



PROJECT MUSE®

---

Toward the “Higher Type of Womanhood”: The Gendered  
Contours of Garveyism and the Making of Redemptive  
Geographies in Costa Rica, 1922–1941

Asia Leeds

Palimpsest: A Journal on Women, Gender, and the Black International, Volume  
2, Number 1, 2013, pp. 1-27 (Article)

Published by State University of New York Press  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/pal.2013.0000>



➔ *For additional information about this article*  
<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/505527>

# ESSAYS



## Toward the “Higher Type of Womanhood”

---

The Gendered Contours of Garveyism and the Making of  
Redemptive Geographies in Costa Rica, 1922–1941

ASIA LEEDS

IN HER 1922 “MESSAGE FOR THE NEGRO WOMEN OF THE WORLD” that appeared in Marcus Garvey’s *Negro World* newspaper, the Lady President of the Philadelphia Division of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA)<sup>1</sup> declared, “[T]he redemption of Africa depends on the motherhood of black women.”<sup>2</sup> *Redemption*, a term central to and often invoked in UNIA rhetoric, functioned as a double critique to black powerlessness in the early twentieth century. For Garveyites, the liberation of both continental Africans from European colonization and persons of African descent in the Americas from disenfranchisement, marginalization, and dehumanization were joint and entangled struggles highly dependent on a particular type of black womanhood. From Harlem to Cuba to Costa Rica, Garveyites located women’s *race work* both inside and outside of the home. While seemingly transgressing the Victorian model of womanhood and the cult of domesticity, the political philosophy of Garveyism held women’s bodies and behavior under heavy surveillance, and in many ways affirmed dominant framings of black women’s inherent sexual immorality. Garveyite men and women instructed young women to immerse themselves in intellectual pursuits and activities that derailed bodily and sexual *deviance*, to behave *respectably*, especially in public spaces, and to mother the race through the biological and cultural reproduction of successful black offspring. As another woman contributor to the *Negro World* remarked, “To [the black woman] has come the privilege of carving the destiny of a race handicapped and persecuted for generations [and] it is for her to bless or curse the future generations by her conduct.”<sup>3</sup>

By examining the ways that West Indians in the Atlantic coastal region of Limón, Costa Rica, engaged with and contributed to the transnational *mediascape*<sup>4</sup> shaped in the circulation of Garveyite newspapers, this essay interrogates the making of redemptive womanhood in both local and transnational context. I use the term *West Indians* to refer to English-speaking immigrants of African descent from the British West Indies, primarily Jamaica, and their offspring. In the late nineteenth century, West Indians migrated to varying locations along the Atlantic coast of Central America in response to the labor demand created by railroad and port construction projects. By the turn of the twentieth century, the development of the United Fruit Company (UFCO) and its multinational banana plantation export system in countries such as Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, Cuba, and Costa Rica stimulated even more West Indian movement and relocation in the region. By 1910, the banana business boomed and around twenty thousand West Indians had made their way to Costa Rica. By the late 1920s, however, the population declined as the banana business suffered in the midst of plant disease and economic depression. Those West Indians who stayed in Costa Rica after the collapse of the banana industry desired permanence, but would not obtain citizenship rights until 1949.<sup>5</sup> This research, therefore, chronicles a period in flux; when West Indians no longer self-identified fully as subjects of the British crown yet were not legally Costa Rican citizens.

Conditions in Costa Rica made the Garveyite call for unification an appealing one. The UNIA language of racial solidarity and gendered redemption made sense in a hostile atmosphere in which the purported innate immorality of blacks marked all people of African descent as unfit for Costa Rican citizenship. Since West Indians were the face of U.S. imperialism in the banana enclave and the most visible reminders of the dominance of United Fruit, both anti-imperialism and racism underpinned Costa Rican nationalism in the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>6</sup> Based on a narrative of history that heralds the Spanish ancestry of Costa Ricans, the idea that white purity and homogeneity existed and should be protected in the nation justified the denial of West Indian citizenship and the enactment of laws of racial segregation.<sup>7</sup> Discourses of black savagery and sexual immorality held black women and mothers culpable for the deviance of the race, and this was the trend in Costa Rica and the Americas at large. In Costa Rica, West Indians of varying skin tones and class background, including mixed-race and *brown* West Indians, *became* black where they would not have been considered as such in the British Caribbean. Claiming belonging to a larger African Diaspora via Garveyism gave West Indians a sense of unity, citizenship, and a space of belonging where they had none, and a language and structure within which they defined blackness, redemption, and womanhood in Limón.

This essay then also highlights the central role of newspapers in the politics of representation and belonging in the transnational Garveyite community.

UNIA West Indians in Costa Rica drew from a transnational network of ideas and images to contest what they viewed as local misrepresentations of blackness and black womanhood. West Indians in Limón subscribed and submitted news to the Harlem, New York–based *Negro World* newspaper in the 1920s. In Limón, two newspapers featured the writings of West Indian journalists and contributors: The *Limón Searchlight*, a pro-Garvey West Indian weekly owned and edited by Port Limón’s former UNIA branch president, and the Spanish-language *Voz del Atlántico* (Atlantic Voice) featured West Indian columnists in the English section. The production and circulation of Garveyite newspapers not only helped map the contours of a discursively cohesive redemptive black diaspora, but also empowered Garveyite women to shape the meanings of womanhood and women’s leadership.

### GENDER, GARVEYISM, AND THE GEOGRAPHIES OF BLACK BELONGING

Literary scholar Robert Carr argues: “[A]lienation by and from states is constitutive of the shared history of black citizenship, [and] of blackness as a sociopolitical category in the New World.”<sup>8</sup> In the context of colonial dominance in the British Caribbean, second-class citizenship and violent suppression in the Jim Crow United States, and West Indian placelessness in U.S. enclaves in Central America, the alienation that Carr describes underpinned the making of alternative spaces of citizenship by blacks in Americas. The geographies of black belonging, therefore, had boundaries beyond the borders of nation-states. These are the conditions out of which Garveyism emerged and gained millions of adherents in various regions of the Americas and beyond. The gendered politics of redemption shaped the ways that UNIA members defined diaspora and diasporic belonging. Waged in the realm of gender, culture, and sexuality, the battle for redemption in Limón highlights the ways that race making draws internal borders delineating who was on the inside and who was on the outside of Garveyite redemptive geographies.

Historian Lara Putnam notes that “the UNIA was very much a phenomenon of the British West Indian diaspora,” and particularly the West Indian diaspora in Central America, as Marcus Garvey’s first experiences living abroad were in Costa Rica (where he worked for United Fruit in 1910) and Panama.<sup>9</sup> In the 1920s and 1930s, West Indians appropriated, adapted, and translated the ideology of Garveyism to suit the local context of Limón. The UNIA was *the* central organizing factor in the West Indian community in Limón in the 1920s, with as many as twenty-three branches spread over the province. While Garvey’s imprisonment in the United States in 1924 and deportation in 1927 initiated the decline of the UNIA in North America, Central America continued to be a stronghold of Garveyism.<sup>10</sup> By 1926, “45 percent of all non-U.S. chapters were located in just three countries: Cuba, Panama,

and Costa Rica.”<sup>11</sup> West Indians in Limón continued to participate in the UNIA and to identify as Garveyites through the 1930s.<sup>12</sup>

The cover of the UNIA membership card in Limón in the early 1920s outlined the efforts of the organization as “striving for the FREEDOM, MANHOOD, and NATIONALISM of the Negro . . . to hand down to posterity a FLAG OF EMPIRE.”<sup>13</sup> For Marcus Garvey, the fact that “a race without authority and power is a race without respect”<sup>14</sup> led him to advocate a fundamental goal of the movement—the creation of an “African Empire” sustained by black industry and capitalism.<sup>15</sup> The UNIA perceived its struggle against marginalization and powerlessness as the struggle against the feminization of the race and the making of a black nation and empire was, therefore, an affirmation of black manhood. One of the tenets of Garvey’s association declared black men “the sworn protectors of the honor and virtue of [black] women and children.”<sup>16</sup> As control and protection over wife, family, and nation defines manhood in heteropatriarchies, black men were denied what were considered the rights of manhood, in the assessment of Garveyites.

