

# Dangriga BZ or USA?: Out-migration experiences of a Garifuna community in post-independent Belize

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## Introduction

### Scope

Studies on ethnicity and migration on the Garifuna have been conducted by two scholars, J. Palacio (1992) and N. Gonzalez (1986). While Palacio has primarily investigated the attempts of self-improvement of the Garifuna people in Los Angeles, Gonzalez has studied the rebirth of the Garifuna in New York. In both cases, the point of departure was the "idealized" viewpoint of the Garifuna as rural people. This study shows that within seven generations, the Garifuna are now urban people, having emigrated permanently from their rural coastal communities to inner city America. To embrace "American" cultural traits, they have discarded traditional Garifuna cultural traits.

The "*lisurnia*" or temporary phase in emigration (J. Palacio 1982) was a transition to the now permanent or "settler" phase (Gmelch, 1992). The focus to the U.S. was fortuitous. But the choice to remain in the U.S. is primarily due to ease of assimilation by the last two generations. This is a viewpoint in self-improvement they espoused while in Dangriga awaiting the leaving process. Two new perspectives to the area of ethnicity and migration emerged in this study, namely, the deportees, and trans-nationalists. While both concepts are brought on by the need for social interventions, the former is legally enforced, while the other is by choice.

This study impacts on social policy and therefore contributes to the field of urban studies in the areas of Social/Policy Planning; but also to urban anthropology in the areas of ethnicity and migration. It leads to several other research questions that need to be answered in a young small developing country. Who are the new Belizeans in America and the new Americans in Belize? What is the social effect of trans-nationalism and deporteeism. These have direct bearing for identity both national and ethnic; and indirect effect on nation building, as it begs the question of people's contribution, that only future research through similar pilot studies can elucidate.

## **Of Ethnicity and Geography**

Some 20 years ago, on September 21, 1981, Belize attained political independence from Great Britain. Boasting a population of 242,042 (Census 2000), the country is geographically divided into six districts, each with its own municipality. Belize is a nation of migrants, for reasons of its history, but more so due to its location. It is strategically positioned in the circum-Caribbean/Central American regions. With proximity to the United States, it was only a matter of time before access prompted out-migration.

Belize is multi-ethnic and each group has distinct symbols for purposes of self-identification — dance, language, beliefs, dress, etc. Since the 1900s, Belize had formed a clear geographic map of ethnicity resembling a checkered regionalism, as one ethnic group predominates in each district. The Mestizos, who represent 48.7% of the population, are predominant in the northern and western districts; the Creole, 24.9%, in the Belize district; the combined Mayan groups, 10.6% in the northern and Toledo districts; and the Garifuna, 6.1%, in the southern districts, particularly, the Stann Creek District (Census 2000).

Located in the Stann Creek District, Dangriga is the area of study for this paper. With a population of 8,814 (Census 2000), Dangriga is one of the smaller towns in Belize. It is home to three industries, namely, citrus, bananas, and shrimp farming—all major foreign exchange earners. Labour (93%) is imported from Central America, so the direct trickle-down effect from these industries, in form of salaries, is not felt at the local level (Moberg, 1996). As a result Dangriga is more notorious in Belizean circles in relation to its people, as the "home of culture" or the "culture capital", than as a foreign exchange earner. At the same time, the culture produced by Dangriga has yet to be equated with economic development (M. Palacio, 1993).

The Garifuna, the predominant group at 70.3% (Census, 1991) in Dangriga, is also the people whose lived experiences are being recounted in this paper. Historically, the Garifuna were Carib Indians from South America, who met and mated with run-away slaves from Barbados on the Island of St. Vincent. The offspring of such procreation were labelled Black Caribs (Gonzalez, 1988). In 1975 the term Garifuna gained currency and legitimacy and replaced the Anglo expression, "Carib". Initiated by a group of Garifuna intellectuals in Belize, "Garifuna" is a way of expressing identity in a people's own language. The legitimization process has since extended to all Garifuna communities in Belize, the Atlantic coast and now to St. Vincent (M. Palacio, 1995).

## **Migration History**

One emigration and two immigration periods have altered the demography of Belize. After the Caste War of Yucatan (1840), the population doubled to 30,000 (Bolland, 1981) when the Yucatecan Maya, the Spaniards, and the Mestizos from Mexico, found refuge in northern Belize. During the Central America conflicts, 1980s to 1990s, some 30,000 primarily Guatemalans crossed the borders to Belize, also seeking refuge, and swelling the population of foreign born to 25% of total population (J. Palacio, 1993). On the other hand the period 1960s to 1980s saw an

outpouring of Belize's Creole population to the United States. Young, in her article (1990: 116) has documented this number as approximately 60,000.

