

**Taíno Affirmation in the 21st Century:
Proliferating communities of indigenous consciousness
within and out of the Caribbean.**

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Published June 2013, <http://www.tainolegacies.com/170582894>

Affirming Taíno cultural identity

Contemplating the complex situations of Indigenous Peoples in the Caribbean, from the point of first contact with Europeans into the 21st century, one is eventually faced with the reality of varied manifestations of Taíno affirmation, which have come to be described by some as the *Taíno resurgence* or simply the *Taíno movement*. The Taíno resurgence movement can fundamentally describe large groupings of individuals, communities, and or organizations focused on the informal and or formal affirmation of Taíno heritage in the context of the universal right to self-determination.[i] In essence, the Taíno resurgence movement represents shared culture knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions operating as unifying forces within diverse communities of indigenous consciousness. Indeed, Taíno affirmation can affect identity, lifestyle, culture, and even public policy at the local, national, and international level.

In the broadest context, it can be said that the Taíno movement began over 500 years ago when indigenous Caribbean islanders first attempted to resist, undo, or adapt to the rapid social changes occurring in the region due to the violent encroachment of European colonizers. More recently, however, beyond the documented existence of extant Indigenous descendant communities largely comprised of extended families throughout the Greater Antilles (Loven, 1935; Rouse, 1948; Delgado, 1977; Barreiro, 1989; Borrero, 1999, Castanha, 1999; Rivera, 2003), a few notable manifestations of indigenous Taíno affirmation beyond the family/clan structure became more visible in region during the 1970s.[ii] This activity takes place within the environment of civil rights/ethnicity equity initiatives such as the Black Power Movement, the Chicano Movement, and the American Indian Movement (Borrero 1999, 121; Castanha, 1999; Rivera 2003, 489). While the origins and scope of contemporary Taíno activism is generally ignored or even devalued by academia, during this time period there is also evidence of individuals affirming Taíno heritage independently, while participating with other indigenous groups, or establishing informal cultural groups (Borrero 1999, 121; Feliciano-Santos 2011, 35).[iii] By the 1980s more formal collectives emerge within and out of the Caribbean, forming a basis for the varied expressions of Taíno affirmation seen in the 21st century.[iv]

Indeed, the development of these groups did not occur in isolation; there are clearly established relationships linking groups on and off the islands (Borrero 1999, 120). In the late 1980s into the early 1990s, primer cultural group *Paseo Taíno*, for example, maintained contact with former members of

their *Travesía Taína* project who moved from the group's base in Borikén (Puerto Rico) to New York, who in turn influenced the development of pioneering urban-based initiative "La Asociación Indígena Taína" aka the *Taíno Native American Association*.^[v] One of the oldest Taíno organizations based in the U.S., the Caney Indigenous Spiritual Circle, based in Pennsylvania, had also established ties to elders in Borikén and to community members in New York. From these early formations, various informal collectives, as well as formal organizations have evolved, evoking varied agendas, and like any other ethnic group, even fierce rivalries. Across these diverse manifestations, however, the affirmation of indigenous Taíno heritage remains a unifying call to consciousness.^[vi]

Additionally, these later informal and formal Taíno groupings were not the first tangible manifestations of Caribbean Indigenous affirmation. At the grass-roots level, and even among some scholarly sources, it is understood that various families and clans throughout the Greater Antilles maintained indigenous/Indian/Indio identity and traditions over the generations (Loven, 1935; Delgado, 1977; Barreiro, 1989; Guitar, 1998; Kearns, 1998, Borrero, 1999). Many of these families can be identified as part of the Jíbaro, Guajiro, and campesino population sectors of Puerto Rican, Cuban, and Dominican societies residing both in the rural mountainous and coastal regions. Oral histories and some historical accounts affirm that, at times, members of these extended families moved from insular rural sectors to other rural sectors or more urban centers, on and off the islands (Borrero, 1999; Delgado, 2007). Some of these families, from Borikén in particular, immigrated as far as Hawai'i in the Pacific (Castanha, 1999).^[vii] Fortified with an Indigenous identity fostered at the family/clan level, these individuals began to meet others with similar family backgrounds in these areas; there new communities of Indigenous consciousness were formed.

