

**EDUCATING MAXIMILIAN FORTE AND TONY CASTANA  
BY GABRIEL HASLIP-VIERA**

**Part 1.**

**A Review of Maximilian C Forte, ed.**

***Indigenous Resurgence in the Contemporary Caribbean:  
Amerindian Survival and Revival.***

**New York: Peter Lang, 2006**

This is a longer original version of a review that was published in 2009 in *Centro: The Journal of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies* 2(2): 313-316.

On the surface, it appears that the number of Cubans, Dominicans and Puerto Ricans who have come to identify as indigenous or Taíno has grown dramatically in recent years. Browsing the internet reveals an ever increasing and evolving number of websites, blogs, chat rooms, message boards, listservs, mailing lists, e-mail petitions, and news groups connected to emergent Taíno “tribal” groups, “confederations,” and the idea of indigenous survival and resurgence in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean. There is Taíno TV on public access cable television and on YouTube. There are also membership recruitment campaigns, “pow-wows,” newsletters, journals, poetry readings, children stories, music, dance, and attempts to “recover” the language and history of indigenous peoples allegedly suppressed by the contemporary island elites and their “allies” in academia and politics.[1] However, the impact of indigenous resurgence on the overall demography of the Spanish-speaking Caribbean and its Diaspora does not appear to be all that significant regardless of what is seen on the internet and other media. In the case of Puerto Rico, the year 2010 census revealed that only less than one percent of the population identified as “American Indian and Alaska Native” or “American Indian” with “som other race.” What is not clear is whether these are persons who migrated to the island from the U.S. mainland and other countries, or whether they are Puerto Ricans who self-identified as indigenous. In any case, this figure is still noteworthy because of the aggressive way the so-called leaders of this population articulate their claims to indigeneity.[2]

A number of academics who support the idea of indigenous survival and resurgence in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean have also emerged in recent years. They include among others, the geneticist, Juan Carlos Martínez Cruzado of the University of Puerto Rico at Mayaguez, literature professor Peter Hulme of the University of Essex in England, the lawyer, DeAnna Marie Rivera, author of a journal article on legal issues related to indigenous resurgence, and a group of academics and non-academics who are members of an organization called “La Liga Guaka Taína-Ke in Puerto Rico.[3] They also include the editor, Maximilian C. Forte, and Drs. Lynne Guitar, José Barreiro, Pedro Ferbel-Azcarate, and other contributors to *Indigenous Resurgence in the Contemporary Caribbean: Amerindian Survival and Revival*, which is under review in this chapter.[4]

As a book, *Indigenous Resurgence...* consists of an introduction, an endorsement by Peter Hulme, and five parts titled (1) “Presence: Contemporary Paths of Survival after the Myth of Extinction,” (2) “Identities: Articulating Indigenous Identities and Spaces in the Contemporary Caribbean,” (3) “Rights: Indigenous Rights, International Conventions, and Current Legal Frameworks within the Circum-Caribbean,” (4) Nation State: Modern Incorporations and Challenges to Articulating and Organizing Aboriginality,” and (5) Region: The Transnationalization of Caribbean Indigenous Resurgence. The Five parts are also divided into chapters that focus on the politics, the realities, or the claims for indigenous survival in the

Spanish, English, French and Dutch-speaking Caribbean, with an essay that also deals with the Diasporas and their connections to the internet. However, this review will focus only on the Spanish-speaking Caribbean and the chapter on the Diasporas and the internet. Incredibly, a chapter on Puerto Rico is not included in this book despite the fact that Puerto Ricans have been at the center of the controversy and debate over indigenous survival and resurgence in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean from the beginning. According to the editor, “a chapter devoted entirely to Puerto Rico” was not possible “because one contributor withdrew when it was too late to find an alternative author” (p.7).

### **Claims for Indigenous Survival and Resurgence in Cuba**

In comparison to the other contributions under review, the only essay that makes a somewhat credible case for indigenous survival in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean is the chapter by José Barreiro titled “Taíno Survivals: Cacique Panchito, Caridad de los Indios, Cuba.” In this case, there is a long-standing historical tradition acknowledging indigenous survival that is missing from the historical records of Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic. The Cuban government (pp.22, 25) also seems to recognize certain extended family groups in eastern Cuba as indigenous which is not the case in the other islands. Barreiro makes reference (pp.26-31) to 1846 court records, and the works of nineteenth and twentieth century writers, such as Antonio Bachiller y Morales, José Martí, and Felipe Pichardo Moya, who comment on the Indians that allegedly lived in the eastern part of Cuba in the period before and after the Spanish-American War of 1898. For example, Martí writes that he was tracked by “the Indians of Garrido” in his journal two weeks before his death at the start of Cuba’s second war of independence in 1895. Other writers, such as José Sánchez Guerra and Abelardo Padrón Váldez also make reference to the indigenous “Hatuey” regiment, which fought against the Spaniards in the War of 1895. However, there is little doubt that these Indians are in fact (by their own admission) persons of mixed background.[5]

Barreiro makes reference to a study of the alleged Indians that was published in 1978 by the anthropologist, Manuel Rivero de la Calle, which focused on “blood tests, dental measurements, the size of heads, lips, arms, and other traits and features” alleged to be indigenous, such as short stature, “scarce hair growth... straight, very black hair, kept into very old age... internal and external eye fold (epicanthus)... moderate obliqueness in the eyes,” and “light brown skin with reddish tendency” (p.28). These stereotypes are also supported by Barreiro when he states that “all” are “dark brown, on the short side and barrel chested, reflecting a variety of indigenous facial features” (p.22). However, Barreiro also admits that these Indians have a history of intermarriage and are also descended from “other sources” in addition to the indigenous (p.25, 26). He quotes Cacique Panchito, the principal leader of this group, who says that “It’s true.” “We have marriages with different people” (p.29). Barreiro and the cacique also admit that there has also been considerable cultural mixing in the history of this population.

At various points in his essay, Barreiro makes reference to the “Old *Changui* music that is played by the alleged Indians with “congas” and “three string guitars,” which are in fact African and European in origin. He also makes reference to the Afro-Catholic saint “San Lázaro Babalú,” the influence of “Afro-Cuban religion,” the “spiritual powers of various origins,” and the “mixed, or...blend of cultures.” He again quotes Cacique Panchito, who states that “there is a mix of everything,” and that in their religious beliefs, some “spirits are Indian, some are saints and some are African *abacuas*, all of which demonstrates that this population is biologically and culturally

mixed even though they self-identify as “Indian” and may be recognized as indigenous by the Cuban authorities (See pp.22, 32, 34, 35).

Ironically, Barreiro’s essay may create major problems for most Cubans who would wish to identify as indigenous or Taíno because, according to Barreiro (pp.21-30 passim), the “Indians” that are acknowledged to have survived are limited to specific groups of extended families in particular parts of the country with specific surnames such as Rojas and Ramirez. Therefore, those Cubans who would identify as indigenous or Taíno would in theory have to demonstrate some genetic or biological connection to these extended families. In other words, a claim to indigeneity based on racial stereotypes, the mere assertion of a Taíno pedigree, or some other factor, would not be sufficiently acceptable for inclusion in this population unless it was accepted by the Cuban authorities and those families defined as Indian.[6]

### **Claims for Indigenous Pedigree, Survival and Resurgence in the Dominican Republic**

The chapter titled “*Ocama-Daca Taíno* (Hear Me. I am Taíno): Taíno Survival on Hispaniola, focusing on the Dominican Republic” includes an introduction, a conclusion, and three sections, each written by one of the three co-authors: anthropologist and historian, Lynne Guitar, cultural anthropologist, Pedro Ferbel-Azcarate, and Jorge Estevez, a self-identified Taíno and employee of the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian in New York. In the first section, Lynne Guitar tries to make the case for indigenous survival in the Dominican Republic from the standpoint of history. In the next section, Pedro Ferbel focuses on “race,” ethnicity and culture as it relates to the politics of indigenous identity in Dominican society. This section is followed in turn by Jorge Estevez’s personal perspective on indigenous survival and resurgence from the standpoint of a self-identified Dominican Taíno and advocate for indigenous revival and its recognition in the Dominican Republic and throughout the Caribbean.