Scholars “take for granted the gendering at work” in the production of the “race man.”<sup>17</sup> While branches of the UNIA were required to have both a male and a female president, Garvey usually addressed his followers as “fellow men of the Negro Race.”<sup>18</sup> The very notion of liberation was gendered, and Garvey characterized settlements in Liberia as a place where blacks could “enjoy the pure atmosphere of manly freedom.”<sup>19</sup> Equating freedom and power with manhood, the UNIA posited that the strength of a black nation and empire would enable blacks to “measure up in this world of men.”<sup>20</sup> For Garvey, disciplined minds and bodies and capitalist production in a sovereign Africa would stimulate the “racial growth that ultimately will make [the Negro] the *man* he ought to be.”<sup>21</sup> While seemingly affirming a linear model of progress that held the European experience as the prototype for development, the pan-African political philosophy of the UNIA asserted that black modernity and self-governance were *native* to Africans and their descendents. Garveyism offered a narrative of African history and civilization that satisfied longings for citizenship, manhood, womanhood, and *normative* black families in the face of discourses of black deviance, sexual immorality, and racial immaturity.

In Limón, Garveyites maintained that black success was dependent on the redemption of black women, specifically *young* black women. In the *Searchlight* and the English section of the *Voz del Atlántico*, West Indian newspaper contributors, both male and female, scrutinized young women’s behavior in public places, in the home, and in romantic relationships. The demography of Limón’s West Indian community shaped the stakes and the meanings of respectability and redemption. Young women outnumbered their male counterparts and were, therefore, highly visible, yet an older generation of men predominated in leadership positions in the UNIA and other community

institutions.<sup>22</sup> While women participated in the Limón branches of the UNIA as members and in leadership positions, the heads of most branches were male, as were all of the newspaper editors and the majority of journalists and op-ed contributors. In other words, a system of patriarchy and male privilege shaped the cultural politics of regulating young women’s bodies, even as women demanded and possessed agency in both UNIA and local Limón politics.

UNIA women struggled against men’s perceptions that redemption would come through the full realization of manhood, and that women’s role were decidedly supportive. As historian Barbara Bair notes in her influential work on gender and the Garvey movement, while some women accepted the gendered roles implicit in Garveyism, others rebelled against them, “creating modified positions of authority for themselves and reconstructing the prevailing views of womanhood and manhood in the process.”<sup>23</sup> With the decline of the UNIA and the relocation of a weakened Marcus Garvey,<sup>24</sup> women such as Nicaraguan-born “Madame” Maymie de Mena proved that they were intellectually equipped to be local leaders as well as transnational policy makers within the organization. In 1926, de Mena rose to the ranks of Assistant International Organizer, and to the position of Fourth Assistant President General of the organization in the following year. De Mena’s central role in the organization in the late 1920s and 1930s, including her reorganization of the Port Limón branch in Costa Rica in 1931, reveals that both women’s leadership and the region of Central America were significant to the continuation of the organization during these challenging years.

#### **DEFINING BLACK WOMANHOOD: NEWSPAPER CIRCULATION AND THE COUNTERARCHIVE**

Black women are, unfortunately, on the “periphery of most historical documents,” as historian Ula Taylor writes. In fact, their representation in the archives is “limited, heavily tainted, or virtually non-existent,” which explains the need for scholarship that engages the “inner lives” of black women.<sup>25</sup> While the official archives of the Costa Rican government, the United Fruit Company, and the British Foreign Office provide few details on the issues that shaped the daily lives of West Indian women in Limón, West Indian newspapers offer significant insight on black women’s thoughts, concerns, and participation in the UNIA.

These local and transnational West Indian newspapers functioned as a “counterarchive” to Costa Rican newspapers and nationalist discourses, putting black self-representations on the record.<sup>26</sup> At stake in this counterimage was the enlistment of an alternative black female body in the service of black uplift, rather than in the service of white households as domestics, or worse, as the object of white male sexual appetites. Garveyism challenged dominant

representations of black womanhood, yet placed a unique burden on black women in the reproduction of a new black world. UNIA discourses emphasized women's public behavior, respectability, homemaking, and motherhood as key sites in the making of redemptive geographies of black belonging. Garveyite women, however, were not passive participants in this process; rather, they examined, defined, and critiqued their own place in the making of black redemption via their contributions to Garveyite newspapers.

This idea resonated with Garveyites in Limón, and the dynamics of race and gender in Costa Rica attracted West Indian women to the UNIA. Marked by the English language, British customs, and the idea of black inferiority and sexual immorality, West Indian women were on the outside of dominant notions of womanhood in Costa Rica. Spanish-language Costa Rican newspapers were the primary means by which the ideal of white womanhood circulated in the nation. Even regional Spanish-language newspapers in Limón, where elite white women were surely a tiny minority, heralded white women as "Limón Beauties" and ladies of *honor* in their photographic albums.<sup>27</sup> Costa Rican newspaper editors participated in a system of representation prevalent at the time, in which "white women were fashioned in racial terms as the media of national reproduction."<sup>28</sup> West Indians utilized newspapers as a vehicle to craft their own representations of race and gender in opposition to the exclusion of black women from the category of *honorable*.

"Brown" and mixed-race West Indians who would not have been considered black in the West Indies *became* black in Costa Rica.<sup>29</sup> Excluded from most jobs tied into industry booms and multinational projects, West Indian women, as black women in a United Fruit enclave, found their employment options limited to service jobs and domestic work.<sup>30</sup> Educated and middle-class women who were sheltered from this type of work in the West Indies found that these were among the only types of jobs available to them in Limón. Garveyites in Limón appealed to West Indians of all colors to participate in racial uplift, arguing that the distinctions of class and skin tone in the British Caribbean were inconsequential in Costa Rica. Philomela, frequent contributor to the *Limón Searchlight*, author of the reappearing 1931 column, "Philomela's Serious Talk with Girls," and likely Garveyite, warned light-skinned West Indians that they too were implicated in the call for racial uplift and solidarity. "Young ladies of the clearer dye, do not think that you are exempt from these articles," she wrote.<sup>31</sup>

While it is uncertain whether or not Philomela was a card-carrying member of the UNIA, it seems likely that she was a Garveyite given the paper's staunch support for her and her espousal of the principles of racial solidarity, black capitalism, and Pan-Africanism. While branches in Limón continued to function into the 1930s and beyond despite conflict, decline, and economic hardship in local branches and the parent body of the UNIA, a younger generation of

West Indians like Philomela deployed Garveyite rhetoric, ideas, and logic in the making of a specifically Afro–Costa Rican social and political identity. Newspapers, therefore, helped to define and expand both the geography of black belonging and the unique role of women within the Garveyite movement.

The ways that UNIA women defined redemptive womanhood through newspaper circulation highlights the dynamics between the transnational Garveyite community and the local Limón community. Amy Jacques-Garvey, second wife of Garvey, introduced the “Our Women and What They Think” page in the *Negro World* in 1924. In contrast to women’s page editors in other newspapers—black and white—who focused on etiquette, fashion, recipes, and household tips, Jacques-Garvey frowned upon what she thought of as frivolous discussions.<sup>32</sup> She believed the newspaper to be an important vehicle for women to communicate with others, and as Ula Taylor’s work reveals, Jacques-Garvey “identified the sharing of ideas—theorizing—as a form of activism.”<sup>33</sup> For Jacques-Garvey, the reconceptualization of a woman’s place was central to black uplift and redemption. Women had “Overstepped the Home Boundary and [Are] Serving All Humanity,” read one headline in her section.<sup>34</sup> Why, in the household, “should only one person be expected to hang up the towels, wash out the basin and clean the ring off the tub?” asked another woman journalist featured in Jacques-Garvey’s page.<sup>35</sup> For Garveyite women in Harlem, Limón, and elsewhere, racial improvement required producing what one contributor to the “Our Women and What They Think” page called “the higher type of womanhood,”<sup>36</sup> one that countered dominant representations of black women and challenged hegemonic constructions of both race and gender.

