VOICES OF SPIRIT AND BLOOD

GARIFUNA LANGUAGE ENDANGERMENT

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A Dissertation Presented to the Graduate Faculty
of the University of Virginia in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Anthropology

University of Virginia
August, 2019

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Acknowledgements

I cannot submit this work without acknowledging several of the people who have guided me and contributed meaningfully to this work and my formation as an anthropologist. I offer heartfelt thanks to my doctoral committee, Eve Danziger, Susan McKinnon, Lise Dobrin, and George Mentore, for listening to me all of these years and helping me find my footing in this field. I am especially grateful to my committee chair, Eve, for her time, commitment, and friendship. I also wish to thank my community of peers and professors the University of Virginia. Thank you for helping me grow.

I am also overwhelmed with gratitude for the kindness and support that the Los Angeles Garifuna community has given me both in California and as my work continued in Central America. Rony and Cheryl Figueroa, I am constantly inspired by your vigilance in the effort to revitalize Garifuna language and culture. Thank you for sharing your knowledge with me and giving so freely of your time to help. I hope that what I have written reflects some of that knowledge. I look forward to continuing to learn from you and am in awe of the enthusiasm you create for Garifuna culture through your podcasts and your work through the Garifuna American Heritage Foundation. Special thanks to Ruben Reyes for sharing your home in Honduras and providing me with contacts during my visits along the coast. The warmth, enthusiasm, and positivity that you have exuded since the first time we met outside of the museum has kept me hopeful about the direction of Garifuna language revitalization. The Garifuna language education to which you are contributing in Honduran schools is incredible. I truly value your friendship.

The insight and direction provided by scholars working with the Garifuna language has been invaluable to my formation, my fieldwork, this dissertation, and the Garifuna language recordings that I have been able to publish at the Archive of the Indigenous Languages of Latin America (https://ailla.utexas.org/islandora/object/ailla%3A257374). I offer my sincerest thanks to Pamela Munro for allowing me to sit in on her classes and for providing guidance, advice, and perspective. I have also been humbled by the help offered to me by Roy Cayetano and Joseph Palacio. Thank you Dr. Palacio for your correspondence and meeting with me in Barranco, and thank you to James Lovell and Roy Cayetano for helping me deliver quality work to the archive to safeguard Garifuna language recordings for future generations.

To my Livingston family, words cannot capture the gratitude and affection I have for you. Special thanks to Rodney Bonilla, Gouule Francisco, Erick Arzu Nuéz, and Wilson Noralez Trigueño for allowing me to learn from you. Your generation is a powerhouse and what you are doing offers incredible promise for language revitalization. Thank you to Ericka Nery and the Escuela Oficial Urbana de Varones Justo Rufino Barrios for allowing me to observe language classes. I am also grateful to the collective of Garifuna farmers, Tomas Sanchez, Fermin Arzu, David Leiva, who often brought me with them to *Gangadiwali.* To my spiritual guides, Fermin Arzu and Juan Carlos Sanchez, thank you for sharing your wisdom with me. I hope that you find my analyses accurate and honorable.

Finally, I must thank several people from the bottom of my heart for their friendship and support. There is not proper space to state the many ways that these individuals have contributed to my life and helped me understand what it means to be a Garifuna person and the value of Garifuna culture and language. You have been master teachers and will always be my Garifuna

family: Cesar Gregorio, Diana Martinez de Franzua and her dear mother Petrona Leiba, Gloria Nuñez, Tomas Sanchez, Claudia Lucas, Digna Nuñez, Blanca and her family at the Hotel Garifuna, and my neighbor Bibi who fought snakes for me and was always ready with a smile.

I wish to also thank the National Science Foundation – Documenting Endangered Languages program for helping to fund this work, and the Garifuna organizations who allowed me to observe and participate in their affairs, including: the Garifuna American Heritage Foundation United, Beluba Luba Furendei, Kevin Flores and the Fomento Salvaguarda de la Cultura Garifuna, and the Organización Negra Guatemalteca. Thanks also to the Archive of the Indigenous Languages of Latin America and to the Garinagu who allowed me to record them, some of whom have now passed on and are with us in spirit: Martina Marcelino, Petrona Leiba, Alejandra Amaya, Rosa Amaya, Damadis Madrid Arana, Isabel Ramirez Catatu. Diana Martinez and Tomas Sanchez, thank you for assisting me with interviews and for helping me organize meetings with Garinagu in Livingston. I look forward to the day we meet again.

Abstract

Languages around the world are being lost at an alarming rate. While this is relatively common knowledge, the sociocultural situations of endangerment and their impact on communities remain largely unknown. As ethnographic research about endangered languages consistently shows, "researchers and communities must come to understand what is happening to the speakers, not just what is happening to the language" (Granadillo and Orcutt-Gachiri 2011:3). This dissertation takes that claim seriously by exploring the effects of and reactions to language shift in the Livingston, Guatemala Garifuna community.

The Garifuna language is an indigenous Arawakan language, spoken by Garifuna people who trace their origins to the mixture of West African and indigenous Island Carib peoples on the Caribbean island of St. Vincent during the seventeenth century. Today's Garifuna Nation spans Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and the United States, as well as St. Vincent. Garifuna language loss is occurring across this transnational community. There is also an unseen population who are profoundly troubled by language loss—deceased Garifuna ancestors who are active members of Garifuna family networks. These exclusively Garifuna-speaking ancestors communicate with living kin through spirit possession and in dreams.

Understanding language endangerment among Garifuna people is therefore a matter of learning how language is involved with Garifuna kinship and spirituality. In this work, I discuss ways that language is ontologically placed in the spiritual and physical makeup of the Garifuna person as it relates to kinship. I find that the experiences and language of Garifuna ancestors reside in the blood, bones, and spirit of descendants. According to elders, the growing lack of Garifuna fluency among youth threatens to fracture the crucial relations between the living and the dead—relationships upon which the entire Garifuna world and identity rely. I show how Garifuna efforts to revitalize language utilize this logic, and also how the practices that sustain the connection between language, spirituality, and kinship drive revitalization in unexpected ways. In particular, observations of ways that youth employ language suggest that Garifuna language use is emerging in new situations and forms. In these contexts, spirituality and language are woven onto contemporary social landscapes in ways that appear to draw from, but not necessarily replicate, the very spirituality that elders point to as threatened. This is especially true of song as it is currently being employed by the younger generation through popular Garifuna music.

The details I have selected for this work demonstrate the importance of recognizing the particular social role that the Garifuna language plays as a connective force between the living and the dead. It reflects a recent move among scholars and language revitalization activists which insists that each language endangerment situation is culturally distinct, and that the specific cultural features of each case should guide the form of maintenance programs (Dobrin 2008; Nevins 2004).

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For my Jacob –

May you always feel the strength of your ancestors within you. May their voices and mine be a light that guides you through the darkness in life and fills you with joy and overwhelming love for as long as you walk the earth.

Nuguia bun, buguia nun.

~ 1 ~

Introduction: "We Have a Problem"

A Talk with an Elder – *Belize, January 2019*

"We really have a problem, you know," declared a small woman with a powerful voice. Auntie Tere was framed in the center of the screen, sitting on a bench in a Belizean living room. She was flanked by Robert Mariano and Martha Robinson, hosts of a weekly Facebook live stream podcast called "Habafu Garinagu."[1] Her hosts—one perhaps even two, generations younger than her—had seen Tere that day and invited her, as Robert stated, to "come and share her knowledge." As Martha's introduction indicated, Auntie Tere was "one of our elders, a stalwart, and one who knows a lot about our culture as it relates to the Garifuna spirituality." To the hosts, cultural continuity depends on allowing elders like Tere to share what she knows with other Garinagu. In their words, "we need to get the knowledge of the elders before they pass because the culture need[s] to continue." And here was one such person, ready to speak. Auntie Tere was a Garifuna elder with valuable knowledge, she was an expert in Garifuna spiritualty, and she sat between her hosts deeply troubled.

When the topic of death arose, Auntie Tere and her hosts had their fingers on what they saw as the pulse of the problem: younger generations are changing the way that "things should be done." The three speakers complained that when younger Garinagu *do* practice their culture (many, according to them, do not), they alter long-standing traditions including ritual forms. As

[1] Garinagu is the plural form of Garifuna. The term "Garifuna" is used as an adjective and to identify a single member of the ethnic group. Garifuna is also the name of the language. According to Robert Mariano, the show's title *"Habafu Garinagu"* means "Power to the Garifuna people." This episode was aired January 29, 2019: https://www.facebook.com/robert.mariano.509/videos/10214128387184598/UzpfSTEyNjA2NzUyNTY6Vks6NzY2MTk3NzYzNzYwOTkz/

Robert declared, "Most of the young people are changing the culture today. It's not the way how it needs to be done in those days."[2]

Auntie Tere, the stalwart expert who conducts rituals by adhering to the structures and guidelines she learned from her own elders, illustrated some of these changes as she began to share what she learned as the correct way in which prayers should be offered when someone passes away. She explained that prayers for a newly dead person used to be conducted for nine days as a standard practice.[3] They were not done on Lent or Advent, and elders in the community still observe these guidelines. Nowadays, however, many younger people request Auntie Tere to perform one day of prayers rather than the full nine—which is, as she stated, the "real way" of doing things. They even ask her to forego traditional practice to perform prayers during Lent and Advent. She conceded that if she does not conduct the prayers, they will simply hire someone else. Despite her wisdom about Garifuna spirituality and the respect she merits as an elder, many younger Garinagu are not following her advice.

The hosts stated that many changes in rituals today demonstrate a lack proper coordination and planning, and they also fail to account for the needs of the dead. Tere pointed out that such alterations were troublesome because deviating from traditional form conveys a lack of respect for Garifuna ancestors and their knowledge. For example, Tere noted that many young people today organize prayers at the wrong time, meaning that events are planned to suit the schedules of the living rather than the needs of the dead. There are even cases, Robert pointed out, of families holding two major death rituals[4] for the same spirit! All three shook their

[2] His speech is infused with Belizean Creole. He is saying that the way the younger generation does things is not the way it was done before. His statement also expresses a need to perform culture and tradition using the same forms and actions of their predecessors.
[3] I discuss the nine days of prayer and ritual that follow death, the *novenario* and the *veluria,* in Chapter 4.
[4] I refer here to the *dügü*.

heads. This overlap in ritual, Robert suggested, shows that Garifuna families are not communicating—they are "not unified," in his words, which is ironic considering that these particular rituals for the dead are meant to establish unity. It seemed that these changes were causing both knowledge and family to simultaneously fall away.

As their conversation continued, someone posted a comment stating that "Everything change up." In contrast to the concern expressed by Tere and her hosts, this statement expressed comfort with ongoing change. Tere, Martha, and Robert emphasized the need to do things the way that ancestors did them, but many younger Garinagu like the one commenting viewed change as an inevitable part of life. Even as Tere and the hosts spoke about the need to act and behave as their ancestors, some viewers who were interested in the conversation nonetheless encouraged a shift away from tradition in subtle ways. For example, one viewer requested Auntie Tere to give her explanations in English. You could see her inhale sharply. She had been speaking Garifuna and she would continue to give the bulk of her explanations in that language. After all, as she would state, Garifuna is the language of her ancestors.

Auntie Tere brought these ancestors into the conversation stating that, while they are "understanding" about certain constraints that the living may have to provide rituals, there are limits to their patience. They recognize, for example, that financial hardships may restrict a person's ability to travel to or pay for certain rituals; but, as the hosts explain, the kinds of changes that younger generations are making are not driven by such hardships, and these deviations are causing ancestors to feel frustrated. The hosts agreed. As Martha stated, "For me that [change] is one of the reasons that our ancestors are annoyed with us. We must go back to how things was done in the past." Cultural practices, such as conducting rituals, farming, fishing,

cooking, and speaking Garifuna, require a specific body of knowledge that has been passed down orally for generations, and Tere was there to share some of that information.

But, performing the practices of Garifuna ancestors is not only a matter of transmitting knowledge and an embodied practice of conveying an otherwise oral history, it is also a matter of pleasing the dead. As Tere and Martha indicate, another set of unseen stakeholders exists in the question of change: deceased Garifuna ancestors who continue to interact with the living and make their opinions known long after death. For Garinagu, these ancestors are not a vague collective body, but a collection of identifiable people with opinions and feelings. Martha knows that these spirits are not happy about the changes they are seeing in the living world. The dead are watching and listening, Auntie Tere concurred, and they are upset by these changes. "We have a problem," she repeated.

Change, Loss, and Ancestors

What do change and loss mean to a community? Like many people around the world, Garinagu are observing a rapid loss of linguistic and cultural knowledge. Most young adults and children are living in a manner that differs greatly from the way that their elders lived. For example, most do not farm or fish; and, unlike many adults over the age of forty-five, they do not typically dress in Garifuna clothing or speak the Garifuna language. While this may appear to some a "natural" course of events, these shifts are profoundly troubling to many Garinagu today. For most Garinagu, changes to long-standing practices threaten to do more than erode knowledge passed down through generations. They are also currently seen to impede relationships with the very ancestors that those practices represent and to harm a cosmological stability that those relationships sustain. In other words, changes to tradition threaten to damage relationships that hold the world in balance.

Traditional knowledge is largely integrated into everyday Garifuna, and it organizes the social world in a particular way. This ordering is true of other Amerindian groups as well. In his book *Hunters and Bureaucrats: Power, Knowledge, and Aboriginal-State Relations in the Southwest Yukon,* Paul Nadasdy observes that cultural knowledge cannot be considered apart from the sociocultural context (2003:60-113). He quotes a member of the Kluane First Nation who responds to the question "What exactly is 'traditional' knowledge?" by stating "Well, it's not really 'knowledge' at all; it's more a way of life" (quoted in Nadasdy 2003:63). This is equally true for Garinagu whose traditional knowledge, even that of rituals for the dead, does not exist apart from everyday life—it *is* the everyday in the sense that traditional activities capture "how things were done" in the past and how they should be done in the present. Changes to these practices therefore alter the representation of "the past"—a period of time indexical of Garifuna ancestors. These ancestors are present observers as spirits with the ability to visit the living world and even interact with people in it via dreams and spirit possession. Because they merit the highest level of respect and deference, changes to the narrative of how they lived misrepresents them and, in this way, are likened to blasphemy.

Showing respect and deference to Garifuna ancestors entails not only listening to them, but living in the manner that they did. Such actions order relationships and strike a balance in the cosmos. The regard with which Garinagu should treat their ancestors, and the repercussions for not doing so, resemble the Mopan Maya concept of *tzik*. As Eve Danziger explains, social relationships among Mopan, including speech practices and even gestures and physical orientations to one another (Danziger 2011), are organized to show behavior that exemplifies "respect," or *tzik.* Danziger shows that upholding *tzik* is crucial in order to maintain cosmological balance. Importantly, *tzik* is unchanging and grounded in truths that Mopan ancestors have

established. What Mopan ancestors say is stable and unchanging, containing set "laws" that establish order. Although Mopan ancestors are thought to have been actual people, these rules were not crafted with "individual intentionality" (Danziger 2013:259). Mandates on behavior are therefore accepted as ultimate truths and "the virtuous Mopan listener positions him or herself as the listening counterpart" (2013:259) without adapting the message. In other words, the form of the messages and the activities that sustain order cannot change.

Changes in conventions, or *kostumbre,* in the Mopan world are problematic because they consequently threaten to alter *tzik.* In this way, maintaining *tzik* often relies on predictable, stable practices that enable Mopan to engage with one another appropriately. As Danziger explains, *tzik* may be "played out in *kostumbre* 'convention'" (Danziger 2013:258). As she continues, "Much current cultural change now taking place in Mopan territory can be linked to a new relativization of the dictates of *kostumbre,* especially under the influence of secondary school education and the arrival of widely available electronic media in the region" (Danziger 2013:258).

For Garinagu, changes to convention, including ways of speaking and language choice, similarly threaten order. Unlike Mopan ancestors, Garifuna ancestors may provide personalized advice with "individual intentionality" but they nonetheless remain unified in their belief that descendants need to do things the way that they did. There is an order, therefore, but it is rich with personal sentiment and identifiable persons, living and dead, who maintain it. Similarly, continuation of old ways is not a mandate lodged in a habitual adherence to laws that have always been or a response to a "nebulous" group (Du Bois 1986). It is a moral directive given by a consensus of individuals who are deceased.

Questions and Scope of this Work

This dissertation is an ethnography of endangerment and loss as it pertains to language in the Garifuna town of Livingston, Guatemala. The central questions that ground this dissertation are: How are Garinagu in Livingston experiencing language endangerment? What is language to Garinagu? What are the stakes for language loss—what is it seen to alter? Such questions emanate from my initial discussions with Garinagu and lead to others regarding kinship, spirituality, and the significance of recognizing an important cadre of dead speakers of an endangered language.

Language loss, and cultural preservation as a whole, is extremely serious business for Garinagu. Generally speaking, they are active and diligent in their efforts to maintain language and keep cultural practices relevant to daily life. That people care about language loss, let alone take concerted steps to maintain it sets them apart from many of the groups the world over. For this reason, the Garifuna drive to preserve their language is a highly important ethnographic fact. It prompts the question: Why is the Garifuna language a major focus of preservation efforts, particularly if other aspects of culture, such as cooking and dancing, remain popular?

Language and Kinship

I propose that part of the answer to these questions has to do with kinship. As I discovered in the course of my research, language and kinship are not easily separable categories for Garinagu. One cannot hope to discuss or even study the Garifuna language without talking about Garifuna ancestors. These ancestors are identifiable, lineal kin members that one may have known in life or who may have lived hundreds of years ago. Death does not impede relationships; rather, the relationships between the living and deceased lineal kin are sustained after the latter has passed on. These relationships are central to a system of reciprocal care that

undergirds Garifuna spirituality. Myrtle Palacio discusses this through the lens of parenthood, explaining that becoming a parent "ensures one's own well-being during old age" (2011:21) and even "beyond the grave" (2011:22) because reciprocal care is expected between lineal kin during life and even after death as the living care for deceased kin through rituals.

The Garifuna language is intimately connected to these deceased family members—many of whom, despite death, still speak to the living. I maintain that listening to the voices of dead kin and interacting with the dead are essential to goals of cultural preservation, and they are also fundamental to sustaining family bonds. The voices of the dead can be heard in dreams and through spirit possession, but the dead only speak Garifuna and this is reportedly true even if they spoke a different language in life. This continued communication with the dead is extremely important for the living. The dead, as parental figures, continue to play the role of moral guide to the living. Dead kin can advise the living, explain seemingly mysterious events, and release the living from spirit-inflicted illnesses among other possibilities. The dead merit the highest level of deference and what they communicate to the living is intended to assist them. The demands of ancestors may lead to rituals which themselves repair familial bonds (Foster 1986; Greene 1998). Because rituals that provide for ancestors are conducted in Garifuna, and because the dead speak only the Garifuna language, Garifuna plays a central role in these kinship relations.

That interaction with the dead is important is not new in the literature about Garinagu. Scholars have developed this claim primarily within studies that focused on the largest Garifuna rituals, the *chugú* and the *dügü.* As I explain more fully in Chapters 2, 4, and 5, these major rites are requested by ancestors in need, and they involve feasting, music, singing, and dancing, all of which the dead are invited to share with the living. The *chugú* is typically much shorter than the *dügü* and is imagined as a mini version of the *dügü.* Both are conducted according to the specific

request of the dead. The *chugú* may only last a day, while the *dügü* transpires over a week or more. For the *dügü,* ancestors typically demand the presence of specific Garinagu from the many countries in which they reside including the United States, Honduras, Belize, and Guatemala. The *dügü* frequently involves hundreds of participants. It is removed from town, and it is a time during which attendees emphasize living and acting in a manner that their ancestors did. In this way, it is a return to the past that simultaneously requests the presence of figures from that past—dead kin. Spirit possession is one way in which the dead make this presence known.

Ancestor voices are essential to these rituals. However, the voices of ancestors also manifest in important ways in everyday life. In my attention to the quotidian engagement with ancestors, I seek to contribute something new to the literature. As I discuss in Chapter 2, ancestors and their voices are also located in the body of Garinagu by virtue of "blood" descent. For several decades, anthropologists have been challenging the notion that kinship is definitively organized by biological ties (Bodenhorn 2000; Carsten 2000; Franklin and McKinnon 2001; Schneider 1984; Weston 1991). These scholars have pointed to ways in which kinship relations can be created by alternative means, such as acts of feeding (Carsten 1995), by choice (Weston 1991), through care (Bodenhorn 2000), and through religious rituals (Chock 1974; Thomas 2017). One claim I make is that language is a product of descent and the way that it is organized in the body suggests that "biological substances" such as blood can also be laden with capabilities or characteristics that define personhood.

This claim is connected to observations scholars have made on the connections between language and social groups. Many anthropologists have examined how practices of talk and language choice are involved in social structure and processes of building communities (Bucholtz 1999; Goodwin 1990; Gumperz 1971; Holmes and Meyerhoff 1999; Jackson 1974) or

how certain styles of talk and discourse are practiced by particular indigenous groups (Abu-Lughod, 1986; Basso 1996; Sherzer and Urban 1986). Building on this literature, some scholars have interrogated ways that such practices of language may operate in the realm of kinship. Janet Chernela suggests that certain kinds of linguistic performances in the Northwest Amazon region can establish membership in a specific descent group (Chernela 2003; 2013; 2018). Kimberley Masson also highlights performance in her description of kinship in the Scottish Highlands. She visualizes kinship as a process that incorporates kin via linguistic performance as a way for newcomers to become incorporated into households (Masson 2005). The way that I believe Garifuna language is operating in relation to kinship, however, suggests that speaking Garifuna is a demonstration of inherited substance. It is a performance and a choice, on one hand, but only insofar as the speaker is accessing something that is biologically given.

The placement of language in the body via descent is a spiritual matter and it relates to a harmony in the cosmos that is held in a tenuous balance. Harmony is maintained via sustained relationships with and demonstrated respect for the dead. I maintain that because Garifuna spirits speak exclusively Garifuna, and because ritual interaction with them is facilitated through this particular language, neither relationships nor demonstrations of respect are fully possible without competency in the Garifuna language.

Ethnography, Language Endangerment, and Documentation

As linguists, linguistic anthropologists, and speakers of endangered languages scramble to both understand language loss and plan ways to maintain or revitalize languages, studies like this one are critically important. Since Michael Krauss' 1992 opening speech at the Linguistic Society of America (Hale et al. 1992:4-10), numerous linguists have dedicated themselves to documenting endangered languages before they cease to be spoken. Scholars suggest that

language loss on the grand scale proposed by Krauss—50% of the world's languages will no longer spoken by the end of this century—will erode biological, cultural, and ecological knowledge (Evans 2010; Gorenflo et al. 2012; Harmon 1996; Harrison 2007; Maffi 2005; Nettle and Romaine 2000) and prevent accurate scientific understanding of human cognition and language acquisition (Evans 2010). Some have also equated language loss to a "language illness" wherein solutions can be conceptualized as a kind of therapy (Fishman 2001).

Ethnographies, such as this one, that investigate how people experience language shift, are greatly needed at this time. Many linguistic anthropologists working on language endangerment point out that revitalization projects must build from and go beyond the aforementioned observations. If scholars do not carefully consider ideologies that people undergoing language shift hold about their languages or the social processes that endangered languages are involved in, their efforts to help preserve or revitalize language may unwittingly have an adverse effect on those communities experiencing language shift (Hill 2002; Nevins 2004). Jane Hill calls attention to the fact that speech communities themselves are often unaware of the value attributed to their language by linguists. Rather, they often value more widely-spoken languages seen as strategically advantageous in a globalized linguistic marketplace (Bourdieu 1991). Despite scholars' best intentions, Hill cautions us to think critically about the impact that "expert rhetorics" (i.e., biological metaphors) have on speech communities and the way in which we may universalize solutions to language preservation by separating a language from its speakers and their lived-in reality (Hill 2002).

Linguistic anthropologists attempt to tie language to communities through case studies which have led many to argue that language is not automatically a "cultural repository" (Muehlmann 2008); language does not necessarily belong to all of humanity (see example of

Hopi in Hill 2002) and, in fact, this notion can actually be a form of oppression (Warner 1999) or even harm revitalization projects (Hill 2002; Nevins 2004). These studies also suggest that classroom instruction is often an ineffective means of producing new speakers because language is learned best through culturally particular practices (Basso 1996; Nevins 2004) not through standardized curriculum where such practices are absent. Some claim that classroom instruction is itself serving a different social function altogether (Dobrin 2014; Ó Hifearnáin 2014).

In response, scholarship on language endangerment has taken an ethnographic turn. Anthropologists use ethnographic accounts to describe the ways in which language loss and revitalization are being experienced within linguistically endangered communities (Dobrin 2014; Meek 2010; Muehlmann 2008; Nevins 2004). They critique methodologies of preservation that universalize solutions to what are actually culturally unique situations of language loss (Dobrin 2014; Nevins 2004). Unlike species of plants or animals, linguists cannot create "a language preserve" for people or isolate them in hopes of protecting or freezing their language for posterity. The shifting wants and needs of a people in a rapidly changing world must be addressed. Recent works argue that language loss should be examined within the social relationships of its speakers and that by understanding what language is to a community, those from outside of the speaker community who are working to create language programs will be better equipped to assist in facilitating effective language revitalization.

Building on these insights and commitments, my doctoral research explores the ethnographic side of language endangerment in Livingston. I am interested in why people want to revitalize their language(s) in the first place; these motivations are often understudied yet extremely necessary in studies of endangerment. Still lacking is serious ethnographic investigation into the culturally specific contexts of language loss which would take note of local

language ideologies, and locate language within the social relations of its speakers, as Dobrin and Nevins suggest.

Given that key speakers of the Garifuna language are spirits of the dead, my research also complicates current ideas about what constitutes a speaker. What does it mean to have dead speakers of a language and how might this impact research? How should we approach revitalization and even speaker counts, for example, when many of the speakers are spirits of ancestors? I hope to provide some answers in this work.

Method and Positionality

I began this investigation with the intention of studying language shift among the Q'eqchi' Maya. When my visits to Q'eqchi' communities brought me to Livingston, however, I was immediately welcomed into the Garifuna community and became so consumed by their way of life that I decided to redesign my project. As a non-Garifuna person, it was challenging to find my place as a researcher in the community, particularly since Garinagu typically prefer to organize research, projects, and revitalization work themselves. Understandably, they do not wish to be misrepresented, but they desire (and deserve) a significant amount of control over the information produced about their people.

Questions about representation must be central to the manner in which the foreign anthropologist decides to approach the research, yet there are not always straightforward answers. One might ask, for example: How can I conduct research that speaks to issues in the "academy," but also discusses the matters that are important to the people whose culture I am studying? What does respect mean to them, and how can I ensure respect while attempting to fulfill an institutional obligation that asks me, in several ways, to objectify the community? The contrast between academic expectations and obligations to the people whom one studies can

pose serious ethical challenges, particularly for many doctoral students who are attempting to fulfill obligations to both the community being studied and academia for the first time. I navigated this by attempting to partner with and interweave the voices of the Livingston community into this work as best as possible.[5]

When I arrived in Livingston to study Garifuna language and culture for the first time, I prepared by speaking with Michelle Forbes, a linguistic anthropologist who had conducted research about Garifuna language and racism in the area (see Forbes' dissertation, 2011). With her help, I arranged a meeting with one of her contacts, Tomas Sanchez—a respected public figure involved in politics, farming, and cultural preservation—who insisted the spiritual leader (*buyei*) Fermin Arzu should join our conversation about my proposed work in the community. The three of us met over coffee and discussed my goals. It was essential that my project be accepted, and quite significant that Fermin was included. From the outset, Garifuna ancestors were present in my research through his presence. Fermin's approval indexed theirs.

During the summer months of 2012, I began my research by attempting to follow the ancestors' voices in everyday life. To what extent were ancestors present in daily life, and how did people "hear" them? This meant identifying locations in which ancestors were said to be present and learning the ways in which people engaged with them. I visited sacred spaces with my Garifuna guides. These included a waterfall called the *Siete Altares* (Seven Alters), and a large span of Garifuna farmland called *Gangadiwali* (translated by Garinagu as "the Promised Land") where Garifuna farmers planted and harvested the crops that their ancestors ate. Fermin called this acreage that lay adjacent to the *Siete Altares* the "altar of altars."

[5] Much more can be said on this topic. I address this issue only briefly to acknowledge its significance.

In the summer of 2012 and throughout the year of 2015, I observed when Garifuna was spoken, who was speaking it, and how it was being taught or learned. The methods I employed were inspired by research on language socialization (Ochs and Schieffelin 1984, 1986; Duranti, Ochs, Schieffelin 2011). I lived in two Garifuna households for approximately three months each, and in an apartment that shared communal space with two Garifuna families for the last six months. The first household was in the center of town and consisted of a grandparent couple with two adult children and a small grandchild who was under the care of the grandmother during the day. The grandparents were fluent Garifuna speakers. Their adult children were competent in Garifuna, but spoke mostly in Spanish. The little grandchild did not speak Garifuna, but heard it spoken around her and occasionally to her. This household also provided access to the members of an extended family who circulated in and out of the house and whose homes were located nearby.

My second housing arrangement was located in a more remote area of town without direct access to a paved road. I lived with an elderly woman who goes by the name of Tona.[6] Her daughter and son-in-law lived in the house adjacent to ours that was connected by a shared porch. Tona raised chickens and grew many crops behind the house with the help of her daughter. Garifuna was her first and primary language, and the language in which she and her daughter conversed. She lived what was considered a traditional lifestyle, even making coconut oil and *tableta* (a sweet treat made of coconut and caramelized sugar) which she sold downtown. In this setting, I was able to learn language through actions important to Garinagu such as scaling fish or making food, while also adapting to a leisurely day-to-day flow that was, for me, quite different from my own fast-paced habit in the United States. Tona was and remained a valuable

[6] This is a nickname.

teacher of Garifuna language, ethics, history, and life throughout my research. In this setting, I was able to meet many elderly women and observe interactions between them.

My final housing arrangement allowed me to witness communication among Garinagu from a different perspective. I rented an upstairs apartment offered through by a friend whose aunt owned the apartment, but lived in the United States. A Garifuna woman and her two daughters lived in the downstairs apartment. Her husband primarily resided in the United States, but occasionally visited. In this way, I was able to better understand the impact of the diaspora on housing and relationships, which may be a topic of future publications, but is not discussed in this dissertation. The large terrace behind the building was enclosed and shared between the family below, a woman and the younger boy she cared for[7] who lived in a small building adjacent to ours, and me. Our three households shared a water source, a large sink for dishes and laundry, and clotheslines, all of which were located on the terrace. This shared domestic space facilitated a high level of contact and intimacy.

In line with typical anthropological methods, I engaged in participant observation throughout my research. My methods included participating in festivals, learning to sew Garifuna clothing, attempting to dance *punta*,[8] preparing Garifuna foods with others, attending large- and small-scale rituals for the dead, farming, and contributing to household and community life. I also took private language lessons and observed Garifuna language classes for several months in the local boys' school, the *Escuela Oficial Urbana de Varones Justo Rufino*

[7] It is not clear whether this was her biological son, adopted son, or the child of another relative.

[8] *Punta* is a traditional Garifuna dance. It is danced to *punta* music, played on three hand drums and accompanied by maracas. While dancing *punta* is common throughout Central America, the style employed by Garinagu is distinct. According to *punta* instructors at a cultural workshop I attended in Dangriga, Belize in 2013, the dance should be done on the sand or dirt with bare feet. The movement of the dancers' hips is caused by them digging their toes into the ground as if "pulling" themselves forward in small steps. It is danced by both men and women. Instructors described the dance as formerly being a kind of courtship dance. Good examples of *punta* dancing can be seen in the following video by Los Hermanos Arriola: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L1XYqavAyP0.

Barrios. In addition, I met weekly with a highly respected local figure, Cesar Gregorio, to discuss my observations and be guided by his advice. His insight and instruction about Garifuna culture was invaluable to this study.

The research was primarily funded by a grant from the National Science Foundations for Documenting Endangered Languages. As a linguistic anthropologist invested in language preservation, I also viewed language documentation as a critical to the project. When designing my research, I envisioned documentation in a somewhat untraditional manner by imagining it as a productive ethnographic tool. As such, the recordings that I made were heavily informed by conversations I had with Garinagu. Specifically, in conversations with Garinagu about their language, they often identified situations in which language was important and referred me to particular speakers whose stories they suggested I needed to capture. I also asked them what they felt would be important to record. I used the information they gave to create audio recordings focused on particular topics. For example, I recorded a group of elderly women discussing motherhood, two accounts of moving to the United States, several instances of teaching dance and song to children for an annual celebration of Settlement Day, and an interview with one of the last remaining Garifuna midwives in town. Several of these recordings have been transcribed and archived in The Archive of the Indigenous Language of Latin America where Garinagu and others have access to these files (https://ailla.utexas.org/islandora/object/ailla%3A257374). While the present dissertation focuses on the experience of loss, particularly as it relates to kinship (i.e., it is not a dissertation about language documentation), the process of creating documentation and archival material have been vital in developing my understanding of Garifuna experience and language ideology more generally.

Finally, in this dissertation I strive to speak of issues that I believe are of importance to Garinagu, while furthering academic discourse. However, I have tasked myself with a weighty ethical responsibility—I am talking about the dead. Representing ancestors has been the most challenging aspect of this work given that I, a non-Garifuna person, am attempting to represent and discuss the most venerated and respected of Garifuna people. I wish to preface what follows by stating that I hope that my analysis will be well-received and even corrected by Garinagu who decide to read this work, which I have written with the sincerest effort to demonstrate respect and accuracy.

I have intentionally chosen to write about Garinagu in Livingston, Guatemala, not only because of their immeasurable kindness, but because they are frequently absent from studies of contemporary Garinagu. I find that Guatemalan Garinagu are decidedly driven in their efforts to revitalize culture and language and to position themselves politically within Guatemala. However, their voices and experiences are understudied and not well-represented in academic literature. Moreover, Livingston is a vitally important center of Garifuna spirituality, with a powerful ancestral presence even in comparison to areas of Honduras or Belize where Garinagu live in much larger numbers. This is quite impressive for such a small population![9] For these reasons, I chose to situate my research about Garinagu in Livingston. Unfortunately, the scope of my project did not extend to other towns in Guatemala where Garinagu reside. For example, Puerto Barrios and Guatemala City are hotspots for Garinagu largely because they provide jobs that Livingston cannot. Nonetheless, I hope that this dissertation contributes to providing more visibility to Guatemalan Garinagu.

[9] The official count of Garifuna was 5,040 in the 2002 census (https://www.ine.gob.gt/sistema/uploads/2014/02/20/jZqeGe1H9WdUDngYXkWt3GIhUUQCukcg.pdf). A clear census count has not been made available since that time.

Overview of Garifuna History and Language

The Garifuna Past: Formation and Exile

Garinagu are an ethnic group whose origins date back to the seventeenth-century Caribbean island of St. Vincent, known by Garinagu as *Yurumein*. According to several scholars and Garinagu themselves, a slave ship crashed in the Southern Antilles sometime around 1635, allowing its captive passengers to escape and swim to St. Vincent. There, they mixed with the local Island Carib[10] inhabitants and this synthesis resulted in the genesis of the Garifuna people, who initially came to be known as Black Caribs (Gonzalez 1988; Johnson 2007; Kerns 1983; Taylor 1951).

Although these original Black Carib ancestors were never themselves enslaved, several scholars suggest that escaped slaves joined them over the course of the seventeenth century, as St. Vincent functioned as a safe haven for runaway slaves, particularly from neighboring Barbados (Gonzalez 1988; Gullick 1985:70-76; Handler 1997). Jerome Handler places this population on St. Vincent at or before the 1660s, referencing a 1668 treaty that makes explicit mention of these so-called fugitives:

> In 1668 Barbados' Governor Willoughby signed a treaty with several Carib chiefs. The treaty provided that the Indians were to return "Negroes formerly run away from Barbadoes" as well as those "as shall hereafter be fugitives from any English islands."[11] In early 1676 St. Vincent may have contained about "600 escaped Negroes"[12] - "some run away from Barbadoes and elsewhere."[13] (Handler 1997:198)

[10] Island Carib is a general term that refers to the Carib and Arawak Indian inhabitants.
[11] PRO, CO 1/22, no. 55, A Treaty between His Excellency William Lord Willoughby ... and Several Chief Captains of the Island of St. Vincent, March 23, 1668.
[12] PRO, CO 1/36, no. 20, Jonathan Atkins, An Account of His Majesty's Island of Barbadoes and the Government Thereof, February 1676.
[13] PRO, CSPCS, 1675-76, 9, William Stapleton, Answers to Queries of Lords of Trade and Plantations, November 22, 1676, pp. 497-502.

In his assessment, it is probable that "Barbadian slaves continued escaping to St. Vincent throughout the seventeenth century,[14] so increasing the number of so-called Black Caribs" (Handler 1997:198).

In St. Vincent, Black Caribs began speaking the Island Carib language(s)[15] and adopted many Island Carib customs,[16] but the various roots that Garinagu claim or highlight has changed over time. According to Ruy Coelho (1955), many Garinagu in Central America did not acknowledge African roots until part of the population began migrating to the United States for work. More recent work by Sarah England (2006) and Paul Christopher Johnson (2007) suggests that, once in the United States, Garinagu encountered numerous challenges to their own self-perception of race and ethnicity as they bonded with other ethnicities of Afro-descendants from the Caribbean.

In 1763, the French annexed St. Vincent to the British. Unlike the French, the British wanted to grow sugar cane on the island and British settlers laid claim to the land in the name of the British crown (Young 1971 [1795]). This attempted land seizure led to two bloody conflicts with the Black Caribs, known as the Carib Wars (see Taylor 2012). The British forcibly rounded up as many as they could, and imprisoned them on nearby Balliceaux island in 1796, where more than half died from disease and starvation. The remaining survivors numbered just over 2,000. They were boarded onto ships and exiled to Roatán, an island located off the northern coast of Honduras. According to Edgar Adams (2002:58), the official count of those that reached Roatán was 2,026. Most of the Black Caribs quickly abandoned the island and made homes along the

[14] PRO, CSPCS, 1706-8, 23, Mitford Crowe to Council of Trade and Plantations, November 5, 1707, pp. 579-81; Douglass 1755, 1:132.