In 1797 the British expelled the Garifuna from their homeland of St. Vincent in the Eastern Caribbean, and abandoned them on Trujillo, Honduras. By 1802 they had started to settle along the Atlantic and Caribbean coasts, including Belize. The mass movement of Garifuna people from Honduras to Belize occurred in 1832. This migration was triggered by the defeat of conservative Spanish forces that the Garifuna had supported in their bid to regain possession of Honduras (Gonzalez, 1988). In Belize, they met the British who restricted their movements to the uninhabited south and to remote mahogany camps, as much needed labourers (Bolland, 1981).

During the late 1800s and early 1900s, there was tremendous ease of movement between Garifuna people of Dangriga, Livingston in Guatemala and Trujillo in Honduras. The primary reason was to search out wage earning and trading prospects; but also for reasons of culture-to participate in burials, births and the ancestral *dugu* ceremony (Foster, 1986). This was facilitated by the skilled boatmanship of the men, as well as the accessibility to the types of crafts necessary to cross the channels. In the early 1900s, large numbers of Garifuna men moved to Puerto Barrios, Guatemala, for brief periods to find employment in the banana industry, using their knowledge of English to secure clerical jobs. Later some went further away as merchant marines, as contract labor to Panama, Great Britain, and as stowaways to the United States. This was the prelude to further outward movement of the Garifuna people.

## Methodology

### Definitions, Delimitations and Objectives

For purposes of this paper the term out-migration or emigration is used interchangeably, and applied to those whose intent was to make a livelihood away from the original home community; whether within the country or outside of the country's borders. This has no bearing on legality of immigrant status and/or legality of entry into the receiving country. Time-line is not consequential, just the intent. For example, someone utilizing a visa specifically to attend school would not be considered an emigrant. Similarly, one who works while on a six-months non-immigrant visa is considered an emigrant.

*lisurnia* is a Garifuna expression, which denotes "a place where one goes to find a job" (Palacio, 1982: i). First introduced in the scholarly work of Dr. Joseph Palacio in 1982, it is a term that is now gaining currency in the literature on the Garifuna. The concept is that one leaves the community to find oneself (*badairagoun boungua*), to "work", but will return to "build". It is deemed as provisional, no matter the length of stay. Those going to *lisurnia* are considered as emigrating in this paper.

Returnees are those who voluntarily return to "build" and make Dangriga their retirement home. It does not refer to those who are still coming and going

intermittently, even though they may own property in Dangriga. Deportees are those Returnees who have been forcibly stripped of all US immigrant status by the INS, following successful prosecution for illegal wrong doings.

There are two principal delimitations. Firstly, the analysis was evaluated from the perspective of the respondents, and did not generalize for the Garifuna population of Dangriga or Belize. Though appropriate for qualitative research, the sample was not randomly selected. Secondly, owing to the dynamism of ethnicity and the nature of qualitative research, an exact replica of this study may not be possible.

The primary objectives are: to look at the extent and patterns of emigration; to determine its effects on the family grouping and the community; to quantify the actual emigration as told by the respondents.

## **Sample**

The research is on one of the largest Garifuna family groupings from Dangriga. Therefore the sample frame is this family grouping. Although Dangriga is the home base, other offspring are to be found in the US; within Belize; and in Central America. For five years, some 923 family members were documented, of which 327 were Respondents in this study. The resultant genealogy chart spans seven generations, and 165 birth years, ranging from 1835 (Generation 1) to 2000 (Generation 7).

This is a case study of the descendants of Toribio Velasquez (Generation 1), who was born in Dangriga around 1835, some three years after the mass migration of the Garifuna to Belize. He and his wife Venancia were blessed with 9 children (Generation 2), 6 males and 3 females, whose birth dates range from 1859 to 1872. I have randomly selected four of the 9 siblings in Generation 2, as separate case studies, and will narrate their experiences with respect to the topic. Toribia and Venancia represent the first generation, and their children, the nine siblings represent the second generation, and so on. The numbering systems utilized for Cases and Siblings have no bearing on the order of the Siblings' birth.

## **Research Strategies**

Studies that quantify migration have largely utilized data from census reports and immigration files. Challenges affected by such are possible under or overstatement of information, resulting from untimely, outdated and incomplete source documents. In the case of Belize, with its open borders, it is difficult to quantify such a dynamic activity as migration. Although some data is quantified, this study utilizes the qualitative research method, and therefore imparts the respondents' own stories on their lived experiences with emigration.

