

THE JOURNEY
**AN INTERNSHIP IN URBAN ACTIVISM, MUSIC VIDEOS: ZOMBIE AND BAD
SYNE, AND A STUDY OF AFRO-PANAMANIAN IDENTITY & THE REGGAETÓN
MUSIC MOVEMENT**

by

Lisa Margaret Spencer

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ABSTRACT

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Lisa Margaret Spencer (llysa)

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2019
Under the Supervision of Co-Chairs: Dr. Theresa Kenney and Dr. Tami Williams

PART I- Under the guidance of Dr. Jill Florence Lackey

A major component of my doctorate included an internship in cultural anthropology at UrbAn in Milwaukee, Wisconsin with Dr. Jill Florence Lackey. The non-profit organization was housed in the Lincoln Park Village neighborhood. I assisted in planning events in the agency's the South Side Museum, implementing the South Side Farmer's Market, executing, and naming, the first "Gathering of the Nations" cultural festival in Kosciusko Park, proofreading a potential multi-cultural studies curriculum for Milwaukee Public Schools, transcribing stories of the city's homeless youth, and videotaping Milwaukee police officers for a Graduate course at Marquette University, and contributing to other agency projects.

A key component of working as a cultural anthropologist is to connect groups and agencies through commonality that ultimately builds understanding and community. The methods and programs established by UrbAn were connected to many aspects of social justice, bringing voice and celebration to outsider, minority, and underprivileged peoples. Storytelling validates identity in personal, cultural, and unified modalities. I was able to use my film, social work, and Spanish language skills to maneuver through the community and serve it in ways best

suggested by the agency's founder and the inhabitants themselves. The project designed by UrbAn organized people to be in community together. Activities, events, and initiatives brought cultural groups together to celebrate their differences, rather than be divided by them.

PART II- Under the guidance of Dr. Iverson White and Heidi Spencer

Zombie https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_zKwiHBlobw&t=7s

Bad Syne <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3fxlf7gyiEQ&t=755s>

The first music and video images of this first project were created during my Master's final. I took the footage and during my doctoral studies rented a film camera and expanded my footage, creating the narrative into a full music video. I entitled it, *Zombie*. The piece explores societal questions and inequities, as well as my relationship to these questions. I also began to explore the relationship between mind, body, and spirit on both a societal and personal level.

The second video, *Bad Syne*, was created mid-way through my doctorate with the permission and supervision of Iverson White. My time working on this piece gave me deeper insight into the lens of a Puerto Rican graffiti and hip-hop artist in New York City. I found the connections to be personal. The videos, like the research and written component of my dissertation, also focused on stories of identity, identities that cross in lines of music and outside art, Latino and Afro-Latino artists who were native to both Panama, Puerto Rico, and NYC. Graffiti art takes an anti-capitalist stand and organizes people to express themselves more freely. Hip-hop does the same.

While hip-hop is just one ingredient in both my video and dissertation, this sets, I feel, a quantifiable value on the significance of music for identity and understanding artists that are outside of the colonial power models. There are many *Americas*, each with their own voices and identities and I know, like Martin Luther King envisioned, there is a new *America*, where each person can define themselves according to their own accord as the oppressive, systematic structures dissipate and where all people are truly created and allowed to live, equal. Even today

in a climate that warns civil war, it is art and music that are among the movements in the forefront of progress.

PART III- Under the guidance of Dr. Jeffrey Hayes, Dr. Theresa Kenney, Dr. Gillian Rodger, and Jack Kenney

Previous research suggests that the roots of the music genre of reggaetón are in Panama. However, without a more inclusive narrative of how the music was brought forth and by whom, its historical journey is thwarted and the heritage of Panama's voice and a branch of black/mestizo music remains unhonored and unacknowledged. The musical movement of reggaetón emerged from a narrative of the African diaspora, at the time already scattered throughout the West Indies, that migrated to the Central American isthmus in search of work, building the Panamanian railroad and canal. This research aspires to accurately contribute to documenting the relationship between reggaetón and Panama accrediting the music as a black/mestizo genre. This research uses the historical and cultural-anthropological methods to discern the intersection of politics, sociology, and music. This study explores how the reggaetón music movement contributed to Afro-Panamanian-Latino identity and offers an examination concerning its roots in the blended musical styles and socio-politics of the U.S. controlled Panama Canal Zone in the early 1900s. The music styles of reggaetón explored in this paper are from sources in English. This is due to the era being studied in this dissertation focuses on the U.S. controlled Panama Canal Zone, when implemented English was established as the predominant language in the region.

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DEDICATION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This paper is dedicated to departed committee members: Dr. Jeffrey Hayes and Dr. Martin Jack Rosenblum, departed reggaetón pioneer, Michael Ellis, and to the Afro-Caribbean-Latinos who constructed the Panama Canal, including the tens of thousands that died during the process.

Jeffrey, “It’s (a) responsibility to get a PhD, your intelligence reaches your heart & soul.”

Marty, “You shine as an unmapped star in the heavens and one that can be seen from all hidden and exposed land forms . . . you are magically lit.”

Michael, “I would burn my hands in fire to have a heart like yours.”

I express deep gratitude to my committee members: Dr. Theresa Kenney, Iverson White, Dr. Tami Williams and Dr. Gillian Rodger.

I am so grateful to have been able to play music with several people on this project:

Brian Ritchie, Michael Ellis, Masud Asante, Liviti, and Paul Gaeta

Lastly, I give thanks to Judy Spencer, Jimmie Rodgers Spencer, Dr. Jill Florence Lackey, Dr. Sandra Toro, Dr. Raji Swaminathan, Dr. Larry Martin, David Vartinian, Margaret Spencer, Heidi Spencer, Greg Thompson, Naya Spencer, Karvari Ellingson, my amazing friends, and finally, with special gratitude, Mr. Jack Kenney, who walked me to the finish line.

Chapter 1- Introduction

Background

As reggae musician and philosopher, Bob Marley, stated in 1980 on his trip to Brazil, “Musicians must be spokespeople for the oppressed masses...Reggae sprang from the ghettos and has always been loyal to its origins” (“Bob’s Visit”, p. 1). Music can transcend individual characteristics and act as a vehicle for the expression of the daily experiences and the perspectives of the composers and musicians themselves in social and larger contexts. The backgrounds, issues, and personal experiences that have affected and influenced the rise and development of reggaetón music are complex. In addition, the genre’s geographical origins are in dispute. Both Panama and Puerto Rico claim to be the birthplace of the music. While that dispute has not been resolved, reggaetón is, nonetheless, an important musical movement that has impacted communities throughout the world. The motivation for this study is to examine the history of the Panama Canal region in order to place Panama on the timeline and context of the reggaetón music movement.

Reggaetón may be a mestizo music movement rooted in the era of U.S. control of the Panama Canal Zone (PCZ). In the field of social justice, importance is placed on equality. During the Jim Crow era, an inequitable social system extended into the nation’s occupied territories, including the PCZ, where Jim Crow laws were applicable. For laborers of color, there was no racial equality. Today, there is an ability and, thus, a responsibility to investigate the deeper meaning and context of the working people who lived and died building the canal. Reggaetón music is part of their legacy. A void exists in the reporting of the contemporary and historical cultural contributions of Afro-Caribbean-Panamanians as well as in the documented

collections of knowledge about those contributions. Music, as a modality, reflects a vital voice for justice. The story of reggaetón is a telling history of a social movement for many Afro-Caribbean-Panamanians.

Multidisciplinary Doctorate

After a year in the Urban Education/Multicultural Studies doctorate program, I transitioned into a multidisciplinary doctorate that I modeled after my Liberal Studies Master's program. My proposal was presented to a graduate committee and to my original doctoral committee: Dr. Sandro Toro, Dr. Rajeswari Swaminathan, Dr. Jeffrey Hayes, Dr. Martin Jack Rosenblum, and Dr. Larry Martin. They examined my program in social justice and documentary and agreed to a three-fold plan to satisfy the requirements for my doctoral degree which included an internship, a music video, and a written requirement. These three elements were linked in social justice, documentary, and community building. My course work included the Graduate School requirements in research as well as courses in Education, Film, Sociology, Cultural Anthropology, and Curriculum Design. This multidisciplinary course also included Social Justice courses: "The History of African-American Education" and "War and the Media Arts." The three-fold plan requirements for completion of my multidisciplinary doctorate specified that I preform a practicum with an anthropological non-profit organization. For this practicum and the first of three requirements I served a two-semester internship at the UrbAn Anthropology, Inc (Milwaukee, WI), a community-based membership association dedicated to the celebration of cultural diversity and a holistic approach to urban problem solving. I worked under Dr. Jill Florence Lackey where I studied anthropology and video documentary for one full semester with UWM, continuing on into the summer and fall, even though I had fulfilled my semester

requirement per the committee. My work with UrbAn Anthropology, Inc. included helping start a farmer's market on the Southside of Milwaukee. The second performance requirement that I completed as a fulfillment of the practicum requirement was to write, shoot, and edit a video documenting an outsider artist. This video was entitled TAG and was released in 2011. The third requirement for fulfillment of my multidisciplinary doctoral degree per my committee is a written thesis. These three requirements for my multidisciplinary doctoral degree were, per the committee, purposely varied and not related to give me a breadth and depth of experience as well as an artistic component completion.

Patrick Eagan and his colleagues at UW-Madison believe in teaching “the importance of culture and interdisciplinary education for sustainable development” (Eagan et al, 2013, p. 1). My three-part, multidisciplinary degree project is entitled, *Social Justice and Documentary*. Research included over a decade of study, internship, creative performance and production, research, and interviews, all designed to highlight key components of social action in a way that could validate the varied and unrelated forms that advance the causes of social justice.

My thesis paper is designed to take a closer look at these points of intersection with respect to a specific era in history, that merges Panama, the United States, and the Caribbean Islands, and the documenting of these points of merge through a form of music, reggaetón. My Master's degree was in Liberal Studies and this multidisciplinary approach merges the academic methods of the arts, humanities, and social sciences. The organic and expanding philosophy of social justice crosses cultures and disciplines and is a foundation in social work. This paper focuses on documenting the link between identity, history, and the music movement of reggaetón in the Panama Canal Zone. It emphasizes a unification of a critical view of social justice, observation in art, music, education, and social work. It is the last part of the trilogy and

links the urban activism and videography in themes of community. The three communities I worked and studied in were Latino ones and my focus was on identity and creative expression in shared oppressive constraints. While using both the English and Spanish languages while working as a Cultural Anthropologist in Milwaukee and while shooting the outside artist, English sources were used primarily in the written study, as English was the official language of the U.S. occupied Panama Canal Zone.

This project emphasizes a unification of a critical view of social justice and observation in art, music, education, and social work. It also offers a perspective of where music has been, where music can go and how, through experience, witness, and documentation, music can be a part of social movements and justice.

Reggaetón

Many nations, artists, and producers stake a claim to reggaetón's origins. One such contender was renowned Panamanian reggaetón producer, Michael Ellis, (b. May 12, 1959- d. Dec. 6, 2014), among the first to produce reggaetón commercially. Ellis was born in Panama of Afro-Caribbean-Latino ancestry. His grandfather was Jamaican. He began his promotion of Spanish Reggae in New York City, which is a third, but less documented potential locale of origin for reggaetón music. There, Ellis established a reggaetón record label with his partner, David Uriel, called New Creations. New Creations recorded and produced reggaetón music with artists predominantly of Afro-Caribbean descent. Eduardo Cepeda, contributor of the Latino cultural web site, Remezcla, describes Ellis as, "the pioneer of Spanish reggae and founder of reggaetón" (Cepeda, March, 2018, para 4). Ellis has won many music awards in this genre including the prestigious Latin music award, 'La Gaviota de Plata' at the Festival de la Canción de Viña del

Mar en Chile, and a Grammy Award for the production of ‘Gran Pana,’ ‘El Maestro’ and ‘Muévelo, Muévelo’. In addition, he won the MTV Video Music Award – International Viewer’s Choice Video of the Year and The Premio lo Nuestro award from 1989 – 1993 (Ellis, K., 2010, p. 2).

In the last interview that I conducted with Michael Ellis, he said, “The information out there is bull crap. You know the truth, [about reggaetón] mommy, you were there” (Ellis, 2014, Interview). Michael loved reggaetón and claimed the music as his own creation. Ellis suggested that the descendants of the Panama Canal laborers inspired and relate to reggaetón music because of its Panamanian roots. The history of the construction of the Panama Canal has shaped many aspects of Panamanian culture, aspects that are still expressed today, including reggaetón music (Ellis, 2014, Interview).

From historians to academics, from Latino and non-Latino populations and artists across the world, reggaetón has been acknowledged as a music genre of both popularity and controversy. The origins of reggaetón have been in dispute since the early 1980s, pitting Puerto Rico and Panama as chief rivals for that claim. Musicians from both countries, however, have taken reggaetón in a variety of creative and original directions. Herein lies the problem of determining the music’s role and development in a Panamanian context. Much of what is documented on the topic of reggaetón is limited to its presence and growth in Puerto Rico. In contrast, this research project will examine the contribution of Panama, through the narrative of Michael Ellis and others, to the history of the music genre, reggaetón, in the context of the building of the canal and its integral role in the birth and development of this genre, as well as in the development of Afro-Caribbean-Panamanian identity. In order to investigate this contribution, this research hopes to shed light on the relationship between the Afro-Caribbean-

Panamanian laborers of the U.S. controlled Panama Canal Zone in the early 1900s and the music that was created through the diversity of this working-class amalgamation.

The subject of reggaetón has received increased attention since the early 2000s. Through the music of reggaetón, a timeline and historical foundation can be discerned that connects the history and music of Panama, and the spread of the reggaetón genre. Reggaetón is of significant importance to the people and musicians who used and continue to use this form of music to express the emotions of their circumstance. The purpose of this study is to document, to acknowledge, and to understand the historical significance of the reggaetón music movement in relation to the Panama Canal region and its historical inhabitants and descendants.

Previous research on reggaetón has noted the rival claims between Panama and Puerto Rico concerning the origin of the genre. Leonardo Renato Aulder is a well-known Panamanian reggaetón artist who was interviewed by Texas Christian University history professor, Peter Szok, on his understanding of the distinctions between Panamanian and Puerto Rican characteristics in reggaetón music. Aulder notes that the danceable beat and the nature of the music draws heavily on aspects of African diasporic culture (2009). This musical foundation is found in both Panama and Puerto Rico. However, Panamanian musicians are equally adamant that the musical form is essentially their creation and that its roots lie firmly in the traditions of the isthmus' Afro-Caribbean population. Panamanian salsa artist Rubén Blades insisted during a press conference in Puerto Rico, "We invented it in Panama" (Szok, 2009, p. 1). The intense debate between Panama and Puerto Rico encompasses all aspects of reggaetón, including where it began and how it developed.

Wayne Marshall, a musicologist and Duke researcher on the topic of reggaetón, comments how the music has often taken on a heated and "linear" quality, with participants

linking the genre's spectacular emergence to pre-existing, nationalist narratives, while ignoring its global and fluid character, the "migration" of its artists, and the "reach of the media" which impacts its subjects simultaneously in various regions (Marshall, 2007, p. 22). Marshall's reference to reggaetón being both "global" and "fluid" emphasizes the effects of the genre on a multi-locale perspective.

Research Questions

1. How does reggaetón music help its fans and practitioners articulate their identity rooted in Panama's particular history?
2. What are the current conflicts in discourses on reggaetón's origins?
3. What is known about the immigrant populations of the Pan-Caribbean workforce in Panama?
4. What conditions and circumstances created the environment for the eventual rise of the reggaetón music movement within the political, economic, and social atmosphere of the U.S. controlled Panama Canal Zone?

Using Grounded Theory and Cultural Anthropological methods, the validity of the connection between Afro-Caribbean-Panamanian laborers and reggaetón music will be examined in this research thesis. Its timeline spans the nineteenth through twenty-first centuries in the Panama Canal Zone. This work will also examine how reggaetón music is connected to Afro-Caribbean Latino identity within this Panamanian historical context, including a thorough exploration of colonialism in the Panama Canal Zone and how it created a systemized division of white and non-white societies. Within these separate societies, distinct cultural expressions

arose. Like many working-class peoples throughout history, music was a form of social expression, continuity, freedom, and unity.

This project also serves as a dedication to the Afro-Caribbean-Panamanian workforce that constructed the canal and their musical legacy from which the formations of reggaetón grew. This work is designed to examine, contrast and compare concepts, such as attempting to determine musical origin, and add to the body of literature on reggaetón music. Existing English-language scholarly literature has not thoroughly addressed the Afro-Caribbean-Panamanian workforce presence in the creation of reggaetón. This project gives Panama its rightful place in reggaetón's origin and identity, and by establishing a clear inspection into the history and timeline of reggaetón, using interviews and popular literary sources, it examines the role this music played among the working-class Afro- Panamanians that lived in the PCZ during U.S. control in the early twentieth century.

Social scientists generally stress the importance of the parallels among different forms of expression. According to German philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey, social science research data on correlation adds to the knowledge base of life experience through communication styles (Dilthey,1974). In order to determine a causal relationship, a researcher must show or articulate correlation. The reggaetón genre is a specific expressive viewpoint through which researchers can explore the story of how this particular musical style carries cultural symbols, meaning, significance, identity, and continuity.

Renowned qualitative researchers Lindlof and Taylor state that, “Research should . . . illuminate how cultural symbol systems are used to attribute meaning to existence and activity” (Lindlof/Taylor, 2002, p. 11). A musical movement that rises from racial oppression demands consideration and the content of that music and their accompanied lyrics reflect many layers of

that particular society. In that context, songs become informal oral history accounts. Furthermore, as a reflection of the inequality and imbalances of colonialism, there is limited research on genres such as reggaetón. Oral historians insist, “The inadequacy of written documentation from previous regimes and colonial powers has accelerated the need--even the demand--for oral history” (Ritchie, 2003, p. 13). Music is by definition oral history and it tells the story of the people from whom that music originated.

Music is an expressive communication of profound significance. It is often an enlightening tool that can offer a depiction of life and history from the perspective of the person performing that music. This insight offers a window into any given social context. Music has historically empowered collective, previously muted voices, thrusting people into social, political, financial, and emotional climates that can serve to contribute to the progress of human civilization; shifting and moving society, supporting continuity amidst oppression and improving both the conditions and the morale of those societies. Oral historian, Daniel Kelin II, argues, “[by] listening to the stories of others, we validate their experience and life. By preserving the stories, we share and hear, our family, heritage, and culture can live forever” (2015, p. xi). Research and music together can, potentially, record those stories of culture, giving both affirmation, value, and documentation to them.

This research attempts to further an understanding of Panama’s important role in the development of reggaetón music by putting it in context with the nation’s history of the building of the canal. The artists, music, lyrics and influences in style are all key variables in contributing to this understanding. Panama’s fingerprint on reggaetón music is often mentioned in popular cultural documents and scholarly work alike. This being true, Panama’s integral part in the development of reggaetón music is still underemphasized, understudied and under-documented.

This dissertation aims to go deeper into the examination of Panama's contribution and multi-faceted relationship with reggaetón.

The inclusion of Puerto Rico in the understanding of the origins of this regional music is relevant to this study, placing the music in global context and acknowledging the discussion and disagreement of the genre's birthplace. The viewpoint of many Puerto Rican researchers, somewhat understandably, is on the connection between reggaetón music and Puerto Rico. This re- search, in contrast, is designed to examine the influence of Panama on the music's development by establishing the cultural, political, and musical history of the isthmus. Furthermore, this work establishes the relationship between the governments of the United States and Panama that led to the migration of tens of thousands of Afro-Caribbean people to work on the Panama Canal. This includes an examination and improved understanding of the conditions and qualities of the segregated, racially-based social system of the PCZ. Perhaps this research could contribute to the development of a reggaetón museum in the Panama Canal Zone to document and highlight one of the cultural movements rooted there. Regardless, this research serves to uncover more about the development of the ever-evolving musical phenomenon of reggaetón.

The theoretical framework of this project examines events, social conditions, and musical expressions that existed in the Panama Canal Zone region during the initial decades of the 20th Century. Using Grounded Theory and historical and cultural anthropological theories, this dissertation examines the differences among the populations in the Panama Canal Zone and helps to explain the need to include reggaetón in an exploration of Afro-Panamanian identity.

How did Afro-Panamanians express themselves in conditions of oppression within the U.S. controlled Panama Canal zone? As noted, contemporary literature explores the history and

expression of reggaetón arising in Puerto Rico, while often leaving out the Panamanian connection. The context of this project is the development and history of reggaetón within Panama and the influence of its people on that music. It is confirmed that Afro-Caribbean-Latino hybrids of culture, including musical expression, were occurring all throughout the Americas since the beginning of colonialism. While the birthplace of reggaetón may be in dispute, Panama can certainly be included in the discussion of reggaetón's origin without ignoring other locales. These various perspectives give a larger, more accurate account of the music genre. Dr. Theresa Kenney explains, "The very heart of social research is reflected in a variety of voices that can serve as a vehicle for rich description to develop informative and sensitive research material" (Kenney, 2006, p. 18).

Published by Duke University Press, *Reggaetón*, co-edited by Raquel Z. Rivera, Wayne Marshall, and Deborah Pacini Hernandez, explores the history of the musical genre and gives a three-dimensional, tangible life to the topic. The relationship between Panama and the reggaetón music movement is multi-faceted. And is relatively unexplored. There is a relationship between Panama and the reggaetón music movement, though the roots of the music extend to Africa, the Caribbean, and throughout the Americas. By studying the history and music of the PCZ, this relationship can be quantified and its significance explored. *Reggaetón*, through its lyrics and composition, explores the topic of immigration in terms of its music, giving the genre dimensionality, both historically and culturally:

Drawing on reggae, hip-hop, and a number of Spanish Caribbean styles . . . Reggaetón emerged from Puerto Rico in the late 1990s but only recently crossed over into the U.S. mainstream and public consciousness. . . . Before it was called reggaetón, artists and audiences referred to the music simply as reggae or sometimes as Spanish reggae or

reggae en Español. The latter term, however, more often describes Panamanian recordings from the 1980s and early 1990s than the Puerto Rican productions that eventually coalesced into reggaetón. . . . While Puerto Rican youths' identification with reggae was heavily mediated by the global music industry, the development of reggae in Panama--though still related to the global music industry--was also rooted in a history of West Indian immigration and a resulting social context where Jamaican music, patois, and Rastafarianism were not trend affectations but an integral part of Panamanian vernacular culture . . . the genre's ascribed point of departure may vary- Panama and Puerto Rico being the most often cited. . . . Reggae en Español, underground, and reggaetón are best described as trans-Caribbean genres. (Rivera et al, 2009, pp. 1-11)

Wayne Marshall's essay in *Reggaetón*, "Placing Panama in the Reggaetón Narrative: Editor's Notes" is dedicated to the Panamanian connection to reggaetón. So, while Panama has never been rejected completely as the source, or part of the collective source of reggaetón, its significance is under-emphasized in comparison to the music's purported Puerto Rican influences.

This project fuses both cultural and historical documents, interviews and popular and scholarly secondary sources to piece together the link between the African diaspora in the West Indies, the isthmus of Panama, the United States' construction of the Canal, and the reggaetón musical movement. The story of Michael Ellis, included in this paper, also represents the Afro-Caribbean-Panamanian hybridity of reggaetón music. What is challenging about music, and what challenges its meaning, is the fact that it is formative and subjective. Further insight into this music as a cultural lodestone can be investigated by exploring its history and social context. Many places in the world have embraced and adapted reggaetón music, especially in, but not

limited to, Latino communities. The music continues to spread and be adapted world-wide. The emphasis in this paper, however, lies in the music's multiple origins and the inclusion of Panama in reggaetón's birth and evolution.

The story of the laborers of the Panama Canal is one of collective oppression. While Afro-Caribbean laborers building the Panama Canal were dying of various illnesses, mainly yellow fever, and accidents by the thousands, their hard work left behind both legacy and legend. Beyond the field of musicology, how is the value of popular music and the story of laborers academically validated and quantified? What sort of validation is needed to determine which genres of music are worthy of study from a cultural, anthropological and sociological perspective? While there are many studies on such musical genres as classical and rock n' roll, other genres, like reggaetón, are comparatively overlooked.

Adding to the academic body of research on reggaetón is important due to the lack of literature on this topic, its centrality to Panama's heritage and peoples, and its connection to the United States and the Canal Zone. Reggaetón is an anthem of the Panamanian-Afro-Caribbean people, a national treasure, and an offering to the world- one that goes hand in hand with the Panama Canal. While the people who built the Panama Canal are long deceased, their ancestors continued to explore musical fusion in the Canal Zone, eventually giving rise to "Reggae en Español," or Spanish reggae, the closest predecessor to reggaetón music. Studying this history and organizing the data of the people and circumstances of the Panama Canal Zone during U.S. control establishes an opportunity to explore the beginning and the inter-relationship of the evolution of reggaetón. This work is an attempt to honor reggaetón's place in Panama by reviewing this past, highlighting mutual and distinct characteristics and exposing racial injustices; in other words, all that led to the creation and growth of reggaetón.

In sum, there is limited research in academia on the connection between the Panama Canal and the birth and development of reggaetón music. This research project, by weaving a tapestry of connections to producer Michael Ellis, provides a basis for further investigation into this connection. The research is pursued through the study of history, music, and context. This work is not designed to examine what is happening in reggaetón today, but instead, what happened before reggaetón even existed, including soca, reggae, hip hop, dance hall and dembow, how it emerged, and why it is significant.

Key Terms and Definitions

Key terms will be used throughout the paper that refer to the topic or elements that are connected to the topic of the reggaetón genre. Reggaetón is a key term that represents a particular style of music and is widely used. The controversy lies in the emphasis of reggaetón as a Puerto Rican musical genre with both scholarly research and popular culture often minimizing the Panamanian contribution. While the details of this music will be investigated throughout this work, the entirety of this dissertation is designed to redefine reggaetón. This dissertation defines the term from popular, informal sources in the interest of colloquial popular usage.

Defined by Urban Dictionary:

Reggaetón is characterized by rough, monotone rapping (in Spanish) and driving dancehall riddims, (the instrumental and vocal accompaniment characteristic in reggaetón music) and it's rapidly becoming the dance music of choice for a generation of young Latinos. While only recognized as a style in the 1990s, reggaetón has its roots in the '70s, when Jamaican workers moved to Panama to work on the canal and brought reggae music with them. Reggae's popularity grew in Central America and the Caribbean at the

same time that American rap was finding its way south. The landmark development came in 1985, when Vico C released Puerto Rico's first Spanish-language rap album. It was only a matter of time before producers linked Latin rap with Jamaica's hard dancehall sounds. All they needed was to add a few native Puerto Rican touches like the bomba and plena rhythms (better known from salsa), and presto, a new genre. Reggaetón finally spilled over Puerto Rico's borders in the 21st century, as artists like Tego Calderon, Don Omar, Ivy Queen and Hector y Tito gained currency abroad. Even boy bands like Aventurra climbed aboard the bandwagon, emulating a defanged reggaetón and signaling the genre's growing appeal. (Urban Dictionary, 2018)

Several key terms used throughout the paper represent common usage, especially among American movements, including colonialism, Panama Canal Zone, and African-American. Reggaetón music is Jamaican reggae style music that is translated into Spanish and blended with many other styles of music, including such styles as soca and afrobeat, which will be discussed in the final chapter. The emphasis on the history of the Panama Canal Zone refers to the period that included the construction of the Panama Canal. This era involved the United States taking control of the territory necessary to build the canal in 1904, establishing its authority over that territory as separate sovereignty from the rest of Panama and its continued control through the 20th century. This new colonial territory was called the Panama Canal Zone.

The term African-American, refers to citizens from the United States of African origin, while Afro-Caribbean-Panamanians refers to people of mixed race that includes Africans. People migrated to Panama from all over the Caribbean, many recently freed from slavery, to join and create a significant work force from the late 1850s through the early 1900s. Through traveling, education, and interviews, this researcher has learned that many people of African descent from

the Caribbean or other parts of the Americas refer to themselves as African-American or the original people. But for this work, African-American will refer to the more common understanding of United States citizens of African descent. Because of the complicated demographic of the Caribbean basin, populations are generally described in this paper as Afro-Panamanian and Afro-Caribbean.

The term ‘occupation’ refers to a military invasion of one country by another in order to gain control. The political term for the U.S. presence in Panama was occupation. However, since that presence was accomplished more with coercion and threat than through military force, this project will more often refer to the occupation throughout the project as control. Ultimately, the United States assumed jurisdiction over the Panama Canal Zone in order to control the construction and operation of the canal, creating a nation within a nation of five miles on each side of the canal.

Licensed social worker, Gabriella Dolan-Reilly, explains her understanding of social justice: “It originated as a religious term to acknowledge the collective nature of humanity, and our personal commitment to helping other humans” (2013, p. 1). The author pinpoints the overarching question that social justice workers contemplate on a deep, personal, academic, and spiritual level. “The advocates and practitioners that advance social justice need to have a handle on what social justice means to them, and how this can apply to the work they do and the people they do it with” (Dolan-Reilly, 2013, p. 1). Dolan-Reilly compares common definitions of the term social justice using popular internet citations:

A state or doctrine of egalitarianism (Egalitarianism defined as 1: a belief in human equality especially with respect to social, political, and economic affairs; 2: a social philosophy advocating the removal of inequalities among people) – Merriam-Webster

Dictionary

The fair and proper administration of laws conforming to the natural law that all persons, irrespective of ethnic origin, gender, possessions, race, religion, etc., are to be treated equally and without prejudice. See also civil rights. – Business Dictionary

The distribution of advantages and disadvantages within a society – Dictionary.Com

. . . justice exercised within a society, particularly as it is exercised by and among the various social classes of that society. A socially just society is defined by its advocates and practitioners as being based on the principles of equality and solidarity; this pedagogy also maintains that the socially just society both understands and values human rights, as well as recognizing the dignity of every human being. – Wikipedia

Social justice is the view that everyone deserves equal economic, political and social rights and opportunities. – National Association of Social Workers

The non-partisan, Center for Economic and Social Justice (Wash., D.C.) suggests:

Social Justice is the virtue which guides us in creating those organized human interactions we call institutions. In turn, social institution when justly organized provides us with access to what is good for the person, both individually and in our associations with others. Social justice also imposes on each of us a personal responsibility to work with others to design and continually perfect our institutions as tools for personal and

social development. (Dolan-Reilly, 2013, p. 1)

Limitations of the Study and Design Controls

A clear limitation of this study is that I cannot go back in time and witness the U.S. controlled Panama Canal Zone nor interview the Caribbean workforce, but the historical documents paint a vivid picture of the circumstances and the anecdotes of the time and place. Furthermore, Michael Ellis has passed away and with him many of the insights into the early days of commercial reggaetón production. In its study of both historical and cultural data, this work attempts to fill in some missing pieces. Perhaps, once enough data has been collected, a tribute to reggaetón music will be erected in the former Panama Canal Zone.

