

LEADERS WHO ADVOCATED FOR THE 19TH NOVEMBER

By I Myrtle Palacio

Although Thomas V. Ramos has been solely credited as the leader who advocated for the 19th November Garifuna Settlement Day in the southern communities of Belize, two other leaders were part of the advocacy movement. They are **C. J. Benguche** and **Mateo Avaloy**. Attached is a copy of the RESOLUTION and a letter to the Commissioner on the topic and signed by the three leaders. I secured this and other pieces from the Belize Archives Department located in Belmopan. C. J. Benguche continued to write in the Newspapers at the time and competed in local and national elections. He represented the National Party in the first election after adult suffrage in 1954 when he lost to Nathaniel Cacho of the PUP—GWU coalition.

The RESOLUTION is as follows:

“RESOLUTION

Whereas in their search for liberty and security, our forefathers in the year of Our Lord one thousand eight hundred and twenty three migrated to British Honduras a British possession on the mainland of Central America in the Western Hemisphere and according to tradition, settled the town of Stann Creek, and whereas at a public meeting held at the said town of Stann Creek on the 17th day of November one thousand nine hundred and forty one, it was unanimously agreed that the anniversary of the said settlement be commemorated.

Be it resolved: that in recognition of and gratitude for the contribution made by the Caribs in the settlement of this part of the Colony of British Honduras, commemoration be held on the nineteenth day of November in each year, and that a copy of the Resolution be recorded in a special manner and preserved for the benefit of our prosperity.

*On behalf of the people of Stann Creek
Stann Creek, November 19th 1941*

*Thomas V. Ramos
Mateo Avaloy
C. J. Benguche”*

Attached is a copy of the letter to the Commissioner and the Resolution, both signed by Thomas V. Ramos, Mateo Avaloy and C. J. Avaloy. The source is the Belize Archives Department in Belmopan.

19th, November, 1941

The District Commissioner,

Sir,

On this day we commemorate the settlement of the Town of Stann Creek by our forebears in the nineteenth century.

One hundred and eighteen years ago, disgusted with the tyrannical rule of the Honduranean Indians after acquiring their independence from Spain, they came to these shores in search of liberty and security.

It is indeed an extraordinary co-incidence that those against whom they fought a protracted war for what they regarded as intrusion in their island homes in the Lesser Antilles — and who, after conquering them, deported them to Ruatan one of the Bay Islands — extended them a hand and offered them the facility to settle Stann Creek.

The Caribs, one of the most skilful seafarers in the world, are and possessing as they do this maritime ability, it is not to be wondered at, that they were the principal pioneers in the settlements of the Atlantic coast of Spanish Honduras and that of this Colony extending from Stann Creek to Barranco near the Southern frontier.

In recognition of and gratitude for this contribution in the settlement of Stann Creek, the Caribs at a Public Meeting held on the seventeenth day of November held one thousand nine hundred and forty one adopted a Resolution — copy of which we attach for transmission to His Excellency the Governor for the information of the Right Honourable the Secretary of State for the Colonies to commemorate this event on the nineteenth day of November in each year; on this day one hundred and eighteen years ago, according to tradition, the pioneers landed on these shores. We respectfully solicit that you be good enough as to recommend to the Governor-in-Council that this day be declared a Public Holiday at Stann Creek.

We express our unwavering loyalty to His Majesty the King and our gratitude for the liberty and security of life and property we had enjoyed and are enjoying under the British flag.

We are, Sir,

Your obedient Servants,

THOMAS V. RAMOS

MATEO AVALOY

C. S. BENGUCHE

On behalf of the Carib Race Stann Creek

RESOLUTION

Whereas in their search for Liberty and Security our forefathers in the year of Our Lord one thousand eight hundred and twenty three immigrated to British Honduras a British possession on the mainland of Central America in the Western Hemisphere and, according to tradition, settled the Town of Stann Creek and Whereas at a Public Meeting held at the said Town of Stann Creek on the seventeenth day of November one thousand nine hundred and forty one it was unanimously agreed that the anniversary of such settlement be commemorated.

Be it Resolved: that in recognition of and gratitude for the contribution made by the CARIBS in the settlement of this part of the Colony of British Honduras commemoration be held on the nineteenth day of November in each year and that a copy of the Resolution be recorded in a special manner and preserved for the benefit of our posterity.

on behalf people of Stann Creek
Stann Creek, Nov. 17th 1941.

THOMAS V. RAMOS,
MATEO AVALOY,
C. J. BENGUCHE