Two research strategies in qualitative research methods, field and focus group studies, were utilized. Data collection techniques included participant observation, in-

depth interviews through narrative analysis, and environmental scans. Environmental scanning is quick observation of the physical — the houses, the street, attire, etc. Each Respondent, in a snowball sampling approach, recommended other Respondents until the objective was achieved. From the stories collected, a genealogy chart was constructed showing seven generations of one family grouping.

Culture speaks itself through an individual's story, and the interpretive theory in narrative analysis through in-depth inquiry facilitates the eliciting of stories from Respondents. In-depth interviews were conducted wherever Respondents were found — face-to-face, by phone, by e-mail — within Belize, and outside of Belize. This mix of settings also proved ideal for conducting environmental scans. Triangulation was accomplished through further interviews/discussions, and oftentimes through secondary research.

As the sample frame is also my paternal family grouping, this study takes the perspectives of the Feminist Standpoint theory. Feminist scholars theorize that the researcher's presence facilitates the shaping of knowledge, and therefore empowers research on one's "own". One main advantage is that as an insider I did not have entry problems; and more importantly, no social distance. The immediate benefit is that as the researcher and the situated knower, I am intimately knowledgeable of the nuances in the culture, and can help to enrich findings (Smith, 1987; Collins, 1990).

## Research findings

### Secondary Research

#### The Statistical Reality

A comparison of three Census periods 1980, 1991 and 2000 shows a steady decline of the Garifuna population in the Stann Creek District, as illustrated in the profile below (*Abstract of Statistics, 1999; Census Report 2000*):

Year	%Garifuna Population
1980	45.4%
1991	36.2%
2000	31.0%

In the ten-year period 1980 to 1991 the increase countrywide in actual numbers was approximately 1,000—very small indeed. Similarly, their presence as a percent of the population has also declined from 7% to 6.6% to 6.1%, between 1980 and 2000 census periods respectively.

During three census periods 1970, 1980 and 1991, Dangriga's population declined by 4.2% and 3.4%, as demonstrated in the next profile (*Abstract of Statistics, 1999*).

Census Year	Dangriga	Rural
1970	6,939	13,023
1980	6,661	14,181
1991	6,441	18,085
2000	8,814	15,734

Dangriga is the only urban community to show a decline. At the same time the rural population increased immensely, which would logically lead one to conclude that the urban population migrated to the rural areas. However, this paper argues that this is not the reason. Also J. Palacio (1993) demonstrated that the influx of Central Americans to Belize, during the period 1980 to 1990, was to rural Belize as cheap labour in the agricultural industry. Stann Creek is one such agricultural district (Medina, 1997; Moberg, 1996).

The 2000 Census Report shows a remarkable population increase to both Dangriga (36.7%) and rural Stann Creek (35.2%). For Dangriga, the absolute increase is 2,373 persons. While natural increase is one reason for such an unusual gargantuan increase in 30 years; there are other factors, but are beyond the objectives of this paper. However, I conducted an environmental scan of seven enumeration districts (EDs) identified as sources for the increase. Six of the seven are relatively new residential areas, and have contributed to 87.9% (2,080) of the total increase abovementioned. From discussions with residents and leaders in these areas, I have established that a large number of the residents are new Belizeans from Central America, who are both Hispanic and Garifuna.

## **Case 1 — Son #1**

Son #1 (Generation 2) was born in 1859 and made a living from fishing in Dangriga as well as trading to Honduras. He married a migrant from Honduras, and the union produced one daughter (Generation 3), in 1883. His daughter had three daughters (Generation 4) of her own, whose birth dates range from 1911 to 1921. One of these daughters migrated to Honduras as a young girl and spent most of her working years away. She returned home to Dangriga when her spouse passed away, bringing along one child. At her untimely death, her child was legally adopted by the third daughter. The second daughter joined the nunnery in 1946 and migrated to New Orleans, Louisiana where she is currently residing.

The third daughter migrated to the U.S. in 1956 to join her spouse, who left eight years before as a merchant marine. He first landed in New Orleans, but moved to New York in search of better wages and standard of living. On leaving Dangriga, she left behind two daughters with relatives. They were not to see them until eight years later when it was affordable for their daughters to join them. While her husband worked the assembly lines, she worked as a housemaid. Together they saved enough money, and later purchased their first eight-unit apartment complex. These were quickly rented to relatives as they arrived to the US. Both retired to Dangriga in 1980 after over 25 years in New York. Her spouse opened a "club", which he managed until the time of his death in 1990. Their two daughters (Generation 5) and their families remained in the US.

The children (Generation 6) of Generation 5 became first generation Americans as early as 1964. Both siblings of Generation 5 died and were buried in the U.S. Besides short visits for educational purposes, this Generation along with Generations 6 and 7 has not returned to Dangriga. Generation 4 is now bedridden. While alluding to preference in cultural environment, she has opted to remain in the care of extended family members in Dangriga, rather than join her grand and great grand children in the US.

