

RACE, PLACE, AND PRAXIS: SHOCK DOCTRINE SCHOOLING IN HONDURAS AND THE DECOLONIAL PEDAGOGY OF *GARIFUNA EN PELIGRO*

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Verónica Brownstone

Wesleyan University

Abstract: In Honduras and across Central America, education has long played a decisive role in both reactionary and revolutionary moments where new ideologies, social relations, and apparatuses destabilize older ones. In the aftermath of 2009 ousting of left-wing President Manuel Zelaya, Honduran schools became a key site of resistance in the anti-coup movement. Meanwhile, the increasing marketization of public education was entirely unprecedented. This article argues that Honduras's experiment in shock doctrine schooling imported the American charter model to advance a free-market agenda predicated on the renewed disempowerment of racialized and poor communities. It then turns to Allí Allié and Rubén Reyes' *Garifuna en peligro* (2012), a Honduran-American film produced at the height of these postcoup reforms, to examine the labor required to undermine neoliberal education. The pedagogical model depicted in the film strives towards an analytic and a praxis that refuses the modern-Western reason of neoliberal education structures and curricula. The article concludes by expanding discussions on decolonial pedagogy to account for its strategic proximity to racial capitalist logics that favor representation, citizenship, sovereignty, and rights, which achieve inclusion in the state, but not necessarily decolonization.

Key Words: Education and neoliberalism, decolonial pedagogy, Blackness and Indigeneity, postcoup Honduras, Honduran cinema

Información de contacto : vbrownstone@wesleyan.edu

In June 2009, the Honduran military staged a coup d'état that forced President Manuel Zelaya out of his home in Tegucigalpa and into exile in San José, Costa Rica. Still in his pajamas, the ousted president called for peaceful resistance while business and church leaders mobilized right-wing supporters to take to the streets wearing white shirts in support of "national salvation" (Fasquelle 17). Within two hours, Roberto Micheletti was named the nation's constitutional president and by September the United States declared its support of a "transition" via election, which brought Porfirio Lobo Sosa into power. After waiting months to condemn the coup—still refusing to call it a "military" coup and sustaining all aid to Honduras—Barack Obama officially recognized Lobo's government and invited the postcoup president to the United States. He made stops in New Orleans and Miami.

Lobo returned to New Orleans five months later to meet with business leaders, security companies, and representatives of seven Louisiana universities. Sitting in the home of former Tulane University President, Scott Cowen, alongside then-Mayor Mitch Landrieu, President Lobo signed a memorandum of understanding to partner with Tulane, Xavier University, Louisiana State University, and other schools on reforming healthcare and education in Honduras. The bilateral agreement promised to bring Honduran exchange students to Louisiana, "trade curricula" with the Universidad Tecnológica Centroamericana in Tegucigalpa, and send US-based faculty and staff to Honduras to "provide guidance on rebuilding public education and healthcare systems." Lobo celebrated this formal commitment as being "very important to Honduran students." University of New Orleans Chancellor Tim Ryan was equally enthusiastic, adding that for Louisianans to be "exposed to Latin Americans in their classes provides a tremendous learning experience" ("Universities Partner" 2010; Geglia 2016; Louisiana Justice Institute 2010). Sold under the guise of cultural diversity, expanding access, improving quality, and mutual exchange, education policy quickly became one of several avenues through which external forces could shape and control Honduran life in the aftermath of the 2009 military coup.

The ousting of President Manuel Zelaya laid the groundwork for the erosion of public education. While neoliberal education reforms began in the 1990s under the conservative government of Rafael Callejas, the coup unleashed the first serious attempts to marketize an entire school system (Levy, "Reforming Schools" 174; Altschuler et al. 2013; Edwards Jr. et al. 2023; Edwards Jr. et al. 2024). However, the postcoup school finance reforms were entirely unprecedented in the history of Honduran education (Levy, "Reforming Schools" 171).¹ New laws were implemented to ensure the rapid decentralization of national public education and the privatization of its funding. These reforms should be read as a part of a global pattern of "shock doctrine" education restructuring, alongside cases such as Puerto Rico after the debt default and hurricanes Irma and Maria, New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina, Chicago and Philadelphia in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, Haiti after the 2010 earthquake, and much earlier, in Chile under Pinochet (Brusi 2021; Bonilla and LeBrón 2019; Klein 2008; Lipman 2017, 2011; Saltman 2014; Vallas et al. 2010).²

As Honduran education reforms became increasingly attractive to US policymakers, national business elites, and libertarian interest groups, working Hondurans also made education a battleground for economic and racial justice in the greater anti-coup resistance movement. In fact, within Honduras's long history of land and labor struggles, mestizo, indigenous, and Afro-Indigenous communities have consistently invented spaces and relationships of education capable of uncovering and overcoming multiple forms of oppression. This essay interrogates schooling's decisive role in both reactionary and revolutionary change.

In the first two sections, I examine how the marketization of public

1. The exploitation of post-conflict or post-disaster instability has a long history across the region. In Honduras, the recovery period following Hurricane Mitch in 1998 brought a series of structural adjustment programs aimed to increase foreign investment in energy, mining, agro-industrial production, Export Processing Zones (EPZs), and tourism. Hurricane Mitch left ten percent of the population homeless, over six thousand dead, and over 60 percent of the country's infrastructure destroyed. In response, damaged fruit crops were replanted with privately-owned African palms and devastated Caribbean coastlines were developed into tourist havens (Phillips 110, 124). Christopher Loperena maintains that this experiment in disaster capitalism formed the blueprint for Lobo's postcoup recovery plan (619).

2. Naomi Klein's concept of the "shock doctrine" describes the process by which capitalists seek to profit from calamity, such as natural disasters, health epidemics, and political unrest. When applied to schooling, this typically involves austerity measures, school closures and privatization, decentralization of funding and governance, and appealing to parents by selling the idea of autonomy and choice.

education was essential to the postcoup regime's restoration of class and racial dominance. I argue that these neoliberal reforms imported the American charter school model. This "charterization" does not imply the transformation of public schools into private schools, but rather the introduction of comparable funding schemes and arrangements. In other words, the importation of ideas, techniques, and practices from the private sector to commercialize public education and increase the involvement of private non-state agents in the making of education policy.

The subsequent four sections offer a critique of Alí Allié and Rubén Reyes's *Garifuna en peligro* (2012), a Honduran-American film that portrays the school as a site of postcoup political struggle. Released at the height of the education reforms, it imagines a model of schooling that thinks with and from the lived experience of coloniality and its matrix of power. I define the resurgent and insurgent teaching strategies advanced in the film's depiction of engaged language pedagogy and discuss their capacity to undermine capitalist and colonial structures of power. The model depicted in the film strives towards an analytic and a praxis that refuses the modern-Western reason of neoliberal education structures and curricula, a place-making process I theorize in dialogue with the work of Ruth Wilson Gilmore. However, *Garifuna en peligro* also wrestles with the limitations of implementing decolonial pedagogy through colonial structures. I conclude by expanding discussions on decolonial pedagogy to account for its strategic proximity to racial capitalist logics that favor the political instruments of representation, citizenship, sovereignty, and rights, which can achieve inclusion in the state but reach an impasse, remaining stuck in their foundational colonial order.

