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## Background Report on the Garifuna of Honduras

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## Acknowledgements

This document was written as part of a series of InnovATE background studies. These are studies conducted on the AET system in a particular country, at times with particular attention paid to an AET institution or program. Background studies are based partially on USAID mission interest, partially on the presence of interesting AET activities or problems, and on providing a geographical balance. Most of the initial work on the studies will be done through desktop review of available literature and communication with experts. The remainder of the information is sometimes amassed through data collection visits. Lessons learned in one country can often be applied in other countries.

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## Introduction

Innovation for Agricultural Training and Education (InnovATE) is a USAID-funded project supporting the capacity development of agricultural training and education systems from primary school through secondary institutions as well as vocational and technical schools and universities. The InnovATE program, implemented by a consortium of US universities led by Virginia Polytechnic and State University and including Pennsylvania State University, Tuskegee University, and the University of Florida, aims to strengthen the range of institutions that train and educate agricultural professionals (InnovATE, 2013).

The InnovATE program takes a “learn, design, train” approach to capacity development. The “learn” component of the program aims to “provide educators and practitioners with good practices and tools that promote agricultural training and education systems development” (InnovATE, 2013). In support of the “learn” component of the InnovATE program, a series of country desk studies will be commissioned to provide relevant background information to inform a basis for identifying gaps in Agricultural Education and Training (AET) programs and institutions in target InnovATE countries.

This paper aims to develop a broad understanding of the Honduran Garifuna in order to provide background context to efforts to strengthen agricultural education and training development efforts targeted towards Garifuna communities. The unique culture, language, customs, and religious beliefs of the Garifuna and their presence in the Caribbean prior to colonization have made the Garifuna a distinct group identifying as both Afro-descendent and indigenous. As such, the Honduran Garifuna face a unique set of challenges both as a minority group and as a target for development initiatives. To learn more about these distinctions would help ensure that development efforts be appropriate to this culture. This paper is divided into sections illustrating important components of the Garifuna people and culture including: language, identity, race and activism, gender dynamics, migration, land tenure, and education.

## Demographic Profile

There are two Afro-descendent populations in Honduras, the Garifuna and the English-speaking Afro-Islanders (Alvarez, 2008). The Garifuna community originated in the 17<sup>th</sup> century from escaped and

marooned slaves of West African descent who cohabitated and intermarried with native Arawak on the small Caribbean Island of St. Vincent (Craven, 2006; Murphy-Graham, 2005). In 1797 the Garifuna were exiled from St. Vincent by the British and settled in Roatan, an island off the Honduran Atlantic coast. Soon after their arrival in Roatan, the Spanish convinced the Garifuna to resettle in Punta Gorda, which became the first Garifuna settlement on mainland Honduras (Murphy-Graham, 2005).

The Honduran Garifuna population is located over a 600 kilometer range along the Atlantic Coast of Honduras in the departments of Cortes, Atlántida, Colón, Gracias a Dios, and Islas de Bahía (Alvarez, 2008). The Garifuna are typically described as occupying between 40-48 villages along this corridor, though many Garifuna have migrated to urban areas such as the capital of Tegucigalpa and the second major city of San Pedro Sula; and to peri-urban areas such as Tela, Puerto Cortes, and La Ceiba – the latter which holds the largest percentage of Garifuna in Honduras. (Alvarez, 2008; Anderson, 2000; Brondo, 2008; Craven, 2006; GaleCengage, 2013; Kleyn, 2010; Solis, 2010).

Exact estimates of the Garifuna population are unreliable and widely varying, currently ranging as low as 98,000 and as high as 300,000. Table 1 demonstrates the variance in estimates of the Honduran Garifuna population.

