

## "Garifuna in Peril" released on DVD

Source: Aban Productions

Dated: Apr. 18, 2014

*First Garifuna language feature film is now widely available.*

LOS ANGELES, Calif. -- "Garifuna in Peril", the award-winning drama directed by Ali Allie & Ruben Reyes is now available on DVD. The film offers an educational look at the Garifuna culture and history, while also evoking the themes and challenges all indigenous groups face: that of retaining their land, culture, language and identity.

Shot in Honduras and the United States, with a cast of newcomers, "Garifuna in Peril" features 19 tracks of Garifuna music in its soundtrack, and 55% of the film's dialogue is in the Garifuna language, balanced with English and Spanish. Subtitles are selectable on the DVD.

"A remarkable labor of love chronicling a teacher from L.A.'s earnest odyssey in search of his West African/Cari-Arawak Indian roots traceable to a rapidly-disappearing community living in a tiny village along the Honduran seacoast." - Kam Williams, *Baret News*.

"*Garifuna in Peril* is a terrific view for those seeking a different kind of cinema that informs, inspires and entertains. Already having played across the U.S. and in multiple countries, *Garifuna in Peril* brings to light the power of cinema to change the world that we live in." - Richard Propes, *The Independent Critic*

"Garifuna in Peril" is available now at Amazon.com and at <http://www.garifunainperil.com/dvd>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NQs5m9haasM>

### ***Who are the Garifuna?***

The Garifuna are descendants of Carib, Arawak and West African people who live in the coastal regions of Central America (and more recently the United States). Since they refused to submit to slavery, the Garifuna managed to preserve both their African roots and their Amerindian heritage, a fusion resulting in a unique ethnicity considered indigenous to the Americas. In 2001, UNESCO proclaimed the language, dance and music of the Garifuna as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

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# GARIFUNA IN PERIL

a film by Alí Allié & Ruben Reyes

## Press Kit

Garifuna in Peril.com | facebook.com/GarifunaInPerilMovie

# WE WILL FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL

WE ALWAYS HAVE. WE ALWAYS WILL

Garifuna in Peril

A film about preserving culture

## Production Notes

Directed and Produced by Alí Allié & Ruben Reyes

Theatrical Version: Runtime 99 minutes

Languages: 55% Garifuna, 30% English, 15% Spanish

Subtitled in: English (Spanish subtitled version available)

## Contact

Aban Productions

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## Garifuna in Peril Short Synopsis

Garifuna in Peril follows the remarkable story of Ricardo a Garifuna language teacher in Los Angeles as he embarks on an odyssey to build a school in his native Triunfo de la Cruz, Honduras. Compelling, humorous, and deeply human, the film takes us on a journey with Ricardo as he struggles with being a father, husband, brother and cultural ambassador. The film truthfully examines family strife and the tensions between tradition and assimilation. These challenges, along with defending the integrity of ancestral lands from exploitative interests, is the focal point of the film's message, highlighting realities not only for the Garifuna, but all indigenous peoples worldwide.

## Garifuna in Peril Expanded Synopsis

Filmed in Los Angeles, California and Triunfo de la Cruz, Honduras, with debut performances by nearly the entire cast of Honduran and Belizean actors, "Garifuna in Peril" confronts historical and contemporary issues facing the Garifuna community such as education, health and land rights, and is the first feature film with a majority of its dialogue in Garifuna (a language proclaimed by UNESCO as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity).

The Garifuna are a mix of West African and Carib-Arawak Indian people who originated on the island of St. Vincent in the 17th Century, and are considered indigenous to the Americas. For over 150 years the Garifuna successfully defended the island against European colonization, but were ultimately defeated by the British and exiled in 1797 to Central America where they now live in the coastal regions of Honduras, Belize, Guatemala and Nicaragua. More recently, large numbers have immigrated to U.S. cities such as New York and Los Angeles.

The plot of the film "Garifuna in Peril" centers around Ricardo, a Garifuna language teacher

living in Los Angeles, as he struggles to preserve his fading culture by building a language school back in his home village in Honduras. A business venture with his brother Miguel designed to raise money for the school's construction becomes complicated by the expansion plans of a nearby tourist resort, prompting Ricardo to confront land rights issues in tandem with his educational mission. Family tensions heighten when Miguel waives in the face of pressure from the resort, and Ricardo's wife Becky objects to her daughter Helena's new boyfriend Gabriel. Historical parallels to the contemporary land struggle are invoked as Ricardo's son Elijah rehearses a stage play about Garifuna hero and Paramount Chief Joseph Satuyé and his last stand against British colonialism on the island of St. Vincent in 1795. This play-within-the-movie was written by Bill Flores of the Garifuna Writers Group of Los Angeles, and is a tribute to The Drama of King Shotaway, the first theater play produced by an African American Theater Company in the United States in 1823 in New York City, also about Garifuna hero Joseph Satuyé (aka Joseph Chatoyer).

## **Garifuna in Peril Backstory**

The film is timely because the Garifuna language is one generation away from being lost unless serious action is taken to preserve it. This challenge, along with that of defending the integrity of ancestral lands from exploitative interests, is the focal point of the film's message, highlighting perilous realities not only for the Garifuna, but all indigenous peoples worldwide.

Allié and Reyes first met at the Los Angeles Pan African Film Festival at a screening of Allié's "El Espíritu de mi Mamá/Spirit of my Mother" (his debut feature film relating to Garifuna culture and spirituality, filmed in Honduras). Reyes questioned why Allié made that film in Spanish and Allié responded by challenging Reyes to make a film in Garifuna language. They ended up collaborating over a decade later, ultimately bringing a unique mix of talent to the table with Allié's cinematographic expertise and Reyes authority as a Garifuna language expert.

## **Garifuna in Peril Director's Bios**

**Alí Allié** is an independent filmmaker and cinematographer who was born in Northern California. After graduating from California Institute of the Arts, he produced and directed several Spanish language short films, *Mi Piñata* (a Mexican woman's tragicomic birthday fantasy) and *Agua en la Villa* (a montage of water usage in an orphanage in Honduras), both of which played at major Latin American film festivals. He then went on to direct the first dramatic feature film relating to Garifuna culture and spirituality, "El Espíritu de mi Mamá" (Spirit of my Mother), filmed in Honduras, which won awards at film festivals worldwide. More recently Alí has been working as a cinematographer on several independent films such as *Canary* and *Amity*, and with young people in the field of video production and multimedia at the Blazer Learning Center in South L.A.

**Ruben Reyes** is a Garifuna scholar and educator who was born in Tela, Honduras with extensive knowledge of the Garifuna culture and history and is an expert in Garifuna language. He has taught Garifuna language classes in Los Angeles in association with the Garifuna American Heritage Foundation and also produced "The Sásamu Show," a weekly program of interviews on GariTV.com about the Garifuna culture and issues in the community. In 2012, Ruben published the first Trilingual Garifuna Dictionary (Garifuna/English/Spanish), which he spent 20 years compiling and editing. He is also a songwriter and artist, designing the Garifuna flag emblem seen in the movie "Garifuna in Peril". He has also translated the National Anthems of Honduras, Guatemala and the United States into Garifuna, and co-founded the Garifuna Museum of Los Angeles.



## Garifuna in Peril Cast Bios

**Ruben Reyes (Ricardo)** A Garifuna scholar and educator born in Tela, Honduras, Ruben has extensive knowledge of the Garifuna culture and history and is an expert in Garifuna language. He teaches Garifuna language classes in Los Angeles and also produces “The Sásamu show,” a weekly program of interviews on GariTV.com about Garifuna culture and issues in the community. Ruben is also the inventor of the Garifuna clock, editor of the first Garifuna Trilingual Dictionary, and designer of the Garifuna flag emblem. He has also translated the National Anthems of Honduras, Guatemala and the United States into Garifuna, and co-founded the Garifuna Museum of Los Angeles.

**Gloria Garnett (Becky)** was Born in Punta Gorda Belize, and is one of three children. Gloria acted in numerous plays in her youth. She migrated to Los Angeles in her 20’s to create a better life for her children and has been working for L.A. County for 24 years. She has been a certified midwife and nurse for almost 40 years. Gloria loves public outreach as well as spending time with her family and friends. She never lost her passion for acting and her Belizean community. She is pursuing her new acting career in movies.

**Julian Castillo (Miguel)** An actor and musician from Triunfo de la Cruz, Honduras, Julian “Mito” Castillo has toured internationally with performing arts and cultural groups. He has appeared as a backup vocalist in several of Aurelio Martinez’s music videos shot in Triunfo.

**Aubrey Wakeling (Richard)** Aubrey has been a professional actor since 1993. British and Classically trained, he worked in the theater for many years, including performances in the West End, London. He moved to Los Angeles in 2010 to pursue a career in film, and has since been in much demand as a character actor. He has numerous movie and TV roles to his name, including the lead in the Emmy winning “Power of Art” produced by the BBC.