From Charter Schools to Charter Cities

Postcoup shock doctrine politics in Honduras are often associated with the development of Zones for Economic Development and Employment (ZEDEs), which have been fiercely contested by the FNRP (Frente Nacional de Resistencia Popular), OFRANEH (Organización Fraternal Negra Hondureña), and other groups as the ultimate expression of modern-day neocolonialism. Less discussed, however, is the connection between these highly privatized, largely autonomously governed "charter cities" and the country's school finance reforms. The outsourcing of the American charter school model remains understudied and underspecified, as does its deep imbrication in a hemispheric chain of education privatization.

Charter schools are publicly funded but privately-run and subsidized models of choice that claim to promote local freedom and control. They are touted by their proponents as solutions to class- and race-based violence, and as elixirs of innovation capable of combating the "achievement gap" (Stern et al. 62, 66). The charter school agenda is characterized by closing public schools, particularly "failing schools" in poor communities, and turning them over to private for-profit management organizations that are legally allowed to take control of administrative decisions for schools and students. "Steering education at a distance" through testing regimes and standards, they tie competitive teacher pay to student test scores, radically undermining the integrity and power of educators. Charter schools also replace democratically elected Local School Councils —key governing bodies made up of parents and community members— with appointed experts and elites, who are seen to provide a more politically stable environment in which to implement market mechanisms (Lipman, "Contesting the City" 7; Harvey 2007). Pauline Lipman identifies this shift to managerialism in education as symptomatic of a larger move in the neoliberal state from government to governance. Governance here describes leadership as synonymous with efficient management, where democracy and public participation are weakened in civic life and

decision making is increasingly carried out by public-private partnership, behind closed doors, and by appointed commissions and unelected bodies (“Contesting the City” 4, 14). In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, 90 percent of public schools in New Orleans were converted into charter schools, and it was precisely this kind of shock doctrine schooling that the Micheletti and Lobo administrations introduced after the coup.

Several new education laws were enacted in Honduras between 2009 and 2013, including the *Ley Fundamental de Educación*. This law mirrored the privatization scheme of charter schools insofar as its funds for academic programs and facility maintenance were decentralized from federal to municipal governments. This process of *municipalization* was first implemented in Chile in 1979, during a military dictatorship that was not only the preeminent experiment in monetarist and public choice theory principles, but also a laboratory for education privatization. Across the hemisphere, the decentralization of public school management has increased inequalities between public schools located in the poorest and richest neighborhoods (Verger et al. 41). Under the *Ley Fundamental*, money no longer came from the central Ministry of Education of Tegucigalpa, but from each school’s corresponding mayoral government, who tasked teachers and parents with soliciting funds from regional businesses, NGOs, and philanthropists. Facing significantly reduced school resources, the burden of fundraising fell on these teachers and parents (Levy, “Reforming Schools” 174, 184). Since the ousting of Zelaya, private sectors have become increasingly influential in the process of education policy formulation and implementation, including international cooperation agencies and multilateral banks like the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank, as well as corporations, nongovernmental organizations, business chambers, think-tanks, and domestic and international philanthropic organizations (Edwards et al. 2023, 639, 642-643, 648).³

Another new law, the *Ley de Participación Comunitaria*, passed by Micheletti’s government shortly after the coup, established local auditing committees to monitor teachers’ work and facilitate the process of rewarding or punishing those who did not conform to the new guidelines. Unlike the PROHECO community-run schools in rural Honduras during the 1990s, these laws did not give parents authority to hire, fire, or monitor teachers, nor to have input on their salaries. Rather, it bunched teachers and parents together under the shared responsibility of soliciting private sponsorship. In fact, receiving state sponsorship was conditional upon teachers and administrators securing funding and increasing the school’s enrollment and retention numbers (Altschuler et al. 2013; Levy, “Reforming Schools” 173-174, 180). Under the *Ley de Participación Comunitaria*, the livelihoods of educators depended on their entrepreneurial servitude to the state. With these changes in place, attention to the care and education of children and youth became compromised both at home and in the classroom, as social reproduction efforts were redistributed to reproduce the educational capacity of the system.

“When the shock doctrine is applied to schooling, it has the effect of both profiteering off children and denying them access to the knowledge that could help them escape subjugation” (2018). Organizer and teacher Jesse Hagopian of Black Lives Matter in Schools made this observation in Haiti following the 2010 earthquake. Haiti’s previous decentralization of school management after the 1985 earthquake was modeled after the even earlier free-market educational restructuring in Pinochet’s Chile, as were the school reforms in post-Katrina New Orleans. American charter school architect Paul Vallas was an advisor to all three reform programs. He preempts critiques of decentralization by insisting on the “importance of creating an organizational structure to ensure that critical partners (including, with regard to Haiti, foreign

3. Brent Edwards, Mauro Moschetti, and Alejandro Caravaca provide valuable research on the impacts of globalization and privatization on education in Honduras, making critical insights on the role of international actors. See their book *Globalization, Privatization, and The State: Contemporary Education Reform in Post-Colonial Contexts* (Routledge, 2023). See also *Education and Development in Central America and the Latin Caribbean: Global Forces and Local Responses*, edited by Brent Edwards, Mauro Moschetti, Pauline Martin and Ricardo Morales-Ulloa (Routledge, 2024).

governments and NGOs) subordinate their own priorities and expenditures to the [...] reform plan, and not vice-versa" (Vallas et al. 28). Despite attempts to conceal the extractive nature of the charter model, the facade of corporate sacrifice is a weak one.

The decentralization and privatization of the Honduran public school system allowed the state to recede into a managerial role and propagate a new market for capital accumulation on the backs of disenfranchised Hondurans. When the Ministry of Education transferred funds to regional governments, they were made responsible for formulating and operating their own budgets for school infrastructure. Cash-strapped or even in debt, these municipalities struggled to handle yet another economic infrastructure project and resorted to contracting out public services to private companies, resulting in more unequal access to education. A key example is the *Sistema de Aprendizaje Tutorial* (SAT), a widely attended middle- and high-school program designed for rural students and autonomously managed by the NGO, Asociación Bayán. The primary innovations of SAT echo the Chilean charter school reforms —flexible teacher contracts, an alternative teacher recruitment model, and school-based management by NGOs or parent associations (Murphy-Graham et al. 115-116). In 2012, the first full academic year of the postcoup education reforms, Honduran teachers declared that these changes benefited the rich and further marginalized the poor (Levy, "Schoolteachers" 140-141). Although scholars consistently emphasize the reforms' promotion of structural inequality, few studies examine their racial character and racializing function.

