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*'No Blacks to the Interior':
Past and Present Racism
Against Afro- Caribbean and their Afro-Costa Rican
Descendants*

Carmen Hutchinson Miller

Research Assistant

Institute for Gender and Development Studies
University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus

Abstract

A significant number of Afro-Caribbean immigrant workers from the Anglo Spanish, and French Caribbean migrated to the Central American country called Costa Rica, to work on the construction of a railroad, 140 years ago (1872). Strained economic conditions in their homelands in the late 19th century was the push factor that forced them out of their homes in search for better opportunities that would improve their own and the lives of the families they left behind. Large numbers of these immigrants were forced to settle in Costa Rica. The unintentional settlement resulted in the biological reproduction of the present Afro-Costa Rican population, who are still not fully accepted within the society. This group of people maintains cultural aspects of the Caribbean immigrant culture, particularly that of Jamaica. This paper will demonstrate from the perspective of history how racism was practiced in Costa Rica from colonial times until the present, using both primary sources, and secondary information found in archival documents, newspaper clippings, interviews, and other publications.

Introduction

The first part of the title of this paper 'No Blacks to the Interior' is a headline taken from an early 20th century newspaper circulated in the province of Limón¹ in which a descendant of Afro-Caribbean immigrants questioned how much a suggestion could be made about their fore-parents brought over 30 years before to contribute to the economic development of that country through their work on the construction of the railroad.

This complaint about discrimination is in contrast with the image constructed internally, and projected internationally of Costa Rica as a paradise. Expressions such as 'Costa Rica no tiene ejército, nuestro ejército son los maestros y los estudiantes',² 'Somos la Suiza centroamericana',³ and 'Costa Rica es el diamante de la America Central, are phrases constantly used in maintaining that image.⁴

Parallel to this constructed image is a second image of a 'white' Costa Rica within which there is embedded the ideology of superiority over other ethnic groups like the indígenas⁵ and Afro-Costa Ricans who are also part of this 'paradise' called Costa Rica. This second image however conflicts with another national discourse 'Somos iguales' (We are equal).

In light of these contradictory images and discourses of progress, equality and ethnic hegemony the main objective of this paper is to provide historical and contemporary evidence of racism in Costa Rica particularly, against Afro-Costa Ricans who are in their majority descendants of Afro-Caribbean 19th century immigrant workers.

¹ The province of Limón where the most important port of the country is located, and the region where late 19th century Caribbean immigrants settled.

The headline can be found in *The Searchlight*, Saturday 22, February, 1930. 4. National Library in Costa Rica. Microfilm.

² 'Costa Rica does not have an Army, our armies are our teachers, and students'.

³ 'We are the Central American Switzerland'.

⁴ 'Costa Rica is the Central American diamond'.

⁵ Descendants of the aboriginal people living in Costa Rica at the time of the Spanish arrival in 1502.

False perception of a ‘white’ Costa Rica

The same is true for post-Independent Costa Rica⁶ which did not escape this racism and the false perception of being ‘white’. The concept of whiteness denoted progress, and industry for early post-Independent Costa Rican leaders. Therefore the early independent Costa Rica needed to ensure, at least at the ideological level, that this new country would be as white as it possibly could.

Post-independence Costa Rica had already internalized the fallacy of “whiteness” from the colonial period by accepting the discourse that as Costa Rica had only a small indigenous population, and as African slavery had not been practiced in the country during the colonial period, its ‘pure’ Spanish inheritance was acceptable.⁷

The truth is that the ‘whiteness’ that mainstream Costa Rica professes cannot be defended given the ethnically mixed faces of contemporary Costa Rica. Early colonial population censuses demonstrated that mestizos⁸ made up the majority of the population.

The discourse of ‘whiteness’ is embedded in both mestizo, and the other ethnic group imagination within the country. The term ‘Blanco’⁹ which refers to mainstream Costa Rica is used in official documents as well as other documents. In the work of Ricardo Fernández Guardia, *Costa Rica en el Siglo XIX*, shows evidence of this belief in ‘white’ ethnicity when Costa Rica is compared to the other Central American States. He comments,

El país de Costa Rica tiene una proporción mayor de Españoles de pura sangre, con menos mezcla de negro e indio que los otros países de Centro América, y si ha logrado mayor prosperidad, demostrando más actividad y espíritu empresarial materialmente, y en otros aspectos es justo atribuirle a esta circunstancia (Fernández Guardia 285).

The country of Costa Rican has a larger proportion of true blooded Spaniards, with less mixture of black and Indian than the other Central American countries, and if it has reached greater prosperity, showing more activity, and entrepreneurial spirit materially, and in other aspects is only fair to attribute this to such circumstance (Fernández Guardia 285).

This Costa Rican arrogance in respect to the other Central American countries is a trait that is still present today. Most importantly for this discussion, the quotation makes reference to the belief that Costa Rica is more prosperous than its sister countries because it has more whites, thus presenting industry, and progress as metaphors for whiteness.

In 1909 a photographer, Fernando Zamora, in his compilation *Album de Vistas de Costa Rica*, described the Costa Rican population as ‘The type of Costa Rican is polite, **white** (my emphasis), tall and of robust constitution as shown in the photographs’ (Zamora 1).

In the analysis of these photographs, it is noticeable the ideology of racial superiority among the same group of mestizos is also noticeable. While the photographer does not use the term white, the language used in the organization of some of the photographs evidences a class difference. In one section, which there is ten photos, representing four different groups of people, the embedded ideology of a ‘white’ Costa Rica is clear. All of the people in the photos based on contemporary ethnic group readings, look mestizo. On page three there are faces of elegantly dressed women, referred to as ‘group of young ladies’, with the same language used on page four for elegantly dressed men, referred to as ‘group of Gentlemen’.

⁶ Costa Rica obtained its independence from Spain along with the other Central American countries in 1821.

⁷For discussions debunking both the idea of a purely white Costa Rica and the lack of a significant presence of indigenous people to justify the mix. See Carlos, Sojo. *Iguálitos: La Construcción Social de la Desigualdad en Costa Rica*. San José, Costa Rica: Master Litho: PNUD, 2010, Oscar Aguilar, Bulgarely, and Irene Aguilar, Alfaro. *La Esclavitud Negra en Costa Rica: Origen de la Oligarquía Económica y Política Nacional*. San José, Costa Rica: Progreso Editorial, 1977, Tatiana, Lobo. *Negros y Blancos: Todo Mezclado*. San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 1997, Elizabeth Fonseca, Corrales, Patricia Alvarenga, Venutolo, and Juan Carlos, Solórzano Fonseca. *Costa Rica en el Siglo XVIII*. San José, Costa Rica: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 2001, Rina Cáceres, Gómez. *Negros, Mulatos y Libertos en la Costa Rica del Siglo XVII*. México: Instituto Panamericano de Geografía e Historia, 2000.

⁸ Mix between the Indigenous people and the Spaniards. See the work of Thiel Bernado, Augusto. *Monografía de la Población de Costa Rica en el Siglo XIX. Tomo I*. San José, Costa Rica: 1900 Web. <http://www.sinabi.go.cr>, June, 2010.

⁹ Literally means white.

On pages five and six the individuals, both males and females, not as elegantly dressed are referred to as ‘group of peasants’. From close observation of the four groups of pictures the only difference is in their clothing. Of the total of seventy (70) photographs in none of the images, which include buildings, rivers, bridges, and parks, is there a photograph of an Afro-Costa Rican descent. Of the 70 images two Afro-Caribbean can be spotted in one image which features a banana plantation and one other, featuring the province of Limón, shows some African faces in the back ground but they are not the subject of the pictures taken.