It needs to be said from the start that the co-authors of this chapter fail to make the case for an exclusive pre-Columbian descended indigenous population in Dominican society from the standpoint of its history and demographics. In fact, the authors demonstrate a considerable amount of confusion when it comes to these and other issues with regard to race, biology and genetics. Claims for the survival of a separate and racially exclusive population descended from the pre-Columbian indigenous or Taínos are made in a forceful or assertive manner, but the claims are subsequently contradicted or diminished by statements that are made in other parts of the chapter.[7] For example, it is stated at the beginning that recent “historical, ethnographic, ethno-archeological, linguistic and DNA studies are demonstrating multidisciplinary evidence for both Taíno cultural and biological survival” (pp.41-42). The three authors also define “survival” as “both the qualitative and quantitative continuity of a cultural or biological feature shared by members of the same family, community, or region” (p.42).[7] However, they also state (p.41) that “a poor but landed peasantry developed from the original groups of Taínos, Africans, and Europeans, who blended both their genes and cultural traditions,” while Ferbel acknowledges (p.54) that Dominicans have been disconnected from their African, indigenous and their mixed Afro-Mestizo or Criollo ancestry and cultural heritage, even though these ancestries and heritages mark Dominicans with the significant emblems of their contemporary identity.” Ferbel also notes (p.55) that it may be true “that a majority of people who identify as Taíno in fact have a variety of biological ancestries, including African and European;” however, he and the other authors fail to demonstrate that a Dominican can actually claim an exclusive and nationally

recognized Taíno pedigree when they refer to the alleged survival of this group.[8]

Contradictions also crop-up when the authors focus specifically on genetic admixture testing, mtDNA and Y chromosome research, and tests for “blood quanta.” For example, Ferbel states (p.56) that “biological and DNA studies are providing provocative new scientific evidence of indigenous continuity among Caribbean populations” and that recent “DNA work by Puerto Rican biologist Juan Carlos Martínez Cruzado...and Dominican physical anthropologist, Fernando Luna Calderon...suggest that both Puerto Rican and Dominican populations have retained high percentages of indigenous genetic markers.” These statements are also echoed by Jorge Estevez who notes (p.61) that “mitochondrial DNA sequencing studies have revealed...indigenous genetic markers in the current population of the Greater Antilles” that are “so staggeringly high it directly challenges the ‘facts’ of Taíno extinction.”[9] However, later, on the same page, Estévez tries to minimize the importance of genetic testing when he also states that “we Taíno as a people, validate the DNA evidence, not the other way around,” and that this “journey of self-discovery...is about culture, not genes, for genes say little about us as a people”—a sentiment previously echoed by Ferbel, who goes somewhat further when he states (p.55) that an “emphasis on biological versus cultural survival is often overdone,” that “determining identity based only on a particular percentage of biological ancestry is, by its nature, racist,” and that we should probably “discard the concept of race entirely.”[10]

Although Ferbel and the other authors try to minimize the importance of the biological, genetic and racial aspects of indigenous identity, they still fall into the trap of racist assumptions when they use “percentages of biological ancestry” and other biological factors to justify their claims for indigenous survival. At one point (p.53), Ferbel makes reference to the “fierce debates” about “what defines Native American ethnicity.” He then raises the following question (p.55) —“Where is the arbitrary line drawn to determine how much ‘indigenous blood’ is needed to be considered Taíno?” Ultimately, Ferbel and the other authors respond to this question by suggesting that indigenous identity should be based primarily on culture and its continuity; however, they nevertheless cannot resist the temptation of invoking biology, genetics and “race” when it suits their purpose. As a result, references are still made to “DNA studies,” “genetic markers,” “biological continuity,” “strong indigenous features,” and the publications of Juan Carlos Martínez Cruzado, Fernando Luna Calderon and Manuel García Arevalo on genetics (pp.42, 52, 56, 61, 63). At one point (p. 61), Jorge Estevez also reveals that he has taken an admixture test which shows that he is actually of mixed background; however, he articulates these results in a vague and self-serving manner by stating that he has “a significantly high quantity of indigenous genetic markers,” whatever that means, and that (according to the testing company) “just four generations ago, my ancestors were what used to be called ‘full-blooded natives.’” As noted on p.55 in Chapter 2, Part 2 of this book and elsewhere, Neo-Taíno “leaders” and spokespersons (including Estevez) have recently been making claims that small amounts of DNA and even “one drop of Taíno blood” is enough to claim an exclusive indigenous pedigree. [11]

Quite remarkably, there is only a brief, perfunctory reference by Lynne Guitar (p.52) to the mandated indigenous identity that has been used to privilege and separate Dominicans from Haitians and all other defined “Black” people in the Dominican Republic. Historically, the Taíno and the indigenous as a concept have been used in the Dominican Republic to marginalize and denigrate Africans and African descended persons and their cultural contributions. Guitar, Ferbel and Estevez know that most non-white persons defined as Dominican are officially referred to, and are always asked to identify as some type of Indian or *Indio* regardless of their skin color and

appearance under the assumption that Dominicans cannot possibly be “Black.” The identities employed in passports and other official documents include among others, *Indio lavado*, *Indio claro*, *Indio oscuro*, *Indio quemado*, and *Indio canelo* (washed, light, dark, burnt, and cinnamon colored Indian).[12] However, Guitar and the other two authors minimize or ignore the importance of this concept, along with its official application and its importance to the formation of Dominican national identity. It is true as noted by Guitar that indigenous or Taíno survival is not accepted by Dominicans in general, but this is perfectly understandable because most Dominicans ultimately accept the reality of their mixed pedigree and heritage. Guitar clearly exaggerates when she claims (p.52) that there is a “stigma” attached to being an “*Indio*” (as generally defined in the Dominican Republic), but this kind of stigma is nothing compared to the stigma attached to Haitians and persons defined as “Black.” Stigma and discrimination are themes that are frequently raised by Caribbean Latinos/as who identify as indigenous on the internet and other media (also see Forte’s Chapter pp.262, 265), but these individuals and their advocates have not been able to present (despite the possibility) a single verifiable instance in which actual discrimination has taken place, especially in Cuba, Puerto Rico and the U.S. mainland [13] where Amerindians at times have become a “model minority” because of their alleged and preferred cultural values and alleged closeness and sensitivity to the land and the environment, etc.[14]