[15] In brief, men and women did not necessarily speak the same language though they were members of the same community and even the same family units. They did nonetheless understand one another's speech. Black Caribs adopted these sociolinguistic practices as well.

[16] For a discussion of these customs, see: Gonzales 1988; Kerns 1983; Taylor 1951.

Caribbean coast of Central America in villages. This territory is now a secondary homeland community to Garinagu living in the United States—a population whose mass migration to North America in the last decades of the twentieth century constitutes the second major Garifuna Diaspora. While St. Vincent remains the "real" or primary homeland for all Garinagu, those in the United States often make trips to villages in Central America to visit family and, as some told me, to "renew" or "remember" who they are as Garinagu. In this way, Central American Garifuna communities have come to be cultural epicenters that form a secondary homeland for Garinagu who have migrated to North America.

Conversations about cultural change, like those between Auntie Tere, Robert, and Martha, are happening among Garinagu throughout Central America, the Caribbean, and the United States, in a transnationally imagined, ethnically bound community called the Garifuna Nation. The physical space of this nation encompasses St. Vincent, Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and the United States, but the Nation conceptually includes all Garinagu as its members. As the participation of the dead in the living world indicates, the living are only part of this nation's constituency. The ancestors are also powerful contributors to the project of nationhood. When their voices emerge in spirit possession and dreams, they influence and directly participate in the debate over where culture is headed and how it should be maintained.

Linguistic Description and Notable Features

Garifuna is an Iñeri language of the Maipurean family with VSO word order and moderately polysynthetic morphology. According to Michelle Forbes (2011), proto-Garifuna (1492-1635) was a variety of Arawak that developed on the island of St. Vincent. She claims this language contained many Carib borrowings and affixes. It also contained a few Spanish and several hundred French words through contact with Europeans. When escaped and shipwrecked

African slaves arrived on St. Vincent around 1635 (Kerns 1983; Gonzales 1988; Taylor 1951), they intermarried with the indigenous population of Island Caribs and learned the Arawak variety that population spoke, but integrated West African phonological features (Forbes 2011; Taylor 1951). This language has developed into the present-day language of Garifuna.

The first observations about the language that would become Garifuna were made by the French missionary Raymond Breton who lived in a Carib community in Dominica from 1641 to 1651. During this time, the Caribbean island chain from Grenada and Tobago through St. Vincent and north to Antigua—a territory of around five hundred miles—was home to Garifuna ancestors (Taylor 2012). This territory would later shrink and St. Vincent would become the main residence of the Caribs (Le Breton 1998).

Raymond Breton composed a Carib-French dictionary and a brief grammatical sketch in which he claimed that men and women spoke differently from one another (Breton 1666). These gendered ways of speaking have remained of central interest to the linguists. In the 1950s, linguistic anthropologist Douglas Taylor studied the Garifuna language in British Honduras and also noted differences in male and female speech such that "Male" speech tended to employ Carib word forms that had Arawak counterparts in "Female" speech. Ostensibly, men gradually abandoned the practice of speaking exclusively in Carib, but had retained certain Carib forms in their speech. Pamela Munro et al. (2012) also note that grammatical gender usage may vary depending on the gender of the speaker. For example, grammatically masculine morphemes can become feminine in male speech. Taylor suggested that this distribution of forms was established during the Carib raids of Columbus' era, when Carib men captured and married Arawak women (Kerns 1983). As a result of these raids, it was proposed, Arawak-speaking females and Carib-speaking males cohabited and raised children in 'languages' corresponding to the child's gender

(Taylor 1951). Though the story persists that men and women spoke different languages, Forbes (2011) claims that both sexes spoke the Arawakan language. Douglas Taylor and Berend Hoff later hypothesized that the "Men's" language was, in fact, a pidgin used for commerce in the islands and South America (Taylor and Hoff 1980). Forbes counters this claim by arguing that the language used for trading with South American groups was not a pidgin, but the same Arawak variety with a greater number of Carib words and some Carib-derived affixation (Forbes 2011). Linguists have noted that male and female speech forms are still used to a certain extent, though the female forms are slowly spreading and becoming standardized (Escure 2004; also seen in Munro 2007).

There has been very little published describing other aspects of the language. Of note, however, is Geneviève Escure's morphological analysis. She claims that Garifuna is undergoing internal morphological changes in a way that resembles the process of decreolization[17] (2004). She argues that Garinagu's increased bilingualism in Creole English in Belize and Spanish in Honduras appears to be changing both morphological and semantic structure of Garifuna, producing a new variety of the language. She explains, for example, how the particle *me,* traditionally used to indicate future, is now being used to mark pastness in Belizean Garifuna, due to the influence of Belizean Creole.

Endangerment Status: A Complicated Measurement

Ethnologue reports that there are 175,000 speakers of Garifuna worldwide, with 100 monolingual speakers remaining (https://www.ethnologue.com/language/cab). The website contributors rank the language at Level 5, "Developing," on the Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale, indicating that the language is in "vigorous use." However,

[17] Decreolization is a process in which a creole language comes to resemble one of the standard languages from which it was derived.

according to my own and other scholars' observations (Escure 2004; Forbes 2011; Munro et al. 2012), this categorization is inaccurate. Assessments that the language is healthy are based upon an analysis of certain Honduran communities that have been able to maintain their language with some success (Alvarez 2008). In contrast to the information given by *Ethnologue*, our collective research suggests that Garifuna, particularly as it is spoken in Belize and Guatemala, should be ranked at Level 6b "Threatened," or 7 "Dormant," depending on the community. In most areas where Garinagu live, including Honduras, the language is not reinforced outside of the home and only 1-5% of first language speakers and 5-15% of second language speakers are literate in the language (https://www.ethnologue.com/language/cab). In all countries where Garinagu reside, children receive formal schooling in either Spanish (Honduras, Nicaragua, and Guatemala) or English (Belize, St. Vincent, and the United States), and the number of children acquiring the language decreases annually (Munro et al. 2012; Escure 2004). Furthermore, Nicaraguan Garinagu, the majority of whom no longer speak the language, are virtually absent from analyses regarding the "health" of the language (Alvarez 2008). Likewise, although Garinagu do continue to live on St. Vincent, the last Garifuna speaker on the island reportedly died in 1932 (Taylor 1951), and the remaining population was not factored into the report on language vitality.

Neither does this particular analysis of language endangerment capture certain ethnographic facts about language use. For example, it cannot account for the fact that dead speakers, who I argue constitute a vital portion of the Garifuna community, continue to speak Garifuna in the living world; or that in some communities, Garinagu reportedly become Garifuna speakers in their teenage years through age-graded practices of acquisition (Alvarez 2008). These facts pose direct challenges to mainstream methods of measuring linguistic "health." Indeed, how does one begin to factor the dead into a speaker count, particularly given that not all

of them make their voices heard in the temporal world? They are among the most important, model speakers of the language in what is considered its "pure" form. Should they enter into this kind of calculation? Additionally, if some children will begin speaking Garifuna as teenagers, as Ruiz suggests is the case in Corozal, Honduras, then the standard gauges of language health are misleading for they fail to capture such variations in speech practices and acquisition. While this dissertation does not take up these questions directly, the arguments I make throughout build upon the fact that dead speakers and their voices are crucial to the living community. In this way, my research raises questions about how to imagine and represent any collection of speakers in the context of measuring language "health."

Overview of the Garifuna Revitalization Movement: Some Challenges and Current Efforts

While Garifuna is the official language of the widely dispersed Garifuna Nation, younger generations in Central America now predominantly speak Spanish, English, or English Creoles, and often lack competence in the Garifuna language even if this is a language spoken within the household. Similarly, across the Garifuna Diaspora,[18] people's level of Garifuna fluency differs.[19] For example, many second and third generation Garifuna-Americans may know only a few Garifuna words. Nonetheless, the Garifuna language remains firmly anchored to conceptions of nationhood. As stated in the Garifuna Language Policy: "We, the Garifuna Nation, declare

[18] Here I refer to the population of Garinagu displaced by the British at the end of the eighteenth century when Garinagu were exiled from their St. Vincent homeland. The current geographic spread of Garinagu is commonly called the Garifuna Diaspora among Garinagu themselves. For more on this, see Taylor (2012).

[19] A similar observation can be made about Garinagu who were born in the United States or other non-Garifuna speaking areas. In this case, differences in Garifuna fluency do not necessarily fall along the same age-graded lines. While I do address Garifuna fluency and language revitalization within United States diaspora communities at certain points in the dissertation, this is not my focus. Rather, this work focuses on the picture of language endangerment in a "home" community, which presents a somewhat different experience of language loss.

that our ancestral language is Garifuna, and that Garifuna is the language of the Garifuna Nation, regardless of the level of individual competence."[20]

Garifuna speakers do share the same language, but there are regional differences in phonology, semantic meaning, and the use of certain morphemes. For example, when pronouncing words with an /r/, Belizean Garifuna speakers use the same approximate [ɹ] as English speakers, while those from Spanish-speaking countries use the trill [r]. Most Guatemalan speakers employ voiceless vowels while they may either be voiced or deleted in other communities. One example of this occurs in the word *hudutu*, which is a kind of fish soup made with coconut broth. All speakers tend to say this word with a final [ɯ], but it is unvoiced for most Guatemalan speakers. Geneva Langworthy notes that there are other lexical differences, such as the Nicaraguan term *wálagayo,* used in place of *dügü* to denote the large ritual for the dead (Langworthy 2002:42), but she sees little else in terms of variation among communities of speakers. During my field work in Guatemala, however, I once sat with my Garifuna neighbors to read through some of the definitions in the Garifuna dictionary I brought back from Belize. Many of the definitions surprised them and sent them into bouts of uproarious laughter because of the semantic differences in the way they used them in their own speech.

Beyond these variations, I also encountered serious challenges when attempting to learn Garifuna from a Honduran text while in Guatemala because there were many words that Garinagu in Livingston simply did not use nor had ever heard. They explained these discrepancies by saying that this lexicon was used in Honduras and I needed to ask a Honduran Garifuna speaker in order to understand the text. I encountered similar responses when I asked Guatemalan language teachers about interrogative formats that I was learning from a Garifuna

[20] "Language Policy." National Garifuna Council. https://ngcbelize.org/the-culture/language/language-policy/.

grammar book written by linguist Pamela Munro in collaboration with Belizean Garinagu Maurice Lopez, Anita Lambey-Martinez, and Jena Barchas-Lichtenstein (Munro et al. 2012). When discussing the particle *sa*[aB1], my Guatemalan interlocutors acknowledged the particle, but explained that following the usage described in the book was "Belizean" Garifuna.

These examples suggest that, in contrast to what Langworthy (2002) noted, there are very real differences in the manner in which people speak and understand Garifuna across the Garifuna Nation, and these distinctions extend beyond lexical and phonetic variations. This variation applies not only to speech, but to differences in orthographic practices. While Garinagu have been fiercely determined to agree upon and consistently teach a standardized orthography, there have been major challenges that correspond to regional variations in speech (see Cayetano 1992, 1995).

Language Policy

One of the most significant actions that Garinagu have taken in their efforts to revitalize their language has been drafting and publishing a Garifuna Language Policy.[21] This policy of was collaboratively drafted by Belizean, Guatemalan, and Honduran Garinagu from the National Garifuna Council (NGC) of Belize, the Organización Negra Centroamericana (ONECA), and the Organización de Desarrollo Etnico Comunitario (ODECO). It was officially adopted by the Garifuna Nation in 1997. This policy has served as a guideline for how to implement language revitalization in Garifuna communities. It lays out the rights of indigenous people declared by the United Nations, outlines goals and organizational strategies, and lists the expectations of language students, instructors, and language preservation activists in Garifuna communities. It offers "a unified vision for Garifuna language maintenance" (Langworthy 2002:47), yet it faces

[21] "Language Policy." National Garifuna Council. https://ngcbelize.org/the-culture/language/language-policy/.

many challenges in implementation caused by lack of funding, physical resources (i.e., schools), and regional sociolinguistic differences. It presents a framework for cohesive revitalization movement on a transnational scale that relies (in part) on local systems, but these vary greatly throughout the communities across the six nations that the Garifuna Nation encompasses. This wide-ranging document serves as a foundational piece of the revitalization movement, but it has proved difficult to fully mobilize people to carry out its aims.

Programs and Organizations

Garinagu themselves have been working hard to revitalize, revive, and maintain their language. Many have graduated from doctoral programs in order to conduct research in their communities and publish work that serves and is affirmed by the Garifuna Nation. Perhaps of greatest note are Roy Cayetano, a prolific linguist and cultural activist from Dangriga, Belize, and Joseph Palacio, a celebrated and highly cited anthropologist from Barranco, Belize. Garinagu have published basic grammatical descriptions (Suazo 2002; Munro et al. 2012) and dictionaries (Suazo 2011; Cayetano 1993, Reyes 2012), and they have spearheaded numerous programs to make the Garifuna language accessible to children. This includes creating learning materials in print and online formats, as well as organizing Garifuna language classes in many communities across all six nations. The success and the stability of these varies within communities, but the fact that Garinagu persist in their efforts despite localized challenges is significant because this determination to preserve language is not universal, or even common, to people experiencing language loss.

Garinagu across the Diaspora frequently collaborate on efforts to revitalize language. For example, Garinagu in the United States have funded and sponsored schools in Central American countries that have been created specifically to teach Garifuna. However, collaboration may

expose differences in ways that Garinagu identify across regions and this occasionally presents challenges in reaching a consensus on instructional material. For instance, many Garinagu have begun teaching classes in state-run schools in Central America, and teachers are organized nationally within Belize, Guatemala, and Honduras. Instructors across this area occasionally travel to meet with one another in order to discuss strategies for teaching language. They share a common goal, but it is equally important for many instructors that national, and even village, identities are reflected in the learning materials. For example, according to teachers in Livingston, Guatemalan curriculum should depict Livingston town and Livingstonian Garinagu. As I witnessed, materials that included images of Honduran Garinagu and examples of vocabulary not common to the Livingston community were unused by some teachers in Livingston.

In the United States, Garinagu sometimes work with non-Garifuna scholars and organizations to teach Garifuna language classes, educate Garifuna-Americans about their history and language, and develop linguistic descriptions. In Los Angeles, Rony and Cheryl Figueroa run the Garifuna American Heritage Foundation,[22] which conducts workshops, organizes performances, holds language classes, and hosts speakers in order to educate Garinagu about culture, language, and origins. Rony is Guatemalan, Cheryl is Belizean, and other members of their organization include Garinagu from all six countries within the Garifuna Nation. In this way, the material presented synthesizes national differences to a larger degree than what I have described in Central America. In addition to the Figueroas, Ruben Reyes has

[22] See information about this organization here: http://www.garifunaheritagefoundation.org/index.html

been a major proponent of the revitalization movement in the United States, teaching Garifuna language and running the Garifuna Museum of Los Angeles.[23]

Apart from Los Angeles, New York City is another hotbed of revitalization activity where organizations such as Casa Yurumein[24] play a similar role to that of the Garifuna American Heritage Foundation. They thrive in combination with a bustling music scene that encompasses even the most mundane aspects of daily life. For example, one can dance their way to a fit body at GarifunaRobotics,[25] an organization "showcasing the Garifuna culture" through workouts that are performed to Garifuna music.

On a broader level, this music scene, which I discuss in more detail in Chapter 5, is also an explosive site for revitalization and, I propose, holds promise for promoting language use in the United States and Central American communities alike. Numerous Garifuna radio shows that play Garifuna music and interview artists already stream from these communities.[26] In fact, Garifuna musicians often play music with the stated purpose of revitalizing language by generating interest in the music which they hope will inspire listeners to sing along and learn the meaning of the words.

Summary of Chapters

This is an ethnography of language endangerment that attempts to capture major ways that Garinagu in Livingston are experiencing linguistic change and loss. As such, the chapters in

[23] See information about this museum here: https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Museum/Garifuna-Museum-of-Los-Angeles-195466460494888/
[24] See information about Casa Yurumein ("Yurumein House") here: https://www.facebook.com/cyurumein
[25] See information about Garifuna Robotics here: https://garifunarobics.com/?fbclid=IwAR3ZDuj3SICAKaPYQ_Qjvcj5uLpqS0_zQqJ8JxM1mOFuR3UUQm-BiBqWWYc
[26] For example: Radio Labuga streaming from Los Angeles (http://ttstation.com/103185-labugacom-radio/); Garifuna Radio from Sandy Bay, Belize (http://www.garifunaradio.net/); and Garifuna Radio in Atlanta, Georgia. Garinagu in Livingston, Guatemala formerly ran a radio station as well, but funding was pulled sometime around 2014.

this dissertation focus on exploring content that most directly engages with ongoing reactions to loss while attempting to unpack specific concepts implicated in this experience and interrogating potential avenues of revitalization.

In my research in Guatemala, I found that, as the speakers from the *Habafu Garinagu* podcast noted, language loss is a concern for both living Garinagu and their ancestors. I structure the dissertation by tracing Garifuna perspectives about language loss, acts of revitalization, and variations in language use through generations. Chapters 2 and 3 discuss these in relation to ancestors and the perspectives and experiences of living elders. Chapter 2, "The Rumbling of Bones: Ancestors and Language at the Core of Garifuna Being," was written in response to Garifuna concerns that ancestors are upset by changes to culture and language. Why should ancestors be impacted by language loss in particular? To answer this question, I explore the category of ancestor as it is used by Garinagu in Livingston and the relationships between the living and the dead. I also address the concept of language itself and the role that it plays in creating or confirming relatedness. This chapter is important for establishing a baseline of *who* is being referred to with what terminology because multiple terms for ancestor spirits are used across the literature, and because Garinagu themselves employ a variety of terms for "ancestor" in both Spanish and Garifuna. I conclude that the Garifuna language is not simply a collection of sounds, but that it is also present in substances passed on through descent—a widely-held Garifuna perception that has particular repercussions for the study of kinship, language, and spirituality more broadly.

If it is the case that the Garifuna language is present in Garinagu as a matter of descent, how might this inform the shape of revitalization when it is organized by elders and adults who adhere to this ideology? In Chapter 3, "Revitalization on the Ground: Garifuna Language

Revival and Intergenerational Interaction," I describe what language revitalization looks like in the context of an intergenerational workshop organized primarily by adults in their forties and fifties in which a central goal is to facilitate conversation between adolescents and elders. My description and analysis of this event illustrate and build upon some of the information I give in Chapter 2. The interactions that transpire in this setting reveal that desired family dynamics shape language learning including ways of speaking. Specifically, elder and adult participants in this workshop model "appropriate" behavior through language use while illustrating the ideal dispositions of a young listener. I observe that listenership involves particular practices of respectful silence and refraining from questions to elders. I explain that this seems to pose certain challenges to intergenerational interaction in Garifuna, but only undermines linguistic transmission if one insists that youth must speak to elders. Specifically, I suggest that this does not have to be the case for revitalization.

Chapters 4 and 5 attempt to capture perspectives young adults in their thirties and younger and the actions that they are taking with regard to revitalization. By the end of Chapter 3, the reader may imagine that youth are not actively engaging in language learning. In Chapter 4, "Separation and Unity Reconfigured: An Emergent Change in the Garifuna *Veluria*," I show that we should not assume that youth are unwilling participants in language learning. On the contrary, they are simply doing things differently from their elders and often in reaction to the contemporary world in which they live, or as a result of a gap in their knowledge. Just as Auntie Tere complained, youth are making changes to rituals and this is frustrating many adults and, in her view, the ancestors themselves. This chapter interrogates one such a change that I witnessed involving language when the spirit of the newly dead speaks at a moment previously deemed "impossible." I explore this situation by consulting with older informants and the young men

through which this event transpired. I conclude that these young adults do, in fact, have enormous respect for their ancestors and wish to practice Garifuna culture (they may, in fact, be the future ritual specialists in Livingston). The change in form, in this case, did not entail a disregard for previous ways, but it does present countless new questions about the spirit of the dead and language use.

These young men remain central to the study as, by the end of the dissertation, I have shifted the focus of exploration from language as it is attached to the ancestors, to language as it is being employed by the younger generation. A particular collection of young men, including some of the same individuals I observe in the ritual scene, are prolific writers of contemporary Garifuna music which is frequently sung collectively by young and old, putting Garifuna language into the mouths of the majority of the Garifuna community in Livingston (and beyond). I explore this in Chapter 5, "One Love": Garifuna Language as Ancestral Influence in Livingston's Contemporary Music Scene," titled as such because of the prevalence of the Garifuna saying "*Aban Isiani"* literally meaning "one love." This phrase is often heard in town and conveys of a "cool," relaxed Caribbean vibe associated with music. It also adorns the entryway of a popular building in the center of town that almost exclusively stages performances of Garifuna music. In this chapter, I observe that current practices of collective singing of contemporary music achieve an emotional unification similar to that accomplished in Garifuna rituals for the dead. In this way, I view contemporary Garifuna music as a valuable asset that should be utilized for language renewal because it facilitates the kind of collective singing that places Garinagu in harmony with one another—a critical feature of the Garifuna ethos of *Garifunadüaü.*

~ 2 ~

The Rumbling of Bones: Ancestors and Language at the Core of Garifuna Being

In the opening of this dissertation, I posed the question: What does it mean to have dead speakers of a language? Garinagu consistently state that deceased kin are fluent speakers of Garifuna who are frustrated and even angered by ongoing language loss that they observe in the living world. These ancestors continue speaking Garifuna while the language declines among the living. In the Garifuna case, learning why dead speakers matter and the significance of their persistence requires knowing about: Garifuna cosmology, the historical identity of the dead, the social lives of the dead, and the obligations that particular kin have to one another.

Who or *what* is a dead speaker? In this case, the dead speaker is the spirit of an ancestor—an identifiable Garifuna person who has died. The living person consists of a body that houses an animating spirit, and this spirit remains mobile after death. The spirits of the dead frequently enter living bodies through spirit possession in order to speak to their descendants. [27] The term used to describe this in Garifuna, *onweha*, means "to faint." In line with this, the possessed Garifuna person typically describes being possessed as having lost consciousness.

The identity of these spirits as Garifuna kin is central to understanding the entire cosmological makeup of the Garifuna world. This point is worth emphasizing—when Garinagu

[27] Aisha Beliso-de Jesús recently described processes through which spirits became "copresent" in bodies of Santería practitioners (2014). I find that, while this concept is useful to describe ongoing relationships that certain living peoples have with spirits, it does not precisely capture what occurs between living and deceased Garinagu when ancestors speak to the living. For example, Beliso-de Jesús describes processes of "making" and "becoming" particular kinds of bodies that sense and feel the copresence of spirit energies. For Garinagu, ancestor spirits are autonomous and decide whether to come and go, and the Garifuna body is born with the potential to sense the presence of ancestors when they are near rather than made into such a body. For this reason, I choose to use the term "spirit possession" to describe the moments of direct, verbal interaction between ancestors and descendants.

are possessed by spirits, these spirits *are Garinagu* and they are recognized as lineal kin. They are benevolent (Foster 1986), positive forces who intend to sustain, guide, and nurture the living. Garifuna possessing spirits are not spirits of deities (Olmos, Fernández and Paravisini-Gebert 2003), demons (Selka 2014), royalty (Sharp 1994), or "cultural foreigners" (Boddy 1993; Stoller 1995) that one might find in other situations of spirit possession communication cross-culturally.

Because a primary avenue through which Garifuna spirits speak is possession, the question of what it means to have dead speakers must be expanded to ask what it means to speak with and also listen to the dead as interlocutors. Of what significance is it that dead Garifuna relatives possess and speak to the living? What does this look like, and what is expected of the living interlocutor? If possession is the central means through which living Garinagu hear the voices of their dead kin, then the details about these exchanges need to be interrogated. Doing so will reveal how the Garifuna language is configured in sustained relationships with dead speakers.

To grasp the significance of speaking with dead Garinagu, the reader will need to know the basic ideas about Garifuna kinship and spirituality that set the stage for communication with ancestor spirits—ideas that will be expanded upon throughout the dissertation. After a brief discussion of this, I unpack Garifuna conceptions of ancestors, focusing on the question of who and what they are. By the end of this chapter, I aim to show the reader that the Garifuna language is ontologically tied to the Garifuna soul through ideas about kinship, cosmology, and language. If, as I claim, language substantively resides within the Garifuna person through descent, Garifuna language loss also entails losing a part of the self.

Lines of Communication

Meeting the Ancestors – *Guatemala, June 2011*

I had been in Livingston, Guatemala for three days when Juan Carlos invited me to what he simply referred to as a ceremony. Having come to Guatemala to research the Maya, I had no idea what to expect. All that my acquaintance told me was that we were going to a *dabuyaba* (a Garifuna temple) and that he was the *Messenjero* (Messenger) whose fundamental role was to facilitate dialogue between the living and the dead, including delivering messages he received in dreams and clarifying what spirits wanted in general. Juan Carlos described this ceremony as a ritual to celebrate the ancestors of a particular family. Because I did not know the family, this meant that I could observe from outside, but would not be allowed to enter the ritual space.[28]

That night, Juan Carlos and I took a taxi down the long road from the center of town to one of the main *dabuyabas* in Livingston. People were scattered about inside and out of the building, chatting and carrying plates of food which many set on benches next to their belongings near the entrance. A small porch, attached to the large inner room of the *dabuyaba*, faced the street. Hammocks had been strung within the inner space, and many were tied up so that attendees could move freely below them.

As we stood looking in, Juan Carlos pointed out the gold-framed picture of Jesus that hung in the back of the room, explaining that Garinagu were Christian. Three large drums that men would soon play were arranged on the ground beneath this image. People wandered in and out of the room, coming onto the porch to take bites of food and engage in easy conversation. Unlike speech I had been hearing in town, these exchanges were in Garifuna, not Spanish. The

[28] In order to enter the *dabuyaba* when a ritual for the dead is being held, one must be invited by the family who is organizing the ritual. Participants may be invited by living or dead family members in this network.

change in soundscape reoriented me to my surroundings. I was still in Guatemala, still in Livingston, but the world in which I found myself was quite new and being aurally delineated by this language.

Soon everyone went into the main room of the *dabuyaba* and I sat outside in the uniform befitting of a female attending an ancestor ritual—a skirt below the knees and every strand of my hair wrapped tightly in a head scarf so that I would not offend any spirits. The fluorescent lights blared above as the blackness of night enfolded the building. The street outside was empty except for the roaming dogs and the light from the cinderblock house across the way, its yellow hue touching the cracked pavement and merging with the stark pool of white flowing from the *dabuyaba*. I waited (for what?!) in anticipation.

I sat out on the wooden bench, transfixed as I looked through the wall of vertically laid reeds next to the open door. I had never seen, heard, or even smelled anything like this. My senses were saturated as I was flooded by a unique combination of fascination, appreciation, and tranquility. The air fell silent and a lit candle was placed in the center of the dirt floor next to bottles of rum. Attendees inside joined hands and encircled the glowing light. Juan Carlos blew puffs of smoke from a thick cigar into the dirt floor surrounding the candle as an older man held his finger over the opening of a flask and sprinkled rum from it onto the ground. Copal incense filled the room with heavy white clouds of fragrant smoke that streamed from the entrance and through the reed walls onto the porch where I sat. In the midst of all of this, people inside began to sing and step rhythmically back and forth. The portrait of Jesus shone in the background.

I was later told that this was a moment in which a pathway was being made clear to ancestor spirits so that they might enter the ritual space and commune with the living. Every action, every sound, and indeed every sense that could be engaged served the purpose of guiding

them into the *dabuyaba*. According to Garifuna spiritual leaders, spirits traveled both by air and up through the ground, and the flame from the candle helped light their paths. Ancestor spirits would likewise be drawn in by the strong smell of rum that was sprinkled on the floor and all of the doorways. As Juan Carlos explained, the liquor comes from a plant that grows with roots in the ground. In this way, ancestor spirits too may rise from the ground as, at least with the rum, "like produces like" and "an effect resembles its cause" (Frazer 1996 [1922]:13).[29] People continued stepping from side to side, their feet pounding the ground as a prelude to the rhythm of the drums that would follow and eventually accompany the movement. Sounds of footfalls and drums would combine with voices merging in song to communicate messages to the dead, to signify that the living were there and ready to receive them, and to produce an audible path, like a beacon in the night, for spirits to follow on their return. As I watched the events unfold, I was still quite ignorant of these details, and I certainly did not anticipate actually encountering the dead.

When the drumming began, songs grew in intensity. I was told that these were songs of placation, called *amálihani,* intended to calm and placate ancestor spirits. Three drummers faced the participants who sang in a chant-like unison as one woman called and all others responded. Though men were present, women's voices dominated the response in an overwhelmingly strong and seamless chorus. Each song lasted for around thirty minutes. In between them people would step out, laughing, smiling, and fanning themselves in the balmy night air to catch their breath before another voice would issue a melodic line and the drumming and singing would resume.

[29] I am in no way claiming that all actions or features of Garifuna rituals are imagined to be effective via the Sympathetic Magic described by James Frazer. However, Juan Carlos' explanation of how rum operated in this setting bore a fascinating resemblance, at least with regard to the ancestors who would come from the ground.

As their voices grew more vibrant, the drumming seemed to resound more strongly. I placed one hand on my chest to feel the instruments' reverberations in my body, and I sensed myself being transported by the pounding and the musky haze of tobacco smoke and incense that saturated the main room. The music and movement were intoxicating amidst the powerfully scented smoke. What was happening before me made everything else seem to fall away, as if the world was divided between the *dabuyaba* and the buzzing light and still blackness that lay outside. Perched there in the fenced-in porch that had been washed in rum and incense, I hadn't danced or sung, but I was tied to the world inside. It was as if what was happening inside was somehow removing the ritual space from all of its surroundings. I was nonetheless entering a stage of separation (Turner 1969) from a Livingston that I would soon view much differently.

Suddenly, a few women began spinning in circles to the music and smiling incessantly. I watched as the body of another jolted backward and was caught by two women standing near her. They steadied her body as yet another woman began to spin. The music stopped and Juan Carlos came out and touched me on the arm. "*Están aquí*." (They are here.) *Who* was here, I wondered? Again, until then I had not anticipated, or even considered the possibility of spirits being *physically* present.[30]

People came streaming out of the main room and onto the porch, and some remained inside. Many indulged in long embraces and looked into one another's faces with smiles or happy tears. A profound feeling of joy was palpable. I was unsure of what I was witnessing or what belied this seemingly sudden shift in sentiment. Soon, Juan Carlos approached me with a tiny, pudgy elderly woman who had removed her head scarf and stood next to him, smiling at

[30] Here I refer to examples of spirit possession that I witnessed transpiring in the bodies of women. However, I would see men become possessed as well. Unlike observations and assertions made by scholars such as I. M. Lewis (1989), spirit possession was not an exclusively female occurrence.

me. Despite her age, she was bursting with energy, as were some of the other older women who jumped and danced in the background. I didn't know at the time that these energetic ladies were not actually themselves, but were possessed.

"*Te presento a Pedro*"[31] (Allow me to introduce you to Pedro), Juan Carlos said. He told me that Pedro was a Q'eqchi' Maya who occasionally appeared at rituals like these. That explained the exposed hair—this was no elderly Garifuna woman! This was a boisterous man now placing his hand lightly on the back of my arm. Unlike the other spirits, he was not Garifuna, but a friend of Garifuna ancestor spirits who, I was told, invited him. In this way, he had no living relatives there to talk to, but was interested in enjoying the celebration.

"*¡Hola, señorita!"* (Hello, miss!), he began. Pedro stood smiling up at me, his arm linked with mine, moving ever closer to my side. The moment was filled with shared laughter and a lack of inhibition as he asked me for a hug. To my mind, this was a unique opportunity indeed. When would I ever be able to hug a flirtatious Q'eqchi' Maya man who was temporarily sharing the body of an elderly Garifuna woman? We hugged and Pedro reacted in hoots of excitement. Juan Carlos and I laughed a little more. The entire *dabuyaba* seemed to be transformed with what felt like a joyful sense of release. The amount of care that was being physically expressed between attendees was moving.

It was not long before the music began again and everyone went back into the main room. The drumming and singing were powerful. This was the final song, at least for the next few hours. After it was over, several ancestor spirits rested inside the *dabuyaba,* seated with their legs wide, lingering in the bodies of the women and laughing wildly. One of these visiting male spirits even got up and chased an unpossessed female around, only to double over in laughter

[31] This is a pseudonym.

afterward. A few individuals wandered into the room adjacent to the main area and swung gently in hammocks.

Just like that, my first night at a Garifuna ritual had ended. There were no taxis, so Juan Carlos and I hitched a ride with a passing police truck. Many of the ladies from the ceremony piled in the back, smiling and now returned to their unpossessed selves. They were erupting into fits of laughter and talking excitedly in Garifuna. It was as if the whole town had burst into happiness on our way back down the empty streets into town.

I was in a state of amazement after the experience of speaking with a spirit. I felt a rush of excitement and curiosity. The dead were talking! And I saw this! As I reflected on my night, I was flattered that any spirit wanted to speak with me, but I wondered why it had not been a Garifuna spirit. Initially, I concluded that perhaps it was a testament to my interest in the Maya. After all, hadn't I arrived in Livingston to study what was happening in the Q'eqchi' community? My desire to learn about Q'eqchi' Maya persisted, but I had now become fixated on the Garifuna world. Who was this community of living and dead that I had witnessed communing so? This question consumed me and forced me to redesign my doctoral project. During my research, I would witness Garifuna spirit possession countless times in Guatemala, but it would be months before one of the ancestor spirits would speak to me directly, and it only happened when I finally found my own place "at the table."[32]

Garifuna Kinship

As Janice Boddy once observed, in order to understand the relevance of spirit possession, one must examine the cultural circumstances or situations in which it occurs (1988). Among

[32] I allude here to the *dügü,* a ceremony that "feasts" the dead. It is described below.

Garinagu, spirit possession typically emerges in ritual processes to (re)establish healthy relationships among kin.

Garinagu claim that kinship is a concept that, for them, includes a spatially and temporally extended network of bodies and spirits who stand in relation to one another. As the Belizean Garifuna anthropologist Joseph Palacio elaborates:

> It [kinship] is a very strong nucleating force ***stretching across time and space*** as it coagulates the peoplehood of the Garífuna. This is a point that still needs further analytical refinement. Certainly the term 'kinship' as used in English is inadequate by virtue of its traditionally limited use to persons within family groups and communities but not as ***a primal coercive force*** for cultural identity and peoplehood. The term used in Garífuna is *iduheguo.* (Palacio 2001:182; emphasis added)

Here, Palacio suggests that the Garifuna term *iduheguo*, which translates roughly into "relation," best describes Garifuna kinship. Garinagu do recognize biological kin and consider themselves part of a nuclear family. However, *iduheguo* relationships are not limited to those born of the same parent or the identifiable men and women drawn onto a genealogical family grid. Rather, Garinagu understand themselves as a people related by virtue of having the same ancestors. In this way, Garifuna "peoplehood" refers to an expansive network of relations who are considered to be family because they emanate from the same set of "original" predecessors—the Black Carib inhabitants of St. Vincent. In Palacio's view, the term *iduheguo* more adequately describes this "primal coercive force" of Garifuna relatedness that draws Garinagu together as a people. The notion of *iduheguo* also collapses temporally and spatially distinguished realms in a way that enables deceased kin to be recognized as active members of a network of kin.

The idea of a physical, biological link combines with spiritual connectivity among kin. This spiritual aspect is emphasized in the kind of care enacted by certain assemblies of kin. For

example, in addition to *iduheguo*, there is a smaller "kingroup,"[33] as Roy Cayetano has called it (2009:225), which participates in a system of care tending to the physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being of family members. As Cayetano explains:

> The individual's orientation is toward the kingroup. It is in the kingroup that the individual Garífuna finds his satisfactions. When one is faced with a situation in which he cannot cope, he turns to his mother, father, sister, brother, other kinsmen, or even ancestors for help. (Cayetano 2009:225)

The obligation to aid a family member who expresses any type of need distinguishes members of a kingroup from the larger network of *iduheguo* Garifuna relations. The reliance on this intimate web of individuals—including siblings that share the same mother, people connected through matrilineal affiliation, or individuals of various generations who inhabited the same household—solidifies a bond and creates a state of "mutual dependence" (Cayetano 2009:225).

Ancestors are included in Cayetano's definition of the kingroup. The system of dependency in life insists upon a continued exchange with the deceased. Rites for the dead and deceased ancestors reassure ritual participants of "the unity not only of the kingroup but also of all Garinagu, past and present, be they in Seiri [Heaven] or on earth" (Cayetano 2009:226). Thus, while the kingroup is a unit apart from the body of Garinagu as a whole, it nonetheless consists of living and deceased members. Moreover, rituals for the dead demonstrate both kinds of relatedness—nurturance within the intimate realm of the kingroup and the broader *iduheguo* care between Garinagu as a people.

[33] Cayetano gives this term and its definition in English. My use of the term "kingroup" in this dissertation refers to Cayetano's definition.

Major Rituals for Ancestor Possession

How and why do these relations come together in rituals like the one I witnessed? Once a person dies, his or her spirit embarks upon a journey to *Seiri* (Heaven). Along the way, the spirit has certain needs that only the living can help provide through ritual. They correspond to the spirit's needs at different stages in the afterlife and again illustrate the way in which living kin share a spiritual connection with members of the kingroup, both living and dead. To make ritual requests, the spirits of deceased kin express their needs to a descendant in a dream. The dreams will be repetitive and, if the descendant offers no ritual response, they eventually become recurring nightmares or the ancestor spirit will afflict the dreamer or his or her loved ones with sickness or death (Coelho 1955:130-31).