Through the *Negro World* and participation in the UNIA, women dictated the terms of what a Jamaican woman contributor called “emancipated womanhood.” “One cannot help feeling proud that one belongs to this special sex in this particular age,” she remarked.<sup>37</sup> During a time period in which white women gained increased political rights in various countries, black UNIA women demanded recognition within the new definitions of womanhood, albeit with racial contours and in the service of African Redemption. The era “when the ambition of the young girl was never any further than the matrimonial altar,” as one Garveyite woman wrote, was over in the minds of UNIA women.<sup>38</sup> Both rejecting and affirming the gendering of space and place, they cautioned that the New Negro woman’s “aim is not to infringe on men’s rights, but to develop her personal abilities and make life worth while.”<sup>39</sup> UNIA women thought through and challenged the place of black women in race leadership from the discursive space of “community feminism.” These ideas of womanhood operated at the intersection of feminism and nationalism, critiquing male dominance while sometimes functioning within patriarchy.<sup>40</sup>



While Garveyite women affirmed women's domestic and maternal roles, they also demanded the right to "work on par with men in the office as well as on the platform."<sup>41</sup> At the forefront of racial uplift and redemption, women *Negro World* writers argued that "the New Negro Woman [was] revolutionizing the old type of male leadership."<sup>42</sup> These understandings of racial uplift and race work demanded a redemptive womanhood that located a woman's place as both inside and outside of the home. As E. Frances White points out about black women's political participation during this era, "a politically active woman was consonant with a respectable black woman; it was her duty to uplift the race."<sup>43</sup> The burden of this duty, however, would put young West Indian women in Limón under heavy surveillance as Garveyites attempted to counter dominant representations of black women.

#### ANTI-BLACK NATIONALISM IN COSTA RICA AND THE CONTESTED TERRAINS OF LIMÓN

For West Indians in Limón, the issue of placelessness was the foremost problem that shaped the politics of representation and redemption. In the climate of shifting authority in Limón and the renegotiation of the United Fruit Company contract in the early 1930s, West Indians found themselves placeless; they were no longer British subjects, no longer able to appeal to the Company, and on the outside of Costa Rican spaces of belonging. As an alternative space of belonging where blacks could claim citizenship, a redeemed African Diaspora was a discursive and political space within which blacks could construct new relations to power and new representations of themselves, in turn challenging their marginal position in Costa Rica.

As the official national identity of Costa Rica laid claims to whiteness, the racial composition of Limón and predominance of indigenous and African-descended people rendered the province outside of the *authentic* nation.<sup>44</sup> Before and after the birth of the United Fruit Company at the turn of the twentieth century,<sup>45</sup> efforts to nationalize and colonize Limón were attempts to whiten the region, one of many examples of governmental attempts at *blanqueamiento*, or whitening, in Latin America at large in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>46</sup> Setting aside immigration laws prohibiting blacks (as well as Asians and Middle Easterners) from entering the country, labor shortages in Limón and the necessity of building a railroad and Atlantic port led the Costa Rican government to concede to the North American-owned railroad company's desire to hire workers from nearby Jamaica. Blackening the nation rather than whitening it, the making of the banana industry in Costa Rica reconstituted Limón as a racially distinct, foreign space. The nature of UFCO production and the hierarchies it shaped created fears of *pardocracia*, or rule by blacks, which white nationalist rhetoric figured as a threat to peace, order, and progress in Costa Rica.<sup>47</sup>

Costa Rican media, civic organizations, and workers’ petitions alike represented West Indian residents as dangerous, savage, lawless, and diseased. “In these Latin countries,” a member of the West Indian community wrote in an op-ed for the *Searchlight*, “there is a tendency . . . to feel that because one is a Jamaican he is inferior.”<sup>48</sup> President of the civic organization Sociedad Economica de Amigos del País (SEAP) Joaquín García Monge declared in 1927 that blacks had a “greater predisposition to sickness such as tuberculosis, leprosy, syphilis and insanity, creating a higher mortality quotient among these elements than among white.”<sup>49</sup> For those who advocated white nationalism, “black immigration [was] not appetizing,” as SEAP secretary Marco Aurelio Zumbado declared. Believing that whiteness and modernity went hand in hand, it was “illogical,” he argued, for black immigration and integration to be institutionalized in Costa Rica. For Zumbado, “the black is only good for the Company as a beast of burden . . . [but] is deadly for the social order [since he is] vicious [and] criminal in general (witness the delinquency in the Atlantic).”<sup>50</sup> In the realm of the unknown, mysterious, dark, and dangerous, Limón was characterized as a wild frontier, where the morality and civility of the Central Valley and the authentic nation were corrupted via the residence of blacks.

Black savagery, in the dominant logic that circulated in Costa Rica and elsewhere in the Americas, was rooted in particular representations of an innately deviant black sexuality, particularly that of black women. For Costa Rican nationalists who believed in the superiority of whiteness and the goal of white purity in the nation, black female sexual immorality was thought to be the basis of the degeneracy of blacks in general. A 1933 letter to Congress signed by five hundred Costa Rican workers in Limón petitioned against the continued residence and employment of West Indians within the country since

[i]t is not possible to get along with [the blacks], because their bad morals don’t permit it: for them the family does not exist, nor does female honor, and for this reason they live in an overcrowding and promiscuity that is dangerous for our homes, founded in accordance with the precepts of religion and the good morals of the Costa Ricans.<sup>51</sup>

For the petitioners, black women were the primary cause of black degeneracy, since the purported preponderance of promiscuity among West Indians was the result of the lack of female honor and normal home and familial relationships, conceived as a woman’s sphere of influence. Defining blackness as devoid of morality, specifically sexual morality, the five hundred workers that signed the petition implicated black mothers for the cultural degeneracy of West Indians.

This aversion to what was deemed black culture and sexuality formed a distinct racial barrier that contrasted the West Indian experience from ethnically distinct, white migrants in Costa Rica, who were often exalted as representatives of ideal womanhood. For example, the “gentle and beautiful” Señora Doña Hortenia de Marroquín, originally from Guatemala, was one of many foreign women featured in the photographic albums of the *Voz del Atlántico* in the 1930s.<sup>52</sup> Doña Magda Shumacher de Antillón, wife of a white doctor, was also lauded as a “distinguished lady.” She had migrated from Germany to Costa Rica, where she was “justly held in high esteem.”<sup>53</sup> Even the daughters and wives of American bosses of United Fruit and Northern Railway Companies were praised in the *Voz* for their whiteness, like the “small and refined” Margarita Sheehy.<sup>54</sup> A color line and notions of racial belonging therefore shaped the boundaries of xenophobia and nationalism in Costa Rica.

With the province of Limón undergoing a process of Costa Ricanization, UNIA leaders sought to counter these representations, and prove West Indian fitness for Costa Rican citizenship. Garveyites argued that West Indians had turned Limón from undeveloped rain forest into a site of modern, capitalist enterprise and had labored to create the most important industry in the nation—the banana industry. Having contributed to the modernization and enrichment of Costa Rica with their blood, sweat, and sometimes their lives, especially in the early years, West Indians, in the words of a Limón UNIA officer, “can with as much reason claim Costa Rica as the land of their adoption as the Spaniard can.”<sup>55</sup> Laws of racial segregation, however, attempted to define the *native* Costa Rican as white. Along with the companion law of the 1934 contract<sup>56</sup> that prohibited the employment of people of color in the new Pacific banana zone, racially restrictive immigration and citizenship laws were adopted in the 1930s and the 1940s.<sup>57</sup> A law restricting the patronage of a public bath and pool in Limón to whites only was an explicit attempt to not only separate the races, but to mark black bodies as unsanitary. Adding insult to injury, a separate bath was to be built in a town called Puita, where blacks and “women of dubious character” were allowed to bathe. Equating blackness with the sexual immorality and *dirtiness* of prostitutes, Costa Rican lawmakers sought to deny West Indians the individual rights of citizenship. As one West Indian writer put it, “[R]egardless of their moral or social standing, our coloured ladies and gentlemen are all regarded as vagabonds.”<sup>58</sup>

With the impending nationalization of formerly isolated Limón<sup>59</sup> and the transfer of UFCO production from the Atlantic to the Pacific side of the country, the potential movement of West Indians outward from Limón became a national Negro Problem, where previously foreign blackness was simply a regional nuisance. Congress enacted laws that sought to restrict black naturalization, black movement and employment within the nation, and the

overall integration of black residents into the national body. The 1934 Banana Contract banned black workers from the new Pacific Zone and laws of racial segregation in public places were proposed, some of which were passed into law. Costa Rican citizenship, therefore, was figured as racially exclusive and definitively nonblack.

