticeable by the food they eat and the adoption of the Jamaican Vernacular which earlier was identified as "Patois". For their Afro-Costa Rican descendants, it has taken an identity of its own, popularly recognized as 'mek a tell you' and most recently in the process of being officially recognized as 'Limón Taak'.

Metaphors for
Black Identity

This book is my first attempt to contribute to historiography on Afro-Costa Ricans. Its limits as such forbade to go beyond exploring some topics in detail, like the presence of Jamaicans during the 18th century in the region of Costa Rica, and their involvement with the Zambos and Indígenas, or necessary comparative historical analysis of the situation of Afro-Caribbean immigrant labour during the late 19th century between the countries of Costa Rica, Panamá and Honduras. In the same way, more detailed investigation needs to be undertaken to determine the participation of Afro-Limonenses in the 1948 Civil War. Also studies need to be done to examine the differences or similarities between Afro-Costa Ricans born in the province of Limón and those born in San José or in other provinces of Costa Rica where there is a minority Afro-Costa Rican population. The impact of Marcus Garvey on Afro-Costa Rican experience is a topic for another research. Thorough investigation is needed to clarify the popular belief that 'blacks could not past from Turrialba' and the overt and covert participation of Afro-Caribbean women in migration movement to Costa Rica, exploring how they worked side by side the men during the construction of the railroad and beyond supporting their families with their paid and un-paid jobs. This book highlights the only 20th century female basketball team organized in Limón which played against at least three other female teams in the capital in San José. Since this was out of the scope of the investigation it was not further developed but considered important to be recorded for future investigations.

This book is giving voice to silent subjects, making visible a historically neglected community within the Costa Rican society. It has allowed me as the investigator to tell a story from the perspective of the insider. I was born and grew up in a country exposed to a hegemonic story of ethnic exclusion. In their introductory comments Carlos Meléndez and Quince Duncan were hoping that other Costa Ricans 'emprendan tareas más perfectas y positivas' ['embark on more perfect and positive tasks']. It is hoped that this book will be received as a positive contribution to new historiography about the province of Limón and especially about the proud descendants of Afro-Caribbean immigrants, who are today citizens of Costa Rica, WE Afro-Costa Ricans.

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APPENDIX I

MID-TWENTIETH CENTURY LEGISLATION GIVING AFRO-COSTA RICAN LEGAL RIGHTS

Colección de Leyes, Decretos, Acuerdos y Resolución (1955) states,
No 1902 –1955

La Asamblea Legislativa de la República de Costa Rica Decreta:

- Artículo 1° Crease un servicio de obtención de documentos de identidad para los ciudadanos que deban proveerse de ellos y de opción y naturalización para elementos de nacionalidad extranjera nacidos en la república y que puedan y deseen optar por la nacionalidad costarricense o naturalizarse como tales, según el caso. Igualmente para los extranjeros que justifiquen una residencia in-interrumpida no menor de veinte años.
- Artículo 2° La dirección superior de este servicio estará a cargo del Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones quien dictará los reglamentos y medidas conducentes a la eficaz aplicación de esta ley.
- Artículo 3° El Registro Civil, por medio de su Sección de Opciones y Naturalizaciones y de las oficinas que establecerá el Tribunal en los lugares en donde se estime conveniente, prestarán a los interesados los servicios tendientes a tramitar las Opciones y Naturalizaciones en su caso, así como también los documentos de identificación.
- Artículo 4° La tramitación de las solicitudes ante las oficinas citadas en el artículo anterior y las certificaciones indispensables para la misma no demandarán gasto alguno para los interesados. Las solicitudes serán autenticadas por la autoridad política del domicilio del solicitante o por un abogado.
- Artículo 5° Si el nacimiento del solicitante no aparece inscrito en el Registro Civil la oficina principal lo inscribirá conforme lo dispone el Reglamento del Registro del Estado Civil.
- Artículo 6° Esta ley deroga el Decreto Ley No 836 de 4 de noviembre de 1949 y el párrafo 3o del artículo 5o de la ley No 31 de 10 de diciembre de 1934, y rige desde su publicación (1955: 25)²³²