In 1909, at the time when Zamora compiled this album, there were already Afro-Caribbean and their descendants living and loving in Costa Rican society. By making this group invisible, ideologically it strengthens the false idea of the “white” Costa Rica. The false “white” ideology based on the analysis of these photographs is also fed by the belief of “white” superiority has embedded in it not only race, but also class inequality.

The embedded use and meaning of the term ‘blanco’ for mainstream Costa Rica is exemplified by some of the interviewees. For some the internalization is so profound that they react emotionally when referred to other wise. Some mestizo Costa Ricans never questioned their “whiteness” as in the case of one of the mestizo interviewee who almost had an emotional melt down during the process of interviewing when was referred to as mestiza.

Others while at some level realizing that they are not “white” readily accepts the nomination out of convenience. When the question was put to Kathleen Vázquez what would be some of the most influential ethnic characteristics in the province of Limón her reply was, ‘El de los que nos llamamos blancos, aún cuando en realidad no lo somos pero bueno...’(Vázquez Arce. July 2, 2010). ‘The one from those of us who call our selves white, even when in reality we are not but...’(Vázquez Arce. July 2, 2010).

The tension between the ideological construction and the reality is noticeable in Kathleen’s reply. She knows that she is not ‘white’ but has no problem in embracing this designation, first, because it is nationally accepted and, second, because she could pass as white, based on the stereotype.



Kathleen Vargas Arce

Others like Esperanza accept and embrace their mixed heritage. Note her response to the same question,

‘Uno de los grupos étnicos, o el grupo étnico que más ha influido en nuestra provincial de Limón, es el negro. Desde pequeña hemos convivido mestizos y negros, se da una buena relación en ciertos casos’(Esperanza Sánchez Echeverría. June 16, 2010).

‘One of the ethnic group that has had more influence here in our province are the black, since I was young we lived together mestizos, and blacks, and between the both there is a good relationship in certain cases’ (Esperanza Sánchez Echeverría. June 16, 2010).



Esperanza Sánchez Echeverría

Note that Esperanza did not use the term white as a designation for the majority population, which can be argued that since she does not fit the 'white' prototype it makes it easier to accept her mixed ancestry.

Racism in Costa Rica

The question in the discussion that follows is not if there is racism in Costa Rica, despite the national discourse, and the international image of Costa Rica as a land of paradise, for many officials and regular citizens this is a known fact,¹⁰ the question is how to demonstrate the ways in which the racism is manifested within the Costa Rican society.

Commenting during an interview on the question of racism in the country, Afro-Limonense Marcia Johnson, responds with a bit of sarcasm,

'Please! It is the most racist country that I know in the whole Latin America. Please! But it is a covert racism, it is not an open racism. It is that subtle that they have a lot of us black people fooled who dare to say that in Costa Rica there is no racism.' (Marcia Johnson May 2nd, 2006).

While it is not certain if Marcia has evidence of Costa Rica's racism compared with that of the rest of Latin America, her response introduces and confirms the discussion on the types and manifestations of the practice, and experience of racism within the Costa Rican society, which includes the false national discourse of equality, and the covert racism which is the type that is mostly experience in Costa Rica.

Forms of Racism

Gloria Yamato argues that there are four forms of racism. With aware/blatant racism, "outright racists will, without apology or confusion, tell us that because of our color we don't appeal to them" (72). With aware/covert racism, "apartments were suddenly no longer vacant or rents were outrageously high, when black brown, red and yellow persons went to inquire about them. Job vacancies were suddenly filled, or we were fired for very vague reasons" (72).

Unaware/unintentional racism... 'has lead white people to believe that it's just fine to ask if they can touch my hair...to assume that bending over backwards and speaking to me in high-pitched..., condescending tone would make up for all the racist wrongs..., (72). Un-aware/self-righteous racism, 'The "good white" racist attempts to shame blacks into being blacker (72). The first two forms identified by Yamato are better applied to the Costa Rican situation.

19th Century Aware/Blatant racism

During the 19th century the leaders of post-independence Costa Rica were not apologetic about their racism. They believed, based on their racist ideology and false discourse of a 'white' Costa Rica that every action was justified in order to maintain their 'pure white' ethnicity.

Based on its early racist belief Costa Rica passed the 1862 racist law, La Ley de Bases y Colonizacion, which restricted people of Africa and African descent from entering the country while at the same time encouraging Europeans to do so. The blatant racism is even further noticed in the treatment given to the Italian immigrants who came 15 years after the Caribbean contingent.¹¹

Another example of this form of racism is seen in conveniently pitting one of the 'undesirable' groups against the other. This strategy is found in an 1869 letter sent to the Costa Rican leader of the time requesting the entry of Chinese over Cullies (sic) by a North American by the name of Federico H. Alberding.

¹⁰ See other comments by Pablo Gueren, Catepillan. "Arias: hay Racismo". *Al Día* Viernes 18 de Noviembre, 2005. San José, Costa Rica. Nacionales.

http://aldia.co.cr/ad_ee/2005/noviembre/18/nacionales6.html, *La República*. "Intolerancia es parte del Ser Tico: Racismo y Xenofobia han Estado Presentes en la Historia Costarricense". 13 de Junio, 1999. 2, Walter Morales, Ujueta, "Hipocrecia Racial en Costa Rica". *Diario Extra*. Miércoles 5 de Noviembre de 1997. 13, Rodrigo Paris, Steffens. "Racismo por Omisión?" *La Nación* Lunes 5 de Enero de 1998. 15A

¹¹ For in-depth discussion on this see the work done by Bariatti. To follow the discussion on their strike and returning to Italy see *Gaceta Oficial* 24 May 1888. 598, *La República* 26 October, 1888. 3, November 3, 1888.3, November 8, 1888.3, November 28, 1888. 3, December 11, 1888.3, March 12, 1889. 2, March 13, 1889. 2, March 16, 1889. 2, *Gaceta Oficial* March 20, 1889.

One of his arguments was,

Para este objeto sirven solamente los chinos, muy superiores en fuerza, inteligencia, laboriosidad y moralidad a los llamados Cullies de la raza Malaya o Hinduh. Con una nacion como la china que se calcula en doscientos millones que habitan un terreno sumamente variado y se compone de distintas razas y confesiones, es natural que haya individuos de distintas cualidades, buenas y malas, de consiguiente dependera de la habilidad y del bien entendido interés...del empresario escoger las buenas' (H. Alberding 1869. 10-11).

'For this objective the Chinese are good, they are superior in strength, intelligence, and morality, to the so called Cullies from the Malaya or Hindu race. With a nation like that of the Chinese which is calculated in two hundred millions who live in a land that is varied, and is composed of different races and creeds, it is natural that there will be individuals of different qualities, good and bad, therefore it will depend on the ability of the employer to chose the good ones' (H. Alberding 1869. 10-11).

