

The Province and Port of Limón: Metaphors for Afro-Costa Rican Black Identity

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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 the province and port of Limón. 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 some of the reasons why the province and port of Limón can be considered metaphors for Afro-Costa Rican Black Identity, using both primary sources and secondary information found in archival documents, newspaper clippings, interviews, and other publications.

KEYWORDS: Central America, Costa Rica, Province of Limón, Port of Limón, Jamaican immigrants, Jamaican descendants, Afro-Costa Rican, Costa Rican black identity.

Brief Introduction



Fig. 1. Map of Costa Rica.

Costa Rica is one of the seven countries¹ that make up Central America. It borders with Nicaragua (north), Panama (south), the Pacific (west) and the Caribbean Sea (east), with a total of 51,100 Km² of land surface, and coastline of 1,290 Kilometers long. Costa Rica is divided into seven provinces San José, Alajuela, Cartago, Heredia, Guanacaste, Puntarenas, and Limón. According to the 2000 census, the total population was about 3,810,179 inhabitants.

Costa Rica's main ethnic groups are whites, mestizos, blacks, *indígenas* and Asians. Colonized by Spain until early 19th century, the official religion is the Roman Catholic and Spanish is the official language.

Limón is the seventh province² with a land surface of 9,188 Km² which represents 17.98% of the national territory.³ The province is divided into six cantons and 27 districts. The cantons are Limón, Pococí, Siquirres, Talamanca, Matina and Guácimo. The canton of Limón with an area of 1765.79 Km² is divided into four districts, the City of Limón, Valle la Estrella, Río Blanco and Matama.

Occupied by Caribbean immigrants since the last quarter of the 19th century, it is perceived as the "Black Province" and English influenced by the Jamaican dialect is the common language spoken mainly by Afro-Limonenses. The province of Limón is 166 kilometers away from the capital, San José. The total population of the Province of Limón is 339, 295. The total population of the city of Limón is 60, 298.⁴ The city extends over of 59.76 square kilometers⁵ and is the most important port of the country. The main objective of this paper is to explore some of the reasons for identifying this area as the black region of the country,

¹These seven countries are Belize, Costa Rica, el Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama.

² It was the last province that was officially established in Costa Rica.

³ See JAPDEVA, (2000). pp. 35.

⁴ See Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos, (2002). pp. 48.

⁵ See JAPDEVA, (2000). pp. 37.

The province of Limón became important during late 19th century Tomás Guardia's administration with the objective of creating more efficient means of national internal transportation in order to get the coffee in a shorter period of time to international markets. I argue that the importance of the province during this period was based on its geographic and strategic positioning, and its economic potential.

After independence in Costa Rica (1821), the Costa Rican elite made efforts to build a national identity through discourses based on racial homogeneity⁶ and later as the Latin American gem, however as the province developed and the population of Limón grew, it went in opposition to the national identity, as it concentrate the Costa Rican black population.

During the 19th century Costa Rica was not unique in its pursue for better ways of transportation, in other Central American countries⁷ and the Panama isthmus⁸ there was also interest in constructing ways of transportation like canals and railroad for national economic development.

In Costa Rica, one of the ways to achieve this goal was through the construction of a railroad which required foreign labour attracting Afro-Caribbean immigrants. Within the reduced historiography Afro-Caribbean immigrant labour appear as indirect subjects within the context of the construction of the railroad and later the banana cultivation.

Preference for European Labour Force

The need for labour force took the central government to invest in importing workers from foreign countries for the construction of a railroad during the 1870s. But the preference was for European immigration and a specific type as evidenced in the following report. In a three-part comment in favour of immigration in *El Ferrocarril* Abril 27, (1872, pp. 2) one individual listed the type of immigrants that should enter the country, recommending that:

Solo los *Alemanes*, y entre ellos cuento parte de los *Belgas y Suizos*, reconocen el principio: *Ubbibene, ibi patria*. Ninguna otra nacionalidad se asimila y se amalgama con igual facilidad. El alemán reúne á pesar de sus instintos aristocráticos, todos los elementos que se necesitan para la colonización; y por consiguiente doy mi voto á favor de la inmigración alemana.