The authors of this chapter also reveal a distinct negative bias towards a nationalist socio-economic agenda and identity for Dominicans at the same time that they exhibit a pronounced and romanticized nostalgia for the society’s pre-modern rural culture, which they falsely claim is largely Taíno.[15] At the beginning of the chapter (p.43), it is stated that in “the colonial globalized reality of the Dominican Republic, traditional cultural practices are seen as unprogressive and individuals are often ashamed by traditions that represent their ‘poverty’ or ‘backwardness.’” This is followed by Ferbel’s comments several pages later (p.54) that the “nationalist identity of the Dominican Republic” has “marginalized” the traditional culture “in favor of nationalist ideologies of progress and civilization found in the embrace of *Hispanidad* and Catholic-ism.”[16] Ferbel then extols (pp.55, 56-57) the alleged virtues of the “many daily lifeways” of the traditional material culture, such as “agricultural practices; use of yucca and casabe; indigenous fruits, vegetables, and tobacco, medicinal plants, fishing techniques, architecture; crafts, tools and technologies.” However, it is perfectly understandable that the average Dominican would reject (e.g.: p.52) an identity that promotes a traditional culture linked to real poverty and lack of economic and social progress. A “colonial globalized reality” should not be dismissed willy-nilly as it is here—especially by Anglo-American romantics such as Ferbel and Guitar, and a Dominican living in New York with a comfortable middle class job at the Smithsonian Institution. The Dominican Republic and Dominicans in the Diaspora are currently facing the major challenges of rapid economic and technological modernization and globalization that will eventually require the re-articulation of the current nationalist ideology which is still largely based on Catholicism and a racist Spanish *Hispanidad*. Hopefully, the new ideology will emphasize real economic and social progress and the elimination of racism and racist ideas. Unfortunately, the authors of this chapter seem to be oblivious to this rapidly changing and important reality. What we get is the promotion of an exclusivist and romanticized ethno-racial fragmentation in the Dominican Republic that would privilege a culturally marginal indigenous identity and pedigree based on bogus assertions with regard to biology, genetics, “race,” and history.

## **Indigenous Resurgence on the Internet and other Media with References to Puerto Ricans on the Island and U.S. Mainland**

In the chapter titled “Searching for a Center in the Digital Ether: Notes on the Indigenous Caribbean Resurgence on the Internet,” Maximilian C. Forte shows how the movement for Amerindian revival and its development has been greatly facilitated in the public sphere by the internet, social networks and other media. According to Forte and Harald Prins (pp.253-254, 255), “The internet provides a qualitatively new and contemporary arena for identification as Amerindian, whether Carib or Taíno as the cases tend to be,” and that the indigenous utilize this medium “to represent themselves, and to do so...largely on their own terms and according to their own aesthetic preferences.” Forte also notes that “The internet is a medium that conveys certain possibilities to those who are already predisposed to some degree, to position themselves and rearticulate their identities as Amerindian descendants,” and he also states that this medium is also used by “solitary persons” and people with “deeply personal needs of belonging.” [17] Unfortunately, Forte, a professor of anthropology at Concordia University in Montreal, Canada, fails to examine this phenomenon with the skeptical eye of the professional scholar he claims to be. As an enthusiastic advocate for Amerindian resurgence and the idea of indigenous survival, he loses all sense of objectivity by accepting any and every claim made by persons who assert an Amerindian identity and pedigree.

Although Forte cites the work of Benedict Anderson on the invention of national identities (p.257),[18] he seems to claim that identities cannot be created with the statement (p.267) that the “internet does not have any power to create identity positions that individuals and groups never possessed before;” however, several sentences later, he seems to contradict himself when he states that the “internet has been important” in “enabling self-definition on terms chosen by participants.”[19] But for Forte and the other contributors to this volume, indigenous identity in the Caribbean is a given—a fact that cannot be challenged. Without any degree of skepticism or hesitation, Forte asserts (pp.258 and 267) that “the internet is allowing relatively marginalized groups to recover a history that colonialism, in large part, helped to erase or distort,” and he also claims that “Taíno activism on the internet has enabled the recovery of an identity that had been...reduced to a symbolic category without a living reality, and treated at best as something to be commemorated rather than experienced personally.” With such a view, he also dismisses the critique of Taíno revivalism by academics and others in a perfunctory manner by claiming falsely (p. 267) that it’s “impossible for contemporary Taínos to explain their identity to individuals who refuse in advance, to admit that they could ever be speaking to Taínos.”

There also is the suggestion (p.261) that there are no “proven material rewards associated with this identification” and that “hostile critics fumble over” this issue, “repeatedly, producing contradictory and unsubstantiated assertions, clearly rooted in prejudice, and often expressed in forms of juvenile literary excreta, e.g.: (a) the aim is to get a casino” or “(b) they are trying to evade their ‘Blackness.’” These snide, over the top and unsupported statements ignore the fact that among others, the lawyer, Naniki Reyes Ocasio, one of the leaders of the resurgence movement in Puerto Rico, has been planning to file lawsuits demanding land, compensatory “reparations” and official government recognition for contemporary Taínos as a separate political ethnic group or tribe within island society.[20] More importantly, Forte ignores the fact that evasions of an African and European identity are extremely important for those who assert an indigenous identity because such persons do not want to be connected to the historically

oppressive European or Spanish colonists, and they do not want to identify with an African identity perceived to be denigrated and low in status. These attempted evasions of a European or African identity or ancestry can clearly be seen in some of the reactions that have been posted on the internet by the alleged Taínos who have had their DNA tested. (See pp.233, 250 in this book, and again, p.55).

Forte also makes other problematic statements in this chapter. He notes, for example (p.259), that Taíno organizations have been recognized and accepted as legitimate by U.S. based Native Americans in general as part of “a joint, ‘pan-Indian struggle’...lending further authority and authenticity to any given group in its respective off-line context(s).” However, this recognition or acceptance does not actually confer authority and authenticity if it’s based on a weak officially un-recognized biological or genetic make-up, and on historical and cultural claims that are generally unsupported. It’s merely the political recognition and acceptance by the mostly beleaguered mainland U.S. tribes of a small self-identified Taíno population that has been socially and culturally invented. Forte also descends (p.261) into the conceptual morass of “race” and who is an “Indian” or “Black” person by asking “If Indians with ‘one drop’ of African blood are evading their ‘Blackness’ by proclaiming themselves Indian, then what do we say of the Africans with ‘one drop’ of Indian blood who proclaim themselves African?” The answer to this question, which he doesn’t provide, is that the offensive “one drop” idea or “rule” is racist to the core and scientifically bogus in all cases.[21]

Forte also states in a confused and problematic way (p.261) that “‘Black’ is taken as the ‘normal,’ ‘natural,’ and unquestionable default identity of Caribbean peoples,” but this statement is clearly not true if applied to the Spanish-speaking Caribbean. As noted earlier, the default (not preferred) identity for non-white people in the Dominican Republic is some variant of *Indio* regardless of appearance, and in Puerto Rico, the preferred identity is “white.” In Cuba, it is also white; however, the Cuban government has adopted an anti-“race” policy since 1959 that may, or may not reflect the reality of race relations in that country at the present time. Racial identity in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean is a complex issue that Forte obfuscates when he focuses on those relatively few individuals who promote an exclusive Black identity or its primacy in an ethnically diverse society. Forte also knows or should know that the preferred racial identity in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean is “white,” not “Black” or anything else. For example, in Puerto Rico, 75.8% of the population self-identified as “white” in the 2010 census, 12.4% identified as “Black or African American,” 7.8% identified as “some other race,” 3.3% chose “two or more races, and only 0.5% identified as American Indian or Alaska Native exclusively.”[22]