The research design for this project will include semi-structured interview questions which will “consist of several key questions that help to define the areas to be explored, but also allows the interviewer or interviewee to diverge in order to pursue an idea or response in more detail” (Gill et al, 2008, p. 1). This format of interviews allows slight guidance on the topic of music but is open-ended so whether the interview is being conducted via email, over the phone, or in person, it allows for the information to be explored. This discovery is a data collection process that, while in the parameters of a research topic, allows for flow and authenticity. Dr. Theresa Kenney (2006) examines the use of interviewing in a doctoral dissertation:

The very essence of interview skill revolves around a commitment to openness for both members of the dialogue. Interview in an active sense is clearly not a mere knowledge collection tool. Both members of the interview are significant in the experience of construction of meaning and partake in a cooperative venture. (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995)

Therefore, my role as research/collaborator involved self-analysis. Without knowing one's own perceptions, the ability to digest and respond in a constructivist manner during interview sessions may be difficult. The interviewer must establish a climate of mutual disclosure (Douglas, 1985). The process of self-analysis and disclosure helped me to understand how I envisioned myself, how I interpreted data, and how I perceived information so as to explore these areas and to impart a narrative describing a personal insight into my background and a subjective philosophy. In short, this personal story helps me to better understand myself and my decision-making with regards to teaching and writing (2006, p. 61).

Summary

In summary, Chapter 1 contains an overview of the musical movement of reggaetón, including the background, problems, purpose, research questions and limitations of this study. Chapter 2 is a literary review, which examines scholarly research surrounding Grounded Theory, a research method that involves the discovery of theory through data analysis, and qualitative interview as well as historical and cultural research, in this case, on the subject of the construction workforce of the Panama Canal Zone and the birth and evolution of reggaetón. Chapter 3 contains an explanation of the paper's methodology using a Grounded Theory design as well as the personal journey of my research. It also explains the ethnographical/cultural anthropological and historical approaches to my research. Chapter 4 contains the research findings. Key points in this chapter are examined within a historical backdrop of the Panama Canal region up until the United States became involved in the administration of the Panama Canal Zone under the leadership of three presidents: President Theodore Roosevelt stewardship of the Panama Canal project during his two terms, its continuation through the single term of

William H. Taft, who traveled to Panama several times to oversee the progress, and its completion a year after Woodrow Wilson took office in 1913. A fourth U.S. President worth noting is Ulysses Grant who sent seven expeditions to scout the location as early as the 1870s. In this context, this chapter explores the history of the U.S. occupied Panama Canal zone, outlining the economic structure of the Panama Canal Zone during U.S. control and construction of the canal. The oppressive characteristics of the Canal Zone, and their inherent link to colonialism are key factors in establishing Panama's place in the evolution of reggaetón and as a form of identity for the Afro-Caribbean-Panamanian people. This chapter also focuses on the racially determined economic system that existed in the U.S. controlled Panama Canal Zone, outlining the economic structure of the Panama Canal Zone during U.S. control and construction of the canal. The oppressive characteristics of the Canal Zone, and their inherent link to colonialism are key factors in establishing Panama's place in the evolution of reggaetón and as a form of identity for the Afro-Caribbean-Panamanian people. This chapter also focuses on the racially determined economic system that existed in the U.S. controlled Panama Canal Zone.

The second part of Chapter 4 elaborates on the musical elements of reggaetón and the chapter ends with the connection between reggaetón music and the nation of Panama, outlining the inequities of the non-white laborers that constructed the Panama Canal. David McBride, author of *Missions for Science: U.S. Technology and Medicine in America's African World*, explains, “[b]y the time the canal was completed, a new industrial black diaspora in Panama would emerge inside and surrounding the Zone” (McBride, 2002, p. 49). This dissertation ends with a conclusion that aims to establish Panama's position in the reggaetón movement after the examination of her history, cultures, and musical styles.

Chapter II- Literature Review/ Theoretical Framework

The purpose of this literature review is to establish a theoretical framework around the use of Grounded Theory, literary research and interviews to support my research concerning the history of the Panama Canal Zone with a focus on the topic of music; specifically, the musical genre of reggaetón in a Panamanian context. This literature review defines the qualitative research that has informed this dissertation in four main sections: (1) Grounded Theory research and interview methods (2) A brief overview of Panamanian Canal historical literature that includes information on the colonial influences on the social and economic culture of Afro-Panamanians living in the Panama Canal Zone in the early twentieth century and (3) an overview of Panamanian and Puerto Rican interpretations of reggaetón music.

Grounded Theory

Grounded Theory is a method of research developed by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in 1967 as a way to challenge the status quo and combat social research that relied on the absolute or certain knowledge of terminal positivism. Glaser and Strauss contended at the time that social sciences and natural sciences did not deal with the same material. They challenged assumptions of a universal behavior that could be applied to human behavior. Birkinshaw (2011) took note of this new approach that is designed to construct new meaning by reexamining already collected data. That new approach allows researchers to construct new theories and knowledge through the observation of daily realities. This expanded perspective offered a compromise between empiricism and relativism and gave researchers a new way to consider and integrate knowledge, ranging from scientific and experiential to a more sensitive cultural or

historical context. Grounded theory negotiates the extremes of empiricism and the ever-changing relationships of relativism and still can be set in existing theories (Birkinshaw, 2011).

Grounded Theory, according to Birkinshaw:

. . . is based on two main ideas; “constant comparison,” where all information is data and is then collected and analyzed, and “theoretical sampling” where decisions made around the data collected are constructed theory and not pre-existing concepts of extreme empirical data (Glaser & Strauss 1967) . . . we adopt Van Maanen's (1979: 520) definition of qualitative research as “an umbrella term” to cover an “array of interpretive techniques that can describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world.” (Birkinshaw et al, 2011, p. 1)

Researchers, then, use their own theories which are developed from a compilation of literature and documents, experience, and unique social perspectives, instead of using and/or imposing the particular concepts of others. Developing new concepts from previously written literature can bring new life to old and/or previously forgotten material. It is through these types of examinations and efforts that informed grounded theory can bring about new knowledge (Glaser, 2002).

Of importance at all times is for researchers to maintain their sense of rigor. Attention must be given to authenticity, substance and efficacy in all research methods. In other words, the researcher is fully engaged with all material coming their way. Qualitative research has continually faced challenges regarding the development of concepts mainly due to the fact that qualitative research often lacks the certainty of statistical data. However, elucidating on how accuracy was maintained in qualitative inquiry, several qualitative researchers of note have

argued that terms such as reliability and validity were particular to quantitative inquiry and were not necessarily pertinent to qualitative inquiry (Altheide & Johnson, 1998; Leininger, 1994).

Reliability and Validity

Guba and Lincoln suggested that all research must have applicability, truth value, consistency, and neutrality in order to be justifiable. The essence of knowledge within a quantitative thesis is different from the knowledge in a qualitative study. Therefore, each type of study requires specific criteria for addressing rigor or trustworthiness. Guba and Lincoln suggested that within qualitative research, the benchmark to ensure rigor includes internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity. Additionally, they suggested that the benchmark used in a qualitative design to ensure trustworthiness was credibility and precision (Guba & Lincoln, 1981).

Guba and Lincoln suggested a number of strategies to use to ensure trustworthiness including but not exclusive to prolonged engagement and persistent observation and member-checks. Another area of importance they defined was the character of the investigator. They suggested that the qualitative researcher must be responsive and adaptable to a diverse set of situations to be able to glean as much information as possible for the research (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). It is in this manner of research that, through the viewing of previous literature, developing new theories and concepts becomes viable.

Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggest that Grounded Theory procedures force us to ask a range of relevant questions. For example, what power is in this situation and under what specified conditions? How is that power manifested, by whom, when, where, how, and with what consequences? To ignore those questions is to obstruct the discovery of important features of

power and to preclude developing further and/or deeper understanding.

Concepts from Existing Literature

Researchers using Grounded Theory find themselves in the position of describing or conceptualizing information in the discovery process. Concepts are often generated after which the researcher spends a great deal of time on the description of the particular concept. Usually the researcher compares ideas and concepts to develop new ideas and/or connections for qualitative categories based on possible existing markers that they may recognize. From this marker, new concepts are developed. The researcher can be caught up in over-describing with little to no real conceptual analysis. The data that the research gathers is often forced into concepts (Glaser, 2002).

Glaser describes the world as being run on descriptions of concepts no matter how vague or precise, although he believed the latter to be more prevalent. He suggests that very little conceptualization affects the way the world operates in reality. Glaser describes his ideas on conceptualization:

All that GT is the generation of emergent conceptualizations into integrated patterns, which are denoted by categories and their properties. This is accomplished by the many rigorous steps of GT woven together by the constant comparison process, which is designed to generate concepts from all data. Most frequently, qualitative data incidents are used. Through conceptualization, GT is a general method that cuts across research methods (experiment, survey, content analysis, and all qualitative methods) and uses all data resulting therefrom. Because of conceptualization, GT transcends all descriptive methods and their associated problems, especially what is an accurate fact, what is an

interpretation, and how is the data constructed. It transcends by its conceptual level and its 3rd and 4th level perceptions. If the researcher can conceptualize, then he or she will trust to emergence of a theory. It's part of their vision and realization that concepts will emerge. Emergence of concepts often happens fast, even too fast, and the research must be slowed a little to check out best fit concepts and their saturation (Glaser, 2002).

Pattern Seeking in Qualitative Data Analysis

In regards to Theoretical Sensitivity, Glaser said,

The ability to generate concepts from data and to relate them according to normal models of theory in general, and theory development in sociology in particular, is the essence of theoretical sensitivity. Generating a theory from data means that most hypotheses and concepts not only come from the data, but are systematically worked out in relation to the data during the course of the research. (Glaser & Holton, 2004, p. 43)

Ideas and concepts are not simply the voice to which a description of a concept can be attributed but rather they are giving an impression of one incident or idea.

Member checking and validity can easily be confusing because the participants may not understand the theory or concept being given to their input. Categories and concepts may not be generated from data with standard Qualitative Data Analysis methodology and often may not fit to an established pattern. There may be many concepts that do not fit or work, but they may still be important information. Grounded Theory seeks to discover ideas which work, that do fit, and are relevant. Grounded Theory works to uncover patterns, concepts and ideas that the participant does not understand or is not aware of, especially the social fictions that may be involved (Glaser 2002). Grounded Theory looks at all information as data. The focus is on the textual data,

meaning that data becomes text (Ralph et al, 2015). Interviews are reciprocal actions between a researcher and a participant. The researcher is meaningfully engaged in a process that will produce data and this data will for the most part become text form.

The note-taking from the type of interview where the researcher has minimal control of data production (no reciprocal action) positions the researcher with a different perspective with respect to the text produced from a meeting as opposed to the data produced from an active reciprocal interview. Charmaz (2006) uses the term “extant text” to indicate data sources that the researcher had no hand in shaping (p. 35). Charmaz, demarcates extant text from text that is obtained through reciprocal research participants (Ralph et al, 2015). In Grounded Theory research, the collection of data is generated from both extant text and reciprocal interviews. The information being reviewed in GT may be outdated, but the approach is new. This allows the researcher to take the extant data and put it into context.

In Grounded Theory, targeted questioning and analytical questioning of data (whether extant text or reciprocal interview) are quite different. While Grounded Theory promotes the dictum “all is data,” finding consistent commentary on how to use documents as data is difficult, especially among seminal works. Social scientists Nicholas Ralph, Melanie Birks, and Ysanne Chapman, expand on contextual positioning,

The researcher is often bereft of the context needed to optimally position extant data for analysis. In GT, data collection should not be a simple process of gathering artifacts, rather it should be a systematic and reflexive process aimed at collecting the data source and its concomitant information to optimally position that data for analysis. (Ralph et al, 2015)

Panamanian Canal Historical Literature

The history of the Panama Canal Zone includes the U.S. control of the region and the continued growth of the African workforces that were called upon to fuel construction projects in the isthmus, including the Panama Canal, under U.S. leadership. The overarching question of this research addresses the nature of Afro-Panamanian identity and the relationships between the U.S. and Panamanian governments and the treatment of the Afro-Caribbean peoples during the completion of the canal. This overarching question can be divided into sub questions that will narrow each aspect of the research questions into specific components. What is the history of the Panama Canal region? What is the history of the African presence in Panama? What were the geo-political conditions for the Afro-Caribbean people living in the U.S. controlled Panama Canal Zone during construction of the canal in the early 20th century? What were the race based, political, social, and economic policies in the U.S. occupied Panama Canal Zone? What were the Panamanian influences on the formation and development of the reggaetón music movement?

Soon after the “discovery” of the Pacific Ocean by Vasco de Balboa in the early 16th Century, Spain realized the potential importance of the isthmus. Encyclopedia.com suggests “This discovery-the short distance from sea to sea-has dominated Panama’s history ever since”. By the 19th Century, serious consideration was being given to a possible trans-isthmus water route (Aleman, 1959, p. 2). The attempt by the French, begun over a decade before, to build a cross-isthmus canal failed in 1898 due to “poor planning, terrible losses from disease among the workers, and bankruptcy” (Britannica Online, 2018, p. 1). According to the Panama Canal Zone Museum (Panama Canal Museum), the French spent over \$260 million while over 20,000 workers died in that initial effort. Subsequently, property, equipment and other assets were sold the United States in 1902 for \$40 million. The U.S. then paid Panama \$10 million for all rights

related to the PCZ.

Panama was chosen by the United States to serve as host to the interoceanic route that it proposed to build; the country's sense of self has been almost entirely dependent on its relationship with the United States, both cooperative and adversarial; the exigencies of canal construction, on one hand, led to the immigration of people of other countries and cultures. In some ways, this latter turn of events has created a formidable obstacle to the evolution of a coherent national identity (Falcoff, 1998, p. 2).

David McCullough, a historian, author, lecturer, and Pulitzer Prize winner and National Book Award winner, wrote about the PCZ in his book, *The Path Between the Seas*, in 1977. He suggested the construction of the canal, under the supervision of Chief Engineer, John Wallace, began in 1904 and that the effort, however, was beset with the same problems that plagued the French; disease and poor working and living conditions. In fact, conditions were so bad that almost three-quarters of all workers from the U.S. returned home (McCullough, 1977, pp. 438-458). Wallace was soon replaced by John Stevens, a railway engineer. Stevens realized that conditions for the workers had to change before the actual digging of the canal could occur. "The digging," he said, "is the least thing of all" (McCullough, 1977, p. 468). Stevens embarked on an ambitious building program that included roads, railways, warehouses, planned communities with hospitals, schools, churches, hotels and related housing. He instituted a sanitation program that included mosquito control that practically eliminated yellow fever from the isthmus. Stevens also convinced President Roosevelt of the need to construct a high-level canal built with locks and dams as opposed to the French idea of a sea-level canal. Stevens resigned in 1907 as the construction of canal itself was just beginning (Conniff, 1985, p. 32).

However, despite the best efforts of Stevens, canal laborers still faced dangerous working

conditions and disease. And a social system segregated American workers from their co-workers of color. In addition, payroll was also segregated with American citizens receiving gold in an amount higher than they would in the U.S. and non-U.S. citizens receiving silver in an amount higher than prevailing wages in the Caribbean basin (Conniff, 1985, p. 32). American workers, almost all of whom were either skilled or in administration, unionized and sent representatives to Washington, D.C. to lobby for better benefits (Conniff, 1985, p. 26). Meanwhile, black workers were used by management as a deterrence against those demands.

As time passed, the initial system of segregation evolved to include nationality as well as race as determining factors in the social structure of the zone. The evolved system included categories for white Americans, Europeans, West Indians, Chinese and Panamanians (Conniff, 1985, p. 43). Mark Falcoff, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, describes the demographic make-up of the region:

Its society is extraordinarily diverse, culturally, racially, and linguistically . . . during the colonial period, most of the population was of mixed Spanish-Indian descent (mestizos), though significant complements of Indians and even small numbers of African blacks rounded out the picture. Chinese indentured laborers were introduced during the building of the Panama railroad . . . followed by large numbers of West Indian blacks, Protestant and English speaking, during construction of the canal. (Falcoff, 1998, p. 24)

Documentation of worker deaths during construction of the canal was sketchy and incomplete. However, according to Velma Newton (p. 144), the death rate for white canal workers was between six and sixteen deaths per thousand, while the death rate for black workers was between eight and forty-six deaths per thousand. Conniff placed the death rate among black workers at 10% (1985, p. 31).

In the sociological approach, the role that culture plays to shape human behavior is associated with changeable circumstances that are studied to link symbolic interactionism (Mathew et al, 2014). The ethnographic approach to qualitative research comes largely from the field of anthropology. The emphasis in ethnography is on studying an entire culture. Originally, the idea of a culture was tied to the notion of ethnicity and geographic location but it has been broadened to include virtually any group or organization (Trochim, 2006). This research posits that a key component to understanding the connection between Panama and reggaetón is made through a deeper examination of the social and political elements of the Panama Canal Zone.

New Theories on Reggaetón

This research also explores the possibility that Puerto Rico and Panama do not need to be in competition with one another for the claim of being reggaetón's birthplace. As such, this paper considers that music may not come from one moment, but from within a much larger social context. There can be distinct traits and geography, as well as mutual ones. All of these overlapping examinations give a richer perspective on reggaetón, not just as a musical movement, but as a social movement. Weaving sociological and anthropological study with the historical method and Grounded Theory leads to deeper symbolism and meaning. (Glaser and Strauss, 1967)

This includes the circumstances and under-documentation of the experiences of the populations that were of African descent. Expanding research on Panama and its history to include the canal zone labor force gives a more quantifiable form that may shed honor and recognition upon populations that were not respected at the time. Tens of thousands of laborers, the majority of whom were of Afro-Caribbean descent, died of causes related to the construction

of the Panama Canal (French Canal Construction, 2018). Their contributions and experiences in the Canal Zone have been neglected by most historical and scholarly data. The process in this study explores the creation and evolution of the Panama Canal Zone and the migration trends of workers to the isthmus, including the amalgamation of cultures that became united both by political and social force, as well as by social connection and consciousness. This process concerns itself with describing the dynamics of culture as it changes over time and shines light on under-documented historical aspects (Strauss et al, 1967).

As Dr. Theresa A. Kenney noted in her research in Art Education, “history has moved away from fragmented documentation of events and into the more intimate forms of individuals within the masses, people within peoples” (Kenney, 2006). *Reggaetón* chronicles the stories and conditions of the PCZ workers. These people were labeled second-class citizens by the Jim Crow standards of the zone, putting them in stressful, dangerous, racist, and oppressive conditions. Through this shared experience, an expression of freedom and continuity was created in the form of music.

The edited collection, *Reggaetón*, acknowledges the debate about the origins of reggaetón between Panama and Puerto Rico. The debate includes controversy dealing with appropriation, nationality, race and censorship as related to some of reggaetón’s lyrical subject matter. One of the main reasons that it has been both valued and devalued by certain communities is the music’s embrace of blackness. Reggaetón is, according to author, Raquel Rivera, “heard and projected as ‘black music’ by performers and audiences alike.... (and) continues to be racialized as black . . . (and) reveals a plethora of visual markers of hip-hop generation (and) African American culture” (Rivera et al, 2009 p. 58).

The apartheid system promulgated by the U.S. in the Panama Canal Zone during the

construction of the Panama Canal included racial segregation that involved all aspects of life in the PCZ. The study of this history, along with the literature on the musical influences of reggaetón, help to fill in a needed information gap as to the link between the U.S., Panama, and the music genre of reggaetón. This publication recognizes that, “despite an acknowledgment of Panama’s place in the reggaetón narrative, detailed accounts of reggae’s presence and resonance in Panama have yet to come to light” (Rivera et al, 2009, p. 79). This research is designed to clarify that presence and resonance. While their account is a highly esteemed examination of the field of reggaetón, further information on the music’s Panamanian connection is needed. This multidisciplinary study stretches across academic disciplines and includes a close look at the U.S. presence in Panama and the Afro-Caribbean people living in the Panama Canal Zone. The story of the PCZ, similar to the story of reggaetón, varies by storyteller (Rivera et al, 2009).

Musicology offers an approach to studying music that includes history, sociology, culture, and ethnology. These key components examine aspects of how music may alter people’s lives. While the methodologies primarily used for this research includes the historical method, cultural anthropological method, and Grounded Theory, some consideration from a musicologist lens may be used. Music is a complex living alchemy, an innate human element that may conjure emotion, enliven, unify, or even inspire continuity, social change and/or effect. Scholarly study of reggaetón will not only verify facts, but examine the metamorphosis of cultural context, meaning, and symbolism qualifying scholarly study as voice relates to empowerment in order “to document, to interpret, to contribute to civic action” (DeBlasio et al, 2009, p. 15). This research aims to add to the scholarly work on black music genres. Some reggaetón scholars posit that the Puerto Rican version is a manifestation of Panama’s reggaetón. Panamanian reggaetón artist, Renato, stated that he and his fellow “pioneers blended Jamaican beats, U.S.-American styles,

and Panamanian language and culture to produce the first reggae-based songs in Spanish” (Rivera et al, 2009, p. 89).

The same publication explains how audiences and artists first referred to this genre of music, prior to the tag names reggaetón, reggae, or Reggae en Español (Spanish reggae). The later term, Reggae en Español, “more often describes Panamanian recordings from the 1980’s and early 1990’s than the Puerto Rican productions that eventually coalesced into reggaetón” (Rivera et al, 2009, p. 4). So, while *Reggaetón* is thorough in detailing the movement from Puerto Rico’s perspective and influence, there is room to explore further what they begin to discover: that is, how does Panama fit into this musical story? There is an avenue that is worth exploring to gain a full understanding of reggaetón music. Clearly, Puerto Rico and Panama are connected through their claims to reggaetón’s origins, with cultural and historical ties that deepen those claims.

Raquel Z. Rivera, Wayne Marshall, and Deborah Pacini Hernandez, the editors and authors of *Reggaetón* focused their research predominantly on one locale, Puerto Rico. This research is designed to examine Panama’s possible inclusion in Reggaetón’s timeline. The content of this study does not compete with the body of information already articulated, but verifies the framework, timeline, and causal elements of the music. Rivera (2009) states:

It is imperative, however, to interrogate this laundry list of genres contributing to reggaetón hybrid style, and to examine the ways that its links to the United States, the wider Caribbean, Latin America, and the African diaspora serve to inform the cultural work that reggaetón does. (Rivera et al, 2009, p. 5)

Like a course taught by two of *Reggaetón*’s co-editors, Raquel Rivera and Deborah Paccini, Music, Blackness, Caribbean Latinos, this paper focuses on one of the musical tributaries that

fuses music, blackness, and Afro-Caribbean-Panamanians. Similar to the evolution of reggae music's reflection of the transformation from an enslaved culture to an industrial culture, Panama's musical roots in Jamaica sprouted the genre of Spanish Reggae, or Reggae en Español. While much scholarly study has focused on Puerto Rico, this study focuses on the history and cultural context of Panama in order to establish its presence, significance, and link to identity in the topic of reggaetón music.

The sociology of music illustrates how music relates to social interaction, social boundaries, such as race and class, and its meaning, both in the context in which it was created and how this meaning evolves. In his book, *Reds, Whites, and Blues Social Movements, Folk Music, and Race in the United States*, author William Roy considers music as an object that can be problematized, studied and solved (Roy, 2010). And as Grammy and Latin Grammy award-winning duo, Calle 13 expressed:

It's about time academia dared to include reggaetón. This might mean that we're finally underlying that all of us are los de atras, (the ones behind) ...Because we Caribbean people, even if we don't want to, even if it hurts, we come from behind...and there's a value to that. There's a beauty to being "los de atras." (Rivera et al, 2009, back cover)

The historical and scholarly literature available on the topic of reggaetón music, though limited, is crucial in examining and testing the hypothesis of this study. Primary sources cover the topic of the Afro-Caribbean presence in Panama, centered around the time of the U.S. control and the construction of the canal. In exploration of the foundation of reggaetón, this study includes interpretations and references of work done by Raquel Rivera and her colleagues in their articles and book, *Reggaetón*. It also includes second-hand interviews, scholarly dissertations, newspaper publications, and other music industry documents to verify facts, dates,

perspectives, and to create a foundation and musical timeline.

In addition, this research includes first hand interviews with relevant music industry professionals. Also included are oral history interviews with Panamanian producer Michael Ellis conducted before he died. Those interviews give first-hand accounts of the birth and evolution of reggaetón as a genre of music and as a movement, given from the Afro-Panamanian viewpoint. This work is designed to expand the information in this field with new lines of inquiry as well as expose important new variables that are relevant to the study of reggaetón in order to gain a new perspective and validity. It also aims to establish reggaetón in the context of identity from a specific geographical place and era.

The void that exists in the documented history of Panama's relation to reggaetón in existing literature, and the acknowledgement of this void, justifies a reason for study. Duke University's *Reggaetón* is the most comprehensive scholarly study on the reggaetón musical style to date, and while it begins discussion after the early growth of reggaetón and it places an emphasize on Puerto Rico, it does acknowledge some of Panama's contribution. Logically, therefore, a scholarly study that examines the Panamanian influence in regards to the birth of the reggaetón musical genre seems more than appropriate. This research hopes to expand the current understanding of reggaetón and provide scholarly as well as cultural data related to Panama by reviewing and integrating findings to the origins and understandings of reggaetón's inception.

It is important to note that this dissertation is not designed to establish and examine if there was a single birthplace for reggaetón but rather to simply further understand Panama and Puerto Rico's role in its origins. In both places, the musical genre was an expression of the social problems that existed within their respective low-income neighborhoods. Scholars Frances Negrón-Muntaner and Raquel Z. Rivera Negrón explain that reggaetón was originally called

other names in Puerto Rico, including “underground,” and that the music:

is a “stew of rap and reggae and reggae en Español cooked to perfection in the barrios and caseríos (housing projects) of Puerto Rico. Drawing on U.S. hip-hop and Jamaican reggae, Spanish-language rap and reggae developed parallel to each other throughout the 1980s in both Puerto Rico and Panama. Although it was initially produced by and for the island’s urban poor, by the mid-1990s, reggaetón’s explicit sexual lyrics and commentary on the violence of everyday life had caught the ears of a wary middle class that responded to the new sound with its own brand of hostility. (Negron-Muntaner et al, 2007, p. 1)

A sense of identity around the music genre shifted through time as reggaetón mirrored popular culture.

Latino culture

In the 2000s reggaetón made its big break into the mainstream music industry when N.O.R.E and Daddy Yankee came out with their hit singles “Oye mi Canto” and “Gasolina.” These songs were key moments in the transition of reggaetón within the U.S, re-defining many of these artists’ styles and music as “Hispanic Urban.” During this transition reggaetón underwent a form of Blanqueamiento in which the industry and the artists moved further away from the genres Afro-Latino roots and more towards a “Pan-Latino” identity. The genre increasingly became known as and promoted as “reggaetón Latino” in order to market the genre to a larger audience and appeal to the identity of Latinidad” (“Reggaetón,” 1999, par. 1).

Reggaetón Latino has also been thriving in Panama since the 1970s. It has functioned in similar ways as the music created by the ancestors of the people during the days of the construction of the canal. A product of a multicultural influence, reggaetón Latino blended

musical influences from the West Indies, including African influenced reggae, dancehall, and soca. These sounds blended with the native musical genres of Panama; predominantly, the bomba, salsa, merengue, plena, and bachata. Decades later, this fusion was blended again with layers of contemporary hip-hop, forming the mixed music genre of reggaetón. According to the article by Kazey Ellis,

The word Reggaetón was coined by (Panamanian) Michael Ellis . . . who promoted worldwide this Big Spanish Reggae Movement. Michael Ellis is the founder of the Reggaetón Movement, pioneer of Spanish Reggae, MTV Video Award winning producer, La Gaviota de Plata (the highest award in Latin America), award winning producer in Vinas del mar Chile, 3 Time Grammy Award winning producer, Billboard Award winning producer, (and) 4 Time Premio lo Nuestro Award winning producer. (“The Truth,” 2010, p. 1)

Colon, Panama, was established by Americans in 1850 as the Atlantic terminus of the Panama Railroad and, by the 1970s, Afro-Panamanian culture there was ubiquitous. There were parallels among the demographics, history, and culture across Afro-Caribbean populations. Reggaetón was more than a mimic of reggae. While it mirrored many of the ideologies and vibrations of its predecessor, it possessed many of its own unique qualities as well. As explained in an article produced by *BigUpMagazine* about Reggae en Español,

The music’s a message of love, unity and unwavering resistance spoken to a generation of young, marginalized blacks as descendants of canal laborers, mostly, and many of Jamaican ancestry, who were in a position to understand, literally and figuratively, Bob Marley’s call to arms. Many were ready to invoke that message and the rhythms that sustained, in Spanish. Reggae en Español was thus born. (“Reggae En,” 2010, p. 1)

Most music industry professionals in Panama and Puerto Rico largely agree with the claim that it was Panamanian producer Michael Ellis who first brought reggaetón to Puerto Rico.

Michael's son, Kazey Ellis, explained that his father "was the first to do a reggaetón show in Puerto Rico along with Prime Entertainment in 1989 featuring artists, El General, Killer Ranks, Vico C, Rude Girl, Profit, Jam, Special Ed, Smooth The Hustler, and Howie Irie" (Ellis, Kazey, 2010, p. 1). All of the artists that performed in Puerto Rico in 1989 were Panamanian. However, despite all of the research, evidence, and history of reggaetón, Panama is often not included in the very definition of the music genre. Examples of the focus on Puerto Rico and the exclusion of Panama are seen in the definition from the popular source below:

reggaetón: popular music of Puerto Rican origin that combines rap with Caribbean rhythms. (Merriam-Webster, 2017)

Nonetheless, in a VIBE magazine interview/story with Puerto Rican reggaetón artist, Handel, the musician gives an insightful and expansive overview of genre's past and future, and includes a reflection on the origins of the music. He writes:

Whether or not reggaetón music and its artists will one day surpass a big crossover market is still up in the air. But the genre has come a long way from only being played in small underground clubs and local neighborhood parties in Puerto Rico and other Latin American countries. Much like hip-hop in its early days, reggaetón was shunned upon and seen as street music that promoted violence and misogyny. It was a fight to get airplay from radio and TV stations. Reggaetón first originated in Panama by an artist called El General in the '70s before it made its way into La Isla del Encanto. (Rosario, 2016, p. 3)

When the music of reggaetón hit "The Enchanted Island," as Puerto Rico is sometimes referred

to as, its popularity spread quickly. The genre was relatable on many levels to the people of Puerto Rico, as well as many other Latin Americans, as they had shared social characteristics with Panamanians, including climate, culture, and history. And since Panamanian producers claim to have brought the music to Puerto Rico, that claim seems worthy of a broader exploration of the hybrid music by taking a closer look at Panama in the 20th century to establish how these musical roots were have established there. Certainly, in this timeline, reggaetón adapted to new variations and distinct, interpretations as it moved from Panama to N.Y. and Puerto Rico, and then throughout Latin America and the globe. Ultimately, reggaetón would not be what it is today without the contributions of artists from both locales.