Some authors attribute this lack of reliable statistics to incorrect or missing counts of rural villages and high levels of migration with Garifuna leaving and returning over various points in their lives (Feany, 2010). Others, however, see the disparity as a systematic underrepresentation of the Garifuna population by the Honduran government. Alvarez (2008) takes this position, stating: “The uncertainty of the official national statistics on the indigenous and Afro-descendent population is caused by a variety of reasons, in

Table 1: Estimates of the Garifuna Population of Honduras

Year	Estimated Honduran Garifuna Population	Source
1986	90,000	Herranz, 2000, p. 461
1986	90,000	Lara, 2002, p. 16 (citing Valencia).
1988	22,020	Lara, 2002, p. 16 (citing National Statistic on Population and Housing).
1993	300,000	Honduras Ministry of Planning (SECPLAN), 2000, p. 461
1993	250,000	Anderson, 2000 (citing Instituto Hondureño de Antropología e Historia (IHAH) & Confederación de Pueblos Autóctonos de Honduras (CONPAH).
1995	250,000	Lara, 2002, p. 16 (citing Isaula).
2001	46,000	National Institute of Statistics, Honduras (INE, 2001).
2001	131,000	Kleyn, 2010, p. 221 (citing the National Institute of Statistics)
2002	300,000	The Organization for Ethnic and Community Development (ODECO), 2002, p. 14
2002	98,000	The Organization for Ethnic and Community Development (ODECO), 2002, p. 14
2004	250,000	Thorne, 2004, p. 22 (citing the Honduran Special Office on Ethnicity and Cultural Heritage)
2006	100,000	Craven, 2006, p. 3 (citing England).
2009	98,000	Gale Cengage, 2009 (citing Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life)

particular the long tradition to exclude, make invisible, and erase the languages, cultures, and even the very existence of the indigenous and Afro-descendent peoples from the national life” (Alvarez, 2008, pp. 34-35).

## Language

Garifuna is composed of three languages including Arawak which comprises 55% of Garifuna, West African phonologies together with Island Carib Kalinago of male ancestry (Kallinga) comprises 20%, and the remaining 20% are borrowed words from French, Spanish, and English (Alvarez, 2008; Craven, 2006). Language acquisition is an important component of the Garifuna culture. Often, Garifuna families will send their children to live in rural communities in order to expose them to the Garifuna language and culture (Craven, 2006). The official number of Garifuna speakers has grown significantly over the past twenty years from an estimated 20,000 to 200,000 worldwide. Alvarez (2008) attributes this growth to the emphasis of the extended family as an integral social structure; increasing cultural awareness and emphasis on preserving the Garifuna culture; and a growing movement of youth leadership and political activism.

## Indigenous and Afro-descendent Identity

The term mestizo has different meanings in different Latin American contexts. In Honduras specifically, the term mestizo refers to a mixture of Spanish and indigenous populations and is most often used to refer to the majority population (England, 2009). The use of the term mestizo is significant in that:

“...in Honduras being mixed or mestizo comes to be the main national identity, so common as to be unremarked upon: to be mestizo is to be Honduran, to be Honduran is to be mestizo. Not only is it normal, but it is the national imperative to create a homogeneous national population and identity” (England, 2009, p. 199).

The use of the term mestizo as a national unifying and homogenous identity becomes an important and controversial point in the discussion of race and racism in respect to Honduran indigenous groups, particularly the Garifuna who are both an indigenous and ethnic culture (Anderson, 2010; England, 2009). This term arose in response to a history of “racial accounting” in Honduras wherein the ideas of racial purity and the “ideology of conquest” resulted in a focus on degrees of race

to establish racial superiority (Anderson, 2010; England, 2009). Over time the categories of race began to disappear as the population became more racially mixed leading to the use of the term “mestizo” (Anderson, 2010; England, 2009). The significance of this is that the Garifuna culture was so different than the mestizo culture that they were still held apart as “moreno,” a term that within the Honduran context referred both to the skin color of the afro-descendent population and to their considerably different culture. This term is often still used today by mestizos. By the 1950’s the Garifuna rejected the term moreno for the term “negro” “as a conscious political, cultural and racial identification with the African diaspora” (England, 2009, p. 203). It wasn’t until the 1980’s that this group started referring to themselves solely as “Garifuna,” separating themselves from the English-speaking afro-descendant population and effectively:

“...[promoting] the idea that this unique Garifuna identity stems from both their Carib and African ancestry, making them eligible for inclusion in the category of indigenous peoples as well as being members of the African diaspora... This identification as Garifuna (rather than simply negro or moreno) was strategic because it removed the Garifuna from the colour continuum and placed them alongside indigenous peoples as a group that is culturally and racially distinct from the mestizo majority and intends to stay so” (England, 2009, p. 203)

This strategy allows the Garifuna to identify themselves as “autochthonous blacks,” meaning that they are African in origin but never assimilated to colonial European culture, unlike other Afro-descendent populations (England, 2006). In this way, the Garifuna utilize their indigenous identity as a structural and political position allowing them to identify with other indigenous groups for political purposes while still being a completely distinct group culturally (Anderson, 2010; England, 2009). This is a particularly important strategy as:

“A long history of dominant representations of the Garifuna as racially negro yet culturally similar to indígenas facilitated the production and reception of a legal equivalence between black and indigenous peoples at a moment in which indigenous rights became a key paradigm for achieving recognition from the state and transnational actors” (Anderson, 2010, p. 388).