Taíno in the 1990s

With the media hype around the quincentennial celebrations of Columbus' arrival to the Western Hemisphere, some Taíno in the U.S. joined with other Indigenous Peoples of the Americas to not only protest the celebrations, but to promote their collective and basic human right of self-determination. Taíno were present and active, for instance, in the coordinating committee of large American Indian protest demonstrations at Dag Hammarskjold Plaza across from United Nations Headquarters in 1992 and 1993.^[viii] Within this framework of hemispheric Indigenous mobilization, more politicized positions began to emerge among Taíno groups, which highlighted concepts of nation building,

social justice, and formal ties with other Indigenous Peoples (Ponce de León, 1992; Santana, 2006). These efforts were largely led by Borikén Taíno activists. Working in collaboration, for instance, groups such as Maisití Yucayeque Taíno and the Kasibahagua Taíno Cultural Society based in New York, and the Consejo General de Taínos Borincanos based in Borikén, began to send representatives to the United Nations to participate within the growing international Indigenous Peoples movement. During this time, the Nacion Taína de las Antillas (Taíno Nation of the Antilles), also based in New York, was also founded and worked to establish more formalized relations with other Indigenous communities such as the Ramapo Mountain Lenape and the Shuar of Ecuador.

While the increased focus on more political efforts continued to develop, Taíno cultural expressions also flourished. The 1990s saw a dramatic increase in Taíno participation in the American Indian Pow Wow circuit on the U.S. East Coast (Kearns, 1998). Members of *Paseo Taíno*, in fact, traveled from Borikén (Puerto Rico) in 1990 to give a presentation on Taíno music and culture at the Rancocas Pow Wow in New Jersey. Additionally, the *Arawak Mountain Singers* travelled the Northeast Pow Wow circuit singing Southern Style Pow Wow songs in the Taíno language and released two recordings on the SOAR label in 1994-95 (Arawak Mountain). Members of the Arawak Mountain Singers also participated in Taíno cultural presentations with the *Kasibahagua Taíno Cultural Society*. Further, the first full length Taíno music recording entitled “Dance of the Mountain People” was independently released in 1994 featuring pre-Columbian style Taíno instruments, rhythms, and songs (Borrero, 2011). Back in Borikén, *Paseo Taíno/Travesía Taína* continued to educate large audiences via cultural presentations at state-run archeological parks and festivals, which in turn inspired the formation of other cultural groups on the island. Members of groups based in the U.S. often participated with groups in Borikén (Puerto Rico) during public cultural presentations, as well as during more private ceremonial gatherings. During this same period, the Caney Quinto Mundo was also established in Orocovis, promoting the concept land re-acquisition and Taíno self-determination.

Toward the later part of the 1990s the Taíno resurgence continued to intersect with scholars and educational institutions. Taíno cultural education groups, such as Kasibahagua Taíno Cultural Society, Presencia Taína, Travesía Taína, and Concilio Guatú Macú, among others, raised awareness via presentations at major museums, universities, and festivals, both in Borikén and the United States. During this same time, a series of Taíno focused conferences were organized in Cuba bringing together academics, Taíno

activists, and local community members (Ferbel, 1998; Cintrón, 2006). In addition to presenting new information on Taíno heritage and cultural survivals, these programs also served to strengthen connections between Taíno people throughout the Caribbean and the Diaspora. Back in New York, *Presencia Taína.TV* launched a weekly television broadcast on Manhattan Neighborhood Network that was not only broadcast on local cable, but also streamed worldwide on the Internet.[ix]

New York's *El Museo del Barrio* opened "Taíno: Pre-Columbian Art and Culture from the Caribbean" in 1997-98, a major exhibition that attracted the "largest audience in the museum's history" (Pardo, 2000). The exhibition *Taíno: Pre-Columbian Art and Culture* at El Museo included important Pre-Columbian Taíno works from major institutions, private collections and the museum's holdings, yet it did not include the contemporary voices of Taíno peoples. El Museo, however, did organize an accompanying exhibition entitled "The Taíno Legacy," which opened at the same time, but was accessible to the public for a shorter duration. *Taíno Legacy* featured contemporary photographs and video presentations that documented aspects of indigenous cultural and biological continuity in the Greater Antilles. Unlike *Taíno: Pre-Columbian Art and Culture*, an associated publication, internet-accessible lesson plans, or student resources were not produced for *Taíno Legacy*. The voices of contemporary Taíno activists were therefore limited to a few public programs. El Museo also hosted several exhibitions related symposia that featured academic perspectives on Taíno worldview.[x]