Only the Germans, and among them I include some Belgians and Swiss, who recognize the *Ubbibene, ibi patria* principle.⁹ No other nationality assimilates and amalgamates with such ease. The German encapsulates despite his aristocratic instincts, all the elements necessary for colonization and therefore I vote in favour of German immigration.

Despite his vote based on the evidence, the Europeans did not come in droves as they were expected. Instead, those who answered the call were Caribbean labourers, who, according to Meléndez and Duncan, (1989) officially migrated in December 1872.

⁶ See Hutchinson Miller, (2012) discussion on 19th to 21st century racism in Costa Rica.

⁷ Echeverri-Gent, (1992) discusses the labour situation of Afro-Caribbean in Honduras and Costa Rica.

⁸ Newton, (1984) discusses the immigration of Barbadians to Panama for the Construction of the Canal.

⁹ Wherever I am well, there is my home.

Convenient 'Undesirables' 19th Century Afro-Caribbean Immigrants

La Ley de Bases y Colonización (Law of Bases and Colonization) was passed forty-one years after Independence, 1862. This law was intended to prohibit certain races/ethnic groups from entering Costa Rican territory. Duncan and Powell, (1988, pp. 67) present the legislation:

Pero es la ley de Bases y Colonización (*La Gaceta*, No. 191, 8-11-1862) la que 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. Por el contrario, en la misma ley de bases y colonización 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.

But it is the law of Bases and Colonization (*La Gaceta*, No. 191, 8-11-1862) that prohibits the colonization of the national territory on the part of African and Chinese races, and empowers the government to forbid the entry of those unwanted populations to the country. On the contrary, in the same law of bases and colonization it encourages and protects the European migration, setting aside a considerable annual fund from the national budget and offering ten acres of land to each single person, and twenty to each married couple, and for each child under eighteen five acres more.

This research was unable to find when this legislation was changed to allow entry into the country by the "undesirable races," but the historical evidence has shown that they were, and were even encouraged, as in the case of the Chinese, to enter the country. Of course, because of the racism embedded in the country, attitudes were more favourable to them than to the Africans.¹⁰

People of African descent were considered "undesirables" in post Independent Central American countries; despite their need for foreign labour because of their racial background they were not welcome by the host countries. Newton (1984) demonstrates that 'the arrival of the first batch of Jamaicans in mid-1850 would hardly have pleased the proud, allegedly racist, white population of Panama (104).

The situation is the same in Honduras during the same historical period and their attitudes towards people of African descent particularly Afro-Caribbean. Amaya, (2008, pp. 10), mentions that the present Afro-Hondurans are descendants of two contingents of Caribbean immigration. He also discusses the nationalistic ideas of racism, struggle and ethnic exclusion of people of African descent. As to the presence of people of African descent in Honduras he notes:

...la población actual desciende de dos contingentes que llegaron en dos oleadas diferentes: la primera a raíz la introducción de esclavos negros de Jamaica, Belice y Caiman, y Belice por parte de los británicos entre finales del siglo XVIII y mediados

¹⁰ See Cohen, (2008) and *El Ferrocarril* April 20, and June 29 of (1872) for evidence of Chinese immigration to Costa Rica.

del siglo XIX, y luego, el segundo contingente con la llegada de obreros negros procedentes de Jamaica y otras islas anglófonas arribados en los albores del siglo XX para laborar en las empresas transnacionales del banano.¹¹

The present population descends from two contingent that arrived in two different waves: the first as a result of the introduction of blacks slaves from Jamaica, Caiman and Belice from the British from the end of the XVIII and mid-XIX century, then the second contingent with the arrival of labourers from Jamaica and other English speaking islands at the beginning of the XX century to work with transnational banana companies.