In other terms, by identifying as both as a racial minority and as an indigenous minority unaffected by European colonialism, the Garifuna have been able to leverage their unique history and culture in order to achieve political recognition internationally and within Honduras. This is important

both in the understanding of the Garifuna as an autochthonous group and in the understanding of how the Garifuna position themselves politically in order to fight for rights and recognition.

## Race and Activism

Despite success in achieving recognition as a distinct group, race and racism within Honduras is layered and complex with many conflicting discourses. Officially, the Honduran government claims that racism against indigenous groups in Honduras, including the Garifuna does not exist. This stance, in large part stems from the notion of a national mestizo identity (Anderson, 2000; England, 2009; Hooker, 2007). However, there is significant evidence to the contrary. For example Craven (2006) states “Many Garifuna youth, both in rural and urban settings, recount firsthand experiences with racism at school, church and even during NGO sponsored events” (p. 5). Anderson (2000) discusses a common discourse of blaming the Garifuna for their own discrimination by describing them as isolating themselves from the majority mestizo population through the practice of their culture. Other discourses describe the Garifuna as backward, tribal, lazy, combative, and uneducated while simultaneously describing them as happy, peaceful, and family-oriented (Anderson, 2000; Craven, 2006).

“Garifuna organizations themselves often discuss the marginalization and neglect of their people within Honduras. In most cases, they invoke racism to refer to the discrimination and marginalization of Garifuna communities rather than Garifuna individuals. This emphasis on the discrimination of governance relative to community development reflects the nature of the struggles engaged by organizations striving for the consolidation of communal rights and resources from the state. It may also reflect the difficulties of locating and combating everyday racism in the absence of de jure practices of segregation, particularly under conditions where the government denies the existence of racism within the nation” (Anderson, 2000, p. 251).

There are two major groups in Honduras that typically represent the Garifuna. The Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras (Organización Fraternal Negra de Honduras, [OFRANEH]) is a grassroots activist movement that was established in 1978 and originally was organized to unite Afro-descendent populations to combat racism in Puerto Cortés and later focused on the fight for indigenous rights to communal land and resources (Anderson, 2010; Thorne, 2004). The Ethnic Community Development Organization (Organización de Desarrollo Étnico Comunitario, [ODECO]) split from OFRANEH in 1991 and is described as serving as an intermediary between the government and the



Garifuna who aims to gain more recognition of and rights for the Garifuna in policies, laws, and governmental programs.

“OFRANEH tends to occupy a stance of opposition to the state and its neoliberal policies by promoting ethnic autonomy and anti-imperialism whereas ODECO tends to couch its demands in terms of the need for the recognition of ‘Afro-Hondurans’ and their integration within national society” (Anderson, 2010, p. 403).

OFRANEH, as a grassroots movement, takes the position that change must come from the ground level and the government will only grant concessions when pressured from below. They take a decisive anti-imperialist, anti-colonial, and anti-neoliberal stance, linking these histories and policies to the oppression and dominance of the Garifuna (Anderson, 2010). OFRANEH has brought many legal suits against the Honduran government to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights including a lawsuit against the World Bank PATH program regarding land and resource rights (Anderson, 2010). The statement of purpose of OFRANEH includes condemnation of the coup d’état that occurred in 2009; opposition to the building of dams on indigenous lands; and condemnation of the privatization of education and health. OFRANEH also outline many ways in which they oppose foreign involvement in Honduras – particularly regarding development of land and resources in indigenous areas (OFRANEH, 2011).

In contrast to OFRANEH, ODECO has a reputation of aiming to gain more recognition of the Garifuna by the government through cooperation. “Government offices usually prefer to work with ODECO, which they find more ‘realistic’ perhaps because it frames its politics not in frontal opposition to neoliberalism but in terms of increased participation and benefit sharing in national development” (Anderson, 2010, p. 403).