Race and Coloniality in Honduran Postcoup Education

While existing hemispheric critiques of neoliberal education help us understand capital's grip on teaching and learning (Levy 2017, 2019; Altschuler et al. 2013; Geglia 2019), they underplay the centrality of race and coloniality within the very logic of neoliberalism, and within education's marketization specifically. Across the Americas, the schooling of working class students and students of color has become not only a commodity of corporate capital, but also an apparatus of control that serves to reproduce racial and class disparities.

In Honduras, school dropout rates affect 50% of young people and disproportionately impact rural students. The Norwegian Refugee Council cites economic problems as being the primary cause for low rates of student retention, followed by lack of food assistance and insufficient support at home (Lázaro Lorente et al. 232-233). Among rural Hondurans, the rate of child labor is among the highest in Latin America, contributing significantly to low school attendance and high repetition rates (Urquiola et al. 577). Many Garifuna youth leave school between the third and sixth grade, leading to a widespread crisis of under-prepared primary school graduates in rural and coastal areas (Kleyn 220; Murphy-Graham et al. 114). I provide these statistics to emphasize that after 2009, it was precisely these racialized "achievement gaps" in "failing schools" that both literally and figuratively formed the ground upon which to expand charter-like non-traditional schools operated by public and private actors. Indeed, writing on the US charter school system, Lisa Leigh Patel theorizes the conversion of public-school buildings into private and semi-private institutions as a process that acts in keeping with the settler colonial genealogy of land grabs, animated by the pursuit of property and ownership (362).

Policies like the *Ley de Participación Comunitaria* and *Ley Fundamental de Educación* allowed the postcoup regime to double down on its managerial role and facilitate alternative forms of jurisdiction over Afro-descendant and Indigenous communities while retaining some degree of control over them. In their Black Marxist and Black nationalist

critique, Mark Stern and Khuram Hussain liken charter schools to post-colonies precisely because they allow external organizations to legally take control over administrative decisions for schools and students (Stern et al. 2015). Similarly, in Honduras, public education's dependence on non-state actors ensures the continual domination of global hegemonic powers. Managed by local elites under the tutelage of the United States, transnational capital functionally determines the marketization of Honduras' education. Understood through a postcolonial lens, this implies the continued influence of imperial economic and political powers.

Stern and Hussain appeal to the insights of Kwame Nkrumah (1965) to describe the colonial relationship between a publicly funded school and its private managerial powers, hence the charter's defining structure: "The essence of neo-colonialism is that the State which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from the outside" (70). Following this line of argument, the settler logic of Honduran postcoup education operates at the point of the privately-run nonprofit and for-profit education management organizations that, as a result of the decentralization of state funding, are tasked with managing schools, teachers, and students at a distance.

Whereas the colonality of power of charter-like models hides behind the mask of being a great equalizer that improves teacher capacity, wins the consent of parents, and retains student enrollment, the settler dream of the charter city is plainly visible. The Honduran "Law of Special Development Regions," passed in 2012, explicitly facilitated the selling of indigenous land and water described as open and uninhabited or unused, including Garifuna coastal fronts (Phillips 111). The laws of free, prior, and informed consent were not applied because the territories were described as vacant. The Frente Común Contra las ZEDES en La Ceiba explained: "por lógica no es necesaria la consulta previa porque son zonas vacías y no tienen a nadie con quien consultar, aunque alrededor si haya población" [logically, previous consultation is not necessary because they are vacant zones and there is nobody with whom to consult, even though the surrounding area is populated] ("Honduras no se ZEDE" 2021). Pockets of the Cortés, Colón, and Islas de la Bahía departments became "new frontiers" of development that renewed a foreign-run enclave economy far too similar to the former "Banana Republic," as Beth Gaglia has argued (2016). The city-scale territories introduced elements of international oversight and intervention that allowed foreign actors from influential neoliberal institutions to partake directly in the governance of Honduras. In terms of modes of governance, ZEDES have their own laws, policing structures, and currency, and the administration of justice is outsourced to other countries in order to appeal to investors (Gaglia 2016, 53-354).

Given their structural similarities, it should come as no surprise that the first ZEDE was itself enmeshed in the commercial sphere of American charter schools. The original charter city was built in 2012 in Trujillo, a region that includes some of the largest Garifuna land titles. The plan to build it was signed by the real estate development corporation, Grupo MKG, owned by Michael Strong, an American education entrepreneur and famed advocate of charter schools.⁴ Strong founded the think tanks FLOW (2005) and the Free Cities Institute (2011), both of which promote full corporate governance and privatization of education, healthcare, and public services. The funding structure of the charter school model was arguably a pretext for the ZEDE. It offered a prototype for alternative forms of corporate governance where public entities are run by external organizations, under a highly decentralized and deregulated funding arrangement that draws in outside capital, with new laws in place to control the local population.

4. Beth Gaglia points to Michael Strong's role in the development of ZEDES in "Honduras: Reinventing the Enclave" (2016).

I have argued that Honduras's experiment in shock doctrine schooling imports an American education reform model to advance a free-market agenda predicated on the renewed disempowerment of Black and Indigenous communities. These policies restore a colonial relationship between the school and their external managerial powers while entrepreneurializing teachers and surveilling their adherence to new guidelines and curricula. Alí Allié and Rubén Reyes' *Garifuna en peligro* (2012) follows a Garifuna language teacher in Los Angeles, California, Ricardo Seyer, as he works to preserve the language transnationally in the face of an increasingly extractive global market.

The fictional film is structured around place-based praxis from the perspective of experiences both lived and imagined, threaded together to provide a social commentary on cultural preservation. It combines fictional and factual elements, and features primarily non-professional actors and on-location shooting. The protagonist, Ricardo, is played by co-director and co-producer Rubén Reyes, a real-life Garifuna language teacher, founder and president of the Garifuna Museum of Los Angeles (GAMOLA) and the Garifuna Hope Foundation, and author of *Garüdia: Garifuna Trilingual Dictionary* (2012). In *Garifuna en peligro*, the scenes of teaching and theater practice are filmed in the very spaces where Reyes offers his language classes in Los Angeles —the Clifford J. Palacio Garifuna Language & Culture Academy, an extension of Garifuna American Heritage Foundation United (GAHFU), and the Garifuna Hope Foundation ("How to Properly Read in Garifuna Language," 00:06-18:00; "Garifuna Hope Foundation Videos," 00:00-00:38). Similarly, William Flores, the actor who depicts the playwright in the film, is also one of its co-writers and the author of "Garinagu in Peril," the play upon which the film is based ("Producers").

Moving between representation and documentation, directors Allié and Reyes incorporate into the film's fictional plot the factual storyline of building a small schoolhouse on a real plot of land in Triunfo de la Cruz. Although "a lack of funds [...] made construction elusive," the completed project was intended to house Honduras' first trilingual (English, Spanish, Garifuna) elementary school.⁵ As a government pilot program, the school's construction was only nominally supported by the state. Therefore, the film functioned both to document the construction of the building's foundation as well as finance and supervise the \$12,000 endeavor. Alongside an architectural model, its production website states that "an investment in the film is not only an investment in the preservation of Garifuna culture via an audiovisual work, but it is a direct, tangible investment in the community and the education of its children" ("School").