**Table 1**  
**Migration Pattern — Case #1**

<b>Generation #</b>	<b>Members</b>	<b>No. Leaving</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Returnee</b>	<b>DOB</b>
2	1	1	1 Honduras	1 Honduras	1859
3	1	0	0	0	1883
4	3	3	1 Honduras, 2 US	1 Honduras, 1 US	1911 - 1921
5	4	4	2 Honduras, 2 US	1 US	1935 - 1939
6	8	7	7 US	0	1959 - 1970
7	4	4	4 US	0	1985 - 2000
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>4 Honduras, 15 US</b>	<b>2 Honduras, 2 US</b>	

Table 1 illustrates the high number and percentage of emigrants, some 90.5%, with 78.3% of these to the US. Travel to Honduras for cultural and for trading in goods is prevalent with earlier generations only. These also went to *lisurnia* as they returned as soon as the goal of building a decent house was achieved. Emigration to the US started with Generation 4 (Table 1) as early as 1945, some 56 years ago. The rate of Returnees was extremely high (100%) with Generations 2 to 4, while the last two generations have remained away entirely. This is the only family unit to have left so completely.

## **Case 2 — Son #2**

With 229 members (Table 2), this is the largest family unit of the Velasquez family grouping. Born in Belize in 1864, Son #2 (Generation 2) lived in Honduras where he met his wife. They both moved to Dangriga, and he continued trading to Honduras to

supplement the income from his small farm business. The story is that it was illegal trading in tobacco, which realized quite an astronomical price in Belize. He had six children (Generation 3), whose birth dates range from 1884 to 1906 — two with his wife and four with two other unions. Of the six siblings in Generation 3, four migrated first to Honduras, then to Guatemala. Their spouses and children (Generation 4) remained in Dangriga, while the Siblings made frequent visits. The primary reason for making Dangriga the home base was to ensure an "English" education for their children. To supplement the husbands' incomes, the spouses cultivated root crops, while caring for their children.

**Table 2**  
**Emigration Pattern — Son #2**

<b>Generation</b>	<b>Members</b>	<b>No. Leaving</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Returnees</b>	<b>DOB</b>
2	1	1	1 Honduras	1 Honduras	1864
3	6	4	4 Honduras	4 Honduras	1884 – 1906
4	17	16	3 Honduras, 5 Guatemala 1 UK, 6 US, 1 Panama	1 Honduras, 2 US 1 Guatemala, 1 UK	1912 – 1945
5	51	42	32 US, 10 Guatemala	0	1937 – 1985
6	105	90	77 US, 13 Guatemala	2 US	1958 – 1973
7	49	35	31 US, 4 Guatemala	0	1988 – 2000
<b>Total</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>8 Honduras, 32 Guatemala</b> <b>1 Panama, 146 US, 1 UK</b>	<b>12</b>	

Table 2 reveals that Generation 4 produced seventeen offspring, and as the generations before, nearly all left Dangriga to seek their fortunes. This included seven females who followed spouses to Guatemala and Honduras. The movement of the other nine were as follows:



- 1 - to London around 1950, eventually earned a law degree and later practiced law in Belize
- 1 - to Panama around 1938, and was never heard of or from
- 2 - to Honduras and Guatemala, and still live there
- 5 - to the US via Guatemala as merchant marines in the 1940's

But unlike the generations before, less than one-third (31%) returned home to Dangriga or even Belize (Table 2). This pattern continued to the final three generations, who now consist of first, and second generation American Born. The only two Returnees with these three generations are two deportees from Generation 6 (Table 2). Both served prison time, one for drug charges in Los Angeles, the other for armed robbery in New York; and were deported by INS at different times about three years ago. They are supported financially by parents back in the US, and live in homes owned by grandparents who are also away. As a result, they have no "need" to seek employment. However, they have become a threat to the public good, as they continue with their deviant behaviours, causing much disruption in the Dangriga community.

Almost one-half of those who went to Guatemala from Generations 5 and 6 eventually immigrated to the US. About ten persons for these generations became first generation Americans as early as 1970 to 1974. However, most are Belizean born who joined their parents much later. They received primary and secondary school level education in Dangriga; with about twelve reaching the Sixth Form level. As encountered by J. Palacio (1992), some of these children joined their parents as legal immigrants, others went as non-immigrants and stayed, while others travelled "through the back". This is a term used in the 80s and 90s for those entering the US illegally by road via Mexico.

