When is an Indian not an Indian? While this question may appear grammatically tautological, that appearance is precisely what will permit us to explore and expose the boundaries set up around racial identities in the United States, boundaries that "Critical Latin@ Indigeneities" drifts across. In this speculative essay I suggest that Critical Latin@ Indigeneities does not name a new paradigm so much as it designates a still emergent area of scholarly research and intellectual community, one that promises to drift across boundaries created by relatively recent academic paradigms that unwittingly reify the racial boundaries they were established to challenge. For do we really need another paradigm for thinking about racial and ethnic identity? Or is it more urgent to think across already existing paradigms, to think existing paradigms at cross-purposes and together? In answering the question posed above, a scholar needs to prepare to cross any number of temporal, geographic and disciplinary boundaries; to prepare for the numerous entities that will police these crossings, insist on their impropriety, ask for the interloper's papers, or quite simply order the interloper to stay in her scholarly place. So the question "when is an Indian not an Indian?" is neither rhetorical nor ironic. It is not a trick question, though there is colonial trickery involved in answering it properly.

To (begin to) answer the question, in the United States an Indian is not an Indian when s/he is also African American or Latina/o. Even with all the permutations implied

---

1 This essay is an elaboration of a keynote address delivered at the Critical Latin@ Indigeneities Symposium held at University of Texas, Austin, in March 2015. I would thank the organizers of this wonderful event, Maylei Blackwell, Paloma Diaz, and Luis Urrieta, for inviting me to think deeply with the other participants about the meaning of "Critical Latin@ Indigeneities". I also thank LLILAS and CMAS at UT Austin for hosting the symposium.
by the generic term "Latinos"—a term used to designate the descendants of Latin American nations whose racial identifications were forged in the wake of Spanish colonialism and through the ideology of *mestizaje*—a Latina/o cannot be a proper Indian in the United States.² According to the racial ideology of the United States, an indigenous person cannot be authentically Indian if they are cut, mixed, intermingled, muddled. (And what are Latina/os and Afro-Latina/os if not an intimate, intermingled bunch?) As Jean M. O’Brian demonstrates in *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians out of Existence in New England*, indigenous peoples worked alongside blacks and whites for British colonists in a variety of labor relations, including slavery, their presence recorded in the profit they produced for colonial farmers and business owners.³ And yet, as soon as an indigenous person married, cohabitated, or reproduced with free or enslaved blacks or with indentured or free whites, they and their children ceased to be Indian:

The narration of Indian extinction in local texts proceeded along two important avenues. Insistence on "blood purity" as a central criterion of "authentic" Indianness reflected the scientific racism that prevailed in the nineteenth century. New England Indians had intermarried, including with African Americans, for many decades, and their failure to comply with non-Indian ideas about Indian phenotype strained the credence of their Indianness in New English minds. Non-Indians thought about race and blood according to a colonial calculus in which the possession of even a single drop of African American "blood" relegated one to the status of "Black" and "slave," whereas it demanded in Indians the evidence of just the opposite: blood purity. (xxi-xxii)

---


With some revision, this "colonial calculus" continues to inform the boundaries around contemporary racial identity formations, especially minoritarian ones. While U.S. Native Americans often do not insist on "blood purity" as a condition for "authentic Indianness" or tribal affiliation, as New England colonists did in their written record of extinction, contemporary U.S. courts continue to demand a demonstrable preponderance of indigenous ancestry for the registration of Native American nations. Native Americans seeking tribal recognition must not only prove "blood purity," but an unwavering fixity of place, as made disturbingly evident in the now infamous 1978 *Mashpee Tribe v. Town of Mashpee* case. 4

Writing indigenous presence out of the local colonial records of settlement not only rendered invisible the indigenous owners of the land usurped by colonists. According to O'Brien, it also served the invaluable purpose of paradoxically rendering

---

4 The Mashpee Tribe sued to recover their original territory on Cape Cod. They claimed that the sale of their lands to the Town of Mashpee in 1834 and 1870 had transpired illegally, without the federal consent required under the Non-Intercourse Act regulating the sale of Indian lands to settlers. The Town of Mashpee argued that the Mashpee were not a tribe at the time of the sale (or in the present) and hence not protected by the Non-Intercourse Act. The Mashpee had to prove their status as an indigenous nation before the court could adjudicate their recovery claim. The judge allowed expert testimony from several witnesses as to what constituted an indigenous tribe. Frustrated by the lack of consensus presented in the expert testimony, the judge instructed the jury to follow the strict precedent set in 1901 by *Montoya v. United States*: "By a 'tribe' we understand a body of Indians of the same or similar race, united in community under one leadership or government, and inhabiting a particular though sometimes ill-defined territory," (*Montoya v. United States*, 180 U.S. 261, 266 [cited in "Translating Yonnondio By Precedent and Evidence: The Mashpee Indian Case," by Gerald Torres and Kathryn Milun, *Duke Law Journal* 1990.4 (September): 625-659, 633], emphasis added). The jury decided the Mashpee were not a continuously existing tribe according to these criteria. See Torres and Milun for an analysis of the way in which the Mashpee's co-habitation with white Christians challenged the narrow colonial calculus of "blood purity" recorded in *Montoya* and reiterated in *Mashpee Tribe*. In 2007 the Department of the Interior granted the Mashpee federal recognition and a settlement was reached with the town, demonstrating some drift in the colonial calculus O'Brien describes.
the immigrant British colonists as the true natives of the newly conquered territories. This colonial calculus continues to resonate in the virulent rhetoric against Latin American immigrants today. The biting irony in the spectacle of white descendants of European immigrants angrily insisting on the deportation of millions of brown descendants of indigenous Americans is lost on both the xenophobic right and the liberal left thanks to the persistence of this colonial calculus. The descendants of the original Americans, who today pour over the U.S.-Mexico border, are rendered invisible through the narrated extinction of a nativist discourse suiting the purposes of present-day colonial dispossession, as we will see below.