In the film, Ricardo endeavors to build a Garifuna language school in his coastal hometown of El Triunfo de la Cruz while he also teaches and creates spaces to practice Garifuna in Los Angeles. An integral subplot is the production of a Garifuna-language play about the chief and abolitionist hero of Saint Vincent, Joseph Satuyé, written and directed by another community member, Hillbuck (William Flores) and starring Ricardo's son, Elijah (E.J. Mejia, Jr.). Meanwhile, Ricardo launches Seyer Vacations, a small business that brings American tourists to the Garifuna coast. The earnings go towards the school, which his younger brother, Miguel (Julian Castillo), begins building. The plan fails when Miguel is seduced into selling the lot to a British-owned hotel company. Upon returning to Honduras and meeting with members of his community, Ricardo comes to understand his own role in the land grab and proceeds to fight for its repossession. The film ends with Ricardo and the community building the school on contested land, as his son, students, and other community members in Los Angeles reenact Satuyé and his army's final battle against the British.

5. At the time of the film's production, trilingual classes were being "held in a borrowed space (a nearby house)" but availability of the space was erratic. The teachers and students were already conducting classes, but they did not yet have a dedicated facility ("School").

The film opens with a flashback of Ricardo's mother speaking in Garifuna to him and his younger brother as children. Sitting on a log facing the water, the young boys listen to their mother as she affectionately reminds them, in Garifuna, that they are Garinagu and that they must speak their language wherever they are. "I love you both so much," she says with her arms opened wide as if to show an incalculable quantity, "that's why I want you to speak your language wherever you go" (00:01:20-00:01:26). In equating the preservation of their language with the love of a mother, she adds context to the value of the mother tongue. Language is what binds one to their mothers, to their pasts, to the brokenness and suffering it contains, but also to its legacies of endurance, care, and survival. As bell hooks proclaims: "We are wedded in language, have our being in words. Language is also a place of struggle" (146). Borrowing hooks' framing, we might say that Ricardo's mother urges him to speak from the margins. That is, to speak not from a marginality one wishes to lose, but from "a site one stays in, clings to even, because it nourishes one's capacity to resist" (149-150). In *Pedagogy of Hope*, Paulo Freire speaks similarly of the need for the colonized and oppressed to take distance from the colonizer-oppressor, "to locate themselves 'outside' as Fanon would say."⁶

In the same breath, Ricardo's mother tells him to "guide [his] brother," in this sense identifying him as a pedagogue, a *pedo-* (boy, child) - *agôgos* (guide) (*Garifuna* 00:01:10). His mother lays the foundation for his future commitment to Garifuna language teaching. Shortly after this scene, we are introduced to Ricardo as a professional teacher in front of a classroom of child, youth, and adult students. He is giving a lesson on basic Garifuna vocabulary, such as greetings and family figures. His grammar teaching practice consists of rote memorization and repetition, a pedagogical technique that follows the traditional methods of language instruction in Honduran schools (Kleyn 228). However, beyond this similarity, his modalities of language teaching deviate. As the film progresses, it becomes clear that Ricardo's revitalization efforts go beyond direct actions to increase the number of new speakers. He repositions indigenous language as central to the transnational Garifuna community's resilience and resistance. In what follows, I demonstrate that Ricardo's teaching framework shares traits in common with Miami nation linguist Wesley Y. Leonard's conception of *language reclamation*, which seeks to not only create new speakers (*language revitalization*) but to incorporate into language teaching the needs and visions of Indigenous communities (Leonard 15).⁷ At the same time, other practices of Ricardo's deviate from this vision.

In an informal teaching moment, Ricardo crosses paths with a group of children in his hometown on the coast of Honduras. He speaks to them in Garifuna, but they respond in Spanish. When he asks them, rhetorically, why they should really be speaking Garifuna, they answer: "Because we are Garifuna." Echoing his mother's words, Ricardo tells them to let go of their Spanish and start speaking only Garifuna (*Garifuna* 00:57:49). This scenario of children responding in Spanish, English, or Kriol to their Garifuna-speaking elders is not uncommon along the Central American coast. In their study of Seine Bight, Belize, Jennifer Carolina Gómez Menjivar and William Noel Salmon report that Garifuna is an "artifact of the elderly," with little indication of intergenerational transmission. However, they also point to drawbacks in their quantitative survey method, primarily because participants' perceptions of their own attitudes and usage tendencies do not always match their observed behavior (62-63). In fact, based on research in Honduras, Santiago Jaime Ruiz maintains that the Garifuna language does not actually seem to be undergoing language endangerment. Rather, over the last two centuries, the number of speakers has been increasing steadily across Garifuna communities in both Honduras and the diaspora (145-146).

6. Cited in Walsh, "Decolonial pedagogies walking and asking. Notes to Paulo Freire from Abya Yala," p. 19. For Walsh's more detailed discussion on Fanon's influence on Freire, see "Introducción. Lo pedagógico y lo decolonial: Entretejiendo caminos," in Walsh (Ed.), *Pedagogías decoloniales. Prácticas insurgentes de resistir, (re)existir y (re)vivir*, pp. 23-68.

7. Leonard's work is about language reclamation specifically within Native American communities and does not include Indigenous peoples of Latin America or the Caribbean.

The scene with Ricardo and the children in Triunfo de la Cruz suggests that both realities are true: younger generations are gaining proficiency in Garifuna *and* parents and grandparents still feel frustration and regret when their heritage seems to be slipping away, frequently blaming their children and grandchildren for their traditional language falling out of use (Gómez Menjívar et al. 61-62). Ricardo does not ask the children why they do not communicate in Garifuna, he only insists upon the need to do so. This suggests a conception of language reclamation as a project to increase speakers and revivify ethnic identity, but not necessarily one that prioritizes listening to the community's needs and visions of this process, nor to how they define the language's sociocultural meaning, both of which are central to Leonard's framing of *language reclamation*. This disregard for community input will later prove detrimental to Ricardo's approach to constructing the school.

Where his language work more readily supports community goals and collaboration is in the classroom. Ricardo successfully integrates culturally relevant interactions and content into his grammar instruction by teaching on Garifuna history. He draws his students' attention to both the legacies of colonization and the emancipatory futures that can surface through the remembrance and mourning of tragic loss. In *Roots of Resistance*, Suyapa Portillo Villeda describes a similar effect of collective memory with regard to the defeat of the left in the 1950s and the political impact this mourning has had on Honduras's labor movement since then. She likens it to a process that David Scott, in *Omens of Adversity*, describes as "reparative remembering," where recovering and grieving the past can lead to new passions, new struggles, new movements, and new efforts made by new generations. Scott writes: "In a somewhat paradoxical way [...] political ideas are founded on object loss" (Portillo Villeda 254; Scott 100). The memory that Ricardo calls up in his lesson is the catastrophic loss of life and independence of the Garifuna, who resisted the British for generations before finally being starved into surrender after the decisive death of Satuyé.