There are basically three rituals that are conducted in response to the request of an ancestor. They vary in size and tend to follow a basic sequence. First, a few months or years after death, the ancestor spirit may request to be refreshed with a bath. They are given this ritual bath in a ceremony called an *amúidahani.* Attendance is limited to siblings, children, cousins, or other very close relatives who might be able to attend. Though I did not witness one of these ceremonies, Virginia Kerns (1983) offered the following description of an *amúidahani* that she attended in Belize:

> On the day before *amúidahani,* some of the close kinswomen of the deceased make the necessary preparations. They bake the bread that will be served the next day, together with the coffee and rum. They also prepare two pieces of cassava bread, baking it so slightly that it remains white. They place this cassava bread into a container with four buckets of clear water from a well and leave it overnight to dissolve. Early the next morning they strain the mixture, discarding the residual cassava in the sea but retaining the liquid.
>
> *Amúidahani* takes place in a yard, usually by the house where the deceased lived. A number of close relatives of the deceased, and often some invited guests, gather before dawn by a shallow pit the size of a grave, dug in the sand some hours before. […] Each of the people present, beginning with closest relative of the deceased – parent or grown child – throws a bucket of water into the pit. They do so in pairs, one person standing at the head of the pit and holding a bucket of the strained cassava water, *sibida,* and the other standing at the foot with a bucket of ordinary water. Throwing water into the pit, each person addresses the spirit by the appropriate kin term

> and says, *Iníha dúna lun bágawan*, "Here is water for your bath." After everyone has taken a turn, the pit is covered. (Kerns 1983:159)

The bath itself occurs in the early morning hours, after which attendees enjoy breakfast with the newly bathed ancestor to whom food is also offered.

Years after death, the spirit may become hungry, in which case a larger ceremony called a *chugú* may be needed to feed them. This usually occurs many years after death and far more participants attend than in the *amúidahani*. Participants include descendants of the deceased as well as those of his or her siblings. Scholars vary in their descriptions of how long these ceremonies last, but tend to describe it as an affair that lasts between one and three days. The most elaborate ritual, called a *dügü*, is a longer version of the *chugú* in which the hundreds of people gather from across long distances for a week or more. The ritual culminates in an extravagant feast for the dead. Of the three ceremonies, only the *chugú* and *dügü* are considered major rituals requiring many participants, much labor, and money.[34]

It is crucial that the living accurately understand and provide what their ancestor spirits require for the *chugú* and *dügü* to be considered successful. Because of the importance of knowing what ancestor spirits want, these rituals (and others requested by them) require assistance from a ritual specialist. This person, called a *buyei*,[35] is defined by Honduran Garifuna scholar Salvado Suazo as "a Garifuna endowed with paranormal powers to cure, divine, invoke spirits and officiate ceremonies for the ethnicity" (2000:345). One must consult this specialist to accurately determine the ancestor responsible for dreams or afflictions and learn their needs.

The *buyei's* office is defined by one's "ability to acquire and maintain possession of one or more spirit-helpers called *hiuruha"* (Taylor 1951:110). The spirit helpers operate as

[34] For example, some Garinagu I spoke with reported that *dügüs* could easily cost up to $20,000.
[35] There are various spellings of this word. I use *buyei* rather than *buyai* following the practice of my informants.

messengers between the spirit world and the living world. Byron Foster adds that possession by these spirits is what makes a *buyei:* "The spirit medium – *buyei* – is a traditional healer. She is a specialist in the use of medicine and amulets, but it is her possession by spirit helpers *(hiuruha)* which makes her a *buyei*" (1986:19).[36] Juan Carlos explained that these spirit helpers *(hiuruha)* select the *buyei.* They are tutelary spirits who guide the *buyei* and are able to locate the spirits particular ancestors. The *buyei* is able to quickly understand how to resolve spiritual problems with their assistance. These spirits may speak to the *buyei* so that only he or she can hear them, or they may possess the *buyei* and speak through her to the afflicted descendant. Juan Carlos himself was selected by these spirits to fulfill his current position as Messenger.

Spirit helpers *(hiuruha)* are reportedly spirits of previous *buyei* and can be original inhabitants of St. Vincent—the Garifuna homeland. Even if they did not reside on St. Vincent, these spirits typically index the island by their manner of dress or the guidance they offer. For example, their clothing is often dyed with red achiote, which "recalls the Caribs from St. Vincent, called 'Red' or 'Yellow' Caribs by Europeans because their skin was always painted with the dye" (Johnson 2007:155). The spirit helpers *(hiuruha)* may also counsel clients or *buyei* by grounding them in their "roots." Foster notes, for instance, that when one of his informants was in the process of becoming a *buyei,* her spirit had to first be drawn back to the homeland before she could begin her work (1986).

In sum, the *buyei* is necessary to orchestrate the two major rituals at which ancestor spirits and the living are able to converse through spirit possession, the *chugú* and the *dügü.* I now turn to these.

[36] On this point, some spiritual leaders in Livingston disagree. A few stated that a *buyei* cannot become possessed because it is his or her responsibility to guide spirits. On the other hand, at the *dügü* I attended, such spiritual leaders were possessed by the spirits of deceased *buyeis,* and I witnessed them guiding parts of the ceremony.

Chugú and *Dügü*

These ceremonies, particularly the *dügü*, have been extensively described by other scholars (Jenkins 1983; Gonzalez 1988; Johnson 2007; Flores 2002; Kerns 1983; Foster 1981, 1986; Greene 1998). Here, I focus on only a selection of details of these ceremonies. I do not attempt an exhaustive description of each.

Another important note of clarification in these overviews is that I encountered differences between the published descriptions of these rituals and the way that Livingston Garinagu talked about them. Scholars, including Garinagu who are scholars, have described the *chugú* as a smaller version of the *dügü* (Kerns 1983; Johnson 2007; Palacio 2005b). As mentioned above, a *dügü* reportedly lasts for up to a week, while a *chugú* spans about three days. While Garinagu in Livingston tended to agree with this assessment, the rituals labeled by Livingstonians as *chugús* that I attended and heard in the stages of planning were extremely large gatherings of hundreds of people from several countries that took up to a year of planning and lasted almost a week. This is precisely how the *dügü* has been described and distinguished from other rituals but, in Livingston, the rituals appeared somewhat collapsed categorically.

Purpose:

The *chugú* and *dügü* are extremely elaborate affairs. They have similar goals and structures, the main difference being the duration of the ceremonies. While ancestor spirits do request these, the living do not always listen or respond to the request. If the living do not respond to the ancestor's request, or if they are living in a way that does not coincide with Garifuna ancestral values, the dead may become angry. According to Garinagu, inattention to the needs of the dead and a lack of adherence to tradition often make ancestor spirits feel frustrated or neglected by the living. It also signals to the dead that the living have begun to forget them.

For these reasons, ancestors may afflict living descendants with an illness or make malicious threats. The only way to convince the spirit to heal the descendant or dissuade the spirit from harming this person is to provide for the specific ritual needs of the deceased. In this sense, it is an exchange.

The size of the ritual corresponds to not only the ancestors' needs, but also to how greatly the ancestors believe the living have strayed. If the deceased feel that the living have made egregious mistakes, they demand a *dügü*. The health of the descendant and the placation of the spirit depend upon the harmony and unity of the community, seen through the highly coordinated preparation and execution of the ritual. Thus, the family and wider Garifuna community assist in securing the well-being of both the spirit and the afflicted descendant. Members of the community are obligated to come to one another's aid in this way because of the shared history that demonstrates relatedness of the entire ethnicity—the *iduheguo* relationality that emphasizes Garifuna personhood.

The notion that these rituals are solely about physical health, however, misses some of the most important emotional effects that they have on the participants. "The purpose of the *chugú* and *dügü* are love," Juan Carlos explained. He was emphatic that this was the main goal and that I should not get distracted by other explanations. For him, Garifuna rituals were about an extended network of family experiencing profound love for one another, who they are, what they are, and where they came from. The cooperation of the group helped this love become palpable. Oliver Greene (1998) and other scholars unpack this further, showing that what spirits require is a display of solidarity and unification seen through both the physical and emotional well-being of the social community. Greene states that the *dügü* is "a ritual whose primary purpose is to heal family members of physical ailments and emotional strife while promoting

solidarity" (1998:169). As one of Paul Johnson's informants claimed, "A *dügü* is supposed to be about happiness! Those who are in mourning have to change by the beginning of the ritual, when the ancestors return" (Johnson 2007:153). This emotional well-being also refers to the feelings that should occur among reunited or estranged family members. "The emotional reunion of dispersed family members on village soil is part of the cure" (Johnson 2007:96). In fact, exuberant displays of happiness by ancestor spirits are among the features that indicate the success of *chugú* and *dügü* rituals.

Participants:

Ancestor spirits request specific kin members to be present and invite other spirits as well. According to Johnson, "All family members, even those residing in the United States, are obliged to attend. Indeed, the ritual's efficacy in resolving the perceived crisis depends on a complete demonstration of family unity" (2007:96). The hundreds of Garinagu that flock to these events include those closely related to the ancestor or ancestors being honored—core members of the kingroup, as Cayetano calls it—and extended relations, including affinal and consanguineal kin, and distant relations whose presence powerfully displays Garifuna solidarity as a unified people across space and, when considering the dead who are also present, across time.

Although there is typically only one focal spirit being honored, "Many of the dead take part in *dügü*, having been invited by the spirit guest of honor (just as the sponsors of *dügü* invite the living to join them in the feast)" (Kerns 1983:163). *Chugú* invitations are extended in the same manner. Garinagu expect that living attendees will remember and make offerings to their ancestors during the ritual, preventatively pacifying them. From the very outset, then, it is evident that healing the single afflicted person depends upon the wellness and effort of the entire

social network because particular spirits cannot be appeased without the unity of the group. By the same token, the ancestor desiring to pass into Heaven (*Seiri*)—a transition that Foster suggests occurs through a *dügü* (1986)—cannot do so without the ritual effort of the living kingroup and extended *iduheguo* relations. Therefore, it is evident that: 1) the *dügü* and *chugú* are both curative and preventative because of their role as commemorative and collective; and, 2) the physical and mental health of the descendant depends upon helping the spirit transcend states.

Main Features:

What follows is not a full description of the sequences that occur each day of the *dügü* and *chugú* rituals (for a full description, see Johnson 2007:146-185). This is not a timeline of events, but a brief discussion of certain key features of these rituals that are relevant to my overall discussion.

As I have witnessed, the *dügü* and *chugú* are a veritable frenzy of smells, sounds, tastes, sights, and tactile sensations. Animals raised for consumption at the ritual are slaughtered. Women prepare often copious amounts of food for a large feast, some portions placed in baskets made especially for offering food to the dead while other portions are separated for the living attendees. Sponsors of the ritual must provide enough rum for everyone who helped organize, and for all of the living and ancestral attendees. They must also coat the inside of the temple (*dabuyaba*) with it. A significant amount of the *chugú* and *dügü* is accompanied by singing, dancing, and drumming. During dances and songs, individuals become physically close, touching skin, sharing sweat and breath—palpably connecting through movement, voice, effort, and experience. Incense and tobacco smoke fill every inch of the *dabuyaba* and accompany all animal sacrifices and blessings. Candles are lit. Rum perfumes the floor and coats the throats,

heads, and necks of individual bodies, increasing their "heat" and opening them up for ancestors to enter. Truly, this is an experience of bodily unification through the spirit of the ancestor in a singular house—the *dabuyaba*—that is created to appear as if plucked up from the Garifuna community of more than three hundred years ago.

Different kinds of songs are sung throughout the *chugú* and *dügü*. They are accompanied by three large drums and maracas. *Amálihani* songs—songs of placation—are intended to soothe and reassure the spirit of the ancestor in need. These are essential to the ritual. These songs are what I heard before the first ancestor possession I witnessed in the desciption above. The part of the ritual in which these songs are sung is commonly known as *máli*. This is the "central ritual act of the *dügü"* (Kerns 1983:162) and the "temporal heart of the event" (Johnson 2007:164). *Máli* are accompanied by drums and dancing. As one of Greene's informants noted, "*Mali* is to calm down the ancestors…the ones who are mad…to ease their anger. They see their family members together and they hear the music and they just start to calm down" (1998:178).

Dancing is also necessary at a *chugú* or *dügü*. The name *dügü* itself is actually derived from the word *adügürahani,* which means "treading," "compressing," "or "gathering" according to Taylor (1951:113), or "mashing down the earth," in Johnson's words (2007:96). The name seems to emanate from the continuous movement required for hours each day by dancers who step from side to side during the half-an-hour to hour during which participants sing *amálihani* songs. This is significant in that a portion of ancestor spirits are conceptually located in the ground (Foster 1986; Taylor 1951) and arise from it to possess descendants. Others arrive by air.

Nearing the last day of a *dügü*, the living prepare a table overflowing with food and drink to provide a feast for ancestor spirits. At the large-scale *chugú* I attended in Livingston in 2015, two long wooden tables blanketed by white table cloths were arranged in the shape of a cross.

Three large drums hung over the center of the table, which had been there for the duration of the ritual. The setup of the feast was a highly coordinated affair that required the work of several men. Musicians began to play drums and maracas at separate ends of each table while the *buyei* and his helpers placed bottles of rum, bowls of blessed water, conch shells, cassava bread, and tall votive candles along the surface of the tables. Meanwhile, some of these men lit copal incense that was placed in a metal box that hung below an opening in the very center where the tables joined, just beneath the drums. Other attendees and I stood and sat along the inner wall, watching. The incense streamed smoke as the men continued to lay out the banquet. Bottles of soda were added to the table and, like the bottles of rum, a ball of cotton rested easily on the open top, which allowed spirits to consume the essences of the drinks.

Some of the participants took out their phones and began taking pictures and videos of the preparation. Slowly, attendees began to approach the table and gently set down plates of the favorite foods of their ancestors, which they had prepared especially for them. The music continued nonstop and eventually I noticed a pair of maracas had been placed, crossed in an X, at the foot of a table that pointed toward the main entrance to the *dabuyaba*, above which four thin blue candles adorned the table's edge. The *buyei* and his helpers moved carefully along, making sure every detail was perfect. Once the tables were set, we gathered around them. A Catholic priest stood at the "head" of one of the long tables pointing toward the adjacent small sanctuary of the *buyei*, and he said a blessing for all to hear. In this moment, the living participants and the dead spirits were gathered together in the *dabuyaba* to feast. Just as youth are expected to serve food to their elders before eating, the dead who had just received plates of food would eat first. Once they consumed the "essences" of the food, the living would then eat what they had prepared for their ancestors. This large gathering of living and dead eating together, the respect

and care given to the dead with whom descendants even shared the same plate of food, and the labor behind it all added to an extreme sense that attendees were being actively (re)melded into a network of family that was emblematic of Garifuna personhood and located under one ancestral roof. Because of the profound meaning and effect of these rituals on kin and connection, my inclusion in was an extreme honor.

Scene from the *dabuyaba*: The table laid out for ancestor spirits during the ceremony I attended in 2015. A priest at the head of the tables resides over the blessing. Hammocks are tied to rafters.

The *chugú* and *dügü* conclude with a heightened state of exuberance. The core group of kin chosen to organize the rituals work together for up to a year. By the time the ritual is over, they will have seen hundreds of family members who were brought together by the dead—some of whom they may not have known. They will have spoken with deceased relatives face to face through possession and received their advice and blessings. They will have also thought about family and unity for months on end, slept in hammocks under the same temple roof for days,

danced *punta*, and participated in an extravaganza of commensality and care. When it is finished, the core organizers will run into the sea holding hands to be bathed by the ancestor spirits there.

Language Use:

Many groups across the Caribbean practice ancestor possession and, like Garinagu, their ancestors often insist upon a certain history and encourage certain cultural practices, threatening harm if the living stray from what the dead see as the right path. For deceased Garinagu, continued Garifuna language use in particular is roundly defended as a practice that must be maintained at all costs. At *chugú* and *dügü* rituals, they explicitly voice this opinion through their mediums during ancestor possession. These spirits, as models of morality that uphold Garifuna values, fiercely insist upon speaking to the living in Garifuna. They use this language even if they are competent in another language, and even if they did not speak the language in life. In other words, they promote a clear message: Garinagu speak Garifuna. These spirits also promote the continuation of other Garifuna practices[37] but, again, will only deliver their thoughts in the Garifuna language. In this way, they are activists from beyond the grave for cultural and linguistic continuation.

From the perspective of language preservation, the fact that ancestors speak exclusively in Garifuna raised alarming questions: If the language disappeared in this community, how would ancestors and their descendants communicate? How could rituals like the *chugú* and *dügü* be conducted? Many Garinagu responded to these questions using the case of Nicaragua, where the language is no longer spoken, to illustrate that if language dies, they may become cut off from their ancestors. They report that because Nicaraguan Garinagu cannot speak their language, they cannot hold ceremonies for the dead. Perhaps this was why spirits in Livingston were so

[37] For example, they often insist upon certain farming techniques or ask that particular crops be grown. They also ask descendants to practice music, cook the food, wear Garifuna clothes and maintain the Garifuna way of fishing.

insistent that descendants must not lose the language—they wanted to maintain lines of communication. Yet, this still does not explain *why* these lines of communication matter in the first place.

For many Garinagu I spoke with, it seemed that family and even personhood would have to be redefined if they could not communicate with ancestors. Some questioned whether they would even continue to be Garinagu. As one acquaintance said, "Who are we without our ancestors?" Garifuna ceremonies and the messages that emerge from ancestral possession insist upon particular family relationships that define a culturally unique kinship system. Ceremonies draw people together from across nations and from the past into the present. Spirits introduce people to new family, thereby expanding kinship networks (see example in Foster 1986). Ancestors teach history, protect and heal the living, and can advise them about the problems they face. In this way, understanding the way in which the dead contributed to the identity and self-understanding of the living was pressing.

Who are the Ancestors?

In this section I explore the concept of "ancestor" through common terms that Garinagu use to describe them. I suggest that examining precisely who these ancestors are to living Garinagu will offer a clue as to why they are attributed such a central role in their lives. This examination will also provide insight into the manner in which the Garifuna language is imagined to reside within a Garifuna self.

First and foremost, Garifuna ancestors are people. They are imagined as spirits that inhabited living Garifuna bodies in the past. Their experiences and idiosyncrasies—the mannerisms, flair, and humor expressed by the living person—persist into death as these spirits continue to have social lives and the full range of emotionality as the living. The dead remain

present in the lives of descendants and, as explained above, they actively engage with contemporary situations by visiting them in dreams and through spirit possession. During these exchanges, spirits comment on various events, identify potential problems, and advise their living kin. These same spirits also protect kin and act as guardians of history, culture, and language by insisting upon their preservation.

On the other hand, "ancestor" is a collective and more generalized concept. It can be applied to one's lineal kin, but can also refer generally to deceased Garinagu—particularly those in the seventeenth and eighteenth century in whom the Garifuna identity is rooted. Thus, while "ancestor" does indicate a deceased person in one's lineage, the concept is more varied and complex.

Garifuna ancestors transcend time and space. Although they lived in the past, they are able to visit the present. This occurs when they inhabit a body during possession and when they speak to kin in dreams. Even outside of these occasions, when they are not in the role of interlocutor, they are generally thought of as guardian spirits who are present in the living world, keeping watch over their descendants.

When the living speak Garifuna, they honor these deceased kin while simultaneously expressing value for and connection to the Garifuna speaking world of the past. Speaking Garifuna symbolically aligns speakers with this ancestry. Mutual fluency in the Garifuna language shared between these spirits and the living enables continued contact between them, for example, during rituals for the dead that are conducted in Garifuna. Speaking Garifuna shows a willingness to communicate on the ancestors' terms, accommodating them rather than expecting them to converse in the Spanish or English frequently heard in the living world.

Gubida and *Áhari*

In Douglas Taylor's extensive account of indigenous Garifuna cosmology (1951), he identified two types of spirits: 1) those who "reward attention and punish neglect, and are constantly venerated and feared"; and 2) those "whose only function appears to be that of plaguing humanity, and who are, in the main, only feared" (Taylor 1951:101). Spirits of dead ancestors fall into the first category, and malicious spirits called *mafia* fall into the second. While Taylor listed more than a dozen terms for spirits,[38] in Livingston, I did not observe more than a few of them in use today. Two that remain in common use to refer to ancestors are *gubida* and *áhari.* These specifically refer to spirits of deceased kin, disembodied from their living form.

Although scholars and Garinagu maintain that there is a distinction between these two kinds of spirits, explanations for these terms in both scholarly literature and among Garinagu themselves is inconsistent. For example, Byron Foster writes that *gubida* are ancestor spirits in their malevolent form. Once they possess the living during the *dügü*, they take on a beneficent form and become *áhari.* In his view, *gubida* are associated with the ground and a difficult postmortem journey of the spirit, and *áhari* are linked to the air as spirits who have transcended the hardship of death and passed into Heaven. Other scholars, such as Nancie Gonzales (1988) and Virginia Kerns (1983), occasionally use the term *gubida* and define it as the "family dead." They make little or no reference to *áhari.* In striking contrast to Taylor and Foster, both Gonzales and Kerns tend to avoid the Garifuna terms altogether and simply refer to "ancestor spirits." This may be a reflection of regional differences given that these scholars worked in different parts of the Garifuna Diaspora.

[38] He lists the following: "*áhari, áhambue, gubida, hiúraha,"* […] *"úfję, mafia, iauararugu, agaiumą, ogoreu, úmeu, dibinaua, duendu, susia, labureme ubáu"* (1951:103). Of these, I heard only *áhari, gubida, hiúraha,* and *mafia* used during my research.

Other scholars identify ranks or varying levels of power among spirits, including those between *áhari* and *gubida*. Salvador Suazo (2000) and Ruy Coelho (1955) both listed *gubida* as the highest spirit form of the dead. As Paul Johnson notes, they claim that "the most exalted of departed spirits are *gubida*, former ancestors who have completed their postmortem sojourn to the land of the dead, *Sairi*. Below these are the *hiyuruha*, the tutelary spirits who advise entranced shamans (*buyeis*) during divination and healing procedures. Lower still are the *áhari*, those recently deceased and perhaps still present in the village" (Johnson 2007:272). This description is almost the inverse of Foster's findings in Belize in the 1980s. Like Johnson, I found that in discussions about spirits with Garinagu in Livingston, hierarchy was significantly less important.

If both *áhari* and *gubida* are used to indicate "ancestor spirits" or "family dead," what distinction drives the use of two separate terms and, further, how should we proceed to conceptualize ancestors? This question prompted a lengthy conversation between my informant Juan Carlos and me. Juan Carlos, the aforementioned Messenger in the account above, took issue with the scholarly explanations he had come across for these terms. In the following conversation (translated from Spanish), he explains the problem he has with such scholars:

> JC: *Gubida* comes from the word *gube,* which is "rotten."[39] Some theories of some people, even though I haven't myself felt these to be true, say that *gubida* is when the body is in the coffin in a hole [in the ground]. The flesh is rotting. This is *gubida.* This is the theory that some people have written about [Garifuna] spirituality. *Gubeli*[40] – "it is rotten." *Gube* – "it rotted." Ok. Some people add that you cannot call the *áhari* [by the name] *gubida* for this reason. I remember when they [scholars] began to prohibit this word from use in our spirituality.[41] I remember it very well. Before, you heard *gubida.*
>
> A: And now only *áhari?*

[39] The Spanish term he used was *podrido.*
[40] This reference stems from the word *agubecha,* which is the root word meaning "to deteriorate" or "to rot."
[41] The scholars to which Juan Carlos refers here or why they would have prohibited this term from being used are not clear.

JC: (*Nods his head. Refers to "hearing" in academic circles, not local use*.) Ok. So studies were on small things like these and some linguistics. So, [they say] *gube* means "rotten." It does. [And they say] *áhari* is a spirit of our ancestors.[42] Now, add to this that writing that I had seen also [said] that in a year, this *gubida*[43]... it is here where I am unhappy because a spirit is a spirit. Always. A spirit has nothing to do with this process [of rotting]. A spirit is a spirit. Ok. Here, the only correction is on how it was said. [They say] not to say that spirits of the ancestors are *gubida* because the word *gubida* comes from something that means "rotten." Ok. I agree. But if they say that in one year, a *gubida* will become a spirit, never! The spirit has nothing to do with the process of decay.

A: What do you prefer [to use]?

JC: I hear the word *gubida*. For me, if I call an ancestor *gubida*, it isn't an insult. But it has been made into something derogatory. To me, saying *gubida* remains [correct] because this word is the one that I encountered here. Suddenly some scholar doing studies…they might say not to use it. But for me, this is the original word for these spirits.

His issue with the literature was that if one claims that *gubida* refers to the material rotting flesh and decay of the body as a corpse, one cannot also claim that this material form becomes a spirit, which these scholars have described as *áhari.*[44] In his view, the spirit is constantly within the body and becomes uncoupled from it upon death.[45] Thus, he believed the distinctions scholars have attempted to make between these terms seemed misinformed and ill-founded. He claimed that he and Garinagu he knows use *gubida* to speak of spirits of the dead.

The distinction that Juan Carlos and other informants made is that the term *gubida* indicates the spirit of a dead person, but specifically the dead that are in one's family. *Áhari* is

[42] Here, Juan Carlos uses the word *abuelos: "Aharí es un espiritú de nuestros abuelos."* This could also be interpreted as "the spirit of our grandparents," but this would be inaccurate because he is referring to the entire spiritual complex of deceased Garifuna. Here, "grandparents" may be a literal translation, but again, *abuelos* in its use shows that this category is much broader than biological grandparents or even the classificatory grandparents (the siblings of biological grandparents). Rather, the use here signals unity and a particular kind of respect, emotional closeness, and obligation—one that can be found between a grandchild and his or her grandparent but is also used to characterize the larger host of ancestral spirits.

[43] The thought that was cut short and mutually understood was that, scholars report that in one year, a *gubida* becomes a spirit or, more specifically, an *áhari.* Here he is referring to a ceremony that occurs one year after death in which the family gathers to celebrate the individual. He came across scholars that claimed this celebration transformed the spirit of the dead into *áhari.* For Juan Carlos, this view is problematic.

[44] It is possible that this is a reference to the description given by Byron Foster (1986).

[45] This corresponds to the Garifuna term *áfurugu,* which is the "spiritual body" and an idea much like "spirit" in that it is constantly within the person's physical form and departs at death.

closer in meaning to "spirit of a dead person" in general. It can be contrasted with the term *áfurugu,* which is described as the "spirit body" of the living person (Suazo 2000:114) that departs from the physical form upon death. In other words, whereas the English term "spirit" refers to a kind of inner being that exists within the body during life and may persist after death, the Garifuna language separates this idea into the spirit of a living person, *áfurugu,* and the spirit of a dead person, *áhari.* The term *gubida* simply distinguishes certain deceased spirits from others by marking them as familial. Following this logic found within the Livingston community, I use the term *gubida* to talk about the spirits of the family dead and not *áhari.*

Abuelos y Ancestros

Garinagu in Livingston use both Spanish and Garifuna terms to refer to ancestors. Because Garinagu in Livingston speak Spanish as often or more than Garifuna, Spanish linguistic practices provide equally valuable information in uncovering the meaning of "ancestor." The ways in which the different Spanish terms are used reveal even more about the configuration of Garifuna kinship. In Livingston, Garinagu were fairly consistent in their use of *gubida* to refer to the identifiable, lineal, family dead. However, when one examines the way in which Garinagu discuss ancestors in Spanish, it becomes clear that the concept of "ancestor" is broader than simply "the family dead." Garinagu use the Spanish terms *ancestros* (ancestors) and *abuelos* (grandparents) interchangeably to refer to deceased kin members. *Ancestros* carries a meaning similar to that of the Euro American English term "ancestors." However, the use of *abuelos* in Livingston exposes important details about the concept of "ancestor" in general: 1) when Garinagu refer to ancestors, ideas about biological lineage are configured in a classificatory manner that includes a greater number of people in certain categories, such as grandparent, than a typical Euro American kinship system; 2) it can include all deceased

Garinagu and indicate the collective "blood" relatedness shared by the network of living and dead Garinagu; and 3) living Garinagu are also ancestors.

Abuelos are honorable predecessors, both living and dead, that descendants should esteem and whose words they should heed. While the term does indicate biological grandparents, the category of "grandparents" extends beyond two biological pairs. When informants sketched family trees, for instance, they revealed that *abuelos* is part of a classificatory kinship system wherein siblings of their biological grandparents are also their *abuelos*. In other words, what many non-indigenous North American-born individuals[46] might term great aunt or great uncle is, for Garinagu, a grandmother or grandfather. This is similar to a Hawaiian kinship system wherein the brothers and sisters of biological parents are called mother and father. For Garinagu, this occurs with reference to the grandparent generation, not the parent generation. Individuals that I interviewed identified these relatives as a single group to which the biological grandparents belonged. In Garifuna, for example, the terms *agütü* (grandmother) and *áruguti* (grandfather) could indicate any member of this group, not simply the biological grandparents. As the conversation below[47] illustrates, biological grandparents were not categorically distinguished from those grandparents' siblings. In what follows, my friend talked about going to his grandmother's house—a woman whom I thought had recently died:

> A: *¿Qué vas a hacer hoy?*
> What are you going to do today?
>
> C: *Voy a pasar el día con mi* ***abuela****. Voy a ayudarla con varias cosas.*
> I'm going to spend the day with my **grandmother**. I'm going to help her with a few things.

[46] Given the vast amount of diversity in the United States, it is important to indicate that there are critical differences between the ways that, for example, Native Americans or families with diverse cultural backgrounds understand and mark categories of kinship. The example I give is intended to clarify Garinagu configurations and it points to the way in which family categories are identified in many Euro-American and African-American kinship systems.

[47] Quotation marks are not used because these are not direct quotes. This is the conversation as remembered and recorded in the researcher's field notes. Emphasis is my own.

A: *¿Tu **abuela**? ¿Pero, no fuiste a su funeral la semana pasada?*
Your **grandmother**? But, didn't you go to her funeral last week?

C: *Sí, una de mis **abuelas** murió, pero esta es otra **abuela**. **Es su hermana**.*
Yes, one of my **grandmothers** died, but this is another **grandmother**. **It is her sister**.

A: *O…Pero. ¿No sería tu tía?*
Oh… But. Wouldn't that be your aunt?

C: (*risa*) *¡No! ¿Por qué sería mi tía? ¡Es mi **abuela**!*
(*laughter*) No! Why would she be my aunt? She is my **grandmother**!

A: *Espere. ¿Cuantas **abuelas** tienes? ¿Quieres decir que las **hermanas de tu abuela** también son tus **abuelas**? ¿Y sus **hermanos** son…tus **abuelos**?*
Wait. How many **grandmothers** do you have? You mean the **sisters of your grandmother** are also your **grandmothers**? And the **brothers** are…your **grandfathers**?

C: *Por supuesto.*
C: Of course.

In C's view, it was laughable that I should imagine the brothers and sisters of my grandparents to be aunts and uncles. He and others consistently expressed confusion that I did not imagine my family in this way. During the activity of drawing one's family tree, I regularly sketched out my own afterward in order to compare and ensure that I had understood the information being presented. On the four occasions that this occurred, I wrote labels in Spanish reading "*tia*" ("aunt") and *tio* ("uncle") to identify the brothers and sisters of the parents of my parents. My own sketch drew laughter, confusion, and correction each time. For Garinagu, these were my other grandparents and I had clearly mislabeled them. Applying the Garifuna configuration of family to my own arrangement would increase the number of my grandparents, as well as my aunts and uncles. It was not uncommon to find Garinagu with five or more grandmothers. Their children, who would be a first cousins once removed to most Americans, are aunts and uncles to the Garifuna individual, and their children are first cousins.[48]

[48] Garinagu did not express this idea of first, second, etc. when discussing cousins. A cousin was a cousin. In Garifuna, they were either referred to in Spanish (including code switching from Garifuna to Spanish) as *primo/a,* or called *primu* (the Garifuna word for *primo*) or *iduhei* (Garifuna term for "cousin" that can also mean "relative").

When referring to the living, the term *abuelos* can convey the meaning of "elder" and is sometimes used to describe elderly Garifuna people in one's community. This appeared, on one hand, to demonstrate respect, and, on the other, to affirm the kinship that all Garinagu share as descendants of "original" Garifuna on St. Vincent in the seventeenth century. When the term *abuelos* was used with deceased kin, it did not necessarily refer to "grandparents" as discussed above. Rather, in death, *abuelos* appear to be deceased kin in general. [49] Thus *abuelos,* when applied to the dead, tended to include all of the kin that came before you.

The reason this is important is that it helps illuminate how the Garifuna person is imagined, and it will point to some of the potential repercussions for language loss later. That *abuelos* can be used with both the living and the dead hints at the fact that the living person is an ancestor. This was explained to me one morning as my friend Tomas and I walked along the coast to a large Garifuna farm. Tomas, the aforementioned contact I made through Michelle Forbes, is in his fifties and is a man who spends much time contemplating the meaning of existence while attempting to create dialogue about issues within the Garifuna diasporic community. He is heavily involved in local affairs and writes a blog called "Food for Thought" that describes the goings on in Livingston and raises questions about spirituality and how to unify as a people.[50]

One morning as we walked, he spoke about his role in the family. His voice raised as if carrying a tone of surprise and he asked, "Did you know I am going to be a great grandfather?!" I replied that this was hard to imagine because he was so young. I asked what that meant to him

[49] It was not clear whether *abuelos* were only "grandparents" as described above, or if the term *abuelos* extended to dead relations that, were they alive, Garinagu would identify as aunt, uncle, or cousin. Garinagu tended to use this term in the same manner they used *ancestros* and I was told that *abuelos* were *ancestros.* This point needs further investigation.

[50] The blog is written in English and not published publicly online, but sent via email to a specific list of recipients that Tomas has compiled.

and he said he was not sure yet, but it was on his mind. He believed he needed to set a good example and to teach the values of his forbearers, which sounded to me like something that dead Garinagu do. Shortly thereafter, he emailed a blog entry that began:

> 6/6/15- It is 2:44 in the morning and ***our*** mind is set on this moment. From ***our*** point of view, a moment like this is what heaven on earth is all about; it is when the mind, body and soul come together as one.
> The mind, body, and soul now become "we" it is an understanding that at this dimension we become the past, present and future. Now in this moment ***we are the Ancestors of Tomorrow*** (emphasis my own).

He closes this entry by identifying himself as an ancestor. He is a living ancestor in part because he sees the present moment as one in which all time exists simultaneously—he is his present, past, and future self. As described above, this merger of time is reiterated in post mortem rituals for deceased kin and described in the very meaning that Joseph Palacio gives for *iduheguo* family: "It [kinship] is a very strong nucleating force ***stretching across time and space*** as it coagulates the peoplehood of the Garífuna" (2001:182).

While his blog entry indicates that Garinagu are living "ancestors of tomorrow," or future ancestors who will assume a certain role after death, the living Garifuna person is also identified as an ancestor *of the past*. In all of Tomás' entries, he uses the pronoun "we." In this excerpt, he identifies "we" as the unification of mind, body, and soul within a temporally connected space wherein the past, present, and future merge. When I asked him about the use of "we," he explained that he *and* his ancestors speak simultaneously. In other words, he possesses the voice of his ancestors and they live within him. His voice is also that of deceased kin.

Numerous Garinagu, particularly of his generation, expressed this feeling of oneness with deceased ancestors and identified as future ancestors themselves. This presencing of ancestor within the self was different from spirit possession and resembled more closely the way in which Aisha Beliso-De Jesus describes spiritual co-presences of Santaria practitioners (2014). Many

Garinagu who, like Tomás, described experiencing the unification with deceased kin, were individuals were heavily involved in ritual work that aligns the time frames of past and present into a single space and allows dead Garifuna ancestors to physically occupy present spaces both as invisible entities and as physically tangible beings when they inhabit living bodies.

Why Ancestors Speak Garifuna

This merger of time and beings into the living "individual" makes the idea of language loss quite profound. If part of one's being is cut off from the other, what then? To this end, I wondered whether the dead would speak in another language and, if not, why not.

One evening, I went to visit Juan Carlos to discuss the connection between ancestor spirits and language. I had only heard *gubida* speak in Garifuna and wanted to know more about which languages these spirits understood and used. He explained that what we think of as spirits of the dead—*gubida* and *áhari*—were simply Garifuna people who had died. They are in death how they were in life, with the same personalities and mannerisms, but they all speak Garifuna. Why then, I asked, would a person who could not speak Garifuna in life suddenly speak it in death? His brow furrowed slightly and he faced me squarely, explaining what seemed self-evident, "Look. If you are Garifuna, you will speak Garifuna." The ethnicity and language were inseparable. The reason that spirits spoke Garifuna was, to Juan Carlos, quite simple: speaking the language is part of who you are as a Garifuna person—your very soul speaks Garifuna. As he said, "their language is Garifuna" and they would not speak in any other language because those languages are not "who they are." If you are not a speaker in life, your spirit will acquire this language in death and speak it because it desires to speak its own language, not that of another people. Juan Carlos assured me that spirits could understand other languages, and they could also speak them if they so desired; but Garifuna spirits did not *want* to speak in other languages even

if they had the ability to do so. He explained that, because one day for the living is much more to the dead, it seems to the living that spirits learn language very quickly. As another acquaintance would tell me, in death those that did not speak Garifuna in life come to be who they "really are" in death, and speaking Garifuna demonstrates this.

In this way, the speech of ancestors is spoken in Garifuna and can be heard in that language through the mouths of possessed descendants. According to dozens of Garinagu, this is an observable fact that occurs regardless of whether or not that living descendant is able to speak the language;[51] and this is so notwithstanding the deceased person's capacity to speak Garifuna when he or she was alive.

The Ancestor Within: A Fixed, Garifuna Speaking Self

Language as Bodily Lineage

How did Garinagu who were not ritual specialists like Juan Carlos understand this connection? I had learned that dead Garinagu only spoke Garifuna, and that they were merged—ontologically co-existing—with a living descendant, yet simultaneously separately moving entities. Did other Garinagu understand it this way? If so, how did this reality impact the way in which Garinagu in Livingston were experiencing language loss?

This notion of connection resonated with other Garinagu in Livingston in that the Garifuna language was frequently imagined as attached to the Garifuna person. Language and Garinagu were so bound together that when a Garifuna-born person did not speak the language, it could seem illogical to other Garinagu. This possibility even confused some informants, who asked "If you are Garifuna, why would you speak anything else?"

[51] Unfortunately, I myself did not have the opportunity to witness this. However, on the dozens of instances of spirit possession that I observed, the dead always spoke clearly and fluently in Garifuna. This speech was presumed to be "pure" and "correct" Garifuna.