## **Concluding Remarks**

In addition to the shortcomings outlined above, there are many other problems with the chapters on the Spanish-speaking Caribbean and its Diaspora in this book. One of the most serious is the apparent unwillingness or inability of the authors to demonstrate any kind of skepticism or analytical rigor when it comes to the stories or oral traditions that suggest some sort of indigenous continuity in the cultures of Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic. As a result, statements such as (pp.264, 265) “my grandmother would talk to me about my Indian background,” or “as a child, my grandmother told us we were Indians” are accepted without question as authentic by the authors. It seems as if the authors have never familiarized themselves with the methodological literature on this issue. At one point (p.262), Maximilian Forte admits that these identities may be adopted by con-artists; however, this important caveat is

ignored when it comes to the postings of self-identified Taínos on internet websites, blogs and chat rooms as recorded throughout this book. There is no attempt to analyze the origins and the motivations that may underlie these oral traditions, although there is a hint of an explanation in the chapter on Cuba (p. 29) when cacique Panchito describes how his group has privileged an indigenous identity despite the knowledge that their communities are mixed in biology and culture.[23]

Another serious shortcoming of the chapters that deal with Caribbean Latinos/as—perhaps the most important shortcoming—is the failure of the authors to fully engage the issue of national identity and its connection to modernization, globalization and the evolving U.S. led imperialism. All of us know that Cubans, Dominicans and Puerto Ricans have been debating and trying to establish an agreed upon conceptual basis for a national or regional Spanish Caribbean identity since the early nineteenth century. These national identities as articulated over time have often been problematic because of their basis on elitist thinking and racism, but they also have been of crucial importance to the political and cultural evolution of the Spanish-speaking Caribbean. They first emerged in the early nineteenth century as the basis for the movements that eventually led to the political independence of Cuba and the Dominican Republic from Spain and Haiti. They also remain important as the articulation of resistance or accommodation to the socio-economic modernization and evolving imperialism led by global capitalism and the United States. However, the authors cited in this review seem to be dismissive or oblivious to this issue at the same time that they promote a narrow, exclusivist indigenous identity full of romanticized nostalgia for the simple agricultural lifeways of the pre-Columbian Taínos. There is also no evidence, for example, to suggest that the “leaders” or spokespersons for the Neo-Taíno movement are calling for all Caribbean Latinos/as to self-identify as indigenous regardless of origin. Nor is there any evidence that they would accept a seemingly more progressive ethnically mixed identity, or even a dual Afro-Taíno identity that would exclude the “white oppressors.” Instead, the authors promote a retrograde ethno-racial fragmentation that would officially divide Caribbean Latinos/as into competing groups of “Blacks,” Indians and “whites,” which is the very antithesis of a socially progressive national or regional identity that would emphasize the ideals of social equality and ethnic unity in response to the globalized western imperialism that is currently dominant throughout the Caribbean.

What we get instead is a potentially conflictual political agenda for the alleged Taínos that would emphasize (according to Forte) “indigenous entanglements with the wider societies they inhabit,” “competition for resources,” “the struggle for rights within the politics of the nation state,” and the rejection of hybridity or creolization as an ideal (pp.4-5, 8, 14 and passim).[24] This rejection of creolization is clearly demonstrated in the book’s introduction (pp.4-5) when Maximilian Forte launches a dismissive, perfunctory but broadly based attack on the many scholars who have written on the reality of creolization in the Caribbean and elsewhere. Forte also states (p.5) that *Indigenous Resurgence...* as an edited volume “is not oriented toward directly revising and rebuilding analyses of creolization, essentialism, or invention.” However, it has to be emphasized that these very important issues cannot be evaded or minimized.[25] Sooner or later, Anglo-Americans such as Forte, Ferbel, Guitar and all the other advocates of indigenous survival and resurgence will have to confront the actual reality of creolization and the invented and essentialist fallacy of an exclusive indigeneity in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean and its Diaspora. They will also have to deal with the evidence that suggests that the indigenous contribution to the demography and culture of the Spanish-speaking Caribbean is relatively small compared to the African and the European, and confront the predicted results of DNA testing,



including mtDNA, Y-Chromosome and admixture tests that will confirm what we have known all along—that Cubans, Puerto Ricans and Dominicans are biologically and culturally people of mixed background.[26]

## Notes

1. See <<http://www.youtube.com/Tainotv>> for the link to TaínoTV.
2. In the 2010 census, 15,731 Puerto Rican islanders (minus their children 14 years and younger) identified as “Indian or Alaska Native alone,” and an additional 12,914 Puerto Ricans (minus their children 14 years and younger) identified as “Indian or Alaska Native” and “some other race” for a total of 28,645. See (U.S. Census Bureau, American Factfinder at: <<http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>>). Also, see the “Appendix” at the end of this book for figures on self-identified “Taínos” on both the island and mainland in the 2010 census, and also see Feliciano Santos (2011) on the Neo-Taíno effort to persuade Puerto Ricans to self-identity as “Taíno” and become members of Neo-Taino organizations. Maximilian Forte, the editor of this book, also comments on the census (p.15) and notes that “the numerical map is simply all over the place” when it comes this issue.
3. See Martínez Cruzado, et al. (2001, 2002, 2005), Rivera (2003), and Hulme, “Advance (sic) Praise for Indigenous Resurgence in the Contemporary Caribbean,” at the beginning of Forte’s book (no pp.#).
4. Maximilian C. Forte teaches anthropology at Concordia University, Montreal, Canada. José Barreiro is currently Assistant Director for Research at the National Museum of the American Indian, Washington D.C. Dr. Lynne Guitar is an independent historian and anthropologist currently living and working in the Dominican Republic. Pedro Ferbel-Azcarate (aka Peter Ferbel or Pedro Ferbel), also an anthropologist, is affiliated with the Archivo Histórico de Santiago, Dominican Republic, and teaches in the Black Studies Department at Portland State University, Oregon. Jorge Estevez, another contributor under review in this article, is a Workshop Coordinator at the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian in New York.
5. Also see Casasús (1950: 48-9) and Miro Argenter (1945: 23) as cited in Barreiro (pp.30-1).
6. Also, see Nuñez Jiménez (1945: 37, 197) as cited in Barreiro (pp.28, 29). At this point, it should be noted that all indigenous populations that have come into direct contact with Europeans, Africans and Asians during the past 500 year have become ethnically mixed in some way or another. The difference with regard to Cuba is that there is an established historical tradition and an apparent official recognition of a population in Cuba. This is not the case in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic where self-identified Taínos usually face unofficial and official rejection because of complicated legal, political and social issues, and the fact that there is no established or apparent historical tradition.
7. The reference to a “biological feature” seems to suggest an acknowledgement that alleged indigenous survivors are of mixed background—also acknowledged on (pp.45, 48, 53, 60, 61, 62-3). However, it should be noted here that the authors of this chapter do not acknowledge that persons of mixed background can be defined exclusively as self-identified Taínos—giving the impression to ordinary readers, and even academics, that Neo-Taínos are claiming a racial pedigree. Only when pressed on this issue, do Neo-Taínos admit to a mixed ethnic background and culture, which they otherwise minimize or erase.
8. The three authors also state in their conclusion (p.63) that “the tenacity of Taíno cultural expression and

biological continuity suggests that a reexamination and reclamation of the Taíno past has finally arrived and that it is spreading in the Dominican Republic.” Unfortunately, this “reexamination and reclamation” has been complicated by recent legislation that eliminates the official “*Indio*” category traditionally used in the Dominican Republic against Haitians and persons defined as “Black,” which the authors of this chapter tend to minimize or ignore. On the legislation, see:

<<http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2011/12/04/no-indian-id-law-being-proposed-dominican-republic-65739>> or type “No Indian ID Law Being Proposed in the Dominican Republic” in your browser. For more on this issue, see endnote #12 in this review)

9. Mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) is traced back in time only through a single female line in the individual’s genome (mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, and so-on) in contrast to the y-chromosome which is traced back exclusively through a single male line (father, grandfather, great-grandfather, and so-on). By contrast, the “autosomal” or “admixture mapping” test is an attempt to determine the relative contribution of selected ancestral/continental populations to an individual’s current genome. These populations are usually defined broadly as sub-Saharan African, European, Asian and Native American, but there are also attempts to narrow the ancestral populations into smaller categories, such as specific ethnic or tribal groups. “Blood quanta” refers to an earlier type of biological analysis that determined the blood types (A, B and O, etc.) allegedly prevalent in specific populations, with a disproportionately high number of Amerindians alleged to have “O” type blood. The results from one recent study utilizing “autosomal” or “admixture mapping” for the Dominican Republic are as follows: 46.8% European, 41.7% Sub-Saharan African, and only 11.5% indigenous on average. See Bryc et al. (2009: Document from the American Society of Human Genetics in author’s possession and no longer available on the internet.).