**Arleny Escobar (Vera)** Arleny Escobar was born in La Ceiba and grew up in the Garifuna community of Sambo Creek, Honduras. After obtaining a Bachelor’s Degree in Tourism in Honduras, she won a scholarship to study Natural Resource Technology at Mt. Hood Community College in Oregon. Upon returning to Honduras, she worked as cabin crew for Rollins Ceiba Airlines and also appeared as an on-camera host for many programs on GariTV.com.



## **Garifuna in Peril Selected Reviews & Press**

### **Movie Review: Garifuna in Peril || [www.cinema-paradiso.co.uk](http://www.cinema-paradiso.co.uk) || 12.4.2012**

"Garifuna in Peril is a timely and interesting movie which will inspire you to go away and learn more about this proud people and their history. The struggles they face to keep their unique heritage in modern day Honduras, where a large number of Garifuna now reside, is passionately demonstrated by the directors." – Rob Keeling

### **Special Screening of Exciting New Independent Film || [www.beinggarifuna.com](http://www.beinggarifuna.com) || 12.20.2012**

"Perhaps it's best to call it, community conscious cinema. Filled to the rim with concerns of a people, striking, emotional, exciting and rooted in community; the new independent film, GARIFUNA IN PERIL is a welcome addition in a film environment filled with movies about superheroes, toys, guns, talking animals, computer generated characters, explosions and special effects." – Teofilo Colon Jr.

### **Movie Review: Garifuna in Peril || [www.pamelastitch.com](http://www.pamelastitch.com) || 01.23.2013**

"You can't help but be impressed by how they intermixed the history of the Garifunas with their present day experience. You can't help but stand in awe of the beauty of their story telling technique. After watching the movie, all of us gave the movie a standing ovation and yelled, bravo!!" - Pamela Stich

### **The Garifuna, a Voice in a Chorus || [www.commongroundgroup.net](http://www.commongroundgroup.net) || 01.18.2013**

"I was speechless and became teary-eyed when I saw the finished version of this important movie. It is truly a labor of love. I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate Ali, Ruben all others associated with this noble endeavor, on an outstanding achievement that will have far reaching ripple effects. We cannot let a unique culture like the Garifuna become extinct. We cannot afford to lose a voice in a chorus. The chorus will be incomplete and flawed otherwise." Bahram Nadimi

### **Reflections On Alí Allié's & Ruben Reyes' Thoughtful, Enlightening 'Garifuna In Peril'**

[blogs.indiewire.com](http://blogs.indiewire.com) || 12.12.2012

"The film serves more as an introduction/education for those who were previously unaware, and should encourage further research, as it did in my case, with self-enlightenment being the main intent/goal." – Tambay Obenson.

## **Learning Garifuna**

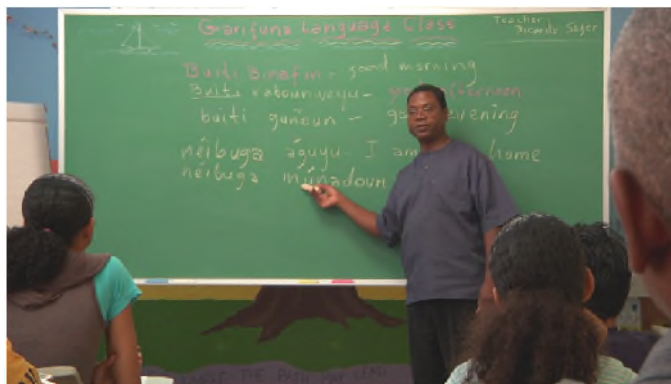
Poder 360 Hispanic Magazine | [www.poder360.com](http://www.poder360.com) | 6.1.2013

"Garifuna in Peril is on a mission to rescue one of the world's most fascinating cultures before it vanishes."  
-Jens Erik Gould



## Garifuna in Peril Publicity Stills

Ricardo's son Elijah (E.J. Mejia) rehearses a stage play about Garifuna hero and Paramount Chief Joseph Satuyé and his last stand against British colonialism on the island of St. Vincent in 1795.



Ricardo (Ruben Reyes) teaching the Garifuna language.



Jankunu dance, featured in the film as part of the play within the movie is an art form that connects music, dance, mime and powerful sociocultural symbols in a riveting display of male supremacy.



## Garifuna in Peril Publicity Stills (cont.)



Ricardo's family gathers to watch Elijah beat plantain. Hudutu is a traditional Garifuna dish made of fish stewed in coconut milk served with mashed plantain.



On the coast of Honduras, Miguel (Julian Castillo), Ricardo's brother contemplates selling his ancestral lands or helping his brother fulfill his dreams to build a Garifuna school.

# **GARIFUNA IN PERIL**

Written, Produced and Directed by  
Alí Allié and Ruben Reyes

**Year of Production:** 2012

**Countries of Production:** USA/Honduras

**Running Time:** 99 minutes

**Languages:** 55% Garífuna, 30% English, 15% Spanish

**Subtitled in:** English (Spanish subtitled version available)

**Additional Writing:** William Flores

**Associate Producers:** Dudley Augustine, Ben Flores, Jorge Garifuna

**Actors:** Ruben Reyes, Julian Castillo, Gloria Garnett, Jessica Alvarez, E.J. Mejia, Jr., Luis Martinez, Aubrey Wakeling, Arleny Escobar

**Cinematographer:** Alí Allié

**Editors:** Alí Allié, Ruben Reyes, Milton Guity, Katherine Cumpa, Marya Murphy

**Music:** Emilio Nuñez & Labaña Maraza, Aziatic, Punta Cartel, Ala Suazo, Rene Crisanto y La Runi Hati, Bodoma, Isabel Flores, Garifuna Records, Bootsyt Rankin, Julito Timbalito, Bill Cayetano, Georgette Lambey, Glen Garcia, Nuru, Luisito Martinez, Yanyman, Ruben Reyes

## **Log Line**

A Garifuna teacher from a coastal village in Honduras struggles to preserve the Garifuna language, culture and land.

## **Short Synopsis**

A Garifuna language teacher from a coastal village in Honduras, Central America struggles to preserve his indigenous culture and communal lands in the face of tourism's encroachment and personal betrayal.

## **Medium Synopsis**

A Garifuna language teacher, Ricardo, struggles to preserve his endangered Afro-Amerindian culture by building a language school back in his home village in Honduras, Central America. A business venture with his brother designed to raise money for the school's construction becomes complicated by the expansion plans of a nearby tourist resort into indigenous territory. Historical parallels are invoked as Ricardo's son rehearses a stage play about the Garifuna people's last stand against British colonialism over 200 years ago in their motherland, the island of St. Vincent in the Caribbean.

## **Long Synopsis**

A Garifuna language teacher, Ricardo, struggles to preserve his endangered Afro-Amerindian culture by building a language school back in his home village in Honduras, Central America. A business venture with his brother designed to raise money for the school's construction becomes complicated by the expansion plans of a nearby tourist resort into indigenous territory. Historical parallels are invoked as Ricardo's son rehearses a stage play about the Garifuna people's last stand against British colonialism over 200 years ago in their motherland, the island of St. Vincent in the Caribbean. Naturalistically shot, with debut performances by nearly the entire cast, "Garifuna in Peril" makes its own history as the first feature film with the majority of dialogue in Garifuna, a language proclaimed by UNESCO as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

## **Who are the Garinagu (plural of Garifuna)**

The Garinagu are descendants of Carib, Arawak and West African people who live in the coastal regions of Central America. Since they refused to submit to slavery, the Garifuna managed to preserve both their African roots and their Amerindian heritage, a fusion resulting in a unique ethnicity considered indigenous to the Americas. In 2001, UNESCO proclaimed the language, dance and music of the Garifuna as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. However, even with this acknowledgement in intellectual and educational circles, the survival of the culture is at risk due to globalization, poverty, AIDS, discriminatory land measures, and lack of educational opportunities.

## **“Garifuna in Peril” Past Screenings / as of December 2013**

London Latin American Film Festival  
(November 25, 2012)

New York African Diaspora Film Festival  
(December 2 & 5, 2012)

Santa Fe Film Festival  
(December 8, 2012)

Best of the New York African Diaspora Film Festival  
(January 18, 2013)

San Diego Black Film Festival  
(February 3, 2013)

Los Angeles Pan African Film Festival  
(February 16, 2013)

Arizona International Film Festival (April 13 & 28, 2013)  
**AWARD WINNER: Best Narrative Feature**

Athens International Film + Video Festival (Ohio)  
(April 14, 2013)

Chicago Latino Film Festival  
(April 14 & 16, 2013)

Festival International du Film Panafricain (Cannes, France)  
(April 19th, 2013)

Langston Hughes African American Film Festival (Seattle)  
(April 19th, 2013)

Boston International Film Festival (April 20, 2013)  
**AWARD WINNER: Indie Spirit Special Recognition**

Worldfest Houston (April 21, 2013)  
**AWARD WINNER: Golden Remi for Docu-Drama**

Berlin Black Cinema International  
(May 11, 2013)

SALALM Conference  
(May 18, 2013)

The Sankofa Salons at African Diaspora Creative Industries Forum  
(May 25, 2013)

Garifuna Film Festival International (Los Angeles)  
(May 25 & 26, 2013)

Zanzibar International Film Festival  
(July 4, 2013)