It was not only individual Indians who were erased in this fashion, but entire communities of indigenous peoples who intermingled with the communities of whites and blacks settling in their midst. O'Brien's analysis underscores another consequence of this narrated extinction that begins to address the question with which I opened. Not only were indigenous communities excised from the geography of New England's colonial settlement through the requirement for blood purity, but the indigenous character and culture of the black and white communities with whom indigenous peoples intermingled was excised from the colonial record as well. The indigenous ancestry of these mixed and intermingled people was also rendered invisible, denied, excised from the narrated history of the founding of the United States as a nation of immigrants—even when that "immigration" was coerced as in the case of enslaved or annexed peoples. Perversely, African Americans' authentic citizenship status—as opposed to the always suspiciously foreign status of Latina/os—is achieved surreptitiously through the narrated extinction of the indigenous ancestry many black Americans do, in fact, possess. One might call this
"authentic 'immigrant'" a foundational paradox of white and black citizenship in U.S. nationalism.

The disappearance of the Indian was concomitantly accomplished by making Indians anachronistic to the landscape of the "New World." Indians after all can never be modern, according to colonial calculus of settlement (O'Brian, 5). The presence of indigenous peoples in the racial geography of Anglo-American colonialism came to signify, ontologically, the absence of labor. To the British colonists, it was their "proper" possession of the land—the application of manure and oxen to agriculture; the fencing of gardens and fields into private holdings—that symbolized the advent of modernity in the New World, even as this required misrecognizing or ignoring indigenous agricultural practices that corresponded with British ideas of "industry." Correspondingly, the indigenous person—her body in the landscape of America—was necessarily rendered incapable of labor. In part, the British colonist accomplished this was by having indigenous labor disappear into blackness in the written record, as O'Brian illustrates. But U.S. historiography has used related narrative techniques to eliminate Indians from the historical landscape, representing the indigenous body as too weak or too idle for

---

5 O'Brien explains: "New Englanders refused to regard cultural change as normative for Indian peoples. Indians who changed did not comply with non-Indian expectations of their authenticity. These ideas produced a lethal brew: non-Indians insisted that Indians could only be ancients, they could never be modern" (5). Philip J. Deloria makes a similar argument in Playing Indian, Yale University Press 1998, chapters one and four.

6 See Patricia Seed's Ceremonies of Possession in Europe's Conquest of the New World: 1492—1640 for a extended discussion of the British colonists' understanding of the proper possession of land and the consequence this had on their appraisal of indigenous peoples' right to their lands, introduction and chapter one, Cambridge University Press (1995).

7 For an extended discussion of racial geographies, the centrality of indigenous peoples in the Americas to their formations, and the place of agricultural practices therein, please see Maria Josefina Saldaña-Portillo, Indian Given: Racial Geographies Across Mexico and the United States, Duke University Press (2016), especially the introduction and chapter one.
colonialism: her body too susceptible to death when taxed with hard work, his too disposed to wander when confronted with the opportunity of settlement. As a consequence of these ontological divisions between races invented by the colonial calculus of settlement, black and brown bodies had to be imported into the Anglo-American colonial geography for the purposes of laboring, precisely to replace the incapable Indian body as it disappeared into waste.

In another context, Melissa Wright has argued that the remains of murdered women in Ciudad Juárez are as valuable in their death as they were in life for global capitalism, represented by the *maquiladora* industry along the border. Their human remains epitomize the "disposability" of the women who labor in the maquiladoras, a disposability that relieves the managers of transnational corporations from the responsibility to train these women for promotion to skilled labor positions within these factories, or to even protect them on their way to and from work at dawn and dusk:

This vision of her disposability, the likelihood that this conditions could exist in a human being, is what is so valuable to those who extract what they want from her. When she casts the shadow of the consummate disposable laborer [in death] whose labor power is not even worth the expense of social reproduction, she is a utopian image. In this particular manifestation, the Mexican woman is the utopian image of a culturally victimized variation of labor who guarantees her replacement—after being worn down by the repetitive stress syndrome, migraines, or harassment over pregnancies—with fresh recruits who are, perhaps, leaving another place of employment for one of the same reasons. (87-88)