### DIASPORIC CITIZENSHIP, RACIAL SURVIVAL, AND BLACK MOTHERHOOD

While countering racist attacks in the Costa Rican media and from Costa Rican legislators who sought to restrict them from the rights of citizenship, West Indians in Limón interacted with the world outside of seemingly isolated Limón via the circulation of black newspapers. News of lynchings and race riots in the United States, the occupation of Haiti, and the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, or Abyssinia, spread in Limón via local and international black media. In the aftermath of the Great War, West Indians were moving away from British Imperial subjectivity and rethinking their relationship to Europe at the peak of the fascist regimes of Hitler, Mussolini, and Franco. Loss of sovereignty in Ethiopia prompted West Indians’ reflections on their own position within the British Empire and resulted in the development of new anticolonial consciousness.

The case of Ethiopia resonated with West Indians in Limón, who were without citizenship or sovereignty. Articles about events in Ethiopia, and calls for meetings, fundraisers, and boycotting of Italian goods in support of Ethiopian resistance appeared in the English section of the *Voz del Atlántico*, a mostly Spanish-language Limón newspaper, with great frequency.<sup>60</sup> As a result, *Voz* journalists and contributors made a call for the West Indian community at large to join the Limón branch of the Ethiopian World Federation, for instance, which held weekly meetings.<sup>61</sup> The local Committee on Abyssinian Matters, another group, sent a cablegram of support to Haile Selassie.<sup>62</sup> Sam Nation, former UNIA branch president and the Garveyite editor of the by then defunct *Limón Searchlight*, chaired the committee, and other Garveyites participated in the organization. “In attempting to perform our racial duties, Ethiopia represents the most urgent need,” a *Voz* article pointed out. The Abyssinian cause was “an opportunity for securing the rights of our people,” the writer went on to declare.<sup>63</sup> Holding African sovereignty as the prerequisite for black freedom in the Americas, articles in the *Voz* examined the Italian invasion as a threat to the salvation of the race as a whole.

As “doors clammed shut across the [Americas] in the 1920s and 1930s” and race-based restrictions on immigration were passed in the United States, Latin America, and elsewhere, West Indians desired permanence and the rights of citizenship in Limón while at the same time advocating for a strengthened Africa.<sup>64</sup> The gendered language of redemption intensified,

as restrictions on black immigration and integration got tighter in Costa Rica. In the opinion of a *Searchlight* contributor, “[a] government by and for Negroes in a Free and Redeemed Africa” was the remedy for “manhood repressed” in the black world at large.<sup>65</sup> “The unorganized . . . group without direct representation” was “helpless” and “more likely to be victimized,” a Limón resident wrote, reflecting on local and global conditions faced by blacks. The “scattered negro groups,” in his opinion, would remain vulnerable to injustice and inequality as long as they remained without a sovereign and peaceful homeland.<sup>66</sup> Redemption was a striving toward racial unity, with the idea that the development of racial strength among blacks would protect them from discrimination and exclusion wherever they found themselves in the world. This belief was based on the premise that a strong *Motherland* would protect its diaspora. “Nationalism,” therefore, was a matter of “paramount importance,” as one *Searchlight* journalist outlined. Redemption enabled certain critiques of power *within* nations in the Americas, and going *back to Africa*<sup>67</sup> was a figurative and ideological move rather than a physical one for Garveyites in Limón. For Garveyites in Limón, therefore, nationalism encompassed efforts toward both a sovereign nation in Africa and the acquisition of citizenship rights in Limón.

The logic of Garveyism and African Redemption informed the ways that West Indians in Limón conceptualized the relationship between nationalism, the home, citizenship, and black motherhood. Frequent *Limón Searchlight* contributor Cyrilo referred to the home as “the nucleus, not only of civilized society but also of all well-ordered governments.”<sup>68</sup> Since the home was conceptualized as the woman’s sphere of influence, black women were charged with the responsibility for the making of this nucleus for the African diaspora. Ruth Feldstein identifies “maternal ideologies” as governed by the logic that “women who failed as mothers were objects of concern because they raised *men* who . . . failed to meet the criteria of healthy citizenship.”<sup>69</sup> The maternal ideology of Garveyism suggested that redemptive motherhood produced redemptive citizens and nations, and black women as mothers shouldered the burden of birthing a diasporic race.

Sociologist E. Frankilin Frazier’s 1939 study *The Negro Family in the United States* drew links between migration (from the United States South to northern cities) and the problems of black motherhood with a similar logic. In Frazier’s estimation, bad black mothering was the root of blacks’ societal problems, and as Ruth Feldstein writes, Frazier charged black women with “perpetuat[ing] female dominance and promiscuity, masculine weakness and, through the production of disorganized families, ongoing racial inequalities.”<sup>70</sup> Garveyites echoed the belief that “black women’s bodies and behavior required regulation for race relations to improve.”<sup>71</sup> While Jacques-Garvey argued that “[m]eek docile women usually rear puny, effeminate men” as opposed to strong

black mothers,<sup>72</sup> she too affirmed a maternal ideology that places the burden of redemption on black women.

UNIA women’s own definitions of redemption highlight an interesting intersection between patriarchal and feminist ideas. Making a redemptive diaspora required a break with the cult of true womanhood that restricted women to the domestic and private sphere. Yet Garveyite women were responsible for the social reproduction of Garveyism and the making of a home life conducive to racial solidarity and race pride. The home was not only central to social, cultural, and biological redemption, but was also the key unit in building a nation. On the one hand, Garveyite women encouraged and emphasized their maternal roles, but at the same time they believed that “nurturing leadership traits allowed women to run not only their homes and communities efficiently but also their countries, if indirectly.”<sup>73</sup> Noting that, as one *Negro World* article claimed, “the hand that rocks the cradle still rules the world,”<sup>74</sup> Garveyite women believed that motherhood was the single most important factor in shaping the destiny and redemption of the race.

Garveyism set the tone for the cultural and political ideas and strategies that West Indian community leaders, clubwomen, and newspaper contributors utilized to critique marginalization and discrimination in Costa Rica. Articles in the *Negro World* in the 1920s laid a foundation for the model of redemptive motherhood that Garveyites in Limón would reassert in the 1930s, as anti-West Indian sentiment gained fervor in Costa Rica. As late as 1941, one year after the death of Marcus Garvey, young West Indians in Limón called for a “second generation of upliftment [*sic*],” building upon local and transnational Garveyite discourses of black motherhood developed over the last two decades.<sup>75</sup> This diasporic politics placed a premium on motherhood in the making and reproduction of redemptive black subjects.

Proclaiming that “it is the babies in the cradle who will be the true Garveyites of tomorrow,”<sup>76</sup> Garveyite women appointed themselves as the guarantors of the future of black redemption. An article entitled “The Obligations of Motherhood” encouraged black mothers to spend the “evenings reading to [their] child about Frederick Douglas, Toussaint L’Overture [*sic*], or Phyllis Wheatley,” affirming both black achievement and diasporic citizenship.<sup>77</sup> For Garveyites, redemptive black mothers, those who encouraged race pride, racial uplift, and identification with Africa and the African diaspora, were the backbone in building a black nation.<sup>78</sup> Echoing this sentiment, a young woman contributor to the *Limón Searchlight*, and member of a Garveyite women’s club, trumpeted that women’s race pride and race work prepared them to become “credible mothers of an ambitious generation.”<sup>79</sup>

Teaching children to value and love their race and history and replacing white images with blacks ones in the home, redemptive black mothers were role models for affirming black culture, and therefore ensuring racial survival and

progress. For example, an article in the “Our Women and What They Think” section of the *Negro World* chided the fact that black women “talk race purity, and yet, by the white pictures on [their] walls, by the many calendars in [their] home with white faces on them, [they] are teaching [their] children to honor and idolize the other race.”<sup>80</sup> The importance placed on black women’s role as the teachers of race pride was more than a reflection of racial chauvinism; Garveyites believed that racial pride would produce racial solidarity, which they figured as necessary for the building of sovereign nation-states in Africa and self-determination in the Americas. The survival and reproduction of the race was at stake in a climate of racial exclusion and subordination rationalized by claims of black inferiority.