## Gender Dynamics

The Garifuna culture is often described as matrifocal, meaning that the mother is considered the head of the family (Brondo, 2008; Feanny, 2010; GaleCengage, 2009). Garifuna women are the center of the culture and hold significant roles in religious ceremonies and rituals, cultural preservation, language, and land rights. Mothers have a central role in language choice in the family household (Alvarez, 2008). As Alvarez (2008) states, “... female leadership in the transmission of Garifuna language can be observed nowadays in the growing tendency among the Garifuna young males to use Arawak terminologies,

which were originally restricted only for female use, instead of Kallina words, initially restricted for males only” (p. 113). The strong position of the mother in the Garifuna household is further illustrated by traditional indigenous land rights in which the land is passed communally through the matrilineal line, which will be discussed further in subsequent sections. Discourses around gender typically place the mother and maternal grandmother as the center of the household. As Anderson (2000) states:

“Even when they achieve their own sources of income [Garifuna children] are bound by emotional connections and filial duty to respect and support [their maternal relatives.] Within patterns of kinship, consanguineal, maternal relations far outweigh affinal relations as women position themselves at the center of extensive networks of lineal ancestors and descendants” (p. 76).

The matrifocal traditions of the Garifuna culture do not, however, indicate a lack of gender disparities or challenges in the culture. For example, it is typically accepted that male Garifuna will have multiple partners despite expectations that female Garifuna remain monogamous with their husbands (Brondo, 2008). Early pregnancy is an issue among the Garifuna and women who have children while still in secondary school often must drop out in order to care for their children (Anderson, 2000). Discourses around gender within the Garifuna describe a rigid gender divide of labor with women working significantly more hours than men including caring for children, responsibility for subsistence agricultural plots, and household responsibilities; while men typically participate mainly in fishing (Murphy-Graham, 2005; 2008; Thorne, 2004). However, challenges exist for Garifuna men who are expected to provide support for all of their children and for their mother and grandmother. This leads many Garifuna men to migrate to seek work and those that remain often live with their parents well into their twenties (Anderson, 2000; Thorne, 2004).

Some scholars attribute the matrifocal influence of the Garifuna familial structure to the importance placed on extended kinship networks which form an integral social structure (Anderson, 2000; Feanny, 2010; Murphy-Graham, 2005). In the Garifuna culture familial networks extend well beyond the nuclear unit and include a dependence on grandparents, godparents, and the extended family to raise and support children (Feanny, 2010). This can take the form of mentoring, raising children in rural villages, financial support, and providing support for youth seeking education outside of their home village (Feanny, 2010; Murphy-Graham, 2005). As Feanny (2010) states:

“...divisions of labor and responsibilities could extend to the widest reaches of one's kinship support system, including help from godparents and other fictive kin for purposes of child

rearing and dependent care. Detached from this group, each family becomes virtually impotent to control its fate” (p. 57).

The matrifocal aspect of the kinship network is particularly salient given the large number of female-headed households due to male out-migration.

In recent years with changes in migratory patterns from cyclical to permanent, increasing economic pressures, and environmental upheavals such as Hurricane Mitch, the strong matrifocal influence and kinship networks have begun to erode with more working-age women migrating abroad in search of employment (Feanny, 2010; GaleCengage, 2013). There is concern that this increase in female migration as well as permanent migration is taking a heavy toll on the Garifuna kinship network with more economic and familial stress being placed on those who remain behind. Additionally, there is concern that the Garifuna are suffering from a growing loss of cultural knowledge and participation as mothers, who are responsible for cultural preservation, permanently migrate outside of Honduras (Craven, 2006; Feanny, 2010).

## Migration

The Garifuna population has a long history of migration and traveling long distances to visit relatives and friends is common (Alvarez, 2008). The migration of Garifuna within Honduras and internationally comprises an important economic system on which the Honduran Garifuna are dependent (Feanny, 2010). As Anderson (2000) states, “migration beyond Honduras constitutes the principal means of socioeconomic mobility among Garinagu” (p 98). The history of migration of the Garifuna is long-lived with a long tradition of men leaving to work in the merchant marines, logging camps, fishing boats, and agricultural plantations while women remaining behind to raise children and maintain agricultural plots for household consumption (Feanny, 2010).