Alberding's letters¹² are written within the context of procuring labour for coffee plantation. The letters came six years after the racist 1862 legislation, hence his efforts in exalting the Chinese, and making for the ability to select the right elements from among this group. It can be argued that one the reasons why Alberding was successful in getting permission to bring one of the banned groups into the country was that the 'Cullies' are of a darker complexion than the Chinese. Again, in the 1870s, discussions on the types of migrants were evident in the nation evidenced by a series of letters by an individual who was arguing strongly for the immigration of foreign workers for the construction of the railroad. These foreign workers based on the suggestion of the writer, should be Germans.¹³

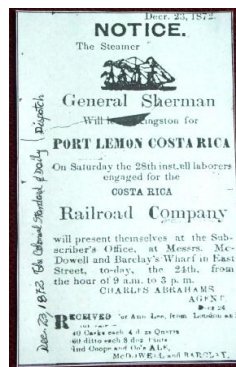
When some Europeans entered the country they were received with open arms as observed in the following reference. *El Ferrocarril* Diciembre 2, 1872 reports:

Están en camino para el interior de la República algunas familias de trabajadores españoles.-Sean bienvenidos,-Brazos son los que necesita el pais para su mejora i (sic) engrandecimiento; para el cultivo de sus feraces tierras; para centuplicar sus producciones, i (sic) llevar á cabo sus empresas (1).

Several families of Spanish workers are on their way to the interior of the Republic. They are welcome, hands are what the country needs for its improvement and growth, for the cultivation of it wild lands; to increase its production a hundredfold and carry out its enterprises (1).

19th Century Aware/Covert Racism

In terms of this form of racism, Yamato suggests that it is the type of racism which restricts access to legal and material goods and benefits like jobs, good housing, and proper health insurance etc. for groups other than whites. During the late 19th century aware/covert racism was the kind that was more evident when the 1870s leaders were expecting to attract a certain type of immigrant workers for the construction of the railroad, and were not successful. Instead they drew workers from the 'undesirable' groups¹⁴ identified in the 1862 racist legislation, conveniently allowing them entry into the country.



¹² Francisco H. Alberding sent three letters to the 1869 leaders insisting on his request which was granted after the third correspondence.

¹³ These discussions are found in the newspaper *El Ferrocarril* April 6, 1872, April 13, 1872, April 27, 1872

¹⁴ These would be the blacks and Chinese.

This newspaper clipping was found in the library at the University of the West Indies in Jamaica. After aggressive marketing by Costa Rican agents in the Caribbean countries, and the lifting of the 1862 legislation, according to Carlos Meléndez and Quince Duncan *El Negro en Costa Rica*, ‘on December 20, 1872’ Afro-Caribbean migration began (Meléndez and Duncan 71).¹⁵ According to Aviva Chomsky *West Indian Workers and the United Fruit Company in Costa Rica*, ‘Between 1900 and 1913 some twenty thousand Jamaicans, along with much smaller numbers of other West Indians, migrated to Costa Rica (Chomsky 34).’¹⁶



This photograph was purchased from the National Archive in Costa Rica.¹⁷

This immigration to Costa Rica attracted workers from all the Caribbean islands, including Spanish, French and English speaking Caribbean. The fact that the larger contingent was of African descent would pose a problem for them very early into the construction of the railroad,¹⁸ contrasting with the treatment of Italian immigrants by Costa Rican authorities fifteen years later.¹⁹ As to the initial relationship between Afro-Caribbean immigrant workers and the Costa Rican state Meléndez and Duncan comments,

Es indudable que en los principios, la relación entre el negro inmigrante jamaicano y el Estado costarricense, fue una relación circunstancial y con carácter no permanente. La idea del inmigrante fue simplemente la de acumular algún dinero y regresar para disfrutarlo en Jamaica (87).

Without doubt in the beginning the relationship between the Black Jamaican immigrant and the Costa Rican state, was a circumstantial and temporary relationship. The immigrant’s idea was simply to accumulate some money and return to enjoy it in Jamaica (87).

The railroad project was faced with unexpected economic constrains which forced large numbers of these immigrants to settle in this country longer than expected.

¹⁵ This would be the second wave of Africans entering the Costa Rica. The first was the Africans during slavery.

¹⁶ For works on Caribbean migration for the construction of the rail road, and banana Industry see some works, Ronald Harpelle, N. *The West Indians of Costa Rica: Race, Class, and the Integration of an Ethnic Minority*. Kingston: Ian Randalers Publishers, 2001. Trevor Purcell, W., *Banana Fallout: Class, Color and Culture Among West Indians in Costa Rica*. Los Angeles: The Regents of the University of California, 1993, Carmen Murillo, Chaverri, *Identidades de Hierro y Humo: La Construcción del Ferrocarril al Atlántico 1870-1890*. San José: Editorial Porvenir. S.A., 1995. Aviva, Chomsky. *West Indian Workers and the United Fruit Company in Costa Rica: 1870-1940*. Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana University Press, 1996, Lara, Putnam. *The Company they Kept: Migrants and the Politics of Gender in Caribbean Costa Rica, 1870-1960*. Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002, Charles Koch, W., “Jamaican Blacks and their Descendants in Costa Rica.” In *Institute of Social and Economic Research*. Vol. 26, No. 3 (September 1977): 339-361, Carmen Hutchinson, Miller, “In Memory of my Ancestors: Contribution of Afro-Jamaican Female Migrants in Port Limón, Costa Rica, 1872-1890.: In *Regional Footprints: The Travels and Travails of Early Caribbean Migrants*. Annette, Insanally, Mark, Clifford, and Sean, Sheriff. Eds. Jamaica: Latin American Caribbean Centre (LACC), 2006: 292-306,

¹⁷ The photograph of 1900 Afro-Caribbean workers in the construction of the railroad can be found under the signature Fondo de Fotografía 3198.

¹⁸ See correspondence sent from the British representative in Central America to the Governor in Limón about the ill-treatment of immigrant workers from Belice, and Jamaica in Archivo Nacional de Costa Rica 20 de Setiembre, 1877. 10-11, *La Gaceta Oficial*, Enero 9, 1875. 3

¹⁹ In 1872 Chinese immigrants also travel to Costa Rica and received the same considerations as do the Afro-Caribbeans. For more information about the Chinese in Costa Rica see Lucy M., Cohen. “Emigración de Chinos de Macao a Costa Rica 1872-1873”. *Revista de Ciencias Sociales*. San José, Costa Rica: Universidad de Costa Rica, 119 (2008): 39-53.

This economic circumstance evidenced once more the existence of the aware/blatant racism through the hostility of prominent and not so prominent mainstream Costa Rica towards Afro-Caribbean, and Afro-Costa Ricans. The convenient ‘other’²⁰ was no longer needed therefore the country was showing its true racist face. According to Meléndez, and Duncan,

‘El estado levantó la prohibición de la inmigración negra y china, decretada en 1862, porque pensaba que una vez concluida la obra del ferrocarril estos inmigrantes ocasionales saldrían hacia otra parte’ (Meléndez and Duncan 87).

‘The State lifted the prohibition of black and Chinese immigrant, decreed in 1862, because they thought that once the railroad job was concluded these occasional immigrants would have left elsewhere’ (Meléndez and Duncan 87).

20th Century Aware/Blatant Racism

During the earlier years of the 20th century particularly during the 1930s²¹ Afro-Caribbean and their descendants experienced both overt and covert forms of racisms, with the rehashing of old racist laws²², some of which restricted their movement to the Pacific side of the country.

A decade later (1940s) the discussion re-emerged with prominent Afro-Costa Ricans lobbying to change the restrictive racist laws. During the national debate the aware/blatant racism showed its face once more through the voice of a Costa Rican citizen from the province of Puntarenas²³ carried in one of the countries newspapers.