Seeing themselves as the guardians of the continued survival of the black race, Garveyite women wrote of interracial sex with disgust. “Miscegenation destroys race pride” and “produces weak offsprings [*sic*],” the author reasoned in Jacques-Garvey’s section of the *Negro World* in 1925. Alluding to interracial sex, and other nonredemptive cultural practices, the article continued, “[I]f we correct the abuses of the race we shall see within a short while what a pure, healthy, unified race can accomplish.” Claiming that “evolution” was the result of racial purity, the author urged blacks to “be proud of those characteristics which make [them] a separate and distinct type” since “pride of race . . . alone is the safeguard to race purity.”<sup>81</sup> Five years later, W. A. Pettgrave, the male president of the Limón Moín Junction UNIA branch would affirm these discourses of racial purity in the *Limón Searchlight*. “The Negro as a race in Costa Rica has no intention to interpose in the other race groups” as the “cultures do not blend,” he wrote in an editorial. “As a fact,” Pettgrave added, “the Negro is at his best when yoked up with one of his own.”<sup>82</sup> In an environment in which white nationalists in Costa Rica viewed black integration and citizenship in Costa Rica as a threat to the purported racial purity of the nation, Garveyite discourses of race pride could be harnessed as a counter to the claim that black sexual desire for whites would lead to miscegenation.

#### REDEMPTION, RESPECTABILITY, AND THE BEHAVIOR OF YOUNG WOMEN IN LIMÓN

Heavily represented among West Indian contributors to the *Voz del Atlántico*, Garveyite women and men appointed themselves the vanguard in the West Indian community in Limón. This social hierarchy, they posited, would stimulate racial uplift, as the “well thinking ladies and gentlemen of [the UNIA] will stretch out the helping hand to those struggling women and help to elevate the morals of our girlhood and womanhood.”<sup>83</sup> In the 1930s, community leaders argued that the redemptive behavior of women was the only means for the West Indians to “attain a standard of respect and esteem in the [Costa Rican]

Community.”<sup>84</sup> Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham describes how *respectability* was entangled in the struggle for equal rights from the perspective of black Baptist women in the United States. These women, she argues, “adhered to a politics of respectability that equated public behavior with individual self-respect and with the advancement of African Americans as a group.” The belief that “certain ‘respectable’ behavior would earn their people a measure of esteem from white America,”<sup>85</sup> was one that also resonated with West Indians in Limón. Crafting a redemptive diaspora required West Indian leaders to campaign against cultural practices that did not adhere to the politics of respectability, including those that troubled and challenged the bourgeois family structure, heterosexuality, and monotheistic Christianity.

The belief in *witchcraft*, Garveyites argued, clouded the rational mind and encouraged “immorality, insanity, and nefarious practices among the younger generation.” UNIA leaders in Limón sought the prosecution and deportation of persons who practiced Pocomia, an African-derived spiritual practice of the Caribbean. Those who “believe not in the doctrine of progress” but ascribe to the “Ancient Superstitions, [and] think that Charms and Obeah can lift them out of their Social Mire” retarded black ascension and represented the opposite of the black modernity that Garveyites held as key in the making of new black subjectivities.<sup>86</sup> Calling for the practice of “Garveyism instead of Voodooism,” the West Indian anti-Pocomia campaign was also a renewed call to arms for a strengthened black motherhood, as women were here again figured as culture bearers.<sup>87</sup>

Garveyites viewed West Indians whose cultural practices threatened black respectability as *biological* threats to the racial project of redemption. Former UNIA branch president and owning editor of the *Searchlight* Samuel Nation advocated the sterilization of “the offspring of germ infested, diseased parents, who . . . constitute a dangerous menace” to the making of a redemptive black community.<sup>88</sup> Racial reproduction was, therefore, a cultural and a eugenic enterprise.<sup>89</sup> The “contagious” and “unclean” West Indian sex workers (always identified as women) shamed the race, “making the *‘better man’* think that negroes [*sic*] are so debased that they encourage this sort of living amongst their people.”<sup>90</sup> The public sexuality of black women prostitutes and otherwise *loose* women affirmed the representation of black women’s sexual immorality and poor mothering.

Garveyite discourses of redemption in Limón were especially concerned with the behavior of young women, and how it reflected upon the West Indian community. An article entitled “Obscene language on our streets,” (written by a male writer) and many others like it, characterized the streets of Limón as a site of moral degeneracy and embarrassment for the West Indian community. In the writer’s estimation, young women spoke with words that prompted the “utter disgust of respectable adults” and were a “danger [to] innocent children.”<sup>91</sup>



A 1931 article, also written by a male contributor, praised one of the “good little girls” who prepared to travel abroad for her education; she was heralded as a rare example of redemptive womanhood in the midst of a “Social Depression that abounds in this [Valley] of Tears.”<sup>92</sup> While the decline of the banana industry and global economic devastation were matters beyond their control, Garveyites, male and female alike, believed that the respectable actions of young women, and their reproduction of redeemed offspring, could alleviate “social depression” in Limón. Garveyites, therefore, not only embraced many of the same arguments used by white supremacists to denigrate and control black women’s bodies but were also at the forefront in the making of black heteronormativity in Limón through their attempts to regulate, punish, and surveil black women’s sexuality.<sup>93</sup>

#### CLUBWOMEN, PHILOMELA’S “SERIOUS TALK WITH GIRLS,” AND THE INFLUENCE OF GARVEYISM

Garveyites in Limón believed that a redemptive diaspora could be enacted locally through respectable behavior, including sexual morality, sanctioned familial relations, and public restraint. Although often characterized as the perpetrators of sexual indecency, young West Indian women were also portrayed as the key to black success and integration within Costa Rican society. West Indian women newspaper contributors played an active part in promoting this vision in Costa Rica. The UNIA informed the making of local women’s clubs in the 1930s that specifically targeted young women, and urged “intellectual encouragement” as the solution to the crisis of black womanhood in Limón. A Literary and Sporting Club for women aimed to raise “the moral, social, and educational status of the women [in Limón] . . . and to provide them with useful and healthful exercises to wear away the monotony of dull cares.”<sup>94</sup> Activities such as “elocution contests,” debates, and weekly lectures<sup>95</sup> sought to stimulate the minds of West Indian women, and therefore reroute their seemingly *innate* bodily desires away from transgressive behavior.

The Young Women’s Standard Club (YWSC), a UNIA spinoff led by women, sought to “[subdue] the darker passions” and reclaim “those [women] who might have erred.”<sup>96</sup> Similar to the organizational aims of other women’s clubs, YWSC women believed that in “the highest achievements possible in moral life,” young West Indian women would “[command] the respect of the Community in which [they lived].” Activities like the YWSC’s basketball team that met twice a week encouraged the female youth of Limón to “put [their] hearts and souls” into athletics such as basketball, which was a “pure game, both good for the Body and well as the soul.”<sup>97</sup> The word *body* is capitalized, rightfully so, since the discipline and training of young women’s bodies as vessels of racial renewal were foundational to the project of redemption.

Garveyites viewed these clubs and activities as a means to keep young women occupied by physical and mental activities to deter their becoming “public women,”<sup>98</sup> whether as sex workers, participants in interracial relationships, or as loud-talking, vulgar fixtures on the streets.

These clubs reaffirmed the divisions and hierarchies between UNIA West Indians and those on the outside of the redemptive community. The making of redemptive blackness through the *re*-presentation of black womanhood sought to showcase respectable young women as examples of the true nature of black women at large. Women who deviated from this model had also deviated from what it meant to be authentically black in the minds of Garveyites. The exclusion of certain parts of the West Indian community and the heralding of specific types of women were part and parcel of the project of redemption. Blackness, then, does not belong to any one group; “rather, individuals or groups *appropriate* this complex and nuanced racial signifier in order to circumscribe its boundaries.”<sup>99</sup> Garveyites in Limón appropriated and remade blackness with an emphasis on gender distinction, placing a unique burden upon women.