This examination of reggaetón focuses on the history and culture of the Afro-Caribbean-Latino migration of peoples to Panama to work on the U.S. construction of the Panama Canal. Although some literature does refer to Panama's role in the reggaetón music movement, the book *Reggaetón*, published by Duke University Press is the most thorough account of the musical movement. While its focus is not on the Panamanian involvement, it does, acknowledge its presence in the movement and the need to further examine that presence.

Reggaetón, gaining in popularity throughout the 1980s, reflects the Afro-Caribbean-Latino history of the music creators' lineage; music that was influenced by both Jamaican Reggae and Ragga music, as well as other Latin-Caribbean musical genres. From Reggae en Español, Reggaetón emerged as a Spanish Reggae movement that was eventually promoted around the world. While many other locales are a part of this widespread musical phenomena, with Puerto Rico in the forefront, Panama is where the reggaetón music style began with Panamanian artists and producers traveling and marketing it first to the Puerto Rican capital of San Juan. Then, Spanish reggae took on its own personality and evolved into a distinct off-shoot

of Panamanian Spanish Reggae (Rivera et al, 2009).

In the book, *Reggaetón*, the authors include an interview with the Panamanian reggaetón artist, El General. Born Edgardo Franco, he grew up speaking English, not Spanish, in the Panama Canal Zone in the 1960s and 1970s. English became the predominant language in the zone when the United States took control of it in the early 1900s. An Afro-Panamanian English-speaking man, from the Panama Canal Zone, Franco worked with fellow Panamanian Michael Ellis at Ellis's record label New Creations in New York City; a company that Ellis co-owned with Israeli David Uriel.

The complexities of Latino musical styles are distinct, but so blended that subtle differentiations can be profound. The Panamanian Reggae en Español, known locally as La Plena, is a signature blend of reggae, soca and dancehall, while reggaetón is often considered to have come from reggae en Español, a newer, grittier, street music with explicit lyrics. Rivera distinguishes, “Reggae en Español...more often describes Panamanian recordings from the 1980s and early 1990s than the Puerto Rican productions that eventually coalesced into reggaetón” (Rivera et al, 2009, p. 4).

While libraries full of research on Western musical themes exist, research on minority, “other” and outsider musical genres are more limited. Each formal inquiry into any of these, including the reggaetón movement, offers a puzzle piece to the complex history, formation, and significance of the music. This inquiry addresses the music's connection to the U.S. occupation of the Panama Canal Zone. This is the perfect time to investigate the significance of reggaetón music as Rivera and her colleagues insist on the study of the reggaetón as:

the genre's commercial rise and tense rhetoric and anxiety centering on immigration rhetoric which in turn informs the reception and productions of the music- makes an

analysis and understanding of reggaetón's social, historical, and political dimensions all the more important, if not urgent. (2009, p. 1)

In the book, *Music and Social Movements*, authors, Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison make the connection between music and song as formative in social movements and the need to put them into broader context:

By combining culture and politics, social movements serve to reconstitute both, providing a broader political and historical context for cultural expression, and offering, in turn, the resources of culture- tradition, music, artistic expression to the action repertoires of political struggle. Cultural traditions are mobilized and reformulated in social movements, and this mobilization and reconstruction of traditions is central, we contend, to what social movements are, and to what they signify for social and cultural change. (1998, p.7)

Scholarly research on certain music movements have in the past been limited, however, is certainly evident in contemporary periodical articles and conference presentations in musicology and ethnomusicology. Alan Lomax's work pioneered the scientific exploration of "outside" artists and less documented music movements, including the music of rural America and incarcerated populations. He was a musicologist who urged the importance of studying music, especially of those less recognized. Many scholars and music aficionados credit him with documenting some of the most valued sound collections of the 20th century. Lomax reminds us of the value of studying such "outside" musical genres by his well acclaimed quote;

The essence of America lies not in the headlined heroes...but in the everyday folks who live and die unknown, yet leave their dreams as legacies. The dimension of cultural

equity needs to be added to the humane continuum of liberty, freedom of speech and religion, and social justice. (1972, p. 1)

While the historical and scholarly literature available on the topic of reggaetón was somewhat limited until the last decade, the history of Panama during the U.S. control and construction of the canal is not. While much of this history focuses on the great accomplishment of the United States in building the Panama Canal, this dissertation puts its attention on the workers that constructed the canal, their circumstances, and their musical legacy. Indeed, reggaetón music, as defined by researcher and author, Juan Flores:

may well go down in that (musical) history as the first transnational music, the full sense of the term.... Being an eminently popular form of music without any single specifiable place of origin, with no cuna (cradle) in the sense of a “hood” or even national setting from which it sprang. The contention over whether it’s Panamanian, Jamaican, Puerto Rican, or Nuyorican will most likely seethe on, since it seems to be castle brewed in a multilocal, transitional cauldron from the beginning... the very crossroads of many diasporic, migratory, and circulating communities. (Rivera et al, 2009, p. x)

The history of the large immigration of Jamaican and West Indian workers to Panama from throughout the Caribbean and Americas becomes foundational to the emergence of reggaetón as a musical style and as a social movement. Since music is itself is a form of historical evidence, sources such as Billboard magazine, and other music industry documentation help create timelines. Cultural sources aid in understanding the significance of the music in order to gain new perspectives. With the history of the Panama Canal, specifically in a social and geopolitical framework, the musical predecessors of reggaetón evolved through the collaborative experience and expressions of blended African and other, local and international, peoples that lived and

worked there. So, even with all the emphasis on Puerto Rico, Wayne Marshall urges that Panama is:

the birthplace of Spanish reggae, or Reggae en Español, the Central American country stands as an important link- New York notwithstanding- between Puerto Rico and Jamaica, which sent thousands of laborers there in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth fostering the creation of Afro-Antillean communities where reggae, calypso, and other Caribbean genres would later take hold. While histories of reggaetón often pay lip service to the construction of the Panama Canal as establishing a sociocultural milieu for reggae en Española, the story of how reggae became popular and was localized in Panama remains murky. (Rivera et al, 2009, p. 79)

The U.S. construction and control of the Panama Canal region beginning in 1904 created a narrative of oppression and cultural fusion among the immigrant Afro-Caribbean peoples working there, blending their linguistic and musical styles from which reggaetón emerged. However, for the contemporary entertainment industry and even the general public, reggaetón is predominantly linked to Puerto Rico. The music did experience sudden and explosive growth when it hit San Juan but the introduction of the music was through Panamanian producers and artists. The music was played in Puerto Rican night clubs in the 1980s, quickly evolving into new amalgams on the island. An article in VIBE magazine by Richy Rosario recalls, “Many pioneers of the movement on the island like Baby Rasta y Gringo and Ivy Queen would perform at a club in San Juan called The Noise – a rite of passage for every successful reggaetón artist to date” (Rosario, 2016, p. 1). Both the lyrics and performance of a variety of Puerto-Rican musical styles, as well as other sub-genres, have offended some audiences. The reggaetón dialect of gang-like, street, derogatory slang was not present in the early songs of Spanish reggae and

reggaetón in Panama. Each locale and era, nationality and social circumstance, developed its own form of expression, adding to the unique and ongoing story of the reggaetón movement. Determining the transition and distinction from Reggae en Español and reggaetón to Panama and Puerto Rico may be blurred, but the predecessors of Jamaican reggae have a shared development. International reggae artist, Liviti, son of Jamaican Ansel Cridland of the infamous Meditations, grew up with both reggae and reggaetón and is clear on this connection. He explains,

I've always been aware of reggae's influence on reggaetón. I grew up in the Bronx, surrounded by different groups of Latinos. Reggaetón was always playing in the local stores, in cars and just from people playing music on the block. I could hear the influences immediately. The instrumentals were similar and the linguistic styles were similar as well. The expression was just in Spanish. It's very important to know the origins of anything you're practicing or saying you're a part of. I've heard so many people, including some reggaetón artists, wrongfully credit hip-hop as its origin and I've had to say "hello" its name is reggaetón not "hip-hopton". Just listen to the artists that were a part of its inception, the foundation of the music is in Jamaica, deep within the heart of Reggae. (Liviti, Interview, 2017)

If the construction of the canal and its accompanying railroad in Panama created a foundation for the cultural blending that formed the roots of reggaetón, then these Afro-Caribbean-Latino and Panamanian origins challenge the exclusive Latino and Puerto-Rican ones.

The Afro-Caribbean signatures popularly associated with reggaetón, re-classify the genre as a Panamanian Black Arts Movement. *Reggaetón* admits that, as Wayne Marshall claims, "despite an acknowledgment of Panama's place in the reggaetón narrative, detailed accounts of Reggae's presence and resonance in Panama have yet to come to light" (Rivera et al, 2009, p.

79). Music is a form of oral tradition. And the music of African American peoples throughout history has been exploited, stolen, and under-studied. Just as people associate several of the songs that Elvis sang with Elvis, rather than the original black composers or musicians, many sources and people worldwide associate reggaetón with Puerto Rico, rather than the original Panamanian composers of mixed African ancestry. While many believe that Elvis either wrote or was the first to perform such classics as *That's Alright Mama* and *My Baby Left Me*, in fact, they were written and first performed by an African-American man, Arthur Crudup. The traditional folk song, *The House of the Rising Sun*, sometimes referred to as the *Rising Sun Blues*, and is of uncertain authorship, (Anthony, 2007, p. 21) has always fascinated musicologists, including Alan Lomax. There is folklore that claims the song writer was a young man who lived with his mother, a freed slave, who worked as a seamstress at a brothel, but no one knows for sure. As time passes, an accurate history often falls further and further from reach. The history of reggaetón is an example of this.

Mr. Michael Ellis has passed away, yet what remains is the music he produced, documentation of his awards, and informal interviews conducted for this study. In this age of knowledge, there is no excuse for the perpetuation of the non-accreditation or exclusion of reggaetón's Pan-African origins. On the cover of *Duke's Reggaetón* is a young Puerto Rican boy wearing a gold, life-size, banana necklace. This type of flashy jewelry and appearance demonstrates urban culture in some Latin American communities, giving status on the streets.

This type of showy jewelry is referred to with the term bling-bling. For comparison, an accurate cover photo for a book on the Panamanian reggaetón music movement could be a historical photograph of West Indian people carrying dynamite to construct the Panama Canal. This work's cover photograph is one created by Michael Ellis, the Panamanian, Afro-Caribbean-

Latino, Jamaican descendant who referred to himself as the founder of reggaetón Rube.

He claimed to have invented it, named it, and brought it out of Panama, including to Puerto Rico and N.Y.C. He insisted until his dying breath that reggaetón belonged to the Panamanian people as much as, if not more than, to anyone else. Peter Szok, a researcher of the reggaetón genre, noted the competition and co-relation between Panama and Puerto Rico:

Puerto Ricans have more successfully produced this style of dancehall music which draws heavily on aspects of commercialized African diasporic culture.... However, Panamanian musicians are equally adamant that the musical form is essentially their creation and that its roots lie firmly in the traditions of the isthmus' Afro-Antillean population. "We invented it in Panama," insisted salsero Rubén Blades, during a press conference in Puerto Rico. (Szok, 2009, p. 1)

The intense debate between Panama and Puerto Rico covers all aspects of reggaetón, including where it began, how it developed as a genre, and how it spread. Wayne Marshall, comments in his research about how it has:

often taken on a heated and "linear" quality, with participants linking the genre's spectacular emergence to pre-existing, nationalist narratives, while ignoring its global and fluid character, the "migration" which impacts its subjects simultaneously in various regions. (Marshall, 2007, p. 22)

Chapter III- Research Design/ Methodology

Growing Up

I grew up in Milwaukee with a father who was deeply involved in the local music scene. He was the only non-African-American member of an eight-piece disco-funk band called, *Sonrize*. I found him dead when I was 11, but his magic, talent, and loving spirit journeys with me still. The summer after I graduated high school I volunteered at Penfield Children's Center (Milwaukee, WI), an organization that offers early intervention for children with developmental delays and disabilities, and worked with children who faced such challenges as fetal alcohol syndrome and crack cocaine syndrome.

The Music

The following Fall I began my studies at UW-Milwaukee. After one year, I took six months off and moved to Europe. When I returned I entered a study-abroad program in South America to enhance my Spanish language proficiency. In Ecuador, I signed up for language courses and taught English at Laica University. I soon dropped my study course load to help address the conditions, circumstances, and challenges of the homeless youth of Guayaquil where I lived. I spent every day with them. My neighbors were angered that they all congregated in our barrio. They slept outside my window and I did everything a twenty-year old could do to feed them, to find them housing, to spend time with them, and to love them. When a friend's parents were visiting and mentioned that a musical icon was staying at their hotel, I decided to reach out to the reggaetón superstar El General in hopes he would meet these homeless children. The artist's dance track, "Muévelo," played in all the local nightclubs. When I met the General the next day, among his entourage was his producer, Michael Ellis. He sat silent and listened to my anecdotes

and concerns for the children of Guayaquil. He finally spoke his first words to me, “I would burn my hands in fire to have a heart like yours.” This was my introduction to reggaetón music, dancing to the music in the clubs in the early 1990s and meeting this group of Afro-Panamanian artists. Michael Ellis and I connected immediately and I began to explore more possibilities for musical interpretation, identity, and meaning. The early musical pieces this group of individuals were producing explored sexuality, politics, and multi-culturalism.

A closer examination of the lyrics and musical components of reggaetón will be explored in the final section of Chapter 4. The memories of this first encounter with the Afro-Panamanian musical movement resurfaced decades later as I was forming my qualitative research paper to accompany my film and internship for my doctorate degree in Social Justice and Documentary. It seemed a perfect fit after all my coursework in race, education, social science, and the arts to research a fresh perspective on the social movement of reggaetón music.

William Roy, author on music as social movements theorizes:

Scholarship conducted under the rubric of sociology of music draws on a broad variety of assumptions about how music enters into social interaction, how it relates to social boundaries such as race, gender, and class, how it expresses meaning (or does not), and even what we mean by music. The differences run deeper than the ordinary divisions between conventional schools of thought such as symbolic interactionism, identity-based theories, or network analysis because the nature of music itself is at stake...what is music... How do people create meaning from or in relationship to music? What does music do in social relationships and what do people do with music? (2010)

As Roy postulates, music is referred to as an object; it can be problematized, studied, and solved with given points of origin and/or reference. Music can be thought of as a document and

can describe the human condition with the thick description that comes from creative emotional content. The aim of this study is to explore Panama's in the context of reggaetón and to honor the music's connection to Afro-Panamanian identity. The strategy for this research has been two-fold with a foundation in Grounded Theory. This research uses historical literature as its framework. The literature looks to the nature of the populations that migrated to the PCZ during canal construction. This research also looks to the written life story and interviews from principle actors in the musical genre of reggaetón as a foundation for connecting data. This research also examines the literature describing the social climate of Afro-Caribbean workers in the U.S. controlled PCZ as a way to establish a foundation for the music movement of reggaetón.

Secondly, a cultural anthropological approach to this research has been applied. This study includes information on the culture of a specific population during a limited era, the Afro-Caribbean people in the Panama Canal Zone during the construction of that canal. This work is supplemented with the observation of cultural artifacts such as the music and lyrics of reggaetón music, magazines articles, dissertations, online sources, and music charts that are relevant to the subject. As a complimentary component, oral history, through interviews that were conducted with professional musicians. In addition to these first-hand interviews, several other interviews conducted by scholars and journalists have been cited. The data collected took the form of observation, interviews, historic research, documents (both historical and cultural) and audio and visual materials.

Merging the historical and cultural anthropological methodologies deepened the understanding and link between the United States and Panama and the foundation of the hybrid music of reggaetón. This dissertation's combined methods help bring Panama's history during the canal construction into the light in regards to the Afro-Caribbean labor force and its

connection to the reggaetón music movement. It establishes Panama's historical tie to the U.S. and the how this mutual history supports the cultural and social backdrop of cultural movement. While there is an abundance of information on the subjects of this study, both the Panama Canal and reggaetón music, it is fragmented and contains gaps. The interviews were conducted through conversations in person, over the internet, and through email. Michael Ellis, self-proclaimed founder of reggaetón, passed away during the research project. The accounts presented are accurate and this researcher met Michael Ellis in Guayaquil, Ecuador in February of 1992 and maintained a friendship with Mr. Ellis till his death on December 6 of 2014 in Charlotte North Carolina. I have been mindful of my own bias of the topic due to this relationship. This paper, therefore, focuses on Panama's contribution, rather than its competition, with Puerto Rico's claims related to the reggaetón music movement.

Telling the Story

Oral history is included as music itself is both oral history and a cultural document. Multidisciplinary research concerning an arts movement within socio-political constructs calls for multiple research approaches. The historical method creates a timeline, mapping the chronology of the Panama Canal Zone and the peoples inhabited there in context to socio-politics and culture. Primary sources can be used as evidence to the research, including interviews, songs and lyrics. This transforms oral tradition into "humans as relics" (Garraghan, 1946). The oral history component of this research, as well as magazine articles and award records, evaluate the music itself as a document, both in the lyrics and musical components. These musical histories inform us about the people that created it and the people that listen to it.

Reggaetón can be heard in Latino communities throughout the world. My goal is to put

the relationship between the history and my experience into context. My conversations with Michael Ellis, which I began to document in 2013, revealed that there was a story that was only half told. I integrated Allesandri Portelli's viewpoint towards oral history in a social context, realizing that the natural introduction to reggaetón made way for an academic inquiry that could be conducted without violating one's private space (Portelli, 1997).

An exploration of musical origins and influence must include an investigation of the social and historical climate from which the music derived. Archives and scholarly documents can help to conceive the environment that led up to reggae en Español in the 1970s in Panama. Oral historian, Janet McDonnell, notes that interviewing can be even in the form of conversation with hand written notes, recording is optional (McDonnell, 2004). Both oral history and the sociological approaches put society into context and gives shape to these narratives in the realm of history. Eyerman claims that there has been a cultural turn in social movement theory:

a growing interest in culture . . . (that) has emerged a range of new “identity movements” which is bringing issues of ethnicity, race, sexuality, and personal expression out of the private sphere and into broader societal arenas. . . . Culture has been brought into the sociology of social movements in recent years primarily through the idea of “framing” by which social movement activity is subjected to a form of discourse analysis. (Eyerman et al, 1998, p. 17)

Intercultural communication, though a post-modern term, has always been the very nature of much of the field study on music. Scientific research bridges understanding through cultural parameters while staying sensitive to diversity within study groups and communities. This aspect of qualitative research sheds awareness on social translation and makes the researcher more conscious of obstacles that may surface working, observing, or researching outside their culture.

The point of this study is to interpret information in a way that is factual and relatable.

If a researcher is uncomfortable or uneducated in the arena of the study then the examination by which s/he is observing is in danger of being ethnocentric or blurry. Dilthey observes, “A study belongs to the human [sciences] only if its object becomes accessible to us through the attitude which is founded on the relationship between, life, expression, and understanding” (Dilthey, 1974). In order to determine a causal relationship, a researcher must articulate correlation. It is this careful observation, not assumption, that leads to truth and understanding.

The method of research is crucial in articulating the desired attributes and intention of the project. This work is grounded in history and social context; therefore, it offers an understanding of the cultural components present in Panama in the early 20th century, as well as an understanding of these components today. “Research should... illuminate how cultural symbol systems are used to attribute meaning to existence and activity” (Lindlof/Taylor, 2002, p. 11).

Much of the history of the Panama Canal and the PCZ is ethnocentric, focusing on Western Europeans and Americans; that is, the white population. For instance, death records kept during the U.S. controlled PCZ were only kept for white inhabitants. Populations of color in the zone lacked contemporary record keeping, so circumstances are best examined through socio-political and cultural perspectives. The concern in dealing with research bias is inherent in the study of social justice. In fact, this problem is not unlike research into all communities that have been under U.S. colonial rule and it brings into question why these imbalances haven't been considered much sooner in academia.

Oral historian, Donald Ritchie, says that, “The inadequacy of written documentation from previous regimes and colonial powers have accelerated the need- even the demand- for oral

history” (Ritchie, 2003, p. 13). The historical method includes oral history and is part of a multi-disciplinary research method that reaches from within the human experience to fill in the voids with mindful inquiry. If the purpose of history is to have records of civilizations from which humans can learn in order to not make the same errors and, in fact, make progress, then the historical method and oral history can only enhance our understanding of that history. The discourse about music suggests it is a form of oral history that has long been a conduit of consciousness, hope, and revival, especially among oppressed peoples. Music and more significant, here the discourses around music, can tell its own story with multiple interpretations.

There is an integrity in studying music movements through sociological context as it gives the opportunity to reclaim dignity, to restore respect, and offer reparations for the next generation; in this case, the global community of Afro-Panamanians. Oral historian Daniel Kelin states that: “By listening to the stories of others, we validate their experience and life. By preserving the stories we share and hear, our family, heritage, and culture can live forever” (Kelin, 2005, p xi).

Whether stories can be verified factually or not does not necessarily determine their value if in an oral history. The history of the Panama Canal Zone and the complex merging of peoples from all over the Caribbean, China, and the Americas is an important backdrop to this oral history. Michael Ellis is the self-proclaimed founder of reggaetón and believed that reggaetón belongs to Panama. There is, however, evidence that Panama is a crucial contributor to the collective sounds of the reggaetón music movement. Ellis may very well be the founder, or he may be a witness, an ancestor, a Panamanian who synthesized these sounds, just as I collected data from the remnants of colonialism and culture. It is in these rich interviews that the personality of reggaetón takes more shape; in Ellis’ laugh, his dance, his music production, and

his accusations and anecdotes surrounding the subject of reggaetón. Ritchie, again, reminds us that:

People naturally recount events and personalities anecdotally, in small self-contained stories that illuminate or instruct... In many ways, the anecdote is a writer's freshest material. The term derives from the Greek word *anekdota*, meaning "things unpublished," and it is often the telling stories taken from interviews. (Ritchie, 2003, p. 121)

My interview with Michael Ellis at his home in Columbia, South Carolina in the summer of 2014 was the last time I saw him. It is a memory that remains vivid. When I arrived, his son said that his father was so sick he hadn't gotten out of bed in months. However, Ellis seemed energized by my arrival and he even went to his studio to continue the recording of a song on which he was working. He answered my questions with questions and was focused on my role in the reggaetón movement. In his own way, he told me how important he thought was my work.

Oral history forces us to shed our preconceptions. The interview is a living methodology Ritchie persists, "The best information to emerge from an oral history is often completely unexpected: a different way of looking at something, turning preconceived notions upside down" (Ritchie, 2003, p. 122). I consider my relationship, observations, phone conversations, and live interviews with Ellis to be the first lens through which I viewed and understood this genre of music. He suggested I compile a history of reggaetón. In fact, I studied Ellis as a primary data source (Becker/ Ragin, 1998. I was curious of Ellis' attention and learned that some social scientists claim, "only when the attention is reflected toward self does experience become meaningful" (Lindoff/Taylor, 2002, p. 35). According to oral historian, Nancy MacKay:

Interviewers should research the subject of the interview and the historical context surrounding it. Research can include conversations with other individuals, photographs

and maps, as well as written materials...respect the right of narrators not to discuss certain subjects, to tell a story in their own words, to restrict access to the interview, or to request anonymity. (2007, p. 38)

The historical and cultural anthropological or sociological research methods offer a backdrop for reggaetón music as a social/music movement that arose from post-colonial Panama. From those perspectives, concept and meaning are evaluated. Researcher Howard Becker urges the use of research to fill the gap between academia and social science and the actual people who lived in the world where the research is being conducted (Ragin et al, 1992). To understand how music created a social movement; the researcher must learn how music consolidated and its significance to Afro-Panamanians.

The historical method allows for the compilation of data to form a record of the past in a specific context. While some sources are fixed, for example, published literature on the history of the Panama Canal, others are more open for interpretation, such as cultural artifacts and music itself. Other than the extensive historical research and first and second-hand interviews, Grounded Theory was applied. This allowed the information to be examined and collected from within the viewpoint of the oppressed people and from their cultural artifacts, documenting a history that spans borders and classes. This approach establishes a solid foundation for research on reggaetón as a pillar of Afro-Panamanian identity and a contributor to the origins and context of the music movement of reggaetón. As oral historian, Nancy MacKay, pronounces, “The recorded voice is the most human of all artifacts, and we are entrusted with preserving the voices of the past for the benefit of generations to come” (MacKay, 2007, p. 25).

The narrator of *The Search for Robert Johnson* (Hunt, C., 1991), a documentary film about the life and career of the Delta blues artist, travels around to various locations to collect

accounts of Johnson first hand. In the film, one of Johnson's girlfriends of seven months, Willie Mae Powell, told her account of her romance and eventual heartbreak with Johnson. He left her to make records, she said, and she never heard from him again. Nor did she ever hear, or hear of, any of his recordings. When informed, Powell expressed pure joy at the apparent influence that Johnson had on others. What peace must she had found to learn that her young love did as he claimed he would. Words bind us, they are our responsibility. Not only are we capturing words in oral history, we, as researchers, are organizing them in a such a manner to achieve the most accurate depiction of history and social context. Oral historian, Paul Thompson, expresses that oral history transforms the content and even the purpose of history, which has the power to change the focus and narrative. This opens up new avenues of questioning, breaking barriers down between structures to give it back to the people in which the history is about (Thompson, 1978).

Like the musical fusion between Jamaica and Panama, my work fuses existing research, interviews, and cultural and historical document to piece together the social, political, cultural and artistic links that created the reggaetón music and movement. In order to determine a causal relationship, a researcher must articulate correlation. It is facts that command our attention and perspective that tells the story of how music incorporates and articulates cultural symbols, meaning, significance, identity and continuity. "Research should . . . illuminate how cultural symbol systems are used to attribute meaning to existence and activity" (Lindlof/Taylor, 2002, p. 11). A musical movement that rises from racial oppression demands consideration while the content of the music documents and reflects many layers of society. Songs, therefore, become informal oral history accounts. "The inadequacy of written documentation from previous regimes and colonial powers has accelerated the need--even the demand--for oral history" (Ritchie, 2003,

p. 13). Oral history becomes intrinsic in any study of music.

Music has historically empowered previously muted voices, giving those voices a platform for expression in their unique social, political, financial, and emotional climates. Reggaetón's lyrics herald the voice of the people and their everyday lives. "By listening to the stories of others, we validate their experience and life. By preserving the stories, we share and hear, our family, heritage, and culture can live forever" (Kelin, 2007, p. xi).

The combined research methods of this study have a foundation in Grounded Theory, a method that allows a multidisciplinary approach in finding new perspectives through existing research. In this study, a close examination of history and music may provide meaning and fill in a void that exists in contemporary literature in regards to the reggaetón music genre. While Grounded Theory was originally applied to the health field, its use has extended to all genres of study. In music therapy studies, Grounded Theory is used to measure meaning. Similar to those studies, this research examines connectedness, continuity, and identity in regards to a theory that is based on values. This is intrinsic to the study of social justice and is crucial to examining the significance of Panama's connection to reggaetón.

Chapter IV-Popular Narratives of the Cultural Emergence of Reggaetón and the Case of Michael Ellis

History & Identity of Afro-Caribbean People in the Panama Canal Zone

Drawing upon the theoretical framework and methods outlined prior, a range of developments around the history of the Panama Canal Zone, and the building of the canal, helps us understand the development reggaetón as read through the oral and crowd-sourced histories surrounding Panamanian-born producer, Michael Ellis. This history begins with the migration of Afro-Caribbean people to the region, and the establishment of new cultural identities. It also takes an initial examination into the research questions, the first being: How does reggaetón music help its fans and practitioners articulate their identity rooted in Panama's particular history? How does the music created in the early 20th century into the 1980s and into contemporary expressions reflect identity and continuity of Afro-Panamanian people?

The African diaspora continued after the “Great Passage” to the Americas and with it, new forms of cultural expressions and identity. Nigel Stewart, the Director of the London-based, *Centre for Pan American Thought*, discusses identity and, specifically, Caribbean identity in what he calls “simple terms”:

the “fact of being, who or what a person is” identity is seemingly immutable.

Therefore, a statement from a person of Caribbean origin that they are

“Caribbean” should be uncontroversial. Perhaps, this would be the case if ethnic or national identity was a fixed concept, such as age, where one had no autonomy over their categorization. However, re- search has shown individuals have a great

degree of agency over their national identity. “Identity is countless small choices about characteristics and behaviors,” yet further discussion over how and why individuals from the African diaspora have constructed their identities is needed. In line with Anderson’s seminal piece “Imagined Communities,” Afro-Caribbeans and African-Americans have formed an image in their minds of their “communion” that must be meticulously assessed. (Stewart, 2016)

The Caribbean communities include all the people who live on the Caribbean Sea, including the West Indies, Central America, and the north coast of South America. According to Collins Dictionary, “Caribbean means belonging or relating to the Caribbean Sea and its islands, or to its people” (Collins, p. 1, 2018). The recruitment of African-descended island populations as workforce continued throughout the construction of the Panama Canal, from 1904 to 1914, and on a much larger scale than in the previous transportation endeavors in the region.

The United States’ 26th President, Theodore Roosevelt, boasted about what he claimed to be his greatest initiative during the course of his two elected terms in office, the construction of the Panama Canal. Although the documented history of Panama often highlights and champions its partnership with the United States, Columbia University scholar, Melissa Gonzalez, defines the relationship between the two nations as more complex and inequitable:

Established in 1902, the Republic of Panama has a unique political, economic, and cultural history that is intrinsically tied to the construction and operation of the Panama Canal. The very process in which Panama achieved sovereignty – by granting the United States the rights to the Canal in exchange for support in

securing its secession from Colombia – has made it difficult for the nation to establish itself as a self-determining center of international trade and transit.