Miami Premiere presented by GarifunaTV  
(July 11, 2013)

Belize International Film Festival  
(July 12, 2013)

Tour of Southern Belize  
(July 12-17, 2013)

Guatemala Premiere (Livingston)  
(July 18, 2013)

San Francisco presented by Beulah Stanley & Culture Productions  
(August 22, 2013)

CaribbeanTales Toronto Film Showcase  
(September 11, 2013)

Atlanta Premiere presented by Susan Arauz Barnes  
(September 25, 2013)

Capital City Black Film Festival (Austin)  
(September 27, 2013)

Cine+Mas San Francisco Latino Film Festival  
(September 27, 2013)

New York City presented by Beinggarifuna.com  
(October 2, 2013)

New England Festival of Ibero American Cinema  
(October 3, 2013)

Interrogating the African Diaspora, Michigan State University  
(October 4, 2013)

Mesoamerican Mosaic at the Newark Public Library  
(October 5, 2013)

Muestra Internacional de Cine y Video en Defensa de la Vida y el Territorio (Guatemala)  
(October 7, 2013)

Central American Film Experience, California State Northridge  
(October 16, 2013)

Festival de Cine de Bogota  
(October 16-24, 2013)

Tour of Northern Honduras  
(October 18-29, 2013)

Festival Cinema Latino American di Trieste (October 25, 2013)  
**AWARD WINNER: Audience Choice**

Englewood International Film Festival  
(October 26, 2013)

Uptown Film Festival  
(November 9, 2013)

BronzeLens Film Festival  
(November 9, 2013)

Pitzer College  
Transnational Identities Film Series  
(November 15)

Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History  
& Belize Garifuna Cultural Organization of Michigan  
(November 16)

Texas A&M University Transnational Blackness Series  
(November 19)

University of Virginia Organization of Caribbean Awareness  
(November 21)

Festival Cine//B - Santiago, Chile  
(November 28)

Bahamas International Film Festival  
(December 5 & 6)



## PRODUCTION TEAM

ALÍ ALLIÉ and RUBEN REYES are independent filmmakers who have worked for many years to create positive imagery for the promotion and retention of Garifuna culture, language and heritage.

### Alí Allié (Writer/Producer/Director)



Alí Allié is an independent filmmaker and cinematographer living in Los Angeles, California. Allié's initial foray into the world of Garifuna culture began when he worked as a volunteer in an orphanage in Honduras run by a Garifuna man. A few years later, Allié returned to La Ceiba, Honduras to direct the first feature film relating to Garifuna culture and spirituality, "[El Espíritu de mi Mamá \[http://www.spiritofmymother.com\]](http://www.spiritofmymother.com)" (Spirit of my Mother) which told the fictional story of a Garifuna woman's spiritual journey of re-identification with her own culture. This film showed at many prominent film festivals and is in wide release.

### Ruben Reyes (Writer/Producer/Director)



Ruben Reyes, a Garifuna scholar and educator, is the top trilingual expert in the Garifuna language and has a vast knowledge of Garifuna culture and history. He has taught Garifuna language classes in Los Angeles and has guest lectured at universities across the United States. In addition to designing the Garifuna clock and flag emblem, he has translated the national anthems of Honduras, Guatemala and the USA into the Garifuna language. He edited the first Garifuna [trilingual dictionary \[http://www.amazon.com/Garudia-Garifuna-Trilingual-Dictionary-Garifuna-English-Spanish/dp/1480267708/\]](http://www.amazon.com/Garudia-Garifuna-Trilingual-Dictionary-Garifuna-English-Spanish/dp/1480267708/) (Garifuna-English-Spanish) which was published in 2012. He is a founding member of the Garifuna Hope Foundation and the [Garifuna Museum \[http://www.garifunamuseum.com/\]](http://www.garifunamuseum.com/) of Los Angeles.

### Bill Flores (Writer)



Bill Flores is a Garifuna writer from Dangriga, Belize. He is a scholar of Garifuna culture. He completed all of his early education at Sacred Heart School and Lynam Agricultural College. In the early 1970' he migrated to the US to complete his education. His education was interrupted by his service in the US Marines during the Viet Nam war. After his honorable discharge Bill attended Los Angeles Trade technical college. While attending LATTC he was a frequent contributor to the school's paper Trade Winds. After graduation he enrolled at California State University at Dominguez Hills where he earned his bachelors degree in Business Administration. He is a member of Garifuna Writers Group in Los Angeles and currently serves as vice president of Garifuna Hope Foundation (GHF) a 501c non-profit agency. Bill has recently completed the novel "One Hand Cant Clap". This novel deals with the strained relationship between the Africanize populations of Belize Garifuna and Creole.

## Garifuna Movie Wins Audience Award in Italy, Tours Central America

Source: Aban Productions

Dated: Oct. 29, 2013

LOS ANGELES, Calif. -- The feature film "Garifuna in Peril" produced and directed by Alí Allié and Rubén Reyes screened in Italy this month at the *Festival del Cinema Latino Americano di Trieste*, winning the audience choice award. This news came while producer Reyes was on a ten city screening tour in northern Honduras where the movie was filmed, and where the majority of the Garifuna live in Central America. "The film has now been delivered to the Garifuna community," Mr. Reyes remarked at a packed screening in Punta Gorda, Roatán, where the Garifuna people originally landed in Honduras after being exiled by the British from their homeland, the island of St. Vincent, in 1797.

Earlier in the year, Allié and Reyes toured the film in southern Belize, another Garifuna population center, and also participated in the *Muestra Internacional de Cine y Video en Defensa de la Vida y el Territorio* in Guatemala.

The film is scheduled to screen in the U.S. cities of Atlanta, Detroit and Houston in November, and will have its Caribbean premiere at the Bahamas International Film Festival in December, winding down its year long film festival run which included showings in 12 countries and multiple awards. The producers are now weighing distribution options for a DVD/VOD release early next year.

Trailer: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NQs5m9haasM>

The plot of the film follows the journey of a Garifuna language teacher Ricardo (played by co-director Ruben Reyes) in Los Angeles as he struggles to be a good father, husband and brother while taking responsibility to preserve his native language, traditional culture and community lands against the expansion of tourism. Ricardo's plans to build a Garifuna language school on the north coast of Honduras become complicated by the expansion plans of a tourist resort in the area and personal betrayal by a family member pushes him to travel to Honduras and directly confront land issues in tandem with his educational mission. Meanwhile, Ricardo's son Elijah (played by E.J. Mejia, Jr.) rehearses a theater play dramatizing an episode from the life of Garifuna Paramount Chief Joseph Satuyé and his last stand against the British on the island of St. Vincent, the same historical events dramatized in William A. Brown's now-lost play *The Drama of King Shotaway*.

"Garifuna in Peril" is the first feature film in the Garifuna language, a language proclaimed by UNESCO in 2001 as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

### MORE INFORMATION:

Website: [www.garifunainperil.com](http://www.garifunainperil.com)

Press Kit: [www.garifunainperil.com/press](http://www.garifunainperil.com/press)

Facebook: [www.fb.com/GarifunaInPerilMovie](http://www.fb.com/GarifunaInPerilMovie)

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State/Province California

# FILM THREAT

## GARIFUNA IN PERIL



Year Released: 2012  
MPAA Rating: Unrated  
Running Time: 99 minutes



Ricardo (Ruben Reyes) is a language teacher in the United States, specifically teaching Garifuna, the language of the Garinagu, descendants of the Carib, Arawak and West African people who now live predominantly in Central America. In the case of Ricardo, his family home is in Honduras, where his brother Miguel (Julian Castillo) still resides. As land development grows around their village, to bolster the tourism industry, Miguel finds himself seduced into working for one of the resorts, and ultimately coerced into selling his family's land (land that Ricardo was under the impression was being used to build a school, where the village could get back in touch with their Garifuna culture by learning their native language, which was slowly being replaced by the more prevalent Spanish).

As Miguel's decisions cause trouble in the community, so too do they bring ire upon Ricardo, who the community feels is responsible for his brother's actions. While Ricardo tries to sort out the issues surrounding his family's land, his immediate family is going through their own dramas. Daughter Helena (Yessica Alvarez) is seeing a man, and trying her best to navigate the relationship without putting herself in a disrespectful spot, and oldest son Elija (E.J. Mejia Jr.), often rebelling against his own culture (unwilling to speak or understand Garifuna in a home that speaks it almost exclusively), makes the decision to finally embrace his heritage, by performing in a stage play about Garifuna history.

There's a very unique and distinct vibe to Ali Allié and Ruben Reyes' feature film, *Garifuna in Peril*. While traditional narrative structure exists within the film, and it even plays with parallel storylines to underscore developments in each, there's something matter-of-fact about the movie that makes it feel natural. I'm not talking realistic in a single camera, almost documentary way; there's an overall mood and tone that makes the film feel less than cinematic, but not in a detrimental way.

Maybe that comes down to the editorial flow, as the film pieces scenes together in a proper order, but scenes play out as if they would in real life, if we were suddenly interrupting a moment. There's sometimes a lack of a clear beginning and end to scenes, just that we're in them, and while I would've predicted such a feeling would lead to confusion or just be uncomfortable, the opposite is true. It feels natural, just matter-of-fact.