That very question was posed to me by a friend one evening. Gouule Francisco was a young man in his twenties and a popular local musician. I had been sitting in the studio with him and a few others one night as they took turns jumping into a small recording booth where they spit fresh Garifuna lyrics into a microphone. Gouule was a talented percussionist and singer whose skills were widely sought and whose music boomed daily from disco and household speakers. He was a fluent Garifuna speaker and an activist eager to preserve his language and culture however he could. He and his friends—an important force in the revitalization movement which I return to in Chapter 5—often fused Garifuna beats and lyrics with Caribbean, African, or Latin sounds like Dancehall and Reggaeton.

During a break from recording that night, we stood on a thick cement balcony, looking out onto the quiet street below. I asked him what he thought it meant when a Garifuna person could not speak the language. He responded with the following:[52]

> It's very strange to meet a Garifuna person who does not speak Garifuna. It is our language, so how can we not speak it? It has happened to me before. When I meet someone from Honduras or Belize and I think they are Garifuna, but when I go up to them and speak our language, they reply that they can't understand me and they only speak Spanish or English.[53] It's weird! It's hard to explain to you. It's like someone from the United States who doesn't speak English, but not exactly the same. Imagine that you meet someone who is Chinese and they can only talk to you in English. But they live in China! How do they not speak Chinese? It's kind of like that. **Our language is *ours*. It's a part of us.** It's really strange when someone doesn't speak it, confusing even. I don't know how you can be a Garifuna person and not speak the language. (Emphasis mine.)

Like Gouule, most Garinagu I spoke with claimed the language as "part of who we are." The reasoning progressed that the language belongs to them *because* it was their ancestors'. This

[52] This excerpt was taken from my fieldnotes and is not a direct quote. I therefore do not use quotation marks, but the text is paraphrased from our conversation and is translated from Spanish.

[53] Here, Gouule is not inferring that all black people in Honduras and Belize are assumed to be Garinagu. Rather, this comment points to his surprise at the lack of fluency in those who may otherwise claim to be Garifuna. It was stated almost as a question about belonging.

impacts the way that loss is understood, often causing it to be framed as a decision to not speak something to which you have irrefutable access.

As one person explained, a Garifuna person who does not speak Garifuna is *lying* about who they are. My friend Cesar Gregorio explained this to me one day with his usual clarity, adding that you cannot stop being Garifuna, you can only deny it. The fan in his living room buzzed, moving around the heavy afternoon air. "If you are Garifuna, why won't you speak Garifuna?" he asked rhetorically. Speaking Garifuna was likened to telling the truth and self-acceptance, while not speaking it was likened to lying and even renouncing yourself—you distance yourself from an identity you cannot fundamentally escape. Therefore, you lie to others and to yourself when you do not speak Garifuna.

Language, in combination with ancestors and the experiences of history, are also described as "within the body," again emphasizing an ontological merger. Ancestors, their lives, and their language are said to have left perceptible traces within the Garifuna frame. Roy Cayetano suggests this in his well-loved Garifuna poem "Drums of my Fathers" (2005:176) which opens with the following (original formatting observed):

Drums of my Fathers
Rumbling in my bones -
Organ music.
Drums of my Fathers
Beating in my mind -
Jukebox blaring
Drums of my Fathers
Capturing my soul –
Sing a hymn to Mary.
Words of my Fathers
Tumbling from my mouth -
Speak the Queen's English

Drums of my Fathers
of my grandfathers
of my ancestors
Drumming in my psyche
Drums of my Fathers
Drum! Beat!

Beat on! Drum on!
And on!

The form, quality, rhythm, and language of music in the Belizean author's present environment contrast with the sound and beat of his forbearers that persists "in his bones." His

Garifuna-born body contains ancestral sounds, including language, that are felt as frequencies within his physical being, which is itself a vessel through which the past is carried into the present. Cayetano continues in first person, blurring the distinction between living person and deceased kin by claiming the hardships of his predecessors as his own. He writes:

> I, stretched and taut,
> Have taken the beating
> and the pounding;
> But my spirit
> and my voice
> Will not be quieted
> Will not be muffled

His body is likened to a worn drum that is simultaneously of his ancestors and of himself. The spirit and voice of the body as a drum thrive and resound in the living speaker despite having suffered from events such as British imprisonment and exile from St. Vincent in the eighteenth century. The ancestors alive during that period, and their experience more than 200 years ago, are retained and sensed within Cayetano's physical being. Through his living body, the Garifuna spirit and voice penetrate time. By the end of the poem, it is clear that he is at once his ancestors—who he writes are "of" Africa, the Amazon, the Orinoco, and the Carib—and their descendant:

> Yet, you must know,
> I was here before all that,
> I was here before -
> before
> the paler faces came;
> And organ music
> Jukebox blaring
> Hymns sung to mary
> and the queen's english
> shall not quiet the
> Drums of my Fathers
> Rumbling in my bones,
> Drums of my Fathers
> Capturing my mind,
> Drums of my Fathers
> Recapturing my soul, or the
> Words of my Fathers
> Tumbling from my mouth.
> Drums of my Fathers
> of my Grandfathers
> of my Ancestors
> Drumming in my psyche
> Souls of my Fathers
> Drum! Beat!
> Beat On! Drum On!
> AND ON!!!

Being Garifuna, for Cayetano, involves existing as a person in the present—specifically, a lineal descendant of Garifuna people—who holds sensations, memories, and experiences of the Garifuna ethnohistory within his being. In this way, Garifuna identity reaches deep into time. As he and Tomas describe, the living Garifuna person is their present self and past Garifuna, a living ancestor and the ancestors who have passed on. The experiences (and people) of history belong to the living Garifuna person. The lessons of the past, lessons that are guarded and enforced by ancestors, are part of histories that are embedded in traditional practices such as dance, agriculture, and speaking the Garifuna language. When Garinagu do not speak the language, it often reads as a rejection of the history, of their ancestors and fellow Garinagu, and of themselves.

Conclusion: Garifuna Ancestors as Spirits from Past to Present

Exploring who the ancestors are and their relationship to the living reveals that the living Garifuna person does not exist apart from their ancestors. Rather, the living and dead share substance and spirit, and this has implications for the Garifuna language. I propose that language not only indexes kinship, but is imagined as a substantive, inherited, bodily property. Losing language, then, risks losing a part of the Garifuna self.

What I have observed among Garinagu in this light resonates with analyses that Janet Chernela has made about language and self among speakers of Eastern Tukanoan[54] languages in Brazil and Colombia (2013; 2018). Chernela has described language for Tukanoans as part of a "complex ideology in which language is consubstantial, metaphysical product—a 'substance' in the development of the person" (2018:23). For Tukanoans, speech itself is "deeply rooted in

[54] "Eastern Tukanoan" denotes a family of languages, not a singular language. Chernela uses the term "Tukanoan" to refer to any speakers of languages belonging to the Eastern Tukanoan language family. I follow her example here.

ontology" as a "fundamental property of the human body" (2018:26). The Tukanoan language that one speaks demonstrates descent from one of four possible lines of ancestry derived from an origin story. In this account, the "founding ancestors of each of the linguistico-descent groups that comprise the Eastern Tukanoan universe" (2018:26) emerged from the body of an ancestral anaconda. Chernela explains that these four groups each share a "natural connectedness" (2018:26) that Sahlins calls "a quality of intersubjective belonging" (2013) and Schneider refers to as "substance" (1972). She asserts that "one of those shared corporal substances is language" (2018:26). The language of one's father—one's *patrilect*—is the language of that substance. She explains that "the processes by which a child learns his or her *patrilect* are regarded as natural, inseparable from the child's physical and spiritual inheritance" (2018:26). This particular configuration of language in Tukanoan ontology has led to marriage taboos between speakers of the same language, and a fascinating case of multilingualism wherein individuals comprehend several languages but discipline themselves to speak only one.

Speaking Garifuna identifies the speaker as someone with concrete kinship links to other Garinagu, including the dead, when it is spoken. Yet, this link between kinship and language has not led to the kinds of multilingualism or marriage taboos present among Tukanoans. Unlike the Tukanoan origin story, the account of Garifuna origins emphasizes the unification of a large collection of people who, together and through a singular language, confronted hostile British colonizers to fight for their land. Whereas Tukanoan ancestry identifies several distinct lineages, this is not the case with Garinagu. Theirs is the story of a cohesive group with one language. Speaking Garifuna attributes this heritage to the speaker and places them within the story.

Jean Jackson, whose work Chernela builds upon, explained that Tukanoans used language as a "badge of identity" (1983:165). Chernela pushed Jackson's discoveries further by

locating language within the body. As in Jackson's descriptions of language use among Vaupes Indians and Tukanoans (1974; 1983), Garinagu do use language emblematically to display belonging to the group through descent. However, the language is also located in the body; and, whereas Tukanoan languages reveal patrilineal descent, speaking Garifuna demonstrates Garifuna descent from either the mother or the father. Like Tukanoans, Garinagu also believe that their language, Garifuna, is a *corporeal* part of who they are—a product of birthright; yet, conversing in non-Garifuna languages does not interfere with their identity as Garinagu. Rather, it is the *inability* for Garinagu to speak the Garifuna language that threatens one's identity as a Garifuna person. Whereas, as Chernela explains, Tukanoans receive their *patrilect* gradually and the process of learning is naturalized, Garinagu state that the Garifuna language is present within the body at birth. Unlike language among Eastern Tukanoan speakers, the Garifuna language is not "transferred gradually," it is simply part of who you are, as Cesar explained. Garifuna belongs to them as, in their words, an "*idioma ancestral"* (an "ancestral language") that is gifted through descent, and is an innate, inseparable component of the Garifuna self. This is not true of other languages spoken in Livingston, such as Spanish or English. Garinagu described their language as "the language of your soul," "in our blood," and "something inside of me."

In sum, the Garifuna language is a physically manifested product of lineage that connects descendants. If the Garifuna language is tied to the very soul of the person, and if one's ancestors and their experiences reside within the body, as Cayetano and others have expressed, then the inability to speak Garifuna demonstrates an inability to access a corporeal property that should be present through descent. As I discuss in the next chapter, the contemporary Garifuna community (including ancestors) understand the utility of Spanish, but increased fluency in Spanish does not explain to them why youth lack Garifuna competency. Because language and

ancestors are inseparable, and because both are located bodily, the stakes of Garifuna language loss appear to entail not only the inability to communicate with ancestors, but also the inability to access a part of one's own being which is understood conceptually as history, self, or personality. In the next chapter, I will explore a few ways in which this particular linguistic ideology shapes the experience of the youngest generations of Garinagu in Livingston who are not speaking the language.

~ 3 ~

Revitalization on the Ground: Garifuna Language Revival and Intergenerational Interaction

A Livingston Street Scene – *Field notes, March 11, 2015*

There is a group of about five girls who play together on the street next to the Catholic church. They must range from about age five to nine. They often burst into giggles and shout hello to me as I pass. The first time I saw them, they were skipping rope with an actual rope they'd tied to a pole. I asked them whether I might join in and they were only too happy to invite me over. One girl untied the rope and another two stood on either side of me. They swung it and sang a Spanish rhyme that asked how old I would be when I got married, each skip amounting to a year. Apparently, I was destined to marry at thirty-five. They asked me where I was from and where I was going, and we launched into a long conversation. I wondered if any of them would say things in Garifuna so I decided to try eliciting a few examples. Greetings? Check. Numbers? Mostly. They did not offer words easily or quickly, which made it difficult to read the extent to which they could wield the language. Perhaps it was odd that this out-of-town woman was asking them to perform? I suspected there was more to this picture, but for the moment, it was hard to tell whether they were competent in Garifuna.

The girls continued to be a part of my daily life through smiles, greetings, and play. One afternoon, I walked by and saw some of them sitting outside on a blanket, while the other girls strutted along the street, supermodel style. One of the older girls was wearing chunk heels and had a sheet or some large, too-big cotton dress draped over her. Her elbows poked out with her hands on her hips as she turned. She was followed by a girl who looked about two years younger and they put on quite a show. Today I saw them out there as well. Three of them wore a lovely

shade of light eye shadow on their eyelids. I told them how beautiful they looked and mentioned that I thought I saw them walking like supermodels the other day. They were overjoyed that I noticed and a few of them got up to show me how to properly strut my stuff on a catwalk.

Just across the street from this scene of lovely ladies, a local fisherman stood weaving a new net a few steps down. We had spoken before, so I stopped to compliment him on his craft and asked if I could watch. The net was beautiful. He had strung a line up along a fence on the side of the street at about chest level. He was attaching a pristine new nylon thread to this by drawing the string in and out of the top loops on the net and attaching it every fifth pass to a thick line. He said that he went out to sea most evenings to fish, and that he is one of the few Garinagu who still fish. He continued, explaining that he is part of a way of life with values that stand in contrast to those of youth. The fact that he didn't see them fishing meant, to him, that young men have no interest in this tradition or the history and values it represents. No interest? The words felt heavy.

The wind shifted around in the fat leaves of tropical trees above and he turned his face toward me for a moment. He said he was looking for me the other day because he was making drums. This statement felt more like an accusation. Was I, too, uninterested in learning? To say that I wanted to know about culture was just a breath of sounds. Where had I been, he wanted to know? I apologized, and he followed this by asking directly whether I was interested in the language only, or if I also wanted to know about culture. I explained that I was trying to understand what was happening with language in Livingston. Why, for example, did some people speak the language while others didn't, and what did this mean? Of course, I believed that I had to learn about culture to understand this. He shook his head slightly and he offered a quick and confident response similar to others I had heard, particularly from those in his generation and

older.[55] He said that the language was gone from the home. Parents weren't speaking Garifuna to kids.

He underscored his explanation like Gouule had, by framing language in terms of belonging. If English is your language, he reasoned, then you speak it at home even if you live in a Spanish speaking place. You speak English in your house because it's yours—it's your language. Yet, Garinagu were speaking Spanish in their homes and, according to the fisherman, Spanish did not belong to them and certainly had no place within a Garifuna household. The logic of language and belonging stood out in the way that it was arranging spaces of the home versus the outside. The idea of a Garifuna home filled with Spanish clearly disturbed my friend, as if the presence of another language itself had undone or broken something.

The fisherman also agreed with others I'd spoken to, stating that the diaspora to the United States was partly to blame for all of the changes in Livingston. He said that the flow of money (and reliance on currency[56]) has shaped the current generation. Young people are not working in the same manner as, for example, he does. He makes drums, fishes, and farms. At fifty-two, he still works hard. He offered a comparison by slouching to one side and raising his hands to his face, portraying his idea of today's Garifuna youth on their phones. He claimed that this generation only asks people for things that are usually provided, and that remittances were partly to blame. He was frustrated, explaining that people here used to farm and fish and that youth today don't do any of this. He interpreted changes like those in the way people dressed, the forms of labor they did (or didn't do), and how they spoke as disrespectful to Garifuna history and ancestors.

[55] He was fifty-two at the time of this conversation.

[56] According to older informants, Garinagu in Livingston had a predominantly agricultural economy in years past. This has been largely displaced by a reliance on cash that coincides with increased food products and household items marketed in and distributed to Livingston from other areas of Guatemala.

I wondered whether the girls in earshot were listening. To what extent was the frustration of the fisherman absorbed by these kids on the street who were fantasizing about fashion, playing at a genre of glamor that was not of his generation, and one that didn't "belong" to Garinagu? Did his open lamentations affect them as they spoke Spanish and wore mainstream clothing? Could this have been intended for them, in part? What was their take on all of this?

As I stood and considered the composition of the street, a Garifuna friend in his twenties walked by and greeted me. He stood, for a moment, next to the fisherman and they exchanged greetings in Spanish. My friend did not speak Garifuna. He was dressed in all white with a cap that still bore a new sticker, which stood out next to the fisherman whose thick, calloused hands continued to weave as he turned quietly back to his work. I said goodbye and continued down the street with my young friend who smiled and asked curiously why in the world was I interested in talking to a fisherman?

Language in Home, Language as Home

In many Central American Garifuna communities, there is an often visible rift between generations. Like the fisherman, older generations in Livingston regularly associate the Spanish that younger people speak with a disinterest in the forms of labor, activities, and dress that have characterized Garifuna life for over two hundred years. They may be discouraged and even confused by this shift given that, in the vein of what I discussed in the previous chapter, the Garifuna language "belongs" to Garinagu bodily and spiritually. As the fisherman's comments suggest, speaking Garifuna in the home demonstrates this ontological connection.

Like the fisherman, the majority of Garinagu, young and old, separated the imagined space(s) of home from everything external to it. This involved mapping the domains of family and language onto physical areas of "home" versus everything else that was "outside the home."

There did not seem to be anything in between. The "outside" was as a nebulous, shifting mass, while the home was a fortress of morals and traditions. It is not an uncommon for home to be imagined in this manner cross-culturally, but that Garinagu included the Garifuna language as an almost physical, unshakable element of the home was significant.

In studies of kinship, researchers have found that structural features of houses, their internal geographies, or activities that transpire within them can facilitate, maintain, or create kin in some manner. For example, Janet Carsten describes the process of becoming kin in Langkawi as practices of feeding and consuming oriented around a central household hearth (1995). For Garinagu, language is similar to this hearth. Garinagu describe Garifuna as a feature of the household but, rather than aiding in a process of becoming, it is indexical of what already exists.

As I explained in the previous chapter, speaking Garifuna is a manifestation of being Garifuna. Garinagu view the ability to speak Garifuna as a demonstration kinship and being, but also as inheritance. The language itself carries within it a story about history that is respected when Garifuna is used. In this way, conversing in Garifuna can be likened to the exchange of a precious heirloom. The increased use of Spanish among children feels to elders and many adults over forty as if this family treasure is being forsaken, and it suggests to them that there has been a rupture in the relationships that nurture Garifuna language production from within the home. Their experience of language shift as an erosion of the home or, more specifically, relationships within the home, informs the current shape of language maintenance efforts in Livingston and also the manner in which children are experiencing language loss in the community.

Given its centrality in the current picture of language endangerment, it is necessary to ask: What and whom are we talking about when we talk about "home"? Defining home is not a straightforward task. Garinagu live in various arrangements within the town, and they are often

members of multiple households consisting of nuclear and consanguineal kin that may be disbursed throughout Central America and as far as the United States. In terms of a physical spaces, Garinagu in Livingston may reside in a single, multi-room structure. Cinderblock housing with metal roofing has largely replaced the older building style of wood, wattle-and-daub, and topped with a thatched roof. It is, however, common for multiple buildings to be attached to one another or built in close proximity so that those residing within share a spaces such as a washing area, kitchen, and bathroom. Families may live in these centralized clusters, or they may reside in separate houses throughout the town. Garinagu explained that families used to take up entire blocks in which parents, grandparents, and consanguineal kin would reside.

Houses themselves are often owned by women, and even referred to as the female's home after death. One neighbor lived in and tended to his deceased grandmother's house, for example. Although she was dead and he was the primary tenant, he considered it her home. This neighbor slept in the house most nights, but this was not given. Rather, he rotated his evenings between homes of other grandmothers and female relatives, and the mothers of his children. Men, particularly those who married into families or partnered with family members, maintained a more fluid presence within households. In Livingston, men typically resided with romantic partners or female consanguineal kin, and it was rare to encounter Garifuna couples, especially young couples, who were married. Their family members and romantic partners were scattered throughout town and not necessarily in one neat cluster. In this way, there was often considerable fluctuation in the makeup of the residents within a home.

The flow within the home has been coupled with a shift in economy as a reliance on cash has come to largely replace localized fishing and agricultural subsistence. This integration into Capitalism was occurring as early as 1969, when Nancie Gonzales noted that the composition in

households had been impacted by economic structure, specifically migratory wage labor (1969:155). As a result of the large-scale employment that Garinagu found with companies that required men to leave home, such as the United Fruit Company, she described Garinagu as living "in a world dominated by a capitalist system over which the Garifuna had no control but with which they were inextricably entwined through male migratory wage labor" (1969:155). She concluded that, partly due to this constant flow of kin, the concept of a home did not actually exist: "in their domestic behavior most Garifuna may be said to treat households as though they were largely interchangeable. In other words, a house is not a home, and it is difficult to find any unit among them that corresponds to the latter concept as we know it" (1969:156).

I suggest that Gonzales' conclusion above does not account for the fact that, not only do Garinagu experience houses as homes, but that their experiences of home are gendered. The structures through which shifting configurations of mostly *male* kin move are nonetheless not "interchangeable" structures, but are themselves a woven collection of houses that constitutes "home." Again, these houses are associated with specific female owners even after death. It is usually women who adorn household interiors with framed photographs and family keepsakes that assist in creating spaces of sentimental value that anchor the physical space as a central hub of "home." Further, while many men spend time in multiple locations, women tend to reside in one household structure.

Based on my own observations and conversations with Garinagu, I propose that the home is a physical place primarily defined by acts of commensality and care that uphold a system of Garifuna values centered on familial harmony and reciprocity. It can be a fixed, multi-room structure, but the idea of home can also extend (in a manner similar to Garifuna kinship) to include the entire town of Livingston, and even the coastal areas of residence in which Garinagu

reside. In other words, "home" can refer to the entire Garifuna Nation, or it can be imagined as a smaller structural unit. Commensality and care occur in these spaces and help define it as home. The Garifuna language should be the medium through which these acts transpire.

In Livingston, adults see relationships between generations as crucial to the continuation of a Garifuna home. They have sought to mend what they see as a rupture between generations—a rupture within the home—by facilitating "encounters" between youth and elders. In these intergenerational learning workshops, the value of language and how it should be used are often explicitly stated. The following account attempts to illustrate what some local efforts of revitalization look like in action. The exchanges that occur in the scene I describe below illustrate a few of the most salient ideas about speech, silence, and respect that are hierarchically tied to particular generations. After describing the workshop, I take the reader to other settings inside of ritual and home spaces to show how these ideas may manifest in ways of speaking among and between generations. I suggest that the set of intergenerational relationships that sustain the idea of "home" require particular ways of speaking and listening that pose potential challenges for Garifuna youth to practice and refine speaking skills.

Revitalizing Relationships: A Language and Culture Workshop

In 2012 and 2015, a local group of women organized workshops for youth and elders that were aimed at teaching Garifuna language and culture to kids and teenagers. As the current keepers of Garifuna knowledge, elder speakers shared their stories and memories from the past. They were the experts on history, language, culinary secrets, dances, agricultural techniques, and artisanal craftsmanship among other things. They did not impart this knowledge through verbal instruction, however. Such information is earned by maintaining relationships with elders and

being present in their lives. Knowledge is gained by gleaning relevant information through observation and practice.

In these meetings, the structure of conversations and actions were planned by organized in a manner that created a space of home and emphasized respect to elders. Youth were guided to moments and styles of speech, for example, deemed appropriate to their position as younger speakers. The actions that youth are encouraged to learn through their interactions with elders, such as smashing plantains, listening to stories of the past, singing, dancing, and the distribution and consumption of food, are actions that nurture family relationships (with both living and dead kin) in the home and ritual spaces. These are modeled here as actions that transpire in Garifuna. In other words, these actions—including language—are "of the home" and sustain the household and the connections within it. It does not matter that the physical space of the household itself is dispersed in a collection of structures throughout town. To reiterate, "the home" is an important cultural concept that includes the often shifting spaces in which kin members gather to perform acts of commensality and care.

Workshop of Abuelas y Nietas[57] – *Livingston, May 2015*

On a lazy morning, the museum in Barrio San Jose slowly filled with women. The sun fell in through the open door and the wooden slats of the windows, illuminating the smooth concrete floor and infusing the wooden walls of the old power plant with a warm glow. The power plant now turned museum was an apt stage for a meeting that housed generations that were raised before and during the rise of modern technology, including electricity. Old women and young girls sat in plastic chairs and benches facing one another. The elders wore straw hats and head wraps often covering four or five thick braids. They spoke with familiarity and open

[57] These Spanish terms *abuelas y nietas* translates to "Grandmothers and granddaughters" in English. This was the title of the workshop I attended in May 2015. It was the third of its kind.

mouthed laughter. Their words and bodies moved slowly and patiently, as if demonstrating lingering delight. Their conversations spilled onto the street, animated by the sounds of boisterous and incrementally rising tones that signal delight in Garifuna speech. This jubilation contrasted sharply with the girls seated across from them who spoke quietly in Spanish. They played on cell phones and, unlike the elders, the crisply ironed, pleated skirts of their colorful *traje*[58] were tied over the occasional tank top and t-shirt. Their uncovered hair was styled or pulled back.

In the rear of the room, a door led out to a narrow patio between two buildings. A large metal pot rested above a fire being watched by several middle aged women who were peeling plantains to boil for *machuca*[59] and readying other ingredients to make *tapau.*[60] I sat on the end of the row with the *abuelitas*[61]—the old ladies who, in Garifuna, would be referred to as "our grandmothers," or, *wagütü.*[62] Smoke from the fire filled the shadowy room, burning my eyes. I coughed as the old woman next to me smiled and asked if it was bothering me. When I said yes, she smiled and said proudly that, having grown up with such fires in her home, she was accustomed to it. The presence of the smoke here was, in this way, an element of home.

The meeting was organized by several of Livingston's most prominent female social activists, including Diana Martinez, Erika Nery, and Gloria Nuñez.[63] The stated objective of this

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[58] *Traje* is the Spanish word for "suit" or "outfit." Garinagu use this word to refer to the colorful traditional dresses that they make.

[59] This is the Spanish word that locals call smashed plantains. It comes from the verb *machucar,* meaning "to crush" or "to smash."

[60] *Tapau* is the Garifuna word for a traditional soup that has a coconut broth base.

[61] *Abuelitas* is Spanish for "little grandmothers." Elderly women were not called "old women" in Spanish (*viejas),* but were referred to in familial terms as is the tradition between younger and elder Garifuna people. The diminutive title indexes affection.

[62] The *w-* here is a prefix indicating "our" while *agütü* is the noun root form of "grandmother."

[63] Diana Martinez and Gloria Nuñez head the Livingston chapter of Afroamerica XXI and busy themselves organizing panels and workshops in the community that focus on educating fellow Garinagu, particularly youth, on topics such as women's rights, Guatemalan human rights, and Garifuna history and culture. Diana farms behind her home, using traditional Garifuna horticultural techniques. She often gives lessons to groups of children about

intergenerational encounter was to put the older women and young girls in conversation with one another so that the youths would have the opportunity to learn from their elders. In line with the title of the event, "*Encuentro entre Abuelas y Nietas*" (A Meeting between Grandmothers and Granddaughters), participants in this meeting were referred to in the familial Spanish terms. Those present affectionately referred to the elder women as *abuelitas* (little grandmothers), and the youth were identified as *nietas,*[64] (granddaughters). The organizers hoped that this would be an opportunity for youth to learn from their elders and ask questions about Garifuna history and values in Livingston. It was also a chance for them to listen to and speak in Garifuna—an opportunity that youth often state they lack.

Although the community of women knew one another, the meeting opened with formal introductions. Diana, Erika, and Gloria introduced themselves. These three women are powerhouses in the community who constantly busy themselves trying to engage fellow Garinagu in issues of human rights, women's rights, and cultural preservation. After they said a little about themselves, all of the *nietas* lined up at the door and took turns stating their names and offering something about themselves, and then they walked to their seats. Once the girls had finished, the *abuelas* each stood up at their chairs and introduced themselves. Before these formal greetings ended, an old woman entered with a hat and a large smile. She walked up to each girl one by one, took their hands in hers, and greeted them, sometimes touching their faces.

Garifuna herbal medicines and agricultural work. Ericka Nery works with the Livingston Salvaguardia de Cultura through which she teaches the Garifuna language to children in local schools. She frequently assists in organizing events that discuss intergenerational transmission of Garifuna language and knowledge.

[64] This mirrors the Garifuna practice of elder and younger generations using familial terms which, in their language, take the possessive first person form *nagütü* (my grandmother) and *nibari* (my granddaughter). In my recording of the event, the *abuelas* also frequently talk about their grandchildren as a whole—*nibaña* (my grandchildren) and *sun nibaña* (all of my grandchildren). The *nietas* present in the meeting are included in that reference. Here, I am using the Spanish terms because these were used with the most frequency, including in the manner in which the meeting was titled in 2015 and in previous years.

During this intimate exchange, her face was often less than a foot from theirs.[65] The girls typically smiled and either offered a quiet response or remained silent.

Once the greetings were finished, everyone settled down and the *abuelas* began to speak in often faint voices that competed with street noises and a clacking metal fan. When one spoke, another often chimed in and speech overlapped as they continued with stories in Garifuna about what life was like growing up—how houses were constructed, the appearance of the dirt roads, what it was like to live without electricity, the labor involved in catching and selling fish, and the work of growing crops. They remembered aloud together and each recollection contributed to a larger narrative they were jointly weaving. It went on like this for some time. Little boys poked their heads in and the women continued telling stories. The girls facing them remained silent.

After about thirty minutes, the organizers and *abuelas* turned their attention to the girls and agreed they should speak. It was now their turn to say something, but what? "*Ustedes preguntan. ¡Hablan ustedes!"* (You guys ask questions. Talk!), directed Gloria. The suggested form of conversation maintained focus on what the elders had said by having the girls ask questions about their stories. The *abuelas* echoed their desire to hear questions from the girls, but they insisted that the *nietas* should use Garifuna. They stated this indirectly by repeating to one another that, like them, their grandchildren speak Garifuna. As one woman stated:

> "Ayi. Nugia adumarina Garifuna. Wasun nibaña gariñegaditi Garifuna.
> *Yes. I speak Garifuna. All of our grandchildren know / are experts in Garifuna.*
>
> Gariñegaiti nibaña Garifuna. ***Sun*** nibaña."
> *My grandchildren are Garifuna speakers. **All** of my grandchildren.*

[65] This resembles an older form of greeting wherein the elder person would take the youth's hands in their own or place one hand on top of the youth's head. The elder and youth would make eye contact and the elder would say "*Isi,*" a word for which I could not find a translation. This information was explained to me in an exchange with author Virgilio Gonzales and was confirmed in conversations with Garinagu in the Punta Piedra village of Honduras. The woman in this workshop appeared to be doing something similar by taking time to approach the girls, make eye contact, and physically touch them. This is significant because of the fact that Garinagu often link greetings to generosity of self—a rich topic for which there is not adequate space to discuss here.

The other elders reiterated this sentiment. That they and their grandchildren spoke Garifuna were separate but connected sentiments that circulated along the wall of *abuelitas,* reverberating in perhaps every mouth with a slightly different form as the thought flowed among them. The youth looked around, at one another, and at the ground. No one spoke. Gloria began to encourage them again and said they should ask questions. "*¡Hablan sin pena!"* (Don't be ashamed to speak!), she exclaimed. Silence among the youth persisted and the elders continued to murmur loudly that the speech of their grandchildren should be in Garifuna. The woman to my left faced me and explained the request to me proudly in Spanish, "*Nos hablamos Moreno en nuestra casa.*" (We [Garinagu] speak Moreno[66] in our house.) "*Hablan"* (Speak), Gloria implored, adding that what they say should not be in Spanish, but in "*puro Garifuna*" (pure Garifuna).

Silence hung heavily and, still, no one spoke. Gloria then turned to specific participants and requested, "*Pregunta algo a la abuelita."* (Ask the grandmother something.) The silence persisted, but Gloria was not discouraged. She gave one final push to persuade the girls to talk: "*Ya que no quiere hablar. […] ¡Hablan pues sin pena! ¡Las abuelitas son de confianza! (She points to a specific girl.) Ella, sí habla. Hasta pelea en Garifuna.*" (Since you don't want to talk. […] Go on and speak without shame/speak freely! You can trust the grandmothers! Her, she does speak. She even fights in Garifuna.)

Despite Gloria's attempts, and regardless of calling on individuals, the girls did not form questions. The organizers were not dismayed, however. The young women and girls were present and this demonstrated their interest. This was significant. After a few minutes, the *abuelitas* continued their stories, talking about what it was like to live in a house without

[66] Garinagu in Livingston often use the Spanish term *Moreno*, meaning "brown," to refer to themselves. By saying "we speak Moreno," the woman means that they speak the Garifuna language.

electricity and explaining what life was like without power. Gloria often emphasized information from the *abuelitas'* stories by repeating it in Garifuna and Spanish. The sound of zooming motorbikes, crowing roosters, and whistles of happy greetings poured in through the windows and mingled with these accounts—*bachata* music and lottery tickets crept into images that these elders were painting of candlelit homes and children selling fish.

Gloria, the attentive facilitator that she is, watched the *nietas* as their eyes wandered around the room. She directed their attention back to the stories of the *abuelas*. "*Es importante que ellas digan. Porque no lo hablan?"* (What they say is important. Why don't you speak?) With this question, she tied their lack of speaking to a failure to listen. There was an air of disappointment in this comment. In her statement, the subjunctive form she uses (*digan*) emphasizes that this—what elder women say—is indisputably important. Why, then, wouldn't they reply to them? The *abuelitas* had shared stories in Garifuna, the girls who sat silently had presumably heard them, and now it was their turn to ask questions about the stories using Garifuna to do so.

The moment passed and the focus was taken off of the girls. The talk (and silence) began to wind down, and the *abuelas* chatted casually to one another and with the organizers about the differences in food and cooking, complaining that kids today would rather buy food than eat from the land like they did. "*Pero ahora los patojos no quieren comer lo que hay*" (But nowadays kids don't want to eat what there is [to eat]), Gloria added. It reminded me of the fisherman's complats about younger generations not wanting to work. The organizers and *abuelitas* giggled about the idea of buying food. Some shook their heads. The *nietas* sat in earshot, engaging in conversations with their own peers.

It was nearing time for lunch and the organizers brought out a large wooden mortar and pestle (*hana* and *ourua*[67]*)* and a tub of boiled plantains. They spoke about this crop and its preparation, contextualizing it within Garifuna history as "*la comida de nuestros abuelos"* (the food of our ancestors). A few *abuelitas* rose from their chairs and took turns smashing the plantains. Strong, practiced hands and limbs thrust the paddle up and down with a rhythmic *clack*-pause-*clack.* Their seamless, swift movements made the labor appear easy. Soon, some of the girls were coaxed into volunteering. In this workshop and the one I attended in 2012, the younger participants struggled to wield the paddle. As one *nieta* of about fourteen approached, she grasped it and pulled abruptly trying to unstick it from the plantains. Once freed, she thrust it back into the large wooden bowl and pulled it out again with the same difficulty. She rest it momentarily back in the deep bowl and stood back with her hands on her hips, looking at it and giggling with her peers. The girls had all seen this done many times, but for many, this was their first experience using these implements. It struck me as parallel to language. They had heard Garifuna their entire lives, but the extent to which they could "wield" it was unclear. The *abuelitas* smiled and, as Gloria had done with language, they verbally encouraged the girl at the large mortar bowl to continue trying. One stepped in momentarily to demonstrate the action again. Her actions were her instructions. Three other girls briefly tried to smash plantains, but they lacked the endurance and technique that comes from regular practice. The *abuelitas* eventually finished the work.

Out back, the same action found its way into the everyday. Cooks—peers of the organizers—pounded their own batch of plantains. Muscular arms moved up and down in rapid succession, twisting the thick wooden paddle after each thrust into the deep wooden bowl that

[67] *Hana* is the Garifuna term for a large mortar bowl carved from the base of a tree. *Ourua* is a large, carved wooden paddle or pestle with a rounded base used to smash food placed in the *hana.*

was placed on the concrete. The curious little eyes of a small child looked on as the woman labored, barely shaded in a red cap, an orange and white Garifuna gown, and flip flops. The girl, who could not have been older than four, looked on in her jean overall dress. Her petite frame stood in the back doorway, witnessing the ongoing labor of the current parent generation while the adolescents in the front room observed their elders and reluctantly participated. These cooks would soon emerge from the back and set the enormous pot of steaming *tapau* in the back of the museum. The *nietas* would distribute bowls of the hot soup to the *abuelitas* and offer them drinks. The old and young would then eat together.

Of Speakers and Listeners: Respectful Interactions

Silence and Respect

This event was framed as an encounter between generations, but was nonetheless seen as a meeting between family that transpired, as one elder noted, in the *casa* (home). It was not explicitly described as a language preservation workshop, yet speaking Garifuna was deemed as a behavior that children should perform within the home. Language played a crucial role as the medium through which other aspects of "being Garifuna," including familial relationships, were enacted. Storytelling and listening to stories was key to this. As Cesar once said to me, he learned about his own history and identity through his father and grandfather who would talk about their past over the kitchen table at the end of the day. Diana herself claimed that one of the reasons that she learned Garifuna was because she wanted to be close to her grandmother who was not comfortable speaking Spanish. Clearly, Garifuna was an important medium through which generations bonded and a means by which youth learned about themselves and their history as elders told stories. But where did the voices of youth fit into this exchange?

One of the most notable features of the workshop was the silence that the youth maintained in the presence of their elders. As I will describe here, maintaining silence while another speaks shows that one is a respectful listener. This socialized means of demonstrating respect through silence became a point of frustration as Gloria pushed the girls to speak. Why wouldn't they ask questions? This is an inquiry that I will return to in due course, but I suggest that the answer begins with acquiring the disposition of a respectful listener, which these girls skillfully performed.

As with speakers of other Amerindian languages, the length of silence between turns in often longer than what is typically observed between Euro-American English speakers (Scollon 1981). For example, at a meeting I attended in which attendees discussed forming a Garifuna Parliament, single speakers who held the floor to share their opinions about the role of Garinagu in Guatemalan politics often paused for up to twenty or thirty seconds in between utterances. This silence was not broken until it became absolutely clear that the speaker was finished. In this model of listening, silence signals respect for the speaker and value in what they say. While peers often converse easily among one another, younger generations are expected to demonstrate the highest level of respect when interacting with their elders. Silence shows reverence for what is being said and signals that one is listening carefully.

Speech must be heard and repeated correctly, and the stakes for accurately representing the speech of others increases with the age of the speaker whose speech is being conveyed, including the deceased. Failure to do so is disrespectful. It is therefore important that responses to or representations of speech reflect an accurate understanding of the content. As a result, Garinagu are extremely careful not to misrepresent one another's speech or "speak for" someone. They emphasize that it is crucial to accurately capture even basic orthographic representations of

sound or they risk demeaning speakers of that language. One Livingston school teacher sited this as a reason he would never attempt to write Q'eqchi' Maya words on the board—misconstruing even singular sounds would be unjust.