The kinship network has been particularly important for the Garifuna’s ability to migrate for work as” ...throughout the Garifuna’s history of migration, traditional networks enabled numerous working parents to foster their children with kinfolk in their home communities. Indeed, it was common practice for parents to leave children with kin while they explored distant economic opportunities” (Feanny, 2010, p. 83). This transnational kinship network that arose from the frequent cyclical migration of the Garifuna has persisted over time and still today US-based Garifuna frequently send remittances and visit their families in Honduras (Anderson, 2000; Feanny, 2010).

The international migration and remittance patterns of the Garifuna have a significant impact in the sphere of education where families who are able to send their children to secondary education often are receiving remittances from abroad (Anderson, 2000). Although the migration patterns of the Garifuna have created an economic system and an extended family network, Feanny (2010) states that: “In Latin America, the effects of economic and political pressures are considered among the foundational catalysts that influenced the migratory practices and community instability among the Garifuna, and other groups” (p. 24). Feanny terms this out-migration of Garifuna as a “voluntary-forced migration” that is attributed to the economic and political vulnerability of the Garifuna (Feanny, 2010). While migration has been a cornerstone in the survival of the Garifuna, the jobs that the Garifuna abroad employ are often at the lower ends of the economic spectrum.

In the past, migration of the Garifuna was cyclical with migrants leaving and returning to their villages many times throughout their lives. Brondo (2008) claims that poverty was not the initial motivating force behind the cyclical migration patterns, and in actuality was a strategy used to supplement the “already adequate subsistence economy” (Brondo, 2008, p. 104). In recent years however, migration has shifted to permanent rather than cyclical migration patterns, becoming a permanent livelihood strategy rather than supplemental. This is largely attributed to increasing economic hardship and movement out of agriculture – in part due to land tenure issues (Feanny, 2010). Additionally, migration that used to primarily be male dominated has increasingly seen larger amounts of female migrants looking for economic opportunities abroad. This phenomenon has put pressure on the extended Garifuna family network with growing numbers of children living with grandparents or other relatives (Feanny, 2010). In more recent years, the permanent out-migration of Garifuna coupled with a move away from practicing agriculture and increasing economic stress has led to a situation in which many Honduran Garifuna rely on remittances to support them while they simultaneously look for opportunities to migrate (Anderson, 2000). “Most households, many of which include grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins, depend on several sources of income... many households are supported primarily by the earnings of sons, daughters, and husbands working outside of Honduras” (Anderson, 2000, pp. 94-95).

## Land Tenure and Agriculture

In the past, Garifuna land tenure was established by usufruct and respected as communal land. Rights of use were granted to individual families with use rights passed to the next generation through

the matrilineal line (Brondo, 2008; Hooker, 2007; Thorne, 2004). As the land remained communal and inalienable, individuals were not able to privately sell the land that they occupied. Legal individual titles were not held by the Garifuna which led to many years of land-tenure disputes first from the banana plantations, then by cattle ranchers, then by smaller mestizo farms, and more recently by foreign investors and tourism (Anderson, 2000; Brondo, 2008; Thorne, 2004). "In the past 30 years, much of this land has been privatized through what Garifuna activists refer to as 'irregular processes.' Such processes include: encroachment; the use of intimidation, trickery, or theft by gunpoint to usurp land; and pressurized sales" (Brondo, 2008, p. 101).

This is despite efforts to pressure the government to recognize Garifuna landholdings, including a 5,000 person strike in 1996 that led to the National Agrarian Institute to set aside money to title Garifuna lands. As a result of this pressure, many Garifuna received titles to their land, but this only applies to the *casco urbano* (city limits) leaving out agricultural lands and those traditionally used by the Garifuna for religious ceremonies, hunting, fishing, and other community activities (Thorne, 2004).

Although the Honduran government has ratified many indigenous rights-based international declarations and conventions including: the United Nations' Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, UNESCO's Declaration of San Jose and the International Labour Organization's Convention Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries; Garifuna activists claim that a political movement towards neoliberalism has undermined communal land rights and titles leading to increasing land tenure disputes, displacement of Garifuna, and mounting violence (Brondo, 2008). Brondo (2008) claims the dismantling of agrarian reform laws and the promotion of foreign and domestic investment in agriculture and has accelerated the parceling and selling of land. Additionally, economic hardships, unclear land titling, and communal land titling that left out significant ancestral landholdings has led to privatization and selling of Garifuna lands.