For Costa Rica there is similarity with both references. Like the situation of Honduras the second 'wave' of Afro-Caribbean immigrants, in particular, Jamaicans were the ethnic group that provided the present Costa Rican demography of people with Afro-Caribbean descent. The similarity with Panama is that during the late 19th century when Panama was constructing the canal Costa Rica was seeking labourers for the construction of their railroad and their attitude was the same as it relates to racism.

Despite these countries racism the need for "any" foreign labour forced them to accept the 'undesirables' sending agents to the Caribbean to recruit workers¹² where they advertised attracting a large number of Afro-Caribbean labourers conveniently changing restrictive racist legislation. Some examples are reproduced from the *Colonial Standard and Daily Dispatch* of December 1872 in Jamaica.¹³

The Colonial Standard and Daily Dispatch 1872 advertizes:

LABOURERS WANTED

The undersigned is authorized by the Costa Rican Railroad Company to contract with labourers to work on their Railroad at Costa Rica under agreements for a year-the terms and particulars of which can be obtained on application at the Wharf of Messrs McDowell and Barclay, - East Street; Kingston – from 10 o'clock A. M. to 2 o'clock P. M.

C ABRAHAMS

Agent of Costa Rica Railroad Co

(The Colonial Standard and Daily Dispatch December 4, 1872)

¹¹ See also Echeverri-Gent, (1992).

¹² See Newton, (1984) chapter four for discussion on the role of recruiting agents in the British Caribbean.

¹³ See *El Ferrocarril* November 16, (1872) for more evidence of black Jamaicans contracted by the railroad administrator Guillermo Nanne.

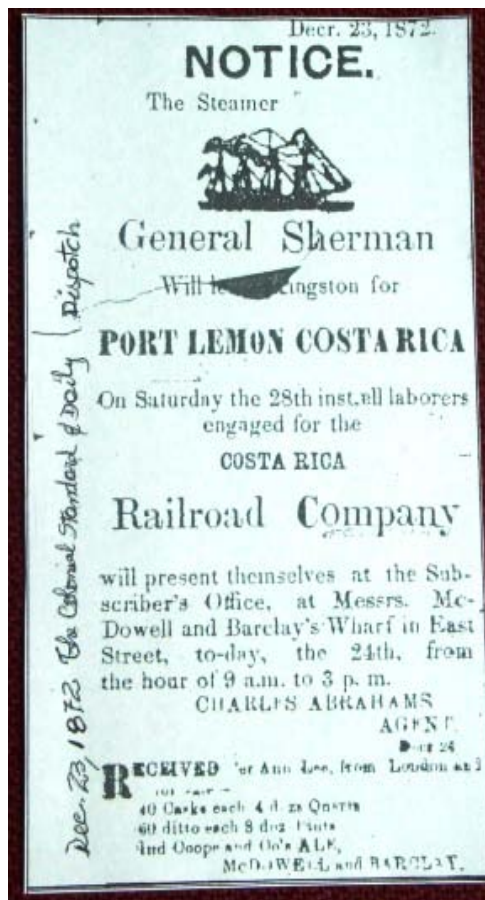


Fig. 2. This Newspaper Clipping, of an ad to recruit Caribbean Labourers, was found in the library at the University of the West Indies in Jamaica.

The advertisement proved effective as recorded in *The Colonial Standard and Daily Dispatch* 1872:

THE COSTA RICAN RAILWAY

The American Steamer “General Sherman”, Captain Gordon, leaves this morning with one hundred and forty labourers for the Costa Rican Railroad Company (*The Colonial Standard and Daily Dispatch* December 31, 1872).

In Costa Rica an official report appeared in *Gaceta Oficial*, Enero 15, (1873, pp. 4)

A las dos de la tarde de hoy fondeó en este Puerto procedente de Jamaica, la Goleta “Lizzie” de 177 toneladas al mando de su capitán Crighir, 7 hombres de tripulación, y 123 trabajadores del ferrocarril, y además 3 mujeres...

At 2 this afternoon 177- ton schooner Lizzie docked in this port arriving from Jamaica under captain Crighir, with a crew of 7 and 123 workers for the railway, along with 3 women...