The willingness of elders to impart knowledge, in this case through speech, may also be stifled if respect is not demonstrated. For instance, I once asked Juan Carlos if there were prohibitions that the spirits of dead ancestors had delegated for someone in his position. After all, they convened in the spirit world and elected him specifically to convey information from them to the living. He laughed a knowing laugh that seemed to say "Oh yes!" and then leaned in to explain. "*Una de las cosas que son muy malas es no respetar. Si tu no respetas, lo mensajes no llegan*." (One of the worst things is to not [show] respect. If you don't [show] respect, the messages won't come.) As one tasked with accurately delivering the voices of Garifuna spirits, he explained that he had to be someone "*lineal,"* meaning that he must act in strict accordance with Garifuna values, and showing respect was among the very highest of these. Because the stakes for disrespect appear to be, in part, an unwillingness for elders to share, the respect indexed by the girls' silence was significant.

This still does not explain, however, why the girls would not speak at all, particularly when encouraged and reassured by Gloria. When the organizers and elders told the girls to ask questions, this would seem to signal an acceptable moment for them to talk. Yet, there are several ways in which asking questions may have been challenging for these young ladies. Forming questions about the content of the *abuelas'* stories would have required the girls to have accurately captured the storylines and points of their elders' speech, and this would have been evident by the quality of their questions. Formulating such questions would have been difficult if

the *nietas* were not fully competent listeners of the language. If misrepresenting speech signals disrespect, then younger speakers may not have been willing to take this risk.

From another perspective, asking questions was often presented to me as a potential means of disrespecting the addressee. If the addressee should not know the answer, for example, then they appear to lack knowledge. In this way, asking questions is an act riddled with challenges. When speaking to elders, one must know what *can* be asked and how to frame the inquiry in a manner that leaves the elder positioned as someone with knowledge and authority.

This risk was plainly explained to me by an informant who referenced a conversation with Marcos Sanchez Diaz, a Haitian military officer who arrived in Livingston in 1802. He is seen as the founder of the town for whom ceremonies of remembrance are regularly held. In this particular conversation, my informant explained that the *buyei* used his helper spirits to get in touch with the spirit of this man. Marcos Sanchez Diaz then arrived himself by possessing the *buyei*. I asked my friend why he could not simply ask the spirit what happened in order to learn about the history of the town. What was preventing him from going to the spirit with a list of questions that would solve lingering mysteries? My friend laughed heartily, explaining that you could not simply go to a spirit and ask them to tell you what happened! It would be extremely offensive, he said, because if you asked a question about something he did not know, he would appear ignorant and this would damage his authority and image. Meanwhile you, the inquisitive living, would position yourself as an extremely disrespectful person who lacks value for a Garifuna ethos that positions relationships in a particular harmony, held together by this respect.

At first, I grasped these ideas about listening, silence, and holding back questions only by observing this between generations and within households. When I myself was invited to speak with a spirit a few months after the workshop with the *abuelitas,* I personally experienced this

model of listenership. This would illustrate, in no uncertain terms, the necessity of silence and measured reply in interactions that are hierarchically framed.

Chügü in *Cheweche*[68] – *Guatemala, August 2015*

In the summer of 2015, the spirit of a deceased *buyei* spoke to me through one of the most prominent spiritual leaders present during a large *chugú*. After several days spent at this ceremony for the deceased, an acquaintance tapped me on the shoulder and pointed to a man nearby.

"He wants to speak with you. *Just listen*,"[69] he said.

"What do I do?" I asked, a little intimidated. "My Garifuna might not be good enough!"

"Don't worry. I will translate. You just listen," he assured me.

I began to run through models of interaction. I had seen people commune with spirits of kin. The living did often listen in silence, but sometimes they would sit together with the ancestor spirit and drink a beer, or dance, or linger in an embrace. I reflected on what I had been told all along—spirits are just people who happen to be dead. They know things that the living cannot. They are guides who work for the good of the Garinagu and their living kin. But, I was not kin, or even Garifuna, and this was a *buyei.* Where did I fit in? To this end, I was assured that the most important part was simply to hear what was being said—I was there to learn, was I not? And, as the guest of the family, I was welcome to be there, within the very heart of the home.

I smiled and looked into the face of the spirit who was momentarily inhabiting the body of a local spiritual leader. In life, he was a *buyei.* His position of authority in this role was strengthened because he was now a spirit—both a *buyei* and a *gubida* (a spirit of the ancestral

[68] *Cheweche* is a largely undeveloped, forested area adjacent to Livingston. It is also the location of the largest *dabuyaba* (temple) in the area, accessible by boat or about an hour's walk from town.
[69] Our conversation transpired in English.

dead)—and because he was speaking through a human whose position was also one of great spiritual authority.[70] In this way, I was about to listen to a voice that stood for the Garifuna past and present, and this demanded a show of ultimate respect. He *was* history now standing tall in the present moment.

In the body of the possessed, which was now momentarily also his own, he reached in to grab my hand. My acquaintance stood to my left and served as translator—this spirit would only speak Garifuna and it was important that I understand everything. The spirit's voice boomed clear and strong. This quality invited other participants to listen. He was, after all, speaking for their benefit as well. The possessed man has a slight stammer, causing his consonants to occasionally linger in his mouth where they are pushed through an otherwise continuous flow of speech beneath warm and smiling eyes. Unlike that man, the spirit's words flowed without hesitation and were infused with a deep, rich timbre. Now inhabited by the spirit, the eyes gazing into mine had become stern, yet they burst with an indescribable and far reaching joy. In typical fashion of one who confidently takes the floor, his sentences were punctuated by a bustling volume that rose incrementally with each new vowel, and ended with a lingering silence for emphasis.

[70] One of the head spiritual leaders at this ceremony, explained to me that spirits cannot simply enter the body of whomever they choose. Rather, that living person's deceased kin must approve of the use of their descendant's body for this purpose as they are the caretakers of their living kin. The possessed man's own dead kinsmen, then, allow his body to be possessed which means that the *gubida* permit words to be uttered by particular spirits. In this way, *gubida* are partly responsible for the speech of the deceased *buyei* I encountered. Thus, the words of the spirit, in this case, possessed extreme authority not only because the spirit was a *buyei,* but also because the deceased kin of this living *buyei* support this speech. In this sense, the words being spoken merited the maximum amount of authority because they were spoken by the dead, approved by the dead, and channeled through a person who habitually opened pathways between the worlds of living and dead—the *buyei.*

Like the *abuelas*, the spirit voiced[71] extreme pride for Garinagu and their history. He reiterated their strength as seen through their survival and their determination to prosper into the future. He told me that many others had come wanting to learn about them and that most of them only took from the community without giving back. He wanted to know about me and my work. What would I do for the community? How soon would I write something for them? These questions were initially uttered as requirements that I should remember: Do something for the community. Write something for Garifuna people. His pauses were not spaces for me to answer—not yet.

My toes dug into the sandy dirt of the ancestor house and I felt flushed with the attention, knowing that everyone's ears were directed toward us. I was told not to ask questions to the spirit, but to give him my undivided attention and to reply only when he desired a response. As he spoke, I thought of the girls in the workshop who were asked to form a question for their elders in a language they had perhaps not mastered. Hadn't the school teacher and one of my own Garifuna teachers expressed offense at someone trying to use a language without being able to do it well? "Disrespectful" was the word they used. How would I, a foreigner, communicatively engage in a social situation that I had never been in and manage to show the appropriate degree and kind of respect? Should I attempt to use Garifuna if I had not mastered it, or might that be offensive? Was this a question that the girls in the workshop had also grappled with? Yes, this was a spirit and not a living *abuelita,* but they were both elders. There was a similar category of respect that I had to observe here, but it was magnified because of the higher position of this elder who was not only wise from years, but from passing into death.

[71] Recording during this event is not allowed and is considered extremely disrespectful unless approved of by spirits themselves. Because I was a guest and am not a Garifuna person, I did not have permission to record the voice of this encounter with the spirit. Therefore, I give a summary here of the content of our interaction.

My palms were damp as I tried to steady my gaze and show a confident smile, looking the spirit in the eyes in steady, attentive silence. The spirit shifted frames and spoke to me directly.[72] He asked specifically about my work. "What have you learned?" was the first question he asked. Then, he wanted to know what I would do with this knowledge. He paused at length and stood facing me, quieting his body in a way that signaled an opening for my response.

Was this the kind of stage fright the girls felt? I felt out of my depth. As in the workshop, everyone was waiting for a reply—my own. An unacceptable response had the potential of discrediting me as a valid researcher in the community and shaming the person that invited me. Although I was told not to ask questions, I took a risk and decided to ask "Can you tell me how to help the community?" It was not a Garifuna response. However, it also was not a question that asked for historical details or information that the spirit could potentially get "wrong," which was part of the argument against asking questions. I hoped that this inquiry would be in line with what spirits tend to do—give advice to the living. "Please, Sir. What would you like me to do?" I continued. The spirit smiled and told the community gathered that they needed to be my guides. He did not give a direct answer, which made sense to me given that Garinagu value learning through action and observation. Rather, it was the community's responsibility to help me understand them. I needed to continue letting them guide me—they were, in a sense, my elders. When he was finished, he gave me and my work his blessing.

Based on my own experience, my observations at the workshops, and my engagement with the community, I claim that one of the reasons that the girls did not easily reply to the women at the workshop was because they were adhering to a model of respectful listening that emphasizes silence and limits questioning. Like the *buyei* I spoke with, living elders are

[72] Although he had been speaking to me, until this point his speech had also been intended for the participants to overhear. At this moment, the participants are not his intended audience.

positioned as knowledge bearers and the younger generations are the recipients of the knowledge that elders choose to give them. Remember that these elders are living ancestors and future *gubida*. In this way, they hold a position of authority that demands extreme respect. I suggest that one of the reasons the youth hesitated to speak was because Gloria wanted them to engage with the *abuelitas,* but was simultaneously asking them to break a culturally enforced frame that risked disrespect by asking questions. However, as I discuss below, even if the girls understood the stories of their *abuelitas* accurately and were willing to ask questions, they would still face the challenge of doing so in "*puro Garifuna*" (pure Garifuna).

Silence and Purity: Speaking *Puro Garifuna*

In the 2012 version of the workshop I attended, one of the girls took the microphone and began to speak shakily in Garifuna. The meeting was much larger that year and included boys and men among participants. Many of the adults were Garinagu visiting from Honduras. Young and old generations faced one another with a similar arrangement in a larger setting, but the goals were the same—to put them in conversation together about Garifuna history and to do so *using the Garifuna language.* This particular girl began by introducing herself in Garifuna and her voice soon became unsteady. There was a moment of silence and she turned to wipe a few tears from her face—something I very rarely saw. She switched to Spanish and what followed was a heartfelt lament at her inability to speak Garifuna and an explanation of why. She said that she and her peers wanted to speak Garifuna, but that they did not have the opportunity to practice. Like other speech communities undergoing shift, she explained those in the younger generation who could not speak like their elders considered themselves to be poor speakers of the language, so much so that they frequently chose not speak it. Adults argued that they were living resources available to the youngest generations, but the youth responded that she and

others felt so deeply embarrassed about their inability to speak "correctly" that they were reluctant to speak with them.

Although adults encourage rather than force children to speak Garifuna, young learners express immense pressure to be highly fluent in their "*idioma ancestral"* (ancestral language) before speaking. I suggest that the girls in the 2015 workshop likely did not feel confident they could speak "correctly" in Garifuna. Although the elders were a resource, they were also the target audience for which the kids would perform language. Similarly, in her article "Participant Structures and Communicative Competence: Warm Springs Children in Community and Classroom" (2001), Susan Philips shows social conditions for speech among American Indian children on the Warm Springs Indian Reserve in Oregon must be met before a student will communicate verbally. She frames this argument by explaining that American Indian kids learn through silent observation and independent practice. Once learners have become proficient at a given task, they may perform that task confidently before others. This is not limited to trade or household skills such as tanning hides; rather, as Philips demonstrates, this includes displays of knowledge articulated through language.

Garinagu learners also take time to observe before acting. In this case, they listen before they speak. Like the Warm Springs Indian children, the girls at the workshop in 2015 were reluctant to talk and when they spoke, they did not use the Garifuna language. As one of the participants in the 2012 meeting lamented, she and other youth were afraid to speak Garifuna because they feared they would get it wrong.

Further, both adults and children who know the language can be harsh critics of "imperfectly" spoken Garifuna. For example, my acquaintance Pablo[73] explained to me that he

[73] This is a pseudonym.

grew up speaking Garifuna with his mother. She encouraged his speech but did not correct his mistakes—he alone was responsible for figuring out and correcting errors. When he began to speak to others outside of the home, he realized that he spoke a "female" version of the language when other children teased him. He claims that this experience caused him to stop speaking Garifuna altogether. In this example, Pablo had no recourse to practice a "male" version of the language. There were no men in his immediate circle that spoke the language to him, and therefore no one with whom he could practice out of the earshot of others.

While the girl who spoke at the 2012 workshop cited embarrassment at her inability to speak fluently, statements by the elders at the 2015 workshop revealed that there was more at stake than simply feelings of embarrassment or shame (*pena*), as Gloria cited. The *abuelitas* concurred that anyone descended from them—any Garifuna person—speaks "*puro*" (pure) Garifuna. Thus, speaking incorrectly would somehow make them less Garifuna.

In sum, the stakes for accurate speech are high both in terms of social appropriateness and of demonstrating one's lineage. Without adequate practice in speaking, particularly amongst peers, semi-speakers[74] such as many of the kids in the workshops, Pablo, and those with the capacity to comprehend but not produce speech often lack confidence in their ability to formulate ideas in "*puro*" (pure) Garifuna.

Distinct Worlds of Conversation

One of the most striking things about the situation of shift in Livingston is that there is a substantial number of fluent adult and elder Garifuna speakers who want children to learn from them, yet youth consistently talk about not having the opportunity to practice. As the scene at the workshop illustrates, there is a social boundary that exists between kids and adults and it

[74] For a fuller discussion on semi-speakers in language death and language endangerment situations, see Dorian 1973:417 and 1977.

influences the form and flow of talk between them. This is particularly evident in styles of speaking and listening. It is true that both within homes and on the street, children are able to hear Garifuna spoken by elders. However, it is not clear that they are always the addressee or an interlocutor whose response is sought or even appropriate. As witnessed in the workshop, peers of the same generation talk with one another, often overlapping speech or completing one another's sentences. However, there are taboos against speaking in this manner with or interrupting older generations.

Using strategies of observation taken from studies of language socialization (Ochs and Schieffelin 1984; 1986), I observed this conversational separation in the intimate settings of households as well as these semi-public spaces at workshops. This form of talk among peers became a resource within the home as caregivers commonly directed children's behavior by channeling directives and instruction to children into adult conversations so that, as the intended overhearer, the child was indirectly informed about any wrongdoing. By directing speech in this manner, children were taught to acquire a particular silence, but this also emphasized restrictions on the flow of language between generations.

One morning I sat at the kitchen table with my friend Elena and her daughter, Ana.[75] The little girl was seated across from us playing on a toy laptop. She sat quietly as we spoke. I had never heard Ana interrupt adults and she rarely demand anyone's attention. This was not to say that she did not desire it, particularly from her mother. This very affectionate six-year-old often required Elena's hand or, at the very least, to be by her side. Nonetheless, Ana, like Lyn and Clara[76]—other children in the community whose family interactions I had observed—seemed content to sit quietly without engaging in conversation with adults. I commented on this one day

[75] Elena and Ana are pseudonyms.
[76] Lyn and Clara are pseudonyms.

to Elena. She faced Ana and said, "Yes, of course [she plays well alone and is quiet]. You know, when I was a child, you could not even be in the same room when the adults were talking!"[77] This praise—the affirmation of this mode of play—was well received as Ana looked up briefly and gave a hint of a smile.

Elena had been raised in a way that emphasized a division between adults and children. Her explanation showed that this separation imposed restrictions on both sharing physical space and hearing conversations. As I witnessed, it is now quite common for adults and children to be near one another during conversations between adult peers. Children are not necessarily dismissed. In fact, Ana, Lyn, and Clara, like other Garifuna children today, are frequently present in the room with adults, but nonetheless exist in separate social worlds through exclusion as peer conversation partners.

This social exclusion is often marked by stylistic choices and shifts in tone and language choice that adult speakers employ when speaking to children. A prime example is the indirect manner in which adults give directives to kids. Like the *abuelitas* who mentioned that Garifuna children speak Garifuna, adults often state explicitly what the child should or should not be doing to other adults while the child is present. The remarks are directed at the child as an overhearer rather than an interlocutor. By not speaking directly to the youth, he or she is not invited to reply. The indirect comment about the child to another adult serves to silence the child about his or her actions while assuring they listen to the directive being given.

A social blunder I made with Ana one day exposed this. She and I sat alone in the dining room one afternoon while Elena tended to chores in the front of the house. I tested my role a bit by asking her about her likes and dislikes—a typical line of questioning in my own North

[77] Elena typically spoke English and Garifuna in my presence. The speech I quote from her in this section was given in English.

American social world that attempts to show interest in and therefore "get on the level" of the child. I encouraged her to show me her toys and asked her how they worked. From my perspective, I was asking her to share some of her world with me. She played along for a time, but soon began to tell me that I was not allowed to touch certain toys and started to call me names in a whispered voice so that Elena could not hear from the next room. In short, my attempt at alliance had failed miserably and my inquiries into her world were met with pushback and one attempted small hit.

When Elena returned, she reacted to Ana's behavior by speaking to me in a firm voice. "No. She cannot do that. She cannot hit people!" she said. Although I was the addressee, the speech was directed at Ana, and she looked directly at the child as she spoke. Elena did not ask Ana to explain her behavior. The corrective information on how to act was given by addressing her firmly, but indirectly, as the targeted overhearer of reproachful statements. The child was not invited to reason or engage with the adults. Indeed, this was not a "conversation" between them.

Elena then pinpointed what she saw as a clue to Ana's behavior. She noted that her child used the informal *tu* form with me in Spanish. She said that this showed Ana was thinking of me as a peer rather than an adult. "She is not your friend," she informed Ana. Elena explained Ana's behavior as an act of jealously. Ana was jealous of me as a peer competing for Elena's attention, and therefore acted out to demonstrate her place. Again, Ana did not explain herself to me—we were not equals in age or intellectually. Rather, the idea that Ana deemed us to be social peers was identified as a likely cause for the disruption and lapse in respect. This could be seen by her word choice. By attempting to engage her as a peer, I potentially blurred my position of authority as an adult and this could have influenced her treatment of me.

Other adults also followed this pattern of indirect scolding. Earlier in the year, I often spent evenings with five-year-old Clara and her grandmother Berta.[78] When I would begin to leave, Clara would often sit on the floor and cry or throw things. One evening, she started pulling out her barrettes and throwing them across the floor. Berta was in the kitchen and came out to look at her. *"¡Basta!"* (Stop it!), she told Clara. This was all that she spoke to the child. She then turned to me and said, *"No puede llorar."* (She cannot cry.) The tone of engagement between Berta and me was one of hushed amusement at the acts of children. This part of the exchange was for us exclusively. Then, she stood next to me and looked at Clara, making her tone suddenly stern in the same way that Elena had with Ana. "*No le prestes atención. Ella tiene que aprender que no puede llorar,"* (Don't pay attention to her. She has to learn that she cannot cry.), she said loudly before walking back into the kitchen. As with Ana, Clara herself was not invited to explain her emotions; rather, Garinagu adults showed confidence that they understood the actions of children and had they knew how best to proceed.

During my time within households, the Garifuna language was not associated with reprimand, but it was located within age-based conversational groups to which children had limited access as participants. Although the social divisions between members of generations poses certain challenges for children to consistently participate in conversations as speaking interlocutors, the dynamic between adults and children does provide ample opportunity for children to develop strategic skills and competency in listening to Garifuna.

Conclusion

Concerns over the place of language in the home, like those expressed by the fisherman, dominated conversations about language loss with adult Garinagu in Livingston. Their vigilance

[78] This is a pseudonym.

and determination to restore language within the home has materialized in the form of regularly occurring intergenerational workshops during which interactions between elders and children are facilitated by local cultural activists. Adults and elders commonly pair language loss from within the home with a rupture between these generations. This perceived rift in relationships and language is seen as a threat to the transmission of knowledge and values definitive of a Garifuna identity—cultural information that has historically been passed down orally through ongoing contact and relationships between the very young and the very old, who hold the position of authorities whose age and wisdom merits profound respect.

While one of the goals of the workshops has been to educate youth about the history of their elders (and therefore themselves), they also encourage kids to speak in Garifuna. Despite their most valiant attempts, organizers at the workshops I attended—like parents and caretakers within many Garifuna homes—were met with only limited success in eliciting Garifuna speech from youth. I suggest that this lack of speech does not mean that youth lack the desire to speak Garifuna, but that there are culturally informed reasons for this reluctance that correspond to age, position, and risk.

Silence emerged as a significant means of demonstrating respect based upon age and social position. Peers of the same age group are able to chat with one another without hesitation, even simultaneously, but when younger and elder generations interact, speech is often directed toward the younger listener whose silence indexes respect and attentiveness. Specifically, there appears to be a hierarchy of speaking in which the words eldest generations take precedence over those of younger generations. This disposition of speaking and listening may correspond to the fact that Garifuna history has been largely passed down orally from generation to generation

(Palacio 2005a). This model of respect creates a situation in which youth have become competent listeners of Garifuna.

Prompting youth to speak in Garifuna, however, poses certain complications that relate to the manner in which respect is modeled. If youth tend to demonstrate respect through silence in listening, asking questions can also be a precarious act that poses certain risks to both the youth and the elder. In a manner similar to Brown and Levinson's proposition that potential offenses are mitigated by Face Saving Acts that convey politeness (1987), Garinagu should measure ways of speaking so that they convey respect. By speaking to elders, youth must assure that they do not speak out of turn and that the content of their utterance does not tarnish the authority of the elder to whom the speech is directed. In this way, youth at the workshops were invited to speak by elders rather than taking the initiative themselves.

Being asked to give questions in Garifuna posed two notable challenges for youth. First, asking questions to elders posed the risk of showing the elder to lack knowledge if they did not have the ability to answer the question. For example, if the elder lacked some kind of knowledge that the question was intended to elicit. Second, asking in Garifuna also had the potential of damaging the young speakers' identities as Garinagu. Because the *abuelitas,* for example, agreed that all of their descendants—all Garinagu—were experts in the language, the inability to formulate "pure" Garifuna risked labeling them as somehow not fully Garifuna themselves, or it would at the very least be a source of shame. This was evident in the reaction of the young speaker at the 2012 workshop who expressed frustration at her inability to speak fluently in Garifuna.

Socialization within households suggests that, while Garifuna speaking adults are resources for language acquisition, they occupy distinct social worlds whose boundaries are

emphasized by the direction of speech and observation of silence. Behavioral corrections, for example, are typically given indirectly in the form of conversation among adults that is directed at the child, but does not invite him or her to respond.

In sum, youth face particular challenges in practicing speech production in Garifuna with adults as they navigate certain culturally informed means of demonstrating respect. This is not an impossible situation, but I suggest that it will require some innovation, especially by youth themselves. In the next chapter, I turn to a situation that is, perhaps, one such innovation.

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Separation and Unity Reconfigured: An Emergent Change in the Form of the Garifuna *Veluria*

As scholars have pointed out, and as I discuss throughout this dissertation, Garifuna families continue to reciprocate care for one another after death—the living serve the particular needs of deceased kin members in a series of rituals and the dead protect, heal, and watch over their living kin (Foster 1986; Gonzales 1988; Johnson 2007; Kerns 1983).

Of these rituals, much has been written about the larger rites organized years after death, such as the *dügü* and *chugú*,[79] while the events that occur immediately after one dies have not been as exhaustively examined. Scholars have described Garifuna postmortem rites as an organized series of rituals in which participants work toward the common aim of helping the spirit reach Heaven *(Seiri)* (Foster 1986; Gonzales 1988; Johnson 2007; Kerns 1983). While this may be true, by presenting the ritual sequence in a cohesive linear model, the published research overlooks crucial differences between these rituals, why they exist, or how they interact with the community in diverse ways. I suggest that even though they work together to guide the spirit to Heaven, certain ceremonies accomplish contrasting ends vis-à-vis the spirit's relationship to the community. Specifically, I claim that it is analytically possible to distinguish between two major categories of death rituals which not only correspond to the state of the soul in the afterlife, but also to differences in the agency of the ancestral spirit in both organizing the ceremony and interacting in it. The first category includes those rituals which occur immediately following death, and are mandatory in order to send off the spirit of the dead and dispose of the body

[79] These will be elaborated on in another chapter.

properly. These are comprised of the *veluria*[80] and *novenario.* The second category includes those rituals which are "called for" and organized by the spirit, whose return is welcomed. The *dügü* and *chugú* are the largest ceremonies of this kind.

In this chapter, I attempt to unpack this analytical division and demonstrate how it has been imagined by Garinagu themselves. In addition, I explore what it might mean when this boundary is crossed and a spirit is not simply observing the ritual, but using her voice to interact through spoken conversation with the organizers of the very rite that serves to send her away. Notwithstanding statements made by nearly all of my informants—in which they insisted that it is impossible to communicate with the spirit of newly dead kin—this is precisely what I witnessed at a *veluria* in November 2015.

With this incident in mind, I attend specifically to the *veluria* and *novenario* rituals in this chapter and use ethnographic descriptions to explore the social meaning and implications of this "impossible" event. First, I explain the purpose of each with particular attention to methods of removing the body and spirit of the dead from the community, and to the emotional states presented by the living. Once I have established what the ritual is said to be and described its typical form, I take the reader to a specific night that throws these "set" rules into question, and then describe the reactions my informants had to the event I witnessed. In the process, I attempt to put the beauty of post mortem rituals on full display for the reader to experience.

Finally, this chapter also takes seriously a comment made by the renowned Garifuna scholar, Joseph Palacio. During our visit in Barranco, Belize, he remarked that Garinagu talk about the importance of their culture in terms of preserving what it has been in the past, but they do not study its place in the contemporary world. In connection to his point, my research

[80] The term *veluria* comes from the Spanish *velorio* (wake). It can actually be used to include both of these rituals—the *veluria* and the *novenario.* This will be unpacked below.

suggests that Garinagu in Livingston are grappling with spiritual practice in a quickly changing, ever-globalizing town. I suggest that the way in which ritual practice is interpreted and reestablished by certain Garinagu contradicts classical claims of scholars of religion who asserted that the encroachment of modernity causes traditional religion to decline (Durkheim 2001 [1912]; Weber 1968). In contrast, an examination of the *veluria* and *novenario* in Livingston suggests not that "modern" society has become disenchanted with spiritual practice (Duara 1991), but rather that, in this case, younger generations of Garinagu are reinterpreting and expanding religious practice in spite of the river of "modernity" rushing around them. What follows is an account of community solidarity, collective joy, and kinship—the ethos of Garifuna spirituality enacted in its "modern" form.

Celebrating the Living and Dead in Livingston: A Garifuna *Veluria*

Drums punctuated the night with loud shouts from a spirited crowd as the rhythmic swish of maracas joined with a chorus of voices and onlookers melodically shouting lyrics in Garifuna. A sea of people gathered on the front porch of Gouule's house, spilling out onto the grassy dirt in front of the cement railing. This was the final night of a nine-day vigil—the *veluria*—that was held at his house for his deceased grandmother.

Pressed up against the far side of the porch, three drummers banged, smacked, and popped out complex beats on a trio of tenor and bass handmade wooden drums, known as the *primero* and s*egunda.* They were topped with animal skins pulled tight using a series of ropes and pegs that ran up and down the sides of wooden bases—hollowed out tree trunks. A maracas player stood behind them in constant motion. Perspiration drenched the thin white and colored tank tops of the stripped-down players as sweat streamed from every pore. Elbows and kneecaps dripped. Players breathed heavily with smiling lips and flung the relentless wetness from their

faces with quick flicks of the head. Their eyes focused intensely and unwaveringly at the movements of the dancers on the porch in front of them. With the thrust or sway of every female hip and the tap of every male toe, the players anticipated and matched the movement in time. Bodies and instruments were partners in a conversation that created a unified sound.

The glowing porchlight and energetic smiles touched the faces of onlookers who occasionally doubled over in loud bursts of laugher at the sight of their friends and relatives who stepped in to dance. The dance was meaningful play that linked people through shared joy. Women took turns stepping into the small open space on the porch. A slim teenager sashayed in with an air of confidence and a sassy smile and stared at the drummers. She stood with one hip out, with a hand resting upon it, and then, without breaking eye contact, suddenly bent her knees slightly in front of her and began swaying her hips skillfully to the beat. Her face portrayed a poised seriousness that complemented her skill and seemed performatively to mask the explosive grin that lay beneath and peeked out through her eyes. Her arms reached out toward the drummers as she moved back and forth with tiny footsteps, her toes pushing and pulling the ground. From the front, there did not appear to be much movement, but as she moved her hands diagonally up to the sky, tilting her head to the opposite side, and turned in a half circle, the back of her long, gingham skirt swished furiously. She looked behind her, arms extended in front and began to back into the drummers. Laughter and shouts burst from the crowd and the musicians. She jumped one hundred eighty degrees on the beat to face them and then, with three thrusts of the hips that matched three double-handed *pam*s of the drums, she walked away doubled over in laughter into the crowd as an elderly woman immediately filled the empty space and continued the provocative banter with her hips, eyes, and the playfully sexy moves that compose the *punta* dance.

Before long, a young man took the floor. He was dressed in calf-length shorts with a long, but fitted cotton shirt and bright white tennis shoes. The rhythm shifted slightly and the drummers now stared at his feet. In an instant, with his arms extended, the man began to dance the *jankunu.* His lower body began to bounce as his toes tapped on the ground in rapid fire succession. There was an immediate fierceness in his dance that was not present in the *punta*. His bent knees and ankles were glued together and his upper body remained still and firm, hinging at the waist, as his legs did all the work. His face was still and serious as his body tilted from side to side, occasionally turning in a full circle. With every tap of the foot, a loud *PAP!* flew from the smaller drum, the *primero.* His feet and the drums moved seamlessly together in time so that hands and limbs rose and fell simultaneously, the one underscoring the other. He extended one leg in front of him and then switched to the other as he demonstrated his skill. People cheered wildly at this display, and then, with a few pronounced jumps and slaps of the drum, he smiled and walked out of the space.

Beyond the porch, three tents stood where the yard met the cracked pavement of the road. People gathered under their tarps. Some were seated in chairs, talking and sipping beer or eating soup (*caldo*). Others sat and stood around card games where small bills and coins were put on the table. Even farther out onto the road, people gathered in small clusters, and leaned on houses across the street. Around the side of the house, beyond the porch, an open door led into a room adorned with soft blue and white crepe paper. It was carefully cut into delicate designs and strung along the cement ceiling. Framed pictures of Jesus lined the wall and lit candles were scattered on the floor. A small table stood on one side of the room topped with a white table cloth. A picture of the deceased had been carefully placed next to a glass of water and another image of the Christ. Several elderly Garinagu sat quietly in chairs against the opposite wall, the

women and men wearing handmade gingham dresses and shirts. The silence of the room stood in sharp contrast to the scene on the porch. Hands were folded neatly on freshly pressed pleats in pants and skirts, and the few people seated on the metal, fold-out chairs stared forward.

Just outside the door, the night sat heavy on us all with thick humidity that was made lighter through pleasant conversation and the ecstatic play coming from the porch. After watching the music and dance for a while, I walked out onto the street where my friend Cesar stood looking onto the festivities. He asked me what I thought and if I had learned anything by being there. I explained that I had been to a few *velurias* before, but I wanted to know more about the deceased. Where was she? He said simply that the spirit of the dead person was there and needed to be sent off with a big festival—this was no time for sadness.

Burying the Dead: A Process of Separation and Renewal

The evening I witnessed was the final night that concluded nearly two weeks of actions with the stated purpose of burying the body of my friend Gouule's deceased grandmother and sending her spirit away from the community. Actions and interactions that occur during this time serve complex social functions for the living as well as the dead. The mourning kin and the deceased must physically separate from one another, and the living must recover from the departure of the person. The community plays a vital role in this process in that the spirit is uncoupled from the living world by witnessing the joy of their living family and knowing they are cared for, both of which result from being surrounded by friends and family. The final night of the *veluria* in particular is the climactic end to this display—an intentionally powerful show of unity that is expressly organized to uplift the living and allow the spirit to depart confidently. This contentment is articulated in the eyes of the dancers, the smiles of the musicians, and the laughter of the crowd. Although expressed by the living, it is witnessed by the deceased spirit.

Thus, the merriment is for the benefit of both the living who enact it, and the dead spirit who departs from the scene, satisfied and ready to leave the community.

The Garifuna Sprit, Its Passage into Life and Death, and the Role of Kin

In order to grasp more fully why this process of detachment is necessary, it is essential to further unpack the way in which the Garifuna spirit is cosmologically understood, the voyage that it takes after death, and the manner in which it is bound to both Garifuna kin and community.

The Garifuna reaction to death is driven by what constitutes the spiritual elements of the person. When Douglass Taylor studied Belizean Garinagu in the 1940s and 50s, he found that the spirit was divided into two parts—the *iuani,* which is the "heart-soul" that animates the body, and the *áfurugu*, which is thought of as the spirit double and literally means "the other one" of a pair (Taylor 1951). Currently, Garinagu in Livingston speak almost exclusively about the *áfurugu* and, while some recognize the term *iuani,* it is generally not used.[81] The first of these is similar to the Christian concept of the soul and, according to Taylor, it was believed to join God immediately upon death. The latter, on the other hand, requires the help of kin members both to bring it into the body after birth and to send it out of the realm of the living after death. Indeed, the procedures undertaken upon the birth and death of a kin member with regard to a person's *áfurugu* reveal not only the beliefs about the afterlife, conceptions of the person, and the relationship between the spirit and the body; they also demonstrate that the health of the spirit depends upon the bodily practices of kin members—what they eat and the activities in which they participate. In fact, when a kinsman with whom one has a strong bond dies, Garinagu say that this kinsman "dies from you," which supports the idea that kin are conceptually bound in a

[81] Further research needs to be conducted to learn what has happened to the notion of *iuani* and whether, for example, this category may have merged with *áfurugu.*

manner that extends beyond the circumstances of birth and lineage. Their physical states affect one another and, as my research suggests, so do their *emotional* states.

Practices and beliefs about the arrival of a spirit provide insight into the manner in which the spirit is sent away from the living world. First, the sedimentation of the *áfurugu* in the body and its departure from that physical form and the world of the living are dependent upon the behavior of living kin (Suazo 2000). Specifically, the *áfurugu* is thought to be acquired from the *gubida* (the family dead) on the paternal side and is associated with heat at birth and coolness after death. Once the person dies, he or she then becomes a *gubida* spirit. The living aid them in their journey into Heaven by providing for them in rituals.

According to some of my informants, the patrilineal *gubida* not only deliver the spirit of a child, but they also contribute to the association of fathers with heat. They claimed that the child's body should be "heated" until the arrival of this spirit, which is thought to occur after the initial nine-day period following birth. Thus, a fire in the room should burn for nine days, heating the exterior body of the child, and as explained below, the interior of the child is kept warm by the substance of the parents until the spirit-double arrives and is placed in the body by the patrilineal *gubida* (Gonzales 1988; Suazo 2000; Taylor 1951). Garinagu did not specify that a particular form of fire was necessary. During many rituals, including the *veluria*, candles are ever-present, for example. I was informed that the heat and light emitted by them was vital to guiding spirits visually and through heat. Thus, fire may not necessarily indicate a large construction with wood, but could be as small as a candle. Finally, although Garinagu described processes of heating as vital for the health of a new child, current post-partum practices of Garinagu in Livingston and other Central American towns are, as I discovered in interviews with

midwives, rapidly changing and new parents may forego such traditional actions. It is also not clear to what extent or whether these practices occur in diaspora settings.

During the nine-day post-partum period, new parents must achieve or maintain certain physical states in themselves that work in combination with sharing bodily substances with newly born babies to assure the health and strength of the child both before and after the arrival of the *áfurugu*. Again, this is most evident in the steps taken to heat the child whose body is awaiting the arrival and cementation of his or her *áfurugu*. For new mothers, numerous dietary restrictions are demanded as the food and drink she consumes must be warmed. The state of her body must fulfill the requirements of the child's physical needs, particularly when the child is breastfed and consuming substance from the mother (Taylor 1951:90). The bodies of mother and child are linked through actions that create a similar state of being—one which is both heated and purified. Her body is physically prepared in conjunction with the child in instances of bathing, for example, in which mother and child are bathed simultaneously in the same herbs or enter into the sea together.

The behavior of fathers previously attested to this connection of action and substance, and to some extent still does today. Though couvade practices are now only marginally practiced by Garinagu, it was previously a widely-held belief that the father's behavior contributed to his child's bodily strength. Garifuna fathers restricted their activities because certain actions, such as fishing or doing hard labor, could physically harm the child (Taylor 1951:89). Unlike Karembola men who, according to Karen Middleton, utilize couvade partly to assert claims on the child and incorporate the child into his own lineage (Middleton 2000:117), the Garifuna father observed certain practices as a means to protect and care for the child who would be a part of both maternal and paternal lineages. The strength of the child depended not only upon his actions, but

upon the transference of his substance. The activity of new fathers was restricted[82] so that they could not engage in strenuous labor, including sex, for up to forty days after the birth of the child while substance from his body such as sweat and blood had the ability to strengthen the child and were rubbed into the skin either by wrapping a child in sweat-soaked garments or smearing bits of blood on the face (Taylor 1951:90). Parents also boiled sweaty clothes in water and placed a bit of the wet fabric in the child's mouth so that he or she would ingest the sweat. These paternal substances were not only associated with protection, but also added "heat" to the child internally. Thus, the child received outward heat from a fire while it was internally heated by the sweat and blood of the father and milk of the mother. Furthermore, both parents had to observe practices that pertained to their physical beings.

While the literature on this refers to biological fathers, I encountered a non-biological, soon-to-be father in Livingston who was observing dietary and physical restrictions before the birth of his child. This man partly resided with his romantic partner,[83] who he began to date while she was pregnant. Their relationship became serious and he categorically became the father of the unborn child. His behavior demonstrated this parental connection to the child. In this way, this complicates the notion of shared substance, and reveals that connections like these, which are deemed spiritual in nature, do not have to be created via blood or semen.