West Indian women in Limón claimed authority over reforming and redeeming young women, and used the newspaper as a tool to state and disseminate their ideas. In her *Limón Searchlight* column series, Philomela upheld the logic that young women had a central role in the uplift of West Indians in Limón and their social integration in Costa Rica. For Philomela, women’s success could not be achieved by being “some overburdened mother of illgotten children, or playthings of licenscious [*sic*], or painted butterflies who lose their beauty when a tough wind blows [*sic*].” In acting “ladylike” and protecting one’s “modesty,” a young woman’s “greatest gift,” as Philomela described it, the race woman put her behavior, body, and sexuality in the service of racial redemption.<sup>100</sup> While affirming patriarchal control over women’s sexuality on the one hand, Philomela sought to empower West Indian women to take control over their own destinies, to set goals, and to penetrate glass ceilings. The educational success and social progress of black women would raise the standard of life in the province at large in Philomela’s view. “Better your situation for a better Limón,” she instructed young women.

Offering one’s “unselfish support” and scorning “snobbishness” and “egoism,” a woman of high social standing had a responsibility to instruct other women how to “follow [her] footsteps,” according to Philomela. With the right aims, Philomela envisioned UNIA and other clubwomen as part of a vanguard that would help to improve the position of West Indians within Costa Rican society and make Limón “better and cleaner by [their] good example.”<sup>101</sup> In a letter to the editor titled “Immorality Among Our Girls,” however, a frequent anonymous contributor to the *Limón Searchlight* with the pen name “Night Hawk,” charged that the women of the UNIA, the YWSC, churches (the “wives of our ministers”), and similar institutions were ineffective in inspiring wayward

young women and failed to be models of redemptive behavior. “Neither by their advices [*sic*] or by their actions do they seem to better the condition [of women in Limón],” Night Hawk wrote of women of distinction. While it is unclear if Night Hawk was a male or female contributor, like Philomela and other *Searchlight* and *Voz del Atlántico* writers, he or she implicated West Indian women and mothers in the predicament of Limón; “We see [young women] running Pell mell [*sic*] in the Jaws of danger due possible to our Financial Crisis but due primarily to lack of training.”<sup>102</sup>

Ultimately, for Philomela and other contributors, the uplift of West Indian women required moving beyond Limón and migrating to the Central Valley, the altitudinous central region of the nation, which includes the capital city of San José. After visiting San José, Philomela concluded that in the capital “exists . . . a higher social environment than in Limón.” In San José, she noted, “the coloured girls feel themselves more important thus they live up to a higher life.” “They are more color conscious [*sic*],” Philomela remarked, meaning they had racial consciousness and pride and sought to showcase themselves as an example of the best of the race. After all, “she doesn’t want her white sisters to say ‘*Que negrita más ordinaria*’ [‘What a common black girl’].”<sup>103</sup> West Indian women in San José were also, according to Philomela, “more refined, more intelligent than their sisters in Limón.” The culture of Limón, Philomela argued, was one in which women behaved poorly on the streets, had “illicit love affairs” and gave nothing but “shame and disgrace” to the province.<sup>104</sup> Life in Limón, on the peripheries of the Costa Rican nation, had retarded black progress and redemption, in her assessment. This was a call for integration into Costa Rican society, particularly the “higher” society, as Philomela called it, of the Central Valley.<sup>105</sup> Writers such as Philomela drew upon the discourses of Garveyism and race pride not only to redefine womanhood but to make the case for a burgeoning Afro–Costa Rican identity.

## CONCLUSION

In response to a hostile environment shaped by anti-black nationalism and a lack of citizenship in Costa Rica, West Indians crafted a politics of redemption heavily informed by Garveyite gender differentiation and anxieties about black women’s sexuality. The *Limón Searchlight*, the *Negro World*, and other newspapers that circulated in Limón offered alternative images of black womanhood to ones embedded in Costa Rican racism, presenting sexual immorality and poor motherhood as a deviation from what Garveyites understood as the true nature of black women. As bell hooks argues, “[I]ssues of representation [are] linked with the issue of documentation,” and Garveyites wrote themselves into the history of Limón and asserted their fitness for Costa Rican citizenship, putting these claims on the record via newspapers.<sup>106</sup> The interdependence

of “writing and racism” and “white supremacy and the text” rendered the West Indian newspaper a key site of counternarration. For blacks, written out of history and caricatured as nonhuman, “textual power becomes a route to freedom and bodily autonomy.”<sup>107</sup> These newspapers, however, were progressive in their stance against white supremacy yet reactionary in relation to the internal organization of black communities.

While the forging of redemptive geographies represented a critique of dominant ideas of blackness, it left intact the overarching logic of race. Garveyites adhered to the truth and science of race as an organizing unit in the classification of peoples and nations. In crafting racial identities, Garveyite West Indians also subscribed to an ideal of racial purity, justified by eugenic ideas about racial rejuvenation. Diasporic citizenship and racial belonging had exclusive contours, underscored by the idea that the strength, development, and the future of a people were based on its ability to reproduce its purist and most redemptive elements. In many ways, Garveyite redemption was complementary to white Costa Rican nationalism, particularly in the realm of gender and respectability, ideals of racial purity, and the truth of race. The discourses of redemption, however, would motivate West Indians to push for citizenship and equal rights in Costa Rica. This was both a challenge to *and* an affirmation of dominant narratives and terrains of Costa Rican nationhood. Garveyism encouraged the civic participation and self-determination of West Indians in Costa Rica as well as their critiques of dominant definitions of blackness, ultimately informing the language and actions with which West Indians claimed rights of citizenship and Afro-Costa Rican identity.

The examination of citizenship in flux and at the margins of society exposes new meanings and functions of nationhood and peoplehood in the Latin America and the Americas at large. Demanding a transnational and diasporic lens, an analysis of Costa Rican belonging from the perspective of West Indians reveals the limitations of using the nation-state as a unit of analysis in the study of race, power, and belonging.

Perhaps closer analysis of black newspapers can aid scholars in critically engaging black women’s writing and race work and their central role in shaping the meanings of both diaspora and womanhood. Well-known UNIA leaders such as Amy Jacques-Garvey, along with lesser-known local writers like Philomela and various other unknown women contributors to Garveyite mediascapes, produced a transnational sphere in which women at times challenged, and at other times reaffirmed gender norms. In an environment shaped in the entanglements of black placelessness in the Americas and anti-black nationalism in Latin America, Garveyite women and men constructed redemptive diaspora in Limón as a strategy of survival in the face of dehumanization and exclusion.

## NOTES

\*This research was supported by funding from the University of California-Berkeley, the American Association of University Women, and the Social Science in Practice Postdoctoral program at UCLA. I would like to thank Ula Taylor, Robin Derby, Andrew Apter, Scot Brown, Mark Sawyer, Brenda Stevenson, Dean Alessandro Duranti, Tami Kramer-Sadlik, Sarolta Laczó, Elana Buch, Loan Le, Iris Hui, and Jade Lo for providing helpful comments and critical feedback on earlier versions of this article. I presented versions of this article at the “Toward an Intellectual History of Black Women” Conference at Columbia University and the HBCU Symposium “Social Movements: Fictional, Fractional, Factual” at the Franklin Humanities Institute at Duke University, where I received significant feedback that helped move this research forward.

1. Formed by Jamaican Marcus Garvey in 1914, the UNIA, headquartered in Harlem, New York, was the largest pan-African organization in modern history. Founded in Jamaica in 1914, Garvey incorporated the organization in New York in 1917. Between 1914 and 1917, the organization grew from thirteen members to 5,500 members in twenty-five U.S. states, the Caribbean, Central America, and West Africa. In Garvey’s estimation, by June 1919, the organization had two million followers. See Colin Grant, *Negro with a Hat: The Rise and Fall of Marcus Garvey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Tony L. Martin, *Race First: The Ideological and Organizational Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1976).
2. *Negro World*, February 4, 1922.
3. *Ibid.*, April 29, 1924.
4. Arjun Appadurai investigates mediascapes and the dissemination of information in global circuits and the world and image making that takes place within these spaces. I conceptualize mediascapes as transnational currents shaped by the circulation of information. In the case of West Indians in diaspora, the circulation of black newspapers formed a transnational mediascape, where the crises that accompany oppression and second-class citizenship informed black politics across borders. For more on mediascapes, see Arjun Appadurai, “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Economy,” in *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).
5. Although a number of West Indians had been born in Costa Rica, by and large, they were not Costa Rican citizens. Both West Indies- and Costa Rican-born West Indians were legally and discursively foreign in Costa Rica. Not until the new constitution of 1949 did West Indians gain citizenship rights that were guaranteed by the state. Scholars such as Philippe Bourgois, Aviva Chomsky, Ronald Harpelle, Trevor Purcell, and Lara Putnam have written extensively on

the dynamics of West Indian migration and labor in the United Fruit Company enclave in Limón, and their incorporation into the nation. See Philippe I. Bourgois, *Ethnicity at Work: Divided Labor on a Central American Banana Plantation* (Johns Hopkins studies in Atlantic history and culture) (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989); Aviva Chomsky, *West Indian Workers and the United Fruit Company in Costa Rica, 1870–1940* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996); Ronald N. Harpelle, *The West Indians of Costa Rica: Race, Class, and the Integration of an Ethnic Minority*. (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001); Trevor Purcell, *Banana Fallout: Class, Color, and Culture Among West Indians in Costa Rica* (Los Angeles: Center for Afro-American Studies Publications, 1993); Lara Putnam, *The Company They Kept: Migrants and the Politics of Gender in Caribbean Costa Rica, 1870–1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