Based on these quotations during 1872 there were several ships bringing Jamaican labourers for the construction of the railroad, with varying numbers of workers. According to Meléndez and Duncan,

(1989, pp. 72) between December 20, 1872 and May 6, 1874, there were 1,396 Caribbean immigrants including 21 females.



Fig. 3. Costa Rica 1900. Afro-Caribbean immigrant workers for the construction of the railroad¹⁴

Aviva Chomsky, (1996, pp. 34) on the other hand reports that “between 1900 and 1913 some twenty thousand Jamaicans, along with much smaller numbers of other West Indians migrated to Costa Rica”. The other small number of West Indians included Cubans, St. Lucians, Barbadians, and Kittitians.¹⁵ Still others included Curacao and mainland Belize as referenced by Meléndez and Duncan, (1989, pp. 68).¹⁶

¹⁴ This photograph was purchased by the author from the Archivo Nacional in Costa Rica. The photograph can be found under the signature Fondo de Fotografía 3198. These are 1900 Caribbean workers in the construction of the railroad.

¹⁵ These are confirmed by the interviewees Afro-Caribbean parents, grandparents and great-grandparents.

¹⁶ See other works on Caribbean migration to Central America Insanally et al., (2006) Newton, (1984) and Thomas Hope, (2002): Chapter 2.

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Fig. 4. A bird's eye view of the Port of Limón. Circa 1920s. Courtesy of the Library of Limón.

The main immigrant labour force the national railroad project attracted were workers from the English-speaking Caribbean, with the largest number coming from the island of Jamaica. The immigrant workers, based on archival newspaper reports were hired to work for a period of one year.¹⁷

However, the railroad construction project took over 19 years to completion causing some of the immigrant workers to settle in Costa Rica, especially in the province of Limón. In reference to the length of the railroad project Harpelle (2001, pp. 11) notes that:

Henry Meiggs, the pre-eminent railway builder of the time, was contracted to build the railway, and construction began in 1871...it was a task that required greater resources than the country could marshal, and, as a result, the 170 kilometre railway link begun in November 1871 was not completed until December 1890.

The point of arrival for Caribbean immigrant workers would have been at the Port of Limón, which faces the Caribbean Sea. The construction of the railroad began in the central valley en route to the eastern province of Limón. Many workers settled not only in the Port but along the routes used for construction work within the province.¹⁸

¹⁷ See *Colonial Standard*, (1872).

¹⁸ See Murillo, Chaverri, (1995) chapter on the "El Mundo en el Trabajo del Ferrocarril" (The World of Railroad Work).

The unintentional settlement because of labour constraints, along with the hostility of mainstream Costa Rica against people of African descent forced most¹⁹ of the immigrants to remain in the province of Limón, imprinting this region with a particular and distinct characteristic different from other parts of Costa Rica.

The cultural difference of Afro-Caribbean immigrants, especially of the Jamaicans, was noticeable from the beginning of the railroad construction project. Murillo Chaverri (1995, pp. 78) notes that:

A partir de 1873, la presencia mayoritaria de jamaquinos, respecto a otras personas provenientes de la cuenca del Caribe, posibilitó que sus referentes culturales cimentaran la matriz cultural básica de la población en el Atlántico costarricense....

From 1873, the majority presence of Jamaicans, with respect to others coming from the Caribbean, made it possible for their cultural references to come to be served as the basic cultural matrix of the Costa Rican Atlantic population...

This Jamaican cultural matrix was evident in the types of food they grew and ate, the language they spoke, the religion they practiced, the sports they played, the music they listened to, the songs they sang, the leaders they followed, the way they danced, the way they dressed, their superstitious beliefs, the literature they read, and their allegiance to the Queen of England.²⁰

It is important to note that during the railroad construction economic crisis, Afro-Caribbean immigrants were offered lands along the railroad construction route, and this helped to overtly showcase their difference in culture with their subsistence farming and the way they built and kept their houses, among other cultural references.²¹

The province of Limón will be considered a metaphor for Afro-Costa Rican identity based on some cultural 'tactics' utilized by the Afro-Caribbean immigrant in order to survive by taking advantage of the region geographical marginality. De Certeau (1988, pp. 38) comments that,

"Tactics" are procedures that gain validity in relation to the pertinence they lend to time - to the circumstances which the precise instant of an intervention transforms into a favourable situation....