La Prensa Libre, 1940 reports,

‘...la zona bananera del Atlántico fue monopolizado por los negros, desplazando al trabajador costarricense; si acaso se conseguía algún trabajo era el de simple peón; los capataces, apuntadores, brequeros, maquinistas, empleados del comisariato todos eran negros; la misma suerte habrían corrido los trabajadores ticos en la Zona del Pacífico si no hubiese sido esa ley, que de un tajo apartó al elemento Negro. Negros costarricenses no hay, aunque don Ricardo diga que sí hay; los negros no se asimilan a nuestras costumbres, ni les gusta aprender el castellano; los negros nacidos en Limón hijos de padres antillanos no son costarricenses...’ (*La Prensa Libre* 1940: 14).

‘...the Atlantic banana zone was monopolized by the blacks, displacing the Costa Rican worker, if by chance they got any work it was that of a simple peon, the foremen, time keepers, break men, machine men, employees of the commissary all were blacks, the same fate the ticos²⁴ would have had to face in the Pacific zone if it were not for that law, that with one sweep separated the black element. Black Costa Ricans are non-existent, even when Mr. Ricardo attests to the contrary, the blacks do not assimilate to our custom, they do not like to learn Spanish, blacks born in Limón, from Antillean parents are not Costa Ricans...’ (*Prensa Libre* December 10, 1940. 14).

This discussion only reproduced part of the article to demonstrate this form of racism in 20th century Costa Rica. The comments of this Costa Rican citizen are not only xenophobic but explicit. In his commentary is reference to the Afro-Caribbean immigrant workers and his resentment towards them for taking away jobs from Costa Rican workers. His comments are also blatantly racist since he ignores the fact that the 1940s ‘Negros’ he is talking about are born Costa Ricans. He justifies this non-acceptance by explaining that Afro-Costa Ricans are culturally different. Another example of the aware/blatant racism is found in 1939 during the presidency of León Cortés Castro²⁵, Clodomiro Picado, a prominent Costa Rican alerted readers of the danger of not maintaining the whiteness of the country.

²⁰ See Peter, Gay *The Cultivation of Hatred: The Bourgeois Experience Victoria to Freud*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1994. See pages 68-95 for an explanation of the convenient ‘other’.

²¹ See research done by Soto Quirós, Ronald. “Inmigración e Identidad Nacional en Costa Rica 1904-1943: Los ‘Otros’ Reafirman el nosotros”. San José, Costa Rica: Universidad de Costa Rica. Facultad de Ciencias Sociales. Escuela de Historia, 1989. Thesis.

²² See Appendix I.

²³ The area where Afro-Costa Rican were prohibited from working.

²⁴ Costa Ricans refer to themselves as ticos.

²⁵ León Cortés Castro was President of Costa Rica from 1936 to 1940.

He sent a letter to historian Ricardo Fernández Guardia in the daily newspaper *El Diario* de Costa Rica, under the title “Nuestra Sangre se Ennegrece” (Our blood is blackening). *El Diario De Costa Rica* May 20, 1939, reports,

‘**Nuestra Sangre Se Ennegrece!**, y de seguir así, del crisol no saldrá un grano de oro sino un pedazo de carbón. Puede que aún sea tiempo de rescatar nuestro patrimonio sanguíneo europeo que es el que posiblemente nos ha salvado hasta ahora de caer en sistemas de africana catadura, ya sea en lo político o, ya en aficiones que remedan el arte o la distinción, en tristes formas ridículas Quizás usted. Cuya voz prestigiada es oída por los humanistas de valer que aun quedan en estas regiones, logre ayudar a señalar el precipicio hacia el cual nos encaminamos’ (*El Diario de Costa Rica* 20 de Mayo 1939)²⁶

‘**Our Blood Is Blackening!** and if it continues this way, gold will not come from the melting pot but charcoal. We could be still in time to rescue our European blood heritage which possibly might be what has saved us thus far to fall within African systems, be it political or activities that mimics the arts in sad and ridiculous ways. May be you, whose prestigious voice is heard by the humanists that are left in these regions, manage in helping to show us the ditch in which we are heading (*El Diario de Costa Rica* 20 de Mayo 1939).

It is clear from Picado’s letter that he was concerned about protecting his ‘white’ European heritage, and that he was afraid Afro-Costa Ricans, and Afro-Caribbeans would contaminate the ‘white’ country. Within the context of a racist society this is understandable. It is arguable that by that time²⁷ in the history of Costa Rica there had already been mixture between Afro-Caribbean descendants with mainstream Costa Ricans resulting into what are called, ‘mulatos’.²⁸

Manifestations of Racism

The following discussion will concentrate on the ways in which this racism is manifested. Duncan and Powell, *Teoría y Práctica del Racismo*, argue that racism is manifested in various ways.

In their explanation they examine eight forms of racist manifestations as follows: **Forced labour** to which Amerindians and blacks were submitted, **Racist genocide**, physical extermination of groups not considered humans and therefore inferior through their racial characteristics, **Racist ethnocide**, the cultural extermination, and destruction of a culture, **Racists reductions**, physical confinement of blacks and indígenas in a determined place, **Racist psychocide**, systematic destruction of an individual identity, **Racist cultural segregation**, a confinement which while not physical, preserves the cultural forms of a particular group, not at the request of the group but for the interest of others, **Reflective Racism** where groups create counter myths, tantamount to racism in reverse, and **Residual racism** (Duncan and Powell 37-48).

The type that best fits for the analysis of the Afro-Costa Rican situation is the one of Psicocidio Racista. Duncan and Powell explain that this manifestation of racism,

El psicocidio mata la identidad del individuo. Hace creer que las formas culturales blancas son las únicas válidas, y que por el contrario las formas culturales de los demás grupos son “primitivas”, “salvajes” o simplemente no valen la pena. Se omite toda referencia a la historia, o a la cultura de los negros o de los indígenas, de los aborígenes australianos; se le pone mala fama, se trata de lograr un blanqueamiento ideológico, es decir, convertir a los no-blancos en mentalmente blancos, se crean estereotipos según los cuales el negro o el indio son buenos para tal o cual cosa, pero no para otras cosas (Duncan and Powell 45).

The psychocide kills the individual identity by making them believe that the cultural forms of white people are the only valid ones, on the contrary theirs are “primitive” and ‘savage’ or simply put, worthless. Reference about then is omitted from history, they are given bad names, they are submitted to ideological whitening, and stereotypes are created against them (Duncan and Powell 45).

Duncan and Powell comments that this racist manifestation is more evident in multicultural societies. Costa Rica is one of these countries.

²⁶ This quotation is taken from the novel by Anacristina Rossi. *Limón Blues*. San José, Costa Rica: Santillana, 2002. 23.

²⁷ Afro-Caribbean have been in the country for over sixty years.

²⁸ Between May 30, 2005 and November 16, 2006 *Nacion.com* in its Raíces section published a series of articles focused on the African presence in Costa Rica.

Especially during the 20th and 21st century there is evidence of this manifestation of racism against Afro-Caribbean and their Afro-Costa Rican descendants.

One 20th century newspaper which carries news of the interest particularly to the Afro-Limonense population reveals examples of this type of racism. In a letter to the editor under the heading “The People’s Forum,” an Afro-Costa Rican in *The Limon Searchlight* Saturday 18, January, 1930 complains,

‘You will permit me space to call the attention of your readers to what I consider a well considered burlesque on the Negro by a caricature en la Tribuna of the 7th inst (sic) there are those of my race who believe they are so appreciated and esteemed by the white race because they may be in a position of accommodation, so as to be utilize in one way or another, and they are so blinded by an apparet (sic) cordial shake or pretentious smile, that when such sarcasms are cast at us, they take no notice of the unpleasantness intended, but there are some of us who cannot but notice these occasions of ridicule....’ (*The Search Light* Saturday 18, January, 1930: 3).