---


In Wright's analysis, the victims of feminicide stand in, metonymically, for the inevitable wasting away of all female maquila workers after one to three years of employment at any particular factory; the murdered girls and young women confirming the limited shelf life of these workers on the factory floor. Their bodies cannot stand any more laboring, presumably, as evidenced by the still-unexplained deaths of these women. Given this utopic life cycle of female labor, companies are justified in firing these women, should they attempt to organize, get pregnant, or simply seek promotion within the factory. Borrowing from Wright's work on the victims of feminicide and their invaluable metonymic relationship to waste for transnational capital along the border, I suggest that the representations of indigenous bodies as wasted and/or wasteful were in themselves performing crucial labor for settler colonialism and early capitalist development, contributing to the representation of the American landscape as vacant or vacating, as res nullius. Moreover, this archival representation of the wasting and wasteful indigenous body justified the enslavement of Africans and the annexation of Mexicans as imported labor for settlers, because these hardy bodies were necessary for the robust primitive accumulation of British-American capital in the colonial and early national periods.10

Revisionist scholarship in American Studies has thoroughly critiqued this conventional U.S. historiography predicated on the disappearance of the native. The gains of the last fifty years of scholarly activism has rendered this mode of narrating U.S. history almost passé in some academic circles and even in popular culture. Indeed, the

---

10 I am not suggesting the decimation of indigenous populations upon contact with Europeans was somehow not as severe as recorded in the historical record. Rather, I am addressing the discursive uses to which the figural construction of the weak, lazy indigenous body was put in order to underscore the historical relationship between racial formations in the formation of racial capital.
recent growth and scholarly success of Native American historiography—new histories of Great Plains, Southwestern, and California Indians—has permanently changed these representations of indigenous peoples, providing a rich record of Native Americans' own agential histories.\footnote{As examples of this new historiography, please see Lisbeth Haas, *Conquests and Historical Identities in California* (U California Press, 1995); David J. Weber, *Bárbaros: Spaniards and Their Savages in the Age of Enlightenment* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2005); Ned Blackhawk, *Violence over the Land* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2006); Juliana Barr, *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman: Indians and Spaniards in the Texas Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: U North Carolina Press, 2007); Pekka Hämäläinen, *Comanche Empire* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2008); Brian Delay, *War of a Thousand Deserts* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2008); Lisbeth, Barr, Delay, Weber, Blackhawk, others?} While the discursive uses to which the colonial tropes of vanishing and/or wasting Indians have been thoroughly critiqued in the field of American Studies—the very area studies that coined these representations in the early twentieth century—these tropes nevertheless pop up in unexpected places. The rendering invisible of the indigenous ancestry of African Americans, Latinos, and whites, as well as the banishment of indigenous peoples from the modern scene of labor, has had a determining impact on the counter-hegemonic scholarly formations of Native American, African American and Latina/o Studies. The colonial calculus of "pure blooded" indigenous authenticity and the "one-drop rule" of African American racial embodiment on the one hand, and the colonial requirement for importation of black and brown bodies to labor on the other, has compartmentalized the study of race and ethnicity in the U.S. academy. While the colonial tropes of the vanishing or wasting/wasteful Indians may be on the decline within the historical and cultural imagination of the United States, these tropes nevertheless helped produce the trifurcated study of race and ethnicity, one in which Native American studies tends to devote itself to the study of indigenous genocide and reservation, African American studies to chattel slavery and its carceral afterlives, and Chican@/Latin@
Critical Latin@ Indigeneities: A Paradigm Drift

studies to colonial annexation and labor migration. This is a necessarily reductive representation of academic fields that have produced diverse and rich scholarship that regularly strays from these broad organizing themes. Nevertheless, the colonial calculus of blood quantum, coupled with the disappearance of the Indian from the scene of labor, is all too often mirrored in the institutionalization of scholarship on race and ethnicity. Critical Latin@ Indigeneities, with its paradigm drift, allows us locate the disappearance of the Indian in this trifurcated study of race and ethnicity. For these anti-colonial and counter-hegemonic schools are in different ways and degrees implicated in the contemporary extinction of the Indian.

Settler colonial studies, prison studies, and migration studies are theoretical paradigms that emerge from this trifurcated division of intellectual labor. These paradigms are in vogue within Critical Race and Ethnic studies, but each renders indigenous peoples invisible in some way. To clarify, I teach these theoretical paradigms regularly in both my undergraduate and graduate classes, and the scholarship generated under each has transformed my own. In addition, I am thrilled by the way these three paradigms have galvanized political engagement inside the academy and out. And yet I suggest that Critical Latin@ Indigeneities, by thinking these paradigms at cross-purposes and together, is especially equipped to re-dress this invisibilization of the Indian in each. My critique is offered as a generous and generative engagement with the theoretical bases and political implications of each. A Critical Latin@ Indigeneities drift urges me to ponder, why it is that migration studies so rarely interrogates migration as a consequence of settler colonialism? In turn, why does settler colonial studies offer little insight into the issue of indigenous migration to the United States? Finally, why is it that the
incarceration of Latin American immigrants—and particularly indigenous Latin Americans—in detention centers goes nearly unaddressed in prison studies, leaving the challenge it poses to the plantation-to-prison narrative unacknowledged?\textsuperscript{12} Attention to Latin@ indigeneities as they persist in the hemisphere today not only underscores the troubling gaps among these three trending academic paradigms, but also offers ways to bridge these gaps.\textsuperscript{13}