Or maybe it has something to do with the acting. There's certainly a rough feel to many of the performances, like those involved are new to acting. Whereas this could lend itself to over-the-top displays, it works here in another sense, more subdued. Again, evoking that feeling of spying on real life as opposed to watching a movie.

It's a strange feeling, honestly. You know you're watching a film, but often you get caught up less in the dramatic developments than in learning about the Garifuna culture. Sitting in on Ricardo's classes as he teaches the language feels like you're actually sitting in on a lesson. Likewise as you share the journey with Ricardo's son as he tries to connect to a culture he's been rebelling against.

Lest you think this is some experimental tale, I know I'm speaking of it in such a way that could give an odd impression, it is very much a drama with character arcs and story acts and the like. It just doesn't feel like that until we move into the final third of the film, when Ricardo returns to Honduras to deal with the mess Miguel has left for him. It is in these moments we get a more traditional feeling of conflict and obstacles to be overcome, and the possibility for a happy, or otherwise ending. Until that point, we're just living the experiences more so than perhaps recognizing their narrative impact.

But that's me. Someone else could watch this and find it terribly boring. Moments are definitely allowed to breathe here, and while it didn't bother me, I do think the film could be tightened. I also think it is the type of film that will be an acquired taste, and some aren't going to be interested in going on the journey regardless. *Garifuna in Peril* just has a distinct flavor to it; if you open yourself to it, you just might learn something.



# The Independent Critic

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**Grade: B**

3.8 Stars

## **STARRING**

Ruben Reyes, Julian Castillo, Yessica Alvarez, Gloria Garnett

## **WRITTEN AND**

## **DIRECTED BY**

Ali Allie & Ruben Reyes

## **MPAA RATING**

NR

## **RUNNING TIME**

99 Mins.

## **DISTRIBUTED BY**

Independent

## **OFFICIAL WEBSITE**

## **"Garifuna in Peril" a Unique, Involving Film**

Ricardo (Ruben Reyes) is a Garifuna language teacher struggling to preserve his endangered Afro-Amerindian culture by building a language school back in his home village in Honduras, a Central American nation. A business venture with his brother designed to raise money for the school's construction becomes complicated by expansion plans involving a nearby tourist resort potentially moving into indigenous territory. All of this creates historical parallels as Ricardo's son rehearses a stage play about the Garifuna people's last stand against British colonialism over 200 years earlier in their own motherland, the island of St. Vincent in the Caribbean.

Thus, we have *Garifuna in Peril*, a film with both a compelling narrative and the tremendous impact of being informative and enlightening about an aspect of culture I'm guessing is unfamiliar for a good many Americans. As the DVD cover for *Garifuna in Peril* notes, in 2001 UNESCO proclaimed the language, dance and music of the Garifuna as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. Despite this awareness, the survival of the culture is uncertain due to globalization, poverty, AIDS, discriminatory land measures, and lack of educational opportunities.

**Movie Rating Scale**

Grade: A+	4 Stars
Grade: A to A-	3.5 Stars
Grade: B+ to B	3 Stars
Grade: B- to C+	2.5 Stars
Grade: C to C-	2 Stars
Grade: D+	1.5 Stars
Grade: D	1 Star
Grade: D-	.5 Stars
Grade: F	0 Stars

With a cast made up almost entirely of non-professional actors, *Garifuna In Peril* is the first feature film with the majority of dialogue in Garifuna language. While there are times when this is just a bit of an obstacle for the film, it's pretty clear from point one that co-directors Ali Allie and Ruben Reyes are aiming for a film far greater than its narrative and in this measure the film most certainly succeeds.

There's a tremendous authenticity within *Garifuna In Peril* that makes every moment of the film's 99 minutes rather compelling. The film sort of dances on this weird line between feeling almost documentary like and feeling like a more traditional narrative. In reality, it is neither documentary nor strict narrative feature but may actually fall within its own sub-genre of a cultural narrative. The story is compelling, but the film itself is far more compelling.

*Garifuna in Peril* weaves together its narrative quite nicely as Ricardo works hard to preserve his culture, daughter Helena (Yessica Alvarez) deals with relationship issues, and son Elija (E.J. Mejia) first rejects then publicly embraces his culture. While these story arcs certainly aren't complete, they do serve the film nicely as a way to bring out the culture within the context of the stories unfolding.

Currently making quite the name for itself on the film festival circuit, *Garifuna in Peril* is a terrific view for those seeking a different kind of cinema that informs, inspires and entertains. Already having played across the U.S. and in multiple countries, *Garifuna in Peril* brings to light the power of cinema to change the world that we live in.

© **Written by Richard Propes**

**The Independent Critic**



## Film Review: GARIFUNA IN PERIL-The Movie

User Rating: ★★★★★ / 5

Poor      Best

Details Category: [Film Reviews](#) Published on 30 November 2013 / Written by Angela Ramsay



GARIFUNA IN PERIL, written, produced and directed by Ali Allie and Ruben Reyes, is a film that chronicles the history of a people. It explores the culture, language, and history, surrounding an indigenous group of people called the Garifuna. Who are the Garifuna?

The Garifuna are descendants of Carib, Arawak, and West African people. The British colonizers referred to the Garifunas as Black Caribs. At first the Garifunas called the island of St. Vincent home, but disease, horrific treatment by their captors and the trip across the seas, claimed the lives of many of the Garifuna people. Today, an estimated 600,000 Garifuna populate a number of areas; Honduras, Belize, Guatemala and Nicaragua.

It was a day like any other day, when the Indians piled onto a boat. They were filled with hope. They traveled from their homeland to new lands. What luck! They had hit the jackpot. They found lush and fertile land, which they inhabited for approximately 1,400 years. For 1,400 years the Indians inhabited the mountainous and fertile islands of the Caribbean. They had sailed the seas and finally settled in the Greater Antilles. Both the Arawak and Carib Indians migrated from South America. The Arawaks were a peaceful people, while the Caribs were rebellious and aggressive. As a result of the differences in temperaments, the Caribs easily overcame and conquered the Arawaks. Soon, the colonizers arrived bearing gifts and diseases. Life as the Indians knew it changed.

Eventually, the ships transporting slaves from the African continent arrived. Intermarriage occurred between the slaves and the local Carib-Arawaks. The Garifuna people were born.

The film, **GARIFUNA IN PERIL**, has the tone of a reality show. So, I kept asking myself: Is this a reality show? A good reality show.



**GARIFUNA IN PERIL**, follows Garifuna teacher, Ricardo, who is diligently trying to teach the dying Garifuna language, and culture to old and young alike. The elder Garifuna people, residing in Honduras, speak the Garifuna language. However, the young people are less familiar with the language and the culture. The question posed by the youth: "Why do I have to speak the language?" "How will it help me in today's world?"

Will this Garifuna man succeed in his noble mission to preserve a language and culture?



Ricardo is also working with his brother to raise funds to build a school for his people in his hometown. Unfortunately, the project hits a roadblock, due to his brother's greed and selfishness. Soon, Ricardo finds himself face to face with the local council members; his brother is accused of selling the Garifuna land to developers.

The filmmakers, Ali Allie and Ruben Reyes, use a technique which gives the movie a realistic feel. It is effectively paced, and skillfully examines the differences in ideologies of the older versus the younger Garifuna generation. The film transitions from the historical tale relayed on stage by young people to present day occurrences, and draws parallels: tourism vs. the locals or indigenous people in Honduras; communal land vs. individually owned land; drab buildings vs. plush landscapes and oceanic views. Ali Allie and Ruben Reyes effectively weave a tapestry that transcends the tale and deals with land ownership, economics, and numerous issues that are relevant to us today.

A must see...



**GARIFUNA IN PERIL**

Written, Produced and Directed by  
Ali Allié and Ruben Reyes

**Year of Production:** 2012

**Countries of Production:** USA/Honduras

**Running Time:** 99 minutes

**Languages:** 55% Garifuna, 30% English, 15% Spanish

**Subtitled in:** English (Spanish subtitled version available)

**Additional Writing:** William Flores

## PAFF 2013 Review - Alí Allié's & Ruben Reyes' Thoughtful, Enlightening 'Garifuna In Peril'

REVIEWS

BY **TAMBAY A. OBENSON**

FEBRUARY 13, 2013 1:18 PM

1 COMMENT



Screening at the **Pan African Film Festival** in Los Angeles, now in the latter half of this year's run, the film's title *Garifuna in Peril* is suggestive enough, and should clue you in to what the the film's focus is - in short, the fight for the preservation of a culture (by those who are indigenous to it) that's practically on the brink of extinction.