6. Ronald Harpelle’s work examines the relationship between anti-imperialism, antiblack sentiment, and the banana industry in Costa Rica. See Ronald N. Harpelle, “Bananas and Business: West Indians and United Fruit in Costa Rica,” *Race & Class* 42, no. 1 (2000): 57–72; “Racism and Nationalism in the Creation of Costa Rica’s Pacific Coast Banana Enclave,” *The Americas* 56, no. 3 (2000): 29–51.
7. Obscuring the existence of the Bribris, Guaymies, and other indigenous groups, small numbers of enslaved Africans and their descendents, and the Afro-Indigenous Miskitu, all of whom existed primarily in the peripheralized region of Limón, official narratives of Costa Rican history depict colonial Costa Rica as a territory with a homogenous population of smallholding farmers of Spanish ancestry. See Lowell Gundmonson, *Costa Rica Before Coffee: Society and Economy on the Eve of the Export Boom* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986). What was known as the “companion law” to the new banana contract of 1934 between United Fruit and the Costa Rican government gave preference to “native” workers and prohibited the employment of “persons of color” in the new Pacific Coast banana enclave. While many West Indian residents of Costa Rica had been born in the country, few were naturalized citizens and West Indians, whether born in Costa Rica or not, were considered foreigners and not natives of Costa Rica.
8. Robert Carr, *Black Nationalism in the New World: Reading the African-American and West Indian Experience* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 14.
9. Lara Putnam, “Nothing Matters But Color: Transnational Circuits, the Interwar Caribbean, and the Black International,” in *From Toussaint to Tupac: The Black International Since the Age of Revolution*, ed. Michael O. West et al. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 110.
10. Garvey was charged with mail fraud and ultimately deported to Jamaica.
11. Putnam, “Nothing Matters But Color,” 110. For more on Garveyism in Central America and the Spanish Caribbean, see chapter 2, “*Un dios, un fin, un destino: Enacting Diaspora in the Garvey Movement*,” in Frank Andre Guridy, *Forging*

- Diaspora: Afro-Cubans and African Americans in a World of Empire and Jim Crow* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010) and chapter 6, “We depend on others too much: Garveyism and Labor Radicalism in the Caribbean Basin,” in Frederick Douglass Opie, *Black Labor Migration in Caribbean Guatemala, 1882–1923* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2009).
12. In fact, the UNIA and Liberty Hall still exist today in Limón.
  13. Bourgois, *Ethnicity at Work*, 85; original emphasis.
  14. Amy J. Garvey, ed., *The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey, Or, Africa for the Africans* (Dover, MA: Majority Press, 1986 [1923]), 2.
  15. *Ibid.*, 14.
  16. *Ibid.*, 139.
  17. Hazel V. Carby, *Race Men* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 5.
  18. Garvey, 237.
  19. *Ibid.*, 377.
  20. *Ibid.*
  21. Marcus Garvey, ed. *The Blackman* newspaper, December 1933; my emphasis.
  22. The young and able, especially young men, and others who had few economically viable opportunities in Limón, left Costa Rica in the 1920s to try their luck in other places, including Cuba, where the sugar industry was booming. A significant number of the West Indian men who did remain in Limón occupied a middle position in the banana enclave, comprising what Bourgois calls a “middle-level local elite” who operated “small- or medium-sized farms” or worked in mid-level positions on UFCO-run plantations. This group was particularly attracted to the UNIA and the language of Garveyism. Bourgois, *Ethnicity at work*, 78.
  23. Barbara Bair, “True Women, Real Men: Gender, Ideology, and Social Roles in the Garvey Movement,” in *Gendered Domains: Rethinking Public and Private in Women’s History: Essays from the Seventh Berkshire Conference on the History of Women*, ed. Dorothy O. Helly et al. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 155.
  24. After being deported to Jamaica, Garvey found himself caught up in legal troubles on the island. He relocated to London in 1935, where he would remain until his death in 1940.
  25. Ula Y. Taylor, “Women in the Documents: Thoughts on Uncovering the Personal, Political, and Professional,” *Journal of Women’s History* 20, no. 1 (2008): 188.
  26. Shawn Michelle Smith argues that the photographic album of W. E. B. Du Bois “functions as a counterarchive that challenges a long legacy of racist taxonomy, intervening in turn-of-the-century ‘race science’ by offering competing visual evidence.” Borrowing from Smith, I read Garveyite newspapers as counterarchives that challenged dominant news media and other representations of black inferiority and savagery. Shawn M. Smith, *Photography on the Color Line: W. E. B. Du Bois, Race, and Visual Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 2.

27. Both San José–based newspapers with national circulation and local Spanish-language newspapers in Limón featured albums of photographs of women, always very fair, white-skinned women in the women’s sections. A few of the hundreds of examples of these albums can be found in *La Prensa*, July 16, 1921; *Voz del Atlántico*, November 23, 1935; *Voz del Atlántico*, July 26, 1941.
28. David Theo Goldberg, *The Racial State* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), 89.
29. The making of race in Costa Rica was informed by cultural and linguistic borders that placed West Indians of varying skin colors within the category of black and foreign. The brown, mulatto, or racially mixed class in the British Caribbean that historically occupied a middle space in the racial hierarchy between whites owners and black slaves, *became* black via migration away from the West Indies. For the significance of skin color in the West Indies in the past and present, see Mervyn C. Alleyne, *Construction and Representation of Race and Ethnicity in the Caribbean and the World* (Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2002); Sarah England, “Mixed and Multiracial in Trinidad and Honduras: Rethinking Mixed-Race Identities in Latin America and the Caribbean,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 33, no. 2 (2010): 195–213; Christopher A. D. Charles, “Skin Bleachers’ Representations of Skin Color in Jamaica,” *Journal of Black Studies* 40, no. 2 (2009): 153–70.
30. The primacy of banana exportation shaped the gendered workforce of Limón and the roles that women played in the midst of a demand for male labor. Neither West Indian nor Costa Rican women were employed to work on UFCO plantation. Over the course of West Indian labor in the enclave, West Indian women provided a variety of services for the UFCO workforce. These included the preparation and vending of food, laundry services, and sex work. West Indian women also worked as “traders, shopkeepers, midwives, or confectioners.” Putnam, *The Company They Kept*, 54. On the gendered contours of West Indian migration, see Irma Watkins-Owens, “Early-Twentieth-Century Caribbean Women: Migration and Social Networks in New York City,” in *Islands in the City: West Indian Migration to New York*, ed. Nancy Foner (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); *Blood Relations: Caribbean Immigrants and the Harlem Community, 1900–1930* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996); Rhonda D. Frederick, *‘Colón Man a Come’: Mythographies of Panama Canal Migration* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005).
31. *Limón Searchlight*, December 26, 1931.
32. Ula Y. Taylor, “‘Negro Women Are Great Thinkers As Well As Doers’: Amy Jacques-Garvey and Community Feminism, 1924–1927,” *Journal of Women’s History* 12, no. 2 (2000): 108.
33. *Ibid.*
34. *Negro World*, November 15, 1924.
35. *Ibid.*, April 18, 1925.
36. *Ibid.*, November 15, 1924.