While Panama's historical role in the global economy and its particular economic and political relationship with the United States have exposed the country to a diverse array of cultural traditions and practices, these same factors have also delayed the nation's attempts to define and assert a sui generis national identity and culture. The United States' ownership and operation of the Canal and the surrounding Canal Zone until 1999 placed Panama in a quasi-colonial relationship with the northern superpower for nearly a century, creating a hegemonic dynamic that permeated Panama's political culture. (Gonzalez, 2015, p. 3)

Panama is a multi-cultural nation that is part of an isthmus connecting Central to South America with its border abutting Columbia. There remains in Panama a significant population with African and mixed African ancestry. The pursuit of science and technology via transportation routes, including the building of a railway and two canal projects, has shaped the demographics of Panama, then and now. These engineering endeavors were in cooperation with both foreign governments and private companies. The Panama Canal changed global industry and is considered to be one of the greatest technological advancements of the era. But the contribution and conditions of the labor force are often understated. Once the U.S. gained control of the territory to build the canal, the systematic, political, social, economic, and labor systems were predominantly determined by race. The contributions of this massive mixed-African labor force in the canal construction are worthy of consideration. David McBride outlines in his book, *Missions For Science*:

As the United States industrialized, engaged their foreign territorial interests throughout the Atlantic world, and rose to the center of Western science and technology, it was helped forward by millions of people of African and indigenous American descent. Indeed, people from the Atlantic side of the African continent have been one of the longest-standing building blocks for this nation's astonishing agricultural and industrial growth. Ironically, the scholarship and popular writings about the development of the United States into the world's largest technological nation have been large one-sided. These works focus most on how American science and technology drew from European intellectual, cultural, and economic connections. But the technological links across the Atlantic Ocean after slavery, links that bridged the two massive continents—America (North and Central) and Africa--remain largely overlooked. (McBride, 2002, p. 2)

A study of the relationship between the emergence of reggaetón and the Panama Canal Zone should include a history of the Panama Canal region, a history of the African peoples' presence in the Caribbean and their migration to Panama, the geo-political conditions for workers while living in the U.S. occupied Panama Canal Zone during the construction of the canal in the early-20th century and information on how these elements merge and with what significance. The history of the canal region sheds light on many hybrid cultural expressions that remain in existence today. This hybridity borrowed from all the ethnicities, races, nations, and cultures of the melting pot that became Panama, creating from these new cultural movements that mirrored this complex multiculturalism and shared history. Some of these creative expressions are found in the music that

emerged and were formed during that period, as well as in the music that continues to evolve from these foundations. The music style of reggaetón has a clear traceable link to the African West Indian population in Panama. But, as Juan Gonzalez notes, these “same West Indians, when it came to chronicling the almost mythical saga of the canal, were virtually forgotten” (Gonzalez, 2011, p. 150).

Music continued to evolve in the isthmus as the demographics of the region kept changing. Within the inequitable parameters of the colonial social system in the Panama Canal Zone, these cultural expressions translated into an aspect of Afro-Panamanian-American identity which remains significant for Panama’s population in the 21st century. Described as:

From early periods Afro Panamanians have played a significant role in the creation of the republic. Some historians have estimated that up to 50% of the population of Panama has some African ancestry. The descendants of the Africans who arrived during the colonial era are intermixed in the general population or are found in small Afro-Panamanian communities along the Atlantic Coast and in villages within the Darién jungle. Most of the people in Darien are fishermen or small-scale farmers growing crops such as bananas, rice and coffee as well as raising livestock. Other Afro-Panamanians are the descendants of later migrants from the Caribbean who came to work on railroad construction projects, commercial agricultural enterprises, and especially the canal. (Afro-Panamanians, 2018, para 1)

In his book, *Harvest of Empire, A History of Latinos in America Throughout the Americas*, author, Juan Gonzalez asserts:

Latino artists accomplished several simultaneous fusion movements, whether in theater, music, literature, or film. Through the borrowed and absorbed lessons from one another's separate national experiences, they found reinforcement and new approaches from artistic traditions of Latin America, they explored and adapted the styles and content of African American and Anglo-American artists. (Gonzalez, 2011, p. 245)

The search for transportation routes through Panama from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans began by expedition on foot and horseback. The route was named the "Camino Real" trail, and later, the "Las Cruces" trail. This foot and horse trail evolved into a railroad system and finally into the canal route. These projects brought people to Panama from all around the world, including a concentrated population of diverse African peoples previously living in the Caribbean islands who had recently been emancipated from slavery.

In the mid-19th century, a U.S. company, the Panama Railroad Company (New York), was established to construct a railroad through the current Panamanian territory, then controlled by Columbia. Completed in 1855, the path of Panama Railroad became a basis for the efforts of *La Société Internationale du Canal Interocéanique*, a French company which made the first attempt to construct a pan-isthmus canal. The United States eventually took over ownership and control of the canal project after the French project went bankrupt, using this same route to complete the modern-day Panama Canal. And the canal continues to be upgraded. In June of 2016, an expansion of the original canal was finalized, "After \$5 billion and close to a decade of construction, Panama open[ed] the long-awaited expansion of its storied canal. Set to potentially double its

current cargo” (Kahn, 2016, p. 10).

After the United States, Haiti was the second country in the Western Hemisphere to gain its independence from European colonizers: in Haiti’s case, Spain and France. A free Haiti was established after a revolt with its first leaders being former enslaved people themselves. Many other islands in the Caribbean, particularly the French occupied ones, had free people of color (Good, 2012). Due to the extensive intermarriage and relations among various peoples, the bloodline of the Afro-Caribbean laborers included various West African tribal peoples mixed with European, Asian, Middle Eastern, and Indigenous peoples.

The many sub-groups that existed within the Afro-Caribbean workforce that migrated to Panama included people from a wide range of political and social conditions, as each island had its own unique history and culture. The African diaspora in the Americas involved over ten million people, spanning close to fifty cultural and linguistic groups which came together on the isthmus during construction projects. According to Dr. Sonja Watson, an expert on Afro- Caribbean and Afro-Panamanian literature, as well as reggae en Español, “the forging of Afro- Panamanian identity continues to be complicated by perceptions of cultural, racial, and national identity that are shaped by ideologies of mestizaje and blackness” (Watson, 2014, p. 2). This complex history created a myriad of identities; identities that continued to develop when the U.S. government arrived in Panama, established the Panama Canal Zone and completed the construction of the canal. Dr. Watson explains that a presence of African descendants existed in Panama for several generations by the early 1900s. Also, U.S. African-Americans were initially recruited to work on the canal when it was under French

leadership, but when the canal effort changed hands from France to the U.S., this ended. The workforce was mostly comprised of people from the West Indies, similar to prior projects in the region (Watson, 2014).

Today, many of the ancestors of these laborers remain in Panama. In fact, many Afro-Caribbean-Latinos identify with signature cultural characteristics that shaped Panama in the early 20th century. As an example, contemporary generations of Afro-Panamanians embrace the mestizo, global music movement of reggaetón as their own.

Panama is not the only locale that claims reggaetón as its own. There is competition, comparison, collaboration, and rivalry between Panama and Puerto Rico in regards to the music genre's origin and notoriety. Panamanian reggaetón artist Renato asserts that "the Puerto Ricans had appropriated what was basically Panamanian innovation" (Szok, 2009, p. 2). Reggaetón continues to influence, inspire, and be adapted and fused with other musical styles, both within and outside of Afro-Caribbean and Latino communities world-wide. Panama's varied demographics gives many the right to claim the music's roots.

The Panama Canal is considered to be one of the seven man-made wonders of the world. Contemporary research does not emphasize the large number of lives that were lost during the construction of the Panama Canal. Instead, much canal documentation focuses on the great achievement of the construction, lauding the leadership, engineering mastery, global status, wealth, and power of the United States. The history of the Afro-Caribbean Panama Canal laborers in a segregated social system that was based on inequality can shed light on the cultural climate that led to the transcultural musical movement of reggaetón and its role in Afro- Panamanian-Latino identity.

Identity for people within the Panama Canal Zone was in constant flux as a new nation- state developed around the building of the canal. Dr. Sonja Watson, makes this connection:

As diaspora subjects, both Afro-Hispanics and West Indians share a common African heritage that is rooted in heterogeneity, diversity, and difference. Becoming Afro-Panamanian recognizes this shared experience as a product of diversity, but also as one that is constantly in transformation. (Watson, 2014, p. 6)

Pan-African and Afro-Caribbean identity throughout the Americas and the Caribbean runs parallel in context to its diaspora and the construction of racist social systems. These connections are linked to the U.S. implementation of the race-based socio-political and economic systems that existed on the mainland in Panama. Few would argue that slavery did not have a large role in shaping the identity of Afro-Caribbean/Afro-Panamanian peoples. The systems of slavery and oppression were prevalent throughout the Americas and were practiced by all of the European colonial powers. Nigel Stewart's article, *Why Caribbeans Struggle to Identify as African*, articulates:

The slave master, his traditions and customs had to remain dominant to prevent rebellion . . . the obliteration of indigenous culture among slaves was deliberate . . . the infamous Willie Lynch letter served as a rule book for slave masters on how to cull all individuality from their slaves . . . [it] highlights that for "further severance from their original beginning, we must completely annihilate the mother tongue." . . . the destruction of original identities was a crucial element of slavery . . . The innumerable torturous acts imposed for speaking one's native

language and practicing indigenous religions, illustrates that outwardly denouncing indigenous culture . . . slave masters reigned supreme and slaves limited outward displays of their culture as a method of self-protection. (Stewart, 2016, p. 1)

While this paper is averse to focus too much on the loss of culture, there is a relevance, significance, and correlation between deculturalization and Afro-Caribbean-Latino identity. Past oppressive political and social policies still have an impact on the social fabric of the United States, for example. Before the Jim Crow laws that denied black people rights given to white citizens, related policies were applied to Native American populations. Even Richard Pratt, the founder and long-time superintendent of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School (Carlisle, PA) and the first to use the word “racism” in regards to his opposition to racial segregation, used the motto “Kill the Indian, Save the Man” (Pratt, 1973, p. 260) when speaking of the benefits of the deculturalization of Native Americans.

The ancestors of the Afro-Caribbean workforce were both enslaved people and lower-class citizens in the colonial caste system. Slavery in the Caribbean outlawed native religions, languages and cultures. The works and voice of Afro-Panamanian poet, Carlo Russell, addresses these issues of oppression in forms of “racial intolerance, national anti-West Indian sentiment . . . (accusing) the colonizer of the denial of language, religion and above all African identity. The loss of language signifies a loss of culture, identity and ethnic memory” (Watson, 2014, p. 122).

While slavery sought to strip identity and sense of community, the strength and courage of the people often prevailed. In Jamaica, the tradition of “kumina,” both a

religion and a drumming style, was created. The religion was practiced by enslaved Africans and included rituals and dancing and drumming. Reggae music traces its roots back to this drumming style (Willis, 2010, p. 1). This spirituality helped reestablish identity for black, enslaved Jamaicans by connecting them with their ancestry and allowed “a space in which ancestors could be recognized. The presence of ancestors created a sense of belonging, and reminded Black Jamaicans of their roots in Africa, a place in which their humanity was never denied” (Stewart, 2016, p. 1).

Transcultural America has produced endless cultural forms. Musical styles with roots in Africa, including call-and-response song form, traveled with its people to the Americas and laid the foundation for many new, blended sounds. Ethnomusicologist George Lipsitz states: "Post-colonial cultural expressions are based in the experiences of people and communities rather than on the master narratives of the nation state. They foreground questions of cultural and social identity, rather than direct struggles for political power" (Lipsitz, 1994, p. 32).

With the migration of peoples to Panama, the music in the canal zone continued to develop and metamorphose, building upon itself with the creation of new sounds and styles. Throughout the duration of the canal’s construction, tens of thousands of laborers immigrated to Panama. The demographics of the isthmus continued to change, and with that change, new musical expressions were established. While the music genre of “reggae en Español” (Reggae in Spanish) emerged from Panama fifty years after the opening of the canal on Aug. 14, 1914, the foundation for that music lay in the Afro-Mestizo music that had been forming for generations from African and Jamaican roots.

Reggae en Español precedes reggaetón. These musical genres are somewhat

blended and associated with the talents of such Afro-Panamanian talents as Edgar Franco, *El General*, and Michael Ellis. Together, Ellis and Franco wrote and produced songs for Franco to perform. Their song, “Muévelo”, was included in the last episode of the third season of the Netflix television series, *Narcos*. That musical inclusion demonstrates that reggaetón music was traveling from Panama into other countries by the 1980s. The genre continues to influence contemporary Latin and World artists. Asdru Sierra, lead vocalist and trumpet player for the L.A. band, Ozomatli, recalls:

I remember when I first heard “Gasolina.” Great song, great hook, great classic beat originating from this particular song “Dem Bow” by Shabba Ranks. ... Even though Daddy Yankee and many other artists ran with this beat creating a new genre, I remember El General from Panama was the first cat I heard do this kind of similar beat back in 1990. “Muévelo” was in my tape deck all DAY. As a young Latino artist, it was important that the world wasn’t looking at us as the usual stereotypes musically. The irony that this became the new stereotype blows my mind. But other than that, as grateful as I am that this beat brought us into the international limelight musically. (Sierra, 2018, Interview)

But, before there was a reggaetón movement or reggae in Spanish or a canal through Central America, and before Panama was a nation or the canal zone was a nation within a nation, there was a connected America. Just as in most areas of the Americas, native people hunted and gathered. This region, along with an area of Nicaragua, was first being considered for a canal in the mid-19th century by many interested parties, including France and the U.S. At that time, it was inhabited by indigenous peoples, namely, the Coclé and Cueva tribes. Ultimately, the current location for the canal was

decided on rather than Nicaragua for a number of reasons. One was that a pathway from coast-to-coast across modern day Panama had already been created by the indigenous people of the region.

Control of the area changed hands between peoples and nations many times. The area where the canal was eventually built was colonized by the Spanish and included modern day Columbia. In 1821, *Gran Columbia* expanded its territory to include present-day Panama by controlling that land independent from the Spanish empire. The territory went from indigenous rule to Spanish rule to becoming a part of a large, democratic-modeled territory called the *Great Columbia*. It included Panama and the three north-western nations of Columbia, Venezuela, and Ecuador. The Republic had its capital in Bogota (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2016).

When gold was discovered in California in the mid 1800s, many prospectors traveled across the isthmus instead of by wagon across the continental U.S. This significantly increased traffic to the area, bringing economic bounty and prompting the construction of the Panamanian Railroad Company, a railway from the Atlantic to the Pacific coast. At the time, over half a million people had been recently freed from slavery in the Caribbean basin. With the emancipation of enslaved people in the British West Indies, a new working class was created. And, as a result of the new railroad project, thousands of African and Chinese workers relocated to the isthmus to work. With that immigration, the demographics of the region continued to change; in fact, the influx of new workers represented the largest demographic shift in Caribbean history.

Once completed, the U.S. owned and operated, inter-oceanic railroad began operation in 1855, stretching almost 48 miles across the isthmus carrying passengers and

freight alike. The tracks built would, eventually, be the railroad lines that made the construction of the Panama Canal possible. Out of the approximate 1,500 laborers working on railroad construction, about 1,200 were black. Unfortunately, despite the convenience and efficiency for both governments and passengers, the railway workers themselves suffered systematic oppression similar to that which was endured by both their ancestors and progeny (McCullough, 1977).

U.S. companies establishing businesses in Panama brought their race-structured political and social systems with them; systems that would dominate once the U.S. government started the Panama Canal project and established its sovereignty over the Zone. The railroad cost eight times more than expected and the reaction of the passengers varied from anxious to magical depending on the beholder and the season. Soon after the railroad was completed, the route became the most important consideration for the possible construction of an international trade gateway for ships to pass from one ocean to another (McCullough, 1977).

From 1881-1894 France cooperated with *Gran Columbia* to occupy the area and attempt to build a canal. The French used the established railways to break ground on the endeavor. When the French's canal project went bankrupt, \$287 million and 22,000 lives later, the United States took its opportunity to take over the project. President Roosevelt didn't hesitate: "I took the Isthmus, started the canal and then left Congress not to debate the canal, but to debate me" ("A Man", 2016, p. 7).

In regards to his decision to embark on plans for the canal, President Roosevelt boasted, "[f]ar better it is to dare mighty things" (1899, p. 1). Roosevelt was the first U.S. president to travel abroad to scout the Panama Canal project. The U.S. military aided

Panama in forcing Columbia to relinquish the land. Many considered the “decision” by Columbia to relinquish control of the land to the United States to be an act of war since it was imposed with threat:

The New York Times called the support given by the United States to Mr. Bunau-Varilla an “act of sordid conquest.” The New York Evening Post called it a “vulgar and mercenary venture.” More recently, historian George Tindall labeled it “one of the greatest blunders in American foreign policy.” It is often cited as the classic example of U.S. gunboat diplomacy in Latin America, and the best illustration of what Roosevelt meant by the old African adage, “speak softly and carry a big stick [and] you will go far.” (Civil Creations, 2017, p. 1)

Columbia’s President, Jose Manuel Marroquin, offered President Roosevelt sovereignty over a ten-kilometer land mass on both sides of the canal route. A similar deal offered to Nicaragua by the U.S. had already been turned down. The treaty with Columbia was suspended, however, when opponents in the Columbian congress rejected the offer deeming it a violation of the sovereignty of Columbia. This enraged Roosevelt, prompting him to demonstrate the U.S.’s determination and power by coercing Panama to cooperate and quickly occupying the region. President Theodore Roosevelt wrote in his autobiography, “[b]y far the most important action I took in foreign affairs during the time I was President related to the Panama Canal.” In a speech that he delivered several years, he elaborated this sentiment:

There are plenty of other things I started merely because the time had come that whoever was in power would have started them. But the Panama Canal would not have started if I had not taken hold of it, because if I had followed the traditional

or conservative method I should have submitted an admirable state paper to Congress . . . the debate would be proceeding at this moment . . . and the beginning of work on the canal would be fifty years in the future. Fortunately, [the opportunity] came at a period when I could act unhampered. Accordingly, I took the Isthmus, started the canal and then left Congress not to debate the canal, but to debate me. (“Theodore Roosevelt”, 2017, p. 1)

Ultimately, Roosevelt’s vision succeeded. Columbian leaders, who had dared to deny the U.S. President’s request for sovereignty of the Panama Canal zone, lost the isthmus to Panama with U.S. aide. Panama was ultimately bullied, through military force, into accepting the terms dictated by the U.S. government. The U.S. promptly incorporated the jungle territory surrounding the Panama Canal project site. Roosevelt was nicknamed, the “godfather of Panama.” In a U.S. Cabinet meeting during his term, Secretary of War Elihu Root accused, “Mr. President, you have shown that you were accused of seduction . . . and proved that you were guilty of rape” (“Theodore Roosevelt”, 2017, p. 2). This began an almost century-long political relationship between the United States and Panama, one based on force. The canal was completed and in full operation a decade after the U.S. restarted construction on the failed French site, and the U.S. continued to rule the territory until the implementation of a treaty signed by President Carter in 1977 returning control of the canal to Panama by the year 2000.

When the United States gained control of the Panama region they implemented their own government. Juan Gonzalez, author of *Harvest of Empire, A History of Latinos in America*, claims:

After Cuba and Puerto Rico, the single largest U.S. expansion into Latin America

was the Panama Canal, a project so ambitious, so grandiose, and so critical to the U.S. quest for economic power in the world that President Teddy Roosevelt devised a whole new nation just to house it. (Gonzalez, 2011, p. 66)

That expansion meant that workers were needed and those workers came from nearby West Indies region, and largely from the island of Jamaica. They joined the existing labor force of Latino, Indigenous, and Afro-Caribbean peoples already established in Panama. These West Indian recruits who migrated with their families made up over a third of the population of the region and “transformed every aspect of the new country’s life” (Gonzalez, 2011, p. 67). Scholar, Peter Szok, documents that there were an estimated 200,000 people that:

traveled from both the French and English Caribbean to work on construction of the Panama Canal and to pursue a myriad of other economic opportunities. Over 50,000 of them remained after the waterway’s completion, most of whom took up residence in the republic, with a small minority remaining in the U.S colony. The West Indians and their descendants became a critical part of the Canal Zone’s long-term work force; however, they faced unequal pay scales and systematic segregation well into the 1970s. (Szok, 2009, p. 3)

With the U.S. occupation in the Panama region came the same racial classification systems as were in place in the United States. Professor of History at Mars Hill University and author of *The Product of Our Souls: Ragtime, Race, and the Birth of the Manhattan Musical Marketplace*, Dr. David Gilbert reflects:

After slavery, the nation, not just the south needs to come up with new not abstract, material, concrete ways, to distinguish black people from white people.

You don't have the institution of slavery, you don't have the scar, you don't have the mostly powerless-ness in the social and political realm of slavery, so you have to recreate that, and that's the era of Jim Crow, Jim Crow racial segregation.

(2018, Interview)

The excavation of the land to build the canal involved digging up 37 million cubic yards of rock and earth through almost fifty miles of mountainous, mosquito-infested, tropical jungle with poisonous snakes, landslides, torrential rain and mosquito-borne diseases. Initially, Roosevelt hired John Wallace as the chief engineer. In summer of 1904 Wallace began ordering the largest ever-made, track-mounted steam shovels, manufactured by the Bucyrus Steam Shovel and Dredge Company (South Milwaukee, Wisconsin). The shovels could potentially excavate 150 cubic yards an hour. When the U.S. began the project, there were only 500 workers. By the end of 1906, there were almost 24,000 workers. Tens of thousands of new black West Indian laborers moved to the Panama Canal site, making it the largest construction project ever undertaken by the U.S. (Rodger, 2014). These workers were forced to labor under hazardous conditions inherent in working in a tropical environment. In addition to the work hazards, laborers were forced to live together in over-crowded, segregated barracks, distinct from the favorable conditions of the white inhabitants of the Panama Canal Zone.

While the leadership for the project changed and emphasis was placed on various aspects of the endeavor at various times, the demand for a large labor force continued. U.S. government officials in the Panama Canal Zone separated African-North Americans from the collective of Afro-Caribbean-Latino populations in both living quarters and work assignments. U.S. African-American people were given minor privileges that

separated them from whites, and also from other minority peoples. The institutionalized classification system was based on race and nationality. All institutions in the zone offered less favorable treatment for black people than whites, as articulated by author Patrice Brown:

They were often told by canal authorities to avoid embarrassment by going to the post office windows, train cars, and schools reserved for their race. The records of the Panama Canal document the inequalities, difficulties, and contradictions faced by black American employees of the Canal. Unfortunately, they had traveled to a foreign land only to face the same problems found at home. (Brown, 2016, p. 1)

The United States government had an uncompromising agenda and schedule to construct and maintain in the Panama Canal region once they had gained control of the construction in 1904. The U.S. didn't want to fail for the same reasons that France had failed in the 1880's, including through a rapidly dying labor force. This was due, largely, to the tropical diseases in the region to which laborers had the most exposure. However, the U.S. was determined to maintain a work force to complete its vision of a waterway passage between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Historian, David McCullough, elaborates how the concept for creating a canal on the Panamanian isthmus can be traced back to 1513 when Vasco Núñez de Balboa, a Spanish explored, discovered the Pacific Ocean on the isthmus (McCullough, 1977).

In the 1870s, seven grant expeditions to Central America document canal concepts, though it wasn't until the technology of the 20th century to actuate it. When the U.S. gained physical and political control of the Panama Canal region, de facto sovereignty was appropriated, separating from the rest of Panama which established an

independent territory within the nation. This action was finalized in November, 1903 with the Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty and was named after its chief negotiators, John Hay, the United States Secretary of State and the French diplomatic representative of Panama during the era, Philippe-Jean Bunau-Varilla. This treaty gave the power to the U.S. to take over the building of the canal. The endeavor created a new territory through a ten-mile-wide area on both sides of the actual canal site which was not leased, but a sovereign of the United States (McCullough, 1977).

Socially Constructed Race Politics in the Panama Canal Zone

When the United States set up a new government within Panama, the legal and social systems mirrored those in place in the U.S. This model of democracy included systematic segregation based on race. The construction of the Panama Canal contributed to the expansion of the United States as a global super power and effectively created a nation within a nation. When the U.S. arrived in the region to take over the canal project, the conditions for African and Asian workers were already dire. They were living in impoverished conditions within a string of almost fifty villages extending from Panama City to Colon. The leading U.S. Federal Health organization described the condition at that time:

the population is almost entirely negro (sic) and Chinese. All the villages are filthy, without regulations or restrictions, without sewers, and having the usual water supply of the country . . . No attention is paid to the wholesomeness of the water supply . . . Malaria, elephantiasis, and beriberi are always to be found, and yellow fever and smallpox will occur . . . unless proper precautions are taken.

(McBride, 2002, p. 56)

White citizens of the United States moved to the Canal Zone to fill positions in administration, leadership, government, and as teachers for white children. They lived under completely different and elevated social conditions compared to their minority co-inhabitants. The black and minority populations, while laboring in intense heat, rampant disease, and thick jungle, lived in officially sanctioned discriminatory conditions. The shared circumstances and hardships of these peoples created a new sub-culture. The continuity and identity of the African people during this time took many forms.

The North American Congress on Latin America, (NACLA; New York), is a non-profit that works toward “a world in which the nations and peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean are free from oppression and injustice, and enjoy a relationship with the United States based on mutual respect” (NACLA, 2014, p. 1). Award-winning Puerto Rican scholar, filmmaker and writer, Frances Negrón-Muntaner, notes that “reggaetón spoke directly to the social conditions prevalent . . . outrageous unemployment rates . . . failing schools, government corruption, and widespread drug violence” (Negrón-Muntaner et al, 2007, p. 1).

The white citizens of the canal zone lived in private housing with indoor plumbing and electricity. These homes were within communities that included theaters and social clubs. The U.S. black community was very small and soon disappeared when a freeze on hiring black Americans was made by the U.S. government. While thousands of islanders came in by the boat loads, northern blacks were forced to end their contracts, most being sent back to the U.S. The remaining combined minority populations lived in barracks with poor diet and living conditions. The black schools were far inferior to those

attended by white students, while the wages of black teachers, like those of all black jobs, were significantly lower. Other than bars, no other social clubs existed for minorities.

Many contradictions existed for the African-Americans from the U.S. in the Panama Canal zone as explained by Patrice Brown:

the contradictions, racial tensions, discrimination, and American privilege rampant in the Canal Zone. Citizenship mattered, but so did color, despite the official canal policy statements to the contrary. If an employee was white and an American citizen, he benefited from the system. However, if an employee was an African American, he encountered problems in securing the “rights” that went with American citizenship in the Canal Zone. Every ethnic group wanted to be on the gold roll because of the better housing, job opportunities, and schools, but they were denied the opportunity to advance or transfer to the gold roll. Into this equation entered the African-American, not quite an American but different from the native population. (Brown, 2014)

From 1876 to 1965 *Jim Crow* laws had been enacted throughout the states of the former Confederacy and the U.S. Southwest. According to Sonia Watson, “Jim Crow laws separated blacks from whites in all areas of society and became a metaphor for racial segregation and inequality in the U.S. South” (Watson, 2014, p. 152). This systematic racism spread to the canal zone when the U.S. occupied it with facilities for blacks and whites that were supposedly separate, but equal. However, since these laws could not be legally enforced in the Panama Canal Zone, the U.S. government designed a race-based economic system that covered all aspects of life in the zone. White inhabitants of the zone were citizens with the same rights and privileges as all U.S. citizens, while

non-whites were commodified as physical laborers with limited rights, provisions, and consideration. Black North Americans were treated with disrespect and oppression. As Brown recounted from a memorandum sent to the governor of the Canal Zone during construction in regards to African-Americans from the United States:

We have already done more for these people than they deserve or appreciate properly. They want to be served in the white lobby which is impossible, because they are not white and if employed by Canal would be on the silver roll—besides it is against the religion of certain castes to take a bath oftener than once a year and others use a vile smelling oil in their coiffures. We cannot build either a special lobby or a special post office for them which seems to be what they want. (Brown, 2014, p. 2)

Ultimately, it was the black laborers from the Caribbean that had the highest exposure to work-place accidents, suffered through impoverished living conditions and who suffered from infection the most. Tens of thousands of these workers died from tropical diseases including Malaria and Yellow fever. Thousands more died from pneumonia and related diseases and the health complications as a result of living in impoverished housing conditions. Patrice Gonzalez notes, “While press accounts praised the marvelous North American engineering feat through some of the world’s thickest jungle, they rarely mentioned the critical role immigrant black workers played, or their disproportionate sacrifice” (Gonzalez, 2011, p. 68). Furthermore, black workers were never given any position that made them superior to whites. And despite the institutionalized, segregated society that had been established in the Canal Zone, financial incentives continued to lure black workers from all over the Caribbean to the Panama

Canal Zone.

The economies of the Caribbean nations couldn't support their local populations at the time. Therefore, those populations were easy to recruit for the construction of the canal by France first, and then again by the U.S. Both countries recruited Afro-Caribbean workers for the lowest paying, most dangerous labor. Once they arrived in Panama, their living conditions were of the lowest quality, putting them at additional health risk. The white administrators from the U.S. valued laborers as a commodity, for their strength as workers, just as in the times of slavery. The division between white and black was stark for all aspects of life in the zone. And just as during slavery, music became a reflection of that life, and an expression of the culture, spirit, and experience of multiple communities living in the zone. The music reflected the division of communities. Put simply, there were two populations in the Zone: white and non-white.

In 1904, a leading missionary from the United States, Charles Pepper, described the Canal Zone as:

a colony within the Republic of Panama, yet not of it...a conglomerate mass-Jamaican and other West Indian negroes [sic], Chinese coolies, Mexican and Central American peons, possibly a few American blacks, Italian railway workers, and similar elements. (McBride, 2002, p. 49)

Pepper propagandized to the white American public the special stamina and the ability of black laborers to do the hardest work. While they did accomplish the most difficult tasks, black laborers were loathed and abused by the white overseers and their system. In its completion, Pepper concluded, the "Panama Canal will be the monumental contribution of the despised black race to civilization" (McBride, 2002, p. 49).

The Panama Canal was built under the leadership of three U.S. presidents, including, in order, Theodore Roosevelt, William Taft, and Woodrow Wilson. Wilson's predecessors, Theodore Roosevelt and Taft, as well as William McKinley, had viewed the United States as an emerging power that needed to extend its influence throughout the world in order to serve national interests. This imperialist policy was justified by the commonly held belief that it was America's duty as a Christian republic to spread democracy throughout the world. It is curious how leaders of the United States have navigated democratic ideals. Taft foreshadows the ongoing struggle of power, "the equal opportunity which those seek who proclaim the coming of so-called social justice involves a forced division of property and that means socialism" (Chace, 2004, p. 220).