This complaint came out of the context of a liquor license that the Governor of Limón received for the province. *La Tribuna*, a newspaper circulated in San Jose, which ran a stereotypical story with Afro-Limonenses portrayed as drunkards in a caricature.²⁹

This Afro-Costa Rican is protesting the way his community is portrayed by people who pretend to like them, but use every opportunity to ridicule them. The letter writer also raised two other issues, suspicion of so called good mainstream Costa Rica, a mistrust which is still evident among contemporary Afro-Costa Ricans, and the “internalization of racism by some members of the Afro-Costa Rican society”. One last example from this century is another piece of evidence found³⁰ which could explain the root of the popular belief among Costa Ricans in general, about Afro-Costa Ricans being restricted from going beyond Turrialba.³¹ At Turrialba, it is popularly believed, Afro-Caribbean or Afro-Costa Rican train conductors change over to the ‘white’ conductors who take the train into the capital, San José.

According to Meléndez and Duncan there was no legal evidence of such restriction,

Una revisión concienzuda de las contrataciones del ferrocarril y aún las bananeras, no permiten sacar conclusión alguna acerca de que las mismas se hubiese querido ya limitar el área de desplazamiento de estos grupos en el país (88).

A thorough review of the railroad and even banana contracts do not allow for drawing any conclusion, that either wanted to restrict the movement of these groups in the country (88).

In *The Search Light* of Saturday 22 of February of 1930 under the title “No blacks for the interior” a very upset individual is reacting to a comment which appeared in another newspaper.

‘There is much complaint on the par(sic) of some thoughtless Costa Ricans of the what is considered “Encroachment of Coloured People beyond the Tunnel” in a complaint by some “egoist” to the correspondent of *The Tribuna*’, he claims there is a law forbidding the entry of coloured people Beyond the Tunel; (sic) does that gentleman forget that Don Thomas Guardia contracted those colored people here to do the work that could not be done by him and after those people fulfilled their mission it is fair to tell their progeny “Costa Ricans” by birth that they cannot have free access to any part of the country in which they were born? Is that gentleman suggesting the Division of the Country from the Tunel to San José white, and Tunnel to Limón governed by blacks?’ (*The Search Light* 4).

Costa Rican historians have not found any evidence of a written law to this effect, neither has this researcher. But it is this research which argues that this piece of evidence could actually be the fuel of the rumor. In no other publication is there reference of this reference as such. Scholars rather focus on explaining that there was no actual law prohibiting the movement from Limón to San José.

²⁹ I was unable to locate, and consult the *Tribuna* while conducting this research because the newspaper was being digitized.

³⁰ Senior Angulo makes reference to this article only as another example of racism.

³¹ Turrialba is Cartago’s fifth canton or county.

From the quotation it is obvious that at the national level there was discussions of the about the movement of ‘gente de color’ as Afro-Costa Ricans are called, to other parts of the country. This understandable based on the restrictive 1930s law to the Pacific, which would have stirred concerns among other members of the society who were interested in keeping the ‘negros’ marginalized to the province of Limón, and who would made affirmations like the above even if they had no proof.

A closer reading of the quotation indicates that it is the writer who is asking if the suggestion is that blacks and “whites” should live in different parts of the country. A thorough review of the 1930s *La Tribuna*, it is suggested will help in clearing up this question.

Important to highlight from these two quotations is the confirmation of Duncan and Powell argument, that this manifestation of racism is resisted and denounced through individual or collective protests. Especially in the last quotation is evident the forcefulness of the objection based on the contributions of his fore-parents and his right to the country by birth.

The popular saying that ‘*los negros no pasaban de Turrialba*’ or from the Tunnel as the quotation states, can be discredited based on the contribution of some of the interviewees. Despite racist legislations and attitudes, especially during the 1930s, Afro-Costa Ricans were living, loving, and enjoying themselves all over the country.



Mrs. Lillian McLennan posing for me after the interview on June 19, 2010 in Port Limón, Costa Rica.

Interviewee Mrs. Lillian McLennan³², a member of the Path Finders female basketball team in Limón, shared some of her travel experiences to play with other team in the capital San José³³ during the 1930s.³⁴ Mrs. McLennan Mrs. McLennan is 91 years old, and the only living member of that team.



This picture is courtesy of Mrs. Lillian McLennan.³⁵

Marva Fennell, 2010 speaking of her Jamaican grandmother, who was taken by her children years later as an elderly woman to San José comments that,

³² Also known as Ms Lillian Smith

³³ Volver a escuchar recording para anotar los equipos contra quienes jugaban.

³⁴ Mrs. Lillian McLennan. Interviewed in Port Limón, Costa Rica on June 17, 19, 2010.

³⁵ The Path Finders team from left to right Lillian McLennan, Cecilia Williams, Mary Edith Topin (Captain), Ida Robinson, and May Edwards.

'I have my doubts about blacks not passing from Turrialba because my grandmother was there Huh!!! A long time before 1948 (Marva Fennell Cartago July 2nd, 2010).

Population censuses of the time would have helped in clearing up that perception. The 1927 population census³⁶ which gave a number of 431 'negros' living in San José, and spread all over the country could suggest that this trend of Afro-Costa Rican living in other parts of the country continued until the present day.

Manifestations of Psicocidio Racista Aware/blatant racism in late 20th Century Costa Rica

As was mentioned in the introduction, Costa Rica is a country subject to contradictions especially in relation to ethnic politics. What is interesting during late 20th century Costa Rica is that from the mid 1950s up to the early 21st century, a number of discriminatory laws were changed including the law 2694 of 1960³⁷ which prohibit any form of discrimination³⁸ Policy makers are informed about these changes but the information is only in rare cases made available for public consumption, unless it is a piece of legislation that the leaders consider of interest to the whole population.

Table 1.3 : Cuadro 7. RAZA DE LA POBLACION TOTAL, POR PROVINCIAS, INCLUYENDO PORCENTAJES, 1927

PROVINCIA	TODAS LAS RAZAS	BLANCOS	MESTIZOS	NEGROS	INDIOS	OTROS
Números absolutos República de Costa Rica	471.524	377.994	66.612	19.136	4,197	3,585
San José	153, 183	133, 089	17, 807	431	1,334	522
Alajuela	97,577	90,820	6,519	24	126	88
Cartago	70,198	66,223	2,969	309	411	286
Guanacaste	51,142	16,380	34,285	67	17	393
Heredia	38,407	36,828	1,546	1	---	32
Limón	32,278	11,060	1,073	18,003	1,065	1,077
Puntarenas	28,739	23,594	2,413	301	1,244	1,187

Source: Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos, 1927. Google.co.cr 17. Sept. 2010.

Within the Costa Rican society racism is not a subject that is dealt with seriously, only on occasion when it raises its harmful head is it given any attention, at least until the situation is appeased.



Such is the case that erupted in 1995. An Afro-Costa Rican model Carolyn Markland Francis, denounced racist practices within the modeling institution she was working with, which led to reactions from political leaders, all the way to the Catholic Archbishop, who responded very diplomatically.³⁹

³⁶ See Appendix I.

³⁷ See Colección de Leyes y Decretos. San José, Costa Rica. 1955, 1960.