37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
40. Ula Y. Taylor, *The Veiled Garvey: The Life & Times of Amy Jacques Garvey* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 2.
41. *Negro World*, April 19, 1924.
42. Ibid.
43. E. Francis White, *Dark Continent of Our Bodies: Black Feminism and the Politics of Respectability* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), 36.
44. Those indigenous peoples who survived the imposition of the Spaniards found a safe haven in places like the dense, tropical terrains of the Atlantic lowlands. Also situated in the Atlantic region of the country, along the Caribbean coast, a small number of enslaved Africans labored in an absentee cacao plantation system beginning in the seventeenth century. Purcell, *Banana Fallout*, 10.
45. In 1869, the Costa Rican government established a national railroad project connecting the coffee-growing regions of the Central Valley to the Caribbean coast for speedy shipment to Atlantic markets, and contracted North American Henry Meiggs. Meiggs's nephew, Minor Keith, took over the building endeavor, signing the Soto-Keith contract in 1883, which granted him "a ninety-nine-year lease to 800,000 acres of land, exemption from taxation, and given ownership of the railway that he was to complete." With ownership of large tracts of land and control over the railroad, Keith was able to develop a profitable banana exporting company, which was consolidated in 1899 as the multinational United Fruit Company. Harpelle, *The West Indians of Costa Rica*, 11–15.
46. Both official and unofficial methods of whitening and attempts to improve the race/*mejorar la raza* were practiced throughout Latin America. Governments subsidized European immigration and wrote laws to prohibit the immigration of nonwhites, and in the 1930s, eugenics gained popularity in some intellectual circles and among those who believed that in order to "modernize," the nations of Latin America would have to "whiten" themselves. See George R. Andrews, *Afro-Latin America, 1800–2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
47. The fear of rule by blacks was particularly salient in the Americas after the Haitian Revolution, which the white Creole elite saw as a threat to the status quo in the region. In Costa Rica, the United Fruit Company hierarchies of race and nationality fostered fears of black dominance. The mid-level position of most West Indians between the white North American bosses and the Spanish-speaking Costa Rican and Nicaraguan plantation labor by the 1920s functioned to the benefit of the Company. The UFCO kept its overhead costs low in the face of the persistent threat of banana disease, as well as the ebbs and flows of the banana market due to world wars and other geopolitical factors, by adopting a system that favored the production of bananas by smallholding

West Indians. At the mercy of the Company were not only those West Indian farmers who produced export crops to sell to the Company but also the West Indians employed in middle-level positions on Company-owned plantations. Able to pay them much less than they could a white North American for the same job, the Company hired the English-speaking West Indians as time-keepers, foremen, etc., and this group was equally dependent on the Company for their livelihood in Limón. See Chomsky, *West Indian Workers and the United Fruit Company*.

48. *Limón Searchlight*, January 4, 1930.
49. Chomsky, *West Indian Workers and the United Fruit Company*, 213.
50. *Ibid.*, 222.
51. Putnam, *The Company They Kept*, 166.
52. *Voz del Atlántico*, August 11, 1934.
53. *Ibid.*
54. *Ibid.*, September 1, 1934.
55. *Limón Searchlight*, August 23, 1930.
56. The 1899 contract between the United Fruit Company and the government was set to expire in 1929. After years of prolonged negotiations, an agreement was met in 1933, and the Company agreed to plant three thousand new acres of bananas on the Pacific side of the country. In response to anti-black nationalist outcry, Article 5 of Decree Number 31 of the banana contract of 10 December 1934 included a clause that prohibited the employment of “colored people” in the Pacific Banana Zone. Known as the companion law, this clause represented, for the Costa Rican government, a “legitimate aspiration of racial protection” and “the opinion of the Executive Office [was] that the final statute of [the Contract was] valid and should be followed in compliance.” *Archivos Nacionales de Costa Rica, Fomento y Agricultura*, June 15, 1937. Also see See Ronald N. Harpelle, “Bananas and Business: West Indians and United Fruit in Costa Rica,” *Race & Class* 42, no. 1 (2000): 57–72; “Racism and Nationalism in the Creation of Costa Rica’s Pacific Coast Banana Enclave,” *The Americas* 56, no. 3 (2000): 29–51.
57. This included the including the 1942 prohibition of the immigration of “visible minorities” in efforts to restrict the entry of nonwhites. Harpelle, “Bananas and Business,” 70.
58. *Voz del Atlántico*, September 14, 1935.
59. After the banana contract of 1934, the Costa Rican government began to more actively incorporate the province of Limón into the nation-state, whereas in the previous decades, Limón operated as a state within a state controlled by the United Fruit Company. The establishment of government schools, for instance, replaced West Indian private schools with increasing prevalence in the 1940s, aiding in the Costa Ricanization of Limón. For further discussion of West Indian private schools, see Deyanira Castillo-Serrano, “Afro-Caribbean Schools in Costa Rica, 1934–1948” (PhD diss., University of Texas, Austin, 1998).

60. *Voz del Atlántico*, August 31, 1935; October 12, 1935; January 18, 1936. An enlistment movement inspired at least one West Indian from Limón, Mr. W. A. Lindo, to “[prepare] to make an early departure for [Abyssinia] to enlist in the Red Cross.” *Voz del Atlántico*, January 11, 1936.
61. *Ibid.*, January 15, 1938.
62. *Ibid.*, September 28, 1935.
63. *Ibid.*, February 26, 1938.
64. Putnam, “Nothing Matters But Color,” 116.
65. *Voz del Atlántico*, June 29, 1940.
66. *Limón Searchlight*, September 20, 1930.
67. Garvey’s Back to Africa movement was a foundational goal of the UNIA, which made ultimately failed efforts to establish self-governing nations for blacks from the diaspora in Liberia.
68. *Limón Searchlight*, February 7, 1931.
69. Ruth Feldstein, *Motherhood in Black and White: Race and Sex in American Liberalism, 1930–1965* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 1–5.
70. *Ibid.*, 18–27.
71. *Ibid.*, 31.
72. Taylor, “Negro Women Are Great Thinkers As Well As Doers,” 115.
73. *Ibid.*, 111.
74. *Negro World*, May 23, 1925.
75. *Voz del Atlántico*, March 8, 1941.
76. *Ibid.*, February 4, 1922.
77. *Ibid.*, April 19, 1924.
78. Although a sovereign nation-state did not exist on the continent of Africa at that time, the UNIA discourses of racial solidarity conceptualized the scattered black peoples of the world as a nation-in-the-making.
79. *Limón Searchlight*, June 6, 1931.
80. *Negro World*, February 4, 1922.
81. *Ibid.*, May 23, 1925.
82. *Limón Searchlight*, August 23, 1930.
83. *Ibid.*, December 13, 1930.
84. *Ibid.*
85. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women’s Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880–1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 14.
86. *Limón Searchlight*, May 10, 1930.
87. *Ibid.*, July 26, 1930.
88. Harpelle, *The West Indians of Costa Rica*, 116.
89. For further discussion of black discourses of eugenics see Delayne English, *Unnatural Selections: Eugenics in American Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).
90. *Limón Searchlight*, March 7, 1931; original emphasis.

91. *Voz del Atlántico*, February 27, 1937.
92. *Limón Searchlight*, January 31, 1931.
93. See Roderick Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).
94. *Limón Searchlight*, August 31, 1931.
95. *Ibid.*, November 1, 1930.
96. *Ibid.*, October 4, 1930.
97. *Ibid.*, December 13, 1930.
98. Lara Putnam notes that sex workers were referred to as *mujeres públicas*, or public women, in Costa Rica during this time period. For more discussion of race, gender, and sex work, see Putnam, *The Company They Kept*.
99. E. Patrick Johnson, *Appropriating Blackness: Performance and the Politics of Authenticity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 3; original emphasis.
100. *Limón Searchlight*, August 22, 1931.
101. *Ibid.*, November 28, 1931.
102. *Ibid.*, November 1, 1930.
103. *Ibid.*, December 26, 1931.
104. *Ibid.*
105. *Ibid.*
106. bell hooks, “In our Glory: Photography and Black Life,” in *Picturing US: African American Identity in Photography*, ed. Deborah Willis (New York: The New Press, 1994), 45–48.
107. Mason B. Stokes, *The Color of Sex: Whiteness, Heterosexuality, and the Fictions of White Supremacy* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 1–2.