Roosevelt initiated the takeover of the Canal project from France, while Taft gave the most time and effort to the project. He traveled to Panama as Secretary of War five times and twice as president. Wilson persuaded the Congress to repeal their 1912 Panama Canal Act which exempted payment by American ships to travel through the canal. In doing so he basically apologized for Theodore Roosevelt's aggression in regards to Panama. Yet he Although Wilson, a southern aristocrat, opposed his niece marrying a Panamanian due to "the presumption that the blood is not unmixed" (Chace, 2004, p. 43). These juxtapositions littered the politics of the U.S. and its territories. Clearly, equality was a virtue that did not implement entire groups of people as the experience differed for citizens and residents depending on their race. As historian and author David McCullough describes:

The portrait painted of the canal's construction only depicted the national

opportunity and was intended for a white audience; information on the dangers and conditions for the minority, labor population were muted. The portrait not shown to the U.S. public was one of socially constructed racism and exploitation with economics as another extension of oppression. Cartoons in the newspapers depicted the canal being dug by cheerful white Americans with picks and shovels . . . In truth, the color-line, of which nothing was said in print, cut through every facet of life in the Zone, as clearly drawn and closely observed as anywhere in the Deep South or the most rigid colonial endeavors of Africa. (McCullough, 1977, p. 149)

When France first began its excavation for the canal through the isthmus, Panama did not exist as a nation. Until the U.S. took control of the Panama Canal Zone in 1904, the territory had belonged to Spain and later, to Columbia. While still a Columbian province, French architect Ferdinand de Lesseps, who had built the Suez Canal in Egypt, led the canal construction. Amidst this construction endeavor, the French government established two separate payroll systems to pay the workers in the canal zone. The two payrolls divided the workforce in two classifications: laborers (black) and the educated and/or officials (white). The laborers were paid in silver, while the wages of the educated and official occupants were paid in gold.

During the beginning efforts of canal construction under France's leadership, African-Americans were hired from the United States. Many black U.S. citizens traveled to the canal territory in a similar manner as the white U.S. citizens did, with equal opportunities in job quality and pay. African-Americans from the United States could work the higher paid jobs and be paid in gold through the gold payroll. While the two-

tiered system was introduced and used by the French, the inclusion of U.S. African-Americans in the upper tier was temporary; conditions of equality changed drastically once France went bankrupt and the canal was taken over by the U.S. government and the new nation of Panama.

The Gold and Silver Roll Economy of the Panama Canal Zone

When the U.S. took over the Panama Canal construction, they kept the two-tiered payroll system of silver and gold but they made one drastic change to that system. Rather than tie wages to the skill level of the job, as France had initially done, the U.S. government used a pay scale based on race. While the gold pay was originally for skilled laborers under the French, it transitioned to a pay grade for all white inhabitants of the Panama Canal Zone under the U.S. While the silver roll was once for the unskilled laborers under French rule, under U.S. rule, silver was used to pay all non-whites. Employment hierarchy no longer was a factor. Furthermore, fewer and fewer African-American workers were being assigned skilled jobs. Even in the case of educated positions, such as teachers, pay was demoted to silver for black inhabitants of the canal zone. The term “colored” at the time meant anyone non-white, including the African-Caribbean, Asian, mixed, and mestizo populations. The populations were further segregated in every sanction of life from their work and pay to their housing and education.

In the article, “The Panama Canal: The African American Experience,” Patrice Brown, explains:

In 1906 the chief engineer of the Panama Canal issued a memorandum to place all

colored men then on a “gold hourly basis” on the “silver hourly basis.” No justification was given for this change, not even the type of job held. As noted in the following statement by a commissary manager at the time, race alone was used to justify the removal of “colored” employees from the gold to the silver roll, moving deeper into systematic segregation. (Brown, 1997, p. 1)

Subsequently, the United States put a freeze on the hiring of all African-American men from the United States and also terminated almost all contracts with black people from the U.S. The very few exceptions to those terminations were all transitioned to the silver roll. They received a few privileges not offered to any other minorities such as “paid leaves of absence, free quarters, receipt of ice, purchase of commissary books for cash in gold commissaries, and free coal” (Brown, 1997, p. 1).

The choice to segregate African-Americans from other minorities was also a deliberate attempt to avoid further disruption of the Canal operation due to racial conflict. The leaders were afraid that black Americans would bring friction to the power dynamic by empowering the still cooperative black work force. Juan Gonzalez notes that, “From the first day of construction (of the Panama Canal), the white American supervisors created a racial apartheid system that dominated canal life for half a century” (Gonzalez, 2011, p. 151).

The race-based pay scale officially sanctioned racial segregation which led to two societies: the white and the non-white societies. The two were divided in every way. Whites and non-whites had separate payrolls, neighborhoods, living quarters, schools, libraries, churches, facilities, transportation, restrooms, and drinking fountains. Wealthy citizens of Spanish descent without mixed Indigenous and/or African blood were

considered white in this era. At one point an auditor in the PCZ noted that the Jim Crow laws and the racial segregation of the Panama Canal Zone were expensive to maintain. The auditor suggested that the zone merge the two systems into one system in the name of fiscal efficiency. This would have dissolved the gold and silver rolls into one unified system for all people. However, despite the significant cost of the two payrolls, systemized race laws continued and the recommendations of the auditor were never adopted. Even money was a lower priority to the maintenance of well-established, systematic class system according to race.

It was not until the mid 1950s, simultaneous to the rise of the civil rights movement in the U.S., that racial distinctions for employment and pay were changed and the gold/silver roll system was abandoned in Panama. Unfortunately, racism persisted in the canal zone in amid resistance to integration, just as resistance to integration continued in the U.S.:

In 1954, after the Supreme Court's ruling in *Brown v the Board of Education* outlawed separate but equal public schools throughout the nation, the federal government ordered Canal Zone authorities to integrate their schools as well. To avoid that, the canal's governor changed the language of instruction in the black schools to Spanish, and forcibly relocated many blacks out of the Zone, thus shifting the burden of housing and educating their children onto the Panamanian government. A new canal treaty in 1955 made matters even worse for the West Indians- it required them for the first time to pay Panamanian taxes. (Gonzales, 2011, p. 153)

Leadership and Resistance in the Panama Canal Zone

There were activists who spoke out against the racist system of the Panama Canal Zone. One of these notable activists was Marcus Garvey (b. 1887-d. 1940). Garvey founded the Black Star Line, a shipping line for goods to and from Africa. His eventual vision was for the Black Star to carry passengers and to empower African people to return to their homeland. Garvey promoted Black Nationalism which included the separation and independence of the African diaspora from colonial European society. He advocated for African unity and a common African destiny. Martin Luther King Jr. referred to Garvey as, “the first man on a mass scale and level to give millions of Negroes a sense of dignity and destiny and make the Negro feel he was somebody” (Salley, 1999, p. 82).

Garvey’s movement began, and became most radical, in Central America. He was expelled from Costa Rica for writing about the mistreatment of blacks at the United Fruit Company plantations and arrived in Panama three years before U.S. completion of the canal. While in Panama, Garvey wrote for a local newspaper, *La Nacionale*, condemning the treatment of West Indian workers in the Canal Zone. Rastafarianism, brought by Jamaicans to Colon, Panama in the early 1900’s, was an African religious movement that promoted justice and continuity for black people. Duke researchers Rivera, Marshall, Hernandez and Flores note Garvey’s significant involvement:

Marcus Garvey worked during the building of the canal as a journalist, and he fought for better wages as a trade unionist. At that time, wages were set according to the so-called Silver Roll for the blacks and the Gold Roll for the whites. They foretold that a black king would come from the East who would free the black

race from its suffering... All that happened here (in Panama). Then Garvey returned to Jamaica and preached Rastafarianism. (Rivera et al, 2009, p. 84)

Garvey used his experience in Costa Rica and Panama to launch the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), an international black nationalist organization designed to uplift the Black race. Texas public education and politics reporter Aliyya Swaby notes:

Only after World War I did West Indians in Central America start to embrace the idea of labor organizing . . . Seeking work once again in Central America, they encountered even worse treatment from their bosses. When Garvey visited Central America in 1919, he was greeted as a celebrity—and as a terrorist. Black West Indians began to join Garvey’s UNIA in droves, seeking a vehicle for overcoming class and cultural differences and organizing for shared goals. (Swaby, 2014, p. 2)

In 1919, 1, 500 West Indian Panamanian workers led a strike protesting the pay and poor work and living conditions. The next year workers on the Canal went on strike, presenting four-teen demands to management. Author, Aliya Swaby, explains in her article, “Black Nationalist Messiah Marcus Garvey: The Early Years:”

The U.S. and Panamanian governments ruthlessly quashed both incidents, but the protests marked Garveyism’s success at promoting solidarity in the region. Still, even when Garveyism was in decline in the mid-1920s, the UNIA had more than 49 branches throughout Panama. Garveyism inspired the creation of later black nationalist movements, such as the Nation of Islam and Rastafarianism, which thrives in Panama today. (Swaby, 2014, p. 2)

Jamaican religious leader Leonard Percival Howell, known as the first preacher of the Rastafarian movement, also spent time in Colon, Panama. Having met Garvey in New York, Howell became a member of Garvey's organization. Much of his preaching focused on positive black identity. He condemned western aesthetics and urged the African diaspora to repatriate to Ethiopia. He offered a strong anti-colonial voice that grew to become known internationally. He was eventually arrested in Jamaica for sedition. While imprisoned, he wrote *The Promise Key*, a book that expounded on repatriation and claimed that Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie I was the black messiah and the incarnation of god. Garvey is considered a founder of the Rastafarian movement in Jamaica and was a fierce proponent of anti-colonialism. That anti-colonial message is at the heart of the Rastafarian movement and reggae music.

Throughout the decade of the 1900s, the connection between Jamaica and Panama became stronger as work on the canal continued. The commentaries of early Jamaican Reggae music inveighed against oppression and encouraged the emergence of a new African identity despite working within a colonial, white-imposed system. Howell is known as a leader in a Pan-African movement which advocated for the union of all people of African descent. As Nigel Stewart notes the importance of both physical and mental/intellectual freedom:

Even the great calls for liberation, nationalism and civil rights have deep philosophical basis in Pan-African thought. In the same way slaves learnt the land through their physical sacrifices, they personally secured their freedom. One cannot discount the clear demonstration of Pan-African thought within the Americas that are well evidenced in the works of Garvey and Dubois. The calls

for an “emancipation from mental slavery” was particularly poignant in the newly liberated mind, and the concerted efforts of Martin Delany to secure a state in Africa for African-Americans in the 1850s should not go unnoticed. (Stewart, 2016, p. 1)

These Black Nationalist movements arose, in part, in reaction to the white supremacy established by the U.S. in Panama and at home. In the Canal Zone, the two-tiered system perpetuated racist stereotypes, including such claims that black people had immunities to diseases and intense heat. The working conditions of non-white laborers were inconsiderate of natural human limits. Whites were excused from such labor, supposedly due to their lack of immunities to tropical disease. The U.S. military deemed the Panama Canal Zone during construction as one of the unhealthiest places on earth. President Roosevelt addressed the canal laborers: "you here who are doing your work well in bringing to completion this great enterprise, are standing exactly as a soldier of the few great wars of the world's history. This is one of the great works of the world. It is a greater work than you yourselves at the moment realize" (Roosevelt, 1905, Speech). And while the U.S. accomplished its mission and completed construction of the Panama Canal, the goal was attained through exploitative practices. While slavery had already been abolished, the race-based economic and legal systems in the zone were almost as oppressive as slavery and forced the zone's African-descended inhabitants to live in very harsh conditions. Non-white workers were offered the most difficult and dangerous work for the least amount of pay and lowest quality of sanctions.

When U.S. President Jimmy Carter addressed the Panamanian government at a meeting of the OAS in 1977, he reflected on the history of the canal and focused his

speech on the future of the Panama Canal as well as the future of the relationship between Panama and the United States. Presenting an outline of the new agreement, known as the Panama Canal Treaty and the Neutrality Treaty, Carter told the Panamanian government and people that the U.S. would relinquish ownership and control over the zone to Panama by the year 2000. This action meant the withdrawal of the United States' presence in the zone after almost a century of dominance. Carter said that the U.S. would continue to support and protect the operation of the canal. He praised the canal as a feat of great importance to world trade, especially in the Americas. He stated that the new treaty would guarantee the neutrality of the canal and, perhaps most relevant, committed his administration to using, "fairness, not force, in dealings with the world if relations are to last" (Carter, 1977, Speech). Carter addressed how the politics and social climate had drastically changed over the course of the U.S. takeover, construction, and operation of the canal that had spanned three-quarters of a century. The treaty, unofficially known as the *Torrijos-Carter Treaty*, continued the cooperation between the two nations. It gave economic opportunity to Panama and promised future partnerships in the potential building of future sea-level canals in Panama. Those promises, Carter noted, were made "in the spirit of reciprocity" (Carter, 1977, Speech.) The Panama Canal Zone dissolved its borders in 1979, and in 1999 the U.S. relinquished full control to the Panamanian government.

Leonardo "Renato" Aulder, a famous Panamanian pioneer of reggaetón music, was a citizen of the Panama Canal Zone. His migration to the U.S. after the treaty was signed was a typical one. Sonja Watson describes Aulder as:

a young Jamaican and Barbadian descendant growing up in the Canal Zone . . .

(who) relocated to Río Abajo in 1978, a seminal year in Panamanian history. 1978 was one year after President Carter signed the Torrijos-Carter Treaty (1977), which would transfer ownership and operation of the Canal from the U.S. to Panama in 1999. This treaty affected the lives of not only U.S. citizens, but also West Indians who resided in the Zone, a geographic area located between Colon and Panama City that represented neo colonialism and empire building. Thousands of Zonians were forced to relocate from the Zone to foreign, Panama City. Many opted to migrate to the United States and became part of the burgeoning Afro-Panamanian enclave of Brooklyn, New York. This cultural and ideological transformation from North American to Panamanian reflects the transatlantic and trans-Caribbean experience that complicates yet enriches Panamanian identity. (Watson, 2016, p. 1)

The social and political climate of the Panama Canal Zone continues to inspire cultural expressions in the arts today. Gerardo Maloney, Panamanian West Indian artist and academic, documents the West Indian experience in his artwork. Born in Panama City in 1945, he made the film, *Los del Silver Roll* (Silver Roll People.) As Watson notes, much of his creative works concentrated on Afro-Panamanian music and literature. In fact, Afro-Panamanian music, especially, became a major source for artists of the genre reggae en Español (Spanish reggae) in Panama (Watson, 2014, p. 107).

Reggaetón and the Meaning of Music

In addition to the general study of non-Western music, musicologist Bruno Nettl, expands the definition of ethnomusicology to include music as culture itself and the

phenomena of infinite variety in musical expression. Music may be influenced through particular human experience and behavior, including relationships between social and economic class and in relation to societal freedoms. Music may be “reacting to what goes on in society either by reflecting it or even by denouncing it . . .ethnomusicologists are interested in the processes through which music changes, remains stable, grows, and disappears, and they have this interest for a culture as a whole . . .” (May, 1980, p. 6).

Dr. David Gilbert, scholar and author of *The Product of Our Souls: Ragtime, Race, and the Birth of the Manhattan Musical Marketplace*, contemplates:

the impulses that shape artists, the context, social constructive nature, and ideologies that shape artists and the relationship of that dialectically to what artists do, they are creative . . . what does creativity mean as an artist... what does creativity mean to historians trying to study it or ethnomusicologists or theorists, philosophically, what is creativity? (Interview, 2018)

Gilbert’s perspective on racial context in American music is comprehensive. He intertwines politics, history, and music into a tapestry that may better reveal the implicit meanings and raw perspectives of how narratives of oppression moved from slavery to segregation. Gilbert explains:

After slavery, the nation, not just the south needs to come up with new not abstract, material, concrete ways, to distinguish black people from white people. You don’t have the institution of slavery, you don’t have the scar, you don’t have the mostly powerlessness in the social and political realm of slavery, so you have to recreate that, and that’s the era of Jim Crow. Jim Crow segregation. No voting, lynching culture, but that was just as true in the north as the south, there just

weren't the same laws. (Interview, 2018)

Music has a stake in societal progress; for example, songs that demonstrate the fight for freedom in a colonial context. As Bob Marley states in a song, "Won't you help to sing, these songs of freedom" (Marley, 1980, track 10). Paul Gaeta, professional musician and sound technician at Mogg music, states that when performing he feels "a fleeting moment of stillness that could be accessed only when I was 100 percent fully present, musically. Time freezes and a deep connection to the eternal is felt" (Interview, 2018). In this eternity and stillness, music can be a tool to reexamine history and narratives. And music, in the form of reggaetón, does reflect the history and culture of Panama. Many hybrids of Afro-Caribbean music have sprouted up all over the world. For example, historian Juan Gonzalez states that "[by] the late 1920s, immigrant musicians from the Caribbean were fusing their arrangements with the ragtime and jazz greats of New York City" (Gonzalez, 2011, p. 242).

Music represents a unique societal mirror and innately embraces an unquantifiable number of interpretations. Jazz music, for instance, originated among black musicians in New Orleans in the late 1800s and early 1900s. It was a blend of West African, African-American and European musical styles. Legendary jazz musician, Herbie Hancock, reflects:

The cool thing is that jazz is really a wonderful example of the great characteristics of Buddhism and great characteristics of the human spirit. Because in jazz we share, we listen to each other, we respect each other, we are creating in the moment. At our best we're non-judgmental. ("Herbie, Fully Buddhist," 2018, p. 1)

The popularity of a certain musical genre does not ensure that its cultural history and impact will be remembered. While Jazz continues to be popular, for example, without the documentation of its history, the social significance of its insurgence could be lost. In a post-slavery, pre-civil rights United States, the black arts movement, including jazz, erupted, giving power, voice, and hope to people in a time of national, social and political inequities. Jazz traveled from New Orleans northward during the 1920s, often as a part of vaudeville acts. For the first time in the U.S., white people were mimicking the sounds and fashions of African-American culture. Black music genres, such as jazz, continue to be adapted, covered, and performed by countless contemporary artists around the world. But as Masud Asante, musician, educator, and DJ for the hip-hop duo, Dead Prez, points out, “the term “Black” has vast perceptions attached to it... certain aspects of the “black experience” ... are definitely unique to those individuals and cultures of those individuals moreover. Those realities are exercised in everything, including music... “Black” is very perceptive and not to be generalized in the quest for accuracy” (Interview, 2019).

Often, once a genre of music, or any art form for that matter, becomes popular, it is commodified. The origins of that art form may become lost through contemporary ideals and images, propaganda, marketing, and stereotypes, to be redefined over and over again. Music documents an era, a story of a people and a time, a collective experience and journey as an oral, historical account. Studying music gives insight and perspectives into history. As Spanish philosopher George Santayana expressed in his now famous aphorism, “Those who cannot remember the past, are condemned to repeat it” (Santayana, 1905, p. 284).

Currently, reggaetón is popular throughout the world. Asante articulates the identity, rather than origin of the music, “The African roots of the rhythms are indigenous throughout the diaspora, which includes Puerto Rico, Panama, Cuba and more...” (Interview, 2018). Afro-Caribbean-Latino linguistic, dance and musical components fused in the Panama Canal Zone became the foundation of the musical genre that would emerge in the 1980s as reggaetón. The genre emerged from reggae in Spanish and, before that, to fusions of island and local music that goes back as far as to Africa and native Central American tribes. After initial exposure beyond Panama, its popularity spread quickly and soon became common throughout Latino communities worldwide. The commonalities between Panamanian and Puerto Rican reggaetón span from musical components to identity. Negron-Muntaner describes reggaetón’s contemporary influence in Puerto Rico:

For many young Puerto Ricans, reggaetón is today what salsa used to be years ago: a “national” soundtrack and the culture’s international musical representative. Yet the genre was initially condemned in the mainstream and subject to hearings in the Puerto Rican senate. What accounts for this shift? In a nutshell: commercial success, achieved in the most unexpected of ways. (Negron-Muntaner, 2007, para. 1)

Reggaetón is theorized to have begun when Jamaicans migrated to Panama for work on the canal and brought their music with them. This music was, naturally, translated into the Panama’s native language, Spanish. Often new lyrics would be sung over original, older melodies. This translation was known as “Spanish reggae” or Reggae en Español. Wayne Marshall and other music scholars define this genre on a global web

resource as one that:

developed as a result of Jamaican immigration to Panama as a result of the Panama Canal. Eventually, many of these Jamaicans had intentions to go back to Jamaica, but many of them ended up staying, and eventually assimilated and became part of the culture. . . . Meanwhile, in the 1970s, Panamanians like (reggaetón recording artist) El General began taking reggae songs and beats and singing over them with Spanish lyrics. They also sped up reggae beats and added Hispanic and Latino elements to them. The music continued to grow throughout the 1980s, with many stars developing in Panama. (Wikipedia, 2017, p. 1)

Music in Panama in the early part of the 20th century was an amalgamation of African, Caribbean and Panamanian music styles within a colonial context. Variations within these foundational musical styles included additional contemporary elements, such as language and lyrical styles, forming the basis of reggaetón. Music can be a gateway to understanding the intricacies of culture. Wayne Marshall feels as though music:

provides a way into the concretes and complexities of post-coloniality, diaspora, globalization, and transnationalism that no other medium, no other data, no resource or theory can offer . . . What emerges from a musically informed study of the historical relationship between Jamaica and the United States is a deep, dynamic degree of interpenetration and interrelation, a set of interactions complexly contoured around class, race, ethnicity, and nation social categories that can seem at once fluid and flexible, firm and fixed. (Marshall, 2007, p. 6)

While in the claims of reggaetón's origin bounce back and forth between Panama

and Puerto Rico, few debate that the roots of the musical movement lie in Jamaican reggae. Popular reggae fans often consider reggaetón to be a Spanish-language offshoot of the Jamaican style reggae, with unclear roots, but a strong presence all over the Americas.

Michael Ellis, among others, claimed that he coined the term for the emerging dancehall Spanish reggae. He documented this style as “reggaetón” and promoted it worldwide. He referred to it as the “Big Spanish Reggae Movement”. The music spread throughout Latin America in the 1980s and around the globe within the following decade, continuing to adapt to local cultures. For his work, Ellis won the MTV Video Award (New York), La Gaviota de Plata (the highest award in Latin America), a production award in Vinas del Mar, Chile, three Grammy Awards for production, as well as a Billboard Award and the Premiolo Nuestro Award four times- all for the production of reggaetón music. In addition to reggaetón, Ellis also claims credit for the terms "RegRapBlues," "Lover's Rock," and "Spanish Reggae" in describing three other musical genres (Ellis, 2014, Interview).

There is almost no dispute among scholars and aficionados that the first reggae music put into Spanish was done in Panama. The Afro-Caribbean-Panamanians adapted the style during the canal construction and workers/musicians continued to experiment and marry sounds for generations. Thus, while this work does not set out to prove reggaetón's origin, Panama may be considered to be the origin of reggae en Español or Spanish reggae, which is the predecessor of reggaetón. As Rivera, Marshall, and Hernandez articulate:

While reggaetón booms in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, the only

Latin American country in which there is a real tradition of reggae is Panama. It is there that the pioneers of *reggae en Español* live, there that the most serious reggae radio stations are found, there that reggae is improvised on rickety buses, and there that Marcus Garvey found enlightenment on the canal. (Rivera et al, 2009, p. 81)

African influences in reggaetón music are directly linked to the music of Jamaica. The island's immigrants to Panama brought with them West-Indian, African influenced reggae, dancehall, and soca. These sounds blended with the native musical genres of bomba, salsa, merengue, plena, and bachata. Decades later, dancehall and hip hop were added to the mix to create the adaptation of reggaetón most commonly heard today. Afro-Panamanian culture was booming in Colon, Panama in the 1970s and it is rumored that there, among the black descendants of canal workers, that reggae en Español was born.

Unlike the rest of Panama, Spanish was not spoken much in the U.S. controlled Panama Canal Zone. This territory extended five miles on each side of the canal and was a nation within a nation. The people who lived in this region were known as Zonians and their primary language was English. Most of the inhabitants were U.S. citizens and Caribbean workers, both English speaking.

In the early 1980s, Leonardo Renato Aulder became a reggaetón recording pioneer. He was an Afro-Panamanian youth whose father was a dredger for the Panama Canal Company. He started taking Jamaican reggae songs and translating them into Spanish and performing them in public. He was born and spent his youth in Panama and would eventually become an early pioneer of the reggaetón movement. Dr. Sonia Watson concludes, "*Reggae en Español* artists such as Renato are a product of anti-West Indian

sentiment, the Canal, and Panamanian national identity politics” (Watson, 2016, p. 5).

At the age of 13, Alder worked in Panama for a local DJ, Wassabanga. In his early teens, living back in the Panama Canal region, he also translated reggae songs into Spanish. In 1984, Renato recorded Spanish Reggae’s first hit song, called “El D.E.N.I.” The track was influenced by the popular Jamaican tune, “What Police Can Do.” Renato titled his version after the Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega’s secret police force called “El D.E.N.I.” He explains:

The song featured original lyrics, and more importantly, a specifically Panamanian theme. Both a boastful party tune and a careful name-checking of the then-dictator, the song was an instant hit. (As it happened, Renato claims, Noriega liked the song, and called on him to perform at several political functions.)

(“Reggaetón”, 2008, p. 1, *BigUp Magazine*)

Renato’s songs also celebrated blackness. For example, in his song “La Chica de Los Ojos Café,” he raps about the beauty of brown eyed, black women in a video made in an apparently rural Panamanian neighborhood. In an interview with the artist, scholar Peter Szok reflected that, “Renato is considered a ‘founding father’ of the reggae en Español movement, insisting that the Puerto Ricans had appropriated what was basically a Panamanian innovation” (Szok, 2009, p. 2). Renato was of Barbadian and Jamaican descent. His grandparents came to Panama “at the beginning of the twentieth century, as part of an enormous influx from the West Indies, encouraged by the U.S. demand for inexpensive labor” (Szok, 2009, p. 2). Researcher, scholar, and ethnomusicologist Wayne Marshall, explains:

The 1970s constituted a heyday for reggae, as the focus on that decade in the

reggae literature would seem to confirm. For such a small, geopolitically powerless island, Jamaica suddenly saw its music rise to global prominence, finding huge audiences in the First and Third World alike and joining the elite, US- dominated ranks of global pop genres. (Marshall, 2007, p. 175)

Reggae is the foundation and inspiration to early reggaetón in more ways than just musically. Reggae culture heralded anti-establishment music, films, and superstars that were transforming the social climate. From within the constraints of racism, poverty, and oppression, Afro-Caribbean music became an expression of the people and of their identity. Another level of reggaetón is the hip-hop element. There is an undeniable connection to social expression. According to Damon Sanjini, Rapper and Assistant Professor:

To properly understand the relationship between Hip Hop and decolonization, we need to first specify the relationship between race and colonialism. Races are not what racial discourse presents them to be: discreet human populations identified by internal characteristics—either biological or cultural. Rather: races are colonial subjectivities naturalized as inherent identities. In other words, existing racial categories are legacies of the European slave trade and colonialism. Those relations of subordination were established and are maintained by coercive force and are reified by racial discourse. From this, it follows that anti-racism is not about reducing mutual antagonism between races, but rather working to destroy the colonial situation: to eliminate the relations of domination that exist between white and non-white populations. It is always and only a question of power; that is to say, of politics. Recognizing race as inherently political and colonial entails a

redefinition of Blackness relative to colonial power. Politics is the dynamics of power in human relations. Black liberation theorists have always understood the necessity of rejecting white definitions of Blackness and redefining it in accordance with the liberation imperative of Black people. (Sajjani, p. 2)

Music may inspire a myriad of responses from emotional to physical to spiritual. Reggaetón's musical and lyrical style inspires many people to dance. Reggaetón is notorious for highly sexual dance movements. Michael Ellis told me, "It's like having sex on the dance floor, but it's innocent and it's fun. Reggaetón does that for people, gives them an arena to be free with their bodies" (Ellis, 2014, Interview). Leslie Bunt, a professor of music therapy, writes in a summary about the significance of music and its influence on movement:

What are the connections between us and music? The answers include: the pleasure gained from listening; the warmth and friendship from being part of a group making music; the stimulus and satisfaction from regular practice and rehearsal; the intellectual delight from exploring the intricacies of musical forms and structures; the physical energy released within us by both playing and listening to music, inspiring us often to move and dance. (Bunt, 1994, p. 1)

Reggaetón is notable for being a form of dance and party music, as well as a street music and a working-class anthem. It has received extensive attention worldwide. Producers and recording artists in the genre have been financially successful and reggaetón's appeal has crossed a range of class and cultural lines. Even its taboo dance moves, such as the *perreo*, have made their way into the mainstream. This style adaptation of dance, as *Remezcla* journalist, Cepeda explains, has roots in Africa:

Many oral histories credit DJ Blass with popularizing “sandungeo” as a term that could be used interchangeably at a party, or as the emerging sexually charged dance. But there’s still no clear point of reference as to exactly when and who coined the term, *perreo*. What is clear is that *perreo*, sandungeo, or even twerking all seem to have similar origins tracing back to the enslaved Africans who were forcefully brought to the Americas. (Cepeda, July, 2018, p. 1)

Perreo loosely translates as ‘doggy-style’ with one dance partner facing the back of the other. Authors in the edited collection *Reggaetón*, commented about such cross-overs in Puerto Rico:

It was a stunning sight. Onstage in 2003 at San Juan’s Hiram Bithorn Stadium, five-time senator Velda González—former actress, grandmother of 11, and beloved public figure—was doing the unthinkable. Flanked by reggaetón stars Hector and Tito (a.k.a. the Bambinos), the senator, sporting tasteful makeup and a sweet, matronly smile, was lightly swinging her hips and tilting her head from side to side to a raucous reggaetón beat. Only a year before, the same senator had led public hearings aimed at regulating reggaetón’s lyrics and the dance moves that accompany it, known as el perreo, or “doggy-style dance,” in which dancers grind against each other to the Jamaican-derived dembow rhythm that serves as reggaetón’s backbone. Using her reputation as a champion of women’s rights, González chastised reggaetón for its “dirty lyrics and videos full of erotic movements where girls dance virtually naked,” and for promoting perreo, which she called a “triggering factor for criminal acts.” Her efforts as reggaetón’s “horse-woman of the apocalypse” touched off such a media frenzy around perreo.

(Negron-Muntaner, 2007, p. 1)

Early Panamanian reggae varied the traditional, Caribbean island styles, encouraging gathering and dance. El General's lyrics from his dance anthem, "Muévelo," invites such coming together and movement of the body: *Muévelo, muévelo, mas a bajo. Muévelo, muévelo, como lo hace. Ven a bailar, mmmm. Ven a gosar, mmmm.* (El General, 1991, "Muévelo") The English translation is: *Move, move, lower. Move, move, how you do it. Come and dance, mmmm. Come and flirt, mmmm.* Reggaetón is the expression of the fusion of the Afro-Caribbean musical styles in Panama, presented in English.