10. Missing from the discussion of this issue is any kind of reference to the controversies surrounding the scientific validity of these tests as applied and interpreted for Caribbean Latinos/as and other ethnically mixed populations. Hundreds and even thousands of individuals who have contributed to an individual’s genome over time are not analyzed in the tests for mtDNA and the y-chromosome because of the focus on a single male or female line that may go back 7,000 years (mtDNA measures distant ancestry only). The admixture tests have also come under criticism as unreliable because of their crass commercialization, their limited data bases, and the exaggerated claims that have been made for this research. See Duster (nd.), Brown (2002), Elliott and Brodwin (2002), Weiss and Fullerton (2005), Cabrera Salcedo (2006), Haslip-Viera (2006, 2007, 2008), Brusil-Gil de Lamadrid and Godreau (2007), Bolnick, et al. (2007), Nelson, et al. (2007), Yang, et al. (2007), Nixon (2007), Brody (2009), and Lee, et al. (2009), among others. A recent article by Lee et al. is particularly scathing in its criticism. They write the following:

Genetic Ancestry Testing falls “into an unregulated no-man’s land, with little oversight and few industry guidelines to ensure the quality, validity, and interpretation of information sold....” They also make reference to the:

“limitations of the scientific approaches used to infer genetic ancestry, including the incomplete representation of human genetic diversity in existing databases, the false assumption that contemporary groups are reliable substitutes for ancestral populations, and the lack of transparency regarding the statistical methods that companies use to determine test results....” “Human genetic variation research is a continuously shifting landscape. This dynamic marketplace puts in stark relief the limitations of categorical thinking about how genetic information is produced and applied....” “...private sector providers of ancestry testing have proprietary reasons for keeping secret their own particular combinations of key technology, software, and population sampling procedures, and many are unwilling to disclose the size and composition of their reference populations.” See Lee, et al. (2009).

11. The company that tested Estévez, DNA Print Genomics, provides its customers with precise percentages for each ancestral group as it did in my own case when I was tested by the same company soon after reading the comments made by Estévez. However, he or Forte, his editor, failed to provide figures in the chapter, even though Estévez sent Forte an e-mail with this kind of information (2-27-2006). Estévez also informed Forte that he had actually taken the test on three successive occasions because he was not “convinced” or was dissatisfied with the initial results. As it turned out, each successive test generated increased levels of indigenous DNA—raising major question about the company, its database, their accountability and other issues as noted by Lee, et al. (2009) among others. The initial scores were 39% African, 32% Caucasian, and 29% Native American, but in the final test, the score for indigenous had increased to 42%.

Estevez has also flip-flopped on this issue depending on the context or the persons with whom he is having a discussion. He spent much time outlining the merits of genetic testing in a presentation that he made in a 2012 panel session at the City College, CUNY, titled “Discussing the Taíno Legacy: a Forum and Photo Exhibit.” However, he has also been occasionally dismissive of genetic testing. For example, he noted in internet postings dated July 2, 2009 and August 14, 2012, that “mtdna is a great tool for tracing migrations but it's actually a poor tool for racial classifications” (e.g.: European “White” and “Indian” etc.) and that “Autosomal DNA does not give you true ‘pedigree.’ What it does is tell you how much ancestry you have from various populations within 5 generations,” which is followed by the comment that “we need a more extensive study.”

It should be noted at this point, that the genetic testing companies have in fact been roundly criticized for telling their customers what they want to hear. See Bolnick, et al. (2007) and Nixon (2007). The tests also need to be monitored and their results subjected to a rigorous, scientific peer review process in order to avoid what is already happening—the deliberate and public distortion of test results by self-serving individuals on the internet and other media. An article published by Wang, et al. (2008) is one of the first to provide suggested methods to insure that research based on “autosomal” or “admixture mapping” are subject to a rigorous peer review process. On the test results for Estevez, see <[http://www.allempires.com/forum/forum\\_posts.asp?TID=24810](http://www.allempires.com/forum/forum_posts.asp?TID=24810)>. His comments on the internet and at the City College, CUNY, panel session can be accessed at: <<http://www.totalwebcasting.com/view/?id=ccny>>.

12. See Candelario (2007: 5, 16-20, 24, 25, 27, 28-9, 31 and passim), and Sagas (2000: 76, 130-1 and passim). Also see Roberts (2000) which focuses on the entire Spanish-speaking Caribbean. It also should be noted at this point that legislation recommended by the United Nations was approved by the Dominican Republic to officially eliminate the “*Indio*” racial category because of its use against Haitians and “Black” Dominicans; however, spokespersons for the Taíno resurgence movement, most notably, Jorge Estevez and Roberto Mukaro Borrero, have protested this legislation and have called for the retention of the “*Indio*” category. It is clear that activists and spokespersons for the Taíno resurgence movement have shown little concern, or do not care that this category has been used, and continues to be used, against Haitians and Dominicans defined as “Black.” See the articulated support for the retention of the *Indio* category in the Dominican Republic by Jorge Estevez, Roberto Mukaro Borrero, and Rick Kearns at <<http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2011/12/04/no-indian-id-law-being-proposed-dominican-republic-65739>> or type “No Indian ID Law Being Proposed in the Dominican Republic” in your browser.

13. That is discrimination in the workplace, housing, access to health care, education, social services (etc.), and also assuming that individuals do not present themselves dressed in feathered costumes and other Amerindian paraphernalia which would probably lead to questions and probable ridicule.

14. On the romanticized view of the indigenous in U.S. society, See Hitt (2005).

15. This is another questionable claim which is not demonstrated by the authors of this chapter, whose

main objective is to promote the alleged cultural primacy of the Taíno in the Dominican Republic.

16. This book also includes a dreadful, poorly written, concluding chapter by Arthur Einhorn, a former director of the Lewis County (New York) Historical Society and Museum, that is cynically dismissive and hostile to any kind of nationalist socio-economic agenda and identity for Caribbean Latinos/as and other Caribbean peoples. See (Chapter 14, pp. 279 and *passim*). It also should be noted here that despite the nostalgia for the romanticized pre-modern agricultural culture of the Taínos, there is the acceptance and even aggressive use of the tools of the modern global economy, such as TV and the internet, in the promotion of an exclusive indigenous pedigree.

17. Also, see Prins (2002: 70).

18. See Benedict Anderson (1991).

19. Citing the work of Terence Turner, Forte also states that video is one of the media that “may empower persons to transform their stock of social and cultural forms”—an assertion that may be true for some individuals but remains unproven in the case of the Neo-Taínos. See Forte (p. 257) and Turner (2002: 80).