Other programs of note during this time included initiatives organized by the Institute of Community Research, based in Connecticut, and *Presencia Taína*, based in New York. A precedent-setting scholarly initiative, The Institute of Community Research produced an exhibition entitled "Taíno Heritage: Legacy and Life," as well as an associated educational brochure available in both English and Spanish. Both the exhibition and brochure were inclusive of the perspectives of researchers, as well as Taíno activists and cultural practitioners. A Taíno led initiative; *Presencia Taína's Voice of Mother Earth* conferences brought together contemporary Taíno activists with representatives of other Indigenous nations at the *Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian George Gustav Heye Center* in New York.[xi] Demonstrating the increased public awareness of contemporary Taíno activity beyond museum activity, Taíno activists were also professionally contracted as consultants for the BBC/PBS production of "Spirits of the Jaguar: Hunter of the Caribbean Sea," an internationally televised documentary chronicling the

development of the flora, fauna, and ancient indigenous civilizations of the Caribbean.[xii] As result of participation of the Taino consultants, the program *Hunters of the Caribbean Sea* did not refer to the Taino as “extinct” peoples.

Concurrent with the increased activism in the mid-1990s, Dr. Juan Martínez Cruzado, a geneticist from the University of Puerto Rico Mayagüez, began to investigate Indigenous biological heritage in Borikén studying mitochondrial DNA. Based on his research findings, Cruzado estimated that approximately 61% of Puerto Ricans could possess Amerindian mitochondrial DNA (“Surviving Columbus,” 2003). According to Martínez Cruzado, the study revealed two important facts; “there was assimilation but the [Taino] people were not extinguished...” and “there has been an under-estimation of the Amerindian heritage of Puerto Rico, much larger than most historians will admit” (Kearns, 2003). Into the first decade of the 21st century, similar scientific studies conducted in the Kiskeia (Dominican Republic) and Cuba have continued to challenge state-sponsored Taíno extinction narratives, as well as reinforce claims of Taíno affirmation across the Caribbean and the Diaspora.[xiii]

Taíno in the 21st Century

With regard to Indigenous Peoples of the Western Hemisphere, it is well-established that the “expectation of extinction” dominated the overall contemplation of the first century of American anthropological discourse (“Surviving Columbus,” 2003; Barreiro, 2011). Within this framework, Taíno affirmation and re-tribalization efforts in the 21st century are no less than a remarkable testament to the strength and veracity of the diverse communities of Taíno consciousness. While the denial of existence or claims of illegitimacy remain generally consistent responses by sectors of government and academia, the advances in information and communications technologies (ICTs) has facilitated greater accessibility to grassroots and scholarly documentation of Taíno affirmation through a variety of media including university dissertations, local, national, and international electronic news sources, printed publications, film and radio archives, as well as an ever-increasing amount of group websites, blogs, and social network pages both in the English and Spanish languages (Forte, 2002). Depending on the agendas of particular groups or individuals, work or research focus, aspirations, as well as the articulation of perspectives vary. Among all these diverse groups and individuals, however, is an overarching unified position affirming a living Taino People, culture, and heritage.

Beyond ICTs, Taíno cultural (including spiritual) awareness-raising continues

during intimate community-based gatherings or large public cultural educational events held within and out of the islands. The opening of the 21st century saw re-tribalising efforts manifest through community areito (socio-ceremonial gatherings) organized independently by Nacion Taína, Concilio Guatú Macú, Esencia Tabonuco, El Consejo General de Taínos Borincanos, the Caney Indigenous Spiritual Circle, and the United Confederation of Taíno People (UCTP). A myriad of community-oriented arts workshops, panels, poetry readings, cultural presentations, as well as spiritual gatherings were also organized by various Taíno groups and individuals throughout the last decade.[xiv] At times these efforts are the result of collaborations with formal educational and cultural institutions, or they are organized at the grassroots level in response to community wants and or needs. Since the crises in Vieques, for instance, Taíno in Borikén, have been more and more visible in island-wide actions on the environment and other issues.[xv] Most recently Taíno in Borikén and New York participated in various actions against the proposed natural gas pipeline also known locally as the “Gasoducto.” This increased awareness and community mobilization has impacted other manifestations of Taíno affirmation beyond individuals and local community exchanges to national and international forums. The existence of Taíno groups in Borikén, for instance, is recognized at the local and national governmental level.[xvi]