On the other hand, fifteen American Born from Generations 6 and 7 were sent back to Dangriga, for reasons of Garifuna acculturation and discipline, as well as to receive a "proper" education. Besides the presence of these children, the interest to "build" in Dangriga as the previous generations is absent. Visits are rare, and only for emergency or cultural reasons-to participate in Dugu ancestral ceremonies (Foster, 1986). Although 72% of Generation 5 own homes or "build" in Dangriga, most seem to be reluctant to return home. Citing medical services and proximity to family as their reasons, one rationale may also be that most members of this generation were invited to the "States" by their children, and not the other way around as in Case 1. They were baby-sitters in Dangriga and continue to perform similar duties for their children in the US, and are not as independent.

### **Case 3 — Daughter #1**

Daughter #1 (Generation 2) was born in Dangriga around 1875. She lived in Honduras for a short period as housewife to her spouse at the time. She had six children (Generation 3) with three different unions, including a set of twins who were born in Guatemala. Two worked in Guatemala with the United Fruit Company for twenty years until their "liquidation" as clerks. Their home base remained in Dangriga and would visit regularly. On their return, one invested in a trucking business, while the other went into fishing, owning several dories. In those days this

was perceived as quite a feat and outstandingly successful. Table 3 below demonstrates some emigration patterns for this family unit.

**Table 3**  
**Emigration Pattern — Daughter #1**

<b>Generation</b>	<b>Members</b>	<b>No. Leaving</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Returnees</b>	<b>DOB</b>
2	1	1	1 Guatemala	1 Guatemala	1872
3	6	2	2 Guatemala	2 Guatemala	1896 – 1912
4	20	12	2 Honduras, 10 US	2 US	1918 – 1944
5	34	27	4 Honduras, 23 US	0	1942 – 1971
6	74	63	4 Honduras, 59 US	0	1970 – 1986
7	12	8	8 US	0	1996 - 2000
<b>Total</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>3 Guatemala</b> <b>10 Honduras, 100 US</b>	<b>5</b>	

Altogether, those from Generation 4, (Table 3), produced twenty children. Of these twelve migrated-ten to the US, and two initially to Honduras. Two, along with their spouses, have retired to Dangriga after over 25 years in California. Emigration to the US started a little later, around early 1960's. But the attraction for five family members was via Guatemala, from where they worked on shipping lines as labourers and chefs, travelling "all over the world" before settling down in the US. Six of the ten who migrated to the US were teachers of long standing in Belize. Five continued teaching abroad, four in Catholic parochial schools in Los Angeles. One received a master's degree and worked in a white-collar position. This generation, and for this family unit, more than the others, placed emphasis on education for their children (Generation 5), and most have attained university level education. As a result, they have moved from the teaching and assembly line work of their parents, and can be found as computer technicians in the Silicon Valley, to Wall Street as financial technocrats.

Although some members of Generation 5 are American Born, others remained in Dangriga for some time with relatives before joining parents abroad. Their entrance

into the US is similar as that for Case #2 — legal entries as non-immigrants and permanent residents, and others illegally, "through the back". None of Generations 5, 6 and 7 has returned except on short visits. Their interest in "building" is through their parents and/or grandparents who continue to reside in Dangriga. The parents purchase properties utilizing monies sent by their children. Also none of Generations 6 and 7 has been sent to Dangriga to be acculturated. However, two of those who remained in Belize have sent their children to relatives in Los Angeles and New York to "cool off" from the law. Subsequently, two from Generation 7 were sent Dangriga to "cool off" from gangs and the law. Such trans-nationalism is widespread in this family unit. Similarly, three from Generation 6 and one from Generation 7 are non-immigrants living in Dangriga, and are raising their American Born children there. The new trend is to go to relatives during the last trimester of pregnancy, for the sole purpose of giving birth in the US.

## Case 4 — Daughter #2

Born in 1867, Daughter #2 (Generation 2) did not migrate, but married twice to Belizeans. She had six children (Generation 3), who were born between 1886 and 1907 (Table 4). One child died as a youth, and of the remaining five, three worked in Guatemala as clerks with the United Fruit Company. Upon "liquidation", each built a substantial home, which was usually the aim. One of the three had moved his family to Belize City prior to leaving for Guatemala, and improved on his home from time to time. Moving to Belize City in 1940 was very unusual, as the City was not "home" to the Garifuna. His son (Generation 4) attended high school in Belize City, (1943-1947), entered the Public Service as a clerk in 1949, and was later promoted to a senior position. In 1958, he (Generation 4) received a masters degree from University in the U.K., and in 1966, was recruited to work in the U.S. by an international organization. He has opted to retire in the US. Generation 3 had a second son (Generation 4) in another union. This son, a retired schoolteacher has remained, but five out of his seven children have since immigrated to New York.