The longer description reads:

**The plot of the film follows a Garifuna language teacher, Ricardo, as he struggles to preserve his fading culture by building a language school back in his home village in Honduras. A business venture with his brother Miguel designed to raise money for the school's construction becomes complicated by the expansion plans of a nearby tourist resort, prompting Ricardo to confront land rights issues in tandem with his educational mission. Family tensions heighten when Miguel waivers in the face of pressure from the resort, and Ricardo's wife Becky objects to her daughter Helena's new boyfriend Gabriel. Historical parallels to the contemporary land struggle are invoked as Ricardo's son Elijah rehearses a stage play about Garifuna hero and Paramount Chief Joseph Satuyé and his last stand against British colonialism on the island of St. Vincent in the Caribbean over 200 years ago. The play was written by Bill Flores of the Garifuna Writers Group of Los Angeles.**

A film on Satuyé's last stand against the British is one that deserves its own film, but, like the story of **Toussaint L'Ouverture**, likely not one that financiers are rushing to fund - although **Phillipe Niang** did eventually produce his Toussaint L'Ouverture film, after many years that saw other attempts struggle and fail. That film is also screening at the Pan African Film Festival this year, by the way.

And, by the way, *Garifuna In Peril* is said to be the first feature film with most of its dialogue in Garifuna.

Its message should be familiar - stressing the importance of land, language and overall culture to indigenous cultural identity. According to UN stats, there are somewhere between 6,000 and 7,000 languages spoken in the world today; most spoken by very few people; in fact, 97% of the world's population speaks just 4% of its languages, while the remaining 96% of languages are spoken by just 3% of the world's population - the majority of these 96% of languages, spoken by indigenous people, with most (roughly 90%) of them, in danger of becoming extinct over the next century.

Add to that the fact that indigenous people all over the world continue to experience loss of land and natural resources (in part because they've been excluded from the decision-making of the nations in which they live, and have been subjected to discrimination, as their cultures are seen as inferior, primitive, or irrelevant), and the result is that indigenous cultures (which includes languages) today are threatened with extinction in many parts of the world.

While some indigenous people are successfully maintaining or revitalising culture, many are fighting a losing battle, where languages/tradition/culture are unfortunately no longer passed from one generation to the next, after a great deal of traditional awareness has been undermined by colonizers and post-colonial governments who imposed their own worldviews on the indigenous people.

And with seemingly little governmental effort to reverse these trends, communities continuously struggle to survive.

The Garifuna people are descendants of Carib, Arawak and West African people who live in the coastal regions of Central America and are considered indigenous to the Americas. This film, *Garifuna In Peril*, is part of their story.

Production values may not be high, however, while there most certainly is a narrative meant to \*entertain\*, the film serves more as an introduction/education for those who were previously unaware, and should encourage further research, as it did in my case, with self-enlightenment being the main intent/goal.

Also worth noting is that the film was shot, on location, in Los Angeles, CA and Triunfo de la Cruz, Honduras, and features a cast entirely of Honduran and Belizean actors, most who were acting for the very time - **Ruben Reyes, Julian Castillo, Gloria Garnett, Jessica Alvarez, E.J. Mejia, Jr., Luis Martinez, Aubrey Wakeling, and Arleny Escobar.**

The film will screen again at the PAFF, this Saturday at 2:40pm, at Rave Cinemas, where the festival is being held.



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## Film about Garifuna culture highlights African diaspora in the Caribbean

Posted by: [The Michigan Citizen](#) Posted date: **November 07, 2013** In: [The Citi](#) | comment : **0**



Garifuna theater performance  
COURTESY IMAGE

**By Steve Furay**

[Special to the Michigan Citizen](#)

“Garifuna in Peril,” a provocative new film detailing African Diaspora culture and its struggle to survive is scheduled to premier in Detroit Nov. 16 at 4 p.m. at the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History. The film is presented in partnership with the Belize Garifuna Cultural Organization of Michigan and will feature an interview with co-director Ruben Reyes.

The film depicts the threat of the Garifuna culture, created by descendents of West Africans, Caribs and Arawaks living in the pre-Colombian Caribbean, being lost amongst a generation of youth disconnected to their history in the aftermath displacement by Europeans. “We are now facing imminent danger. (W)e could eventually lose our land, our culture, our identity and just become simple workers,” Reyes told the Michigan Citizen. “They are coming in to try to recolonize the area we inhabit, and call it neo-colonialism.”

“Garifuna in Peril” was co-written, produced and directed by filmmakers Ali Allie and Reyes, and filmed in both California and Honduras. Reyes, who plays the film’s lead character, Ricardo, is a scholar of the Garifuna language. Allie, who had already made a film in Honduras about the Garifuna people, was an ideal collaborator for him.

The dialogue is in English, Garifuna and Spanish, with English subtitles, illustrating the importance of language to culture and heritage. Reyes’ character, Ricardo, instructs the Garifuna language while living in Los Angeles, raising children with his wife and dedicating himself to preserving the Garifuna culture. His goal is to build a Garifuna language school in Honduras, though the expansion of a tourist resort along the nation’s north coast threatens his property rights. His son, meanwhile, is rehearsing for a play about General Paramount Chief Joseph Satuyé and his army’s last stand against the British on the island of St. Vincent.

England was the first European nation to claim the Garifuna-populated island of Saint Vincent in the year 1627; later, French settlers made plantations, which profited from African slave labor. In 1796, Britain defeated the natives in war, deporting more than 5,000 to an island off the coast of Honduras. The Garifuna spread along the Caribbean coast, including Honduras, Belize, Guatemala and Nicaragua, with Diaspora communities later developing in New York, Los Angeles and other major U.S. cities.



COURTESY IMAGE



“This film was a learning experience and kind of a wake-up call for us,” said Allie. “We went to cast the movie and were shocked that there was almost no one under 18 years old who spoke the language, and that was something we were kind of in denial about. And that’s when the film took on more urgency, and that’s when we came up with the title, ‘Garifuna In Peril.’”

“It’s related to all indigenous cultures,” said Allie, “and at different screenings we’ve had people stand up and make comments. We’ve had a Native American woman stand up and say ‘thank you for telling this story; this is my story.’ A Mayan women in Honduras said ‘this is also our story.’ It’s specific to Garifuna in one sense, but these are the issues — the cultural loss, the economic problems and the land grab — really relevant to all indigenous peoples.”

Some believe the colonial displacement of the Garifuna directly relates to the condition of others under colonial rule. Today, many people view the private management of Detroit by a non-elected appointee as a continuation of colonization, with private companies absorbing valuable public resources including land.

“The Garifuna, we’re not an exception from the atrocities and abuses that are happening,” said Reyes. “The fact is now the government and the rich people see our land as the lifeline of the country, where we should no longer live so it (can be set aside) for tourists.”

Reyes and Allie have been greatly encouraged by the public’s response to “Garifuna In Peril,” which has been viewed in film festivals in several countries since its release in 2012. “We see in Belize, Honduras and Guatemala, the people have embraced the message of the film because they can relate directly to their lives in their struggle,” said Reyes.

“It wasn’t just a showcasing of the culture and history, but it was really a wake-up call. The film became about how we educate the kids about this culture,” said Allie. “We’ve heard reports from parents who are taking their kids (to the movie), and their kids are becoming more interested, like, ‘I really want to learn this.’”

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June 2013



## Learning Garifuna

The filmmakers—members of a unique culture—want to make sure their heritage and language survives

By Jens Erik Gould



Few Americans know much about the Garifuna culture. Surprisingly, an increasing number of Garifuna find themselves in the same situation.

A new film hopes to change that. *Garifuna In Peril* is on a mission to rescue one of the world's most fascinating cultures before it vanishes.

The Garifuna are descendants of West African slaves who settled on the island of St. Vincent when their ship wrecked in the 1600s. They intermarried with the native Carib-Arawak people but were banished from the island by the British in 1797 and exiled to the coasts of Central America. They held onto their language, a unique mix of Arawak, Carib, English and French, as well as a traditional Afro-Caribbean music and dance so stunning they were named a "Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity" by UNESCO.

In recent decades, a large part of the population migrated once more, this time to the United States in search of work.

Yet employment has come at a cost. In small coastal Garifuna villages in Honduras, it's not uncommon to hear middle-aged men greet people in perfect American English as they return home from New York. More and more teenagers neglect the Garifuna language, inspired to speak Spanish and listen to reggaeton. And in U.S. Garifuna communities, new generations are declining to learn the tongue. For larger immigrant groups, becoming Americanized doesn't jeopardize their culture because they can count on their home country to retain it. But the Garifuna don't have a country.

The film depicts the struggle in a fictional narrative. The movie opens with a mother in a Garifuna village telling her two boys to never stop speaking their language. One boy, Ricardo, grows up to become a teacher of Garifuna. Even though he moves to Los Angeles, he returns to his Honduran hometown to build a language school. That action in itself underscores how the language is fading.


Obstacles to preserving the language come from his family—his oldest son doesn't even speak the Garifuna—as well as from larger economic forces. Plans to expand a nearby tourist resort get in the way of Ricardo and his brother's venture to raise money for the school, bringing into the film the ongoing conflict over land ownership that the Garifuna have experienced in Honduras.

The effort to rescue a fading culture is also apparent in the film's production. The majority of its dialogue is in Garifuna—a first. Ruben Reyes, the film's co-director and lead actor, is in fact, a Garifuna teacher and scholar in Los Angeles. He published the first Garifuna-English-Spanish



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dictionary and has produced Garifuna cultural programs. “We are coming at Garifuna issues in a way we’ve never been able to express,” says Reyes, originally from the town of Tela, on the Atlantic coast of Honduras. “The Garifuna people are feeling they have a voice now.”