According to Douglas Taylor, restrictions in eating and behavior were practiced long after the child was grown and by other kin members as well. This is evinced in an account in which those who were injured working far from home immediately sent word to family members so that they might abstain from certain behavior or foods that might aggravate the injury (Taylor

[82] I found this to still be true in Livingston. Many new fathers were careful to avoid strenuous activity.
[83] In this situation, the woman lived in a home with her mother, her father (occasionally present), a brother, and her two small children. The man frequented the home where he shared a room with the woman, but he also maintained residence in his mother's and grandmother's homes.

1951:91). Consequently, Garifuna who share kinship ties are thought to be capable of impacting one another bodily as a result of their actions. Just as a kin member "dies from you," he or she also lives from you.

Such a conception of bodily and spiritual relatedness means that when the body of a kin member dies, appropriate measures must be taken to correctly separate the spirit from the living and to ensure that the living overcome the removal of the person. Even in death, *gubida* and the living are capable of aiding or injuring one another in ways that nonetheless continue to be manifested in terms of a physical condition, such as hunger, thirst, weariness, or illness. However, the deceased do not express their needs to the living immediately following their passing. These needs begin to emerge around a year after one dies,[84] when the spirit is able to communicate to the living vocally, through spirit possession, and through dreams.

In both birth and death, a nine-day period of time is required for the *áfurugu* to transition into the body and care is taken to assure its warmth. In birth, fire has to be on the premises for eight days after the baby is born. During this period, no one is to tamper with the fire for fear of killing the child. Nothing can be taken away from it and it cannot be used to light another fire. However, when the body dies, the spirit undergoes a process of cooling. The *áfurugu*, heated while inside of the body, begins to feel cold and is thought to remain by the fire until its departure. Therefore, when a person dies, fire burns in the location where death occurred and, as in birth, continues for nine days. However, just as the *áfurugu* requires time to enter the body, it also appears to cling to it after death. The dead body, for example, is thought to listen and respond to voices for a time, hearing being the last sense to leave the body. Those washing and

[84] A ceremonial celebration called the *fin del año* marks the one-year anniversary of death, and spirits have the ability to speak through possession at this point, but not before, according to the majority of my informants. Not enough research has been done about this celebration to report on its place in the ritual sequence and it has not been investigated in the published literature.

dressing the corpse even speak to it in whispers to assist in the process (Valentine 2002:2). The warmth of the fire helps to draw the spirit out of the body.

Death of the Body: Sending Away the Spirit and Leaving the Living

There are two specific ritual processes that aid in the transition that the spirit must make to exit the body and the community: the *veluria* and the *novenario.* When a Garifuna person dies in Livingston, ritual attention is given to the body and spirit of the individual to help the deceased depart from the living world and "accept that they are already in a better life," as one informant put it. *Veluria* is the Garifuna term used to describe the period of time immediately following death during which the deceased is laid out in their home with candles as described above. However, *veluria* also frequently refers to the nine days of prayer and social interaction in the home of the deceased after burial, which is discussed below. I will describe *veluria* in the first sense here and, following Garinagu informants, use it after this section to refer to the event as a whole.

Upon death, the body is bathed, dressed, and laid out in a room in the house. Displaying the body is a powerful first step in honoring the body and spirit of the deceased, and aiding the spirit's transition into the next life. Candles are placed at the head, feet, and sides of the body which is not left alone until burial. Juan Carlos Sanchez, my *Messenjero* acquaintance, explained that the candles "*hace como muestra de respeto a ese cuerpo que cargó ese espíritu en vida"* (act like a show of respect for the body that held the spirit in life). The corpse surrounded by candles also acknowledges that "although the body is dead, the soul, represented by the 'live' candle, is still alive" (Valentine 2002:2), and it is now up to the family and community to assist it in making the transition to the spirit world.

Shortly after displaying the body during the *veluria,* a funeral is conducted and the family buries the body. In Livingston, the basic structure for burial is that the corpse is placed into a coffin, loaded onto a truck, marched to the Catholic church while accompanied by a small musical ensemble, and then prayed over by a priest or nun. During this time, people gather outside the church and join the exiting congregation. Pallbearers then place the body in the bed of the truck once again, and people follow the vehicle to the cemetery for the burial. During this slow walk, musicians usually lead the procession, playing softly as many of those walking pray either in Garifuna or Spanish, or both.

Burying the Dead

In the following section, I describe three funeral processions and two burials that I attended in 2015. The details in these accounts reveal information about the deceased and their relationships to the community, and they also demonstrate the aforementioned bodily connection between the deceased and the living family—one that must be severed in order for the spirit to proceed into the afterlife. I include descriptions from my original field notes for the context and insight they provide into the situation of death and burial. These are inserted throughout this section as italicized text.

What does it mean to comfort someone? What is comfort and who is it for? Is it for those mourning the loss of a loved one? Or for the benefit of the giver of comfort? Or is it for the dead? For Garinagu, I believe it is all of these.

As the year has grown on in days, rituals for the dead have become commonplace. Scholars have skillfully detailed the features of various rituals, and I have also attempted to flesh out "what Garinagu do." And yet, I fear that this over-intellectualizes the profound grief

experienced when family and friends lose a loved one, and it seems to miss the significance of the community's reaction.

When Gouule's grandmother died recently, I suddenly found myself uncertain of the protocol. As scholars, we can comparatively observe emotional displays and wonder at the social motivation or underlying sentiment, but does this too often distance us, unethically, from the biting pain that our informants—our friends—experience when loved ones die? The Garifuna reaction to death is an explosion of communal solidarity that carries certain people through grief by encircling them with constant presence, conversation, and joy. Yet, in our fascination with this form, as scholars I fear we may lose sight of the individuals within the collective.

I had heard of his grandmother's death through a mutual friend. I had read all about rituals for the dead, but found myself wondering what it meant to simply comfort someone? Would I, like Americans I know, bring food and offer condolences? What emotions should I express? Do I even mention the death? These were not things that books cover, but because of the pain I knew Gouule was feeling at the loss of someone so dear to him, I wanted to help somehow.

There would be a funeral and a procession through town, and I had seen these countless times, but did not know what the personal contact looked like between attendees and the family. I asked a mutual friend what to do, but he just shrugged it off and laughed at my sentiment as if it was silly. After the burial, another friend would tell me I'd consulted the wrong person—the friend was a-typical in his lack of attendance at any ritual or funeral. Was that what comforting loss boiled down to?

The day of the burial, people lined up in the street and sat outside the church awaiting the coffin to be carried inside and blessed, after which it would be carried into the cemetery and

buried. I stood out on the street a ways from the church as a large sea of bodies moved toward me. Gouule stood at the front with others' arms around him and a chorus of song reaching above and around everyone, like a canopy blanketing us all in comfort. As Gouule approached, he feebly sang a few words. Our eyes met and he nodded at me. The sea of song and bodies ushered him, his family, and the deceased into the church.

I finally saw him again at the ninth night celebration to send off his grandmother's spirit. We embraced and I apologized, admitting that I wasn't sure what to do—should I have joined the group into the church? Was it my place to do so? Should I have gone to the cemetery? Who were these events for? He gave a classic Gouule laugh—a deep chuckle with hints of his baritone voice—and placed a hand on my shoulder telling me not to worry. I was there now and this act seemed to matter quite a bit.

As this excerpt shows, presence and action bear more significance to mourners than words. Following this death, the mother of my friend Carlos[85] died, and he invited me to his home to accompany him and others as they walked her body to the church. The day of the procession, I stood outside of Carlos' house with about ten people in the morning sun. Soon, men emerged from the house carrying the coffin and placed it on the back of an old pickup truck. A few musicians led the procession. They were not playing traditional Garifuna instruments, but horns and a snare drum[86] in a slow, solemn tune. We did not take a direct path, but wove through streets with the body. People often came out of their homes either to watch the body pass or to join in the procession. There was light chatter among those walking, but the mood was solemn as siblings of the deceased led the way and joined with arms thrown over one another's shoulders.

[85] This is a pseudonym.
[86] This was the typical musical arrangement for most every funeral I witnessed during 2015. Traditional Garifuna instruments were the "marked" choice.

When we arrived at the church, many people were already seated on benches outside on the street. We entered the church and the body was unloaded by six men. As they carried the coffin, they and stepped from side to side, walking in a slow, swaying motion to the front of the church where they placed the it down. Those who had entered the church sat in pews and listened while one of the nuns prayed and spoke about death. The nun splashed holy water over the coffin a few times. When she was finished, the men once again lifted it, slowly marched it out of the church, and loaded it onto the bed of the truck. Bells rang as we left the church and the band, which was waiting outside, struck up a tune to lead the procession into the cemetery.

Hundreds of people who had gathered on the street during the funeral service joined the congregation exiting the church on this walk. Scattered discussions spread throughout the crowd. Some held umbrellas to shade themselves from the scorching sun while a group of women prayed. Once we climbed up the cemetery steps and into the grounds, people staggered along the unmown, wild, tropical grass and made their way toward the newly dug hole. People stood near and far, still chatting quietly. Then Carlos, the son, gave a speech in a clear and powerful voice about the failed medical system and used his mother as evidence that the community needed to fight for basic human rights like good health care.[87] The lid of the coffin was open for all to see the dead woman's face one last time. Carlos shut the lid and another man said a prayer in Garifuna. The musicians played soberly as she was put into the ground. Carlos' sister screamed horrifically as though the sound emanated from her entire body. As she leaned forward and began to collapse, a relative stood beside her and held her limp body tightly. The crowd was solemn and quiet conversations continued as attendees left the cemetery.

[87] People were extremely reluctant to speak about the reasons this woman died. What Carlos and others told me was that she had been sick for some time and that her illness could have been cured if only she had been given proper care and an accurate diagnosis from the beginning.

Carlos was devastated by the loss of his mother. By then, I had learned more about what it meant to show friendship and enact care even as someone who is not Garifuna. This meant walking with him through the neighborhood as his mother lay in the bed of a truck—walking out every step of pain there with him. I watched as dozens of people came out of their houses when they heard the truck approaching and joined the procession. I sat in the church while his mother was blessed. I walked to the cemetery with the crowd of people and listened to my friend's lamentations. I brought wine to the ninth night celebration. These were acts of comfort.

These actions of comfort are integrated into funerary rituals tailored to the personality of the dead. A few months prior, a well-loved musician in town passed away. The procession into the church was similar to that of my friend's mother, but the mood drastically changed on the walk to the cemetery. Upon leaving the church, hundreds of people marched in a tight cluster through the street as Garifuna drummers played loudly. The crowd sang, joyfully screaming out lyrics. Women and men shook their hips as they marched, raising their hands and jumping on occasion.

When we reached the cemetery steps, the entrance—a small, covered space not three hundred square feet—filled with people and drummers playing Garifuna hand drums placed their drums on the concrete. Maracas rhythmically swished like an ocean on fire with sound as the drummers pounded out powerful beats. A small circle emerged and people stepped in to dance playfully. Cell phones sprung up overhead, documenting the event. After a few minutes, the musicians moved with the crowd through the entrance and into the cemetery itself. They paused the music as everyone gathered around a man still digging the grave. People stood on top of cement tombs to get a better view. Indeed, the cemetery landscape was covered with people, sparing no surface.

As in other burials I had attended, a man spoke for some time in Garifuna, offering prayers and bidding farewell. When he was finished, the musicians struck up their tune again and several men lowered the coffin into the ground with ropes. The daughter of the deceased screamed frantically "Papa! No! Papa!" A woman came to her aid and held her tightly, as if her limbs would somehow come unglued without the pressure, and she carried her away as the young woman cried out in tearful screams for her father. A woman who had been drinking a beer, took one last sip and poured the rest into the grave while another bystander threw in a handful of dirt and turned away. The daughter's tears were the only ones I saw. Some people wore serious faces, but may others smiled and the general mood was uplifting and festive.

The physical weakness and exasperated grief displayed by the two daughters at either burial were visual examples of one's kin "dying from them." Once the coffins were closed, the corpses were lowered, and the physical separation complete, each young woman's body reacted by collapsing in profound despair. As I will attempt to show, the nine days that follow the burial aid in the recovery from the absence of the deceased as the mourning family is surrounded by a communal presence that reincorporates them into society.

Seen here: The funeral truck loaded with the musician's coffin and a man who has jumped on the bed of the truck to dance. Traditional drums and maracas lead the procession.

Above: A procession from the Catholic church to the cemetery for the death of the musician. The cemetery entrance can be seen just ahead as people walk toward its stairs.

Above: The gathering of people surrounding the newly dug grave for the musician. A priest dressed in jeans stands at the foot of the grave, reading prayers for the deceased.

Áfurugu Departure and Community Renewal: *Novenario* Prayers and the *Veluria* as Both Vigil and Celebration

Once the body is put into the ground, a small altar is set up in the house where two or three women come to pray for the deceased several times a day for nine days. This is called the *novenario*. These prayers are commonly spoken in Spanish, not Garifuna. The word *veluria* may also be used to refer to the nine days of the *novenario*[88] and indexes not only prayers, but all that occurs at the home during this period. In other words, while the term *veluria* can indicate either the time in which the body is on display or the entirety of events before and after burial, *novenario* indexes the vigil and prayers offered for the deceased over the nine days.

The ritual work of the *novenario* is mandatory and the spirit, though present and observant, is largely guided into the next state of being by the actions of the family who eventually exclude the spirit from their social activities. In other words, once the spirit has left the body, the work conducted by family and friends immediately following burial is oriented toward detaching the spirit from the living world. The spirit is blessed and then separated in social activities and behavior, and this is a vital step in sending the *áfurugu* (the animating spirit of the body) on its journey.

This marginalization is partly seen through the language in which the *novenarios* are conducted. Prayers are essential in sending the spirit on his or her way and ensure that it will rest properly. Informants in Livingston agreed that these should be said in Spanish, and other anthropologists have also observed that those who pray are often chosen specifically for their fluency in Spanish (Kerns 1983:154; Valentine 2002:18). According to Jerris Valentine, this is because, even though people may not understand Spanish, "it is believed that prayers said in

[88] From this point, I will follow my informants' use of *veluria* to refer to the events of the nine-day period of time and the vigil held over the body. When *novenario* is employed, it will specifically be in relation to the prayers.

Spanish are more powerful than those said in any other language" (2002:18). In addition, he states that about a dozen women, who are rarely in the kin group of the deceased, gather at the house each morning at dusk to sing songs which are not typically sung in Garifuna, but Spanish. This detail is important in that, according to Juan Carlos, the language of deceased Garifuna is and must be Garifuna. Even if they did not speak this language in life, he explained that they will speak it in death because it is who they are—Garifuna. While it is true that the use of Spanish language here is tied to the fact that the *novenario* is a Catholic ceremony, the fact that these prayers—unlike the *Bible* and other Christian prayers—have not been translated into Garifuna also suggests that the dead are not invited to participate as interlocutors or overhearers in prayer or song.

The ninth and final day is filled with the most activity. According to Valentine (2002), four additional prayers are required which include: 1) the *Recomendación del Alma*, which is the "delivering of the soul" to God; 2) the *Adeweihani,* wherein family and friends offer prayers for the departed; 3) the *Libera Me,* or "deliverance" of the spirit in which the house is stripped of elements that indicate mourning such as the table and candles; and 4) the Dismissal prayers during which windows and doors are opened for the spirit to leave the house.

On the ninth night, a large celebration is arranged. It is the only ritual celebration in which food is not offered to the dead—an act which, again, excludes the spirit from the social activities of the living. In fact, on the ninth night of prayers, eating has traditionally been frowned upon altogether in the location in which prayers occur. Plentiful amounts of food are nonetheless prepared and distributed among the guests. Unlike rituals in which kin members directly communicate with the dead, attendees at the *veluria* do not reportedly speak directly to the dead person's spirit, but actively work to disengage it from social life in the community.

This nine-day period is also a time of communal support during which friends and relatives keep constant company with the mourning family. Unlike rituals for the deceased that occur years after death, these gatherings are open to the public and organized by the living family, not the spirit of the dead. No invitations are sent, and passersby are welcome if they see a familiar face. Volunteers erect a canopy outside of the house and fill the space below with chairs and tables. Friends and relatives bring small donations of food and money, and also contribute their time. At Gouule's house, in the days that led up to the celebration, people flowed to and from the yard and house in a constant, changing stream. At each of the five *velurias* I witnessed in Livingston, people could be seen sitting together at all hours, drinking cold beer in the heat, chatting, or simply being silently present. Sometimes the canopies extended into the street and cars wove around clusters of people and poles. The evenings often grew rowdier with gambling and larger crowds full of laughter, lively chatter, and shouts.

Comforting a grieving friend means showing up, but not in the living room parlor of a funeral home. Garifuna comfort means being with someone in their grief, singing to them and with them, giving them food, and displaying joy until it sticks. You walk together, you laugh together—you act as one body repairing from the loss of the person who died from you. The ninth night emphasizes this. Those present are showing respect, but they are also the body of community.

It is easy enough to walk by gatherings like those mentioned above and take the socializing for granted. However, that one is never left alone to experience sadness or grief is a profound kindness given to the mourning family during the *veluria.* As illustrated above, those experiencing immense grief or sadness require community to physically "walk them through it."

To fully appreciate this point, it is worth taking a moment to unpack the significance of emotional states in the process of the *veluria* and in the ritual complex as a whole.

Grief and Happiness: The Role of Emotional Displays

One afternoon I sat with Don Cesar, watching the documentary *Yurumein*[89] (Leland 2014). The film captures the homecoming of a group of Garinagu who travel to St. Vincent, the island from which their ancestors were forcibly exiled by the British in the late eighteenth century. At one point in the film, the group arrives on the small neighboring island of Balliceaux, where the British imprisoned these same ancestors before shipping them across the Caribbean Sea to the Honduran island Roatan. One of the women in the film drops to her knees on the shore and throws her arms and face into the wet sand, wailing. In three years, I had only seen a Garifuna person cry on three occasions—at both of the burials described above, and again when my middle-aged neighbor learned that her relative in the United States had passed away. In each case, the tears were those of wailing females whose bodies would have collapsed like the woman in the film, had others not immediately rushed to physically hold them up. In the case of my neighbor, women ran over in the night, quickly appearing from several adjoining streets once they heard the loud screams exploding through the open holes in the painted cinderblocks that laid sideways at the top of her wall to vent the constant heat. They stayed through the night.

Given that I had seldom seen tears and outward displays of grieving, I wondered whether there were only a few situations in which this was appropriate. In the first scenario, wailing was an acceptable response to death that demonstrated sadness and grief as living kin were being physically separated from the bodies of the dead. The expressed pain was only resolved by close physical contact with others who immediately hurried to the side of the distressed. The effect of

[89] *Yurumein* is the Garifuna name given to the island of St. Vincent, where their Garifuna ancestors originated in a process of ethnogenesis as the product of African and Island Carib mixing (see chapter 1).

that contact was an outwardly calm emotional state. However, in the second scenario, the woman was not at a burial. The ancestors she wept for had been gone since the early nineteenth century. She was not being physically separated from them; rather, she had arrived at a place where they had previously suffered. She was in a state of connection, not separation.

Cesar explained that the woman was overwhelmed with emotion for her ancestors. He continued, stating that remembrance is not only about knowing the past, but *feeling* the past experience of one's ancestral kin. In this case, being forcibly removed from their homeland was parallel to the separation from a loved one upon death—the homeland was like a body dying from them. The woman cried not because she herself had been physically removed from this land in her lifetime, but because this was how her ancestors must have cried. Cesar explained that one must feel *for* and feel *of* their ancestors in the sense that one must not only remember their journey sympathetically, but must empathetically undergo their pain as well. In other words, because they live in you, you must align yourself with their emotional state to know what they experience. According to Cesar, this is both a way of respecting the dead and understanding who you are through them. The crying woman is her ancestors.

This was *iduheguo*—the Garifuna notion of kinship that I discussed in Chapter 2. To refresh the reader, *idueheguo* includes a spatially and temporally extended network of bodies and spirits in relationship to one another. However, recall that, as Joseph Palacio explains, *iduheguo* does not only include living people in family groups. Rather, to repeat his definition, it is "a very strong nucleating force stretching across time and space as it coagulates ***the peoplehood of the Garifuna***"; it is "a primal coercive force for ***cultural identity and peoplehood***" (Palacio 2001:182, emphasis added). In this way, living and deceased Garinagu are a unified continuum of extended kin networks that collectively constitute the body of Garifuna people. In other

words, Garifuna kin and people are both distinct and yet collapsed into the same concept. One is both their ancestors and their people simultaneously. This idea of family and peoplehood is a distinct aspect of Garifuna rites for the dead that reassure ritual participants "the unity not only of the kingroup but also of all Garinagu, past and present, be they in *Seiri* or on earth" (Cayetano 2009:226). Thus, the Garifuna community has a particular responsibility in aiding one another on the occasion of death, and that duty is all the more pressing if one is a lineal kin member of the deceased. This kind of communal aid, rooted in *iduhego,* is what I had witnessed in Livingston when the mourning women were comforted and during the *velurias* when most of the town showed up to be with the mourning family.

In a *veluria,* Garinagu believe that the spirit lingers and observes his or her family. Where death is concerned, curtailing displays of grief and sadness becomes critically important for the community to perform once the body is put into the ground. A sustained, united display of happiness during a *veluria* actively works to uncouple the spirit from the living world because the dead can attest to his or her family being well-tended and emotionally stable before parting. Therefore, while the woman in the film mapped her emotions onto those of her ancestors, the spirits of the newly dead did not need to be sent away and her wailing was not impeded. However, the two daughters were allowed to briefly express pain before someone in the community intervened.

The Ninth Night Celebration

To summarize my points thus far, there are several ways in which the spirit is pushed away rather than kept in the community after death. First, the *áfurugu* is drawn out of the body in the *veluria* vigil in the home. Second, the person is separated from the community physically when buried. Third, the spirit is not spoken *to* as an addressee while *novenario* prayers request

God to bless the spirit on its journey. Regarding speech and addressivity in general, it is worth noting that the spirit is an observant listener at this point in its journey rather than an interlocutor. Specifically, Garinagu commonly believe that the spirit is not able to verbally interact with the living through spirit possession at this point. In this way, the voice of the spirit is silent.[90] And finally, when the spirit witnesses the positive state of the mourning kin and the care given by friends and family, they can depart knowing their living family will be nurtured by the community. I now turn to this final point here as it is seen most clearly in the ninth and final night of the *veluria*, the event I described above.

The final night of the *veluria* is often referred to in English as the ninth night wake, however my informants did not use a separate term for this celebration.[91] On this night, the labor of praying and community visitation culminates in an explosive celebration like the one described above. This final night is the most anticipated part of the *veluria* and is usually set to fall on a Saturday so that everyone can participate. Large amounts of food are provided. People gamble, drink, dance, and play music. The small altar for the deceased also remains at each of these events, complete with standard ritual elements: a table with a framed image of the dead person, a lit candle, a glass of water, and a room adorned with crepe paper (usually white) and framed images of Jesus.

This celebration is an all-out bash that serves three main purposes simultaneously. First, it thanks the community for their presence. Because the company of the community is understood as both a manner of caring for the mourning family and of demonstrating respect for

[90] However, in Marilyn Wells' recent publication *Among the Garifuna: Family Tales and Ethnography from the Caribbean Coast* (2015), she describes a scene in which a widowed woman is being attacked by the spirit of her recently dead husband in dreams, and others fear that he will take her with him into death. It is not clear whether this encounter involved dialogue. Dreams of Garifuna spirits, particularly those that occur immediately following death, constitute a large and quite underexplored area of research.

[91] For this reason, I will follow suit and refer to it more generally as the final night or the last night's celebration.

the dead, the final night is a way of giving back to the community. Second, it is meant to cement the positivity within the mourning family so that they feel sincere happiness.[92] Juan,[93] an informant in his early thirties explained to me that, by the final night, the family may not be feigning happiness, but may actually feel it. He explained that although individuals attempt to portray a positive emotional display throughout the *veluria,* this is not necessarily an internal emotional experience. From Juan's perspective, by painting the exterior positive for a time, one eventually feels internally positive, in that the outward display eventually becomes absorbed within. In sum, and where the *veluria* is concerned, the living community should not dwell on sadness or problems, but must maintain harmony and a positive outlook. By the final night, it is expected that the social work during the nine days and the excitement of the festivities will result in truly helping the family and lifting their spirits.

The final night of celebration sees the spirit off by demonstrating the well-being of the living family to the *áfurugu*. If the spirt believes that his or her living family is suffering, he or she may linger. Thus, the music and dancing are dedicated both to the deceased and to the living family who must show that they have reassimilated into the community without the deceased.

This pushing out rather than pulling in of the spirit is a critical difference between rituals for the newly dead, like the *veluria* and *novenario,* and those for the long dead, such as the *dügü* and *chugú.* In the first set, the community seeks to achieve a positive emotional state apart from the spirit, whereas in the latter, participants' emotional states are more empathetic to the spirit.

[92] In everyday encounters with Garinagu, this was a widely held mindset. In fact, when I articulated frustration, distress, or any variety of melancholy, every instance was met with the prompt solution of drinking a beer and smiling. When I specifically asked a Garifuna friend in his late twenties what he did when he felt sad, he looked confused, shook his head, and explained "*Tiene que ser feliz. ¿Por qué quiero sentir triste? Hay que sonreír, y ya."* (You have to be happy. Why do you want to feel sad? You have to smile, and that's it.) The idea was, if you smiled, you would not feel sad. In other words, the outer display becomes internalized.

[93] This is a pseudonym.

Specifically, the *dügü* and *chugú* invite spirits into a temple space and center on embodying and recreating the traditional world of Garifuna ancestors; whereas the *veluria* and *novenario* center on community happiness in a home space and work to *dis*engage the spirit of the dead from the living world. Moreover, the *dügü* and *chugú* are generally restricted to participation by either the kingroup or kin members selected by the deceased spirit, whereas the *veluria* is informal and open to the general public and any friends who want to stop by. Instead of working to exclude the spirit and send it away from the living world, these second kinds of ritual, which include the *dügü* and *chugú*, welcome the spirit's return and require direct interaction either through a dream or direct conversation through spirit possession. They correspond to the spirit's needs at different stages in the afterlife and are typically considered by Garinagu to be the primary sites for communication with the dead. Because the dead only speak in Garifuna, these rituals are vitally important sites of Garifuna language use. The need to communicate with the dead in this way makes Garifuna language maintenance an absolute necessity.

"Impossible" Contact: The *Veluria* at Carlos' Home

Unlike the *dügü* and *chugú*, the actions of the *veluria* exclude rather than include the spirit from the living world. Indeed, the spirit is not directly engaged with or spoken to after death. According to the vast majority of Garinagu, this communication is simply not possible until at least one year after death. At least, this is what I was told by almost every Garifuna person in Livingston. Given the marked distinctions between these kinds of ceremonies, what might it mean if one *did* communicate with the deceased shortly after death, at a *veluria?*

In a surprising twist, toward the end of my research I witnessed an incident of spirit possession on the last night of a *veluria.* Despite everything I had learned about spirits, rituals, and the stated fact that they could not speak to the living in possession until a year after death,

the spirit of one woman proved that this truth was malleable. What follows is an account of a ninth night wake that took place in late November 2015. It includes a moment of contact between the deceased and a group of young adults that I witnessed in which the recently dead spoke. After this description, I include the reaction of two older informants who contest this event and suggested it would be an impossibility. They argued that the Garinagu I observed offered contradictory explanations about Garifuna spirituality because they are vying for authority as spiritual leaders. Even if this is the case, I contend that this contact nonetheless demonstrates the persistence of religious practice into a "modernizing" world. Moreover, because the dead spirit continues to speak only in Garifuna, even in a situation in which it is moving through[94] and in communication with younger interlocutors, it creates a new space in which the Garifuna language can be heard.

The Ninth Night at Carlos' House

In November, I attended the *veluria* for Carlos' mother. I have known Carlos since my first visit to Livingston in 2013. He is in his mid-twenties and is considered one of the young leaders in town. He is deeply committed to educating other Garinagu about Garifuna agricultural practices, and he is part of a co-op that grows traditional Garifuna crops with the hope of getting back to their roots and creating transnational trade in produce among Garifuna communities in Central America. He is also dedicated to the maintenance of his language, and he writes and records music sung in Garifuna—music known, loved, and widely sung within the community.

For several nights after the burial, people gathered at Carlos' home—where he had lived with his now deceased mother—for the *veluria* to pay their respects to the dead and to provide

[94] Spirit possession typically requires the presence of a ritual specialist to assist the spirit to move into and from a living body, and to assure that the living body is protected and able to handle the possession. In this case, the body of the possessed and those assisting with the possession were all young adults, not the older and more practiced specialists I had observed during *dügü* and *chugú* rituals.

company for the living. As usual, this went on for nine days and nights with the last night erupting in a festive celebration complete with drums, dancing, gambling, and food. I pulled up to the house on my bicycle that evening. Children stood outside lighting sparklers and a row of boys and men stood under the awning of the small store across the street. A vibrant and bustling energy emanated from the yard and living areas. Motorbikes lined the cracked concrete road in front of the entrance. Under a long, white tarp, women stood and sat huddled around tables, playing cards, laughing, smiling, and shouting friendly jests. The tarp was stretched along a yard beside two housing structures and a covered outdoor bathroom and washing area. I scanned the crowd for familiar faces, and decided to look for Carlos to give my condolences and my meager contribution of *Vino Tinto* (Red Wine).[95] In the far building, a lace curtain hung over the open door to a well-lit room. I pulled it to the side and peeked in to see a lit white candle on a stand beside a table with a white tablecloth and framed Christian images. The room was bright and crepe paper draped the ceiling in soft colors. A cascade of white fell along the wall, lacelike holes delicately cut into the thin sheets. A few people sat inside talking, but my friend was not among them. I stepped away and walked over the wet grass to the adjacent building.

A familiar face greeted me and led me into the building. Two large bins sat on the concrete floor, exploding with banana leaves opened or wrapped into squares of what looked like tamales or perhaps boiled, mashed green bananas. These enormous bins of food were to be given to all of the guests. I was introduced to Carlos' sister and I kissed her on the cheek and gave her a brief hug. I presented her with the wine and told her that since I didn't know too many people,

[95] Friends of the mourning family will typically bring something to donate. According to informants in their sixties, in the past, people donated goods such as flour, sugar, or other food products used in cooking. On this occasion, a friend suggested I bring the wine since it was something guests would drink. In other words, guests typically contribute gifts, financial or otherwise, to the gathering.

perhaps I would just go. Instead, she offered me a cup of hot chocolate[96] and a woman by the door motioned to a chair for me to sit in, saying it was "*por mi amiga*" (for my friend). Carlos' sister pulled a metal kettle from the gas range and poured steaming hot cocoa that smelled of cinnamon into a Styrofoam cup. I sat back in the crowded entryway and took in my surroundings. The room itself was a kitchen, but had a partition with a door that separated it into two halves. Long wooden boxes lay to one side with objects on top. The concrete floor was swept clean and there was general space to walk. The walls were bare and pots were stacked on the ground and atop tables. At one point, a woman came in with a clipboard that had names written down, collecting money for lottery-style gambling. The kitchen was bustling with people coming and going.

A cloth curtain hung in the window of the door in the partition. For a moment, the door swung open and I could see lit candles and people sitting on a bed. Carlos was there and I saw him come in and out. After he reentered, I heard the sound of someone slapping skin. I had taken part in several ninth night wakes before, but what was happening in the next room was nothing I had ever read about or encountered. This included a small group separated from the rest, multiple lit candles, and the slapping of skin. Although it was impossible to hear clearly over the clatter of guests both from within the house and in the yard, the quality of one of the voices suddenly stood out. It was stronger and more distinct than any other voice. It had an uneven cadence, but it was clearly speaking Garifuna, not the Spanish that the majority of guests were using to converse. These details signaled that I was hearing spirit possession.

After my cocoa, I decided to step out and possibly return later. Just then, I saw Marco,[97] one of the young men who was in the room, and he explained a bit more to me. Marco is around

[96] Chocolate is one of many drink options. Coffee and wine are also common drinks.
[97] This is a pseudonym.

28 years old and, like Carlos, is someone who frequently participates in rituals. Unlike Carlos, Marco occasionally becomes possessed. In August, after witnessing ancestors possess him at a *chugú*, I struck up a conversation with him about spirits and the feeling of possession. He became a helpful resource in my quest to learn about spirit possession.

Now standing together in Carlos' yard, I decided to ask him about what I had overheard while sitting in the kitchen. He explained that the last night of the wake is important because you learn whether the spirit of the deceased has accepted the celebration or if they have problems with it. This sounded strangely like a description of the final day of a *dügü* or *chugú* in which the ancestors inform the living whether the ritual was successful. According to Marco, the dead person does not directly talk to the living at a *veluria* because it is too soon for their soul to directly communicate. However, a living medium communicates to others in the world of the dead who in turn speak with the deceased. Through a medium, the spirit then relays the thoughts of the recently dead person. This, he said, is what was happening in the room with Carlos—they were communicating with his mother through another spirit. In this way, she was given voice and "spoke" at the *veluria*. This was markedly different from what Don Cesar had previously informed me, stating that the dead person was simply present and observing without participating. Here, the deceased was playing an active role in the ceremony in that, according to Marco, she was judging whether the celebration was well-received and stating any needs he or she might have that had not been met, albeit through another spirit. I had never heard of this communication being possible at a ninth night wake and must have looked surprised because he smiled and continued with an adamant "*Sí, es verdad!*" (Yes, it is true!). He added that a woman could not even be there on her period because this too could upset the spirit—a rule commonly

associated with entering the temple during large-scale rituals. This was the first time I had heard of this rule associated with a *veluria*, an event that occurs within a home.

Challenging the Possibility of *Veluria* Spirit Communication: Pushback

Despite Marco's explanation and having overheard this event, no one I spoke with afterwards who was not present deemed communication with Carlos' mother possible, even through another spirit. Three days later, as the event I had witnessed stuck in my head, I decided to pass by my friend Valeria's[98] house to give her some peanut butter cookies I baked and get her opinion on the matter. She and another friend, Elena,[99] were sitting on the front porch with Elena's six-year-old daughter.[100] These women are in their sixties and belong to the generation of Garinagu who have returned to Livingston—what many of them have described as an unrecognizable town—as retirees after decades of work in the United States. Although the sentiment of disorientation is typical among individuals who return to their home countries after long periods of living abroad—what had changed in Livingston were elements they considered emblematic of their cultural identity as a people. Gone were the thatched roofs and traditional houses. People were no longer growing crops or making *ereba*.[101] Stories about the way things were and traditional *ürüga*[102] accounts had been silenced with the new flow of life, meaning that

[98] This is a pseudonym.
[99] This is a pseudonym.
[100] The fact that Elena is in her 60s and not the child's biological mother is irrelevant to the mother-daughter relationship they share. Many situations result in women raising children that are not biologically theirs. However, the biological "fact" does not define the parent-child relationship. The child one rears under their roof is typically considered their own. This relationship extends to siblings as well in that children raised under the same roof have a sibling relationship. Though participants in these relationships usually come to understand that their "blood" connections to one another are configured differently than Western definitions of concepts such as mother, brother, or sister, this is not necessarily relevant to parent, child, and sibling categorizations.
[101] *Ereba* is crispy cassava bread made with cassava root flour that has been cooked on top of a hot, round metal slab with a fire burning beneath it.
[102] Literally, this means "stories." These fictional stories were once told by the old to the young to teach them life lessons. I tried to find anyone in Livingston who still knew some of these, but no one knew of anyone who might be able to remember an *ürüga*—that generation had passed, but people in their 50s and older usually remembered hearing them as children.

the passing history itself was stunted in certain forms through which it was once transmitted. The community no longer raised the child[103] and Garifuna was no longer the language in the mouths of babes or youth.

Many of their voices become tense and sharp when they talk about returning to Guatemala and as they complain that they cannot believe the ways people have changed. A disjuncture had formed between them and the generations of Garinagu in their thirties and younger. They took up a different life in the United States and had to learn to live in a different cultural context. Yet they carried with them their home identities, always holding strong to the thought that they would return once they "put in their time," as Elena said. Many left with a specific plan to work and save money, retire from a good job with a retirement payment, and build a house in Livingston where they would return to live in their community. To this day, one can see many houses in the process of being built. Some will be finished, but many of these building projects have been abandoned and the structures sit as relics of modernity—frameworks of bricks with lush overgrowth swallowing them up. Some retirees travel between both places, spending a few months in the United States every year. These informants often spoke to me in English or Spanish, but among one another they tended to relish speaking exclusively in Garifuna—that is to say without Spanish or English interjected, which is how the young adults who know the language tend to speak it. The people in this group were exceedingly proud of their Garifuna identity, which was very pronounced not only in language choice, but also in their

[103] This is a larger issue explained to me countless times by the oldest generations. Essentially, when the population of Livingston was primarily Garifuna and before many people left for the United States, children could be chastised by any adult that saw them doing wrong. They would then be brought to their home, where they were commonly raised by grandparents with a strict moral code, and then they would typically be punished again. Thus, the community all aided in correcting child behavior. However, with the change in composition of the town, including an influx of Q'eqchi' Maya and more non-working parents remaining in Livingston, the relationship between children and other members of the town has changed, giving children more authority. There is much to say about this regarding a shift in values, household composition, cash flow, and the influence of the diaspora in general.

clothing, which was often Garifuna or African in style. Many told stories about how they had to constantly assert their Garifuna identity in the United States and did so proudly. Again, the *majority* of older people I met were part of the returning diaspora.

Members of this generation have provided a critical window into the significance of changes that have occurred in the community, and they did so on this occasion with Valeria and Elena as well. These women had become close friends and reliable resources for questions I had about the Livingston before one large wave of diaspora occurred in the 80s and 90s.[104] When I sat down with them that afternoon, I wanted to ask them about my conversation with Marco straightaway, but waited my turn. After I sat down, the women promptly dug into the cookies. Soon, one of them mentioned that a woman in the community had died that day. She was an elderly neighbor of a friend whom I had recently recorded in a group discussion about motherhood. They asked me if I had gone to the funeral, but I had not realized that she had passed.