20. On the activities of Naniki Reyes Ocasio and her group, see Brown (2003), Haslip-Viera (2007: 421-2), and the July-August 2005 internet blogs by Roberto Mukaro Borrero at <[www.uctp.blogspot.com](http://www.uctp.blogspot.com)> (transcript in author’s possession).

21. Pedro Ferbel-Azcarate also notes in the earlier chapter on the Dominican Republic (p. 54) that “We should be informed to understand the racist implications of why one drop of African blood makes a person ‘Black’ while a higher standard is used to determine whether a person is an ‘Indian,’” but like Forte, he does not provide an assessment of this problematic statement and the issue of the bogus “one drop” rule.

22. See (U.S. Census Bureau, American Factfinder at: <<http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>>). International agencies, universities and other institutions also provide figures for Cuba and the Dominican Republic, but it should be understood that these data do not reflect how persons may actually identify if given the opportunity. For the Dominican Republic, the figures are 16% “white,” 11% “black,” and 73% “mixed” or “Creole” (i.e.: some variant of *Indio* or other). For Cuba, the figures are 37% “White,” 51% “Mulatto” or “Creole,” 11% “Black,” and 1% “Chinese.” These are consensus figures from a variety of sources which range from the “*Factbook*” of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency to the *World Book Encyclopedia*; however, the CIA provides a different breakdown for Cuba—65.1% white, 24.8% mulatto and mestizo, and 10.1% Black. See <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cu.html#People>> or search the CIA website.

Otherwise, Arthur Einhorn also notes in the concluding chapter of this book (p.282) that “the Dominican Republic’s general population seems to retain a compulsive urge to promote the Iberian part of their identity... Yet once Dominicans land in New York City, an amazing transformation ensues; the ‘diaspora’ populations in New York City and elsewhere have affiliated with established North American Indian groups as well as organizing their own groups as Taíno.” This statement on Dominicans in the United States is of course ridiculously inaccurate and not supported by any citation or evidence. Data on racial identity for Dominicans in the United States can vary substantially depending on what and how questions are asked, who or which institutions or agencies are asking the questions, and what locality or region is being surveyed. For example, only 0.1% of foreign born Dominicans self-identified as indigenous in the 2000 census; however, 10.0% of 418 Dominicans surveyed in a study published in 2005 identified as “*Indio*,” which was interpreted by the authors of the survey as the official Dominican

classification for “*Indio*” and not identity as Taíno. Interestingly, only 3.8% of those who identified as “*Indio*” also thought that mainstream Anglo Americans would classify them as Native American or indigenous. The reluctance of U.S. mainland Dominicans to identify as indigenous was also evident in the 2010 census—29.6% of Dominicans identified as white, 12.9% identified as Black, 1.4% identified as Amerindian or Alaska Native, 9.7% identified as having “two or more races,” and 46.0% marked the box for “some other race” See U.S. Census Bureau (2002, 2010), Bonilla-Silva (2004: 938), and Itzigsohn, et al. (2005: 58-62 and passim).

23. The serious shortcomings and methodological problems that are associated with storytelling and oral traditions are discussed in Metcalf (2001) and other sources.

24. Here, Anglo-American academics, such as Ferbel, Forte, and Guitar, leave themselves open to accusations that they are “divide and conquer” agents of the globalized Western imperialism for promoting potentially conflictual political agendas based on divisive ethno-racial issues that distract or divert attention from real concerns. Forte may, or may not recognize this problem (p.261) when he disdainfully dismisses those critics who have already accused the alleged Taínos and their academic mentors for supporting “a sinister, separatist or racist agenda.”

25. At the beginning of his introductory essay, Forte admits (p.4) “that indigenous activists” may be “‘essentializing’ their identities as consisting of a core of fixed traits,” but this problem is subsequently ignored or minimized by Forte and the other authors.

26. As explained in Haslip-Viera (2006, 2008).

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**Part 2.**  
**A review of Tony Castanha's**  
***The Myth of Indigenous Caribbean Extinction:***  
***Continuity and Reclamation in Borikén (Puerto Rico).***  
**New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2011.**

In this book, Tony Castanha tries to establish a connection and a mostly unadulterated physical and cultural continuity between the pre-Columbian indigenous population of Puerto Rico and those individuals on the island and the Diaspora who currently assert or claim an exclusive or privileged indigenous or “Taíno” identity. In this endeavor, Castanha is generally unsuccessful because the evidence is either lacking or is presented in a problematic or unconvincing manner. The title of the book is therefore inappropriate because pure blooded Taínos (100% Native American) became extinct probably by the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century as survivors mixed biologically and culturally with Spaniards, Africans and others who came to Puerto Rico in the succeeding decades and centuries.

Castanha claims that his “work is an attempt to draw on *alternative* sources of written and oral information to allow most importantly, the indigenous Caribbean voice to speak and to be better recognized, for this voice has remained silent for too long” (p.1). Unwittingly, the last part of this statement reveals the very serious limitations of his approach to the subject matter. Castanha has not been able to locate and assess the indigenous voice of the sixteenth to late twentieth century unless it has been filtered by the Spaniards, Anglo-Americans and other Westerners.[1] He is therefore obliged to choose, or he deliberately chooses to focus on the very problematic voices of the more articulate “leaders,” activists, and spokespersons for the contemporary Taíno revival movement among Puerto Ricans, along with a few of their supporters in academia and elsewhere.

In a problematic section on “mythmaking” (pp.21-50), Castanha relies on academic sources that he would otherwise despise for many of his claims. However, he also maintains that modern scholars who claim that the Taínos became extinct in the sixteenth century have been misled or duped by the deliberate lies and distorted accounts of chroniclers and officials of the Spanish colonial period and should therefore not be trusted. Nevertheless, when it comes to stories told to him by Taíno revivalists and their supporters, his consistent reaction is to accept them at face value without question or with little or no reservation.

His sources among the contemporary storytellers can also be quite bizarre. In addition to the Taíno revivalists that he interviews among “elders,” artisans and residents of the interior regions of Puerto Rico (the alleged traditional homeland of indigenous people since the late sixteenth century), he relies heavily on a few individuals who are judged by him to be experts on the history of the island and its peoples. An important source among these alleged experts is a rather mysterious fellow by the name of Oki Lamourt-Valentín, who is described as a “Carib...scholar” and “preeminent linguist of the native language of the island,” who also “was basically ostracized by the academy...because his work and views did not conform to the main academic line” (xiv-xv, 17).

As a result of the importance that he gives to Lamourt-Valentín, Castanha’s book is peppered with many of his false or crudely exaggerated claims. These include the following among others:

1. “We are Jíbaro.” “We are Indians.” “We are Caribs.” “...and refer to ourselves as, within the context of a nationality, ‘Boricuas’” (pp.xv-xvi). (*GHV note. All of these names are conflated*



here to mean “Indian.”)

2. “We [referring to the Taíno] were a great empire.” (p.51).
3. “the Spaniards were astounded at the major civilization they had encountered.” “This was a major civilization.” “It freaked the Spanish out” (p.73).
4. “They (the Spaniards) were kicked out of all the major islands. They only had Havana and the western part of Cuba.” They only had “two or three trade outposts” in Santo Domingo (p. 73). (*GHV note. He makes no mention of Puerto Rico in this regard.*)
5. “...the commercial language in Borikén was never Spanish. Spanish was a secondary language” (p.73).

