



black banana
exhibitions of absence

focus | dialogue

Identifying the gaps in representation of Black Latino art and it's artists in the region of Guatemala and greater Latin America.

The impact of colonization, and later; the economic influence of companies like: The United Fruit Company play a major factor in race relations within Latin America. Ultimately impacts the curation of art and culture. With research, reflection and communication the hope is to confront and expose the erasure of Black Latino culture and artistic expression.



history

In the early twentieth century the banana was a favored commercial commodity in Latin America particularly in places like Costa Rica. Racial tensions between those who immigrated from the West Indies to work the plantations and the existing Hispanic population already existed through the effects of colonialism. We can speculate that the presence of the United Fruit Company and its monopoly of production and exportation of banana had a large play in this scenario. This was largely due to expansion in the Atlantic Coast regions and the need to grow the labor force to meet demands. This encouraged the import of foreign workers most of which were black. The UFC were said to have given no preference to West Indian workers over the Hispanic however having had experience with the commodity and with a better grasp of English the West Indians had a clear advantage. This stoked the embers of racial tension and discrimination that was passed off as nationalism.

United Fruit properties (1951)



a few questions

1. What is considered contemporary art?
2. Why would Afro Latin work be excluded from what is currently curated?
3. How can we further this conversation?
4. Who are existing artists?

Guatemala → Belize connection → afro art community

- **Originally part of the British Empire**, it shares a common colonial history with other Anglophone Caribbean countries. Belize has a **diverse society**, with many cultures and languages.
- Approximately **50% of Belizeans self-identify as Mestizo, Latino, or Hispanic** and 30% speak Spanish as a native language. When Belize was a British colony, **Spanish was banned** in schools but today it is widely taught as a second language.
- **The Garinagu (singular Garifuna), at around 4.5% of the population**, are a mix of West/Central African, Arawak, and Island Carib ancestry.
- In the early 19th century, the British sought greater control over the settlers, threatening to suspend the Public Meeting unless it observed the **government's instructions to eliminate slavery in whole**.
- **Slavery was abolished in the British Empire in 1838, but this did little to change** working conditions for labourers in the Belize settlement.
- Slaves of the colony were valued for their potentially superior abilities in the work of mahogany extraction.
- Progress toward independence, however, was hampered by a **Guatemalan** claim to sovereignty over the territory of Belize. While **Belize finally attained independence on 21 September 1981**, about 1,500 British troops remained in Belize, the declared purpose being to provide protection from a Guatemalan threat.
- **Guatemala's president formally recognised Belize's independence in 1992.**



collaborators

- **Leonard Daniels Jr.:** <http://circlecircledotdotnyc.tumblr.com/>
- **AfroLatino Project:** <http://afrolatinoproject.org/>
- **Mai-Elka Prado Gil:** <http://www.maielkaprado.com/>
- **Mai Nolasco:**
- **Katie Numi:** <http://www.katienumi.com>
- **Novel Idea Sholars:** <http://1novelidea.com/>
- **Jose Andres Reyes:** <http://misterfrik.com/>

proposal

exhibition

forum

film

website / archive

look and feel

Black room

1 Large projection screen for featured art

7 Monitors for interviews

2 Black benches

Black platform for bag of call to action 3 D printed bananas

Pamphlets and printed materials

Giant black banana to be suspended from the space

Black Banana performance: Black Banana bodysuit and poem

along with ...

1. Website with mission, and tracking of project and resources
2. Documentary of the process and interviews with artists
3. Interactive map of art exhibitions around Latin America that focus on Afro-Latinidad

look and feel cont.



look and feel cont.



"THE BIG BLACK BANANA IN THE ROOM"

MEDIUM: VINYL AND POLYFIL
DIMENSIONS: APPROX 6FT X 2FT
COST OF MATERIALS AND LABOR: \$500

look and feel cont.



"BLACK BANANA SUIT"
MEDIUM: VINYL, POLYFIL, BODYSUIT
COST OF MATERIALS AND LABOR: \$400

Tracking our current project: <http://blackbananaproject.tumblr.com/>