\textit{Los de abajo también cruzan}

Since 2014, over 70,000 children from Central America have come to the United States seeking asylum, the majority from Honduras.\textsuperscript{14} These children are currently detained in just two states—Texas and Pennsylvania—though children released from detention are in most cases monitored electronically.\textsuperscript{15} Texas warehouses these children

---

\textsuperscript{12} This line of analysis would not be possible without the conversations that I have sustained over the last two years with three American Studies doctoral students in my home department of Social and Cultural Analysis at NYU. I thank Ricardo Gamboa, Oscar Marquez and Susana Morales for their critical thinking. They have made visible to me the impasses that exist amongst settler colonial studies, prison studies, and migration studies with their insights. As always, I am grateful for Susana, Oscar and Ricardo's critical insights, and am solely responsible for any gaffs.

\textsuperscript{13} A new generation of Latina/o scholars have for some time now been devising a new vocabulary and theoretical concepts for addressing the relationship between mestizo and indigenous identity formations, analyzing the complex, intimate, and longstanding relations between mestizos and Indians in the Southwest without falling into the romanticism of the high nationalist period. I again thank the Critical Latin@ Indigeneities conference organizers for putting a name to this collective effort.

\textsuperscript{14} Teresa Wiltz, "Unaccompanied Children from Central America, One Year Later," \textit{Huffpost Latino Voices}, 8/24/15, \url{http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/unaccompanied-children-from-central-america-one-year-later_us_55db88b4e4b04ae497041d10}. Wiltz draws her figures from U.S. Customs and Border Protections. If one counts from 2012, the number exceeds 100,000, with the spike beginning in 2014.

\textsuperscript{15} Previously, there were family detention centers in Artesia, New Mexico and in Hutto, Texas, both of which were closed by the Obama administration because of the deplorable conditions in the centers and because the prolonged detention of children violated the \textit{Flores} Settlement Agreement, which prohibits long-term detention of minors. After closing the Hutto detention center, the Obama administration opened the detention center
in two detention centers located between Laredo and San Antonio (in Karnes and Dilley, Tx), moving the majority of those held through the process or asylum or deportation fairly rapidly, while Berks in Pennsylvania houses roughly 85 families who remain in limbo between asylum and deportation. States like New York have opted for a method home surveillance, once a child has been processed out of detention, which I discuss below. The U.S. media and President Barak Obama have described the children as fleeing drug related gang violence. U.S. citizens have heard the horror stories associated with these children's plight, of forced induction into the gangs, of rapes and death threats to family members should children refuse to join the gangs. Undoubtedly, gang violence has increased in Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras over the last two years, devastating the family structures and the social fabric within these countries. The role of Central American gangs in the transportation and distribution of cocaine has increased dramatically, as Columbian cartels developed inland routes to evade tightly patrolled sea routes.

Nevertheless, for any scholar of Central America, this explanation for the sudden spike in migration by minors seemed too facile, the timing of the latest influx suspicious, the description of the migrants somewhat incredulous. After all, gang violence in these countries increased drastically, in both quality and quantity, after the 1995 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act. As euphemistically reflected in second half of the title, "irresponsible" immigrants to the U.S. who were convicted of a crime carrying a one or more year sentence were immediately eligible for deportation, in Artesia, only to be forced to close the Artesia center for violation of the same agreement. For more information on Flores Settlement Agreement, see https://lirs.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Flores-Family-Detention-Backgrounder-LIRS-WRC-KIND-FINAL1.pdf.
regardless of their legal residency in the country. The Act allowed the U.S. government to deport more than 150,000 convicted criminals back to Central America after serving their sentences in U.S. prisons, many of who were members of Mara Salvatrucha and the Eighteenth Street Gang. Those deportees who were not gang members often joined gangs upon arrival in Central America, as they arrived "bereft of social networks and sometimes without Spanish language skills."\textsuperscript{16} These deported youth had also arrived to the U.S. as child refugees, accompanying parents from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras who in the 1980s came fleeing political persecution and violence perpetrated by right wing militaries and death squads funded by the U.S. military or by Israel's, our proxy. Raised in barrios across the Southwest and the Northeast, these deportees knew nothing of the "home countries" to which they returned with one notable skill, drug distribution.

