

Explanation and Context for the Performance of the Song “Tighter”

Proyecto Artístico de la Costa Caribe

Throughout our time on the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua, one of the most prominent topics discussed by community leaders, youth, and residents of the region were the lack of economic opportunities on the island, and the resulting lack of infrastructure and essential resources, especially medical services. Yet, in spite of this, or perhaps because of it, many of the communities were exceptionally tight-knit and supportive of one another. Especially in Orinoco, it was impossible to distinguish between family ties and neighborly kindness, as several large extended families populated the island, living alongside one another.

In Orinoco’s context, where situations of desperate need were juxtaposed with intra-communal solidarity, I was not especially surprised to find country music was among the most popular genres of music in the community. There were even several remixes of country music over reggaón beats. Country music comes out of a tradition of the South and Midwestern United States’ working class and poor, and reflects the themes of such an experience, including simple lifestyles, facing tragedies with grace, love and love lost. As I listened to the history of both the town, and the personal narratives of some of Orinoco’s woman residents, it became clear that these themes easily transferred across cultures.

With this realization, I decided to write and perform a country song. The lyrics are either direct quotes or abridgments of ideas taken from three experiences I had while in Orinoco: an interview with Miss Elma, the Orinoco midwife who described her experience of having to deliver a dead baby, Miss Jeri, who had to travel to Managua to receive physical therapy after part of her face was paralyzed by a tumor, and Professor Gonzalez of the Orinoco secondary school, who spoke about the impact of migration on the community and the “brain drain” phenomenon that is taking Orinoco’s brightest young students to populate English speaking call

centers in Managua. In spite of the community's struggles, each of them found a reason to have hope in Orinoco; for Jeri and Elma, this hope emanated from a deep trust in God, and standing by others in their time of need. This spirit of togetherness, and growing "Tighter", acts as both the title of my piece, and its performance will feature tight harmonies from others in our group. The song is in English to reflect the language those in Orinoco spoke when speaking about their personal stories. Listed are the complete lyrics.

Another night, the boat didn't come in time
Mama sitting quiet with the midwife
Baby came out blue, blue, blue
There was nothing anyone could do

But praise God we'll make it through

Chorus:

'Cuz there's nothing here for us in this old town
Only ones who stick around just can't get out
With everyone leaving and dying
We just hold onto each other tighter

Seven hour ride, can't afford the flight
Paralyzing tumor growing in her side
Must have been the luck she was born into
'Cuz this is how heaven took her mama too

But praise God we'll make it through

Chorus x2:

'Cuz there's nothing here for us in this old town
Only ones who stick around just can't get out
With everyone leaving and dying
We just hold onto each other tighter

With everyone leaving and dying
We just hold onto each other tighter