Black residents of the Panama Canal Zone were allowed to attend school only through the eighth grade. There were no community buildings for non-whites, except bars. Impromptu music, then, became a forum of expression that was deeply entrenched in continuity, diaspora, and freedom with deep ancestral roots. Such music movements take an:

anti-commercial stance derived from the feeling that because capitalism controlled the mass media and allowed only watered-down kinds of protest, people's culture had to be found outside that realm...to create working-class culture and to facilitate those workers' development of their own culture.

(Rounds, 2007, p. 281)

Reggaetón emerged to include any, or all of, the following: Jamaican Roots Reggae, Ska Lover's Rock, several variations of Latino music styles including, *la soca* from Trinidad, as well as North American electronic dancehall, hip-hop, R&B, and rap. Much like hip-hop and rap, reggaetón music was a platform for the urban voice of low-

income, minority youth to record spoken word and improvisation over tracks.

Undoubtedly, negative attributes of reggaetón, such as violence, sexism, and homophobia, surfaced more in later expressions. Michael Ellis explained, “This is not reggaetón, this is reggaetón music reflecting the qualities of the people” (Ellis, 2014, Interview).

Contemporary Christian standards in the predominantly Catholic Panama, for example, influenced viewpoints on gender roles as well as sexuality in general. Those social conditions and standards predate reggaetón and are, therefore, not characteristics of the genre but of the society in which the genre emerged. The music mirrored the social elements around it, depicting those elements as part of the environments in which the artists lived. Part of the evolution of music happens when it is expressed. It reflects the conditions and ideas of the people who are listening to it. When a new art form is given expression, a new tradition begins. Eyerman contemplates, “Traditions are usually defined according to time, region, or genre” (Eyerman et al, 1998, p. 37).

Michael Ellis came to the United States in 1978 on a basketball scholarship from UCLA (Los Angeles, CA). After dropping out of college for personal reasons, Michael pursued several creative endeavors. In 1987, he opened *New Creations Enterprises*, a reggaetón recording studio and production company, in New York City. Ellis and his partner, David Uriel, worked with artists such as El General and Killer Ranks. The label prepared them to expose the evolving musical style in multiple sites to new audiences through recordings, music videos, touring, CDs, and radio promotion.

Over a decade prior to the launch of that label, Michael was introduced to a young talent by the name of Edgardo Franco. Franco was only twelve years old but Ellis was

drawn to him. Franco worked with Ellis and, from that mentorship, Franco became the first major, well-known representative of reggaetón. Franco's performance name was changed to El General. Ellis coached him and wrote music for him to perform with lyrics often translated from English into Spanish. This musical style had African roots and Jamaican reggae elements, but it also blended localized flavors and local lyrical slang. Panamanians' signature sound was referred to as "*petroleo*... the country's Jamaica-derived popular music... which strongly signified the perceived and projected blackness of the genre and its adherents" (Rivera et al, 2009, p. 31).

Edgardo Franco did not speak Spanish due to the fact that English was still the predominant language in the canal zone when he was growing up. Franco was raised in the canal region as a black, English-speaking Panamanian. When his family moved to New York City later in his childhood, the family continued to speak English at home. Eventually, Franco would become reggaetón's first superstar. The music became a multi-million-dollar industry by the mid-1980s.

When the Panama Canal Zone was established as a U.S. territory, English replaced Spanish as the official language, and the previously implemented French language dissipated just as their canal attempt. El General and other black Panamanian artists, such as Renato and Nando Boom, were doing what their ancestors had done, that is, blending musical elements to express themselves. This form of mixing in the 1970s was the foundation for reggaetón music. As author and scholar, Sonja Watson, acknowledges:

Reggae en Español (reggae in Spanish) is a hybrid cultural and musical form that blends elements of Jamaican dancehall and reggae. Panama gave birth to reggae en Español in the late 1970s in the urban West Indian barrios of Río Abajo and

Parque Lefevre in the capital city of Panama. As a product of West Indian migration from the Anglophone Caribbean and Central America, Panamanian reggae in Spanish evinces racial, cultural, and linguistic hybridity resulting from on-going processes of transculturation. As a hybrid cultural discourse, reggae en Español pulls from various geographic areas (Africa, Caribbean, Panama) and musical genres (Jamaican dancehall and reggae). It is a prime example of cultural identity and difference, which reflects the multiplicity of the African diaspora experience. The lyrics of first generation Panamanian reggaesero, Leonardo “Renato” Aulder, conveys the effect of hybridity and transculturation and aid in the reinterpretation of Panamanian national identity. (Watson, 2016, p. 1)

The first Reggae recordings in Latin America were made in Panama in the mid-1970s. A large proportion of Afro-Panamanians carried on the distinctive African musical genres of the islands, including Reggae music. This music blended with the local music to create new sounds. Eventually, this hybridization led to the Panamanian Reggae in Spanish, as explained by popular reggae website:

Afro-Panamanians had been performing and recording Spanish-language reggae since the 1970's. Artists such as El General, Chichoman, Nando Boom, Renato, and Black Apache are considered the first Spanish reggae DJs from Panama (though) today Puerto Rico is often considered to be the home of reggaetón . . . Reggaetón really blossomed from its early roots as a Spanish-language offshoot of Jamaican reggae after it spread to the island nation of Puerto Rico, where the local populace latched onto the sound and began producing their own songs, riders, and unique flavor of the music. Today, Puerto Rico is often considered to

be the home of reggaetón, having long since surpassed Panama in terms of creative output and fan base. (“Reggaetón,” 2017, p. 1)

Across Latin America, reggaetón as reggae translated into Spanish became more and more popular. It was characterized by a combination of a unique tempo, instrumentation, melodies, lyrical elements, and a reggae-style feel. Its signature was a stream of consciousness that went against the grain of mainstream society. Music is a cultural phenomenon, full of signs and complex messages, both overt and subliminal. As described by social scientists Thomas R. Lindlof and Bryan Taylor, “Ethnography of communication (EOC) conceptualizes communication as a continuous flow of information, rather than as a segmented exchange of messages . . . rules that inform cultural members how to use and interpret particular categories of signs” (Lindlof et al, 2002, p. 1).

The *Star and Herald* (Panama Canal Museum) was a newspaper originally launched in 1854 that was produced in Colon, Panama. It evolved from a mostly advertising-based paper which published three times a week into, by 1912, a daily newspaper. It had an Associated Press feed and coverage of local news. It was printed in both English and Spanish. In addition to politics and news, the paper had columns that described life in the Panama Canal Zone. Often observations of the non-white communities were made by white citizens, reinforcing racial class structure. One such article in the newspaper was by a white woman living in the zone who had mistakenly wandered into the designated minority neighborhood. She wrote a column about what she had observed, describing an off-hour dance party attended by both whites and non-whites. White and non-white people simple did not integrate on any level, professional or

personal, in the Panama Canal Zone as per Jim Crow laws already established.

The columnist exclaimed the dangers to whites of exoticism based on the cultural musical and dance styles of the non-white people. The columnist described this culture as wild and over-sexual. Her account described laborers enjoying themselves in a big barn crammed pack full with people dancing in a fashion that was considered to be vulgar. (McCullough, 1977) Music was a forum that could not be controlled by the powers that be and, in addition, it was free. Music provided an outlet to relieve the stress of canal life for laborers of color. People gathered from all over the Americas as part of the canal's labor force, creating unique cultural identities and a myriad of new musical expressions. These dance and music sessions of blended African and Spanish styles were happening wherever colonialism had been established. These impromptu parties preceded and formed the basis for the musical hybrid called reggaetón.

Reggaetón derived in part from the Jamaican and African-based reggae style music. The music of reggae is often a vehicle for political and social commentaries and inspiration. From reggae en Español, reggaetón may be considered an Afro-Caribbean-Panamanian musical movement. Not only did reggaetón's musical characteristics resemble those of Jamaican reggae music, it often included similar lyrical themes. It spoke the language of the common people, their struggles and their social constructs. As Wayne Marshall observed: "Roots reggae preached Pan-American liberation and consciousness raising, often couched in the millenarian language of Rastafari, dancehall reggae embraced more earthy and local concerns, themes resonant and in close conversation with contemporary hip-hop: crime, drugs, violence, sex, poverty, corruption" (Rivera et al, 2009, p. 25).

This rhythmic, musical blend also inspired new forms of movement. A common dance move in the reggaetón music dance style is *perrea*. It is an explicit platform for sexual freedom and creative expression in response to both the music's sound, rhythm, and lyrics. Reggaetón continues to be adapted and translated through cultures worldwide. The sounds and movements have been integrated into other artistic forms across modality, genre, and culture. In a contemporary song by U.S. hip hop group, Black Eyed Peas, *Dirty Dancing* (1988), the lyrics begin in Spanish stylistically in reggaetón, both lyrically and rhythmically:

Muevele, muevele. Bailar, (Move, move. Dance)

yo quiero bailar lalalalalalala bailar, (I want to dance lalalalalalala dance)

Mueve las nalgas, shake your ass girl . . .

So mami, get a little loose and make your hips swing.

The band puts its own imprint on freedom and sexuality through lyrics, music, and movement. The song is sexually explicit but in the spirit of dancing. Sexuality and dancing are key components that often accompany early reggaetón.

Reggaetón music became highly influential with Afro-Latino, Hispanic, and Caribbean youth, specifically those in Panama, New York, the Dominican Republic, Chile, Venezuela, Mexico, and Puerto Rico. Reggaetón offered Afro-Caribbean-Latino communities and audiences a mainstream voice. The fusion of the music characteristics from throughout the Americas including, but not limited to, Soca, Reggae, Dance Hall, Bultron, and Calypso with modern Hip-Hip, gave expression to populations that formerly had none. Whether unintentional, circumstantial, deliberate or more like a cocktail of all three and hints of many more, it is important to acknowledge the deep significance that

reggaetón played in these societies in context of identity.

Michael Ellis remembers the early days of his success in the music industry, “We were all black. The artists, the producers, everyone! Mommy, all of a sudden, we had the power, we were free” (Ellis, Interview, 2013). Similar to what Motown accomplished in the United States, reggaetón empowered black music to finally be in the hands of black producers. While it has been argued that there is no such thing as black music in the context of colonial history, the phrase, “black music,” refers to music that comes from, and is created and performed by, Africans or descendants of African diaspora. The Panama Canal was an incredible feat for all of humanity, connecting two oceans for trade and travel. Tens of thousands of black, Afro-Caribbean- Panamanian workers gave their lives during its construction. For the descendants of those workers, their legacy in the form of reggaetón lives on.

The geographic, political, and multi-cultural comparisons between Panama and Puerto Rico make it easy to accept that reggaetón sprang up in both places, each producing music with its own personality. As described by an article on reggaetón on the Spanish learning site, Don Quixote:

The history of Reggaetón and its origin is a bit controversial since it mixes various different musical genres and influences. The beginning of Reggaetón can be traced back to Panama’s Spanish Reggae style which was an adaptation of Jamaican Reggae. However, the general consensus is that Reggaetón actually originated in Puerto Rico, where it evolved into Reggaetón as we know it today and gained popularity. Additionally, most famous Reggaetón musicians are Puerto Rican. The history of Reggaetón’s development was also influenced by

North American Hip Hop, Puerto Rican rhythms and other Latin American musical influences.... Reggae first developed in Jamaica and evolved by adding new sounds and rhythms. By 1985 Chico Man was performing Spanish Reggae in Panama, around the same time that Spanish rap appeared in Puerto Rico, performed by Vico C. A new Latin musical movement had started that would evolve and spread throughout North and South America. (“Reggaetón Music”, 2017, p. 1)

While many similarities exist between reggae and reggaetón, many distinctive differences exist as well. Reggae arose in Jamaica. It stemmed from and evolved out of such earlier genres as, Rocksteady and Ska which were popular on the island in the 1960s. In Jamaica, the word for “raggedy looking” was, *streggae*. A variation of the word was adopted by Jamaican musicians and the name for the music style stuck as a connotation of the lower classes and the voiceless.

The term reggae used to describe the musical genre was claimed to have been invented by Bob Marley. The word reggae means “to the king” in Latin. The jump from reggae in Jamaica to reggaetón in Panama was due to several key factors. The first was reggaetón’s use of the Spanish language, rather than English. The second was the use of regional instruments and rhythms in reggaetón, with lyrics that reflected on local issues.

Also, reggae is highly connected to the use of marijuana as a spiritual and mental ally, while there is no evidence that the use of marijuana played any major role in the evolution of reggae en Español. Both genres consider the music as a form of rebellion (Davis, 2009).

Chapter V: Conclusion

Reggaetón music helps its fans and practitioners articulate their identity that is rooted in Panama's history, specifically, the African diaspora and the political, economic, and social atmosphere of the U.S. controlled Panama Canal Zone for the Caribbean workers. It was in 1977 that the Torrijos-Carter Treaties were signed and the Canal Zone was given back to Panama. Finally, the Latin American culture could flourish there. It was then, as music and culture writer, Eduardo Cepeda described, "on the Diablo Rojo buses of Panama City, that a dancehall-derived sound took shape and began to spread across the country and beyond, making Panama the hotly contested birthplace of reggaetón" (March 2018, para. 2). The National folklore is that cassettes were passed out to the drivers on this competitive bus system and this was the, "genesis of a genre" (Cepeda, March 2018, para 8). Reggaetón publication, *Remezcla*, (Remix) interviewed Panamanian artist Renato who informed, "Michael Ellis [the Panamanian producer responsible for much of El General's early work, among others] used to say, 'We gotta do a big reggae, like a reggae-ton'" (Cepeda, 2018a, p.1). Panamanian plena singer, Jaime Davidson, better known as, Gringo, El Original, agrees. In a 2010 interview with *Mi Diario* from his prison cell, Davidson informed, "[Michael Ellis said] to make the word big. And like everything big [in Spanish] we add 'on' like cabezón or camisón, so we called it 'reggaetón,' a big 'reggae.' That's the plain truth" (Cepeda, 2018a, p. 1).

Cepeda goes on to poise this question, "So why did most of the Panamanian pioneers of the genre get left behind when reggaetón's explosion came" (2018a, p. 1, para. 8). This may have been answered in the beginning of the conclusion. Panama still did not belong to Panama, not did components of its culture and identity. The oppressive history of Canal workers in the early 20th century and the hybridity of the Zone are foundational to the formation of reggaetón music. As

Michael Ellis urged, the claiming and reclaiming of the music correlates to dignity, contribution, and identity. Cepeda explains the lack of economic success for many Panamanian reggaetón artists:

Some, like Renato, chalk it up to lack of investment, and more specifically, colorism.

“The stations didn’t wanna play our songs ‘cause they were like, ‘No this is black music. Maleante.’ They [Puerto Rican artists] had people invest in these guys. Nadie invirtió en nosotros. Ellos tuvieron todo... they were white(r), they looked good, they dressed good. And we were black from Panama City. People were like, ‘This image looks beautiful, and this image looks mas o menos; let me go with the white(r) guys,’ and that’s what happened.” (Cepeda, March 2018, para 21)

The insights made by this researcher in this project are multifaceted. A primary discovery in this first look at the connection between reggaetón and Panama is that the people, the Afro-Panamanian people, the ancestors of the Caribbean workers who constructed the canal, state that the music is part of who they are. It feels as though the artists and producers, especially Michael Ellis, want to stake the music as a Panamanian contribution to a global music community. Another insight is the deeper applications and influence of music in general and how it chronicles our lives. In an interview with luthier, musician, and film-maker, Denny Rauen, music was revealed to have parallel significance as it did in the Panama Canal. Music can represent survival, continuity, and love:

I had a terrible childhood and for some strange reason music was something that cared about me as much as I cared about it. If I worked hard I was rewarded with feeling the incredible energy and power of creating my own sound. No one yelling at me, no beating, no judgement. (Rauen, 2018, Interview)

Rauen, who considers himself a life-long activist, recently has been touring with his short film, *Standing Rock, Take Me From the River* (Rauen & Bootzin, 2017). His film documentary follows Milwaukee citizens as they travel to the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and join in the protest to protect the water against a Dakota Access Pipeline which the Native tribe verifies would violate the Fort Laramie Treaty. Just as in the struggle for identity and origin, this film questions, whose land is this and why is water sacred to some peoples and seemingly irrelevant to others. Rauen reminds us that even when there is nothing else, there is music and unification through cause.

In this light, this study exposes the need for a more expansive questioning of race and power as it played out in the Panama Canal Zone. In societies where there is limited racial diversity, there is no distinction of people by race. If classification is used, the categories tend to be class, gender, and/or religion. Colonization, by its very definition, creates racial categories.

Colonization inherently accepts that racial differences do exist and that concept infiltrates into every aspect of human culture in nations that have been affected by colonialism. Narratives of people deserve to be acknowledged. However, race is now being viewed more and more as a social construct. Dr. David Gilbert explores this in an interview:

racial categories are myths, cultural ownership by race is a myth. Everyone is borrowing from everybody all the time, but we subscribe, ascribe racial meaning to sounds, and culture, and it's a myth, but we buy into it. That's what ideology is; we confuse the socially constructive nature of things with nature. Elvis shocked people because race isn't just a myth, but a myth we believe in. (Gilbert, 2018, Interview)

It is illustrative that so many philosophies advocate for the claiming and re-claiming of identity while others strip down identity to myth. One of the most profound outcomes of this

inquiry is the conclusion that the music of reggaetón reflects the struggles, experiences and essence of Afro-Panamanian people. While this may not be the only outcome; it is a significant one. This genre of music has changed through time, locales, and contexts. As the genre traveled through space, time, and different cultures, it has adapted to new locales. To be fair, I would now consider reggaetón to be an Afro-Panamanian-Puerto Rico musical movement. The genre of reggaetón grew from the Afro-Panamanian genre reggae en Español which itself grew from reggae music translated into Spanish. The first fusion of African and Latino music came in the eras discussed in this research. Latino American Studies scholar, Sonia Watson, distinguishes the roots and transformation of the music style of reggaetón:

Panamanian artists view reggae en Español as a distinct genre that gave rise to the international phenomenon of reggaetón. For them, reggae en Español's identity is rooted in the West Indian communities of the Canal Zone, Colón, and Panama City... As Nwankwo notes, "Panama was actually the first Latin American country to produce and popularize Jamaican reggae rhythms with Spanish lyrics . . . Reggae en Español's hybrid nature speaks to the nation's Caribbean heritage and the well-known cultural and political influence of West Indian immigrants and their descendants. Artists such as El General, Renato, Nando Boom, El Maleante, and Chicho Man took Jamaican dancehall songs and beats and infused them with Spanish lyrics during the late seventies and early eighties. This style came to be known in Panama as reggae en Español, literally reggae music with Spanish lyrics. West Indian, El General, along with his contemporary, Renato, paved the way for reggae en Español by playing for private parties.... Reggae en Español [reggae in Spanish] is a hybrid cultural and musical form that blends elements of Jamaican dancehall and reggae. Panama gave birth to reggae en Español in the late 1970s in the

urban West Indian barrios of Río Abajo and Parque Lefevre in the capital city of Panama. As a product of West Indian migration from the Anglophone Caribbean and Central America, Panamanian reggae in Spanish evinces racial, cultural, and linguistic hybridity resulting from on-going processes of transculturation. As a hybrid cultural discourse, reggae en Español pulls from various geographic areas (Africa, Caribbean, Panama) and musical genres (Jamaican dancehall and reggae). It is a prime example of cultural identity and difference, which reflects the multiplicity of the African diaspora experience. The lyrics of first generation Panamanian reggaesero Leonardo “Renato” Aulder convey the effect of hybridity and transculturation and aid in the reinterpretation of Panamanian national identity. (Watson, 2016, p. 1)

That national identity was clearly expressed to me by reggaetón producer and friend, Michael Ellis. We stayed in touch from the time we met until the time he died, having many conversations over the next two and a half decades about everything, including reggaetón, its role in Panamanian identity, and my role in recording it. Ellis seemed to believe that many people lose their way in music. Music was part of his make-up, as he explained, while claiming the creation of both the Spanish reggae movement and the word “reggaetón”:

It all began back in the 1970s, back home in Panama, when I first began translating reggae to Spanish with some folks Renato, Ricky, myself, Narro...in the Youth Corp in Panama when we were kids. I busted into New York when I got into music (with a Spanish product into an English market like tropical salsa, it’s a tropical thing... (I) began Spanish Reggae, not a music, a movement of Spanish reggae music. I created the word, reggaetón, giving voice to Latino communities in ma mainstream market, created a new sound, new voice, a movement. I went to Puerto Rico with the product to teach kids

beats, street stuff, marketing; we took it to the street, radio, and clubs. (There were) changes, division, break up in the movement. It's the same thing as hip-hop, strongest movement, they tried to kill it because it gives power to people like us; the poor, minority, Spanish, African. They try and kill it; lock you up, stifle you, hang you, divide and conquer. This movement had diversity, included everybody, between genders and race and it had affect. They don't want you to have power or to form alliance. They want to control you, they dictate, you follow. Politics, social more, music, this is a revolution. (Ellis, Interview, 2014)

Ellis, after dropping out of UCLA, got into the music business, eventually shared his passion for reggae in Spanish with his business partner, Israeli David Uriel. From their New Creations record label, named after Michael's son Kazey, they were the first to produce reggaetón. The following year, New Creations was the first record label to bring reggaetón to Puerto Rico, producing the songs: "Yo Quiero Un Amor" by El Profeta, (Oscar Jemmoth), "Ingles y Español" by Owie Irie, "Te Vez Buena" and "Tu Pum Pum" by El General, and "Hombre Murio" by Killer Ranks. Ellis was disappointed in some of the adaptations that occurred to the genre in Puerto Rico; adaptations that he considered offensive. However, there are controversies over some of the content of early Panamanian reggaetón as well.

Contemporary reggaetón has received resistance from different groups due to its explicit lyrics and dance styles and its reputation of representing the street life of Afro-Caribbean and Hispanic Latino youth. In some places, restrictions have been placed on reggaetón music.

According to *Atlantic* contributor David Wagner, the music has been banned in Cuba for:

aggressive, sexually obscene lyrics, which portray women as grotesque sexual objects . .

. The Cuban Music Institute's, Orlando Vistel Columbié, says the government will stamp

out any music that runs against the country's revolutionary culture. "We are not just talking about reggaetón," Vistel said in an interview with the party-owned newspaper *Gran ma*. "But it is, also, true that reggaetón is the most notorious... Radio and television stations are being pressured to avoid programming reggaetón. "We are in the process of purging music catalogues with the aim of eradicating practices that, in their content, stray from the legitimacy of Cuban popular culture," says Vistel. He also fired a shot at the music's production values, just for kicks, calling it "the poorest quality music." (Wagner, 2012, p. 1)

In Puerto Rico, reggaetón music has occasionally been blacklisted and censored. On the island, there have been bans on playing reggaetón on the radio and boycotts of the recordings. Often, objections are due to the content being considered inappropriate. Authorities have called out reggaetón for its sexually explicit and anti-authoritarian lyrics. These controversial themes caused trepidation in 1977 in Panama as well. The Panamanian dictator, Manuel Noriega, banned the playing of the reggaetón, saying that the producers of the music had "problems with the government" ("Puerto Rico", 2006, p. 1). That was the first time that any music had been banned in Panama. However, most reggaetón music was light-hearted dance music and was still listened to in underground and street culture until the ban was eventually lifted. Today, the genre is heralded as a national anthem in Panama and is played without bans or censorship.

When cultures merged and created new musical genres, as they did in the canal zone, documentation of those changes can be spotty at best. As researchers, we try and pick up historical clues and follow the trail back through time. Ultimately, the history of the building of the Panama Canal can be viewed through more than one single lens. There are many layers to history. Historical writer, David McCullough, writes:

The creation of the Panama Canal was far more than a vast, unprecedented feat of engineering. It was a profoundly important historic event and a sweeping human drama not unlike that of war. Apart from wars, it represented the largest, most costly single effort ever before mounted anywhere on earth. It held the world's attention over a span of forty years. It affected the lives of tens of thousands of people at every level of society and of virtually every race and nationality. Great reputations were made and destroyed. For numbers of men and women it was the adventure of a lifetime. (McCullough, 2000, p. 11)

President Carter and de facto Panamanian dictator Omar Torrijos signed the Torrijos Carter Treaty in 1977. Ratified by the U.S. Congress in 1978, the treaty articulated a process in which the U.S. could withdraw from Panama, giving control of the Panama Canal to the Panamanian government for the first time by the year 2000. Though many scholars agree that reggaetón's roots are in Panama, the details remain under investigated. Perhaps, like the return of control of the canal to Panama, it is time to give credit where credit is due. Music writer, Christopher Twickel explains:

While reggaetón booms in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, the only Latin American country in which there is a real tradition of reggae is Panama. It is there that the pioneers of reggae en Español live, there that the most serious reggae radio stations are found, there that reggae is improvised on rickety buses, and there that Marcus Garvey found enlightenment on the canal. In short, Panama is the forgotten republic of reggae. (Twickel, 2009, p. 1)

The region that constituted the Panama Canal Zone has been ruled by a number of governments over the last two centuries, including Columbia, France, the U.S. and, since 2000,

Panama. The shipping route between oceans is renowned as an engineering legacy and modern world wonder. Another legacy of the Canal Zone was the birth of the reggaetón musical genre. The last time I saw Michael alive he danced with me in the hallway outside his bedroom to the music of Panama and in that visit, said this:

All of the people, they want glamour . . . but you, Lisa, you were there, with the kids. I stay behind the scenes, mommy. You can live when you are not worried about getting there first. This story is about people; it's about us; it's about humanity; it's about sanity, being righteous, being true, having integrity, having love, all people, no hatred, no sickness--the way God created us. It was perfect and I'm looking forward to that- to dying. But while we are here, we are here to serve. I try to keep it humble and simple. I am coming forward with this now because you need this story. I had a dream about you. You were looking, but you couldn't find. You have to understand this yourself. When I go, I want to leave you with something. I didn't want to write a book, but with you writing this dissertation, you are uncovering the truth and piecing together the story. Jehovah is blessing me, I am ready. When you are done, we will take it to the next level from the University to the people. We are going to tell the truth and let the people involved tell the truth. This music is a movement. It was a birth. I want to acknowledge the people who were there. We were poor and black and we made this movement off a dime- off faith and passion and determination. The people say things about black women and black people, I understand Black Nationalism, but you are one of us. You have a family you haven't even met yet, Lisa. (Ellis, 2014, Interview)

Work deserves to be acknowledged and those musicians involved in the creation of reggaetón also deserve credit. This paper examined the connection between the Panama Canal

Zone and reggaetón music through both cultural as well as primary and secondary historical documents. With a foundation in Grounded Theory, it attempted to piece together the links between the African diaspora in the West Indies, the isthmus of Panama, with a focus on the United States control and construction of the Canal and the reggaetón musical movement. What is problematic about research into music and musical history, and what challenges its validity, is the fact that it is formative. Further insight into musical phenomenon can be investigated by exploring history and social contexts. Many places in the world have embraced and adapted reggaetón music, especially in Latino communities.

While laborers strove to avoid the dangers inherent in the construction of building the Panama Canal, including disease and accidents, their hard work left behind a legend and a legacy. Reggaetón is an anthem of the Afro-Panamanian people, a national treasure, and a gift to themselves and to the world. As well, the ancestors of the Panama Canal laborers have contributed in the creation of reggaetón music. The study of the people, ancestors, and artistic movements of colonized peoples may be a form of reparation. This work attempts to honor the mutuality of Panama and reggaetón music and is written in remembrance of Mr. Michael Ellis. It was he who first instilled in me a love of Panama, its people, the canal, and its unique music styles.

While the Panama Canal Zone may have been the birth place of the first musical styles antecedent to the development of reggaetón, Puerto Rico made the music accessible to a global audience. The two variations of the music are interconnected and as reggaetón artist, Renato, claims, “Puerto Rican reggaetón is a manifestation of Panama’s reggaetón” (Rivera et al, 2009, p. 89). Also, a product of this time was the “Panama hat.” On his way to visit the Panama Canal Zone, President Theodore Roosevelt stopped in Ecuador. While in there, he purchased a woven

hat in which he was extensively photographed while overseeing the Panama Canal operations. This is what made the 'Panama Hat' famous, even though the hat's origin was Ecuador, not Panama. The story is an ironic parallel to the story of the reggaetón movement, now generally considered a Puerto Rican genre, but with its actual origins in Panama. Ellis explained that when he arrived in Puerto Rico with reggaetón music, it was an instant hit (Ellis, Interview, 2018). Puerto Rico, like Panama, claims the music as a part of their national identity. Scholars Frances Negro-Muntener and Rachel Rivera discovered that:

For many young Puerto Ricans, reggaetón is today what salsa used to be years ago: a “national” soundtrack and the culture’s international musical representative. Yet the genre was initially condemned in the mainstream and subject to hearings in the Puerto Rican senate. What accounts for this shift? In a nutshell: commercial success, achieved in the most unexpected of ways. (Negron-Muntaner et al, 2007, p. 1)

And while the debate goes back and forth between Panama to Puerto Rico in regards to the “ownership” of reggaetón music, parallels exist between the two cultures in the contexts of colonialism, diaspora, and societal/cultural fusion. Cultural outcomes of that systematically segregated, racially-divided history may go beyond national borders and extend to entire regions of the Americas. Author of *Harvest of Empire, A History of Latinos in America*, Juan Gonzalez, contemplates:

Unfortunately, whether the myth making comes from Bible Belt conservatives or liberal historians, it suffers from the same flaw- a refusal to recognize that the quest for empire, fueled by the racialist theory of Manifest Destiny, divided and deformed the course of ethnic relations from our nation’s inception, fragmenting and subverting any quest for one “national language” and “national culture. (Gonzalez, 2011, p. 226)

Afro-Caribbean-Latino people have spread to communities around the world today, and with it, reflection on Pan-Africanism. Nigel Stewart started the Centre of Pan-African Thought in 2015 in London, England. He was inspired by his own awakening with the birth of his son after: the years of struggle for identity and decolonising; I asked myself who would be responsible if he grew up and had the same experience as I did. After his birth, I made the vow to build Europe's flagship black owned learning and development institution, for him and other African and African Caribbean's of his and future generations. You may be familiar with the Malcolm X quote, "only a fool would let the enemy teach his children." We (The African Diaspora) cannot continue to rely on Europeans to decolonise their curriculums and education systems before we reclaim our cultural memory and road map. We must be proactive in re-creating our own spaces for personal and community development, even if it's just supplementary . . . A Pan African Centre of learning in every continent, at the heart of every African community, that is an ultimate dream. (Stewart, 2018, Interview)

Ultimately, as Dr. David Gilbert defines, "music is an unequivocal, non-detachable expression of one's identity, because music is the architype of culture . . . spirit is in the music, and music represents or becomes part of the culture that shapes your identity" (2018, Interview). Music is an incredible phenomenon that can travel and infiltrate anywhere. However, as music gains popularity, the music industry is always ready to monetize that popularity. That monetization offers the music to a global market and takes the music off the streets and into the mainstream. As Nigel Stewart contemplates:

Reggaetón is an emergent genre from South America that hangs on the fringes of the European club scene . . . that demonstrates how communities can find new forms of

expression and create new cultures. If we observe its evolutionary process It tells us how we can move beyond the confines of the oppressive cultural structures we live in as Africans (the music) start(s) in the margins, start at the grass roots of oppressed or marginalised people become popularised for its deviant freshness and rebellion. It then becomes a type of social capital or social currency for those people. It also becomes fashionable in its ability to offer an alternative from the mainstream, that is until capitalism (i.e. record labels) commercialises and exploits, monetises and (mis) appropriates. This kind of cultural wave cycles are evident to cultural theorists but not so much to the layman. (Stewart, 2018, Interview)

Michael Ellis was determined to include the contribution of Afro-Panamanians in the explanation of how reggaetón music emerged into the multi-cultural and widespread musical expression that exists today. He seemed to be a legend before his time and now, like so much of reggaetón's history, he is buried. He urged me to do this research topic and chose a book cover for me long before I finished. Before he died, he explained:

Lisa, I let out this photograph a while back of the cover of the book.... After I released this, I had a half of a dozen universities calling me up, asking me who Dr. Lisa Spencer is, that's you.... You already got it, baby! Them university people want the truth. All the people really are wanting truth. Jah! I love making music, just silly mommy, fun, ya know, sometimes with hidden ideas. This is just the beginning for you. The university's gonna give you your Ph.D. and I want the world to know that you were the one I trusted, you and my son. I trusted you with the story of reggaetón. (Ellis, 2014, Interview)

The last time I spoke to Michael we were driving in the car. He was writing a song about me. I mocked him playfully, *Lisa, fresca, como la brisa*, translated as “Lisa fresh, like the

breeze.” He continued, “Lisa, I am a walking dead man. I fear no animal, no government” (Ellis, 2014, Interview).