One of the tactics utilized by Afro-Caribbean immigrant was to impregnate the province with some aspects of the Jamaican culture. Within the circumstance of regional and racist marginality this was the most pertinent 'tactic' to utilize since many of the Afro-Caribbean labourers had already decided to remain in Costa Rica.

This circumstance in the long run would work as a double edge sword for their descendants, Afro-Costa Ricans, who would share a double culture, the one inherited by their Afro-Caribbean fore-parents and their national culture as Costa Rican born citizens.

By deciding to remain in Costa Rica and re-create their culture within the province of Limón this decision created for the rest of the non-Afro Costa Rican population the covert perception that it is

¹⁹ I argue that they must have been Afro-Caribbean and their descendants living in other parts of country during this period. More historical studies are needed to clarify this assumption.

²⁰ See Meléndez and Duncan, (1989).

²¹ See Meléndez and Duncan (1989) chapter III, for detailed information. See also Samuel Gutiérrez, 1991 on Caribbean Architecture.

the 'black' region of Costa Rica. Covert perception because there is not an official identification of this region as the 'black' region of Costa Rica, but there is the general view that it is. I argue that there are two main reasons for this perception.

The first reason is based on the fact that this province historically has had the largest number of people of Afro-Caribbean descent and later Afro-Costa Ricans living in the country,²² therefore, the perception that they are the majority of the population in the province of Limón. The argument continues that this perception is fueled by the everyday practices of Afro-Caribbean and especially Afro-Jamaicans immigrants.

By performing many of their everyday practices like the speaking of the English language with Jamaican flavor, observing their celebrations, maintaining their culinary practices²³ and their religious worships²⁴ among other everyday activities they managed to give the impression that they are an ethnic majority in the province of Limón.

This perception of the 'black' province according to De Certau (1988, pp. xix) would be in this case 'victories of the "weak" over the "strong". During the 19th century Afro-Caribbean immigrants within the context of foreign labour relations are considered the "weak" ones but finding ways in their everyday lives within a foreign country to live out their culture and ideologically take over a region is definitely a victory over the "strong".

This victory is demonstrated in Russell (1999, pp. 39). In his work the perception of the province of Limón as the black province is confirmed by one of his mestizo Limonense interviewee who is an artist by the name of William Durán who expresses his frustration about the perception of Limón as a 'Black' city. He notes:

Throughout our conversations Duran expressed the frustration many whites feel in regard to the perceptions of Limón as a 'Black city'. According to Duran, when the people of the central valley speak of Limón they say 'los negros' [the blacks]. We have now in Limón 60% whites, like 5% Chinese and the rest are Blacks.

The last population census done in Costa Rica that desegregated the groups by race was done in 1950. The total Costa Rican population in that census was 800,875. Living in the province of Limón was 41,360 representing 5% of the population.²⁵ Of that total 25,926 were whites, and *mestizos*, and 13,749 were *negros* (Blacks), these been the largest minority group between *amarillos* (Yellows) 361, and *indígenas* (Indigenous) 1,278.²⁶

The 2000 population census data shows that the total Costa Rican population for that period is of 3,810,179 inhabitants²⁷, 72,784 are Afro-Costa Ricans,²⁸ of this total of Afro-Costa Ricans 54,131 live in the province of Limón which highlights the region with the largest population of Afro-Costa Ricans.

²² See 1950s population census in appendix, Table 1.2.

²³ Some elements of these include the rice and beans cooked with coconut milk and scotch bonnet pepper especially on Sundays, the patties, plantain tart, grater cake, bon (known as pan bon), ackee and salt fish, red beans soup, coconut biscuit, Johnny cake (journey cake), run dong, and cut cake among others.