232 This law also appears in the Gaceta Oficial No 157 of July 16, 1955.

APPENDIX II

Table 2.1

Some of Costa Rica's 19th Century Racist Laws

YEAR	LAW
<p>1862. <i>La Gaceta</i>: No. 191, 8-11-1862 This prohibits the colonization of the country by any other race but white.</p>	<p>Ley de Bases y Colonización. “Se prohíbe la colonización del territorio nacional por parte de las razas africana y china, e incluso faculta al gobierno para prohibir el ingreso de esas poblaciones no deseadas al país. Se estimula y protege la inmigración europea, destinando un fondo considerable anual del presupuesto nacional y ofreciendo diez manzanas de terreno a cada individuo y veinte a cada matrimonio, y por cada hijo menor de dieciocho años cinco manzanas más.”</p>
<p>1888. <i>La Gaceta</i>: decreto XXIX del 20-11-1888. This law encourages the migration of Italians with the understanding that they will work in the agriculture and industrial area.</p>	<p>“Se estimuló la radicación de trabajadores italianos en tanto que por decreto hacía al Estado responsable de costear la traída de sus familias, con tal de que se dedicasen a empresas agrícolas e industriales.”</p>
<p>1891. <i>La Gaceta</i>: decreto IV art, 18, 25-1-1891. This law came as a result of the signing of a contract with Cyril Smith for the construction of a railroad in the pacific.</p>	<p>“Es entendido que el concesionario no introducirá gente de raza asiática para los trabajos de la línea férrea, ni asiáticos o negros para labrar o colonizar las tierras que se le otorgan.”</p>
<p>1892. <i>La Gaceta</i>: Oficio No. 1, artículo XIX del 18-2-1892. This year the Colonizer Agricultural Bank was open to finance immigrants, but in its article number 19 it was stipulated that neither Asians, blacks, criminals, beggars or invalids could be financed.</p>	<p>“los inmigrantes no podrán ser en ningún caso asiáticos, negros, mendigos, inválidos ni criminales.” This is a compilation from the following Source: Duncan, Quince and Powell Lorein. <i>Teoría y Práctica del Racismo</i>. San José: Departamento Ecuménico de Investigaciones (DEI), 1988: 67-69.</p>

Table 2.2
Some of Costa Rica's 20th Century Racist Laws

YEAR	LAW
<p>1904. <i>La Gaceta</i>: No. 136 del 15-7-1904 This was another restrictive migratory law</p>	<p>“para evitar la inmigración de gentes que por su raza... serán en el país motivo de degeneración fisiológica y elementos propicios para el desarrollo de la holganza y del vicio.”</p>
<p>1934. <i>Colección de Leyes y Decretos</i> This law was prohibiting Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Costa Rican to work on the Pacific side of the country</p>	<p>No.5 “En los trabajos de producción y explotación de la industria bananera del país se procurará dar preferencia a los costarricenses y estos gozarán en igualdad de ocupaciones de las mismas ventajas y prerrogativas que los empleados y trabajadores de otras nacionalidades. Para proveer al personal de empleados de oficinas y talleres las empresas deberán ocupar por lo menos un 60% de los costarricenses aptos para el desempeño de sus respectivas funciones. Queda prohibido, en la zona del Pacífico, ocupar gentes de color en dichos trabajos.”</p>
<p>1940. <i>Colección de Leyes y Decretos</i>. 1942. Ley No. 37. 4 de Junio de 1940 This law was barring any non-white person to enter the country</p>	<p>“No serán admitidos en el país, y por consiguiente deben ser rechazados por las autoridades de los puertos, aeropuertos y fronteras de la República los extranjeros que vengan en calidad de inmigrantes ó transeúntes, que se hallaren en las condiciones siguientes: a) los de raza negra, chinos, árabes, turcos, sirios, armenios, gitanos, culies etc. b) los extranjeros que sin estar comprendidos en los inicios anteriores, sean personas inconvenientes, nocivas o peligrosas al orden o progreso de la República o a la conservación de la raza ya sea por sus tendencias agitadoras, ya por sus escasos medios de subsistencia o por las características raciales que predominen en ellas y sean de notoria desafinidad con la población nacional.”</p>