While the seeds to the development of Reggaetón were planted with the arrival of disparate immigrants to Panama, the genre began to take shape when lyrics from Jamaican reggae songs were translated from English to Spanish. Today, reggaetón continues to grow in creativity and fusion throughout Latino communities worldwide. And in a new era of division with the present U.S. administration advocating for the building of a wall between the U.S. and Mexico, it is a good time to continue the work to highlight cooperation, and cause and effect.

As Juan Gonzalez, a journalist and co-host of the award-winning daily radio and television news program, Democracy Now! articulates:

If Latin America had not been pillaged by the U.S. capital since its independence, millions of desperate workers would not now be coming here in such numbers to reclaim a share of that wealth; and if the United States is today the world’s richest nation, it is in part because of the sweat and blood of copper workers of Chile, the tin miners of Bolivia, the fruit workers of Venezuela and Mexico, the pharmaceutical workers of Puerto Rico, the ranch hands of Costa Rica and Argentina, the West Indians who died building the Panama Canal, and the Panamanians who maintained it. (Gonzalez, 2011, xxiii)

Finally, how will music continue to effect humanity? Artist, Saul Williams, contemplates this poetically in his book, *The Dead Emcee Scrolls*:

Can music change the world? . . . Can the music of a society, help mold its mental state? Can a great song affect more than the way, a musician approaches his next song? How about the way they approach their children, their loved ones, their lives...? These are the ways, of a carpenter. (Williams, 2006, pp. 152-153)

Brian Ritchie, international, Japanese bamboo flute player and renowned bass player from the folk punk band, Violent Femmes, addresses social issues, often as the roots of folk music does. He plays and works with:

marginalised people. For example, I spend a few weeks or a month every year mentoring Aboriginal musicians in the Australian desert, or sometimes in urban areas. Or play music with Down's Syndrome kids. I also curate Mona Foma, which is an incredible multi-media arts festival in Tasmania. In that role I program a great variety of artists, many of whom come from underrepresented groups or parts of the world. We make significant efforts for example to program female artists at a rate much higher than the norm. But we don't talk about it much. We just do it. (2018, Interview)

The roots of reggaetón music connect to Afro-Caribbean-Panamanian identity. Ancestors were immigrant populations of the Pan-Caribbean workforce in Panama. These populations, largely gathered in the U.S. occupied Panama Canal Zone, created many cultural amalgamations, including music, that created the environment for the eventual rise of the big reggaetón music movement. Dave Lührssen, Managing Editor of the weekly entertainment publication, Shephard Express, lecturer, and author, explores the value in understanding the history of music:

Without roots nothing can grow. We can't understand music—or much of anything else—unless we understand the roots. However, we can enjoy music without knowing where it came from, and we can derive meaning from it without knowing where it came from, but we intellectualize on it at our peril if we don't understand the origins. Knowing the roots gives us additional levels of appreciation. But we need to be aware that new and unexpected fruit can grow from the roots of human endeavor, and we shouldn't be closed to that. (Interview, 2018)

Ultimately, who is anyone to tell a people that something does not belong to them, yet it has been done since history. This land is not your land. These Goddesses and Gods are no longer yours. This land is now ours and this is your new language and God. This was the colonial culture that yielded its power to create more, while deculturalizing, displacing, and oppressing other cultures in the track of its quest for empire. While history is fixed, the way we look at it is not. In fact, in contemporary terms, many feminist scholars use the word herstory. And today, herstory is being reexamined. While we can not change the past, we can apply new perspective on it, a deeper one that can reflect possibilities for a more equitable future. This is inherent in the vision of democracy. Why can power not be mutual? What is the threat of mutual power versus oppression? Is today's world perpetuating colonial mindset? In 1926, after the U.S. completion of the canal and while in the heyday of its control of the region, law 13 was passed there. This law prohibited *non Spanish-speaking* blacks from entering the country of Panama (Watson, 2014). For something to be so oppressed, its power must be feared. Is that why non-white people, non-male people, non-Western, non-Christian peoples have been persecuted. What does our power look like? Who are we in the context, not of colonial construct, but in wider, deeper reflections. Panama is a melting pot with a dembow beat and unique story that continues to unfold. Reggaetón is one of its stories of history and identity and it wants to come home.

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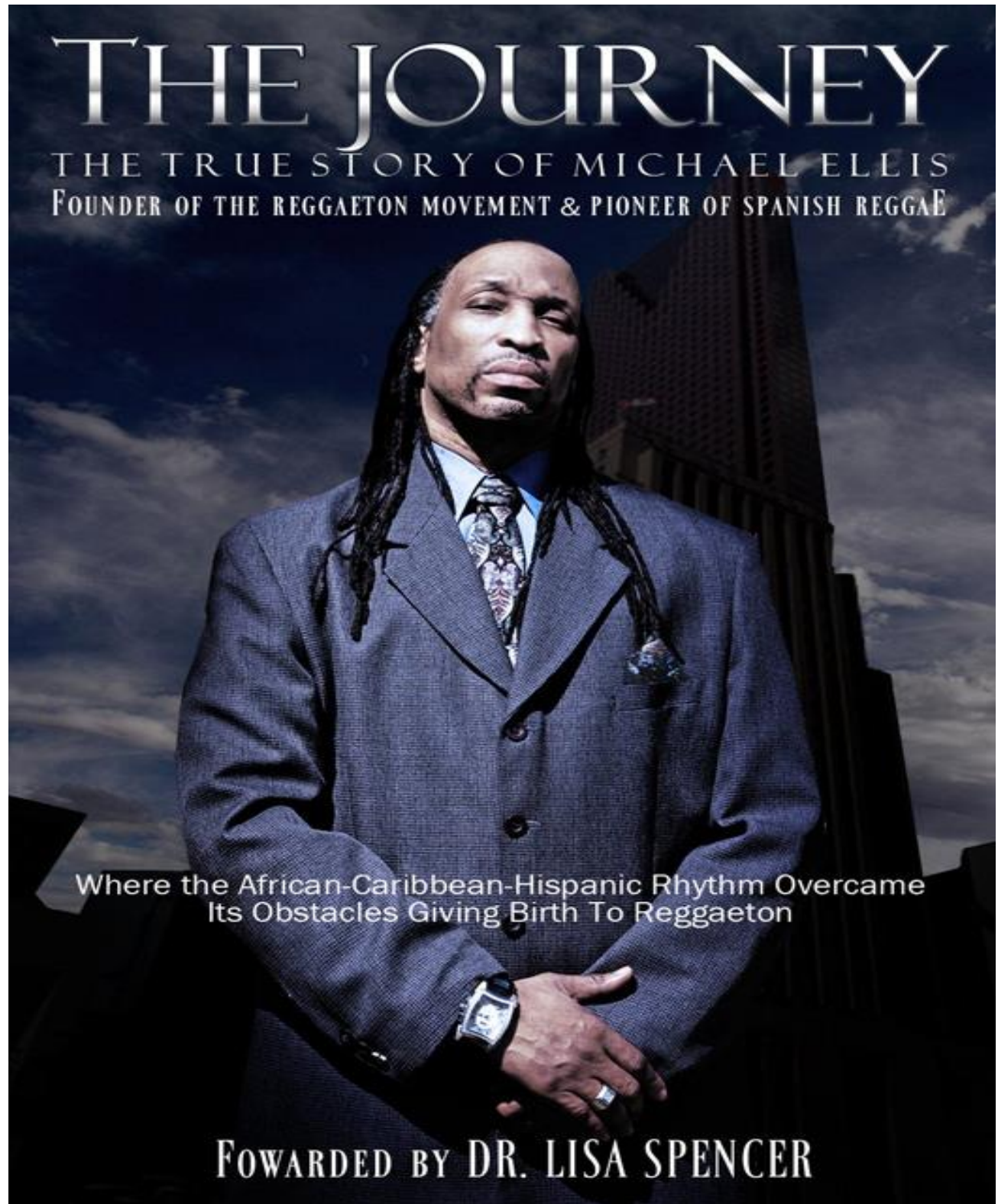
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Appendix A- The Journey Cover by Michael Ellis



Appendix B- Supplemental Songs- collaborations with interviewees

Paradises- by Ilysa Spencer (vocals/ rhythm guitar) harmony- Heidi Spencer
recorded at Fire Hole Studios, mixed at DV productions
electric guitar- Christy Eager
percussion- River Guergerian

Diamonds in Your Eyes- by Ilysa Spencer (vocals/ rhythm guitar)
recorded and mixed at DV Productions
flute- Brian Ritchie
electric guitar & piano- David Vartinian

Wind Blow- written & performed by Ilysa Spencer
opening, mixed & produced by Michael Ellis, beat by K. Ellis, featuring D. Jones

Canary- dedicated to Leonard Peltier by Ilysa Spencer (vocals/ rhythm guitar)
recorded & mixed at DV Productions
keyboards and tom-toms- David Vartinian
shakuhachi flute- Brian Ritchie
percussion: congas- George Jones, shakers- Scott Johnson

Can't Steal Thunder- written & produced by Masud Asante, vocals by Ilysa
recorded by Masud Asante (Dead Prez) and mixed at DV Productions

Ride Darkness- by Ilysa Spencer (vocals/ rhythm guitar)
recorded & mixed at DV Productions
slide guitar- Allen Coté
percussion- Paul Mattox

Storm Ride by Ilysa Spencer (vocals/ rhythm guitar) for T. Kelly
recorded & mixed at DV Productions, rhythm guitar recorded at Frogville Studios
piano- Dave Vartanian
slide guitar-Allen Coté
percussion & back vocals- Paul Mattox

Higher Place- written, performed, & produced by LIVITI (unmastered)
Bridge by Ilysa, harmony by Naya Spencer recorded at Marshall Sound Studios
background vocals by Tiffany Clarke & Ilysa Spencer

Red Hen- by Ilysa Spencer (vocals/ rhythm guitar) harmony by Heidi Spencer
slide guitar- Allen Coté
percussion- Paul Mattox
upright bass- John Price

Appendix C- Internship Letter

UrbAn Anthropology Inc.

707 W. Lincoln Ave.

MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN 53215

Phone (414) 271-9417 Fax (414) 271-9417 JFLanthropologist@sbcglobal.net www.urban-anthropology.com

March 25, 2012

To Whom It May Concern:

Ilysa Spencer served at internship under my direction for two semesters in 2008. During that time she completed a series of life stories of children who had been homeless. She also used her fine videotaping skills and helped us film a documentary on homelessness. Ilysa completed the internship perfectly. Everything was done on time and was exceptional quality.

Since that time, Ilysa has remained closely tied to UrbAn Anthropology, Inc. She has served on several committees to help plan and implement community events. I have been impressed with her persistence and dependability. She has also written press releases for us.

I would surely recommend Ilysa Spencer in the future. If we had funds, we would hire her.

Feel free to contact me in the future for more information.

Sincerely,



Jill Florence Lackey, PhD

Principal Investigator

Appendix D- Interview

Masud Asante

Via Email, 01/24/19

Q: Does "black music" exist? Explain your answer.

A: The term “Black” has vast perceptions attached to it. In “my” experience, there are certain aspects of the “black experience” or “my black experience” that are definitely unique to those individuals and cultures of those individuals moreover. Those realities are exercised in everything, including music. But again, that term “Black” is very perceptive and not to be generalized in the quest for accuracy.

Q: Reggaetón is considered a Latino music genre originating from Puerto Rico. Why does it matter that it may have stemmed from Panama? Why does it matter that reggaetón may be an Afro-Caribbean-Latino music genre? (This is not to say other locales did not have an incredible and progressive effect on the music and its movement into a global genre, but this is a matter of not as much origins, as identity.)

A: I know that reggaetón is very popular in Puerto Rico. The African roots of the rhythms are indigenous throughout the diaspora, which includes Puerto Rico, Panama, Cuba and more... Puerto Rico currently may have more commercially popular artists and surely that has a lot to do with the ideas of Puerto Rico’s connection and potential rankings in that sonic movement/culture.

Q: How does hip hop continue to evolve in a social context and as an artist what potential does it still have to evolve and how are you involved in that?

A: Hip-hop will continue to evolve in the social context as many artists strive to embrace the everyday transparencies of their lives. The potentials are endless, as the

creative energy is as easy to express than ever before in major markets. The technological advancements of the World Wide Web create tremendous avenues for artist to share their expressions. I'm taking full advantage of these realities to add my own piece to the global puzzle of creativity.

Appendix E- Interview

Michael Ellis

5/30/14, Columbia, N.C. (His son Kazey was home, but not present for the interview.)

Q: How were you inspired to work in music and your musical background.

A: Back in Panama as a kid I was in a Youth Corp. We actually competed with Michael Jackson, I'm not kidding. After I saw him perform with his brothers and sisters decided to pursue basketball instead. I came to the U.S. on a basketball scholarship for UCLA. I had to leave that due to some personal stuff that happened. I will tell you about it, but I don't want it on the record.

Q: Specially, talk to me about the beginning of reggaetón, in your perspective.

A: It all began back in the 1970's, back home in Panama, when I first began translating reggae Spanish with some folks Renato, Ricky, myself, Narro . . . in the Youth Corp in Panama when we were kids. I busted into New York when I got into music (with a) Spanish product into an English market like tropical salsa, it's a tropical thing . . . (I) began Spanish Reggae, not a music, a movement of Spanish reggae music. I created the word, reggaetón, giving voice to Latino communities in ma mainstream market, created a new sound, new voice, a movement. I went to Puerto Rico with the product to teach kids beats, street stuff, marketing; we took it to the street, radio, and clubs. (There were) changes, division, break up in the movement. It's the same thing as hip-hop, strongest movement, they tried to kill it because it gives power to people like us; the poor, minority, Spanish, African. They try and kill it; lock you up, stifle you, hang you, divide and conquer. This movement had diversity, included everybody, between genders and race and it had affect. They don't want you to have power or to form alliance. They want to control you, they dictate, you follow. Politics, social more, music, this is a revolution.

Q: What about reggaetón in Puerto Rico? Is that connected to you or Panama?

A: I brought the music to Puerto Rico! I promoted it to all the clubs. That's how reggaetón music began there and it was an instant hit.

Q: How did you get back into music as an adult then if you left it for basketball?

A: After basketball, which I was on a soda commercial, mommy, can you believe it! I got into music and when my son was born I had to get serious. You saw my label when you came to New York City. I called it New Creations after my son. I had a stork carrying him on the business card! Everything fell through fast though because of some bullshit. There's nothing like the moment that people feel they don't need you anymore, mommy.

Q: Why did you want me to write about reggaetón?

A: Lisa, I am a walking dead man. I fear no animal, no government. I fear Jehovah. The information out there is bull crap. You know the truth, (about reggaetón) mommy, you were there. This story is about people; it's about us; it's about humanity; it's about sanity, being righteous, being true, having integrity, having love, all people, no hatred, no sickness- the way God created us. It was perfect and I'm looking forward to that- to dying. But while we are here, we are here to serve. I try to keep it humble and simple. I am coming forward with the story of reggaetón now because you need this story. I had a dream about you. You were looking, but you couldn't find. You have to understand this yourself. When I go, I want to leave you with something. I didn't want to write a book, but with you writing this dissertation, you are uncovering the truth and piecing together the story. We are being blessed, we must be ready. When you are done, we will take it to the next level from the University to the people. We are going to tell the truth and let the history tell the truth. This music is a movement. It was a birth. I

want to acknowledge. We were poor and black and we made this movement off a dime-off faith and passion and determination. We are Panamanian. The people say things about black women and black people, I understand Black Nationalism, but you are one of us. You have a family you haven't even met yet.

Q: Why did you release that photograph as the cover of a book that has not yet been written, claiming that I was a Doctor already?

A: Lisa, I let out this photograph awhile back of the cover of the book After I released this, I had a half of a dozen universities calling me up, asking me who Dr. Lisa Spencer is, that's you You already got it, baby! The university people want the truth. All the people really are wanting truth. Jah! I love making music, just silly mommy, fun, ya know, sometimes with hidden ideas. This is just the beginning for you. The university's gonna give you your Ph.D. and I want the world to know that you were the one I trusted, you and my son. I trusted you with the story of Reggaetón.

Appendix F- Interview

Paul Gaeta

Via Email 05/15/18 & 11/24/18

Q: How were you inspired to work in music. Please explain your musical background and how you see yourself as a musician.

A: I got a late start. It wasn't until college that I realized my adult life would be spent in the pursuit of producing music. In college, I spent a lot of time "freestyling" and quickly realized I brought a certain energy to these improv jams in front of our school. There was a fleeting moment of stillness that could be accessed only when I was 100 per cent full present, musically. Time freezes and a deep connection to the eternal is felt. It took about 12 years to actually make a living in the music industry. If I was more inclined to tour rigorously, perhaps I'd put it all on the line and try to make money playing live shows, but I'm not built for it.

Q: Do you use music as a way to express things that have happened to you in your life? If so, can you give anecdotes, or stories about these instances? Does any of your music address or imply social issues? If so please explain.

A: When I first started rapping, it was very personal and involved storytelling, but as I became more interested in music production and composition I moved towards instrumental music that was open to interpretation. There's less of an overt message. I guess it depends on the song too, as I try to listen to what the song needs and wants to convey, however abstract. I do think music is a great way to keep stories alive and to spread their lessons. At the same time, the best lyrics tend to be both incredibly personal and also open to interpretation. Just the right amount of imagery and the

listener can fill in the gaps. That tends to be a great approach to songwriting.

Q: Have you heard of the music genre reggaetón? If so, please talk about this form, including your thoughts and feelings about it. Do you have deeper connections to this music or have you met musicians who may have been worked in this genre? What are distinctions you notice between reggaetón expressions from different locales?

A: I don't know much about this genre. Really, home base for me was the music I fell in love with in High School. East Coast Hip Hop was my favorite. When I think of reggaetón I think of hi energy electronic reggae.

Appendix G- Interview

Dr. David Gilbert

5/17/18

Q: How were you inspired to work in music? Please explain your musical background and how you see yourself as a musician.

A: Music is as you know the best thing in the world. Like Zappa, music makes it all worthwhile. I got into Frank Zappa and inspiring artists at a young age. My best friend in the world, Kyle, plays Irish music. He's in Alaska right now. My childhood friend Roger best guitar teacher in the world. He taught Kyle and I music theory by the time we were 14, 15 years old. He would teach us exactly what was going on but never teach us make up your own solo, the love of your own improv. He's still alive and still teaching. He introduced us to Muddy Waters . . . I played music all through high school all through college. I've just been playing with my friends and people I meet ever since. My dad played guitar growing up. My dad was in a band called the Mystics in Northeast Louisiana in the 1960's so it was really me telling my mom I wanted to play guitar and her first response was you just want to do it because Kyle wants to do it. We were new friends we met in 7th grade. She totally didn't buy it, she thought it was a phase that I was copying my friend so she tells that story on herself because she's got a stack of Kyle's CDs, and a stack of my CDs. She loves music. We all want my nephews to play music. She got really supportive quickly, but she wasn't initially supportive it was my dad was very supportive right away and bought me a

guitar right away and we went out and we out and bought a guitar 90 dollar off brand Stratocaster I traded in for my red Ibanez guitar that I played for years and years and years. Freshman year I got my first real guitar. I have 8 guitars now. My dad was from NE Louisiana and was a sociologist, his sister was a life term teacher at Elkhorn, a historically black college in the Mississippi delta . . . music has always been really important to me . . . While living in Madrid in 1996 I got two books sent to me from America for my 21st birthday, one from dad, Frank Kofsky's, John Coltrane and the Revolution in Jazz or Black Music, the title's changed since he rewrote in the 1990's. The trio that Kyle and I had in middle school which eventually became a six-piece band, my band in Madison, WI was embarrassingly enough, Soul Tavern. We didn't drink. We didn't know anything about soul, period . . . My childhood friend pianist and he sent me Ralph Ellison's invisible man, so it was like this thing, I was living abroad realizing what America was. I was studying America history, tripping on all the things young people trip on . . . so I got one of the best black novels ever written and a history book that did music and politics in a way I didn't know was possible. I think there are musicians who think mathematically . . . and others who think more historically, almost, liberal arts, humanities stuff.

Q: I guess, how does music tell stories in your life or as a scholar or historian, how would you describe music telling stories in documented music and media outlets that you have studied or witnessed?

A: Jenny Shineman did this amazing film found footage of N.C. small town daily people in the 1930s, like snippets, like three and five seconds of daily black and white N.C. during the G. Depression. She's a violinist. She brought N.C. fiddle soundtrack to this thing. How did she do that? How did she know how to make this beautiful sound to this history? She started singing about how the good ole days weren't so good for me. I'm just like, it's so anti-nostalgia, so anti-

sentimentality . . . I got a PhD so I could learn that. How does Jenny Shineman just know that historians should not be sentimental in fact Jim Crow is not shown in that movie at all, if you saw that movie you might think that b and w people were all equal and got along in NC in the 1930's, but she knows that and she somehow brings that out... a lot of the musicians I love have a deep sense of history . . . I think of myself as a historically minded musician... that I always loved seeing my music as a link in the chain of tradition, Ralph Ellison quote, that I've always loved the stories of Roger and Kyle, who now hangs out with Bela Fleck and Yo Yo Ma, the stories make music so rich. I love the sound of music, I love the complex harmony, and polyrhythms, African grooves, but what makes really meaningful for me are people and the stories behind the song and the sound . . . I had a sense of the history but I didn't connect it. It was being abroad and being given these books, subjectivity, thinking of yourself as a subject, existentially, thinking of how America makes you. So, that really tripped me out which I really loved. I lived the first semester in Austria and the second in Spain. There's this underbelly of existential crisis under the beauty, duende, that's the blues. Reading *The Invisible Man*, the introduction the man smokes a joint and puts on Louis Armstrong... battered and blue... and then Emerson talks about the slaves, very ahistorical, very artful and important, connecting Louis Armstrong with the slave spirituals . . . That time in Europe was the only time I danced at the Discotechs. I still call them that to be charming and to date myself. The only time I ever danced to disco techs were in Austria, the Czech Republic, and Spain, and when I went to Poland in 2003.

Q: Did you have any other influences that you worked with personally?

A: David Schmitz, a huge intellectual influence, he was a total jock and a jerk to me, but I knew how to knock on the doors of my professors. Bill Kronen the historian at

Madison called me an academic brat, he knew my dad, his father wrote the first book on Marcus Garvey, David Kronen. To teach people to multi-cultural pluralism, that our country has never been one thing, in fact, that's the genius of the founding fathers, not like we do because they were slave owning assholes, but they did create an ideal, which our nation hasn't lived up to, but the nation has always had pluralistic intentions and ideals. The way I think of this is comes from Ralph Ellison, his non-fiction essays. I do believe how the figures in my book believe America means multi-faceted things that need to be debated and changed over time and that academia is a way to teach this... I really do think that scholarship and critical thinking prepares people to introduce really important aspects of empathy, I would use that word, but you were the first person to use that in the interview, it speaks directly to what I think is important. My college band was Gravity Free, free music. We all had headphones instead of monitors, and so they moved to Fort Collins, 20 years ago I went on my first tour, but in Portland the band broke up and I was bummed, but I spent the summer in the Rockies with my grandparents . . .

Q: What's your favorite thing about music?

A: My favorite thing about music is communication . . . musical communication . . . I like playing the song and wrong, but it always has to be in the right context with what's going on. Jazz is a musical language for communication. I went to Chicago to become a better jazz musician . . . I went back to graduate school which did two things: Ron Radano introduced me to James Reese, the subject of my book and within three months of being back in Madison I had my old blues, string trio, Delta blues stuff, another free jazz band, and soon this amazing interracial band all US historians with

three black women all from the south who had never sang into a microphone and two white guys from Wisconsin. We all had a band, Blixxy, black dixy, all country music, feminist, hip hop, country music. We created a genre. We met at EMP Mopop music conference open to academics and musicians out in Seattle. What happened to me in Spain was happening to me again, I was older and more mature, all of sudden I had the James Reese Europe story, that became my book, and all the Civil rights, jazz and what into Craig Warner, I met Wayne Marshall was in that class. We were good friends for three semesters. I got my Master's in AA Studies and transitioned into history for my PhD in Madison. All of a sudden, I wasn't alienated, I was in my hometown, living with my parents, every night I'd come from Grad School and my dad would ask me, what did you learn today, my dad studies black land owners, farmers, that's what his entire sociology career was, he didn't turn me into a black Marxist, but he did. I'm creating new genres, mutually enforcing and simultaneously giving me a break, not just reading books, but taking a break which is music with my friends, what I love doing and am good at is adding to someone else's vision. Plank Eyed Peggy is this amazing Carnival band and at 43 years old I shred harder than I ever because that's what they need. So, Grad School and the book reinforces my love of music and performance but also by necessity almost need take measured breaks from things . . . symbiotic release . . . after tour I'll come back and read books because I need a break from rock tour.

Q: What are your musical goals?

A: Have you met Claude Coleman? He came here because of me and Maya. He is Ween's only drummer. I met Ween because of my best friend's girlfriend, Kyle's long

term girlfriend, my first girlfriend, Kyle stole my girlfriend in 8th grade and we got over it, Jess lives in Durango, one of my greatest friends, beautiful woman, traditional by all standards, and my best friend in college in Phoebe, if I don't count kissing Jess in 7th grade, these are the two most plutonic best straight up best friends that I met up at different points of my life and they both speak Nepali, they met in Chicago. My ideal would be to play music with Claude Coleman, what I would like in the new future is to play with more women, I don't play with enough women, especially right now, not just because of Donald Trump, for the last 5 or 6 years. I have really been loving Harless Bastards, one of my favorite rock bands ever is the Geraldine Fibbers from the 90's and that woman's voice is fucking amazing, I have not been able to perform and play and work with, Blixy aside and we played for years. For us it was such a break from history, we went through prelims together, defending before ABD, dissertation topic, we were so linked at the hip, all five of us. I want to open myself musically. I don't care what white guys think anymore. I think young women have much more to say right now. So, my vision is pretty realistic. So these two pretty girls, Jess and Phoebe, got us back stage to Ween in 2001 in Chicago and didn't really follow up but in 2003 all three of us became Ween heads for 3 shows and everyone wanted to hang out with the Dean Ween and Gene Ween, but I was hanging out with the bassist, Dave Drywist and Claude Coleman the drummer they were nice guys and we would like hang out and so saw Ween a lot for a few years, when Ween came to Madison a few months before I moved to NY to write and research my dis the first time I told Claude we're gonna be in NY do you wanna hang out, not just be your fan. Claude is the best rock drummer ever cool he's moving to town, he remembered that I

played guitar, so one of the top three events of my life was moving to NYC with enough money for six months to research James Reis Europe and live in Harlem to end up joining Claude's band, Amanda, which means power in Zulu, he's a political black man and Claude took me on a five week tour to San Diego where we opened up for Fishbone and paid me, I had never been really paid, this is 2006, I had known him as a fan for years. He's a soul musician. All the music I had played before was improvised. Claude is an amazing drummer, but he plays all the instruments, like Stevie Wonder, sings does everything amazingly well, but to be in his band, you can't improvise, you learn the guitar parts. So, I learned the discipline for the first time, where if it's not right, it's wrong. It was a cool new window, I never thought of music like that. It made me listen to the Beatles differently, I don't even like the Beach Boys, but I respect them so much more, Motown, I have a lot of respect, oh, I learned the parts of the song, the hook, the subtly of this little thing, Claude opened that doorway that I love. I stayed in NY for an entire year, Claude, he doubled the amount of month, I toured at least three times that year, I was in the band Amandala proper. We were a working band from 2007 to 2010 or 2011, he plays with lots of bands as a working drummer so it's hard for him to be a band leader. It's so good.

