



**GARIFUNA TECHNOLOGY—Mask Making Workshop 2018
I Myrtle Palacio**

PRESENTATION OUTLINE
For Workshop 2018
By: Habinaha Wanaragua Committee
Presenter: I. Myrtle Palacio

SUBJECT: Garifuna Technology

TOPIC: Wanaragua (Johncunu Mask)

OVERVIEW

The mask is a part of the Johncunu dancer's attire. The term comes in many other forms, such as, Junkanoo, Jonkonnu, Jonkanu, Jankunu. The dance is West African in origin deriving from African slaves and is a traditional festival form still practiced in what was the British West Indies—in The Bahamas, Jamaica, St. Kitts & Nevis etc. It is a satirical dance where dancers by the attire including the mask, mock and ridicule the colonial slave masters dancing to a fast tempo. It is alive with the Garifuna people or Garinagu (plural) of the Central American region—Belize, Guatemala, Honduras; as remnants of the African heritage first introduced in St. Vincent. Each country has different styles of dress, dance, music as determined by other cultural and regional influences.

In Belize the dress traditionally included white trousers and jackets with black stockings, and a mask resembling the face of the colonial master. The jacket is draped with ribbons of pink or green reflecting the season, whether Christmas, New Year or Diarey (Dia del Rey) on January 6; and at times also black to show respect for a deceased member. A colourfully decorated headdress with feathers, flowers and mirrors to demonstrate vanity, is placed on the dancer's head, swathed with colourful head ties. It is done by male dancers who jump in various styles to the beat of traditionally two drums, the *secunda* and the *primero*. The dance, dancer and mask are all termed *Wanaragua* in the Garifuna language.

The Garifuna people are of African and Amerindian (Arawak/Carib) descent from the Eastern Caribbean who were exiled by the British from their homeland of St. Vincent in 1792, and forced to land in Roatan Honduras; and from there migrated to Guatemala, Nicaragua, Belize and now North America. The Garifuna people are biologically and culturally indigenous to the Circum-Caribbean sub-region, where Belize is located. Their biological and cultural origins come from the Arawak and Carib peoples, an intermixture which took place in the Eastern Caribbean island of St. Vincent.

In reinforcing the abovementioned information, the Garinagu are described as a group of indigenous people due to their aboriginal origin and being natives of the Caribbean region. Once called Black Caribs until the mid-1970's, when through the advocacy efforts of Garifuna scholars and leaders, the term Garifuna gained currency and was legitimized as a way of expressing identity in place of Black Carib. Black Carib was perceived as the Anglo version, which contradicted with the name people used and continue to use as self-identification. Both

language and people are called Garifuna/Garinagu and the language as well as the *wanaragua* dance are cultural symbols that differentiate the Garifuna people from other ethnic groups.

Today, in post-independent Belize, Garinagu continue to mix with other groups predominantly the Creole in Belize City and Stann Creek District, as well as East Indian and Mayan in the Toledo District. Self-identity is a matter of choice influenced by interethnic mixture and nurturing.

Lastly, why the term “technology”? Technology is science or knowledge put into practical use to solve problems or invent useful tools. There are several other technologies used by the Garifuna people. I learnt this technology, the Wanaragua, first hand at a Cultural Retrieval Workshop in 1989 sponsored and organized by Dr. Joseph Palacio of UWI. I have also used the video of the workshop to fine-tune my presentation. I first presented this topic two years ago in a two-day workshop in Dangriga conducted by elders for about 10 youths, males and females.

METHOD

Needed

Mould: wooden mould in the shape of a face with male caucasian features

Tools: shears, pliers, hammer knife, sharp point or nail, tape measure

Materials: sieve wire; several thumb tacks; 2 strips of cloth for string; paint brushes—2” and artist brushes; turpentine; big/thick needles & thread; 4 colours of oil paint—red, white, blue, black; 2 one inch strips of metal sheeting from discarded cans

Constructing the Mask

1. Place the mould on a flat surface

Preparing Metal Strips

2. Use the shears to cut 2 one-inch-wide metal strips—one the length of the forehead area of the mould and the other the length of the sides and chin
Use the pliers to fold or bend each piece of metal strip into half, so a groove forms in the center

Shaping the Mask

3. Cut a piece of the sieve—same width and length as the mask
4. Place the sieve over the mould and align the length and the width
With 3 fingers of the left hand hold the sieve in place while lightly tapping in a few tacks for reinforcement with the right hand
5. Apply pressure on the sieve to get the contour of the mask from the mould—particularly the nose, eyes and lips
6. Place the metal strip for the sides and the chin and tap to fold and tighten, locking the sieve in place to form the edging for the face

7. Place the second and shorter sieve metal in the same manner on the forehead area
8. Where the 2 strips meet, tap a hole with a nail or sharp pointed tool
9. Cut off the excess strip from each side.
10. Remove the sieve from the mold—it now the beginnings of a mask with the shape of the mould

Painting

11. Mix red and white paint to get pink and with the 2-inch brush, paint the entire; leave to dry
12. With the smaller artist brushes paint the following parts of the face as follows: blue for the iris, white for the eyeballs, black to shape the outline of the eyes, the eyebrows and moustache
13. Leave to dry for a few hours. When completely dry, sew the cloth strips on either side to be used to secure the mask on the head

Sewing of Cloth String

14. Sew in 2 pieces of cloth string on either side of the forehead to be used to secure the mask on the dancer's face.