Thus, while gang violence in Central America has certainly increased in the last two years, the explanation that these current child refugees were fleeing gang violence begged the question, why now? When gang violence has been a constant in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras for the last twenty years? Also, in order to get to the U.S., these terrified children would have to cross the country most affected by drug gang violence on the continent, Mexico. From the mass gravesites discovered along the Mexican side of the border since 2010, we know the drug cartels regularly force migrants from Central and South American into their ranks, as mules and petty dealers, so it is at least counterintuitive to flee drug violence by heading into it. But the most difficult part

of the story to fathom was precisely that any Central American mother would send their child off on this journey by themselves. And of course, they did not.

Carla García is a transnational Garífuna intellectual and activist, a member of the Organización Fraternal Negra Hondureña (OFRANEH) that campaigns to protect and recover Garífuna territory in Honduras from multinational corporations and corrupt national and local government agencies. When in New York City, she works with the Garífuna Solidarity Network, an organization that advocates for Garífuna mothers and their children who have come to this country as part of this latest wave of asylum seekers. There are an estimated five thousand Garífuna mothers and children in New York City who are part of this wave, as these mothers accompanied their children rather than subject them to these dangerous journeys alone. Most have come to New York City because it is home to the largest concentration of Garífunas outside of Honduras. More than 1,500 of these mothers are currently under direct surveillance by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), whose agents monitor their movements with GPS ankle bracelets or with daily calls and visits.¹⁷ These women and children live with the relatives and friends who paid for their journeys, confined by ICE surveillance to tiny apartments they share in a few neighborhoods in the Bronx, an economic burden to their relatives as they cannot work while they await their trials. García provides us with a richer explanation for the plight of these women and children than that of "fleeing gang violence," and the complexity of which challenges settler colonial studies, prison studies, and migration studies, defying the intellectual barriers that surrounds each just as these

women defied the multiple national barriers between their homes on the Atlantic Coast of Honduras and New York City.¹⁸

Garífuna territory in Honduras has become a prime target for colonial dispossession by developers and government agencies since the passage of CAFTA, the Central American Free Trade Agreement in 2009.¹⁹ As in Mexico under the regime of NAFTA, CAFTA required constitutional reforms that have made it considerably easier for transnational corporations (TNC) to acquire territory in Central America. These corporations are interested in acquiring large swaths of choice beachfront property along the Atlantic Coast for their mega-projects, much of it held collectively by the Garífuna. Tourist TNCs desire Garífuna territory for building luxury hotels, gated retirement communities, and deep-water docks for cruise ships. Oil corporations meanwhile desire it as a base for oil exploration in the Caribbean; the Honduran government for naval bases; narco cartels for sea to land drug running.²⁰ The Garífuna have already lost considerable amounts of their land through corruption, fraud, and squatting, or through coerced transactions with TNCs mediated by corrupt government officials. These transactions are not terribly dissimilar from the fraudulent and coerced methods used by Anglo-American

---

¹⁸ Carla García and I were both participants in the Hemispheric Institute's Crossing Mexico, held at NYU and Princeton University in March, 2015. She presented her analysis of the Garífuna mothers and children as her presentation at the event, which I summarize and augment here. For a video stream of her archived presentation, please follow the following link: http://hemisphericinstitute.org/hemi/en/video.  
²⁰ Ibid.
colonists to purchase lands from Native Americans.\textsuperscript{21} The process of dispossession has accelerated to such a degree that OFRANEH started a campaign in 2012 to reclaim their lands on the basis of their recognized status as indigenous peoples and their protected rights as such to territory. As part of this campaign, in 2013, the Garífuna community of Triunfo de la Cruz brought a suit against the Honduran government before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (CIDH) to recuperate their collective title to ancestral land that had been fraudulently transferred to third parties.\textsuperscript{22} The CIDH found in the Community's favor in October, 2015, ordering the restitution of lands with due title.

The Garífunas are an internationally recognized group of Afro-indigenous people that span the Atlantic coast from Belize to Nicaragua, descendants of sixteenth century escaped African slaves who intermarried with coastal Carib and Arawaks Indians to form \textit{cimarrón} (maroon) communities. For the Spanish colonial authorities \textit{cimarrón} was a derogatory term for these communities, indicating an escaped and feral animal, but the Garífuna take great pride in the legacy of freedom symbolized by both their African ancestors who escaped slavery and their indigenous ancestors who resisted Spanish colonialism.\textsuperscript{23} Indeed, García credits the mixing of these two ancestries in fugitive \textit{cimarón} communities with the Garífuna's continued freedom and willingness to fight against contemporary colonial dispossession. The Garífuna, after all, have not only won


\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Comunidad Garífuna Triunfo de la Cruz y Sus Miembros v. Honduras}, Sentencia de 8 de Octubre (\textit{Fondo Reparaciones y Costas}), Corte Interamericana de Derechos Humanos.