**Table 4**

### Emigration Pattern — Daughter #2

Generation	Members	No. Leaving	Location	Returnees	DOB
2	1	0	0	0	1867
3	6	3	3 Guatemala	3 Guatemala	1886 – 1907
4	8	7	1 Guatemala, 6US	1 Guatemala, 1 UK	1918 – 1942

5	30	27	2 Guatemala, 25 US	0	1936 – 1979
6	32	30	3 Guatemala, 27 US	0	1956 – 1996
7	6	6	6 US	0	1977 - 2000
<b>Total</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>9 Guatemala, 64 US</b>	<b>5</b>	

As is the situation with Case 3, Generations 5 through 7 are lost to the US (Table 4). While all who migrated from Generation 3 returned, less than one-half returned from Generation 4 (Table 4). This family unit, along with that of Case #1, demonstrates the highest percentage of emigration to the US (87.7%). About eleven members of Generations 5 and 6 have been sent back for Garifuna acculturation and education, with five attaining Sixth Form level education before returning to the US. Transnationalism is also pervasive, as there is a lot of visiting back and forth between the US and Belize. The reasons range from medical attention both in Dangriga and the US, for cultural reasons in Dangriga, and to give birth in the US.

I am one of the three persons from Generation 5 who did not emigrate. Along with my nuclear family, I have stayed in North America for educational purposes only. Although we don't live in Dangriga, we visit frequently. My four siblings and their families live in the US and have no intentions of returning to Dangriga or Belize. They have successfully acculturated to the North American lifestyle, with a blend of their version of what is Garifuna. All four are married to Americans, and enjoy an upper middle class standard of living.

## Where forth Garifuna?

### In The Beginning

Emigration was prevalent to Central America for the first two generations (Generations 2 and 3). Cultural, affinal and economic ties were also maintained with Central America until the attraction to the U.S. commenced around the late 1950's. The men in Cases 1 and 2 were the first to venture, usually working their way as merchant marines or stowaways to several U.S. ports. Once settled, these initiators paved the way for others to follow. A few became entrepreneurs, purchasing apartment buildings. They formed cohesive, supportive and interdependent communities within inner city America, primarily Los Angeles and Brooklyn. Initially, they socialized mostly among themselves, but with the arrival of newcomers, the network gradually widened.

The average residence abroad was 15.25 years. Those to Honduras either visited or are visited by family members at least once every two years; while for those to the U.S., meeting with families took an average of 6 years. However, the rate of returning back to Dangriga was 100% (Tables 1 - 4). Notwithstanding, the length of stay, the emigration pattern for Generations 2 and 3 whether to Central America and/or the U.S. was certainly temporary. One startling similarity with the West Indians in Gmelch's study is this perception of the temporary stay abroad. Termed by J. Palacio (1982) as *lisurnia* for the Garifuna and "sojourners for the West Indians by Gmelch (1992), the connotation is that emigrating is transitory and not "settling".

**Table 5**

**Emigration Pattern — Velasquez Family Grouping**

<b>Siblings</b>	<b>Members</b>	<b>Residence US</b>	<b>Residence Other</b>	<b>Returnee US</b>	<b>Returnee Other</b>	<b>Born US</b>	<b>Born Other</b>	<b>% Emigration</b>
1	21	4	3 Honduras	3	1 Honduras	8	0	90.5
2	229	94	1 Panama 31 Guatemala 2 Honduras	4	6 Honduras 1 Guatemala 1 UK	48	0	82.1
3	147	59	3 Guatemala 10 Honduras	2	3 Guatemala	36	0	76.9
4	83	46	1 Guatemala	*2	3 Guatemala	19	1 WI 1 UK	87.95
5	74	11	1 UK	3	1 Guatemala	14	0	40.5
6	103	28	0	*3	0	19	0	48.5
7	69	9	0	1	0	11	0	30.4
8	71	18	1 Guatemala	4	1 Guatemala	17	0	57.7
9	126	39	0	5	0	20	0	50.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>923</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>*27</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>64.89</b>

\* 3 Deportees — 2 Siblings 4, and 1 Sibling 6

Table 5 demonstrates the overall emigration pattern for the family units of each of the nine Siblings. Out of a total of 923 persons in the Velasquez family grouping, approximately two-thirds (599), or 64.89% have left. Emigration by this group was highest to the US at 87.9% (527), with 11.5% (69) to Central America. Only 3 persons went to other countries — 2 to the UK and 1 to Panama. Included in this figure is 32.4% (194) who are Foreign Born, most (192) of whom are American Born. The rate of emigration ranges from 30.4% with Sibling 7 to 90.5% with Sibling 1. These same Sibling units also represent the extremes in the percent of Foreign Born, at 5.8% (least) and 42.9% (most) respectively. Two other statistical inferences on emigration from Table 5 are:

- Returnees — 7.35% (44) of all emigrants returned, including 3 Deportees  
Rate of returnees from Central America higher (32.1%) than from the US (8.8%)
- Foreign Born — American Born as a percent of Foreign Born is 98.96%  
Does not include those born to non-immigrants living in Dangriga

## From *lisurnians* To Settlers — The Permanent Move

Table 6 illustrates the emigration to the US, including the rate of Returnees for all four case studies, during two periods-1950s to 1970s for Generation 4, and 1980's to present for Generations 6 and 7. The focus towards the U.S. (1950s to 1970s), started with Generation 4 (Table 6), with emigration ranging from 37.5% in Case 2, to 85.7% in Case 4. On the other hand, the rate of Returnees decreased drastically — down from 100% (Generations 2 and 3) to an average of 32.2%; and ranging from 16.7% to 50% (Table 6). Though still to *lisurnia*, it is a shift that has implications for permanence.

**Table 6**

### Emigration to U.S. by Case Study

Case #	Generation 4		Generations 6 and 7	
	1950s To 1970s		1980s To Present	
	% To US	% Returnees	% To US	% Returnees
1	66.7%	50.0%	100%	0
2	37.5%	33.3%	86.4%	1.6%
3	83.3%	16.7%	94.4%	0
4	85.7%	28.6%	91.7%	0

The emigration pattern again changed, starting in the late 70s and early 80s (Table 6). At 93% nearly all have focused on the US, ranging from 86.4% in Case #2 to 100% in Case #1. Of the 219 to the US only 2 representing 1.6% have returned. The predilection is still the U.S., but the inclination is not transitory — not to *lisurnia* — but permanent for several reasons, some of which are:

- a. Successful assimilation of Generations 6 and 7
  - o Intermarriage with Americans
  - o Offspring born in the U.S.
- b. Dangriga does not suffice as a home — no longer needed for baby-sitting
  - o Children join parents
  - o Grandparents join their children
  - o Grandparents visit children in the U.S.
  - o Visits to Dangriga during crisis situations
- c. Successful transfer of cultural traits
  - o The dead are buried abroad instead of at home
  - o "Building" is not in Dangriga but in the U.S.
  - o Some Garifuna *dugu* rites performed in the U.S. — with alterations
  - o Garifuna Priests visit to conduct Mass in the U.S.

The permanence posits a significant phase in the evolution of the Garifuna people in this study. In approximately 300 years of development as a people, we have journeyed from being Carib Indians in South America to Black Caribs at St. Vincent in the eastern Caribbean; survived expulsion to Honduras, Central America; traversed the channels to British Honduras, now Belize, and self-identified as Garifuna; and presently to the United States. J. Palacio (1992) in his study of Garifuna in Los Angeles found that they resided in clusters in south central Los Angeles. They had transferred some symbols of their culture and successfully formed their own colonies within America.

Augmenting the high emigration and no return above are two new but central variables in the permanence of the move. That is the generation of trans-nationalists as well as the "Americans" born to non-immigrants residing in Dangriga. Sending a problem child to "cool off" in America is perceived as upliftment. Similarly, bestowing "American" nationality on a child is tantamount to giving him/her an opportunity for guaranteed upward mobility. It is the continuing journey to self-improvement. The community treats these "American bundles of joy", including those sent back for acculturation, with great deference. American Born in the latter circumstance also signifies economic value.

## **Permanent Emigration — The Whys and Whats**

What has prompted permanent emigration? Generally, this has been identified in the literature as economic. Below are some determinants for emigration as outlined by Pastor (1985: 42):

1. High population and labor force growth rates
2. Social and political strife

3. Development strategies that have failed to generate sufficient employment opportunities
4. Social and economic change unaccompanied by necessary structural and political transformations

The initiators did not leave due to unemployment in the sending country, as those who left were gainfully employed. Rather not having information on the receiving country, they emigrated at great risks. Although "work" was a factor for leaving, their decision to emigrate was more complex. The themes throughout, in all four cases, were "work" and "build", which signify family welfare and self-improvement (J. Palacio, 1992). The Respondents saw the U.S. as providing better opportunities, for five reasons — improvement of living standards, can expand ones horizons, opportunities for self-improvement, ease of acceptance, jobs were readily available. Being highly motivated, disciplined, and English speaking, they were perceived as "different". "Different" also alluded that in the "pecking order", they were favoured over African Americans.