While no Taíno entity is currently recognized via the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, governmental recognition for Taíno has extended into the United States. At the Federal level, the United Confederation of Taíno People (UCTP), for example, officially partnered with the U.S. Census Bureau during its campaigns 2000 and 2010.[xvii] This partnership contributed to an almost 50% increase in persons affirming American Indian ancestry in Borikén, over 35,000 persons, in 2010 (UCTP Taíno News, 2011). Additionally, the UCTP has received U.S. Congressional recognition, as well as State and local level recognition in New York. At the international level, the communications work of the UCTP was recognized as a “best practice” by the government of Canada during the preparatory process for the United Nations World Summit on the Information Society (Gov. of Canada, 2005). Continuing the inter-Tribal outreach work that began in the 1990s, the Confederation has re-invigorated Indigenous to Indigenous relations throughout the Caribbean region entering into treaties of solidarity with Caribbean Indigenous Governments and Tribal organizations in Dominica, Trinidad, Barbados, Bermuda, and St. Thomas, as well as with related South American mainland communities in Venezuela and Guyana.[xviii]

Taíno have similarly engaged North American Indigenous Peoples. The

National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), for instance, issued a resolution concerning sacred sites in Borikén (Puerto Rico) and United Confederation of Taíno People's efforts to address the issue.[xix] Founded in 1944, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) is the oldest, largest, and most representative American Indian and Alaska Native organization serving the broad interests of tribal governments and communities. In 2006, the UCTP was accepted as an affiliate of the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC). The IITC is an organization of Indigenous Peoples from North, Central, South America, the Caribbean and the Pacific working for the Sovereignty and Self-Determination of Indigenous Peoples and the recognition and protection of Indigenous Rights, Treaties, Traditional Cultures and Sacred Lands. In 1977, the IITC became the first Indigenous organization to receive Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council.[xx]

In 2010, Taíno organized the first *Peace and Dignity Run* on the island of Borikén. A spiritually-based event, the run was organized to “raise awareness about the condition of Indigenous sacred sites on the island, as well as connect native Taíno islanders with their mainland relations” (UCTP Taíno News, 2010). This run was connected to larger continental runs entitled *Peace and Dignity Journeys*, which take place every 4 years since 1992 connecting Indigenous Peoples communities from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego. The Peace and Dignity participation continued into 2012 with subsequent spiritual runs taking place in Borikén, Queens, NY, and in Kiskeia. In 2012, two Taíno youth from Borikén, Yari Sina Sierra and Wakarakari Arawak, continued on with the continental run all the way to its conclusion in Guatemala where they were met by other Taíno community members,[xxi] as well as Indigenous delegates from throughout the hemisphere.

Taíno representatives continue to participate within the global indigenous movement at the United Nations level playing a lead role in Caribbean regional organizing. Taíno people lobbied for and in many cases attained significant spaces for Caribbean Indigenous Peoples within the United Nations system. In collaboration with the *Eagle Clan Arawaks* of Barbados, representatives of several Taíno entities affiliated with the UCTP established the first Caribbean Indigenous Caucus at the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the Organization of American States. This work set the stage for other organizations, such as *Guabancex* from Kiskeia (Dominican Republic), to also participate at the international level.[xxii] Indeed, the UCTP was a major regional voice advocating for the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Soria, 1998). Additionally, the UCTP has also

presented formal reports, and or interventions to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Indigenous Leaders Summit of the Americas, WIPO, UNICEF, etc.[xxiii]

Moreover, as part of the process to develop a comprehensive program of action for the Second United Nations International Decade on the World's Indigenous Peoples, in 2005, Secretary General Kofi Annan called for comments toward the policy-oriented document. Twenty-two indigenous organizations from around the world provided input for the program of action. The United Confederation of Taino People (UCTP) was the only entity representing Caribbean Indigenous Peoples to submit a formal proposal to be considered within this process (UCTP Taino News, 2005). Highlighting the importance of Taino participation within the international system, the UCTP's recommendations were included in the final program of action, which was discussed and adopted by the UN General Assembly on November 21st 2005.[xxiv] The UCTP followed up on this process in 2009 providing analysis toward the Mid-Term Evaluation on the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples.