As his students listen attentively and take notes, Ricardo uses English, Spanish, and the target language to explain their ethnogenesis in 15th century St. Vincent (Yurumein), where the Garifuna were captured by British settlers and forcefully displaced to Central America (*Garifuna* 00:23:20). He does not yet convey the memory of the Garifuna's long resistance to their colonizers; this lesson is transmitted through the play. For now, Ricardo emphasizes their near total extinction between the very small island of Bequia, the even smaller island of Baliceaux, and their final transport to Roatán, off the coast of Honduras, by which point only half had survived —"It was a genocide," he emphasizes (00:24:30). He then writes the date of Satuyé's death on the chalkboard in Garifuna. They were forced to surrender to the British the next year, he explains. Asking his students why Satuyé fought, Ricardo revives the lost object that he hopes his students will internalize, a beloved ideal "imagined with all the complex associations of hope and disappointment" (Scott 101). He waits a moment and then writes on the chalkboard the word "únguahabuni." In Garifuna, he asks the class what it means. Understanding the question, a student answers: "freedom" (*Garifuna* 00:25:22).

Ricardo's classroom facilitates identity-oriented experiences. This is clear in the inherited histories of emancipatory struggles that he chooses to teach, as well as his repeated stress on embracing their Black and Indigenous identity in both his classroom and Hillbuck's play. The pedagogues impart to their students: "We are the result of an African father and a Carib-Arawak mother. That's who we are." "You're Garifuna-American. You're Garifuna first, then you're American" (*Garifuna* 00:16:24, 00:53:36). This claiming and assertion of Black

Indigeneity is reflective of contemporary Garifuna ethnohistory within Honduras' neoliberal multicultural paradigm. Whereas the 1990s multicultural turn across much of Latin America normalized a distinction between the categories of Black and Indigenous and institutionalized them in different ways, in Honduras, Garifuna communities and organizations laid claim to the entangled relations and blurred distinctions of their Black and Indigenous identities (Anderson 2007, 2009; England 1999, 2006). Much has been written about Garifuna identity formation and political projects, but Ricardo's treatment of it stresses two specific historical and cultural implications, both of which respond to sociopolitical values advanced in contemporary Garifuna struggles.

The first is reflected in his content-based language pedagogy, which positions the Garifuna as Black subjects with a history of marronage and resistance to European colonialism, as well as embodied histories of anti-Black racism, violence, and erasure shared with other communities of the African diaspora (López Oro 248). This emphasis also addresses the imposed contradictions and ambiguities of where the Garifuna find themselves within US notions of blackness, *latinidad*, and indigeneity (England 2006; López Oro 2010). The second value attached to Ricardo's identity politics is depicted in the film's treatment of accumulation by dispossession, which I address in more detail below. Inclusion in Indigenous identity affords the Garifuna added negotiating power over land rights vis-à-vis nation-states, international organizations, and development organizations. The assertion of Indigenous ethnicity lends certain structural privileges to collective rights because, as Juliet Hooker argued in 2005, "multicultural citizenship regimes are more amenable to demands made on the basis of cultural difference or ethnic identity than racial difference or discrimination" (299).⁸ As it happens, the claim to Indigeneity was central to OFRANEH's success in gaining land rights for the Honduran Garifuna community in 2015, in partnership with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (see England 2006, Bronco 2009).

By highlighting the rights and belonging afforded by inclusion in both Blackness and Indigeneity, the ethnohistorical focus of Ricardo's teaching offers his students a framework to potentially challenge the colonial matrix of power. In other words, by disrupting Western myths of racial and ethnic dualities, his teaching disrupts processes of race formation that otherwise ensure the ontological and structural superiority of one group against the inferiority of another. As Sylvia Wynter writes, "one cannot 'unsettle' the 'coloniality of power' without a redescription of the human outside the terms of our present descriptive statement of the human" (268). It is not surprising that the film reflects contemporary Garifuna ethnohistory considering the latter's centrality in the emergent multiethnic postcoup resistance movement (La Resistencia), which was at its height during the film's production.

Like many expressions of identity politics, Ricardo's ethnohistorical pedagogy appeals to a rights-based framework. To some extent, his language work—both his teaching and construction of the school—partakes in a settler-colonial mode of politics where representation, citizenship, sovereignty, and rights strive to achieve inclusion in the state, without assurance of redescribing the conditions of power or reshaping human relations. In the following section of this paper, I discuss how Ricardo's pedagogical praxis finds itself tethered to both coloniality and neoliberalism in ways that threaten to undermine its integrity. At the same time, it is also important to understand that the film's depiction of pedagogy is not reducible to the affirmation of identity or demands for recognition. It extends beyond epistemic reconfigurations to an educational praxis of reflection and action. This praxistical emphasis is developed in Ricardo's classroom through his incorporation of theater, and is further substantiated in the lessons he learns in Triunfo de la Cruz.

8. Cited in Anderson, 2007.

Openings of Decolonial Pedagogy

While decolonial pedagogy and its constitutive parts are productive concepts perhaps precisely because their definitions are expansive, key tenets merit naming insofar as they are reflected in the film. The introduction to the *LÁPÍZ* issue on decolonial education in the Americas states that beyond critique of the world-as-is, decolonial thought opens up possibilities for worlds-which-might-be:

It [decolonial thought] calls for an imagination of futures where non-Eurocentric epistemologies and ontologies would predominate and it invites the voices from the exteriority to lead the conversation. Education, as the process by which we collectively introduce ourselves and others to critiques of the as-is, in order to give form to what-might-be, is inseparable from decolonization. (Perisic 15-16)⁹

As proposed here and echoed by education philosopher Catherine Walsh, pedagogies are not only ways of teaching content, but are themselves “struggles, practices, processes, and wagers of life.” Pedagogies are “the praxis of decolonial paths that [...] work to regenerate the broken weave of community, territory, ancestral knowledge and memory” (Mignolo et al. 95).

Channeling Freirean notions of pedagogy as method, as praxistal liberation-based thought, Ricardo’s use of theater invites his students to establish alternative views of what the world could be. Education scholars claim that a positive learning outcome of embodied pedagogy is the students’ ability to “feel knowledge, internalize it, and commit it to memory” (Nguyen et al. 332).¹⁰ Writing on the connection between language development and drama, Janet Dutton and Kathy Rushton contend that performing theater in a new language allows students to speculate, experiment, and think critically about language, themselves, and the world (Dutton et al. 162). The transformative capacity of drama-driven language pedagogy resonates through Elijah’s performance of Satuyé. Before beginning to rehearse the character, he showed no interest in Garifuna language and culture. In fact, according to his father, he was becoming a “non-identifiable person” (*Garifuna* 00:12:30). However, once he starts playing Satuyé, Elijah begins speaking the language at home. His commitment to his community also grows exponentially, as Jennifer Goett has described (292). Moreover, it not only grows, but also becomes politicized. While rehearsing with his younger brother in *Garifuna*, Elijah describes the play in oracular terms as an object that speaks to him and guides him. It awakens in him a sense of purpose and resilience that undermines his idleness. He explains that Satuyé and his army did not surrender to despair or adversity: “They fought [...] For freedom. For who you are” (*Garifuna* 01:09:11).