This led into a conversation about the ninth night, but to my surprise, Valeria and Elena offered a description of a very different event—one that starkly contrasted the celebrations I had been to in the past year. From Valeria's perspective, the ninth night of the *veluria* had become a "crazy party." She spoke to me in English, stating that it used to be something for "old people."[105] She explained that young girls would have been sleeping during the ninth night celebration, not "out partying." I thought about all of the ninth night celebrations I had seen that year. It was true that most of the attendees were young. She said the previous purpose of the *veluria* was to pray and to help send the spirit to the right place, but she added that anyone who

[104] There have been and continue to be waves of diaspora. Informants describe these in terms of waves or periods of departure rather than a constant flow.

[105] Valeria and Elena often switched between English, Spanish, and Garifuna with me. Most of this conversation took place in English.

was Catholic would already know this. So far, I didn't see too much of a conflict. Despite the shift in attendees, this remained the stated purpose for everyone I had spoken with that year, including the younger generation that partook in the festivities. However, the difference clearly bothered her. She made the point that what people wanted to do now was party. The *veluria* had become about the party and not the prayers or the deceased, and the attendees were young. She did not recognize them as particularly knowledgeable about the means by which a spirit departs from the community during the ninth night.

What struck me was that both generations were deeply concerned with the spirit of the dead being sent away properly; they simply interpreted the means in different ways. For Valeria and Elena, there was an aspect of solemnity that was practiced throughout the week. Nevertheless, on the final night, people gathered to play drums, dance, and be merry—it was still a show of solidarity and happiness, but not a party with gambling. The focus, in their minds, should be more on the objective and they felt that the young were forgetting the purpose of the festivities in the first place. On the other hand, the younger generation expressed the same stated goal—they were there to send the spirit away. However, they believed that the spirit needed a large party of the sort they were engaged in to do it. In other words, they still claimed to be working toward the same ends.

It was not until I brought up the incident I witnessed at Carlos' house that a significant deviation in form became clear. Since we were on the topic of the final night of the *veluria*, I asked them about what I had witnessed at Carlos' house. Specifically, I enquired: Was it typical that someone should talk with the mother's spirit to make sure that she was ok and see if she needed anything? And, could they do this indirectly through another spirit? They both sat back and looked surprised. They frowned and took turns telling me that this was strange and absurd.

They were sure someone had either given me the wrong information, or lied, or they did not know what they were talking about. Elena stated that it "is not possible." Yet, I had no reason to distrust Marco and felt sure that he was not attempting to be dishonest. They wanted to know who told me that this happened. Without naming him, I described Marco and I relayed the scene of what I saw and heard. They spoke in turns, insisting on the impossibility of this event and explained that people were constantly struggling to have and demonstrate spiritual knowledge. They concluded that these young men were confusing the ninth night with events at the temple—they were confusing the two settings and "it was never like that" before. When I explained that they had also told me a woman with her period could not enter, the two shook their heads and reiterated their points, adding that these spiritual leaders are constantly creating what is "right."

I had heard similar claims before—that people now involved in spiritual practice in Livingston frequently change their stories about spirituality, and that anything is possible. Informants who express this view say that either there do not seem to be any rules, or that the rules are changing all the time. Paul Johnson noted a similar multiplicity of explanations for spiritual phenomena in his ethnography about Garinagu in New York City and Honduras (2007). He states that "Myths and belief remain largely implicit, embedded in ritual performance, and discussions of them reveal wild variations**.** Maintaining the 'tradition' is viewed as a question of ritual practice rather than dogma" (2007:92).

While it may be true that Garifuna ritual practice is a matter of "action," this does not change the fact that there are rules—social facts (Durkheim 1982 [1895])—that can be explicitly stated by Garinagu, which are followed and understood by the majority of those in Livingston. In this case, the fact is that most Garinagu state that newly dead spirits do not communicate to the living at a *veluria.* Sitting on my porch with Juan one day after the incident, I checked this

information with him as well, asking him directly whether this was possible. Juan grew up with a temple behind his home and his grandmother, the woman who raised him, was a prominent figure in conducting ritual there. He told me that I was confused and could not be talking about a *veluria.* He said that the spirit could not speak to the living until a year after death. "What about speaking through another spirit?" I asked. He shook his head, explaining that it was impossible. His reasoning was that the departing spirit did not speak to the living—it was leaving.

In sum, the comments by Elena, Valeria, and Juan among other informants made clear, in no uncertain terms, that the voice of the deceased was not present at a *veluria*, nor was it able to be. The most common response, in fact, was "this is impossible" and the space of the *veluria* is "not the *dabuyaba* (temple)." In fact, my acquaintances at the *veluria* had been focused on something distinctly different from what is known to take place in this ritual event—communicating with the very spirit that should be sent away in order to learn of her approval and needs. What I had observed and the conversation with Marco seemed to signal a determination to send off the spirit, but to do so using a form that links the home to the ritual space of the Garifuna temple. In short, communicating with the dead in any form during a *veluria* blurred the lines between the two distinct forms of ritual practice whose boundaries had been so clearly established by all of my other informants.

Conclusion

The event I witnessed and the responses given to me by informants emphasize the distinction that Garinagu make between rituals that send away and call back spirits of the dead. They highlighted the purpose of the *veluria* as sending the spirit away, and identified the state of the soul in departure as largely responsible for its inability to speak to the living after death. Nonetheless, communication with the dead brought the voice of the deceased into the very ritual

in which it was not supposed to be able to speak, thereby blurring the lines between the two categories of ritual. How exactly was the *veluria* made more similar to the other category of death rituals and what does this indicate?

First, at more elaborate rituals[106] for spirits who have been dead for several years (even for decades or over a century), the ancestors are asked to demonstrate their approval or disapproval in a symbolic act on the final day (Johnson 2007; Foster 1986). As I observed at one *chugú*, many of their voices are also directly heard during the ritual itself through possession in which they may offer long speeches or simply physical affection and temporary companionship to kin members. In other words, the approval of the dead is necessary and given both verbally and symbolically throughout these rituals, all of which take pace in the temple. However, the incident at Carlos' house was the first time in which I had heard of approval being sought for a ninth night wake.

Marco's second remark about the menstruating woman served to emphasize the sacred nature of the event and suggest a reinvention of the home space as ritual space equal to the temple. According to every spiritual leader in town, menstruating women should not enter into a Garifuna temple because they could anger the spirits and are therefore deemed dangerous. This rule, which applies to the space of the temple, was now referring to the space of the home. In this way, the spaces of the temple and the home and the events of the ancestor rituals and the *veluria* were being mapped onto one another. By doing this, ancestor presences and communication with the dead become naturalized events of the evening as these spirits are drawn in, not sent out.

Moreover, the need for the ninth night possession event I witnessed creates another space in which fluency in listening and speaking Garifuna is essential—if non-fluency results in the

[106] Here, I mean the *dügü* and *chugú* in particular.

inability to communicate with the deceased, linguistic skill becomes necessary for the success of the event. Elena and others would say that it was impossible to talk to the spirit because you are sending it away, not bringing it back. By their logic, how could the spirit simultaneously be coming and going?

The explanation given for the possession I overheard and the reactions of my informants raise several questions. First, if indeed communication with the newly deceased kin continues as a phenomenon during the *veluria,* what might this change indicate? I claim that the explanation given for the spirit possession is partly rooted in a knowledge gap caused by the diaspora to the United States. The young men who participated in this possession and gave me the explanation are part of a group who will become new spiritual leaders. They are heavily involved in "reclaiming" tradition and culture that many of them state has been lost among their peers.

The possession they enabled during the *veluria* indicates both that they are attempting to maintain spiritual practices and that they have lost some knowledge of the original form of the ritual itself. Most men and women in their generation have distanced themselves from Garifuna cultural and spiritual traditions and some even go so far as to claim Creole rather than Garifuna heritage, despite having Garifuna parents. Most young adults are focused on the monetary and material wealth that involvement in a globalized economy has the potential to provide. Yet, while modernity has in many ways disrupted previous Garifuna social structures, there has been remarkable pushback by this particular group of young men who seem to be attempting to increase the presence of tradition and integrate it into a contemporary landscape rather than allow modernity to bury it. However, while enacting the *veluria* ritual, the men conflate two ritual forms whose boundaries are partly drawn on the ability to verbally commune with the spirit. The blurred distinction between these two categories leads these practitioners to essentially

hypercorrect their ritual practice. Although the *veluria* is intended to separate the spirit from the living and send it away, perhaps these young men are leading a change in form that will soon become a standard in which the spirit is able to not only observe, but to participate in her own sendoff. Although this is in direct conflict with what most Garinagu understand to be possible, as with hypercorrection, it may mark the beginning of redefining the "correct" form. Moreover, the young men are insisting upon the continuation and even embellishment of their spiritual practices in direct response to the encroachment of modernity that threatens to make traditional practices obsolete. In this sense, modernity has thereby created a new space for ritual practice rather than erasing it.

~ 5 ~

One Love": Garifuna Language as Ancestral Influence in Livingston's Contemporary Music Scene

A throng of people fill the street and cluster under a nearby tarp. Speakers stretch to the top of the adjacent building, covering miles of the town in music. A young man with an inviting smile picks up a microphone. The artist called Gouule,[107] a local favorite, shouts into the mic and the crowd hollers back. Excitement percolates. A track of his own design plays. As he begins to sing, he is backgrounded by the mob of others, engulfing him with bodies and voice. There is no stage. He and the crowd sing together, their voices and figures flow together under an expanse of gesticulating limbs that colorfully accent the song's description of a gorgeous woman whose body and movements are fixed in the author's mind. A small circle emerges. Gouule's crisp, white button-down shirt is saturated with sweat, but he doesn't miss a beat as he describes going "slowly"—*Hamarula*,[108] the song's title. A female steps in front of him to dance. He grabs the microphone chord and, leaning down to observe her physique, he sings *"O hingiyabei, semeti badügü nei!"* (Oh, the way you move [there] is delicious!) She dances "*hamarula*," swinging her hips slowly and with suggestive precision. The crowd cheers. Gouule and others continue singing the Garifuna lyrics, throwing their hands up wildly. As other pairs of males and females take turns stepping into the circle to dance, their scenes of sexual attraction and physical appreciation theatrically play out. This is not a private affair. The chorus repeats again and again, and the crowd enacts the scene of slowly relishing in one another's physique each time. Men draw attention to the "deliciousness" of certain dancing females, and women emphasize their

[107] Gouule is a nickname. It is extremely common that Garinagu in Livingston are known by nicknames, whereas one's given name may not be known.
[108] To watch a video of this song, see this link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OCaRkkfUu7o

curves in playfully sexy moves. Gouule's imagined scene becomes our own, and by the time the song is finished, we understand his captivation with the mythical female he describes and we have ourselves partaken in a demonstration of passionate, unquenchable attraction. The music stops and Gouule has blended into the crowd. He points at his chest. Other men point at their chests. Everyone is raising their hands and waving at one another, smiling. Flirtatious, intimate excitement is palpable. Inhibitions are lost and any differences quelled.

Introduction

Garinagu in Livingston identify several segments of the local population as those empowered to save or lose the Garifuna language. According to Garinagu, children must take an interest in speaking, parents must speak it to children within the home, and elders who speak "*puro*" (pure) Garifuna bear the responsibility of transferring traditional knowledge and identity which is ontologically paired with the Garifuna language. While many complain that parents are not speaking Garifuna to children, a 2009 Livingston household survey conducted by Michelle Forbes (2011) suggested otherwise.[109] At that time, 87% of Garinagu stated that they consistently, if not exclusively, spoke Garifuna to their children. In the same survey, 57% of adult Garinagu reported that, despite speaking Garifuna to their kids, the children spoke only Spanish to them. Garinagu I encountered during my research offered the same complaint and typically blamed these Spanish replies on a lack of desire to speak. As in Forbes' study, they maintained that children nonetheless understood the language.

[109] Forbes gathered information by conducting a series of interviews during which she and a Garifuna assistant asked the same series of questions. Responses included self-reported information about language use. During my own observations within households, I noted that several adults who stated that they spoke Garifuna to their children did so inconsistently, frequently switching into Spanish. This was particularly true for verbal children who replied in Spanish to their caretakers.

While speaking to children in Garifuna attunes children's ears to the language, it does not guarantee Garifuna language production. As seen in Chapter 3, many young people who are unconfident in their capacity to speak "pure" Garifuna may be reluctant to speak to elders in the case that they make mistakes. This combines with stigmas of ethnic stereotypes prevalent among children themselves,[110] producing a feeling of shame (Bonner 2001) and creating a situation of what Smith-Christmas has called "vertical" language use (2014). Similar to her study of Scottish Gaelic, Garifuna caregivers tend to speak the heritage language to children, but kids reply in the majority language—Spanish—which they also speak to one another.

However, as scholarship by Amy Paugh reveals (2012), analyzing language shift may require attending to language use outside of dominant frameworks of intergenerational actors within households, for example. As she states, certain "key actors" may be "consistently overlooked and underestimated in the process of language shift and attempts to reverse it" (2012:1) as "language preservation and revitalization are often perceived as resting in the hands of community elders, educators, and policy makers" (2012:2). In her study, Paugh shows that children's roles have not been adequately understood or examined in processes of language shift.

I build from Paugh's insight here by observing that, while mainstream models of intergenerational and school-based language revitalization are an essential component in the project of maintaining language in Livingston, there is another vital domain of language use in

[110] For example, Ladino, Maya, and Garifuna children attend the same schools and, despite some segregation within neighborhoods, they play together. Children commonly tease one another for speaking languages other than Spanish. This includes Mayan languages and Garifuna. During my observations in local schools, there were many occasions on which non-Garifuna children mocked the sounds of the Garifuna language (this also occurred with Mayan languages). Within Guatemala, my own investigations confirmed Forbes' results which showed that most non-Garifuna children knew very little about Garinagu, and any knowledge they did present depicted Garinagu as dangerous and lazy (Forbes 2011). For example, one young man in Guatemala City (who was quite mistaken) told me that Garinagu did not own shoes and they often cut visitors with broken bottles. Within Livingston, such stereotyping persists and, for Garinagu, appears to contribute to sentiments of shame about the Garifuna language. (For more on a Maya perspective in Livingston, see Kahn 2006.)

which the Garifuna language is flourishing—collective singing of popular[111] music written in Garifuna by local Garinagu. While each of the efforts mentioned above do assist in making the language accessible to new speakers in home and school settings (a major accomplishment, considering the ridicule with which Garifuna speakers were met in schools even one generation ago), these models of intergenerational transmission and school instruction miss the, here, positive language-building influence of popular culture outside of family and school.

Along this line, one linguistically influential and "underestimated" collection of individuals in the Livingston community is the network of young, mostly male, adults who write and perform popular Garifuna music on local and international platforms. Their songs are highly interactive and designed to be sung jointly with listeners rather than performed by a lone singer. In this way, audiences constitute a principal element of the performance and minimize the composer.[112] The popularity of this music and the collaborative manner in which it is performed motivates even those listeners lacking proficiency in the language to learn and sing the music in Garifuna. While these artists occasionally write lyrics in Spanish and English, the majority of

[111] I use the term "popular music" here to indicate music that has wide appeal, particularly within Garifuna communities and the Garifuna Nation more broadly. The kind of popular music to which I refer specifically integrates non-Garifuna musical styles (i.e. Central and West African, Afro-Caribbean, Central American Latino, etc.) and typically pairs them with Garifuna lyrics. I am not referring to, for example, Paranda, Punta Rock, or other genres of Garifuna music largely produced with traditional Garifuna instrumentation and storytelling. Popular music as I describe here is most frequently created by young adults and may stray from "traditional" topics of storytelling to include sexual encounters, and it contrasts with what I describe as "ritual music." (However, there are several cases today in which musicians have begun to perform certain ritual songs—songs that were forbidden to be sung outside of rituals for ancestors—for audiences, including non-Garifuna audiences, in everyday secular spaces. The song "Wala Gayu" is one such example.)

[112] Although I use the term "composer" here, I do so loosely and with some hesitation. This term cannot be clearly applied to many forms of Garifuna music. Because the music and lyrics of many songs, even those played in secular settings, are said to be given or inspired by dead ancestors, the living do not claim authorship. Therefore Garinagu infrequently use the word "composer." It is not clear, however, that the lyrics penned by these young men is influenced by ancestors. In fact, many of them spoke of these as song that they had written. However, because Garinagu view the living and dead as integrated into the person, they may be included as authors in some capacity.

their songs are written in Garifuna and, according to these musicians, must be in that language. As many Garinagu plainly state, if it is not written in Garifuna, then it is not Garifuna music.

The kind of street-friendly musical performance I describe is reminiscent of what Roger Abrahams wrote about what he called "men-of words" (Abrahams 1983). Like the Afro-American lyrical performances Abrahams observed in the West Indies, the lyrics and styles that Garifuna male popular musicians have developed are influenced by and discuss contemporary social conditions while nonetheless fitting "into the total picture of a community's traditions and institutions" (Abrahams 1983:4). In other words, these Garifuna performances, as I discuss in this chapter, are contemporary forms laden with traditional values. Although performing these songs is not competitive in the same manner as performances by men-of words', these Garifuna musicians are nonetheless "good talkers" in that they must be talented storytellers in the Garifuna language. And, similar to man-of-words traditions on West Indian islands, Garifuna popular musicians also synthesize elements of traditional expression and integrate pervasive community ethos into song structure and performances.

While gendered differences are not the focus of this chapter, it is worth noting the way in which gendered singing corresponds to song genre and public and private space. In Livingston, I did not meet any females producing this type of popular music. Females are almost exclusively responsible for performing ritual song in the temple, but their presence is virtually absent from the kind of popular music scene that I discuss here (at least in Guatemala). Conversely, men's voices in song are minimized in ritual spaces and, in fact, the "men's songs" previously sung by men in rituals for the dead have almost been forgotten. In my observations, female singers who are heard in public spaces are praised for their skill in conveying stories of hardship, struggle, and joy, but not the sexually explicit stories sung by these male musicians. For example, one of

the most notable recent projects, *Umalali: The Garifuna Women's Project*, lauded the "mothers and daughters who, while working tirelessly to support their families, sing songs and pass on the traditions of their people to future generations." [113]

As in many Caribbean societies, Garifuna females are the bedrock of home and familial continuity (see Gonzales 1984 and Kerns 1983 for full discussion). Men move fluidly among women's homes (including grandmothers, mothers, and romantic partners). In this way, women have a stronger association with private, home spaces, and men with public spaces. Further research is needed to explore the reasons behind the potentially different effects that music produced and sung by different genders has on Garifuna listeners, and the manner in which the songs are received.

My observations of groups singing popular music together have led to two interrelated questions that guide this chapter: Why must popular Garifuna music be written in the Garifuna language? And, what is accomplished by singing in Garifuna? As I discuss below, young Garifuna musicians in Livingston describe creating songs in Garifuna as self-evident—Garinagu sing in Garifuna because it is their language. Yet, this explanation overlooks the fact that languages like Spanish, English, and Caribbean Creoles are frequently preferred for spoken conversations and earn greater social capital as spoken registers. What is different about songs?

I suggest that singing together in Garifuna effects Garinagu in a way that singing in other languages cannot, and it also reveals another manner in which ongoing relationships with Garifuna ancestors are influencing language use and relationships in the living world. Specifically, I claim that the way in which Garinagu sing popular music together in Garifuna shows it to be a register of Garifuna speech through which those singing participate in

[113] *Umalali: The Garifuna Women's Project*. Cumbancha. 2008.

collaborative storytelling. The effects of this are not unlike group singing in ritual settings wherein living singers collectively recount the experiences and sentiments of ancestors. In both cases, singing together facilitates an emotional alignment as stories are shared and embodied by participants in whom they become firsthand accounts via repetition that "places" the events and sentiments within them. The resulting unification among participants is a uniquely Garifuna connection that is spiritual. This was the phenomenon that I described at the beginning of Chapter 2 when I discussed the singing and sentiment at the first ceremony I attended. Such emotional *communitas* (Turner 1969) is a master symbol (Turner 1967) of shared history and experience in the world—of being Garifuna. Because this state is attached to the spirit, to ancestors, and to lived experience, Garifuna—the language of the soul and of ancestors—is the language in which it is achieved. This suggests that truths and values that belong specifically to the Garifuna world should be spoken in Garifuna. In other words, it is "truer" than other languages for Garinagu because it represents truths about Being.[114]

These truths about Being pertain to an ethos and worldview known as *Garifunadüaü* which values, above all else, solidarity and harmony among Garinagu. Ancestor spirits model this most clearly, which is why Garinagu say the "heart" of *Garifunadüaü* is the *dabuyaba* (a temple for ancestor rituals) and the behaviors, exchanges, and actions that transpire there. The synthesis of voices in Garifuna during ritual singing and while singing popular music establishes a particular sense of belonging and shared experience that performatively (Austin 1962) achieves this state. As I observed, popular music produced by these musicians creates moments in which the Garifuna language is not only heard and sung by multiple generations, but moments that experientially enfold participants into a state reflective of the ideals of *Garifunadüaü*. I suggest

[114] I capitalize this to indicate that this concept of "being" is a significant component of Garifuna cosmology, quite particular to a Garifuna worldview and understanding of self.

that this cannot be accomplished in any other language, and that because even popular music belongs to the category of *Garifunadüaü,* Garinagu state, as a matter of self-evidence (Du Bois 1986), that it must be in Garifuna. In this way, deceased ancestors and the values that they promote are influencing the state of popular music, and the shape of language revitalization, even though this may not be explicitly recognized by Garinagu themselves.

This oral transfer of experience and ethos may remind readers of what Hanétha Vété-Congolo has recently called "interorality" (Vété-Congolo 2016). Interorality is similar to Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia wherein an utterance is dialogically embedded with other times, places, and language so that "the word in a language is half someone else's" (Bakhtin 1981:293), but interorality is about specifically Caribbean "words." Vété-Congolo proposes that storytelling in the Caribbean is *inter*-oral because regional accounts build onto and subsume one another:

> […] in the Caribbean, transposition remains the foremost means of interoral text production and sytematism its paradigm. At its root, interorality presents multiple sources because the canon embodies tales from Africa mostly, but also from Europe. Although the new whole—the interoral tale—shares some of the same features as its sources, it is distinguished by its semantic autonomy. (Vété-Congolo 2016:4)

Like many Caribbean peoples, Garifuna history and experience has been conveyed orally over centuries (see Palacio 2005a). Written accounts, while highly valued, have only recently begun to emerge. For Garinagu, song has been a critically important, if not primary, means of conveying stories over time. Contemporary musicians continue to utilize this as the platform to share accounts of present-day experiences, knowing that song is heard and received differently from speech.

In following pages, I discuss more fully the Garifuna worldview and philosophy to which Garifuna music—and as I claim here, even popular music—belongs. After explaining this concept, known as *Garifunadüaü,* I take the reader through its most obvious manifestation in

music in the form of ritual singing. I then counter this description by describing example of popular music as it is sung collectively. I argue that the performance of these genres are acting in similar ways, and that the reason that artists write popular music, almost unthinkingly, in Garifuna is because it is the language through which "true" Garifuna experiences may be shared to facilitate the kind of *communitas* and unification definitive of Garifuna peoplehood. Popular music, via the Garifuna language, is nonetheless cosmologically oriented.

Background

Garifunadüaü: A Garifuna Ecology and Ethos of Being

Garifunadüaü is a way of life that defines Garifuna personhood. At the center of *Garifunadüaü* is the intimate connection between kin and environment captured in the phrase "*Au bun, buguia nun,"* a phrase commonly translated as "I for you, and you for me" or "I am because you are." Because one is, in effect, their elders both living and dead, respect for them is equated to respect for oneself. You *are* one another, quite literally. But the Garifuna person is also composed of their physical environment and community, which they in turn constitute. Valuing oneself therefore entails valuing one's community and the physical environment in which they live because everyone and everything are interconnected into a unified whole.

This is one aspect of what Garinagu mean when they emphasize the importance of reciprocity. *Garifunadüaü*, or "being Garifuna" as it is sometimes translated by Garinagu, entails a state of unification among kin and with nature that is maintained through reciprocal acts of care. These establish and propel the stability of the Garifuna universe. Healthy relationships between individuals in both large- and small-scale networks of kin create a balanced environment because of the manner in which Garinagu are spiritually bound. Individual action or

inaction, belief or disbelief, can disrupt this harmony, but can be renewed in ritual. As Roy Cayetano explains:

> I think if an individual sees himself as one, social, physical, spiritual, he thereby has obligations as to how to relate with others. If he deals with them right, everything will be real. When he begins to fail in his obligations, bad things begin to happen, like disease, illness and misfortune. One has to step in since things are thrown out of balance and in order for this balance to be re-established it is necessary for certain rituals to happen. (quoted in Flores 2002:149)

Because these ruptures are spiritual in nature, they are led by specialists, called *buyeis,* and their assistants. Together they effectively guide the living and the dead into a healed state of renewed harmony, and do so by using elements from the environment, such as water, through which life and spirits are believed to flow.

Although the unification that occurs through religious practice underscores the way in which Garifuna people are bound together, the notion of personhood is itself riddled with paradox to Western sensibilities. The person is at once highly autonomous (Kerns 1983), yet fixed within group of kin whom their actions impact for better or worse. These actions and their effects configure the individual as someone spiritually and physically bound to other family members. For example, according to Douglas Taylor, restrictions in eating and behavior were formerly practiced by the mother and by other kin members long after a child was grown. This is evinced in an account in which those who were injured working far from home immediately sent word to family members so that they might abstain from certain behavior or foods that might aggravate the injury (Taylor 1951:91). Garinagu who shared a consanguineal tie were deemed capable of impacting one another bodily as a result of their actions. Such a conception of bodily relatedness that circulates around the spirit carries over into death as spirits and the living may aid or injure one another in ways that nonetheless continue to be manifested in terms of a physical condition, such as hunger, thirst, weariness, or illness. Thus, the self-governance that

characterizes Garifuna individuals contributes to the success of the group. Just as Garinagu state that a kin member "dies from you," he or she also lives from you.

This model of personhood that embeds autonomy within collectivity is not uncommon among other native peoples in the Americas. Joanna Overing and Alan Passes list these attitudes as pervasive among other Amerindian groups:

> (1) There is the idea widespread in Amazonia that the self who belongs to a collective is an independent self, and that the very creation of the collective is dependent upon such autonomous selves who have the cognitive/affective skills for congenial social interaction; (2) at the same time, the moral gaze is other-directed, where the autonomous I is ever implicated within and joined with an intersubjectivity […] (2000: 2)

The Garifuna notion of personhood does appear to align with such a model of Amerindian selfhood, but only up to a point. It differs drastically by including the dead as members of the collective who are "joined with an intersubjectivity." Unlike many native communities who place taboos on recalling the deceased, the Garifuna dead are emphatically remembered and remain active members of the collectivity. The dead, and their wellbeing, are factored into the overall health of the Garifuna community because they are a component of the personhood of the living. Specifically, because of the bodily and spiritual connection that Garinagu share, the wellbeing of one relies on the wellbeing of all, regardless of whether the person is alive or dead.

This notion of peoplehood, and the connection experienced between individuals and between people and nature, is a central reason why reciprocity is a definitive value of *Garifunadüaü.* Reciprocity, this *Au bun, buguia nun* (I am because you are) mentality, is not simply about an exchange oriented give and take. Rather, the kind of reciprocity that respects the spiritual and bodily connection between kin entails a shared "placing" of one person's experience into another. In other words, the reciprocity of *Garifunadüaü* is also a profound

means of sharing intimate truths of experience and being. This should occur with ease and fluidity when Garinagu live together in a manner that upholds the values and ways of living of their ancestors—in accordance with *Garifunadüaü.*

Garinagu themselves can easily identify forms that convey *Garifunadüaü,* such as dancing or song, but how is the morality, worldview, and value system imperative to *Garifunadüaü* known and transmitted to new generations? My research suggests that rituals, and more specifically, the historical and emotional experience of ancestors that transpire in rituals, are the primary means by which the tenets of this cultural model are honored and transmitted. These are conveyed orally in the form of sung experiences and in physical enactments of history that, most obviously, transpire in rituals. However, as I will later explain, popular music is emerging as a contemporary site of *Garifunadüaü* as well, one that is also able to uphold ancestral values as it employs the language in a nuanced manner of collective singing.

Songs as *Garifunadüaü*

At major ancestor rituals such as the *dügü* and *chugú,* and even some smaller rituals like *limesi* (literally meaning "mass"), a chorus of women assemble toward the front of the room and lead attendees in songs. During the *dügü* and *chugú*, these songs are accompanied by three drummers and a maracas player. Songs are addressed to ancestors, some of whom are explicitly named before the music begins. Their music, in combination with other ritual elements, calls to and guides ancestor spirits into the ritual space—the *dabuyaba*—and into the bodies of certain attendees.

However, the songs are not composed by these choral members, but are considered to emanate from the dead. Many of them are *ichahówarügüti,* or "given" songs received in

dreams.[115] Roy Cayetano explains this as a definitive aspect of the chorus: "This group is ordinarily comprised only of women, who acquire the songs to be used at the *dügü* through dreams. […] They would be inspired with a melody in a dream and they would teach these songs to the other members of their group" (quoted in Flores 2002:163). Specifically, during the period that a ritual is being organized for the dead, it is common for one of the spirits of the family dead to "gift" a song to a sleeper. The person may awaken with a melody in their head and lyrics that simply come to them, and they would say that the ancestor gave it to them. Alternatively, the sleeper may dream of an ancestor spirit who sings a song to them. This is what it means to be "given" a song for ritual.[116] Once it has been received, the dreamer then shares it with the larger group of chorus members. The women then practice the song and it is sung back to the ancestor during the course of the ceremony. The receiver is not recognized as the composer, but is responsible for teaching the song.

What I have observed is that as Garinagu listen to and re-voice the words of their ancestors, two things happen. First, as the lyrics are sung repeatedly, "word comes into contact with word" (Vološinov 1973:118) as they are processed, internalized, and personalized to become a part of the singers' own experience. The lyrics, like language itself, are not detachable from humans. Rather, the speaker becomes the lyrics—the words are heavy with emotion,[117] and the more singers speak them, the greater the effect of experiencing the sentiment of the ancestor. The feelings become embodied by and inscribed into the singer through repetition, so that the lyrics are not simply conveyed through them as reported speech, but felt by them personally. As

[115] For a fuller description of *ichahówarügüti,* see Broach 2018.
[116] Although Cayetano references only *dügü* songs received by the women in the chorus, I have encountered people who have received songs that are not necessarily for ritual. For example, a midwife in Hopkins, Belize sung to me in Garifuna about a little bird flying away. She then explained that she awakened with it in her mind. She did not claim authorship, but identified it as a gift from the spirit of one of her ancestors.
[117] See Appendix for examples.

one of my informants said, both the relationships between dead and living kin, and the experiences in lyrics, are "etched" onto participants through repetition. And this is the expectation of ancestors—this emotional alignment is a primary way in which the living root themselves firmly in history, and allow themselves to be guided by the dead.

The second effect of re-voicing the ancestors' words is that it communicates to ancestor spirits that they are valued, and that ritual preparations are underway. Even though the lyrics remain stable, *ichahówarügüti* resemble a kind of long, drawn out dialogue in that there are particular, appropriate moves and responses, despite singing together. The song passes through mouths and returns to the spirits, each stage signals care to the dead, who finally acknowledge that they receive the care by possessing the living and singing with them. In other words, each voice is collaboratively working with the other voices to construct *implicit, unspoken* messages. The act of singing *ichahówarügüti* in this way indexes the kind of unity and cohesion desired by the ancestor. It also confirms that the living have listened.

In Charles Hirschkind's *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics* (2006), he describes the manner in which various forms of media are utilized to convey religious messages and their role in crafting a particular kind of Islamic devotion. In his account, a particular sense of Muslim piety penetrates into Muslims who listen daily to recorded sermons. In the words of Rodney Bonilla, one of the Garinagu writing popular music, Garifuna ritual songs are "*parábolas recitada con la objetividad de reflexión y algunos para invocación de nuestros ancestros*" (parables recited with the objective of reflection, and some are to invoke our ancestors). When they are sung, the person should be infused with the moral lesson. In this way, certain forms of listening pair with repetition and stimulate a process of embodiment.

This process can also be compared to what Robin Shoaps discusses in her article "'Pray Earnestly': The Textual Construction of Personal Involvement in Pentecostal Prayer and Song" (2008). Shoaps examines how unique, personal experiences with God and religion are created in Assembly of God churches while maintaining the use of Biblical texts. She explores this as a paradox of the need for personal, emotional experiences in a context where the seemingly fixed word of God is utilized. Shoaps explains that churchgoers entextualize Biblical messages and incorporate reported speech into prayers, songs, and sermons, speakers. By doing this, speakers are able to situate holy messages within themselves and reframe them in the moment of speech. As in the Garifuna process of singing ritual songs, speech becomes earnest.

Like Biblical texts, Garifuna ritual songs have fixed phrasing and musical accompaniment. As Rodney added, "You sing them again and again and they become written onto you." In fact, attendees sing many of these songs from thirty minutes to an hour while stepping in a slow dance around the space of the *dabuyaba.* In the course of this song, drumming, and movement, the sentiment of the ancestor from which the song originated is transferred into the singers and, finally, made their own**.** In this way, the songs become sincere, honest, and profoundly personal. Again, this shared experience of emotion is the intention of the ancestor spirit who gave the song in the beginning.

During the *dügü* and *chugú,* singing assists in the process of fusing Garifuna time, space, and personhood into a singular whole. As Barbara Flores describes of the *amalihani,* the most vital songs performed with corresponding dances at these rituals, "In the *[a]mali[hani]* we pull space into the center, into the here, and we pull time into the now so that all things are pulled together into the here and now" (2002:165). This is similar to Roy Rappaport's description of ritual time in which he argues that experiences such as *communitas* and altered consciousness are

often a product of particular forms of rhythm-inducing performances that create an organic effect on group unification and permeate the psychology of participants so that the "numinous and the holy are rooted in the organic depths of the human being" (Rappaport 1999:230). In other words, the processes of singing, dancing, and music making in the *dügü* and *chugú* fix the sacred within the attendees. Here, the sacred is the truth of the past realized in the words and emotions of the ancestor that, through their internalization, unify the group of living and dead.

In sum, ongoing exchanges and reconciliation with ancestor spirits require the living and dead to establish a state of shared emotion and experience. These are key avenues through which the unification and harmony idealized by *Garifunadüaü* are accomplished. While ritual songs and the process through which they are sung together present a clear example of this ethos, everyday popular music has not been interrogated as such. However, I propose that this music is a contemporary expression of *Garifunadüaü.* Not only is joint singing of popular music accomplishing the project of solidarity envisioned by this philosophy of Being, but that very state emanates from the teachings of ancestor spirits themselves. In this way, deceased speakers of Garifuna are influencing a contemporary music scene that is primarily led (in the living world) by young men.

Scenes from *Semana Santa*

It is Easter Sunday and streets in Livingston burst with color. Fresh flowers and fruit lie in decorative layers on thick powder and rough concrete. The softness of mineral rich dirt spreads across the crackling cement in arrangements of elaborate artwork that are similar to Native American sand painting. Rusty, deep ochres of earth contrast with stark white powder that spells out themes like "*Paz*" (Peace) and "*Fe*" (Faith). The peachy blush of melon wedges shows softly next to thick skinned plantains, both awaiting the scorching sun that will turn their

sweetness pungent once the morning shade recedes. Small tables draped in fabric adorn the sides of the road. Framed images of Jesus, Mary, and angels are displayed behind white candles and fresh cut flowers that burst from vases.

On this Easter, like others, the big attraction of the day is the reenactment of the crucifixion. Crowds overflow, spilling into commercial doorways as three men walk by in replicas of chains. Several actors beat them with "whips" made from soft cloth that has been dyed with red at the tips to mimic an actual blood. The person next to me lets out a giggle and calls out to the character of Jesus. "Wilson! WILSON! Haaaaa!" The crowd laughs and shouts at the sight of their friends in costume. Meanwhile, "Jesus" and his woeful companions attempt to maintain a serious demeanor on their long walk down the central road, through the gate of the Catholic church and into the large, grassy yard beside it. Several strong young men playing the soldiers bind the limbs of the condemned to crosses and prop them upright. The onlookers surrounding the action in the churchyard form a tidy semicircle to listen. "Jesus" stares into the blazing sun. And in that moment, as his crown of thorns and painted-on blood mixed with sweat and he pleads for forgiveness, it is somehow enjoyable. The sorrow and tragedy of the event are conveyed, but subsumed within the excitement of the performance. As strange as it is to say, watching the crucifixion is fun.

This reenactment comes annually at the tail end of *Semana Santa* (Holy Week), one of the most exciting times of the year to be in Livingston. The town is packed with tourists, including many Garinagu from as far away as Los Angeles and New York. According to hotel owners, Garinagu from out of town book their rooms up to a year in advance. The days leading up to Easter Sunday are packed with cultural shows, workshops, and one endless party that goes hand in hand with the religious celebration. It is a time for family to catch up, but is also an

opportunity for Livingston to showcase its cultural richness and Garifuna identity. The religious holiday is a holy week of cultural spectacle and commensality.

Along the shore, vendors had been set up all week, selling home cooked Garifuna food and cold beer. Enormous speakers, often six feet high and taller, blasted local and regional tunes from many of the stalls. I had ventured out the previous day to meet a few friends and join in the celebration. As I descended the hill, the statue of Salvador del Mundo loomed watchful from his pelican laden post in the sea just off the coast. Several of my friends reclined in chairs around a plastic table under large tarp where at least a hundred people were gathered. We faced the shore, where kids played and jumped in and out of the water. Friends and family were catching up on what for some was an annual reunion.

Three friends, Gouule, Erick, and Giovanni, offered me a seat and introduced me to several people they said had "come home" from the United States to visit. I stumbled up in my straw hat and old dress feeling quite disheveled in comparison to this sharply dressed bunch. In the bustle of *Semana Santa*, visiting (or returning) Garinagu typically appear immaculately attired in styles that weave urban hip-hop from the United States with marks of Jamaican Rasta, Central American, Caribbean Afro-descendent, and Native American identities. Their clothes were spotless, pressed, and bright. Their studded earrings and name brands adorned unhurried, laid back demeanors echoed in Giovanni's favorite English noun turned adjective, "Relaxx!" Gouule ran his hands along the collar of his shirt to make sure it was properly angled with the back raised. One of the guys pulled out a small razor blade and gave a few quick passes to the corner of Giovanni's forehead to catch the few, almost imperceptible strays that had grown overnight. A kid of about ten walked by with a new Miami Heat cap turned slightly, the tag dangling as he passed our "Relaxx" group with a bounce in his step. This synthesis of Black and

indigenous styles—the way in which Garinagu assert multiple cultures in a singular display of identity—was markedly Garifuna (Anderson 2009; Gonzales 1988) and vibrantly lived by youth in this post-exile homeland.