³⁸ See appendix I.

³⁹ This information is found in the newspaper *Nacional*. Lunes 12 de Junio, 1995. 3.

The government and national clergy held very guarded discussion on the matter making reference to the constitution right of equality. Asked about the existence of racism, the then President Ing. José María Figueres, along with Monseñor Román Arrieta from the Catholic replied that,

‘...el Presidente de la República, Ing. José María Figueres aseguró que “siempre hemos vivido en una gran y Hermosa convivencia, a mi me parece que la mayoría de los costarricenses apoya esa convivencia.” El Arzobispo de San José, Monseñor Román Arrieta, coincidió con Figueres al afirmar que “pueden darse practicas racistas, que responden a actitudes de personas que se sienten racialmente superiores, pero el 95% de la población repudia esas manifestaciones” (Nacional, Lunes 12 de Junio de 1995: 3).

‘We have always lived in the beautiful togetherness, and he believes that all Costa Ricans support this togetherness. Monseñor on the other hand reply was that there can be racist practices coming from those who consider themselves superior to others, but that the 95% of the rest of the population repudiate such manifestations’ (Nacional 3).

Note the two discourses echoed in these official replies of Costa Rica as the Central American diamond and as the country of ‘iguales’ which is echoed in these official replies. Montoya Arias, in her research “Estudio sobre los Derechos Fundamentales de las Minorías, con Énfasis en los Afro-Costarricenses como Colectivo Etnico no Dominante”, on the acceptance of racism comments,

En el ámbito legal es muy común que se utilice la siguiente versión: Como la discriminación racial está prohibida en nuestra legislación, nuestro Gobierno jamás la admitiría y por lo tanto no pudo ocurrir (Montoya Arias 235).

This version is commonly used in legal circles since racial discrimination is prohibited in our legislation, our Government will never admit to it, therefore it could not occur (Montoya Arias 235).

This makes eradicating racism from the Costa Rican imagination almost impossible even when it is legally unacceptable. On the other hand the reactions from Afro-Costa Ricans within the same news was totally different, with them using the opportunity to express the ways in which the society discriminate against them This is the reply from an Afro-Costa Rican man by the name of Thomas in the same news report,

Thomas señala que “siempre he creído en la existencia del racismo, este se da en muchas formas: está en el susto que uno observa en la gente cuando nos conocen personalmente, en la omisión de los negros en la enseñanza, negándonos la oportunidad de sentirnos parte de este país, pese a que estamos acá desde el siglo XVI. El catedrático dijo saber del caso de un diplomático negro a quien no le negaron el ingreso como miembro a un club social, pero tampoco recibió respuesta a su solicitud. “Cuando llegamos a un lugar, a todos les dicen ‘señor’ pero a nosotros ‘moreno’. Es una falta de respeto (Nacional, Lunes 12 de Junio de 1995: 3).

Thomas points out that, “I have always believed in the existence of racism, it is manifested in many ways, it is in the fright that one observes from the people that get to know us on a personal basis, in the omission of blacks in education, negating us the opportunity to feel part of this country despite the fact that we are here since the XVI century. The professor said that he knew of the case of a black diplomat whose request was never denied to be member of a social club, but he never got a reply. When we enter some place, they refer to others as Mr, but to us as ‘black’ it is a lack of respect (Nacional, Lunes 12 de Junio de 1995: 3).

Another national upheaval resulted from two Afro-Costa Rican women being denied entry into a popular pub in San José. The news report unlike in the previous case, stated the racism blatantly. *La República*, 1997, reports,

“Yo soy racista porque no considero a los negros como iguales., y mientras ellos no ese metan conmigo, yo no los determino. Para mí son invisibles, no existen,” confesó Juan Chávez uno de los cientos de costarricenses que cargan en su mente la barrera de la ignorancia por el racismo. “No quiero ofender a nadie es una actitud mía porque siento que los negros son muy diferentes a los blancos en sus costumbres y forma de pensar” agregó este hombre de 42 años. Chávez nacido en san José reconoció abiertamente su sentimiento contra los negros de una forma despectiva y cargada de ofensas (por razones de respeto no las transcribimos completamente (*La República* 17 de Noviembre 1997: 5A).

'I am racist because I do not consider blacks as equals, as long as they do not mess with me, I have nothing to do with them. For me they are invisible, they do not exist.' Confessed Juan Chavez one of the hundreds of Costa Ricans which carry in their minds the barrier of ignorance due to their racism. "I do not want to offend any one, that's my attitude because I believe that blacks are very different from whites in their customs and way of thinking." he added. Chavez 42, born in San José, acknowledged dislike of blacks with many expletives (which out of respect we did not reproduce)' (*La República* 5A).

Chavez who boldly expressed his real feelings about Afro-Costa Ricans, is probably voicing the sentiments of many others. This quotation contradicts the image of a Costa Rica of equals, a Costa Rica where racism does not exist as the national discourse would have us believe.

Chavez's intervention speaks also to the aware/blatant racism, and to the racist spicocidio manifestation of that racism with his admission of Afro-Costa Rican invisibility, and perception of their different cultural expression. Chavez echoes the sentiment of quotation from the 1940s.

Racism in 21st Century Costa Rica

The racism in 21st century Costa Rica is a combination of all the forms of racism listed by Yamato. But the manifestation of these types of racism continues to be the racist spicocidio, which is obvious through the several stereotypes, use of stereotypical language, racist jokes, racist popular expressions, and invisibility through the exclusion from the official history of the country.

The paper will focus on presenting some more proof of both the forms and manifestation of racism taken from some of the interviewees; the media, including newspaper clippings; and others found in an analysis of Costa Rican literature.

Manifestations of Psicocidio Racism Ideological whitening

In terms of stereotypical images and language, one of the interviewee had this to say with respect to the stereotypical use of the colour black in reference to Afro-Costa Ricans. Hermelinda McKenzie Williams explains,

'Por ejemplo un anuncio que había de clorito white. Era un Negro en el anuncio cantando feo y enseñando la palma de la mano...significando como un ejemplo digamos del cloro, que la única parte que el tiene blanco del cuerpo es la palma de la mano! Anuncios tan estúpidos!' (Mackenzie, Williams, May 2nd, 2006).

'For example there is an ad about clorito white. It was a black man in the ad singing ugly,⁴⁰ and showing the palm of his hand...meaning that the only part of his body that is white is his hand! Stupid ad!' (Mackenzie, Williams, May 2nd, 2006).

This racist commercial was shown on national television advertising Clorox (a bleaching agent).⁴¹ The underlying discourse is the suggestion that Clorito was too black and, needed to become white.

Invisibility

Another aspect is that of ethnic invisibility. Hermelinda, after recounting the 'clorito white' situation with disgust, uses an ad for papsmear tests to highlight other ways in which mainstream Costa Rican society treats Afro-Costa Ricans. Hermelinda continues,

'Por ejemplo hay un anuncio actualmente sobre el papanicolao donde un chiquito blanco llega con un chiquito Negro a la casa. Van a ir a la escuela juntos, entran a la casa, la mama del chiquito blanco ni siquiera saluda al niño negrito que vino acompañando a su hijo. Le prepara un sandwidge a su hijo y ni siquiera hace uno para poder, digamos, que el chiquito comparta. Entonces yo digo, ese anuncio, para qué el chiquito Negro está allí?...la mama habla únicamente con su hijo blanco...ni siquiera vuelve a ver al chiquito Negro, eso es un mensaje subliminal' (Mackenzie, Williams, May 2nd, 2006).