By incorporating into his language work the embodied practice of performing a play, Ricardo assumes the role of a pedagogue as described by Walsh —not as a teacher who transmits or imparts knowledge, but as a facilitator who endeavors to provoke and advance, with others, critical questionings, understandings, knowledges, and actions (Mignolo et al. 83). Ricardo creates a space for his students to grasp their continued relationship to unfreedom and imagine the unfinished work of freedom-making that permeates their history. Like the process of worldmaking that Jose Muñoz described in *Disidentifications*, Elijah’s performance labors to establish alternate views of the world that are not only oppositional perspectives, but oppositional ideologies that reshape reality as they deconstruct it. “Such performances,” Muñoz writes, “transport the performer and the spectator to a vantage point where transformation and politics are imaginable” (196). In the film, this disidentificatory capacity pushes the

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9. *LÁPÍZ* is the journal of the Latin American Philosophy of Education Society (LAPES). The editorial collective of this issue, “Decolonial Education in the Americas: Lessons on Resistance, Pedagogies of Hope,” consisted of Cecilia Diego, Scott Henstrand, Anuar Juraidini, Walter Kohan, Bret Leraul, Tomas Rocha, Sheeva Sabati, Rafael Vizcaino, and Jason T. Wozniak.

10. “Embodied pedagogy” refers to learning that joins body and mind in a physical and mental act of knowledge construction, implying thoughtful awareness of body, space, and social context (Nguyen et al. 332).

play's function beyond the realm of representation to that of praxis and method. By juxtaposing the play's battle with Ricardo's land struggle in Honduras, the directors insist upon a theoretical causality between Elijah's performance and his community's practice of refusal (*Garifuna* 01:24:30-01:27:20). Following Tina Campt, I read refusal here as the "rejection of the status quo as livable and the creation of possibility in the face of negation" (83). While Satuyé's army fights their final major offensive against the British in the play, the future of the Garifuna is fortified as they reclaim their land in the film's other storyline of building a school. Theatrical performance is depicted as slicing and disassembling the settler colonial order to offer not only a decolonial critique through the play, but a simultaneous remaking of place in *Triunfo de la Cruz*.

Ricardo's language work operates along the conviction that freedom is a place, as Nick Estes reminds us (2020). Freedom is made in physical space through the human practice of rearranging people, land, social capacity, and other resources to consolidate the ability for people to flourish, to produce the conditions where, as Gilmore often says, "life is precious" (Gilmore 2007, 28-29; Gilmore 2017, 227). In other words, the performance not only transforms Elijah, but also insists that individual political consciousness can resolve into collective liberation. Perhaps, then, in reactivating a legacy of emancipatory struggle, Ricardo's drama-pedagogy extends beyond Muñoz's conception of worldmaking to offer a vision of liberation through place-making. While the former is an anticipatory temporality, marked by a present enactment of a future that is yet-to-come, the latter describes a geographical imperative that materializes liberation into active everyday spatial struggles. In short, Ricardo's drama-based language pedagogy is a praxis because it engenders the quotidian construction of a decolonial otherwise.

Hacer escuela: Praxis and Parasitism

Like place-making, decoloniality is neither a complete nor stable project. It is a nonlinear radical reorientation. Decoloniality is not a singular event of spectacular manifestation, but rather the "ongoing serpentine movement towards possibilities of other modes of being, thinking, knowing, sensing, and living" (Mignolo et al. 80). In this sense, it does not imply the absence of racial capitalism and coloniality, which are unlikely to disappear entirely. Rather than waiting for the resolution of a revolutionary telos, decolonial place-making builds ways of sustaining and reproducing life that actively liberate and abolish. Understood this way, decolonization is necessarily provisional and non-static because experimenting and rearranging characterize its process of negation, of "making something into something else" (Gilmore, "Abolition" 477). Gilmore is insistent upon this in her definition of abolition as "how and to what end people make freedom provisionally, imperatively, as they imagine home against the disintegrating grind of partition and reparation through which racial capitalism perpetuates the means of its own valorization" (491). In both decolonial and abolitionist praxis, the qualities of provisionality and nonlinearity are germane to understanding the inconsistencies, cracks, and fissures that arise in their undertakings. *Garifuna en peligro* highlights the presence of such tensions. In what follows I argue that the strategic proximity to capital that Ricardo retains in his decolonial praxis at first compromises the project's integrity, and later strengthens it.

As previously discussed, a second central storyline of *Garifuna en peligro* is Ricardo's endeavor to build a Garifuna language school in his hometown of Triunfo de la Cruz. At stake in this is the protagonist's method of creating the conditions for Garifuna language education to happen. Education philosophy scholar Jason Wozniak's notion of *hacer escuela* is valuable to consider when examining this task in the film. Wozniak describes the process as inventing the spatio-temporalities hospitable to thinking and practicing education otherwise. Whereas the

formal translation would be “to make” or “to produce” school, Wozniak’s emphasis on invention appropriately describes Ricardo’s process of critique and experimentation, where new forms of teaching, learning, and collective liberation are set in motion in order to uncover and overcome dynamics of oppression. This quality of invention also accounts for the unique space offered by the classroom, which allows creative and critical thinking to take place, or as Wozniak describes, “rhythmic ruptures produced in the process of teaching [where] aspects of daily life are suspended temporarily, offering one a chance to contemplate the world we live in, and the world that might be” (8, 12-13).¹¹ In Ricardo’s material undertaking of *hacer escuela*, invention is both necessary and inherent to building a Garifuna language school where it did not exist before, and where it would never exist were it not insisted upon and created by the community. As a practice of decolonial place-making, creating a school requires organizing people, land, labor, and capital in new ways that are experimental, innovative, and potentially contradictory.

To finance building the school, Ricardo creates a start-up tourism venture that brings American tourists to Triunfo de la Cruz and neighboring villages. In doing so, he takes the wealth that produces dispossession and erasure and turns it back on itself by using the profits to create conditions for sovereignty in the face of its negation. In other words, this parasitic tactic depends upon, or is parasitic upon, the financial support of foreign consumers of the capitalist class in order to carry out a project that refuses the totalization of their colonial power. In the context of contemporary art, Michel Serres describes the parasite as a “figure who interrupts an existing circuit, producing disorder but also generating a different order” (Anagnost 2018). In its parasitic capacity, Ricardo’s process of *hacer escuela* does not operate outside the capitalist, extractive violence that devalued and degraded Garifuna culture in the first place. Rather, it comes to fruition in and through intentional, strategic proximity to it, using colonial wealth for purposes that undermine it.