Reyes and the film’s other co-director Alí Allié aren’t shy about their intentions. They believe the Garifuna language could be lost in one more generation and hope the movie will be a call to action. “We would like to generate change, to be able to hold onto our identity and teach the language to our children,” Reyes says. “We need to act drastically. By gaining pride, the people will start using the language again.”

The film appears to be a hit in Garifuna communities. Special showings in mainstream theaters sold out during a tour of major U.S. cities this spring. In Houston, people were even turned away. Since premiering at the London Latin American Film Festival in late 2012, the film has appeared at the New York African Diaspora Film Festival, the Santa Fe Film Festival and the San Diego Black Film Festival.

Reyes and Allié hope the enthusiasm will translate into people doing more to incorporate the language and culture into their lives. “It was like coming back from a dream. Some people laughed. Some people cried,” Allié says of the screenings. “They just don’t think they’ll go into an AMC theatre, get their popcorn, walk in and see someone talking in Garifuna. They could not believe there was already a film of this quality about their issues.”

While audiences have been predominately Garifuna, the film’s directors want to raise awareness in mainstream American. Because of the Garifuna’s complexion and because most speak Spanish, many in the U.S. assume they are Dominican or Cuban. Yet, starting with New York and L.A., there are significant Garifuna communities in U.S. cities with their own unique music, dance and culture.

The directors say the film speaks to the plight of small indigenous peoples around the world. Like the Garifuna, many are fighting to keep their lands against larger economic interests and struggling to preserve their culture amid globalization and migration. Allié says a Mayan woman stood up after a screening in Arizona and told the audience she identified with the Garifuna struggle, while a native American woman made a similar comment.

Ricardo’s triumphant speech near the film’s end may lend inspiration to those peoples and to the Garifuna. “We must transfer everything we have to the children,” he tells members of the community as workers lay large, gray bricks for the school. “We will transfer our knowledge to the children. The reason we have knowledge today is because our ancestors transferred it over to us. We have kept that wisdom and we cannot be stingy with it. That has to be the mindset at this school.”

*Face it, airports are an absolute runway for humor, from check-in to baggage claim—remember Airplane? Pedro Almodóvar is back with I’m so Excited which mines such territory in its own way. An ensemble cast includes favorites Penélope Cruz and Antonio Banderas. Technical difficulties occur,*



*El cine es el arte  
de la elipsis*

Inicio

lunes, 4 de noviembre de 2013

## GARÍFUNA EN PELIGRO



“Garífuna en peligro”, es un film hondureño de Alí Allié y Ruben Reyes, quienes con cámara en mano, circulando y a modo de falso documental, intentan con éxito mostrarnos los ancestros hondureños (viven en las regiones costeras caribeñas) y cómo hay que defender su cultura y su pasión por su tierra.

En este contexto Jean Rouch, (etnográfico y uno de los creadores de la corriente del cinema verité,) sentenciaba y afirmaba: “la única

manera de filmar es caminando con la cámara, llevándola a donde sea más efectiva e improvisando un ballet en el que la cámara misma llega a estar viva como la gente que está filmando”.

Con este argumento, el film ilustra con el idioma nativo Garífuna, un cine antropológico, etnográfico, aunque la parte de ficción se bifurca entre dos hermanos y sus propósitos respectivos en la vida, el compromiso con su pasado, y la sociedad en la que habitan respectivamente: uno en los Estados Unidos y el otro en Honduras.

Con la idea más de mostrar con orgullo a una raza y una serie de personajes indisolubles (casi todos actores naturales) crean una identidad —que llegamos a aceptar como propia—, porque tiene como base y fundamento la cultura de todo ese gran espacio del Caribe. Así que, toda la película, de pronto con ritmo irregular, muestra y señala la idea para el debate: La bifurcación funcional que produce los dilemas de enunciación y formulación entre géneros cinematográficos tan próximos como el documental, el cine de ficción con inspiración realista y el cine etnográfico.



Gonzalo Restrepo Sánchez

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## Garífuna en peligro. Cine desde el corazón

noviembre 18th | by Rafa Calderón Luna | [Criticas.](#)

NUEVO SEAT LEÓN CON PS...

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**Analizamos esta película hondureña que se ha proyectado con éxito en el extranjero, siendo galardonada en varios Festivales de Cine en 2013.**

El cine de Honduras continúa en un proceso de crecimiento, de continúa evolución. Esta vez, con un protagonista, la cultura garífuna, que en *Garífuna en Peligro*, desvela una historia donde se muestran los secretos de este pueblo.



## GARÍFUNA EN PELIGRO

Sus directores y productores **Rubén Reyes y Ali Allie** han trabajado durante más de diez años en un proyecto que arrancó realmente allá por 2000, y que finalmente vió la luz con su estreno en el **Festival de Cine Latinoamericano de Londres** en Diciembre del año pasado, y en su país de origen el 18 de octubre de este mismo año.

La película describe la amenaza real de la desaparición de la lengua y las costumbres del pueblo garífuna, por lo que Ricardo, un profesor, hace verdaderos esfuerzos por preservar su cultura como condición indispensable y necesaria para no terminar perdiendo la identidad y dignidad como pueblo.

Esa lucha del parte del pueblo Hondureño por la preservación de sus costumbres, de su idioma, de gran parte de su identidad, se ve reflejada en un film con mucho corazón, **Garífuna en peligro** está tan alejado de las pretensiones del cine más comercial, como cercano a la más cruda realidad.



Sus protagonistas consiguen, no sin esfuerzo, compensar al espectador, en el conjunto del metraje, de la falta de estímulos narrativos, de recursos técnicos y artísticos, de una trama consistente, con una voluntad férrea, con grandes dosis de fe en un proyecto veraz, con alma, con vida, la del pueblo Garífuna.

Y es entonces cuando la voluntad, una vez más, se impone a la razón, cuando la creatividad es capaz de superar los obstáculos más insalvables, cuando la escasez de recursos, de guión, de verdaderos profesionales, es suplida por la fuerza y la garra.

Para, al final del viaje, ser recompensados con la sensación de haber sido testigos de un viaje en forma de **largometraje con aire de documental** que ayuda a entender la lucha tenaz por sobrevivir de un pueblo que desde hoy no camina solo.

**Una Crítica de cine de Rafael Calderón Luna.**



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**Rafa Calderón Luna**



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## Gozamos » a spotlight on Chicago community and culture

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## The Story Behind 'Garifuna in Peril' The Story Behind 'Garifuna in Peril'

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By [Hector Luis Alamo, Jr.](#) on [April 25, 2013](#)

*"The land is part of my family, and what do you call it when you sell someone? I won't sell the land into slavery! ... The Garifuna rather die than be dominated!"*

The protagonist, Ricardo, speaks these words in the film [Garifuna in Peril](#) (*Garifuna en Peligro*). Directed by Ali Allié and Rubén Reyes (who plays Ricardo), the docudrama tells the story of a Garifuna language teacher living in Los Angeles who tries to build a Garifuna school in Honduras. Standing in his way are a treacherous brother (Julián Castillo) who attempts to sell the land and a conniving tourist company that tries to buy it.



Rubén and Julián are Garinagu themselves, members of the centuries-old Garifuna tribe. Who are the Garifuna, you ask? Well, for that, you need a little background...

Founded on the present-day island of St. Vincent, the Garifuna are descendants of the Carib and the Arawak peoples of the West Indies, as well as the slaves torn from Africa. St. Vincent, though sparsely settled by the French, had remained largely unclaimed during the first 200 years of New World exploration. Then, in 1763, Britain brought the islanders under the crown.

What followed were the so-called Carib Wars, in which the Brits subdued the Garifuna, killing their rebel leader, the now-lionized Satuyé. For their insolence, 5,000 Garinagu were shipped to the island of Roatán off the coast of Honduras. When the 11 ships carrying the exiles finally weighed anchor at present-day Punta Gorda in April 1797, only 2500 Garinagu had survived the voyage. Roatán would become the epicenter of the Garifuna diaspora, though they settled much of Central America's Caribbean coast, from Guatemala to Nicaragua.

Now over half a million Garinagu live in Central America, St. Vincent and the United States, the last being a major center of the global Garifuna community. In 2001 the UNESCO named Garifuna culture to its [first list](#) of "Masterpieces of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity," Punta, a form of Garifuna music and dance, is widely popular among Hondurans, to the extent that "Sopa de Caracol," arguably *the* Honduran song, is also punta.

Directors Allié and Reyes hope their film brings awareness to the plight of the Garifuna, who face threats to their way of life from within the community and without. Obstacles come in the form of newer generations of Garifuna abandoning the heritage and culture in an attempt to assimilate into the broader societies of Latin America and the United States. Danger also presents itself in political and economic challenges, governments looking to eliminate any Garifuna presence and business interests plotting to corrupt lands the Garifuna have kept pristine for over 200 years.