Table 2.3

Some of Costa Rica's 20th and 21st Century Anti-discriminatory Laws

YEAR	LAW
<p>1955. Law 1902 <i>Colección de Leyes, Decretos y Resoluciones</i> This law derogates discriminatory migratory laws. This law has six articles.</p>	<p>Art. 1. "Crease un servicio de obtención de documentos de identidad para los ciudadanos que deban proveerse de ellos y de opción y naturalización para elementos de nacionalidad extranjera nacidos en la república y que puedan y deseen optar por la nacionalidad costarricense o naturalizarse como tales, según el caso. Igualmente para los extranjeros que justifiquen una residencia in-interrumpida no menor de veinte años." Art. 6. Esta ley deroga el Decreto Ley No 836 de 4 de noviembre de 1949 y el párrafo 3o del artículo 5o de la ley No 31 de 10 de diciembre de 1934, y rige desde su publicación 1955."</p>
<p>1960 Law 2694 November 22, 1960. This law Prohibits any type of labour discrimination.</p>	<p>Art. 1. "Prohíbese toda suerte de discriminación, determinada por distinciones, exclusiones o preferencias, fundada en consideraciones sobre raza, color, sexo, edad, religión, estado civil, opinión política, ascendencia nacional, origen social, filiación o situación económica, que limite la igualdad de oportunidades o de trato en material de empleo o ocupación".</p>
<p>1968 Law 4230 November 11, 1968. This law Prohibits Racial Discrimination.</p>	<p>Art. 1. "Se considera delito la negativa a permitir el ingreso de personas a asociaciones, centros de diversión, hoteles, afines, clubes y centros privados de enseñanza, por motivos de discriminación racial."</p>
<p>1973 La Gaceta No.208 November 6, 1973. Law 5360 October 11, 1973. This prohibits racial immigrants restrictions.</p>	<p>Art. 1. "Se prohíben todas las restricciones a la inmigración fundadas en consideración de raza." Art. 2. "Se derogan las disposiciones contrarias a los dispuestos en el artículo anterior y contenidos en los artículos 38, 41, y 42 del Decreto Ejecutivo No. 4 de 4 de Abril de 1942, reformado por ley No. 51 de 29 de diciembre de 1943, relativos a la raza china."</p>

The Province and Port of Limon: Metaphors for Afro-Costa Rican Identity

It is another publication in the emerging scholarship on 19th century Afro-Caribbean descendants in Costa Rica. This book analyzes from the perspective of history and of everyday life some of the reasons why the province and the Port of Limón are considered metaphors for Afro-Costa Rican black identity. It also highlights the region's importance for Afro-Costa Ricans, and explains how they have managed to maintained aspects of late 19th century Jamaican immigrant culture along with their Costa Rican identity.

Es otra de la emergente escolaridad sobre los descendientes Afro-Caribenos en Costa Rica. El libro analiza desde la perspectiva histórica y de la cotidianidad algunas de las razones por las cuales la provincia y el Puerto de Limón pueden ser considerados como metáforas de la identidad Afro en Costa Rica. También subraya la importancia de la región para los Afro-Costarricenses y explica cómo han logrado mantener aspectos de los inmigrantes Jamaquinos de finales del siglo 19 junto a su identidad costarricense.

This publication is contributing to the present historiography in presenting one of the first studies which tries to explain the importance of the province of Limón to its Afro-Costa Rican population. The book is shifting the main focus of earlier historiography which mentions Afro-Caribbean immigrants, and their descendants exclusively within the context of the construction of the railroad, and of banana cultivation, making visible and presenting the community of Afro-Caribbean and particularly Jamaican descendants in Costa Rica as active subjects of history.

Esta publicación está contribuyendo a la presente historiografía presentando uno de los primeros estudios que tratan de explicar la importancia de Limón para su población Afro-Costarricense. El libro cambia el enfoque de publicaciones anteriores que mencionan al inmigrante Caribeño y a sus descendientes únicamente dentro del contexto de la construcción del ferrocarril y las plantaciones de banano, haciendo a la comunidad Afro-Caribeña y a sus descendientes en Costa Rica visibles y sujetos activos de la historia.



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