In Borikén, a number of Taino entities have engaged local government and cultural institutions on the issue of sacred sites, ancestral remains, as well as community participation in any representation of Indigenous culture. At least in one instance, this engagement led to the successful reburial of ancestral remains in Jayuya, Borikén at the CEDETRA cultural complex in 2005. With logistics facilitated by community member Margie Noguerras, representatives of the Caney Quinto Mundo, the Consejo General de Taínos Borincanos, and the UCTP all took part in the ceremonial preparation and actual reburial of Taino skeletal remains formally on display in the Museo del Cemí. In a separate initiative, an additional set of ancestral remains was repatriated to Cuba by the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian in 2003 ("Surviving Columbus", 2003). Local Cuban Taino community members, as well as a delegation from the Diaspora, took part in the reburial ceremony that also included Smithsonian staff and Cuban government officials.

While these are positive examples of interactions between contemporary Taino, government, and cultural institutions, the pervasive reality is that Caribbean governments or cultural institutions generally continue to be

unresponsive to the concerns of Taíno community members. This situation was highlighted in 2005 when leaders of several Taíno groups took over the Caguana Ceremonial Center in Utuado, Borikén for over two-weeks to publicize the deteriorating conditions of sacred sites on the island and the lack of community participation in their administration (Stapp, 2005). The occupation of Caguana achieved local, national and international news coverage and increased public scrutiny of the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture (ICPR). Although the action was peaceful in nature, the then head of ICPR was overtly hostile to the protestors, publicly stating that the ICPR "would not allow cannibalism or the sacrifice of captured enemies to take place [at Caguana]" (Stapp, 2005). The Taíno advocates taking part in the action were finally arrested. Community leader Naniki Reyes Ocasio was the last person to be removed from the ceremonial grounds, violently, by a fully equipped police squadron brandishing automatic weapons and riot gear. Reyes Ocasio was unarmed and in a physically debilitated state as a result of the prolonged hunger strike she initiated in an effort to dialog with the Governor of Puerto Rico.

Looking toward the future

While many examples of contemporary Taíno affirmation highlight the power and necessity of physical engagement at the local, national, and international level, the role of ICTs cannot be ignored as a legitimate vehicle to facilitate opportunities for the development of communities of Indigenous consciousness (Forte, 2002). Considering the international scope of Taíno affirmation, social media provides, for example, an efficient mechanism for the exchange of ideas and Taíno solidarity. An example of Taíno community mobilization via social media to affect significant change is poignantly documented within a 72-hour exchange with Nature.com and Taíno people. In this instance, Nature.com published a news article entitled "Rebuilding the genome of a hidden ethnicity" on October 14, 2011. The article reported on research findings of Dr. Carlos Bustamante, a geneticist working on the population genetics of the 1000 Genomes Project samples.

Bustamante's work included "whole-genome sequencing data from 70 research subjects from Puerto Rico," with a number of persons exhibiting aboriginal Caribbean ancestry, mainly Taíno (Hawks, 2011). Controversy ensued when the article's author claimed that the Taíno were an "extinct ethnicity" (Young, 2011). As reported in the weblog of anthropologist John Hawks (2011), over the course of that weekend "the comments section of the *Nature* news article was filled by people outraged at the description of their ancestors as 'extinct'." Within 72 hours Taíno community members, beyond specific group

affiliation, mobilized and affected a response from Nature in a way that Hawks (2011) suggests “will have a large impact on future scientific and news reporting.” The editors at Nature posted a retraction on the web page in question, which reads: “The article originally stated that the Taíno were extinct, which is incorrect. Nature apologizes for the offence caused, and has corrected the text to better explain the research project described.” In addition, Dr. Bustamante also posted an apology at the same page with the following message:

“My name is Carlos Bustamante, and I am one of the investigators leading the Taíno Genome Project. Along with my colleague Esteban Burchard, I am writing to thank the members of the Taíno community who wrote here for their response and to apologize for any offense our work and the media coverage has caused. It was a mistake to refer to the Taíno people as ‘‘extinct, ‘‘given the large number of people who self-identify as Taíno. We, too, are committed to the message you state loud and clear: El Taíno Vive / The Taíno Live On.” (Bustamante, 2011)

Contemplating the incident with Nature.com, along with the broader spectrum of situations affecting Caribbean Indigenous Peoples in the 21st century, it is clear that as Taíno people maintain focus on the affirmation of Taíno heritage within the context of the universal right to self-determination, varied manifestations of support and resistance will continue to emerge.