I came in contact with plenty of Garinagu during my trip to Honduras, my ancestral homeland, back in 2011. Visiting the famed Caribbean coast, like I did, one can't help but come across Garifuna children splashing each other in the waves, Garifuna adolescents relaxing under an almond tree as a nearby radio bumps punta, a Garifuna woman beckoning from the doorway of her seaside restaurant, Garinagu at the market selling pan de coco, aceite de coco, aretes de coco — you get the idea.

As a fan of the Honduran national soccer team, and an Afro-Latino myself, I'd known there were Afro-Hondurans. What I didn't know was that the Garifuna are their own nation, as Mr. Reyes explained during the Q&A session on Sunday.

Nonetheless, I realized the Garifuna were more than simply black Hondurans during my stay in La Ceiba, a coastal city near Roatán. María, the 50-something proprietor of a tiny eatery near the hotel, was an image of joviality. In her 16-seat shack, where the temperature topped 90 degrees, María offered us sopa de cangrejo and the restaurant's only fan, in what sounded like Spanish with a Jamaican accent (I didn't know the Garifuna possessed their own language).

Fifty miles down La Costa, in Tela, Garifuna boys sold the greatest bread ever known to man. Anyone who's tasted a Hawaiian roll has at least some inkling of the Eden I'm describing. We bought a dollar's worth (10 rolls) every time we were approached, immediately procuring ourselves a table and three cups of café con leche.

I tell you all this because, as I said, and as the film drives home, the Garifuna culture teeters on the edge of extinction. Furthermore, it's [under attack](#).

In Honduras, reports have surfaced of [Garifuna radio stations being burned down](#), and both the [narcotraffickers](#) and [Pres. Porfirio Lobo](#) are open enemies of the Garifuna community. International courts are now hearing cases brought forth by the Garifuna, and groups like the [Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras](#) have [defended the rights of the Garifuna](#) for decades.

The directors of *Garifuna in Peril* themselves are part of the struggle. Alí Allié, an American producer and director, has been involved with the Garifuna since the filming of *Spirit of My Mother*, a Spanish-language film on the Garifuna, in the late '90s. It was while touring with the film in 2000 that he met Rubén Reyes, a linguist and Garifuna expert, who would subsequently co-direct the film with Allié and compile the world's first [trilingual Garifuna dictionary](#) (Garifuna, English and Spanish).

As a second-generation American of Central American descent, I recognize the invaluable contributions the Garifuna have made to my heritage. I can't imagine a trip to Honduras without the Garifuna there, just as I can't imagine Honduran music without punta, with its fast-paced drumming and intense hip-shaking.

"Freedom is our destiny" are the last words spoken in *Garifuna in Peril*, and I hope the preservation of Garifuna culture is written in the stars, too.

# THE TRACKING SHOT

## Garifuna in Peril

Posted by [Rob Keeling](#) on Dec 4, 2012 | [0 comments](#)



Ali Allie and Ruban Reyes' *Garifuna in Peril* is a naturalistic drama looking at the story of a school teacher in America called Ricardo who is desperate to preserve the fading Garifuna culture back in his native village in Honduras. Ricardo has been living and working in the States for a while and his desire to help ensure that the Garifuna language is not forgotten by the younger generation is in part sparked off by his own son's inability to speak it. Spurred on by a conversation with his brother, Miguel, who still lives back home, he decides to fund the building of a school back in his home village and sends Miguel the money to do so. The building plans are complicated however when a nearby tourist resort begins to threaten the process thanks to its ruthless expansion plans. When Miguel buckles under pressure and sells the community land earmarked for the school to the tourist resort, Ricardo flies out immediately to try and repair the damage.

Meanwhile, back in the States, Ricardo's son, Elijah, is taking part in a play covering the actions of a Garifuna hero called Chief Joseph Satuye who led his people in a last stand against the British colonial forces on the island of St Vincent two centuries earlier. The parallels are clearly drawn between the devastating impact on native culture caused by expanding modern day commercialism and latter day colonial expansion.

I must admit that prior to watching this film I knew little about the Garifuna people and that's something which the film articulately rectifies. A brief history lesson is cleverly worked into the narrative as we sit in on a school class which explains how the Garifuna are descendants of Carib, Araawark and West African people. Part of what gives them a unique identity is that during the period of excessive European colonial expansion in the eighteenth century, the island of St. Vincent where the Garifuna resided, refused to buckle to French and British invasion. It is a proud point amongst the Garifuna that they never succumbed to slavery. Garifuna in Peril is a timely and interesting movie which will inspire you to go away and learn more about this proud people and their history. The struggles they face to keep their unique heritage in modern day Honduras, where a large number of Garifuna now reside, is passionately demonstrated by the directors.

It is telling that the film's cast is nearly all newcomers as it does unfortunately show at times. Though while the acting on show is not the film's strongest point, if you can see past it, there is a strong and interesting message being delivered. Garifuna in Peril is more historically and ethnographically interesting than it is a work of great drama, but a commendable and heartfelt piece of film making nonetheless.

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**GARIFUNA IN PERIL****GARIFUNA IN PERIL****Like** Be the first of your friends to like this.**Garifuna in Peril**

Jeri Jacquin, Movie Maven

A film that needs to be seen is director Ali Allie and Ruben Reyes is a compelling story of a culture on the edge with GARIFUNA IN PERIL.

This film tells the story of Ricardo (Ruben Reyes), a man who is living in Los Angeles with his family. Teaching the language of the Garifuna to keep it alive, Ricardo is working with his brother Miguel (Julian Castillo) to build a school on Honduras.

But it becomes clear very quickly that Miguel is being forced out of the land of the Garifuna by a resort who wants to expand. Ricardo knows he must go to find out what has gone wrong but how? Daughter Helena (Yessica Alvarez) has a new boyfriend that wife Becky (Gloria Garnett) doesn't like and son Elijah (E.J. Mejia, Jr.) seems to be missing the point of his cultural roots.

Ricardo does what he must to return to his village and set it right with his people and reclaim what belongs to his culture.

**FINAL WORD:** Reyes as family man Ricardo has the demeanor I'd expect of a family man trying to do the right thing by his Los Angeles family and the village he left behind. Keeping the history of his people alive is so important and teaching the language is this man's way of playing his part. When he realizes his village is hurt, he does what a good man would do and plays the part perfectly.

Mejia as Elijah portrays his character as many teens are today. The idea that culture and history isn't important because everything is "now". Even being left out of his own language doesn't seem to affect him until it does.

Alvarez as Helena is such an incredibly young lady knowing where she is going and how to get there. It was a pleasant surprise to see her being so responsible about her own personal beliefs with her boyfriend. Garnett as mother and wife Becky sees her traditions fading away yet tries not to lose ties with her kids.

Castillo as Miguel is left behind in Honduras to lose himself. If he had retained his own self-value things could have been different. Castillo plays the role very well.

The film also educates viewers of the Garifuna and the mix of West Africa and Carib-Arawak Indian in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the struggle against the British to retain their identity. I don't want to say more because I enjoyed the story unfolding in the film.

Other cast include: Etsil Arnold as Jimmy, Luisito Martinez as Gabriel, Arleny Escobar as Vera, Aubrey Wakeling as Richard, Bill Florez as Hillbuck and Araceli Nunez as Yanisi. The cast consists of actors from Honduras, Belize, the United States, and United Kingdom.

**TUBS OF POPCORN:** I give GARIFUNA IN PERIL three tubs of popcorn out of five. This film leans more toward telling the story of an indigenous people rather than spiffy camera work. This was filmed in Los Angeles and Triunfo de la Cruz in Honduras with lends credibility to the story and the impact.

This is a good cast working toward one goal – reaching those who don't know and educating through a mixture of story telling and performance.

In the end – they fight for survival, they always have, they always will!

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## EXCLUSIVE: Garifuna Women DIOXI MARTINEZ and AUDREY FLORES Explain How They Organized The GARIFUNA IN PERIL Film Screening in ROATAN Honduras in OCTOBER 2013

Posted on November 13, 2013 by Tio Teo | [Leave a comment](#)



Garifuna Woman Audrey Flores, Garifuna Man Ruben Reyes and Garifuna Woman Dioxi Martinez pose in front of the Turquoise Bay Garifuna Mural in Roatan, Honduras. Photo by Jorge Garifuna.

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**ROATAN, Honduras:** Based on the success of the screenings of the Garifuna In Peril film in Honduras; I thought it would be helpful and instructive to share Garifuna Women Audrey Flores and Dioxi Martinez's account of what it was like to organize and coordinate the screening of this unique film in Roatan, Honduras; a place of unique historical significance to the Garifuna people. Are you ready?



The Garifuna In Peril Film Screened in Roatan, Honduras from October 25th through October 26th 2013 in French Harbor and Punta Gorda.

Upon learning that the Garifuna In Peril Film would be shown in cities and towns in Honduras about a week before the tour was scheduled to begin; Dioxi Martinez and Audrey Flores immediately began to see if it would be possible to include Roatan, Honduras into this Movie Tour.