The impact of neoliberalism on Garifuna landholdings became more salient with the World Bank's 2001 Honduran Poverty Reduction Strategy which promoted a four-year project for the development of the Atlantic coast for tourism. As a part of this strategy, the Honduran Lands Administration Program (PATH) "respects land titles granted to outsiders within communal lands and permits the individualization of community land... the effect of which has been to undermine Garifuna rights to collective territory and further disenfranchise women" (Brondo, 2008, p. 102). Brondo (2008) goes on to state:

“Garifuna women are actually losing land rights as a result of neoliberal land titling programs. This is because while Honduran legislation (e.g., the LMA and PATH) recognizes women as producers, the laws are aimed at modernization, globalization and the privatization of the economy, and focused on the issuance of private land titles as opposed to communal land titles with matrilineally-based use rights. Garifuna women lack the conditions necessary to benefit from these laws – specifically, education, experience in a market system, access to credit, and investment capital” (p. 107).

Land conflicts have increased since 2008 and indigenous groups are particularly targeted for intimidation and violence due to their vulnerable status and the desire for land in prime tourism locations along the Atlantic coast (Thorne, 2004; United States Agency for International Development [USAID], 2009). “In 2005, an arson attack destroyed the home of a Garifuna leader. In 2006, another Garifuna community leader was allegedly forced at gunpoint to sign over community land. Also in 2006, armed paramilitaries entered the community of San Juan and fenced a section of land desired by a privately owned real estate company” (USAID, 2009, p. 9). Brondo (2008) notes that the violence surrounding land has particularly affected women in the Garifuna community due to the practice of communal land passing through the matrilineal line. She describes incidences including the 2005 shooting and wounding of a female OFRANEH leader who was on her way to testify to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights to promote Garifuna land rights, the 2006 murder of a Garifuna woman in connection with the land rights movement, and other examples of intimidation and coercion targeted specifically towards Garifuna women.

Many authors have researched the land tenure disputes involving the communal land rights of the Garifuna and the impact on the Garifuna population. In addition to the violence and coercion to sell land that the Garifuna experience, the loss of communal lands has impacted the economic stability, reduced participation in agriculture, and has contributed to the increase in permanent migration (Anderson, 2010; Brondo, 2008; Hooker, 2007; Thorne, 2004).

The impact of land tenure disputes has had a significant impact on the Garifuna participation in agriculture. Historically, the Garifuna participate in subsistence agriculture for household needs but the history of, and now the more recent increase in, land-tenure disputes and displacements have disrupted the traditionally wide-scale participation of rural Garifuna in agriculture (Anderson, 2000). This has particularly affected women as not only are women the primary holders of communal land rights, but also in the Garifuna culture women are primarily responsible for agriculture including growing yucca, plantains, and other crops, while men have limited participation in agriculture (Anderson, 2000).

## Education

Some researchers have attempted to capture the educational participation and quality of education in Garifuna communities and among the status of education as it pertains to the Garifuna is difficult to ascertain, as similar to demographic statistics, official educational statistics in Honduras seldom distinguish between indigenous groups and the mestizo population, and rarely if ever distinguishes amongst indigenous groups themselves (Anderson, 2000; Solis, 2010). Researchers attempting to ascertain the status of education of all combined indigenous groups in Honduras do so by comparing departments with the highest concentration of indigenous groups to those without. This method gives the indication that departments with indigenous populations have higher rates of illiteracy and lower rates of school completion (Solis, 2010). However, as a representation of the Garifuna community, this result is misleading as the five departments that represent the majority indigenous population (Gracias a Dios, Colón, Olancho, Lempira, and Intibucá) differ from the five departments that make up the Garifuna population (Gracias a Dios, Colón, Cortes, Atlántida, and Islas de Bahía). Indeed, when examining the departments that the Garifuna occupy, illiteracy rates and school completion vary significantly with Gracias a Dios performing significantly below the national average and Cortés performing significantly above (Solis, 2010). What is clear, however, is that there is a serious gap in educational demographics and statistics for all indigenous groups in Honduras.