Yet, as the film makes clear, while this paradox aims to exceed the impacts of extraction and exploitation, it cannot in fact be disentangled from them. Some may argue that the vulnerability introduced by such proximity is not inevitable. Perhaps, for instance, if the Garifuna community of Triunfo de la Cruz were to become the primary benefactor of Ricardo’s tourism venture, this financing strategy could successfully usher in a shift in power. This logic is used by tourism developers (and Ricardo) to tout the profits their projects will bring to local communities. Ricardo tells his potential clients that Seyer Vacations is “going to support the people who are entrepreneurs in the area. They’re gonna sell bread, they’re gonna do the laundry, whatever, right? This is helping the economy in the village” (*Garifuna* 00:19:30). However, as Charles Hale and others have argued, while Central American Afro-Indigenous communities participate in enclave tourism, it is mainly as sources of surplus labor, fetishized and eroticized as cultural attractions, or, “at best, as small community-controlled enterprises that operate on the margins” (Hale 192; Loperena 2016; Brondo 2013; Anderson 2013). What, then, comes of the tourism business that Ricardo introduces into his community?

While recruiting clients from Los Angeles, he tasks his brother, Miguel, with managing the tours of Garifuna villages as well as physically building the school. Miguel remarks that his brother is trying to do something noble, but puts all the work on him. “Y yo que hago todo el trabajo, ¿qué consigo de esto? De mis ganancias que consigo de los turistas, tenía que poner a hacer una escuela. Y todas mis ganancias tenían que ayudar a comprar cemento, *bricks*, todo” [And me, who does all the work, what do I get from this? I had to put what I make from tourists towards building a school. And all of my earnings had to

11. For more on this, see also Walter Omar Kohan’s interpretation of Simón Rodríguez’s decolonial dictum, “inventamos o erramos,” in *The Inventive School Master*: Simón Rodríguez (2015).

help buy cement, bricks, everything.] (*Garifuna* 00:37:20). Noticing the burdens that come from working for a new, small enterprise, two mestizo representatives of a nearby British-owned hotel attempt to capitalize on Miguel's precarity. Miguel gradually becomes a crucial conduit in the foreign-owned company's racial capitalist mode of capture. He is first seduced into selling his labor to the hotel, Copán del Mar, and abandoning his commitment to build the school, then persuaded into selling the land intended for it. Afterall, as Aníbal Quijano writes, "beyond repression, the main instrument of all power is seduction" (169). Miguel's experience demonstrates that like white-European culture, the capitalist marketization of land is made seductive because it gives access to power.

The ILO Convention 169 recognizes indigenous peoples' right to land and self-determination within a nation state. It was ratified in Honduras in 1994 thanks in large part to alliances built and mobilized by Garifuna organizations on the basis of a shared autochthonous identity, which allowed them to legally reclaim land. In doing so, the state introduced a legal mechanism for Garifuna communities to contest neoliberal agrarian legislation and committed to "adequate procedures ... within the national legal system to resolve land claims by the peoples concerned" (United Nations 1989; Brondo 44-45). However, across the Global South, the ineffective application of autonomy laws has historically compromised such land titling.

As the film effectively registers, insufficient structures of accountability and transparency enable the swift subversion of legal documentation of a community's possession of lands (Finley-Brook 2007). Since the 1990s, the privatization of beach fronts in Honduras has been achieved in part through the bribing and intimidation of Garifuna individuals, as well as government corruption and corporatism (Daser et al. 119). To this effect, the film's directors draw attention to the cronyism and deregulation that developers thrive off in order to manipulate locals into selling their lands against their best interests. For instance, the hotel's crooked lawyer explains to Miguel that despite agreeing to sell his land for \$50,000, Miguel will only be receiving \$5,000 because the rest was used to pay off local authorities. Furthermore, before completing the land sale, the lawyer strikes from the contract the line stating the ILO 169's declaration that the land cannot be sold to anyone who is not Indigenous. Miguel reluctantly initials the change. In signing the contract he not only loses control over the territory and its economic development, but also surrenders the maintenance of Garifuna cultural identity by foreclosing the possibility of their heritage language education.

Through this lived experience, Miguel glimpses the true intentions of laws purportedly designed to protect people like him. The film conveys the widespread sentiment that, as Lara Montesinos Coleman puts it, "all human rights can provide in such contexts is a diversion, a sedative, a degree of analgesia in an intolerable situation" (1). She continues:

Critics of human rights remind us that they come burdened with the moral-political baggage of liberal individualism. They naturalize a concept of 'the human' (sovereign, self-interested, and ruling over nature) that is inextricably linked to the rise of modern capitalism and shaped through the exploitation and dehumanization of colonized peoples. (2)

In taking up the language of rights in the ethnopoliitics of his teaching as well as his struggle to reclaim the land, Ricardo's pedagogy does not only seek inclusion in the state, but also enacts a conception of liberation that is itself, to some degree, contaminated.

When he returns home to find that Copán del Mar has seized the land, he decides to draw on traditional Garifuna knowledge and consults a

buyei. Following the Garifuna tradition, a *buyei* is a spiritual guide that heals and counsels those in the community in need of clarity. In this case, she observes that selling the land and building the school are endeavors that Ricardo has pursued alone. She explains that if the village's language is dying, just as if the village were dying of hunger, the people must come together to talk about it (*Garifuna* 01:02:57). This prompts Ricardo to meet with the villagers about the land. They describe his individualism as "US psychosis," insisting that they would have helped him had he not become so selfish since moving to Los Angeles, and so intent on constructing the school without their input. One of the village men explains: "Even cleaning around the community, the men must come together before doing our community work. This is how we Garifuna do things. We always reach a prior consensus." Ricardo responds by denying accountability and instead disciplining the wage-earner by placing the blame on Miguel, who he claims sold the land (01:05:19-01:07:40). Ricardo embraces the liberal rationality of realizing his own project and freeing himself from all forms of personal dependency (Laval et al. 41, 176).

His tenor finally changes when an elder attributes Miguel's poor decisions to Ricardo's neglect as his older brother. As if flooded by his mother's words, he is reminded of his responsibility to guide Miguel, and not through the episteme of the colonizer-oppressor, but away from it, from the lifeways of the margins. As with all decolonial praxis, his incentive to rearrange the conditions of the present came with inconsistencies and cracks. In his managerial neglect to consult the affected community, Ricardo embraced the very governance practices that his pedagogy sought to subvert. His strategic appropriation of capital led him to not only finance education through private wealth, but also to steer education from the outside, without the community's input and participation, and to outsource fundamental activities away from them. Ricardo comes to understand that he has so far failed to properly involve those most affected by his project, and that if he is to move forward with it, he will need to change his approach.

Occupying Education

A critical intervention of *Garifuna en peligro* is its reflection on the question of doing decolonial pedagogy within colonial structures and logics. Can educators (ourselves included) parasitically co-opt the space of private-public education while meeting the needs of the communities we claim to defend, whose epistemologies and histories we honor in our teaching and learn from in our own struggles? Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui and Emma Chirix have been critical of how decolonial thinking has been practiced in the United States, in part because it is reduced to a process of thinking (Cusicanqui 2019; Chirix 2022). We teach decoloniality, but do we decolonize? In a way, Ricardo's mistake to represent the community only in theory is relatable to many pedagogues in the US education system and its Global South offshoots. Representation and its sensations of belonging and inclusion are sometimes fraught with avoidance of structural change. Delimited and controlled treatments of difference across institutions and states most often evade material and political questions despite (and sometimes through) the recognition of difference (Da Costa 476-477).