Before I had a teaching job I was finishing the book and I came to Asheville in 2012, Claude was finishing his third album, which I'm on, because he mostly does everything himself, there's a couple songs with other musicians because I was a part of this band that helped him write all this new material, that my number 1 priority was to get Claude to move to Asheville because I knew when Claude had his new Amandala cd and they went on tour that I was going to miss out. I want to be in on. He went to Austin, stayed with us, came back and

stayed with us for two weeks while he mixed the new record, Asheville is full of musicians and put your band together, we played the Mothlight, we had our own little Amandala, now that Claude is touring he has a new guitar player which makes me sad, but I need the Mars Hill gig, I need to do the things I doing, but the highest goal I have in my life is to be a successful touring Amandala with Claude Coleman leading the band as a guitar player, which is what he does in the band, everyone in the band loves each other and we're Sly and the Family Stone. All we need is some luck. I'd like to write another book, but back seat, and I don't want to be a professor. I've been so lucky. The most creative people I know are my neighbors. The connections I made in 2006 I've immersed myself in. I put people together. I introduce people from across my life and put them in context. I love my friends, I take friendship and communication very seriously. I love when people make music together, make dinner together. Music is one of the few things left in our culture. Pop maybe isn't what it could be but it's still fucking great. I haven't put much energy in promoting. One of the pitfalls of ebb and flow, it's not just one thing, but many things in my life are important to me, travel and lots of things I prioritize, not just one. It was unusual of me to pitch myself to Claude, but the payoff was so huge . . . the downfall of not aiming with more specificity at goals is that I haven't achieved a high level of musician ship, but it's the goal of artist to want to communicate and therefore want to be heard. It's always the balance of doing something for your own sake and wanting to accomplish things, while also hoping while accomplishing things the world sees or hears it, not the whole world, but some percentage. Our crowds need to be bigger.

Q: What about your book and can you tell me more about the musicians and genres you studied? You studied race and music as well, correct?

A: The musicians that I studied in my book are cool examples, one of the goals of writing

for me was to describe the impulses that shape artists, the context, social constructive nature, and ideologies that shape artists and the relationship of that dialectically to what artists do, they are creative . . . what does creativity mean as an artist... what does creativity mean to historians trying to study it or ethnomusicologists or theorists, philosophically, what is creativity? My answer is grounded in philosophy and grounded in race theory, but what I chose to do is write history so I try to tell the stories of these guys who are all about being at the right moment, there are all these things happening, the rise of Jim Crow, the first generation of blacks born into freedom after slavery, the rise of national consumer culture, markets, especially coming out of N.Y.C., the subtitle of my book is “The Birth of the Manhattan Musical Marketplace.” These musicians are right there, Claude’s record label is named after the guys in my book, the Hotel Marshall, Claude’s been talking about my book and named his record label, they are all hanging out in Hotel Marshall on 53rd street, they are all hanging out in NYC, they are hanging out in the America, so I tried to tell a story that really gets into all these contexts, these impulses, this social construction, but that also tells a story of what people be creative and express themselves and why do they choose certain notes over other notes, harmonies over other harmonies, my book is about rhythms, why did they use ragtime rhythms to denote blackness?

The first day of second semester Grad School, Ron played James Reese for me and I had never heard music like that and my term paper became my Master’s thesis became my dissertation became my book. For twelve years I tried to talk about the sounds of black rhythm both ideologically and creatively, why would you want to groove? Why do artist do what they do, there’s an inside and an outside answer to that. Modernity, the idea that we’re the end of

history, that things are changing quickly, we are modern people, people present themselves as modern, it's an abstraction, electric lights on Broadway, the guy who wrote the *Wizard of Oz* also invented the shop window, it's all the lights of Emerald City and the gold and ruby slippers, he made Broadway, Broadway, Frank Balm. Subways. Black music becomes the sound of NY, the sound of the nation, the sound of self-identified, modern white Americans. White modernity and black modernity are differently, but dialectally related. White people buy ragtime rhythms that resonate as blackness because they like it and makes them dance, but they also buy it because that music is "othering" those black performers, the primitive quality, the so-call primitive sound of syncopated ragtime make white people feel like they are modern and black people are old-fashioned. The irony, the fundamental aspect of my book is how much black musicians try to break outside of the box of primitivism and folk and race, they constantly put themselves in a box, the irony is that African American musicians by and large, not all, but the ones in NYC and the ones I study, they think of ragtime as the height of modernity, it's new, it's not slave spirituals, it's not DuBois's old idea of dressing up and Europeanizing black music. It's not from Africa or slavery, it's new and modern, these are the new sounds of, Ernest Hogan, 1896, "A new sound was created among the Negro people." Such a great, but also sad metaphor, just AA are leaving slavery behind, creating a new negroes, rejecting slavery, rejecting primitivism, rejecting the old shit, they're going to be American citizen, they're going to fit in, they are going to be equal, the more they do that, the more creative they are, white people, yes love it and dance to it, but part of why they love is due to the black people primitivizing themselves in the face of the white peoples' need for dialectical difference to modernity. It is the AA Ernest Hogan's song, "All Coons Look Alike to Me." And he sells a hundred thousand copies, generates the coon song craze, ragtime music with lyrics. These folks are really into

sexuality, but respectability, this is pre-blues. There should be a whole book about Aida Overton Walker known in 1914, later she does the Solame scarf dance, veil dance, she's not naked but you can see the shadow and her body, that was real risqué back then.

After slavery, the nation, not just the south needs to come up with new, not abstract, material, concrete ways, to distinguish black people from white people. You don't have the institution of slavery, you don't have the scar, you don't have the mostly powerlessness in the social and political realm of slavery, so you have to recreate that, and that's the era of Jim Crow. Jim Crow segregation. No voting, lynching culture, but was just as true in the north as the south, there just wasn't the same laws. Blacks can't go into most Broadway, they had to sit in the balcony in the peanut section, the peanut gallery. My argument, that no one else has made, although it's very similar to Ron Radano's argument at the end of his book, *Lying Up a Nation*, is that ragtime and black dance scene on Broadway, the cake walk, that music and culture, become the most powerful ways to distinguish black people from white people . . . James Reese Europe fights in WWI and the Harlem Hell fighters and plays jazz for the French, like who's more American than that guy. But when he comes back to America, he's a second-class citizen. And music even as it's transforming, and altering and doing beautiful stuff, it becomes one of the most powerful lenses of black musical difference which is why people study hip hop and jazz and what ethnomusicologists are really interested in is like why does this music do the work that it does and how does race play into it. I have the answer the answer is in my book.

The roots have to do how with America needs to racialize us and there's tons of ways and know most of them, Supreme Court decisions, Jim Crow, red lining and ghettoization, and voting and tons of answers, my answer is a music answer that celebrates black creativity and ingenuity. They can't fight against history the context, Jim Crow is looking, metaphorically on society, not

just top down, that's why music is folk, commercial, and it moves and it's fluid and white people can black music it's not black peoples things it resonates racial difference because society needs it to which is why Elvis is so scary because he is exposing the lie and any black musician that doesn't sound like a stereotype is breaking the lie that black music is this simple thing that you put in a box primitive and it's guttural and it's sexy and it's soulful. Fuck that. Those are adjectives that white Americans need to use to describe black people again to describe themselves . . . My story is how AA get in on that by selling by blackness, embrace black difference, sell it to a Jim Crow society, wanting black difference, so the AA's All Coons Look Alike they don't realize that they are selling that shit out and that's not all, but setting up a historical precedent that will only exist within black and white for a long time.

There is no blackness, they are inventing it. Where there is racial difference, culture and music is one of the best ways to understand why racial difference takes on the forms it does, the language of resistance, and also reflecting society. You have to know society to resist it. Historian look at this. Music is the most powerful example of racial ownership distinction and society constructing race. My point is that the racial categories are myths, cultural ownership by race is a myth. Everyone is borrowing from everybody all the time, but we subscribe, ascribe racial meaning to sounds, and culture, and it's a myth, but we buy into it. That's what ideology is, we confuse the socially constructive nature of things with nature. Elvis shocked people because race isn't just a myth, but a myth we believe in.

Q: What's the name of your book?

A: My book is, The Product of Our Souls, Ragtime Race and the Birth of the Manhattan

Musical Marketplace

Appendix H- Interview

Dave Luhrssen

Via Email 7/06/2018

Q: How were you inspired to work in music. Please explain your role in music.

A: I could go on and on with answering your first question. Here goes: I became a music writer, and a person drawn to Milwaukee's music scene, as a teenager (this was the 1970s) because hearing music became the most important facet of my life at the time. By music I mean rock music, although soon enough I began to investigate its roots in blues and country. For me, the words of songwriters were a way of making sense of the world, of finding my bearings in uncertain times. The best of that music elevated me into a different emotional place.

I became known locally by the end of 1978 for writing about punk rock and producing the fanzine that evolved into the weekly Shepherd Express, where I work today as managing editor. To me, punk was the voice of the disaffected segment of my generation—it wasn't being written about respectfully or informatively by older rock critics in town—the first wave of Baby Boomers who I felt were stuck in the mud of Woodstock. I felt it was important to provide for a forum for this emerging music.

Q: Have you heard of the music genre Reggaetón? If so, please talk about this form, including your thoughts and feelings about it. Do you have deeper connections to this music or have you met musicians who may have been worked in this genre? What are distinctions you notice between reggaetón expressions from different locales?

A: As to your second question, I'm aware of reggaetón but barely, and have nothing of interest to say on the subject.

Q: What meaning can music have and how or why may origins be important?

A: Music can be a way of expressing the human condition in ways that evade language. Some people have theorized that music predated language in our evolution. We'll never know that for sure, but it certainly seems integral to who we are as people. Music can also become part of our identity as individuals—our choice of music says something about who we are and can even become part of a tribal identity. Without roots nothing can grow. We can't understand music—or much of anything else—unless we understand the roots. However, we can enjoy music without knowing where it came from, and we can derive meaning from it without knowing where it came from, but we intellectualize on it at our peril if we don't understand the origins. Knowing the roots gives us additional levels of appreciation. But we need to be aware that new and unexpected fruit can grow from the roots of human endeavor, and we shouldn't be closed to that.

Appendix I- Interview

Liviti

Emails: 03/19/2017 & 11/24/2018 and phone: 07/06/2018

"Reggae is the artistic and cultural expression of the Rastafarians, signifying oppression of the Rastafarians, signifying oppression, exile, a longing for home, optimism and Jah love...the soul of music itself...an extension of Ethiopianism, a black religious reaction to pro-slavery propaganda." (Davis, Simon, 1992)

Q: What is your response to this perspective?

A: To answer your first question, Reggae is most definitely a cultural expression but it's also a personal expression as well. To me, it's a culmination of experiences, through life lessons.

Q: Were you aware of reggae's influence on the genre, reggaetón?

A: I've always been aware of Reggae's influence on reggaetón. I grew up in the Bronx, surrounded by different groups of Latinos. Reggaetón was always playing in the local stores, in cars and just from people playing music on the block. I could hear the influences immediately. The instrumentals were similar and the linguistic styles were similar as well. The expression was just in Spanish.

Q: Reggaetón music is typically in Spanish and those involved did not use marijuana. What role do linguistic styles and the influence of ganja play in reggae music and culture?

A: Well, reggae music is loved internationally, so it's only natural for you to express it, first, in the language that you speak, especially if you're an artist. The different styles are good in my opinion. Legends like Peter Tosh has always been experimenting with words and metaphors. Jacob Miller, another legendary reggae artist, has a unique way of rolling his tongue at the end of

a word, to kind of stretch and vibrate the phrase, so different styles and linguistic backgrounds are welcome in the community. As for the usage of marijuana in the culture, it was originally used by the Rasta as a means of meditation and a spiritual connection with the earth. Rasta, being at the forefront of the genre, it's only naturally for some musicians to imitate some of their practices, without really understanding the purpose of the herbs to the Rasta man. I might be a bit too young to completely qualify to answer this particular part of the question, so it's necessary to note, that this is just my opinion on the subject. Some musicians also say smoking the herbs, helps them in the creative process. Writing, producing, etc.

Q: Jamaican people, mostly men, migrated to Panama during the construction and U.S. occupation of the Panama Canal bringing with them linguistic and musical styles. How important is it to determine the roots of reggaetón and its connection to Jamaica?

A: It's very important to know the origins of anything you're practicing or saying you're a part of. I've heard so many people, including some reggaetón artists, wrongfully credit hip-hop as its origin. I've had to say, hello, its name is reggaetón, not hip-hopton, just listen to the artists that were a part of its inception. The foundation of the music is in Jamaica, deep within the heart of reggae.

Q: How has reggae music changed, in your opinion, and what messages do you intend to bring forward in your music?

A: A lot has changed, but essentially, it's still the same. In my opinion, the change depends on the artist that you're listening to. There's plenty of musicians out there who are still bringing that music with the heavy drum and bass, with a powerful message behind it. However, there's equally a lot of Reggae musicians whose music sounds more like alternative music and pop culture. So again, the change is with the artist not the culture essentially. As for myself, am more

of a Reggae/ Hip-hop artist. Being raised in the Bronx, I have the pleasure of being exposed to both genre of music. In high school all I listen to was Tupac, Nas and BIG, then later on hip-hop groups like Dead Prez, which lucky enough I end up doing a song with Stic Man of Dead Prez , called " I Am the Cure". I keep my music realistic. All my songs come from personal experiences and observations and I've never put a limit on myself. I've written songs for many different genres.

Q: What are the main characteristics of roots reggae music?

A: Reality is the heart of roots reggae. Life and all of its ups and downs has always been the driving force behind it. My father has worked with many of the greats, like Bob Marley, Tosh, Gregory Isaac, Jimmy Cliff and some of the super producers like Sly & Robbie and Willie Lindo. I've had the pressure of observing some of these recording process and one thing I can say for sure is that the root of the music is always their goal. Capturing its true essence and delivering it with a powerful message.

Q: What is reggae's influence on reggaetón?

A: I've always been aware of reggae's influence on reggaetón. I grew up in the Bronx, surrounded by different groups of Latinos. Reggaetón was always playing in the local stores, in cars and just from people playing music on the block. I could hear the influences immediately. The instrumentals were similar and the linguistic styles were similar as well. The expression was just in Spanish. It's very important to know the origins of anything you're practicing or saying you're a part of. I've heard so many people, including some reggaetón artists, wrongfully credit hip-hop as its origin. Just listen to the artists that were a part of its inception, the foundation of the music is in Jamaica, deep within the heart of Reggae.

Appendix J- Interview

Denny Rauén

Via Email: 08/12/18

Q: How were you inspired to work in music. Please explain your musical background and how you see yourself as a musician.

Q: Do you use music as a way to express things that have happened to you in your life? If so can you give anecdotes, or stories about these instances? Does any of your music address or imply social issues? If so please explain.

Q: Have you heard of the music genre reggaetón? If so, please talk about this form, including your thoughts and feelings about it. Do you have deeper connections to this music or have you met musicians who may have been worked in this genre? What are distinctions you notice between reggaetón expressions from different locales?

A: As a child the attraction was strong to say the least. Seeing a guitar in the window of a store or on the pages of a catalog was mesmerizing. By age 10 I figured out that I could go into music stores and they would allow me to test play an instrument if I was careful. I perfected this and each day after school I'd go into 3 stores after school and play guitars off the rack. Lyon & Healy, Sears and Custom Music. I would work out chord changes for songs I'd heard and on occasion would watch someone else test a guitar and then copy what they played. Pretty crude but it's all I had and I learned a hell of a lot about playing guitar doing this.

It was such a routine that the sales people knew me at each stop. Still, each time I would ask if I could play a certain guitar and each time they would say "yes, just be sure to hang it back up when you're finished". I did this religiously for 4 years until I was 14 and finally saved up

enough money to purchase a Gibson LGO from J Reynolds Music. It's impossible for me to explain what it felt like the day I sat in the park playing my own guitar. Growing up one of the oldest of 10 children, I was well aware extra money did not exist. Most of the money I made from paper routes, snow shoveling, popsicle routes etc., was given (begrudgingly) to my parents to pay bills. I can remember all this like it was yesterday.

Early on my structured musical background was limited to "a" lesson at Custom Music 4pm Wednesday from Ron? (years later played with Bonnie Koloc). It took me 2 months to save up for my second lesson. I stood outside Ron's lesson room at 4pm on Wednesday and I was totally confused when he came out of the room and asked what I was doing there. I said I'm here for my lesson and he spent a few minutes explaining that you have to come once a week. I was devastated but understood. I was poor and that was that. After I left Ron came running outside and said a student cancelled so he'd give me a lesson. He showed me the pentatonic scale and drew me a diagram of basic understanding of bar chords and told me "the rest is up to you." I had a terrible childhood and for some strange reason music was something that cared about me as much as I cared about it. If I worked hard I was rewarded with feeling the incredible energy and power of creating my own sound. No one yelling at me, no beating, no judgement and maybe a person in a music store would say something nice to me. I had precious little of that and love it all. There was no music in my family so this was my own thing and I loved that too. As an activist most of my life I've never really used music to push my point of view. Same with Blues music. I love it but never really had the desire to play it.

Appendix K- Interview

Brian Ritchie

Via Emails: 11/23/18

Q: How were you inspired to work in music. Please explain your musical background and how you see yourself as a musician.

A: My initial spark to get into music was simply the joy of hearing rock and roll music and then making the leap to thinking I should try to do it myself. It was not long before I was doing gigs, at which point music became more than a hobby. It was a job and lifestyle, which has never stopped for me since 1975 or so. Music has been a lifelong love affair since that point. I was always inquisitive about different styles of music and a variety of instruments. So, I branched off into blues, folk, jazz and much later into Japanese traditional music and dabbling in Western classical music. I started out on guitar but of course when I became proficient on bass guitar, the demand for that increased. This is because there are not many good bassists around. Later on, I studied Japanese music and became a licensed teacher and performer on the shakuhachi (Japanese bamboo flute). Although my main public face is that of a rock musician, I probably spend more time on shakuhachi now. My attitude towards music is that it is a very special thing. So, I try to keep it pure and honest. I like making money with music, and I need to as well. But the starting point is good music, and then exploiting that as much as possible, rather than attempting to make music that is commercial from its inception. That's a slippery slope. I choose my projects based on what's new and interesting. I usually say yes to anything that comes down that pike which is fun, or which I haven't done yet. Music is an adventure for me so I'm willing to take risks.

Q: Do you use music as a way to express things that have happened to you in your life?

A: Music is the thing that happens in my life. I improvise a lot so maybe that comes close to expressing things. But I don't usually do literal storytelling or confessional work. I express myself more instrumentally than lyrically, so it's an impressionistic approach.

Q: If so can you give anecdotes, or stories about these instances? Does any of your music address or imply social issues? If so please explain.

A: Sometimes I have been known to write a protest song. But the main way I use music to address social issues is by playing or working with marginalised people. For example, I spend a few weeks or a month every year mentoring Aboriginal musicians in the Australian desert, or sometimes in urban areas. Or play music with Down's syndrome kids. I also curate Mona Foma, which is an incredible multi-media arts festival in Tasmania. In that role I program a great variety of artists, many of whom come from underrepresented groups or parts of the world. We make significant efforts for example to program female artists at a rate much higher than the norm. But we don't talk about it much. We just do it.

Q: Have you heard of the music genre reggaetón? If so, please talk about this form, including your thoughts and feelings about it. Do you have deeper connections to this music or have you met musicians who may have been worked in this genre? What are distinctions you notice between reggaetón expressions from different locales?

A: I don't know much about reggaetón, except that my step-mom had a cat named reggaetón. Hahaha.

Appendix L- Interview

Asdru Sierra

Via Emails 07/05/2018 & 11/22/18

Q: Have you heard of the music genre reggaetón? If so, please talk about this form, including your thoughts and feelings about it. Do you have deeper connections to this music or have you met musicians who may have been worked in this genre? What are distinctions you notice between reggaetón expressions from different locales?

A: As far as reggaetón, I remember when I first heard “Gasolina.” Great song, great hook, great classic beat originating from this particular song “Dem Bow” by Shabba Ranks. I think it was the production team, “Steely and Clevie” who made the beat. Even though Daddy Yankee and many other artists ran with this beat creating a new genre, I remember El General from Panama was the first cat I heard do this kind of similar beat back in 1990. “Muévelo” was in my tape deck all DAY. As a young Latino artist, it was important that the world wasn’t looking at us as the usual stereotypes musically. The irony that this became the new stereotype blows my mind. But other than that, as grateful as I am that this beat brought us into the international limelight musically, I’m really happy to see an artist like Residente make records like his latest one. Exploring music from China, Mongolia, and many places in the world that we gravitated towards in the last two decades. It’s one of my favorite albums, and Residente became one of my favorite artists that originated in this genre with his journey into exploring MORE into the world of music with his art form. Not to mention his integrity filled, word-smith approach and striving for the next level. Don’t wanna get stuck in the reggaetón thing. Btw, I think it was 1992 that “Muévelo” came out.

Appendix M- Interview

Nigel Stewart

Via Email: 07/04/2018

Q: How were you inspired to work in your field? What is your background?

Q: California University states, "**Pan-African Studies** (PAS) encompasses the systematic investigation of the History, Culture, Social Relationships, Political Economy, Literature, Arts, and Languages of peoples of **African** descent and their contribution to world civilization." What are the specifications and/or programs that your agency focuses on? Does your agency reach out to educate the public, locally, nationally, and/ or globally? What is your vision of expansion for your agency?

Q: Have you heard of the Afro-Panamanian music genre of reggaetón? What is your reaction to this style of music, at its inception and/ or in regards to contemporary adaptations?

A: So here goes. My background is in Real Estate and Recruitment, I'm an entrepreneur (or trying to be). Very simply, I was inspired to start The Centre when my son was born in 2015. Drawing from my own experience of awakening, the years of struggle for identity and decolonising; I asked myself who would be responsible if he grew up and had the same experience as I did. After his birth, I made the vow to build Europe's flagship black owned learning and development institution, for him and other African and African Caribbean's of his and future generations. You may be familiar with the Malcolm X quote "only a fool would let the enemy teach his children." We (the African diaspora) cannot continue to rely on Europeans to decolonise their curriculums and education systems before we reclaim our cultural memory and road map. We must be proactive in re-creating our own spaces for personal and community

development, even if it's just supplementary. I believe that music is an unequivocal, non-detachable expression of one's identity, because music is the archetype of culture. If we imagine how music is created or birthed, as in formulating sound to tell stories or create energies and emotion, man cannot express those formulas outside of himself. Who you are is carried in the very vibration of those sounds. So, from the drums that beat to summon the God's in African ritual to John Coltrane playing stardust on saxophone, spirit is in the music, and music represents or becomes part of the culture that shapes your identity. In other words, show me your playlists and it will say a lot about your identity.

As I understand Reggaetón is an emergent genre from South America that hangs on the fringes of the European club scene. It's a genre that demonstrates how communities can find new forms of expression and create new cultures. If we observe its evolutionary process, as in the elements or ingredients from other cultures and music genres that are infused with indigenous sounds; it tells us how we can move beyond the confines of the oppressive cultural structures we live in as Africans. Contemporary music will always evolve in this systematic process. It is the same with Grime music here in the UK. Sounds that start in the margins, start at the grass roots of oppressed or marginalised people become popularised for its deviant freshness and rebellion. It then becomes a type of social capital or social currency for those people. It also becomes fashionable in its ability to offer an alternative from the mainstream, that is until capitalism (i.e. record labels) commercialises and exploits, monetises and (mis) appropriates. This kind of cultural wave cycles are evident to cultural theorists but not so much to the layman.

At the beginning of the year The Centre devise a research strategy in which we broadly focus on fields of knowledge or research that we hope to produce. Our content and events planning are based around that focus. It is based around those themes we believe are crucial to our audience.

As this is only our third year, most of our work is concentrated in London, however, we have our first event outside of London on July 12th. This is our first step to being more proactive across the whole of the UK and then eventually around Europe. We do get a lot of requests to visit the United States and Africa, our programs generate interest from all parts of the globe. In the long term we do have the ambition to work in every continent. A Pan African Centre of learning in every continent, at the heart of every African community, that is an ultimate dream.

Lisa Margot Spencer

Curriculum Vitae

Objective

To join a creative and/or educational team while maintaining my work, research, and documentation of storytelling and social justice.

Skills & Abilities

I have dedicated my life to serving people, having lived, studied, volunteered, and traveled around the U.S. and globe. Coming from a working-class background, I've worked two jobs to get through college. As a social scientist, I have worked with a myriad of populations, shape-shifting accordingly. I'm a humanitarian and an artist with three decades of experience in my passions of education, social service, and the arts, specifically music, film, theater, and creative arts.

Spanish speaker, public speaker, performer, cultural anthropologist, researcher, writer, agriculturalist, musician, videographer, photographer, storyteller, curriculum designer, healing arts practitioner, leader, actress, director, social worker, editor, educator, legislator, social justice advocate, and creative force.

Higher Education

2019- University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee

Doctorate of Philosophy in Social Justice and Documentary through the English

Department with a minor in the Arts: Film and Theatre

Started in Urban Education/ Multi-Cultural Studies

I wrote my own PhD program, passed unanimously by the Graduate Committee

Internship in Cultural Anthropology

2008 - New Mexico School of Natural Therapeutics

Hand Medicine/ Certification in Core Synchronism

2006 - University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee

Master of Arts in Liberal Arts, Liberal Studies, Film, English

2002 - University of North-Carolina, Asheville and Wilmington

Bachelor of Arts in Spanish with a minor in the Creative Arts

Internship in Acting/ Film- Frank Capra Jr., Screen Gem Studios

Courses Taught

English as a Second Language, Laica University, Guayaquil, Ecuador (1992)

Mystery School, Ways of the Divine Feminine, Marshall, NC (2000-2003)

Non-Western Religions, Cardinal Stritch University, Milwaukee, WI (2006-2015)

Humanities I, Cardinal Stritch University, Milwaukee, WI (2006-2015)

Cooking With Kids, CWK, Santa Fe, NM (2012-2014)

Garden Education, Amy Biehl Elementary, Santa Fe, NM (2013-2014)

Budget Gourmet, Helpmate Domestic Violence Shelter, NC (2015-2017)

English as a Second Language, A-B Tech Community College, NC (2015-present)

Writing and Inquiry, A-B Tech Community College, NC (2015- 2019)

Writing and Research in the Disciplines, A-B Tech Community College, NC (2015-2019)

Professional Research and Reporting, A-B Tech Community College, NC (2015-2019)

HI Set: High School Equivalency, All Subjects, Madison County Jail, NC (2016-2017)

HI Set: High School Equivalency, All Subjects, Buncombe County Jail, NC (2017)

Work Experience

A-B Tech Community College, Instructor of ESL, English, and HI Set, North Carolina: 2015-Present

I started at the college by teaching English as a Second Language in the Transitional Studies Department. After a semester, I joined the English Department as an Adjunct Professor. In partnership with the college, county governments, and two Sheriff's offices, I started two education initiatives in County Jails. I taught incarcerated students in the subjects of English, both grammar and composition, Social Studies, Science, and Mathematics. I wrote an additional jail education program that expands educational opportunities to vocational studies, ESL, and college courses.

Helpmate, Bi-lingual Case Manager, North Carolina, May 2005-Oct. 2016

I volunteered a decade prior in the Latino community with the agency, eventually gaining employment as a bi-lingual case manager at the domestic violence shelter for women and children. I continue to advocate for Lethal Assessment Protocol to bring this safety measure

to County law enforcement, as well as sensitive crimes training in order to connect them to prevention and advocacy protocols, as well as the needs of the community and victims.

Cardinal Stritch University, Adjunct Professor, School of Business, Jan. 2006-August 2015

I taught a decade on the main University campus as well as the three off-campus sites.

Cooking With Kids, Bi-Lingual Garden and Food Educator, New Mexico, Dec. 2012- Dec. 2014

I worked as an instructor for a non-profit educational agency in public schools in the lowest income districts in Santa Fe. I had a classroom in two elementary schools in which each grade of students would join in my classroom for several units throughout the year. Each unit included lessons on language, culture, geography, agriculture, nutrition, core curriculum, and cooking. I also started a garden club which hosted harvest festivals. In addition, I implemented a class at an alternative high school, which worked with students who had been expelled from traditional schools.

Path Finder, Youth Case Manager, Wisconsin, July 2007-Feb. 2010

Youth Care Worker at a homeless shelter, teaching life skills and counseling teenagers.

Downer Avenue Garage, Office Manager, Wisconsin, Sept.2006-April 2007

I worked as an office manager for this automotive shop. I was able to organize the space, the files, and finances, as well as advocate wage increases, insurance, debt, and tax matters.

Mayor Barrett's Youth Campaign, Wisconsin

I designed and led a team of eight teenage boys in a summer employment program established by the City Government.

Southeastern Family Services, Wisconsin

I worked at a group home in Milwaukee for felons under the age of 18.

Communication

Journalism, Writing, Music, and Research, 2010- Present

I have written and submitted a legislative proposal to change child marriage laws in North Carolina as a Federal protocol. My doctorate dissertation researched U.S. policies during their occupation of the Panama Canal Zone in the early 20th century. This included the Jim Crow policies that were established there and the cultural expressions of the Afro-Caribbean people that lived there and its connection to the musical genre of reggaetón that emerged in the 1970s.

UrbAn, Cultural Anthropologist Internship, Wisconsin, 2008-2011

My internship and volunteer work at the non-profit included such activities as journalism, transcribing the stories of homeless youth, video-taping a Milwaukee Police Department Master's course at Marquette University, organizing a neighborhood farmer's and cultural market, helping to initiate the first "Gathering of the Nations" festival, and other neighborhood and city programs.

AMERICORP Volunteer- One-Year Term, Wisconsin, 2003-2004

I worked at the Fitzsimonds Boys and Girls Club and Ralph F. Metcalfe Elementary School in Milwaukee in Youth Care Programming and Special Education.

Music video enhanced CDs by llysa Spencer on YouTube

2011 Bad Syne (from the original CD- Red Hen)

https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=llysa+spencer+bad+syne

2008 Zombie (from the original CD- Lost Language)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zKwiHBlbw&t=189s>

References in the Creative Arts

Volunteer

AmeriCorps

Art Not Apathy

Asheville Free School

Asheville Waldorf Pre-School

Boys & Girls Club of America

Buncombe County Sheriff's Office

Craggy Prison

Children's Leukemia Foundation

Cooking With Kids

French Broad Cooperative

Girl Scouts of America

Helpmate Domestic Violence Services

Homeless Children of Guayaquil, Ecuador Advocacy
Madison County Sheriff's Office
Mayor Barrett's Youth Campaign
Milwaukee Food Banks
Milwaukee Public Museum
Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra
Milwaukee Urban Gardens
Music for Humanity
National AIDS Foundation
New Mexico School for the Arts
Off the Grid
Our Voice Sexual Violence Services
Pathfinder's Youth Shelter
Penfield's Children Center
Riverwest Random Recyclable Art & Gift Show
Riverwest Cooperative
Santa Fe Independent Film Festival
Shepherd Xpress Art and Entertainment Newspaper
Silver Spring Community Center
Tamarack Community School
UrbAn Anthropology Inc.
Wisconsin Department of Agriculture