These claims are always accepted without question as fact and are often followed by Castanha’s claims which like Lamourt-Valentín’s, are poorly supported, not supported at all, or they are hurled at the reader without any citations whatsoever. They are also frequently repeated, sometimes ad-nauseam, in a crude effort to convince the average or uninformed reader of their alleged truthfulness. Castanha’s claims (bogus in this case) include the following among many others:

1. “...there were and are many ‘white Indians’ on the island, as well as throughout the Americas (both pre- and post-European contact)” (p.93).
2. “*Mestizos*,” “*pardos libres*,” and “*Jíbaros*” are all “Indians” in actuality (pp.xv, xvi, 6, 49, 78, 80, 88, 124 and passim). [2]
3. “...the people called themselves (*Jíbaro*) before the Europeans arrived...” (p.xv).
4. “...there could have been well over two hundred thousand Indian inhabitants present in Borikén in the late eighteenth century” (p.80 and passim). [3]
5. “...when Abbad y Lasierra penned in 1788 that ‘*mulatos*’ on the island comprised the largest segment of the population, he was unwittingly referring to *mestizo* Indian people” (p.79).
6. “a majority of the population in Bolivia is made up of indigenous peoples, this is also the case in Borikén” (p.124).
7. Castanha also articulates exaggerated claims about the “presence” or “survival” of Indian communities in Puerto Rico’s mountainous interior regions throughout the period from the sixteenth to the late nineteenth century (pp.10, 18-9, 49, 61-2, 64, 65, 74, 74-80 and passim).[4]
8. Castanha also admits that the years from the 1530s to 1776 and again from 1808 to the 1860s were periods of “silence” for the alleged Indians of interior Puerto Rico, but he also claims that this was a period of indigenous “passive resistance” because the Indians were ignored, or they forced the Spaniards to ignore them (pp. 2, 19, 53, 54, 63, 67, 133-4 and chapter 4 in general).

It also needs to be said that Castanha's use of mainstream academic and journalistic sources are also problematic. On the one hand, he falsely and repeatedly accuses academics of indulging in a conspiracy to silence and erase the history of "Indian survival" (pp.1, 3, 11, 17, 61-2 and *passim*), but he has no problem with the acceptance of academic and journalistic sources that might support his claims however problematic. Yet, even in these cases, the sources are poorly used, or they are employed in a manipulative or pseudo-scholarly manner.[5] The impressionistic study of Puerto Ricans published by journalist Stan Steiner in 1974 is a case in point and an important source for Castanha and other Taíno revivalists. However, it's not clear that Steiner actually believed that there were still Indians in Puerto Rico when he wrote his book. As a journalist, he reported on the claims that were made by "the storyteller" or the "old Jíbaro" when he visited the interior of the island, but he makes no definitive statement on whether there were actual Indians in Puerto Rico.[6] Castanha and other Taíno revivalists also fail to quote another statement made by Steiner that would not support a major claim they make. Steiner's statement with regard to the sixteenth century is as follows:

"In the early years of slavery, it was the Jelofe (Wolof) tribesmen of Senegal who were most often shipped to Puerto Rico.... It was the Jelofes who led the way into the mountains, to freedom, where they joined the Borinqueños in their hidden caves and villages.... As a tribal people, the Jelofes and the Borinqueños lived in somewhat similar ways. They had common beliefs. They knew similar trees and gods and spirits. They ate roots and fruits that were familiar, for both were men and women of the tropics. So they understood one another better than either understood the behavior of the Europeans.... The African men on the island outnumbered the black women by four to one; so it was natural that these men sought Indian women as lovers. And the children born of these matings created the strongest bonds between the slaves and the Indians" (pp.56-57).

In contradiction to this statement, Castanha and other Taíno revivalists have been claiming that the supposedly "small" numbers of Africans and impoverished Spaniards who joined the Taínos in the mountainous interior of Puerto Rico in the sixteenth century, or who migrated into these regions in the decades and centuries that followed, were "absorbed" by a supposedly much larger indigenous population. They also claim that the Africans and Spaniards who migrated into the interior of the island adopted the indigenous culture and became Indians as a result (pp.7, 8, 10, 109-112, 117-119, 132, 136 and *passim*). Steiner clearly does not see it this way and Castanha fails to provide evidence to support his claim.

This argument is also related to another claim or viewpoint that sees ethnic mixture, biological and cultural hybridity, and creolization among Puerto Ricans and other Caribbean Latinos/as as an impossibility despite the repeated admission that biological, and cultural mixing has in fact taken place (pp.xiii, 6, 8, 9, 14, 46-47, 52, 112, 135 and *passim*). According to Castanha and other Taíno revivalists, everything that is non-indigenous has been totally absorbed into the indigenous and rendered invisible or unimportant as a result (e.g.: pp.109-112). This allows them to subsequently claim a privileged or exclusive Taíno identity and it also allows them to minimize or erase the importance of the real biological and cultural contributions of Africans, Spaniards and others.

In this regard and not cited by Castanha, are the results of fourteen genetic "admixture mapping" tests (now twenty in number) published since 2004 that show that Puerto Ricans and Dominicans on average are ethnic hybrids that are overwhelmingly of European and African

background. The combined averages of the fourteen tests show that Puerto Ricans are 61.7% European, 21.7% African, and only 16.8% of Amerindian background. The results for Dominicans also confirm the long term creolization of this population with results from a single study showing that Dominicans are 46.8% European, 41.7% African, and only 11.5% of Amerindian background.[7]

It also needs to be said that the specific references to indigenous cultural survival in Puerto Rico are also vague or skimpy in Castanha's book despite their alleged importance for claims to a Taíno indigeneity. References are made in a limited and self-serving way to the persistence of pre-Columbian agricultural practices, the cultivation of "ñame, yuca" and "batata," the use of "plants for herbal and medicinal purposes," and the continued adherence to certain religious practices and ceremonies (pp.8, 9, 109-12, 117-19, 136 and passim). However, the plants, animals and much of the culture introduced by Spaniards and others, beginning in the sixteenth century, are minimized or erased from Castanha's narrative because of his rigid ideological rejection of hybridity or creolization. For example, the reader is not informed that plantains, bananas, mangoes and other products were introduced from the outside and consumed by the islanders everywhere during the Spanish colonial period. The reader is not informed that chickens, pigs, goats and other foreign animals were introduced into island society during the same period and that the meat and other products derived from these animals was consumed by the islanders in all areas. The reader is also not informed that tools and other implements of foreign origin were adopted and used by the islanders, and so on.

Castanha would have you believe that the economy and culture of the alleged Indians of Puerto Rico's interior and elsewhere was essentially the Taíno of the pre-Columbian period with only minor outside linguistic and religious influences, and that this alleged reality prevailed without significant change for some 400 years from the 1530s to the early 1900s. Castanha would also have you believe that DNA testing is no longer important compared to a demonstration of "cultural continuity" even though he and other Taíno revivalists enthusiastically embraced and exaggerated the findings of earlier and relatively insignificant research that showed that 61% of Puerto Ricans had traces of mitochondrial DNA.[8] An individual interviewed by Castanha by the name of "Isabel" exemplifies the position that he and other Taíno revivalists now take with regard to this issue. After admitting that there was significant African ancestry in her family tree, "Isabel" is quoted as saying that regardless, "all of them are *Indio*, no matter what" (p.112).[9]

Despite Castanha's efforts to rewrite the history of the indigenous in Puerto Rico as a result of his interviews with contemporary Taínos (etc.), his speculation on their "survival" over the centuries, and his charge that academics and others have tried to suppress their "true" history is a truly bogus claim that he shares with other fanatics in the Taíno resurgence movement. The earlier general consensus on this issue still prevails as originally articulated by historian, Salvador Brau, way back at the beginning of the twentieth century (1904, 1907). Pure blooded Taínos (100% Amerindian) were decimated in the sixteenth century as a result of disease, enslavement and war with the Spaniards. An unknown but probably small number of Taínos most likely survived in the mountainous interior regions and elsewhere into the seventeenth century. These pure "blooded Taínos" (100% Amerindian) eventually became extinct biologically by mixing physically (and also culturally) with Africans, Europeans and others who came to Puerto Rico during the decades and centuries that followed to produce the hybrid, creolized population and culture that all Puerto Ricans are familiar with today.