In this vein of critique, the contradictions that unravel themselves in *Garifuna en peligro* convey that decolonizing education is not only a matter of whose voices we bring into the classroom. A decolonial pedagogy is an educational praxis of both reflection and action — pedagogical interventions that are "not just of defense or reaction, but also and more importantly of offense, insurgence and (re)existence" circumscribed in/by building places and relationships that sustain and reproduce life in ways that are less harmful (Walsh 11). The film ends by reflecting on pedagogy's relationship to the struggle for freedom.

When Ricardo meets with the manager of Copán del Mar, they discuss their distinct ideological perspectives on how indigenous lands should be used. The manager talks about the jobs tourism and development bring local communities, how people no longer want communal control but individual property rights, and that going back and reconciling control is next to impossible for the Garifuna because of the myriad of powerful stakeholders now involved, including the Ministry of Tourism, World Bank, ONF, ILO 169, PATH (Land Administration Program Project), and IMF. In response, Ricardo describes the Garifuna's distinct relationship to land as an inalienable extension of the community itself ("I don't have the right to sell another member of my family"). He insists on their commitment to survival, closing the meeting by proclaiming in Garifuna, "We will always fight to ensure our freedom" (*Garifuna* 01:28:45). Early in the film, Ricardo writes "únguahabuni" on the chalkboard, which he defines to his students as "freedom." However, according to Rubén Reyes's own *Garüdia: Garifuna trilingual dictionary*, the word "únguahabuni" means "liberty," while the word "únguani" means "freedom" (143). The variation in Ricardo's definition of the former may well have been rhetorically unremarkable, but given freedom's centrality to the film's script and storyline, it is worth considering his choice of words and its political implications.

In the Western lexicon, the concept of "liberty" refers to modern European political philosophical conceptions of individual rights, progress, private property, and free will. The pursuit of liberalism has not only driven the establishment of sovereign nation states, it has also justified the subjugation of their colonized subjects. As Lisa Lowe argues, throughout Western history, liberty has been intrinsically connected to settler colonialism and liberalism. She explains that alongside the need for "civilization," Liberal myths about the "capacity for liberty" historically served to "subjugate enslaved, indigenous, and colonized peoples [...] '[L]iberty' did not contradict colonial rule but rather accommodated both colonialism as territorial rule, and colonialism as the expansion of imperial trades" (8, 15). Freedom, on the other hand—in not only the Hegelian-Marxist, postcolonial, and Black radical traditions but in historical liberation struggles—is often defined in its dialectical relationship to unfreedom, such as oppression or enslavement. Rather than liberty, it is the concept of freedom that is commonly used to describe liberation as something that is made universal without relying on liberal political enfranchisement or free-market capitalism.

Ricardo's use of "únguahabuni" as "freedom" instead of "liberty" may imply a conception of liberation that is incompatible with the Liberal-colonial project and its frameworks of rights and inclusion. Without linguistic proficiency in Garifuna and an understanding of its etymology, the significance of his linguistic decision remains tenuous to most viewers. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy insofar as it reflects an important political tension that persists after the film ends. Following his conversation with the manager, Ricardo and a large group of community members cut the overgrown grass on the plot of land with machetes and begin constructing the school with cement bricks and mortar. As the structure comes to life, its rooms and entrances already clearly defined, the gate to the property is left open and the sign reading "No traspase" ("No trespassing") is knocked down, yet the wire fencing around the plot remains intact. The community makes use of the land, but within certain limits drawn by the corporate power.

The viewer could infer that the two parties reached a mutual understanding of coexistence, with the land remaining in the hands of Copán del Mar and the Garifuna essentially leasing it—a compromise between the hotel's offer to build the school for them and Ricardo's insistence that the community construct their own school. However, the film offers no indication that a peaceful agreement was ever reached. To the contrary, its final scene revisits the concept of freedom

as a future still in progress, with Ricardo's wife, Becky (Gloria Garnett), comforting him while he sleeps and stressing that their struggle will go on: "We will fight together for freedom. [...] Don't forget, my husband, I will help you" (*Garifuna* 01:32:09). The viewer is left observing, as Angela Davis did, that freedom is a constant struggle. It is an ongoing, nonlinear effort characterized by obstacles, perseverance, and compromises.

Some viewers may assume that the community agreed to coexist with Copán del Mar and become parasitic upon the foreign development project as a necessary lifeline. However, without evidence of such an agreement, we are left to believe that the community repossessed the land insurgently, asserting its sovereignty through extralegal occupation of the plot. In this case, to occupy education would be to claim the right to construct and share alternative forms of knowledge that reflect the struggles and culture of the Garifuna people —akin to the Landless Workers' Movement who strategically occupy schools in rural Brazil.¹² The nature and extent of community control of the land remains undefined in the film. What is clear, however, is that they not only defend their right to the land, but also to redefine its function in society. One of the main goals of the postcoup education reforms in Honduras was to "reform curriculum [...] so that the system is able to shape students in a business culture" (Edwards Jr. et al., 642). In stark contrast, standing in front of the partially erect school building with the Garifuna flag already raised at its entrance, Ricardo calls upon the community to evoke the strength and generosity of their ancestors in order to transfer their knowledge to their children. This, he insists, is the "mindset to be taught at this school" (*Garifuna* 01:30:20).

By teaching Garifuna language, collective governance, ancestral histories and knowledge, and a genealogically-informed critique of capitalism and colonialism, the community's decolonial pedagogy plants the seeds for a new set of social relations. In so doing, it emphasizes that the concept of rights, to both education and land, is not settled. The policies, laws, and discourses enforced under neoliberalism ontologize these rights, insofar as the right to speak Garifuna, to learn about their culture, to enjoy their land and its resources, are claimed primarily on the basis of being Indigenous. Going beyond this, the pedagogy of *Garifuna en peligro* politicizes the rights to land and education by imbuing them with historical analysis and exposing their sustained tether to the frameworks and objectives of colonialism.¹³ The film leaves viewers with the question of whether neoliberal education, in all its emphasis on choice, in fact allows for teaching that is transformative, or if this capacity —so central to freedom-making— requires seizing control of education and redescribing it outside its given terms. As the charter model continues to penetrate the Global South, and private for-profit management organizations increasingly seize control of administrative decisions for schools and students, we would do well to consider how to occupy education.

12. See Rebecca Tarlau's *Occupying Schools, Occupying Land: How the Landless Workers Movement Transformed Brazilian Education* (2019).

13. For more on the shift from the politicization of rights to their ontologization in the 1970s, see Étienne Balibar "What is a Politics of the Rights of Man?" (1994).

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