\textsuperscript{23} The Garífuna and other intermixed maroon communities were called “black Caribs” in English during the 18\textsuperscript{th} and 19\textsuperscript{th} centuries, a name for resistive natives in British colonies, to be distinguished from putatively less resistive “yellow” and “red” Caribs.
international recognition of their indigenous status, they continue to fight for territorial recognition and autonomous government at the national level. In Nicaragua, the Garífuna are one of the four indigenous groups participating in the autonomous regional government of the Atlantic Coast that includes the entire western half of the country. This regional government exercises authority over indigenous territorialities and the region’s economic and natural resources. In Honduras, the Garífuna may not enjoy regional autonomy, but the OFRANEH continue to fight successfully for the collective titles to their ancestral lands, to recuperate lands fraudulently transferred to third parties or usurped by squatters, to achieve cultural preservation, and to struggle for recognition.

It is in this context of struggle against contemporary colonial dispossession that, according to García, a rumor was started in 2013 among the Garifuna in Honduras and in New York City that the Obama administration would not only welcome Garifuna women and their children to the U.S., but would provide the women with jobs and the children with services. Rather than clarify this rumor, the Honduran government facilitated the opening of the border to Garifuna women and children who were leaving Honduras by the busload, their trips financed by their relatives and friend in New York City who were also privy to these rumors. Their passage was further facilitated across the Guatemalan and southern Mexican borders by the coyote syndicates that greased the wheels of illicit commerce all the way across the U.S.-Mexican border, where the coyote's job was made considerably easier than usual since they simply handed them over to ICE officials as refugees. Certainly, this rumor may find its origin in part in a misinterpretation of DACA. However, that would not explain the circumscribed and targeted reach of these rumors—to indigenous women and children in Honduras (and possibly Guatemala)—nor the
representation of these children as traveling alone in flight from gang violence. Instead, from OFRANEH's perspective, the timing of these rumors corresponded perfectly with recent attempts to dispossess the Garifuna of their choice territories, and even more precisely to OFRANEH'S ongoing campaign to recuperate lost territory under international law as indigenous peoples.

These rumors, I would argue, are a thinly veiled form of colonialism, an ethnic-cleansing lite. They targeted the reproductive center of the Garifuna as an indigenous people, removing from Honduras the women and children upon whom generational reproduction relies and facilitating greater dispossesssion by lessening the number of Garifuna left in Honduras to fight for the protection and restoration of their territories. As a scholar of Central American leftist insurgencies in the 1980s, I immediately recognized the use of rumor as a favorite counter-insurgency tactic. During this 1980s, the Guatemalan military was snatching teenagers off city streets to fill its ranks, while right-wing paramilitary groups were disappearing catastrophic numbers of indigenous teenagers deemed potential guerrillas. Rumors were rampant throughout the country that the guerilla were kidnapping and killing these teenagers, selling their body-parts to flush U.S. medical tourists in need of kidneys, eyes, hearts, and livers, in order to finance their own insurgency. My personal favorite was from Nicaragua, where it was rumored that Fidel Castro's urine was used to vaccinate children during the period of the Sandinista national health bridges. The vaccines were said to turn future generations into communists, and the rumor had the effect of preventing children from receiving one of the main benefits of the revolution. Thus Garcia's claim that the rumors were started as part of a counter-insurgency campaign to impede the Garifuna land reclamation
campaign along the Atlantic Coast is not far-fetched but a familiar technique of contemporary colonial dispossession and genocide.

When Garífuna women and children arrived in the United States, President Obama did not greet them with free hugs, jobs, schools and medical care. Instead they were shipped to privately run detention centers, or in the case of the Garífuna who had relatives or friends willing to host them, they were sent to the Bronx. Although not imprisoned, neither are these women free while they await their asylum trials. Rather, many must wear a GPS ankle monitor that limits their movement of their Garífuna barrios. These Garífuna women denounce these bracelets as "modern slavery," associating them with the shackles their cimarrón ancestors escaped centuries ago.24

Significantly, these women's ankle bracelets are monitored by a private company that charges the government $46 dollars per day per bracelet to follow the comings and goings of these women and their children. This is a bargain for the U.S. taxpayer, as incarcerating them in a detention centers would cost $600 per person per day.25

I work with the Coalición Mexicana based New York City, a non-profit immigrant rights organization serving documented and undocumented immigrants from Mexico, Central America, and South America in the tristate area. One of the services the Coalición provides for undocumented immigrants in New Jersey is that of informing their consulates that these immigrants are finished with their trial proceedings and available for deportation. We have to provide this service because private detention centers routinely fail to inform the corresponding consulates that immigrants are available for deportation,

24 Cortés, ibid.
25 These figures on the costs of immigrant monitoring and detention are provided by the Coalición Mexicana.
handled by the consulates. Detention centers "forget" to inform consulates because they continue to receive payment for the beds these immigrants occupy. These undocumented immigrants are not so disposable after all, as there is a fortune to be made from the administration of their waste: from their wasting away in detention centers, from their wasted and wasteful journeys here, wasteful because the average journey costs $7000 from Honduras.