²⁴ Many of the immigrants belonged to one of the at least three main denominations Anglican, Methodist and Baptist.

²⁵ See Ministerio de Economía y Hacienda, (1953). pp. 43.

²⁶ Ibid. 82.

²⁷ See Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos, (2002). pp. 37.

²⁸ Ibid 227.

Based on both population census figures '*los negros*' were not the majority in the province of Limón during the 1950s but it certainly housed the major concentration of Afro-Costa Ricans than the rest of the country even to the present day. For Durán his confirmation without any statistical verification saw this as something negative. Even when he is a Limonense himself, does not want to be identified as '*negro*' which can be attributed to the covert racism of this country.

Because of this perception that Limón is the 'black' province mainstream Costa Ricans identify every person of African descent within the country as a born and bred Limonense. This is exemplified by an account shared by interviewee Grace Cope Gordon who is an Afro-Limonense and registered nurse living and working in San José, she gave an account about one of her mestizo colleagues in a hospital in Heredia.²⁹

She notes that, on a specific occasion there was an Afro-Costa Rican male patient who was discharged from this hospital. Within their system of operation, there is a male colleague who drives the discharged patients to their homes. Without asking the discharged Afro-Costa Rican male patient where he lives, he assumes that the man was from Limón, and drove him there,³⁰ then to realize when he got to Limón that the man was from the province of Heredia. She ended by confirming that, for the mestizos in Costa Rica, every person of African descent³¹ is from Limón.

The other main reason to consider the province of Limón a metaphor for Afro-Costa Rican black identity is the imposition of their culture on the land scape, as mentioned by Murillo Chaverri, (1995) and in particular about the Jamaicans, from the early stages of migration into Costa Rica, they had impregnated this region with their culture, making it from the onset of the province development the distinct region that it is until today.

Some of these differences are noted in terms of the landscape. Traveling from the Central Valley to the province of Limón it can be observed the change in vegetation as it began to approach this region. Along the way there are palm trees, cacao, bread fruit trees, among a variety of other type of fruits and vegetables which came with the Caribbean people. Also noticeable was the way the houses were built along the railroad tracks. In their chapter three Meléndez and Duncan (1989) discuss this in detail.

In terms of other cultural identifiers in the region, because of the immigrant strong cultural influence they spoke English, becoming the only province up to the present where the majority of its population speaks another language other than the official Spanish language. The other cultural difference is the worshiping of other religious denominations other than the official Catholic religion which was mentioned before.

Because of these main reasons Afro-Caribbean left a cultural legacy that is not only observed in the speaking of the English language with Jamaican flavor and the worshiping of Christian protestant denominations but also in celebrations and material legacy.

These celebrations and material legacy were made possible to maintain because of the collective memory of the Afro-Jamaican immigrants. Halbwachs (1992) argues that every individual has their own personal memory but they also share one that is particular to the group they belong even when they themselves have not experience that memory.

²⁹ Heredia is one of the seven provinces that form the Costa Rican country.

³⁰ This drive is approximately 2 hours and a half.

³¹ Read every person with dark pigmentation.

In the case of Afro-Costa Ricans they share a collective memory from the experiences of their immigrant fore-parents and they ensure that these memories do not disappear by commemorating some of these, as in the case of the celebration of El Día del Negro³²

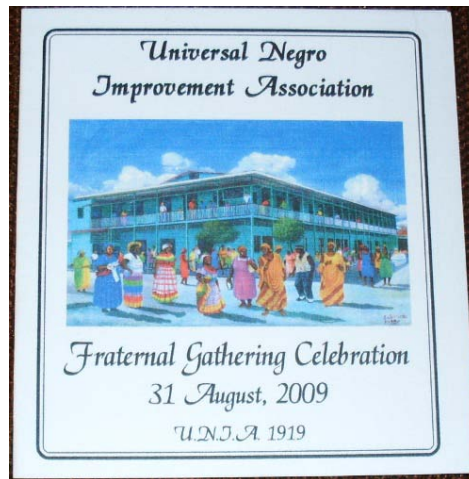


Fig. 5. Invitation to 2009 Día de Negro Celebration in Limón. Courtesy of Interviewee Ms Ruby Nicholson. Limón, June 2010.