Garifuna population though using small quantitative samples and qualitative methods. The findings of these researchers have varied widely with some asserting that the Garifuna population has a low level of education with many students leaving the school system by the end of primary school and others that find a significant emphasis on education with students leaving communities to pursue secondary and even tertiary education (Alvarez, 2008; Craven, 2006; GaleCengage, 2013; Kleyn, 2010).

Alvarez (2008) finds in his study of 40 households in Corozal, near La Ceiba, that 10% of household heads hold a university degree, 40% completed secondary school, and 50% completed primary school. Anderson (2000) finds in his study of Sambo Creek, also near La Ceiba, that “Garinagu place a great deal of emphasis on education and aspire to provide their children with opportunities for *superando* (getting ahead) through secondary or university education” (p. 67). However, Anderson goes on to state that many students have to drop out of secondary school due to financial or personal reasons and often aspired to migrate abroad (Anderson, 2000). Similarly, Craven (2006) finds in her study of Irióna, also near La Ceiba, that one third of survey respondents were planning to relocate to La Ceiba upon completion of the 9<sup>th</sup> grade in order to pursue educational and work opportunities. Craven

goes on to state that: "...young rural Garifunas place a high value on education. Seeking educational opportunities is the principal migratory push factor and often remains the primary activity for Garifuna youth residing in the urban setting" (p. 44).

In Craven's (2006) study she found that increases in educational availability in Garifuna communities were met with significant increases in participation and educational attainment. Although she was not able to give quantitative numbers, as discussed above, her discussions with high school principals revealed estimations of increases from 32% to 70% participation in some rural communities. Additionally, schools that offered weekend and alternative programs were important to students who travel long distances to school, work, and are responsible for agriculture. She goes on to state that there is a significant demand for increased educational opportunities for Garifuna at both the secondary and tertiary level, particularly in rural areas (Craven, 2006).

Multiple authors describe the Honduran education system as marred with a lack of valuation and understanding of the Garifuna culture and language as well as bias and discrimination (Alvarez, 2008; Anderson, 2000; Craven, 2006; Feanny, 2010; Kleyn 2010; Lara, 2002). The vast majority of teachers in Garifuna communities are mestizo and Spanish is the language of instruction from pre-school through university in all communities, including Garifuna speaking communities (Alvarez, 2008; Kleyn, 2010). "Therefore, learning Spanish is not much of a choice but an obligatory means to receive the benefit of the formal education system in the country" (Alvarez, 2008, p.117). Schools are described as hostile for culturally and linguistically diverse students, particularly those of indigenous and Afro-descendent origin (Craven, 2006; Anderson, 2000; Alvarez, 2008; Feanny, 2006). There is a prevailing perception that the school system is unsupportive of the Garifuna and other indigenous cultures. "The school system has led teachers and students to the conclusion that Garifuna and indigenous languages are for primitive, non-educated, and ignorant people, and the use of these languages on school campuses has been totally prohibited" (Alvarez, 2008, p. 140).

Anderson (2000) notes in his research on Garifuna children, that stereotypes and racial biases are present in the school system, giving multiple examples of educators in both public and private schools including that: "The principal of the largest public Colegio in La Ceiba stated bluntly that '*negros* are slow [*lentos*], in the sense of learning. In general, their level of learning is below ours [mestizos]. There are few *negros* who are brilliant'" (p. 274). Anderson goes on to explain that many of the comments by educators regarding Garifuna youth were in terms of culture rather than their race, specifically. For example, the principal of another Colegio (secondary school) in a Garifuna community stated:



“What is an issue, it appears to me of customs... They are practically raised alone. They only have a roof and some food and it is this way that the part that is the bread of knowledge has been much neglected among the majority who do not live with their parents. So it is there where there could be some, eh, let’s say assertions by certain people that say that the intellect of the Garifuna is not equal to that of the indio or the North American or the German or whatever other. This [assertion] probably is not valid if we look at the roots” (Anderson, 2000, p. 276).

Issues such as these persist despite efforts to create more inclusionary education through the introduction of the Intercultural Bilingual Education (IBE) law in 1994. Although this law seeks to “...[open] a space for the recognition of racial/cultural difference heretofore effaced by ideologies of mestizaje” (Anderson, 2000, p. 186), the implementation of the law is dependent upon regional districts and school authorities such as principals and teachers themselves” (Alvarez, 2008). The national standard curriculum includes very little about the Garifuna and other indigenous cultures meaning that any teachers who wish to be more inclusive of the Garifuna culture in their teachings must create their own lesson plans beyond the official textbooks. Additionally, teacher training programs rarely address the importance of cultural relevance in education or methods for teaching students of diverse backgrounds (Kleyn, 2010).