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Because they didn't learn of the Honduran movie tour of Garifuna In Peril until the last minute, they decided to make the screening a FREE screening because there just was not enough time to develop enough awareness and demand for this potential film screening in Roatan. You would need MANY days of promotion to properly develop that awareness and demand and as a practical reality; many Roatan residents are poor, so the decision to make the screening FREE to the public was made. Despite the fact that the screening was FREE, there were still many considerable expenses to consider. Expenses like:

- Lodging (Housing and Food),
- Transportation to Roatan from the Honduran mainland
- Transportation on Roatan
- Equipment Rental (Projector, Sound)
- Etc

In detailing the strategy of organizing and coordinating this film screening, Dioxi Martinez explained:

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"When we spoke on Skype on the night of October 15, I just knew there had to be some way to make it possible for Ruben to bring the movie to Roatan. After all, we are the first place Garifunas landed in Central America (after being forcibly removed from our ancestral land of St. Vincent in 1796-1797). I partnered up with Audrey Flores and she began to take the steps to legitimize the event so that we could get sponsorship. She is the coordinator of the April 12<sup>th</sup> committee and she saw it as a way to start raising awareness about our Garifuna culture and as a way to promote the next April 12<sup>th</sup> festival. (**EDITOR'S NOTE:** The Garifuna people arrived in Roatan from St. Vincent on April 12th 1797. Many cultural events in Honduras and in the United States commemorate that date in Garifuna history). After getting approval from the town council (patronato), we began to make phone calls to arrange a venue and get financial sponsorship to cover the cost of travel and accommodations for Ruben Reyes and two of the actors of the film." – **Dioxi Martinez**



Garifuna Women Audrey Flores and Dioxí Martínez in front of the Turquoise Bay Garifuna Mural in Roatan Honduras. Photo by Jorge Garifuna.

These Garifuna women encountered plenty of resistance as these two Garifuna Women set out to organize this screening of the Garifuna In Peril Film. **Audrey Flores** explained; “To organize this screening we had to put together our contacts and approach them immediately. Which meant we were:

- endlessly walking across the Roatan pavement, unpaved roads and white sands for a week.
- knocking on the doors of politicians, business owners, media, etc
- tracking down the person in charge and dodging their assistants.

Most importantly it meant having faith, there are some details of this that didn’t get confirmed until less than 24 hours before the first scheduled screening date in Roatan, but we believed this was going to happen and moved forward with the promotion. Some people might say that was crazy or risky but we say don’t ever underestimate the power of faith.” – **Audrey Flores**

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There were personal obstacles to consider as well. Dioxí Martínez added;

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“Some people we approached in the community felt offended that Roatan was not considered originally as a site for a screening but that it was our effort to try to squeeze ourselves in there at the last minute. Because everything moves at a snail’s pace on the island, our biggest enemy was time. Friday the 25 in French Harbour and Saturday the 26 of October in Punta Gorda would be the only time that we could make a screening happen. We went to the Mall-Mega Plaza owned by the Lady Lee corporation. They donated the venue and the set up of 60 chairs along with the electrical hook up for an outdoor screening on Friday. They also agreed to put up the posters advertising the events to their patrons.” – **Dioxí Martínez**



Map of the island of Roatan. Illustration courtesy of travel-roatan.com

“We then went to the tv station, Canal 9 who took us on as an exclusive promotional sponsor for the Friday night event. They



interviewed us on tv the Monday of October 21 and showed the trailer to the audience. They are the most watched television station on the island. They also agreed to interview co-director and lead actor of Garifuna In Peril, Ruben Reyes the Friday of the event. Their promotion would help us by incentivizing businesses to support us in exchange for their logo getting air time. The plan was a good one but we soon learned that it would take too much time to raise money that way so we decided to rely on donations in kind, transportation, lodging, food etc., ..." – **Dioxi Martinez**

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Sponsors included:

- **Safeway Maritime Corporation** donated the tickets on the Ferry from La Ceiba, Honduras.
- Mayor **Julio Galindo** donated 2000 lempiras (\$100 US)
- Mayoral candidate **Dorn Ebanks** donated 1000 lempiras (\$50 US).
- **Duane McNab**, owner of the local Cable Company "Cable Color" also donated 2000 lempiras (\$100 US) along with lots of good advice and emotional support.

"People from the Punta community pitched in to help with the event in many ways. Some helped with clean up, preparing food for the guests and even with driving." – **Dioxi Martinez**

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As the date of the screening came closer, another unavoidable obstacle had to be considered.



Audience watching the Garifuna In Peril Film at the Mega Mall Plaza in French Harbour, Roatan Honduras on FRIDAY October 25th 2013.  
Photo by Jorge Garifuna.

"The weekend of the event, the weather forecast included RAIN. The screening at the mall in French Harbour was OUTDOORS in the open air. We got through half of the movie when it started to drizzle. We paused and continued again but eventually had to stop because of the rain." – **Dioxi Martinez**

-

*"By the next night people in Punta Gorda people had heard about the movie from the screening on the previous night in French Harbour. We wouldn't be able to screen it outside, but the community center was not ready because there had been another event scheduled there that was cancelled at the last minute. We weren't able to get volunteers to clean it up last minute so we decided it would be in the second floor of the building of the town's supermarket but we were met with an **uproar**. People WANTED the film screening to be in the community center. The town patronato president mobilized the youth to clean the community center and to walk through the town announcing the film with a large megaphone."* – **Dioxi Martinez**



Garifuna Woman AUDREY FLORES speaks to the audience at the Garifuna In Peril Film Screening in Punta Gorda, Roatan, Honduras on SATURDAY October 26th 2013. Photo by Jorge Garifuna.

“The fact that we had screened in French Harbour created a buzz that had reached Punta Gorda and people were eager to see it. We had a huge turnout. There were over 150 people there that night. People came as far as Coxen’s Hole to attend. Just as the movie ended and people lined up for the question and answer session, the lights went out.” — **Dioxi Martinez**



Audience watching the Garifuna In Peril film in Punta Gorda, Roatan Honduras on SATURDAY October 26th 2013

“Even so, many stayed behind in the dark to ask questions of co-director and lead actor of Garifuna In Peril, Ruben Reyes. It rained so hard, it was like the rain came from a big faucet in the sky pouring water down at it’s highest intensity and we were only able to leave the community center an **hour** after the lights went out. The response to the movie was largely positive. Some of the young people are inspired to create film, others made a commitment to practice the Garifuna language more. People were inspired to embrace their identity as a special ethnic group. We were concerned that we wouldn’t have enough to pay the sound system (Dollins Sound) but we took up a collection and we had enough to cover all the costs of the event.” — **Dioxi Martinez**



Audience preparing to watch the Garifuna In Peril film in Punta Gorda, Roatan Honduras on SATURDAY October 26th 2013. Photo by Jorge Garifuna.

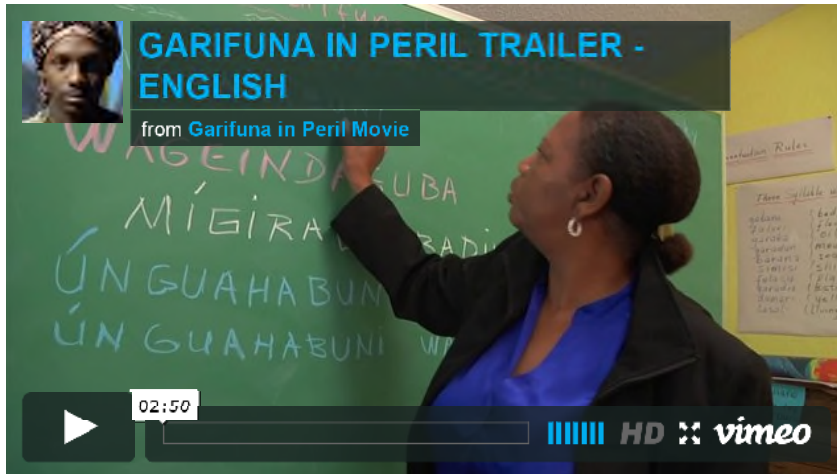
As far as financing this last-minute addition to the Garifuna In Peril movie tour in Honduras is concerned, Dioxi Martinez noted;

“Ruben Reyes thought we might have gotten support from non government organizations like OFRANEH or ODECO for the cost of the event, but that wasn’t the case. We (Roatan) are usually left out of cultural activities geared toward Garifuna communities. It is partly due to the fact that we are on an island, but part of it is because we don’t make an effort to include ourselves as a community.” – **Dioxi Martinez**



Dioxi Martinez talks to the audience at the Garifuna In Peril Film Screening in Punta Gorda, Roatan Honduras on SATURDAY October 26th 2013. Photo by Jorge Garifuna.

Finally Dioxi Martinez’s response to the Garifuna In Peril film was a simple, “Wow”. She added, “The Garifuna In Peril film is a work of art. Co-directors Ali Allie and Ruben Reyes have set a high standard. It sets a high starting point for future Garifuna films to come. Some of the points challenged my views of community and the whole issue of property ownership. I think Garinagu have a very unique experience with collectivism.” – **Dioxi Martinez**



Maburigaü to Dioxi Martinez and Audrey Flores for organizing and coordinating this Garifuna cultural event in Roatan. Their efforts are appreciated and saluted. I hope this blog posting has been helpful to those thinking about organizing a screening of the Garifuna In Peril Film in their town.