This is one of the most outstanding activities which identify the province, and the Afro-Costa Rican, especially Afro-Limonenses, the celebration of August 31st. This celebration began with Marcus Garvey. According to *Limón Roots*, (2010, pp. 3):

He visited this country on four different occasions and during his first visit in 1910 he worked as a time keeper with the United Fruit Company. He established August 31st as a special day when all black people around the world should respect, feel proud and celebrate the African cultural heritage.³³

For Afro-Costa Ricans and for Afro-Limonenses in particular, this is one of the three main important celebrations of the year beside the independence celebration on September 15, and the carnival in October. For the August 31st celebration there is a lot of preparation from the different organizations in the province of Limón.

For the last years the celebration has expanded to include a colorful parade in the Port of Limón showcasing aspects not only of the Afro-Caribbean preserved legacy but also general aspects of African culture in that way publicly showing their pride for their ancestral culture.

The parade presents floats depicting aspects of Afro-Costa Rican lives based on the yearly team. Women and men will dress in African attire. To continue strengthening especially the English speaking Caribbean ties the organizers will invite calypsonians from the English speaking Caribbean to make guest appearances during these celebrations.

³² Presently it is called Día del Negro y de la Cultura Afro-Costarricense.

³³ See Harpelle, (2000) "Radicalism and Accommodation..." for an in-depth discussion on the impact of Marcus Garvey in the province of Limón during the early 20th century.

Recently the celebration as expanded to the Capital San José where they have attracted a large number of followers. For 2010 the organizers invited calypsonian Mighty Gabby from Barbados who made guest appearances at the National Theater in San José, and in the Port of Limón.

Another collective memory that continues to connect Afro-Costa Ricans with their Afro-Caribbean past is the material legacy of the United Negroes Improvement Association building (U.N.I.A). The importance of these is that they still can be found in different parts of the province of Limón.



Fig. 6. In the Port of Limón. The U.N.I.A. building known as “The Blacks.”³⁴
Photo by author, 20 June 2010.

Individuals like engineer Ramiro Crawford who in the late 1980s among other interested people, was instrumental in helping to get the Liberty Hall³⁵ declared as a national heritage³⁶, he is also the director and editor of the magazine *Limón Roots*, where he and his staff highlights and promotes not only the achievement of Afro-Costa Ricans but also the unbroken ties with especially the English speaking Caribbean.

In August of 2003, diputado Edwin Patterson Bent³⁷ submitted to Parliament a proposal to declare the building that is presently called La Casa de la Cultura de Puerto Viejo³⁸ (Puerto Viejo’s Cultural House) as the “Casa de la Cultura Marcus Garvey” (Marcus Garvey’s Cultural House). The rationale that Patterson Bent puts behind this proposal, is the historical fact that Garvey, with the support of Afro-Costa Ricans bought a piece of land in Puerto Viejo in 1935, where they could hold their meetings. The building was finished in 1937 and was called Liberty Hall, later it was used as an English school and presently it is the Casa de la Cultura de Puerto Viejo.³⁹

³⁴ This is shortened version from the words The Black Star Line.

³⁵ The Liberty Hall known as the Blacks, for Limonenses and people in general) is a material legacy of the Marcus Garvey Movement around late 1920s early 30s in Costa Rica.

³⁶ See Universidad Estatal a Distancia video, (1989).

³⁷ Mr. Edwin Patterson Bent was Minister of Parliament under the leadership of President Abel Pacheco 2002-2006.

³⁸ Puerto Viejo is one of the communities in Limón fourth canton, Talamanca.

³⁹ See Paterson Bent, (2003).

Beside the effective 'tactics' of the different language spoken, different religious denominations practices and Afro-Caribbean material legacy in the province of Limón, the preservation of the collective memory played a very important role in maintaining Afro-Jamaican culture within the province of Limón and its metaphor for black identity in Costa Rica.