⁴⁰ She means terrible, and the stereotypical way they mimic Afro-Costa Rican speaking the Spanish language.

⁴¹ After protests from the Afro-Costa Rican community the ad was withdrawn.

'In the commercial a mestizo child takes an Afro-Costa Rican child to his home. In the house, the mestizo mother ignores the African child. The mother in the ad speaks to her child, prepares a sandwich for him, and does not share it with the other child. The Afro-Costa Rican child is totally invisible. This is a subliminal message (McKenzie Williams 2006).

Within the context of the ad, Hermelinda is bothered that even when the black boy appears in the ad he is totally ignored, treated as if he were invisible. This invisibility is also shown in the absence of statistical data on the situation of Afro-Costa Ricans and other ethnic groups in the country,⁴² in the virtual invisibility and stereotypical representation of Afro-Costa Ricans in the educational system,⁴³ and token representation of Afro-Costa Ricans in politics.

Stereotypes

Hermelinda also makes reference to the stereotyped negative images in the media portrayals of Afro-Costa Ricans, making fun of the way they speak.⁴⁴ Other stereotypes include '*el negro es ladrón*', '*Blacks are thieves*', '*el negro es agresivo*', '*Blacks are aggressive*', '*el negro es fuerte*' '*Blacks are strong*', '*el negro es bailarín*', '*Blacks can dance well*', '*el negro es bueno para los deportes*' '*Blacks are good at sports*', '*el negro es bueno para el sexo*', '*blacks are good for sex*', '*el negro es bembo*, '*blacks have thick lips*'; '*toda mujer negra tiene el culo grande*', '*every black woman has a big bottom*', '*todo hombre negro tiene el pene grande*', '*every black man has a big dick*', '*los negros cocinan bien*', '*all black people are good cooks*'.

These stereotypes are designed to reinforce racist ideologies and justify the legal and other social mechanism perpetuated to keep people other than whites marginalized ideologically and geographically, as in the case of Afro-Limonenses.

Popular racist expressions

Racism is so perverse that it is also manifested in specific imagery found in the Spanish language. Some examples of racist language in Costa Rica include '*Si es Negro hágallo trompudo*' (if he is black show him with thick lips) making a negative reference to the thick lips of Afro-Costa Ricans.

'*Hoy trabajé como negro*' (today I worked like a nigger), is an expression used after a long day of hard work, which contradicts the stereotype that blacks are lazy. If one works like a negro it is making reference to the hard work performed by especially African slaves and later immigrant Afro-Caribbean labourers.

'*Que suerte más negra*', (What black luck!), '*Aguas negras*', (literally black waters, meaning sewage), '*la vimos negra*', are other expressions used within the Costa Rican context to mean negativity, parallel to the use of the literal word black as designation for both Africans and people of African descent. Both mainstream Costa Rica and Afro-Costa Rican are adversely affected by the incorporation of stereotypical language and meanings. For mainstream Costa Rica, the internalization makes use of these terms normative, and for Afro-Costa Ricans its effects are painful, causing silent or aggressive reaction by their offensive meanings.

Costa Rican Literature

One specific and powerful way in which the racist language is more evident and powerful is within the Costa Rican literature where unaware/intentional racism is the form of racism that is most evident. Yamato explains,

With the best of intentions, the best of educations, and the greatest generosity of heart, whites operating on the misinformation fed to them from day one will behave in ways that are racist, will perpetuate racism by being "nice" (Yamato 73).

Contained in Costa Rican literature is the perpetuation of this racism manifested through the spicocidio racista in the stereotypical portrayal of Afro-Costa Ricans as grotesque, as buffoons, with animal like characteristics, and their ideological whitening.

⁴² The only three population censuses which provided population distribution by ethnic groups were the 1927, 1950 and 2000 censuses.

⁴³ See the work of, Sawyers Sawyers, and Hutchinson Miller.

⁴⁴ One of the heritages from Afro-Caribbean fore-parents is the speaking English language with a Jamaican accent. Historically older generations spoke a mix of English with Spanish which until today is used as material for comedy on radio and television programs.

Some examples are found in the works of Joaquín Gutiérrez *Cocorí*^{45 46}, and Alfonso Potocarrero⁴⁷ *Negro Desgraciado*. The authors of these two publications in particular are perfect examples of Yamato's unaware/intentional racism. These authors in their patronizing of the Afro-Costa Rican subject which Yamato calls "being "nice", continues to perpetuate their racism through the stereotypical images they portray of them.

By way of example, evidence of racism is clear when one of Portocarrero's white characters, in comparing Mr. Watson, an Afro-Costa Rican, to the main character, deceased Mr. Bully, attributes Watson's "good" graces to his lighter complexion and "white" like (read civilized) behaviors while implying animalistic traits to Bully. The novel reads,

Bueno. Eso es diferente, Acaso has visto que mister Watson tenga trompa, o sea color de caimito como ese otro?- continua la voz que había comenzado a criticar a los negros ((Portocarrero 26).

Well. That is different. Have you seen that Mr. Watson has a *trompa*, or that his colour complexion is like caimito like that other one?...Mr. Watson is not a nápiro, is like if he was white without being white. He is not a nápiro because he is not that chumica⁴⁸, and because he has white ways' (Portocarrero 26).

The manifestation of the *spsicocidio racista* is glaring in this quotation. The stereotype of Afro-Costa Ricans as animal like with the use of the word *trompa*⁴⁹, the negative connotations of the colour black with the example of the colour of the caimito⁵⁰ fruit, and the term nápiro⁵¹, along with the ideological whitening of Mr. Watson for not behaving in the stereotypical "black" way.

Portrayal of Negative Image in the Media

Montoya Arias "Estudio sobre los Derechos Fundamentales", analyses the various laws that should be in place to eliminate racism in the country, and mentions a complaint by a group of Afro-Costa Ricans against a commercial for a cleaning product, 'La Negrita', that portrayed negative images particularly of Afro-Costa Rican women. The community won, and the racist commercial was taken off the air (242).

Negative Connotation of the Term 'Negro' in the Media

During the 2006 world cup in Germany, many Central American organizations like ONECA⁵² and ODECO⁵³ were vigilant about verbal racist manifestation in the media. In Costa Rica the Asociación Proyecto Caribe made sure that it denounced this racism, and in June 2006 circulated an e-mail protesting the use in the local and international press of the term "Negro" to describe negative situations in expression like '*la vimos negra.*' (We saw it black,) and '*Jóvenes con negro porvenir.*' (Black future for the youth), to mention a few.

Use of the Term "Negro" as an Insult or Curse Word

⁴⁵ This is the most controversial of all the books because it is a children's book and is one of the required texts in primary school. The Afro-Costa Rican society has protested, demanding its removal from the list on more than one occasion (2004 and 2006), but have been unsuccessfully.

⁴⁶ Scholar Lorein Bernard Powell has analysed some of these in her thesis *Lectura (en Crisis) de Tres Obras Racistas*. Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica. Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Escuela de Literatura y Ciencias del Lenguaje. Heredia, Costa Rica, 1985.

⁴⁷ When this book was launched in 1990 the Afro-Costa Rican community protested.

⁴⁸ Meaning Jamaican.

⁴⁹ An elephant's trunk, referring to the thick lips Afro-Costa Ricans.

⁵⁰ the fruit called star apple.

⁵¹ Meaning black like charcoal.

⁵² Organización Negra Centroamericana.

