

Today, for them
Revitalization is key
Interestingly, Garifuna has been
Stripped of its black history

And yes,
In countries everywhere,
Despite skin being solely color,
And true colors being within
Black was and still is
Victimized,
Stolen,
Beaten,
Used, then thrown out
Out of legislation
Out of housing
Out of the human race
Out of places and spaces we built
Contained
On the outskirts of societies
Maybe contained on the Coast

In Nicaragua
Discrimination strides long
Racism runs deep
And colorism sprints so fast that
People don't even think to stop it

In Nicaragua,
I expected different reactions to black
The skin some Nicas live in,
Is of deeper tones than mine
But I can't seem to find
Comfort
Safety
Shields from discrimination
From stares
From the dissatisfaction with blackness
Brownness
Our blackness and brownness
Which all blend among the array of
Caramels, cinnamons and chocolate crèmes

Despite my minds recycled thoughts
It is still unsatisfactory
For both the Garifuna and me

Today, for them
Comfort exists only at home
Home on the coast
Home, labeled the poorest of Nicaragua
Home, where many months of money
Is still insufficient for a 30 minute panga
Home, where fingers point
And mouths reference and criticize,
But feet never go.

For the Garifuna,
Comfort or acceptance aren't always in
Pearl Lagoon
Because Creole is a pinch of black
And Garifuna is black, black
And colorism doesn't seem to
Miss the opportunity to divide
Comfort or acceptance aren't always in
Blue Fields
Where the kind and color of black you are
Determines your liberty and power
Mestizo
Creole
Garifuna
The ladder will repeatedly smother
The most brilliant of blacks
And push them back
And only to
Garifuna
Because there's only acceptance there

Today, partly thanks to them
Revitalization is key
Culture is in danger
And it falls on the Garifuna
To save themselves
Despite societies failures
To see their true colors

Reflection on Project

I loved the coast. When I visited Orinoco, I couldn't help but hear and learn the history of the culture as well as many of the reasons that the people believe their culture started to wither away. People talked about their language being forbidden by the government and about color division making it hard for them to have confidence in their languages and in themselves. I relate to the Orinoco story as a black woman in America. I believe that as a black woman, there are pressures to change, conform and mold oneself to fit into an "acceptable" image of a woman. I see that many black women alter their hair, skin, bodies and ultimately strive to own things that are non-essential and solely serve to achieve a certain image. I believe that in efforts to achieve a certain image, women lose themselves and cease to appreciate things about them that are unique.

Like people in Orinoco, at times, I have felt cast out and under valued. An American idea it to "pick oneself up by one's bootstraps." But how can this be done when one doesn't have boots, let alone bootstraps? Sometimes it seems as if Black Americans and people in Orinoco are at societal disadvantages, that are generated by the governments we support, salute and serve. This poem is a compilation of my initial thoughts and feelings about colorism. This was a hard task to do because I wanted to peel back and evaluate the many layers of racism and colorism, but there just isn't enough time.

I chose the background photo for a few significant reasons. These steps are remnants of a house in Marshall Point, a community 30 minutes by foot from Orinoco. The house is gone because the land started to erode and the steps are what is left of the house. I thought about the steps as Garifuna culture. And after things began to change, like the land the house used to be on, it is time to rebuild somewhere else—like revitalizing the Garifuna culture. Nonetheless, the steps remain and they are unmovable—a lot like Garifuna culture surviving long after its culture was oppressed and unrecognized and uncredited. I learned a lot from the Garifuna and I am grateful for my experience in Orinoco among the Garifuna people.