The young men at my table sat sipping cold beer, greeting friends, and casually chatting. Suddenly, a new song came on the loud speakers and several of the guys at the table stopped speaking mid-sentence and let out uproarious, joyful shouts. It was one of Gouule's recent creations called "Chikungunya"—a humorous song in which the artist relays the story of how the intense body aches that accompany Chikungunya prevented him from being able to sexually perform.[118] Since most of the town has had Chikungunya, the comedy of his situation was well-received. My friends stood and began to sing the lyrics in a shout together. Others nearby pointed to Gouule and he pointed back with a laugh in his throat as he sung. Their bodies bounced up and down, and hands rose and fell in exaggerated gestures that engaged the entire arm. They pointed to one another, made eye contact, and dramatically enacted the events of the song with their bodies in different ways, not unlike the scene captured in Gouule's "Back It Up" video.[119]

A pair of pre-teen girls climbed onto a stage and stood in front of the speakers where they shook their hips from side to side, throwing in some *punta* style hip thrusts. Gouule and the rest of the crew continued singing, and were joined by most of the Garinagu in earshot. Even the young girls, a group so hesitant to speak Garifuna among one another or to elders, shouted the lyrics as several of the nearby adults offered claps and playful jeers of approval. Once the song

[118] Despite the crippling discomfort of the illness (which often presents as a high fever accompanied by rheumatoid arthritis that can linger for years), the unknown long-term effects, and the lack of effective treatment or prevention, the shared "tragedy" of Chikungunya is nonetheless rendered whimsical. Like the trials of Christ presented earlier, Garinagu remove the sting of local troubles and afflictions by finding a way to laugh about them.
[119] To watch this video, see this link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gtxL81h_tSA

ended, the laughter lingered, the young men at the table sat down, the young girls went back to speaking in Spanish.

Later that evening, the two discos on the coastline were packed. Bachata, Reggae, and Dancehall beats with Spanish and English Creole lyrics blared loudly across land and sea as people packed inside to dance and visit. Chatting persisted while the music played, and vendors sold plates of steaming rice and beans, smothered chicken, plantains, and thick flour tortillas topped with barbequed meats in front of disco doorways.

My companions and I began to make our way home when Gouule stood still, crouched down slightly, and began to sing one of his songs in Garifuna. Immediately, everyone in the company stopped and physically collected into a close unit, bouncing rhythmically with hinged knees to a beat in their heads. Several of them let out shouts, and soon all of their voices rose together in an uproar of lyrics with raised hands that punctuated phrases. They moved in slow steps forward, and then back, almost as if huddled together. The talking had stopped. Although this transition was not intended to exclude me, my language skills fell too short at that time to understand the lyrics and join this exchange of coordinated voice and movement. From my vantage point, there was no conversational "in"—no way of meeting another's eyes, gaining physical closeness, contributing relevant gestures, or indeed simply addressing or being addressed—without an ability to sing with the group in Garifuna. Songs in other languages had not provoked this shift in talk or physical, emotional delineation, nor would they for the remainder of my stay. I was present, but only singing along would have allowed me to become a visible interlocutor in this kind of moment.

As the singing ended, laughter and smiles lingered for some time. The talking continued in a code-mixed flow of Spanish and Garifuna. When I asked what the song was about, one

acquaintance explained simply that the song was about a sexy woman. We soon parted ways, but I would continue to witness this brand of physically engaged, jubilant singing among Garinagu whenever they sung popular Garifuna music together.

Singing Together

As Francisca Norales notes, "The concept that governs music performance among Garinagu is that making music is a participatory group activity that serves to unite Garinagu into a cohesive group for a common purpose" (Norales 2011:86). This cohesion is partly achieved because songs are expressions of genuine emotions—whether they are felt in reaction to past trauma or a beautiful woman—conveyed through the telling of actual experiences that are shared and then embodied by the other singers. As Cayetano states:

> There are no Garifuna songs that deal with fictitious or imaginary events or feelings. All tell something about the 'composer' or about some experiences he is having or just had. Indeed, one can safely claim that one of the purposes of Garifuna songs, their *reason d'etre,* is to give expression to the feelings genuinely felt by the 'composer' and shared by the people among whom the songs gain popularity because they have similar experiences or because the songs deal with themes that are among their main concerns or preoccupations. (Cayetano 2009:220)

As participants sing popular Garifuna music together, they collaboratively build shared experiences in a manner that achieves the kind of unification similar to what ritual seeks to accomplish. In the singing described in the scenes above, these moments begin by Gouule giving an account of an event and his feelings about that event in song form. His companions not only listen to the lyrics, but they physically enact the events with Gouule, singing along as lyrics and movements are repeated many times. These companions physically and verbally re-enact the event as it is internally dialogized (Bakhtin 1981) and comprehended bodily. Thus, although the topics in popular music do not necessarily convey profound historical insights the way that ancestor-given songs might, the "*reason d'etre"* of sharing genuine feelings applies to popular music as well.

It is in this manner that, whereas rituals emphasize the unification of the kin group (Palacio 2001) to re-establish kinship (Greene 1998; Foster 1986), collective popular singing nonetheless "re-establishes" the larger sense of Garifuna peoplehood to which all Garinagu belong.

Singing as Communicative Competence

This kind of collaborative singing exhibits a conversational shift in topic and is, I propose, a register of Garifuna speech. As Dell Hymes explained, acquiring language is not limited to the ability to wield grammatical forms; rather, he imagined language as "a mode of action" (Hymes 1974:75) situated within a "social matrix." Unlike Chomsky, who envisioned competence in language as "unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interests, and errors" (Chomsky 1965:3), Hymes argued that the ability to competently communicate with language was not simply a matter of performing accurate grammatical structures. Hymes shows that "Competence is dependent upon both (tacit) *knowledge* and (ability for) *use"* (Hymes 1972:282). He explains, "Within the social matrix in which it acquires a system of grammar a child acquires also a system of its use, regarding persons, places, purposes, other modes of communication, etc.—all the components of communicative events together with attitudes and beliefs regarding them" (Hymes 1974:75). In this way, the ability to use language within this system, not simply to produce accurate grammatical forms, constitutes communicative competence. Following this line of thinking, singing together in Garifuna is an important mode of communication among Garinagu, and one that is modeled by interactions with deceased ancestors. Collectively joining voices in Garifuna songs is a common communicative event, in both sacred and secular settings, that is an ongoing part of Garifuna language socialization.

The manner in which this socialization is enacted succeeds in sharing sentiment in a manner similar to Mark Sicoli's description of Zapotec co-construction of mutual stances in conversations (2016). During our walk home and in the opening scene of this chapter, Gouule leads the group in songs of his creation. As groups continue to sing, however, they physically move in a manner that aligns with Gouule and his words become first person perspectives as the singing continues. While Sicoli's Zapotec speakers delineate physical spaces and share stances through joint actions in discussions, Garifuna speakers carve out spaces that invite others into a shared world of experience *as Garinagu* when they sing together in the language.

Wherefore Garifuna?

In the above sections, I discussed what is being accomplished by collectively singing in Garifuna. However, one question still lingers: Why insist upon singing in Garifuna if other elements of music are malleable? It may be true that singing together in the language has effects that exhibit particularly Garifuna values, but it is nonetheless significant that this sung register of the language persists, even thrives, in the face of largescale language disuse, especially by youth, when it comes to spoken dialogues.

When I put this question to musicians, one response that musicians offered was that they sang in Garifuna and liked Garifuna songs because they were Garifuna. However, composers could just as easily write and produce songs in Spanish, English, or the Creoles from Belize and Jamaica that are frequently incorporated into speech. In fact, Garifuna musicians do occasionally write songs in these other languages, but their popularity cannot match that of the songs they pen in Garifuna, nor do the actions around these songs inspire the kind of singing I witnessed. In other words, the explanation that Garinagu reflexively sing in Garifuna intentionally excludes the moments in which they add other languages into their music, and it also fails to explain the

public's enthusiasm for Garifuna lyrics in song while its popularity as a spoken language is waning among the youngest generation.

As I interrogated further, musicians continued to naturalize the connection between being Garinagu and writing in Garifuna, yet they also discussed using the language in song as a choice citing their desire to inspire interest in the language. While Garinagu do partake in singing these songs, it is not given that such music would be popular, nor does the mere fact of writing in Garifuna necessarily entail that those who do not typically speak in Garifuna will sing the lyrics. Youth and other listeners could just as easily decide that the music is unrelatable, for example, if they do understand the lyrics, or they might associate using Garifuna with older generations and view it as outdated. In sum, simply writing in Garifuna does not guarantee that the Garifuna public will listen to, learn, or appreciate songs in that medium. What made this "work"? And why *wouldn't* these songs be as popular if they were in any other language?

I believe the reason for this has to do with an association between sung language and truth that exists below the level of awareness of speakers. Group participation in Garifuna scripted songs is notably different from singing other genres of music and in other languages because they enable interlocutors to collaboratively share experiences in a way that speech, even in Garifuna, cannot. As Rony Figueroa, a Livingstonian expert on Garifuna music, told me during a telephone interview, "If you want someone to listen to you, don't say it. Put it in a song." Again, this is because songs, unlike spoken language, convey genuine emotion and truthful accounts. Yet, returning to Cayetano's statement above, this does not extend to all genres of music. Rather, *Garifuna* music, which must be sung *in Garifuna,* is the music *and language* indexical of genuine sentiment and truth.

This ideology about singing in Garifuna depicts spoken language as a poor medium of truth, which is not unlike what Joel Robbins describes in his account of the Urapmin in Papua New Guinea. In this case, promises made or statements given in spoken word were viewed by Urapmin as undependable, whereas prayer was the site for truth telling (2001). Similarly, Garinagu generally put little stock into what one says in passing conversation, but when something is sung in Garifuna, the story or message is deemed to convey truth and worth listening to. In this way, the language of the Garifuna soul is also "truer" than other languages for Garinagu in its sung form.

This idea that, as one informant explained, "songs don't lie," may stem from practices of ritual singing described above. The stories that ancestors share in song are historical and experiential accounts that epitomize the truths of Garifuna experience and constitute the core of their identity. Because these are delivered exclusively in Garifuna, the language itself is implicitly realized as the language through which truths about Garifuna experience should pass. In other words, the fact that ritual songs convey divine truths about Garifuna personhood and can only be authored in Garifuna has created an ideology wherein this language self-evidently (Du Bois 1986) represents the truth and emotionality. In other words, these young men are creating music in Garifuna because it is deemed the language through which *specifically Garifuna* truths and experiences should pass.

This social fact about sung Garifuna is utilized in a nuanced manner by these young men as they brilliantly employ it to capture a contemporary Garifuna experience. At a time when many younger Garinagu feel disconnected with their elders, as I discussed in Chapter 3, this creative incorporation of Garifuna into songs with popular regional styles (i.e., Jamaican Dancehall) is a means of engaging a new generation of Garinagu in their language and heritage.

Conclusion

Much of the latest scholarship by linguistic anthropologists on language revitalization has discussed cultural incongruities between those undergoing loss and others creating maintenance programs (Kazakevich 2011; Nevins 2013; Perley 2011; Shaul 2014) or disjunctures created in the attempt to utilize "traditional" models of intergenerational learning (Meek 2010). Despite these insights, Sheena Shah and Matthias Brinzinger, scholars in applied linguistics, nonetheless claim that "When natural intergenerational language transmission in the home domain is interrupted, language teaching [in schools] remains the only way to pass on ancestral languages to younger generations" (2018).

In contrast to Shah and Brinzinger, I suggest that the kind of secular joint singing I witnessed in Livingston is a vital area of Garifuna communicative competence that may be a valuable resource for language revitalization because of its pervasiveness even among youth. While "outside" regional and United States-style rhythms embellish or shift Garifuna beats of popular music into new forms, Garinagu consistently insist that their lyrics must be in Garifuna, and Garinagu listeners sing these lyrics with a fervor not present when singing songs written in Spanish. Even as virtually all other musical elements in popular music incorporate other musical styles (i.e., Garifuna instruments and rhythms are not mandatory), language should remain Garifuna in order to "make" the song Garifuna. This insistence upon Garifuna language use in popular songs boosts the linguistic capital (Bourdieu 1977) of the language and allows it to become a resource for revitalization in this particular register as a collaboratively sung form.

As Schwartz and Dobrin aptly note "speaking per se need not be the only criterion for assessing the value of language preservation activities" (Schwartz and Dobrin 2016:117). Singing is not a form through which revitalization is typically imagined. I suggest that, because

this particular practice of language is widespread throughout the Garifuna Nation, and is a growing means through which Garinagu foster *Garifunadüaü* among one another, it is an ideal site through which to explore new tactics of language preservation. An act such as singing is, in this case, equally as vital for authenticating identities, strengthening relationships, and demonstrating value for particular cultural features tied to language.

Finally, collective performances of popular songs demonstrate another fascinating manner in which ancestors maintain presence and influence in the "modern" world. The effects of singing popular music together *in Garifuna* categorize songs as a means of promoting values and ways of being that are modeled by ancestor spirits and they are necessary for interactions with them. The fact that Garinagu insist upon singing in this language and pair it with an ability to convey genuine sentiment and truthful accounts sets Garifuna distinctly apart from other widely spoken, "cool" regional languages. In this way, the Garifuna language remains the "true" language-e of the Garifuna soul, and song a conduit for connecting those souls and mending differences.

~ 6 ~

Conclusion

So how are Garinagu in Livingston experiencing language loss? In this dissertation, I have attempted to show that language loss is being experienced as a rupture in familial bonds that is felt by all generations, including the dead. It is experienced as a shift away from ancestral values that harmonize kin and the cosmos—*Garifunadüaü* values. And Garinagu, even young Garinagu, are eagerly attempting to address language loss.

By examining the practices and conceptions of that Garinagu have about kinship with one another, it is clear that a biological explanation of lineage cannot account for the emotional intersubjectivity that draws kin together; nor does it explain the configuration of language and memories that exist ontologically within bodily substances such as blood and bones as I described in Chapters 2 and 4. I have claimed that ancestors, their voices, and the language that they speak play a central role in sustaining kinship bonds that, while biological, are not given as stable through time without maintenance. In particular, Garinagu may become "lost" to family and to Garifuna peoplehood.

I have aimed to show that that the Garifuna language, as a biological substance infused with experiences and sentiments of ancestors, provides access to relationships between the living and the dead. As the medium through which particular kinds of knowledge is carried, it is also a conduit of personhood as both elders and deceased ancestors inform living descendants about their lives in the past.

The current social geography of language in Livingston (i.e. the dominance of Spanish in classrooms and relationships between those aged twenty and younger) combines with ideologies of respect in a manner that poses challenges to an approach to language revitalization that

imagines linguistic transmission as something exclusively gained as elders "pass on" language to youth. Rather, the silence that younger interlocutors must show to elder speakers, and the hesitancy to perform without practice may be creatively approached by stepping outside of "traditional" notions of language revitalization that map learning onto classrooms and between particular generations of speakers.

In Livingston, contemporary Garifuna music and what I have identified as a speech register of group singing are rich resources that may benefit language revitalization on a larger scale. Not only is this genre of song available to all generations as a means of "practice," but the values and ideology of *Garifunadüaü* course through the act of group singing. This is because, different though the content may be from ritual song performances, collective singing of contemporary music nonetheless achieves an intersubjective emotional understanding that plays to a common life experience as Garinagu in a "modern" Garifuna Nation. Moreover, by mirroring the process of "etching" experience onto others, it mirrors the process of achieving intersubjectivity that is imperative for the success of rituals for ancestors.

In the following sections, I speak more specifically to each of these themes, summarizing my points, and discussing the conclusions and contributions of this work.

Kinship beyond Biology

My research interrogates the spiritual, linguistic, and physical manifestations of Garifuna kinship in a way that engages with and builds from anthropological theory about kinship. Research on Garifuna kinship has largely been concerned with household arrangements and the effects of ritual (re)unification with deceased kin. Scholars examining the first of these often discussed labor, migration, and the social effects of matrifocal household arrangements (Gonzales 1969, 1988; Helms 1981). Those discussing the latter category have explored shifts in

consciousness that have altered who Garinagu identify as ancestors (Johnson 2007), practices of kinship across transnational space (England 2006), how values are reinforced via music and ancestor spirit possession (Greene 1998; Foster 1986), and gendered responsibilities to living and deceased kin (Kerns 1983; Gargallo 2005).

In these studies, kinship itself has been discussed from a biological perspective in terms of lineal, affinal, and consanguineal kin. As I have pointed out, while Garinagu do explain kinship through the idiom of blood, this substance alone cannot clarify practices of kinship in which the spirit and the language are salient features. These social, spiritual, and linguistic aspects of kinship are important given the insight about research on kinship that anthropology began to acquire in the 1960s. This decade began period of reflective transition in kinship studies in which scholars challenged a Euro-American assumption that all kinship was a biological result of procreation (Schneider 1984; Yanagisako and Collier 1987). Scholars have expanded this insight to show how kinship may be conceived apart from biology, or configured in ways that imagine biology as one of many defining characteristics of kinship (Carsten 1995; McKinnon 1991; Weston 1991; Thomas, Malik, and Wellman 2017). Scholars have demonstrated through ethnographic study that kinship may result from social practices rather than biology so that kinship may be created through care, and may even shift in configuration (Bodenhorn 2000); and they also can be derived from practices of feeding (Carsten 1995) or even working land (Bamford 2009). As scholars addressed the presupposition that kinship was ultimately a biological affair, they also began interrogating how understandings of the divine influenced practices of kinship (Delaney 1986). They recognized that kinship may be constructed in spiritual domains rather than achieved exclusively through material, biological substances

(Cannell 2013; Wellman 2017), and provided solid research showing that kinship could also be manifested in the organization of houses (McKinnon 1991; Traube 1987).

As I discuss in Chapter 2, "The Rumbling of Bones: Ancestors and Language at the Core of Garifuna Being," Garifuna kinship integrates the biological in combination with the spiritual and the linguistic. Kinship is, on one hand, imagined as a series of bonds conferred through sexual reproduction. Biological offspring are said to contain Garifuna blood, and this is so even if one parent is not Garifuna. Having Garifuna blood identifies a person as being the offspring of one or two biological parents who are Garifuna. But, there are properties that blood possesses as naturalized characteristics, such as physical strength, resilience, and energy. Blood is not simply substance, it is also a formative part of personhood.

Bones, in addition to blood, impart connections to ancestor spirits and provide access to their lived experiences. As Rose Wellman observes in her study of Muslim kinship in Fars-Abad, Iran, "kinship can be actively imbued with immaterial, sacred, and moral properties to bind people together or set them apart" (Wellman 2017:188). In this vein, Garifuna substances like bones and blood house the residual experiences of one's ancestors. The material of the body is a source of sacred connections to spirits of the dead. The blood and bones of the living contain the stories and emotions of one's biological predecessors and are, from this perspective, both contemporary and "ancient." But they also connect spirits of the living whose actions can have physical repercussions for another kin member. The spiritual and biological are therefore entangled.

The ancestral voices that reside within the body as a result of biologically derived blood ties speak exclusively in Garifuna, and they are essential to recognize and "hear" in order to know and claim oneself as Garifuna. As Roy Cayetano eloquently illustrates, they "rumble"

within the bones of the living. The Garifuna language continues to be the language of all Garifuna spirits, living or dead. This point was strongly made by informants and concurred with the moments in which I heard the dead speak. On these occasions, Garinagu spirits spoke only Garifuna, regardless of the language that they spoke in life.

Because the Garifuna language is imagined as a language of the spirit, woven into the living body via ancestral voices that it houses, I suggest that this is why adults and elders frequently judge language loss to be a choice that results from a disinterest in the person that one irrefutably is. In this light, non-speakers are often described as "lost" to Garinagu, or ashamed of their heritage. This is because if language is imagined as attached corporeally and spiritually through biological descent, not speaking it can only be seen as a choice.

Language and Kinship

While the Garifuna language is integrated into the body and spirit, Garinagu nonetheless fear that it can be lost. They explained the implications of language loss in two major ways. From one perspective, losing Garifuna would mean a loss of identity in that one could not be a Garifuna person without the language. The sentiment expressed by the *abuelitas* in the 2015 workshop supports such logic. To their minds, anyone who is a Garifuna descendant will speak it given that Garifuna "blood" entails the capacity to speak the Garifuna language. Another point of view was that, without the language, Garinagu would be living a lie—their identity, self-understanding, and very life would be "unnatural" because the person they undeniably are in both body and spirit is Garifuna and longs to speak that language. It would be as if they were hidden from themselves. In other words, language loss can be equated to becoming less Garifuna (or, according to some informants, not Garifuna at all), and it can entail existing in a somewhat anomalous state. This reality challenges Abram de Swaan's argument that people can remain

members of their group if the language ceases to be spoken, or, as he states, "You can perfectly well be Breton without Breton, Irish without Gaelic, Jewish without Yiddish, Frisian without Frisian, and Catholic without Latin" (de Swaan 2004:573). This may be possible for those who identify with the groups he mentioned, but this logic is certainly disputable when applied to Garinagu.

These conclusions resonate with Rose Wellman's kinship research among Iranian Muslims. Her findings challenged partitions commonly separating ideas of "natural" blood kinship and "fictive" relations of spiritual kinship. Ideas about blood and the spirit were inseparable for her hosts. Kinship was reckoned through both bodily substance (i.e., blood) and, as she writes, "sacred qualities between the bodies and souls of kin. It is thus both material and spiritual. It is configured, moreover, through ongoing pious and ritual acts […] necessitated by what are often changing and problematic relations between family members, spurred by moral decay in and beyond the home" (Wellman 2017:188). Kinship relations were created and maintained by processes of sanctification. These discoveries led her to calls for "a rethinking of the presumed oppositions between 'natural' kinship and 'spiritual kinship' as well as between spirit and matter" (Wellman 2017:188).

Similarly, Garifuna blood cannot be considered apart from language or spirituality. As spirits of Garifuna ancestors reside within the body via lineal blood, the "natural" and "spiritual" are integrated. For Garinagu, speaking Garifuna is one of the "ongoing and pious acts" that keep connectedness with deceased kin relevant and "alive," while communicative competency (Hymes 1972) as both listener and speaker are key to mending current disjunctures (Meek 2010) being experienced between generations of living kin.

Intergenerational Language Practices and Ideologies

The intergenerational approach to language revitalization in Livingston, which I discussed in Chapter 3, is influenced by these ideas of substance and language. Ongoing efforts to revitalize language illustrated that, within the home, the directional flow of language from elder to younger speakers was seen as a key to language preservation. However, the conventions of speaking and listening must convey respect and authority. Observing how language is employed in these and other intergenerational relationships suggested that the information carried through language is important to sustaining kinship. Just as the experiences, sentiments, and voices of deceased kin are imagined to reside within the physical body via biological descent, knowledge imparted by elders in the form of personal recollections should expand the young listeners' self-understanding as Garinagu. The stories of the elderly are being gifted to youth as intangible heritage, but they are only accessible in Garifuna. This is true not only within the home and at revitalization events, but in ritual settings wherein ancestor spirits impart knowledge exclusively in Garifuna.

I argue that the transmission of these recollections conveyed in Garifuna constitute a social process through which Garifuna personhood[120] is acquired. One dimension of kinship flows, bloodlike, in stories that are passed on only in the Garifuna language. As elders give these stories to youth, listeners' "inherit" Garifuna sensibilities. I claim that when youth speak Garifuna in return, this acknowledges receiving the wisdom that elders have given while demonstrating pride in being of Garifuna lineage. The sensibilities that one acquires by listening to these accounts are inheritance that is earned by virtue of biological Garifuna descent, but accessible only through the language of that descent—Garifuna.

[120] Recall that Joseph Palacio links personhood to Garifuna kinship in the sense that all Garifuna people share the same ancestors from St. Vincent (2001).

In this way, coming into the fullness of being Garifuna entails the ability to access what is biologically given through parentage, and this requires linguistic competency in addition to cultivated relationships with elder and deceased kin. This transmission of intangible heritage belonging to Garinagu is understood as a process that transpires within the home, seen as residential spaces and the ritual space of the *dabuyaba.* Based upon the concerns of elders, it is unclear that this kind of interaction can or will become conducted in Spanish in the future.

Yet, speech is not equally distributed between interlocutors of different generations. Rather, silence is an important aspect of these relationships. Garinagu observe silence in a manner similar to several other Amerindian language speakers (Basso 1979, 1996; Philips 2001; Scollon and Scollon 1981). Among these groups, silence signals a situation of learning and is a means of demonstrating respect. As Barbara Meek observes, "Among [Kaska] people, respect should be shown through silence and listening, *edēhts'egi* ('listen'), especially in interactions between children and adults. To educate children accordingly, elders and parents often reminisced about their own childhood experiences as illustration" (Meek 2007:31-32).

As knowledge passes from elder to younger generations of Garinagu, listeners must maintain respectful silences that identify them as learners or risk tarnishing the authority of elder speakers. As a communicative practice, the younger Garifuna listener should remain silent unless invited to speak and should refrain from asking questions. The silence indexes deference to the speaker and allows them to remain in control of the conversation. In this way, elders may elect the topic and share select information. This silence is particularly salient when communicating with an ancestor spirit.

In many ways, the Garifuna world is being continuously crafted, imagined, and redirected by the voices of the dead. *Gubida* (the family dead) are empowered to do this by virtue of their

kinship relationship with the living. Specifically, because they are identified as lineal kin and because of their status as deceased elders, their words are weighted and merit the ultimate level of respect and attention. This is not unlike other Amerindian groups in which the form and flow of talk changes based upon kinship relations between interlocutors. As Keith Basso described in *Wisdom Sits in Places,* only older matrilineal Apache kin had the authority to instruct or advise another person (1996:64). In other words, for the Western Apache, direction and guidance should come from within a kinship network and along a specific line of descent. Similarly, Garifuna advice and instruction also has its proper place within the community. In this case, both matrilineal and patrilineal deceased kin are positioned as those from whom to seek and receive guidance. Whereas, in Basso's account, wisdom and guidance is acquired by careful considering and internalizing the stories of a general body of Western Apache ancestors, Garinagu are directed by specific, identifiable kin who may be maternal, paternal, or extremely "distant" ancestors from ST. Vincent. Unlike the Western Apache ancestors whose stories remain for the living to memorize, internalize, and learn from, Garinagu ancestors speak to the living—an ability awarded by their position as elder, deceased kin.

Interest in Language among Younger Generations

Although adults expressed an overwhelming concern that youth were disinterested in the Garifuna language, several factors need to be taken into account. For Garinagu, interest in learning is demonstrated through actions, not speech. To adults and elders, Garifuna youth are less visible participants in acts associated with Garifuna culture and identity, such as fishing or dressing in traditional clothing, and this signals to them a lack of interest in and value of everything that these acts represent. Language is included as an action in which one chooses to participate. However, it is also true that, like the children Philips observed in Warm Springs

(Philips 2001), Garinagu tend to learn best through practice among peers and they display skill when it has been refined. Given that the stakes for speaking "*puro"* Garifuna include being implicitly "less" Garifuna, reluctance to speak is understandable particularly given that most people under twenty in Livingston speak Spanish with one another and are not fully competent in Garifuna.

Further, I propose that children and young adults are not necessarily disinterested in Garifuna culture or language. In fact, I believe this may be a misperception. In a community that highly values personal autonomy (also see Kerns 1983:75-88), the decision of the young women to attend the 2015 workshop directly speaks to their interest in the language and culture. Similarly, the dozens of both boys and girls that participated in the previous workshop with elders were also stating their interest by appearing there. And while the social world of youth appears to elders to lack connection to the culture with which they identify, the language is emerging in new settings and contexts among young people in Livingston who do appear to be extremely interested in participating in Garifuna culture, albeit in different ways.

I considered this point in Chapter 4, "Separation and Unity Reconfigured: An Emergent Change in Form of the Garifuna *Veluria*." In this chapter, I identified two genres of rituals for the dead that are held in relation to the stage of the spirit's journey in the afterlife and that vary in levels of agency that the spirit of the dead has in organizing and participating in rituals in the living world. Rituals like the *veluria* and *novenario* transpire within days of a person's death. Mourning family are surrounded by friends, food, and festivities while the dead is sent away. Years after death, *dügü* and *chugú* rituals may occur, and the spirit is momentarily drawn back into the living community on this occasion. I pointed out that spirits (reportedly) cannot talk to the living immediately following death, whereas they commonly speak during these later rituals.

Similarly, they are (supposedly) unable to assist in the organization of the first set of rituals following death, while they play a central role in ritual organization for the *dügü* and the *chugú*. In the latter rituals, they express needs to the living through dreams, speak in spirit possession through ritual specialists during the organizational period, and return during the ritual in spirit possession.

At the *veluria* I attended in 2015, the spirit of the recently dead returned and spoke to the living who wanted to make sure that she had everything she needed. This incident is extraordinary in that the spirit spoke to the living, who then learned whether the event was to her liking. This ability for the recently dead to speak had not been deemed possible, and indeed, Garinagu with whom I spoke afterward insisted that this could not have transpired. Yet, what I witnessed and the explanation that I was given by those who made contact with the spirit all spoke to the accuracy of my observation. The spirit of the recently dead spoke to her descendant at her own *veluria*.

As my older informants explained, the *veluria* has changed drastically over the years and, to them, it has lost some of its definitive features. That night, the majority of attendees at the *veluria* were young adults, playing cards, drinking, and there to both celebrate the dead and comfort friends through their presence. It is true that the form of this *veluria* is unlike those of decades past, but young adults were nonetheless there and participating in this part of their culture. They remain interested in maintaining this ritual, different as it may appear. Young adults, in particular, are also grappling with tenets of spirituality and trying to find their footing as Garinagu in a contemporary Livingston. I claim that the appearance of the spirit in this new and unlikely context and the positive reception of the spirit by youth demonstrate that this contemporary world is not causing a decline in religion. Rather, young people are eager to

engage in Garifuna spiritual practices and these are taking on new forms, adapting to the current sociocultural landscape.

Finally, this occurrence also shows a new moment for language to be heard. As the spirit of the recently dead spoke Garifuna to and through the group of young men huddled there in the room, she broke the mold of possibilities. If this kind of possession begins to occur consistently, given the frequency with which *velurias* are held, it will provide exponentially more opportunities for young adults to hear Garifuna from the dead. As forces of moral authority and guidance, it will be important to follow how newly dead spirits may progress in interacting with the living and what their repercussions might be on kinship and language.

Young Garinagu in Livingston, in addition to playing a central role in facilitating communication with an ancestor spirit at the *veluria,* are guiding the helm of an exploding Garifuna music scene both locally and throughout the Garifuna Nation. The kind of group singing that ensues is a speech register of Garifuna, and a form of communicative competence that allows a platform of peer to peer practice on a level that intergenerational conversations cannot provide. While singing popular songs may appear to be a secular triviality, a closer examination of this practice shows that this activity is reproducing two highly important models of learning. As Garinagu of all ages sing lyrics together, they are recounting the story of another person. This shows that they have listened well and mirrors the model of transmitting knowledge through personal recollections of experience, but without an age-based hierarchical direction of speech. Singing the experiences of another also achieves a kind of emotional *communitas* similar to that experienced in rituals for the dead. As lyrics are repeatedly sung, they become "etched" into the person.

Concluding Remarks

In sum, as the Garifuna language flows through the mouths of those, living and dead, in Livingston, it creates a culturally particular soundscape grounded in ideals of *Garifunadüaü* and kinship. Researchers attempting to support speakers involved in revitalizing their languages must consider the social practices through with language exists and the ideologies attributed to language (Himmelman 2008). In the Garifuna case, silences may appear to non-Garinagu to pose challenges to the ability of youth to practice speech, but these are countered by the possibility of practice through music. This does not address the frustrations expressed about the perceived gap between generations of Garinagu, or the fear that youth will not speak the language (as opposed to singing it).

Garinagu both young and old remain fiercely determined to come up with and enact a successful plan to revitalize language. On this front, much has already begun. In the diaspora, people like Rony and Cheryl Figueroa run the Garifuna American Heritage Foundation United, which provides outreach to Garinagu and education on language, music, and other elements of culture for the diaspora population. In addition, Rony Figueroa promotes Garifuna music by interviewing artists and playing new and classic Garifuna tracks as DJ Labuga.[121] In addition to founding the Garifuna Museum of Los Angeles,[122] Ruben Reyes, a Honduran Garifuna activist, has published the first online trilingual Garifuna-Spanish-English dictionary[123] and assisted in directing a film that directly addresses the struggle over Garifuna language loss in Honduras—*Garifuna in Peril*. Within the diaspora, there are countless more examples of activists promoting Garifuna cultural and linguistic education that are especially designed for communities of

[121] For more on his show, see following link: https://www.facebook.com/gmatwithdjlabuga/
[122] For information about the museum, see following link: https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Museum/Garifuna-Museum-of-Los-Angeles-195466460494888/
[123] To access this dictionary, see following link: http://www.garifunainstitute.com/

Garifuna Americans. Garinagu from Central America frequently present information as guest speakers or artists through these organizations.

In Central American communities, there are also encouraging examples of efforts to revitalize language. In Honduras, several towns have school programs in Garifuna (including Tornabé and El Triunfo de la Cruz).[124] There is also a productive organization of teachers who collaborate on learning materials as well as a grassroots activist group, the Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras (OFRANEH),[125] who work to protect rights of Garinagu in Honduras, including access to education in their language. Within Guatemala, Garinagu are still struggling to access resources to fund and teach Garifuna classes in schools in a manner that represents Guatemalan Garifuna people. Nonetheless, Garifuna language teachers are increasingly present in schools.

Of course, language learning cannot be exclusively relegated to classrooms, but must be socially integrated into sacred and everyday spaces. As long as ancestors continue to be a vital part of the Garifuna world and remain integrated into the beings of the living, I believe it is unavoidable that Garinagu who engage in these relationships will emphasize the need for language. In terms of practice, breaking silence requires a platform for peers to talk a language they don't necessarily know. Music gives them an opportunity to start doing this. Possession in a *veluria* also provides additional contact with ancestors in a context where the events have changed drastically—it places the emphasis back on the dead and on language. If we look at the activities of youth as a collective and collaborative peer group, we can see that they are in fact weaving Garifuna language into new areas of social life. This nonetheless does not negate the

[124] Several of these receive funding from Ruben Reyes who has also contributed to building and organizing these Honduran language programs.
[125] For more on OFRANEH, see following link: http://ofraneh.org/ofraneh/index.html

observation that language loss is a serious issue in the community, and in most Garifuna communities. However, it does give us some insight in to emerging dimensions of language that could be creatively integrated into ideas on language planning.

While I believe music is an extremely hopeful avenue for language revitalization and should be considered when thinking through language maintenance, it is unrealistic to imagine that, even with the motivation of Garifuna people and the popularity of Garifuna music, those undergoing loss will have the resources they need to facilitate and create programs to renew language (Dobrin 2008). This is particularly true of those in Central America facing immense challenges beyond language maintenance, including land seizures, national recognition, employment, and even basic human rights. Garinagu do not necessarily have the financial or organizational means to undertake language revitalization planning in the manner they see fit. To this end, the role of non-Garifuna linguists and linguistic anthropologists must be supportive of local efforts and work collaboratively with communities. However, as this research shows, a diversity of experience exists among Garifuna communities, and this impacts experiences of language loss, the resources available to Garinagu, and the ways in which revitalization is being approached. To this end, I believe that a creative approach is needed that takes these factors into account and considers local ideologies and communicative practices.

There is immense hope and promise for language revitalization in Livingston and within the Garifuna Nation. For non-Garifuna scholars, progress in this area will require careful consideration of the ways that language is involved in practices of kinship. It will also entail creative exploration in collaboration with Garinagu of where Garifuna *is* thriving in Garifuna communities in order to plan, in partnership, ways to re-enliven language.

APPENDIX

Selection of Garifuna songs from:

Cayetano, Roy. 2018. "Song and Ritual as s Key to Understanding Garifuna Personality, In *The Garifuna Music Reader*. Oliver Greene ed., p.47-69. San Diego: Cognella, Inc.

1. The following relates an experience of a mother who has just lost her daughter. Cayetano (2018:62) translates the following into English and uses this as an example of how songs may convey a strong "sense of ***personal loss and the feeling of grief***" (2018:52, emphasis in original).

   It has been played on the radio,
   It has been announced on my behalf;
   I have drunk my own tears.
   "Go, Death," is what you should have told him, little sister,
   "I won't go with you" is what you should have told him.
   I have drunk my own tears
   "No, Death," is what you should have told him, little sister,
   "I won't go with you," is what you should have told him.
   That day was sad.
   "No, Death," etc.
   So misery is like this!
   So death is like this!
   I have drunk my own tears.
   Go, Death, etc.

2. According to Cayetano (2018:65), the following song expresses the idea that one should be able to rely on their relatives in times of need because they have a moral obligation to support and aid one another, and not doing so has profound emotional and physical consequences. As he states:

   "In addition to the theme of *méteñu* (being bereft of one's parents), we get the idea that no matter what the rest of the world says about you, no matter how much you are slandered or how much *lamíselu* (troubles and misfortune of all sorts) rains on you, you can always turn to these people for comfort. In Song 12, the singer, whose house has just been burnt down, fails to find this comfort and relief in her brother's house. Instead, it is her friend who does what she had a right to expect from her relatives. Hence the imaginary television in which she says, "***I have seen my friend here to be my relative."***

   This song has also been translated into English by Cayetano.

   I am going to tie my hammock on my friend's back;
   My friend to be my swinger, to be my relative.
   My friend has opened her door to me.
   My burden has become heavy, I can't carry it anymore;
   But I won't get angry about it.
   I am in a television,
   I am seeing a relative,
   I have seen my friend here to be my relative.

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