⁵³ Organización de Desarrollo Etnico Comunitario.



Another example of the injurious use of the term ‘Negro’ can be found in the electronic newspaper de *Al Día* in the section, OVACION on Thursday September 28, 2006, where a football trainer cursed an Afro-Costa Rican player calling him ‘black son of a bitch’ in the middle of the field (<http://aldia.co.cr/hoy/ovacion841087.html>)

Against these types of verbal attacks Afro-Costa Ricans invariably will defend themselves by responding aggressively, ironically playing into the other label that *‘los negros son agresivos.’* (“blacks are aggressive”). This type of racism is experienced mostly by the Afro-Costa Rican athletes as a way to upset them in a game. Needless to say, in Fig. 19 above, the Afro football player defended himself.

Conclusion

The paper has illustrated some of the forms and manifestations of racism practiced against people of African descent, especially Afro-Caribbean in the 19th century and later in the 20th and 21st centuries against their descendants, the Afro-Costa Ricans.

The paper has demonstrated that there is a great contradiction between the national discourse of equality for everyone in the society, and the existence of racism with its frequent blatant manifestations. What is remarkable based on the quotations cited in the paper is the attitude of Afro-Costa Ricans to this racism. Afro-Costa Ricans demand their rightful place within Costa Rica. With their attitude they let mainstream Costa Rica know that different to their Afro-Caribbean fore-parents they are part of that society, and they are there to stay.

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Appendix I

Table 1: Some of Costa Rica's 19th Century Racist Laws

YEAR	LAW
<p>1862. <i>La Gaceta</i>: No. 191, 8-11-1862 This prohibits the colonization of the country by any other race but white.</p>	<p>Ley de Bases y Colonización. “Se prohíbe la colonización del territorio nacional por parte de las razas africana y china, e incluso faculta al gobierno para prohibir el ingreso de esas poblaciones no deseadas al país. Se estimula y protege la inmigración europea, destinando un fondo considerable anual del presupuesto nacional y ofreciendo diez manzanas de terreno a cada individuo y veinte a cada matrimonio, y por cada hijo menor de dieciocho años cinco manzanas más.”</p>
<p>1888. <i>La Gaceta</i>: decreto XXIX del 20-11-1888. This law encourages the migration of Italians with the understanding that they will work in the agriculture and industrial area.</p>	<p>“Se estimuló la radicación de trabajadores italianos en tanto que por decreto hacía al Estado responsable de costear la traída de sus familias, con tal de que se dedicasen a empresas agrícolas e industriales.”</p>
<p>1891. <i>La Gaceta</i>: decreto IV art, 18, 25-1-1891 This law came as a result of the signing of a contract with Cyril Smith for the construction of a railroad in the pacific.</p>	<p>“Es entendido que el concesionario no introducirá gente de raza asiática para los trabajos de la línea férrea, ni asiáticos o negros para labrar o colonizar las tierras que se le otorgan.”</p>
<p>1892. <i>La Gaceta</i>: Oficio No. 1, artículo XIX del 18-2-1892 This year the Colonizer Agricultural Bank was open to finance immigrants, but in its article number 19 it was stipulated that neither Asians, blacks, criminals, beggars or invalids could be financed.</p>	<p>“los inmigrantes no podrán ser en ningún caso asiáticos, negros, mendigos, inválidos ni criminales.”</p> <p>This is a compilation from the following Source: Duncan, Quince and Powell Lorein. <i>Teoría y Práctica del Racismo</i>. San José: Departamento Ecuménico de Investigaciones (DEI), 1988: 67-69.</p>

Table 2: Some of Costa Rica's 20th Century Racist Laws

YEAR	LAW
1904. <i>La Gaceta</i> : No. 136 del 15-7-1904 This was another restrictive migratory law	“para evitar la inmigración de gentes que por su raza...serán el el país motivo de degeneración fisiológica y elementos propicios para el desarrollo de la holganza y del vicio.”
1934. <i>Colección de Leyes y Decretos</i> This law was prohibiting Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Costa Rican to work on the Pacific side of the country	No.5 “En los trabajos de producción y explotación de la industria bananera del país se procurará dar preferencia a los costarricenses y estos gozarán en igualdad de ocupaciones de las mismas ventajas y prerrogativas que los empleados y trabajadores de otras nacionalidades. Para proveer al personal de empleados de oficinas y talleres las empresas deberán ocupar por lo menos un 60% de los costarricenses aptos para el desempeño de sus respectivas funciones. Queda prohibido, en la zona del pacífico, ocupar gentes de color en dichos trabajos.”
1940. <i>Colección de Leyes y Decretos</i> . 1942. Ley No. 37. 4 de Junio de 1940 This law was barring any non-white person to enter the country	“No serán admitidos en el país, y por consiguiente deben ser rechazados por las autoridades de los puertos, aeropuertos y fronteras de la República los extranjeros que vengan en calidad de inmigrantes ó transeúntes, que se hallaren en las condiciones siguientes: a) los de raza negra, chinos, árabes, turcos, sirios, armenios, gitanos, culies etc. b) los extranjeros que sin estar comprendidos en los inicios anteriores, sean personas inconvenientes, nocivas o peligrosas al orden o progreso de la República o a la conservación de la raza ya sea por sus tendencias agitadoras, ya por sus escasos medios de subsistencia o por las características raciales que predominen en ellas y sean de notoria desafinidad con la población nacional.”

Table 3: Some of Costa Rica's 20th and 21st Century Anti-discriminatory Laws

YEAR	LAW
1955. Law 1902 <i>Colección de Leyes, Decretos y Resoluciones</i> This law derogates discriminatory migratory laws. This law has six articles.	Art. 1. "Crease un servicio de obtención de documentos de identidad para los ciudadanos que deban proveerse de ellos y de opción y naturalización para elementos de nacionalidad extranjera nacidos en la república y que puedan y deseen optar por la nacionalidad costarricense o naturalizarse como tales, según el caso. Igualmente para los extranjeros que justifiquen una residencia in-interrumpida no menor de veinte años." Art. 6. Esta ley deroga el Decreto Ley No 836 de 4 de noviembre de 1949 y el párrafo 3o del artículo 5o de la ley No 31 de 10 de diciembre de 1934, y rige desde su publicación 1955."
1960 Law 2694 November 22, 1960. This law Prohibits any type of labour discrimination.	Art. 1. "Prohíbese toda suerte de discriminación, determinada por distinciones, exclusiones o preferencias, fundada en consideraciones sobre raza, color, sexo, edad, religión, estado civil, opinión política, ascendencia nacional, origen social, filiación o situación económica, que limite la igualdad de oportunidades o de trato en material de empleo o ocupación".
1968 Law 4230 November 11, 1968. This law Prohibits Racial Discrimination.	Art. 1. "Se considera delito la negativa a permitir el ingreso de personas a asociaciones, centros de diversión, hoteles, afines, clubes y centros privados de enseñanza, por motivos de discriminación racial."
1973 La Gaceta No.208 November 6, 1973. Law 5360 October 11, 1973. This prohibits racial immigrants restrictions.	Art. 1. "Se prohíben todas las restricciones a la inmigración fundadas en consideración de raza." Art. 2. "Se derogan las disposiciones contrarias a los dispuestos en el artículo anterior y contenidos en los artículos 38, 41, y 42 del Decreto Ejecutivo No. 4 de 4 de Abril de 1942, reformado por ley No. 51 de 29 de diciembre de 1943, relativos a la raza china."