Therefore none of the suggestions offered by Pastor (1985) above can be translated to the circumstance of the Garifuna people. In his study on the lives of West Indian emigrants George Gmelch (1992) also discovered that the economic theory of migration did not apply. Like the Garifuna, Gmelch's group easily assimilated into the U.S. and U.K. way of life, and also found a "competitive edge" over African Americans in the job market (Gmelch, 1992: 264). In his study of Garifuna in Los Angeles, J. Palacio (1992) also discovered that the catalyst for emigration was "self-improvement".

What are the implications for the Garifuna? Firstly, traditional culture is eroded. With Generations 6 and 7, I did not observe "additional pride in their culture" as did J. Palacio (1992: 24) and Gonzalez (1988). While the November 19th celebration served as a rallying point (Macklin, 1986) of sorts, ethnicity is more symbolic and invoked at will. The underlying meanings of rituals are lost, and *Garifunaduo* tended to be overemphasized when convenient. On the other hand, symbols attached to "things" American were more valued, which made it easier to assimilate and identify as Americans. In so doing they may have lost the "difference" that gave previous generations respect in America.

Secondly, there is great inter-generational conflict, an issue that is relatively new to the Garifuna. Generations 6 and 7 had grandiose perceptions of "America" via the "things" they received from parents during the years they waited to emigrate. Also, they had observed the deference with which the American Born is acknowledged. They did not share the philosophy of "building" in Dangriga. For them, self-improvement meant integrating into "things" American, causing much "intergenerational conflict" (J. Palacio, 1992: 24).

Thirdly, there is ease of assimilation. It was not difficult to become absorbed into the American culture because, their stance, while waiting in Dangriga, was already outward. On arrival, they were more selective in their Dangriga associations, and immediately sought out self-improvement, through social institutions, such as, the Army, school, and gangs. As a result, some members moved into the wider U.S. when jobs took them to other States within the U.S. Others, through the Army, visited foreign countries outside the U.S. Yet others fell through the cracks into the hands of neighbourhood gangs.



Lastly, culture of materialism — Through the availability of mortgage, easy credit loans for cars and other consumables, these generations soon discovered that their standard of living had improved at a faster pace than their parents'. There was no need to save to "own", as the culture of materialism stepped in. These opportunities were still not readily available in Dangriga and caused a growing ambivalence about Dangriga.

Assimilationists claim that assimilation increases as a result of urbanization, and as in the case of the Garifuna in Generations 6 and 7 ethnicity became less important without political and economic reasons for maintaining solidarity (Waters, 1990). J. Palacio (1976) cited emigration of leaders as one cause for the existing challenges in the maintenance of Garifuna cultural traits. There are limitations to the practice of culture in the receiving country/community. At the same time, those returning introduce non-Garifuna culture. M. Palacio (1982) also cited emigration for the low population growth, due to assimilation through inter-ethnic mating. Although the above inferences are primarily cultural, it speaks to the Garifuna in this study.

The following is a list of social realities to add to the above-mentioned theses on the cultural dimension:

- Dangriga as an identity is a state of mind and not tied to residence
- Garifuna are now expatriates in the U.S.
- Dangriga (developing community), educating a generation of American citizens (developed community) at taxpayers expense
- Dangriga is host to a new generation of unemployables and drug addicts — the Deportees.
- Garifuna people are trans-nationalists

The social effects, though yet unknown, are worth investigating as these may impact negatively on the common good of the community.

## Conclusion

This study is a microcosm of the Garifuna situation, and possibly other groups in Belize, particularly the Creoles. If so, and I was to generalize, then this study dispels two myths regarding emigration. Firstly, guesstimates are that one in every two persons has migrated to the U.S. This study shows a more pervasive direction, at a rate of two in every three persons. Secondly, the literature on Belizeans emigrating to the U.S., places the Creoles only, as those involved, commencing around the early 60s (Young, 1990). This paper documents that the Garifuna people were just as affected in that:

- Emigration movements to the U.S. was earlier, at 1945 in these cases
- Over half, some 59.98% left in the 50s and 60s

Emigration for the Garifuna intensified during the last two decades and is now permanent. As a people, they have gone "full cycle" in this process to include Deportees in their midst. At the same time the permanent leaving has not yet

peaked as a new generation of American Born is being raised in Dangriga. The cultural implication is a forgone conclusion, first observed by J. Palacio (1993). However, the social challenges outlined have urban policy implications for Belize. Although the overseas link is an important component to the support system in the Dangriga Garifuna household, the opportunity cost to Dangriga is still to be quantified. The choice is U.S. and not Belize. This augurs well for their future as a people.

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