From this narrative of flight and detention, we began to discern the myriad of ways in which the case of the Garifuna mothers and children in New York City troubles settler colonial, prison and migration studies at once. Beginning with migration studies, the case of these Garifuna mothers and children does not fit the usual economic factors of Latin American migration to the United States. Migration scholars like Patricia Fernández-Kelly, Douglas Massey, Raúl Delgado Wise, and Mariana Ortega Breña, to name but a few, have provided us with invaluable analyses of NAFTA push factors for indigenous and subsistence farmers and for displaced workers from domestic industries, as well as the pull factors of jobs in Mexico's maquiladora sector along the northern border, and of jobs in the domestic, agricultural, and construction sectors of the United States.26 Phillip Martin estimated the numbers of the NAFTA-induced "immigration hump" from Mexico at four million as early as 1993, providing this information in the hopes of circumventing treaty articles that would have dire consequences for Mexican

agricultural production and indigenous land tenure.\textsuperscript{27} These warnings failed to have the hoped for effect, and at twelve million undocumented immigrants and counting, we now know that Martin vastly underestimated the "immigration hump." Such economic and political research will most certainly now be directed toward calculating the effects of CAFTA on Central American economies and migration to the United States. I could not teach my Latino Studies classes without these scholars, for it would be impossible to provide a meaningful account of the Latino experience in the U.S. without their studies. And yet, these accounts fail to capture the colonial aspects of Garifuna migration, the fact that the targeting of women and children for out migration is a form of colonial detribalization, of native elimination for the purposes of dispossession and for "properly" laboring the land presumably lying idle in the Garifuna's wasteful hands. Again, indigenous waste becomes the fuel for a new round of primitive accumulation.

As Patrick Wolfe's analysis of settler colonialism stipulates, colonialism is not an event but a structure, and yet migration scholars would never analyze the influx of Latin Americans to the U.S. as an extended form of indigenous detribalization and dispossession; the words colonialism and neocolonialism never appear in their essays. I do not want to indulge willful naiveté.\textsuperscript{28} These scholars work in the interest of influencing national and international policy and any extended discussion of migration as a form of colonialism would disqualify their scholarship as ideological and bizarre,


eliminating any chance of influence. Nevertheless, their economic paradigm of migration as strictly an effect of neoliberal restructuring cannot account for the racialized nature of capitalist accumulation occurring not only through indigenous dispossession in Latin America, but also through an expansion of the prison industrial complex to include the housing and monitoring of black and brown indigenous bodies in the U.S. From the perspective of the migration studies paradigm, colonialism is dead and any racial consequences of neoliberal reforms are epiphenomenal rather than structural. But a Critical Latin@ Indigeneities drift must interrogate these neoliberal reforms for precisely the ways in which they reiterate a colonial calculus of racial formation, especially when neoliberal economic expansion by TNCs is dependent upon indigenous waste and dispossession.

This brings me to the ways in which Garifunas’ presence within the prison industrial complex challenges prison studies. Michelle Alexander’s book *The New Jim Crow* has been so important for drawing the nation's attention to the ways in which the prison industrial complex not only devastates the daily lives of black people throughout the United States, but also to the dangers incarceration poses to our democracy. Alexander is quite responsible in pointing out in her book's shortcoming, its lack of attention to how incarceration affects Latino lives and to the ways immigrant detention centers augment the prison system. She invites future scholars to take up these aspects, and thus I am answering her invitation. Alexander’s argument draws a straight line from

---

plantation slavery through post-reconstruction Jim Crow to the prison industrial complex as analogous modes of denying political enfranchisement to the African American population through time. Garífuna mothers and children trouble this story in several productive ways.

I return our attention to the Garífuna's origin story as the descendants *cimarrón* communities of free and resistive Africans, Arawaks and Caribs. On the one hand, this Garífuna origin story may harbor an unarticulated desire to disassociate themselves from the historical taint of enslavement associated with blackness. On the other, Garífunas' insistence on their fugitive freedom within *cimarrón* communities suggests a profound understanding of the fact this freedom was accomplished precisely through miscegenation: free blacks cohabitated with free indigenous people to remain free. Moreover, today in Honduras it is Garífuna's indigeneity that continues to insure their freedom and the possession of communal territories that enable their reproduction.

Thus I am not simply using the Garífuna origin story as a "gotcha" moment, suggesting that because their *cimarrón* ancestors escaped the system of enslavement on but they are now in detention, Alexander's formula is wrong. Rather I am suggesting that the Garífuna mothers and children alert us to the provincial aspects of two key building blocks in Alexander's plantation to prisons narrative: her use of the concept of racial caste and her interpretation of the war on drugs. Alexander argues that an implacable racial caste system in the U.S., with African Americans located firmly at the bottom, has necessitated continuous black disempowerment through successive modalities of control. Here Alexander divorces racial caste from any relationship to its historical origin in the *casta* system under Spanish colonialism, to the detriment of her argument. In colonial
Latin America, *casta* was anything but fixed, instead measuring the fluidity of race, albeit in ideally rationalized units of mixture. In practice, *castas* were always shifting, hence the need for constantly calculating the infinite permutations of racial mixing. It was a paradoxical system but one that refused stasis and always foregrounded relationality amongst races. When Alexander forgets this longer history of racial *casta* in the Americas, she replicates the interested divisions made by British colonists in early New England. That is, she inadvertently replicates a colonial calculus of racial difference that cuts intimate relationality out of the colonial record. For how to account for the circuitous routes through which other brown and red bodies ended up in prison alongside blacks since the beginning of incarceration and deportation except through racial relationality? Deportation and detention of Mexican immigrants swelled prisons in the first half of the twentieth century and were big business for the carceral state then as now.

