

REVIEW

Maximo G. Martinez, *Sojourners in the Capital of the World: Garifuna Immigrants*

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Sojourners in the Capital of the World: Garifuna Immigrants is a monograph personal to the author, Maximo Martinez, and all the better because of it. His Preface outlines his positioning as a Garifuna man growing up in the ethnically diverse Bronx in the late 1970s and 80s, whilst in the Introduction, he provides a background to the Garifuna people – a people rooted in both Indigenous (Amerindian) and African-Caribbean heritage. Chapter 1 provides an overview of Garifuna history; from their ethnogenesis in the Caribbean Island of St Vincent (then named Yurumein), through British and French colonialism, their wars for sovereignty over that homeland, to their exile to Central America at the hands of the British, and their post-exile life there. Little of this history is new, but the focus on Garifuna culture in the form of foodways, music, folktales, language and spiritual traditions shifts the narrative from a focus on the Garifuna past to their present, emphasising their survival and the preservations of their lifeways. As Martinez notes, ‘the history of the Garifuna on the island of St Vincent serves as the foundation for an understanding of the Garifuna community’ (p. 40). Martinez’s focus is on the Garifuna in the Bronx, but it serves to underline the background to all Garifuna globally, and provides a solid foundation for the remaining chapters, which explore the dynamism of their lifeways as a people in diaspora.

Chapter 2 shifts to exploring the Garifuna communities in Central America. Martinez notes how ‘the challenges and discrimination they experienced ... [in the various coastal communities where they settled] led to their unity’ as a people (p. 41). The author provides an overview of informal village governance of the Garifuna communities established in Guatemala, Honduras and British Honduras, and of how each village had a local Roman Catholic saint as its representative in annual festivals. The chapter touches on land ownership and banana growing as a cash crop, and the growth of agro-exporters and wage labour dependency: as such, the prevalent social and economic situations meant some Garifuna prospered whilst others could not. He notes the difficulties the Garifuna faced as an ethnic minority, but how acts such as establishing a Garifuna Settlement Day,

and creating a distinct Garifuna flag, have helped with local and international recognition.

Chapter 3 focuses on the early days of the Garifuna in New York, and how the newly settled Garifuna managed in a country and city still affected by Jim Crow discrimination; they established Garifuna organisations and associations, and celebrated annual events and functions. This chapter draws heavily on ethnographic material providing fascinating information about, and images of material culture important to, the heritage of the Garifuna New York community today, and is a real strength of the monograph. The main 'take home' from this chapter is the vitality of the early Garifuna New Yorkers, and how, regardless of their nationality, it was their Garifuna ethnicity that helped them thrive in a period known for its racial tensions.

Chapter 4 shifts the reader into the 1970–80s: a time when the Garifuna were 'integrated into their New York City communities' (p. 75) and when cultural awareness highlighted 'Garifuna cultural pride, music, and identity' (p. 75). Alongside Garifuna music, it explores social and sports clubs, the foundation of scholarships and development societies, the Garifuna Catholic Church, and the growth of hometown associations: associations that link New York Garifuna with communities in Honduras in particular but also in Belize and Guatemala. Importantly, the role of women is explored in several sections of this chapter.

Chapters 5–7 focus on the 1990s onwards. Chapter 5 again draws heavily on ethnography to outline contemporary Garifuna culture in the form of folkloric performance, soccer and festival parades, whilst raising the subject of community debates around origins and ethnic classifications. Chapter 6 focuses on Garifuna social issues in New York City and how these are managed, including touching on Garifuna civic engagement more widely. Examining a range of social issues, the chapter examines how umbrella organisations are used to address social problems and civic engagement, as well as preserve and promote Garifuna culture and identity. Chapter 7 returns to Central America and how the Garifuna in New York are supporting those in their home countries, notably with territorial and human rights issues, and helping to preserve Garifuna culture (which in 2001 was listed by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity). The importance of homeland connections extends to St Vincent (Yurumein) and reinvigorating the Garifuna communities that are distributed around the island. These last three chapters cement the importance of retaining Garifuna lifeways globally and as such include gender (several sections note the importance of women), with the Conclusion offering Martinez's thoughts on how colonialism has contributed to the 'social norms that impede the Garifuna's comprehensive community development' (p. 184).

This is a fantastic book for anyone interested in the Garifuna people with key events and significant community figures noted, but with enough ethnographic data to make the work of interest to students and scholars of diasporic communities more generally. However, there are a few issues. It is a shame there is not more on women in the book as the Garifuna are historically a matriarchal people, and whilst some significant women are mentioned, the role of women in ritual and community development is somewhat marginalised; for instance, it was a Belizean Garifuna woman who founded the Garifuna Heritage Foundation in St Vincent.

Also, it is not until p. 28 that it is explained that the people referred to as the 'Black Carib' are the Garifuna, and there is no recognition that those once termed 'Red' or 'Yellow Carib' are today known as the Kalinago. Additionally, the term 'slave/slaves' is used unproblematically throughout without acknowledging the issues around this designation. Whilst there are debates around the use of the term 'slave' rather than 'enslaved' (see James R. Burns, "“Slaves” and “Slave Owners” or “Enslaved People” and “Enslavers”?", *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* (2023)), a nod to the linguistic problematics of the chosen terminology would have been helpful. This is particularly so, given that Martinez enters into the debate on reparations (pp. 4–5), yet fails to acknowledge that historic community leaders, notably Chief Duvalle (p. 32), had enslaved people working on his Yurumein plantation. Nevertheless, this is an important contribution to scholarship about the Garifuna people. With its emphasis on the more recent past (largely 1990s onwards) and by drawing on interviews and aspects of material culture, Martinez provides a detailed exploration of contemporary Garifuna-ness, that acknowledges the past but is future-focused.