In more recent years The National Program for the Education of Autochthonous and Afro-descendent People of Honduras (PRONEEAAH), which is an executing unit of the Secretary of Education, has met with some success in forwarding the goals of the IBE including: designing teacher training programs for indigenous and Afro-descendent educators, providing in-service teacher training, and the production of primary school textbooks in indigenous languages including Garifuna (Alvarez, 2008). To date, however, there is little literature that explores the impact of the IBE on indigenous education in Honduras.

## Conclusion

The Garifuna in Honduras are a unique and distinct culture within Honduras identifying as an autochthonous group with both indigenous and Afro-descendent heritage. This positioning allows the Garifuna to represent themselves as an indigenous group in Honduras in order to collectively fight for rights and recognition in solidarity with other indigenous groups, while also still identifying as an Afro-descendent group culturally uninfluenced by European colonial rule.

In many ways the Garifuna contrast the mestizo population such as in its unique spiritual beliefs and celebrations, language, foods, female-centered households, and extended kinship networks. The uniqueness of the Garifuna culture has afforded it the ability to survive hardships for centuries, particularly due to the strength of the kinship networks that have supported the ability of the Garifuna to cyclically migrate for work while still maintaining a household in Honduras. The kinship network is an important foundational aspect of the Garifuna culture where extended families, which may also include non-blood relatives such as godparents, support each other in familial responsibilities, agricultural practices, educational support, language acquisition, and more. In more recent years, the kinship networks have become threatened by increasing economic hardship, loss of communal lands and natural resources due in large part to land tenure disputes, increasing permanent migration, and increasing migration of women – the focal point of the Garifuna household.

Land tenure disputes have had a significant impact on the Garifuna community and are often the focal point for Garifuna activist groups including both ODECO and OFRANEH. The geographic location of the Garifuna on prime real estate for tourism development coupled with neoliberal policies and programs that directly support tourism development have created increasing land tenure disputes in the region which more often are becoming coercive and violent in nature. This particularly affects female Garifuna who traditionally pass down communal land through the matrilineal line. These land tenure disputes have been blamed for increasing permanent migration, significant loss of cultural and agricultural lands, decreasing agricultural participation, increasing poverty, and increasing violence directed towards women land holders.

Migration among the Garifuna has been an economic strategy for many years, in the past affording the opportunity to supplement a subsistence economy. In more recent years, the supplemental attribute of migration patterns has become a fundamental economic strategy with many Garifuna dependent upon remittances from family to support themselves including the ability to send children to secondary school. The increasing migration is causing concern among Garifuna scholars and activists who fear that permanent migration is affecting the kinship networks of the communities, and with increasing female migration is causing a deterioration of cultural knowledge and practices – which is traditionally within the role of women.

The level of educational attainment of the Garifuna is not well defined in the existing literature. However, there is some evidence that many Garifuna students do not complete higher than a primary school education, while many also go on to secondary school and beyond, often supported by remittances and the familial kinship network. The relevance of the curriculum to the Garifuna is in

question as Honduran educators, particularly mestizo educators who make up the majority, are not prepared in either cultural awareness or methodologies appropriate for indigenous and bi-lingual students. Many see the need for increased opportunities for Garifuna students including greater opportunities in rural areas, greater access to secondary and tertiary education, and a need for financial assistance for those attending school away from their families. Some scholars also point out that a greater emotional support of Garifuna students who are studying away from their families is important.

While there are many challenges facing the Garifuna community there are also many strengths that have ensured their survival. They are described as a remarkably resilient group as evidenced by their ability to maintain an autochthonous culture, the importance placed on family and the family matriarchs, the structure of remittances that have ensured economic support, and the growth of their language over the past 20 years. They have fought for recognition by the Honduran government with success and continue to show representation through strong leaders including youth leaders. Despite all of this, it is clear that the Garifuna's needs are not being met by the Honduran government and there are many areas in which the Garifuna are in need of developmental support.

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