Alexander’s analysis of the war on drugs is provincial in similar ways, as Alexander attributes the root cause for this war in the need to incarcerate African Americans who had gained new freedoms from the Civil Rights movement. She traces the war on drugs back to Reagan's presidency and the proliferation of crack cocaine on U.S. city streets facilitated by the CIA. The war on drugs effectively equals the New Jim Crow in her analysis. However, Nixon began the war on drugs as part of a Cold War strategy to contain communism in Latin America, years before the era of mass incarceration of African Americans. While Nixon marketed his new war as an effort to curtail drug consumption in the U.S., designating funds for rehabilitation, it was primarily a vehicle for funneling monies to Latin American military and police. This is why two-thirds of the trillion dollars spent on the drug war since the Nixon administration has been
spent on eradication and interdiction in Latin America. For five decades now the U.S. has supplied Latin American police and military with arms to fight drug production and distribution, providing them with the perfect cover for also killing labor organizers, indigenous leaders (including members of OFRANEH), human rights advocates, progressive journalists, clerics, and students. Since the threat of communism and of guerrilla insurgencies in Latin America ended with the fall of the Soviet Union, this repressive activity funded by the war on drugs has been directed against those who stand in the way of neoliberal reform and the transformation of Latin American economies, particularly against indigenous activists like the Garífuna who resist extractive industries looking for minerals or energy sources, tourist industries looking for new sites for luxury resorts, pharmaceutical industries looking to harness biodiversity, and green imperialism looking to protect indigenous territories from indigenous peoples.

African Americans have suffered truly dire consequences as a result of the war on drugs, but so have Latin Americans; what is more, these sets of dire consequences are articulated together. Alexander misses this relationality because prison studies regularly makes the Indian presence in the Americas invisible. The ability of Critical Latin@ Indigeneities to drift across paradigms restores this relationality. Thus, when Garífuna and other indigenous peoples from Latin America show up at our doorstep fleeing the effect of drug wars in their countries, a Critical Latin@ Indigeneities perspective points out that these drug wars in Mexico, Central and South America are also the part of a much broader ongoing colonial dispossession of indigenous populations across the hemisphere. Moreover, when the Garífuna end up in modes of detention in the United States, they are not only joined to African Americans through a shared history of
enslavement, struggle and freedom, but also as victims of a shared militarization of drug enforcement across the Americas. Their migrations and detentions as indigenous peoples are not marginal to the economy of incarceration in the United States, but central to it.

Finally, turning to the settler colonialism paradigm, what do these Garifuna mothers and children tell us about the ways in which this paradigm about indigenous peoples paradoxically makes Indians invisible? They baffle the paradigm, according to which any and all peoples who arrived in the New World were participants in settler colonialism and benefited from it, even if they were brought in chains, or under indenture, or through massive annexation. Enslaved Africans, Asian coolies, annexed Mexican, all are *arrivants* who benefitted directly and lucratively from the elimination, removal and absorption of the original inhabitants by European settlers. Do we begin to see how this settler colonialism is predicated also on the narrated extinction of Indians? Because what of the Garifuna? How does a settler colonial paradigm account for their continued presence in the new world? Were they *arrivants* when they survived slave ships that might have crashed against Central American shores to launch their *cimarrón* lives? Are these Afro-indigenous mothers and children present-day *arrivants*, here to reap benefits expropriated from Native Americans? Did they displace the indigenous people they became in the sixteenth century? More importantly, are the Garifuna mothers and children crashing against our shores today *arrivants* or indigenous? How shall we treat them? Who shall greet them? At least in New York City, Latinos organizations are meeting this challenge, since according to the settler colonial paradigm, Garífunas must
be the *arrivants*, since by its calculus they cannot be the indigenous. According to the prison studies paradigm, they too are *arrivants* to the scene of incarceration, their detention epiphenomenal to the story of African American incarceration. They arrive and do not fit the colonial calculus of blood quantum set in motion centuries ago by Anglo-American settlers. If Garífuna are cut, intermingled, diluted, far from home—they must be Latina/o. And what about the "pure" Mayan mothers and children who languish in Texas detention centers road because there is no one who is capable of translating trail proceeding, even bail hearings, for them in their indigenous languages? They do not speak any colonial language, and yet they are not properly Indian for they do not stay in their proper place. Are these indigenous women and children *arrivants* as well, because this is not their territory, because they too are far from home? These are the urgent questions that a Critical Latin@ Indigeneities perspective, capable of drifting across paradigms and defying blood quotas, can address by challenging settler colonialism studies, prison studies and migration studies.

---