How these manifestations of support or resistance will affect Taíno affirmation into the future is at best the subject of speculation. In any case, it is also clear that as long as there is a Taíno movement, it will continue to have an effect on individual and collective identity, lifestyle, culture, and even public policy at the local, national, and international level. Indeed, whether on the internet or during physical encounters in rural regions and urban landscapes, ongoing opportunities to share cultural knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions will persist in proliferating the development of communities of Taíno consciousness within and out of the Caribbean.

Endnotes

[i] The right of self-determination is recognized within the United Nations Charter written in 1945. It is a cornerstone legal principle throughout international law speaking directly to the rights of a people to collectively control their own social and political and cultural destiny, identity, and development.

[ii] In the article “Batú: The ancient game lives on”, Jorge Estevez (2008) documented the

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establishment of the batú game revival in Kiskeia (Dominican Republic). In 1969, Aristides Estrada Torres, Danilo Perez, brothers Ica and Rhadames Perez, and others formed a cultural group called *Grupo Marcos*, which inspired other batú groups that continue today in three separate leagues. Batú is a pre-Columbian ball game recorded by early Spanish chroniclers.

[iii] In the 1970s, for example, Cesar Serraty formed *Artesanos los Tainos* in Kiskeia and Marie-Hélène Laraque, a self-identified Taino from Haiti, was present at Alcatraz Island occupation of 1969 (Borrero 1999). Laraque was the co-founder of an Indigenous news and solidarity network called *Indígena*. Jose Barreiro and Miguel Sague, both Taino from Cuba, contributed to another Indigenous news and solidarity initiative called *Akwesanse Notes*.

[iv] Miguel Sobaoko Sague establishes, for example, the *Caney Indigenous Spiritual Circle* in 1981 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. In 1989, the *Sociedad Nacional Indigenista de Puerto Rico* formed in Borikén (CGTB, 2005).

[v] Led by Elba Anaka Lugo, *Paseo Taino* was established in 1978 (CGTB, 2005). *La Obra Indígena Travesía Taina* was developed by the group as an ongoing theatrical presentation to not only educate audiences on Taino culture, but to provide an opportunity for Taino descendants from different areas on the island to socialize while promoting their culture in a positive manner.

As per the public declaration, “Establishment of a Native American Organization,” the Taino Native American Association was officially founded in New York on December 12, 1990 by “René Sibanakán Marcano, Daniel Baracutey Lopez, Roberto Cibadujo Vélez, and Loticia Naniki Semi Guarichegua Reyes” (Marcano, López, Vélez & Reyes, 1990). After a group fissure, Marcano formed Nación Taina de las Antillas in 1992 and Reyes, along with Domingo Turey Hernandez and Maria Manati Robles, and others, formed Maisití Yucayeque Taino in 1992. Reyes also established the Caney Quinto Mundo in 1994 when she returned to live in Borikén (Puerto Rico).

[vi] This unifying call to consciousness is significant in that contemporary Taino affirmation follows historic indigenous racial perspectives, and is not relegated in terms of Eurocentric concepts such as “purity of blood” (Borrero 1999, 122).

[vii] Tony Castanha (1999) notes that from “1900 to 1901, eleven expeditions brought over 5,000 Boricuas to Hawai`i” and that most “came from the mountain regions of Yauco, Lares, Utuado and Ajuntas, and many were coffee farmers whose crops had been devastated by huracan [hurricane] San Ciriaco in 1899.”

[viii] These protests were organized by the League of Indigenous Sovereign Nations (LISN). Roberto Borrero was a member of the event coordinating teams in 1992 and 1993. Members of the Arawak Mountain Singers participated at the 1992 event as a drum group with leader Alexander “Bold Eagle” Santos also speaking at the event. In 1993, Esperanza Martell participated in this event as a speaker and the participation of Susana Atkinson (a Lokono Arawak from Venezuela) as a speaker was facilitated by Roberto Borrero.

[ix] Roger Guayakan Hernandez was the show’s founder in 1999 and continues as its Executive

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Director.

[x] Organized by Dr. Arlene Dávila, one of the panels was entitled “Taino Revival: Critical perspectives on The Cultural Politics of the Use of Their Legacy and Imagery,” yet it did not include any contemporary Taino representatives. The Center for Puerto Rican studies published the essays of the panelists in a book entitled “Taino Revival: Critical perspectives on The Cultural Politics of the Use of Their Legacy and Imagery, however, as a result of the outspoken participation of Taino activists, such as Roger Guayakan Hernandez and Vanessa Inarunikia Pastrana at Dávila’s panel discussion, the publishers also included an essay by Roberto Múkaró Borrero.