This is ideologically and culturally sustained by the collective memory of the family. According to Halbwachs (1992, pp. 54):

Family recollections in fact develop as in so many different soils, in the consciousness of various members of the domestic group. Even when they live near each other, but all the more so when life keep them distant.....

For this discussion, family can also be referred to a larger group of individuals who are not related by blood but by culture. As Halbwachs (1992) explains about family when they get together after being apart, they tend to behave and assume the role they had played in the family before leaving.

This is true especially for Afro-Limonenses who had left and lived in other parts of the country. Even their children, who was not born in the province of Limón share their collective memory and assume certain attitudes and behaviours even when they are not living in the province.

One of these attitudes is the defense and protection of the image of the province from false accusations and stereotypes. One example will suffice about the attitude towards the province by one of the children of Afro-Limonenses born in other parts of the country.

A Newspaper report of *Diario Extra* on June 15, (2004, pp. 11) evidence the negative identity construction of the province and its Afro-Costa Rican population due to racism. Esmeralda Britton⁴⁰ who is an Afro-Costa Rican born and living in San José comes out to defend the province and its people against negative stereotypes.

Esmeralda Britton comments with concern in el *Diario Extra* 2004:

Duele. Es como un dardo envenenado de imprecisiones y generalidades que se disparan contra toda la gente de Limón, como si esta provincia fuera el territorio segregado para hipócritas, prostitutas, drogadictas y drogadictos, funcionarias y funcionarios públicos cuya única vocación es la ineficiencia.

It hurts. Is like poisonous degas of imprecision, and generalizations that are fired against all the people of Limón, as if this province was the segregated territory for hypocrites, prostitutes, drug addicts, public workers whose only vocation is inefficiency.

In the same newspaper she continues to publicly defend the province by embracing it as her own. She declares ownership of the province of Limón. *Diario Extra*, Junio 15, (2004, pp. 11):

Ser Limonense es un honor. Y tener a Limón en el corazón, es una inspiración constante y una responsabilidad urgente para construir la calidad de vida decente que todas y todos se merecen.

Being a Limonense is an honour. Having Limón in one's hearth is a constant inspiration and urgent responsibility to build the quality of decent life that all deserve.

⁴⁰ Esmeralda Britton was at this time the Minister for the Condition of Women.

Esmeralda Britton comments are laden with both pain and pride. Pain for the way mainstream Costa Rica continues to perceive, and treat the province and the people of this region, and proud for the region and its people's struggle for a better life despite the economic, and racist odds.

It is interesting to note that even though Esmeralda is not a born Limonense, being Afro-Costa Rican is enough to defend this region it is argue because of what it represents in terms of Afro-Costa Rican identity and the collective memory of her ethnic group.

It is the conjugation of elements the un-intentional settling of Afro-Caribbean immigrants, the influence and impact of their culture, the larger population representation and the preservation of mainly Jamaican culture by the part of their Afro-Costa Rican descendants which help in making this region and particularly the Port of Limón a metaphor for Afro-Costa Rican black identity.

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Table 1.2.

Cuadro XXV COLOR O RAZA DE LA POBLACION DE COSTA RICA, POR PROVINCIAS, 1950

PROVINCIAS	TOTAL	BLANCOS Y MESTIZOS	NEGROS	AMARILLOS	INDIGENAS	OTROS
REPUBLICA DE COSTA RICA	800.875	782.041	15.118	933	2.692	91
SANJOSE	281.822	280.987	694	129	---	12
ALAJUELA	148.850	148.683	46	---	121	---
CARTAGO	100.725	100.148	146	28	378	25
HEREDIA	51.760	51.736	22	1	---	1
GUANACASTE	88.190	87.967	20	203	---	---
PUNTARENAS	88.168	86.594	441	211	915	7
LIMON	41.360	25.926	13.749	361	1.278	46

Source: Dirección General de Estadística Y Censos. *Censo de Población de Costa Rica 1950*. 82.