## Notes

1. Despite considerable research and linguistic analysis, Dr. Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel admitted in an article published in 2011, that she and research colleagues were unable to “recover an authentic, uncontaminated Taíno voice from the written colonial archive available to us, nor have we yet found documents representing the experiences of the Caribbean indigenous Hispanization fictionally recreated by the *indigenista* literature of the nineteenth century and twentieth centuries.” See Martínez-San Miguel (2011: 209 and *passim*).

2. The terms *Jíbaro*, *Carib*, *Boricua*, *mestizo*, and *pardo* have always referred to specific types or specific groups of people in Latin America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean in various ways and should never be conflated with “Indian” or “Taíno” the way they are conflated by Castanha and Lamourt-Valentín. *Boricua* is a term that is used to refer to all Puerto Ricans and is most often used as the equivalent of the term and the idea of a Puerto Rican. The term *Carib* has been used in reference to the pre-Columbian indigenous populations of the eastern Caribbean, although some modern groups in this region also refer to themselves as Caribs and claim Carib descent. *Mestizo* and *pardo* were terms used by the Spaniards during the colonial period, but the terms are also still used in Latin America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean in reference to specific physical types. *Mestizos* are said to be persons of mixed race in a general sense, or persons who are specifically said to be half European and half Indian. *Pardos* are by definition persons of mixed African and European ancestry, but were specifically defined by Spanish colonial officials as “light brown” persons who were said to be seventy-five percent European and twenty-five percent Black African.

The term *Jíbaro* has been used as a label for the rural peasant population of Puerto Rico—especially those persons living in the mountainous interior region of the island. The term *Jíbaro* has also been equated with “hillbilly” on the United States mainland; however, the origin of this term and its evolution has varied over time. Research by historians and other social scientists have demonstrated that there has never been a connection between the term *Jíbaro* and the pre-Columbian Taíno population of the Caribbean. According to the evidence, the term *Jíbaro* was probably first applied to Puerto Rico’s rural population in the early eighteenth century by Spaniards and the island’s Creole elites. Prior to the eighteenth century, the term *Jíbaro* was used and applied in a very insulting, derogatory manner elsewhere in the Spanish colonial empire. It was used, and is still used, to refer to the *Jíbaros* or *Xíbaros* (the modern Shuar) of Amazonian South America, who were famous during the colonial period for their effective resistance against the Spaniards. In Mexico, the term became a negative racial category that signified the mixed offspring of Africans and Indians. In Cuba and Santo Domingo it was employed as an adjective to define a state of wildness in certain animals, especially undomesticated dogs in forest areas—for example, as in the term *perros jíbaros*. Historian, Francisco Scarano, believes that all three meanings might have been combined when creole elites and Spanish colonial officials in Puerto Rico began to use the term negatively to describe and define the still largely autonomous rural population of Puerto Rico’s mountainous interior in the early eighteenth century. Scarano and others have also concluded that segments of the creole elite, who soon began to advocate for greater autonomy if not total independence for Puerto Rico, began to idealize the *Jíbaro* peasant and even adopted a partial *Jíbaro* identity in order to separate themselves from the colonial authorities and the conservative creoles who supported total royalist control. See Scarano (1996: 1413-15). Otherwise, the earliest known written application of the word *Jíbaro* in Puerto Rico is that of Manuel Moreno Alonso (not the author of *El Gíbaro*) who used the term to describe the population of Aguada in the 1745 journal of his trip to Puerto Rico. In the journal, he states that the men of Aguada are called “*gíbaros*” and are “*amulutados*” (*mulato*) in appearance, and the women are gypsy-like, or in his words “*propiamente agitanadas*.” See Scarano (1996: 1415) and Feliciano-Santos (2011: 59).

3. Castanha and other Taíno revivalists who claim that there were hundreds or even thousands of pure blooded or mixed Indians living in the interior of Puerto Rico in the eighteenth century need to take into

consideration the thoroughness and motivations behind Field Marshal Alejandro O'Reilly's 1765 survey of the island. In the aftermath of the Seven Years War with England (1756-1763), Spanish royal officials, such as O'Reilly, were sent to the American colonies to report on the natural resources, commercial activities, the status of colonial populations, and on other issues of concern to the royal government in a concerted effort to encourage economic development, maximize labor utilization, and increase revenues for the state. There was seemingly no motivation or reason to conceal the existence of a Native American population in Puerto Rico during this period. The same can also be said of Abbad y Lasierra's survey a decade later. The reader can find a summary of O'Reilly's census in Abbad y Lasierra (2002: 378-80).

4. Contrary to assumptions that Castanha makes or would make, the surviving allegedly isolated Indian populations of interior Puerto Rico were probably decimated by epidemic diseases through indirect diffusion that also struck other indigenous peoples not controlled by the Spaniards. According to recent and not so recent research, this is what apparently happened in southeastern North America and also in the Inca Empire and other regions prior to the arrival of the Europeans. In quite a number of instances, the spread of bacteria, viruses and epidemics by diffusion from one Native American group to another preceded the actual arrival of Europeans in particular regions; however, there is a debate on this issue with regard to North America. For the Inca Empire and southeastern North America, see Alchon (2003: 75, 93), Cook (1998:72-3, 76-83, 154-162 and passim) and Hays (2010: 76). For a critique of this issue with regard to southeastern North America, see Kelton (2007: Chapter 2).

5. Castanha tends to rely on old publications by Adalberto López (1980), Loida Figueroa (1978), Stan Steiner 1974), and Juan Angel Silén (1971), among others. To a much lesser degree, he also cites more recent publications by others, such as Samuel M. Wilson (1997), and Fernando Picó (in a contradictory manner, 2006), but in all instances, Castanha suggests or would have the reader believe or assume that the authors of these works would support the idea of indigenous survival or a claim to a modern indigenous pedigree, which is not the case.

6. Although Steiner makes no definitive statement on this issue, the book publisher included an image of a young woman by the photographer, Geno Rodríguez, that includes the caption "a contemporary Indian girl from Jayuya." See pictures in Steiner (1974) after p.110.

7. The results of the two most recent studies for Puerto Ricans show that the percentages for the indigenous have declined to 13.0% and 12.4%. These studies employ the most recent methods to study Puerto Ricans and other similar populations. See pp.111-117 and 291-293 in this book for details.

8. See Castanha's misinterpretation of the findings published in 2005 by Martínez-Cruzado and his team on pp.15, 49, 66, and 135.

9. A Taíno revivalist version and application of the racist "one drop" rule utilized in U.S society against African Americans has also been articulated on the internet. See for example, the comment by "Cacique Coqui" that "one drop" of Taíno blood is sufficient for membership in a "Taíno" tribe in Haslip-Viera (2008: 230)

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