[xi] Jorge Baracuty Estevez, a Taino from Kiskeia (Dominican Republic) and a staff member at the National Museum of the American Indian in New York was assigned as the Museum’s liaison for these conferences. Estevez is also largely responsible for the development of publicly accessible Taino education materials at the Museum’s Resource Center.

[xii] Both Elba Anaka Lugo and Roberto Múkaró Borrero were contracted and identified as scientific consultants in the film. Borrero, Lugo, and other members of Travesia Taína, such as Pablito “Haguey” Rosario and Taina Rosado, also appeared in the several cultural reenactment scenes in the film.

[xiii] UCTP Taino News, 2008; Juan Carlos Martínez Cruzado 2012, personal communication

[xiv] There have been many groups and individuals who have contributed to this process over the last decade. While the following does not include all groups or individuals, a few are included here, such as the Bohio Atabei, Biaraku, Yucayeque Yamocuno, KuKary Spiritual Circle, Wakia Arawaka Taina, Tainos Roca de Amor, Opia Taino International, Taino Naboria Society, Jornada Indígena de Jayuya, Joanna Aya Soto Avilez, Sonia Nube Vigo, Luis Ramos, Kelvin Acosta Velez, Irka Mateo, as well as UCTP Liaison Officers Rose Anao Quiñones, Monika Ponton Arrington, Tai AnaYuisa Pellicier, Joey Inherst, Mildred Karaira Gandia, Millie Mukara Torres Speeg, Cyril O. Taylor, Hector Baracutey Gonzalez, Claudia FoxTree, Eva Tona Lazu, and many others.

[xv] Carmelo and Maria Felix Matta, for instance, were well-known community leaders in the Vieques struggle, as well as members of the founding council of the Consejo General de Tainos Borincanos.

[xvi] The Consejo General de Tainos Borincanos, the Caney Quito Mundo, and the United Confederation of Taino People have attained cross-party acknowledgement at various levels of government in Borikén. Documents can be viewed at http://www.uctp.org/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=76&Itemid=38

[xvii] The New Jersey based “Jatibonicu Tribe” also engaged the U.S. Census Bureau in 2000.

[xviii] These declarations can be reviewed at the UCTP’s online document archive at http://www.uctp.org/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=62&Itemid=38

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[xix] The full NCAI resolution is available for review at http://www.uctp.org/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=62&Itemid=38

[xx] In 2011, the IITC continued to make history becoming the first Indigenous organization to be upgraded to “General Consultative Status” in recognition of its wide range of work in a number of UN bodies and processes. Naniki Reyes Ocasio currently sits on the IITC’s board as a representative for the UCTP.

[xxi] The 2012 Peace and Dignity Journey ended in Uaxactun, Guatemala on November 29, 2012. Taino community members Vanessa Inarunikia Pastrana of Bohío Atabei and Iukaieke Guainía, as well as Román Guaraguaorix Pérez and Sherry Kunanate Vigdor. of Maisiti Yucayequé Taino were present to greet the runners and participate in the closing ceremonies (UCTP Taino News, 2012). Pastrana is the run’s Caribbean regional focal point.

[xxii] Guabancex is a Taino cultural group based in Kiskeia dedicated to investigating, researching, and disseminating all aspects of Taino culture, customs, language and history. The organization has also organized programs in commemoration of the United Nations International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples in Kiskeia.

[xxiii] Many of these interventions and presentations are available for review at the online document archive of the United Confederation of Taino People located at http://www.uctp.org/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=47&Itemid=38

[xxiv] The program of action’s specific reference regarding Caribbean Indigenous Peoples can be found under Section 6 “Social and Economic Development”, item (b) Regional level, number 86. The recommendation suggests “representatives of Caribbean indigenous peoples should be included in region-specific consultations and conferences in Latin America and the Caribbean, and on steering committees for planning and implementing the programme of activities for the Second International Decade. Serious consideration should also be given to organizing a special regional consultative session focusing on the unique situation of Caribbean indigenous peoples, which would take place in the Caribbean, hosted by a Member State and a local indigenous community.”

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