



Dances at the Center of Social Discourse: from Europe Through the Caribbean to Latin America

Las danzas en el centro del discurso social:
de Europa a América Latina, pasando por el Caribe

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Abstract

It is common to hear how song has been used as an instrument of social protest. Dance has helped bring about social change in several parts of the world; however its contributions are almost ignored by history. Tango Argentino and *Sociedades de Tumba Francesa* are considered Patrimony of Humanity. Tango, originally a social dance of the lower classes, its execution considered obscene by the Argentinean upper class, had to withstand Papal judgment. *Sociedades de Tumba Francesa* developed in Haiti and in time came to be associated with the Duvalier regime. Today they survive in Cuba, after enduring racial discrimination in the 1940s and 1950s. La Jarana Yucateca still serves as a bond between the white and the mestizo members of Yucatecan society, a gesture of gratitude from the first to the latter for their solidarity during the War of Castes. La Danza de los Seises in the Cathedral of Sevilla remains a notable exception of religious dances within Catholic worship, otherwise banned from Catholic services for being considered sinful. La Cueca, Chile's national folk dance has been performed by the wives, and daughters of the *desaparecidos* in protest for political injustice. The origins and present state of Brazilian Capoeira is an example how the social discourse can continue and modify itself to meet the needs of time. Tambu from Curaçao is a present day case of oppression/victory over the dominant Eurocentric culture. And Dominican Merengue is a kaleidoscope of ways in which dance can be used within the social discourse. By placing these dances in the social context where they helped bring about awareness or change the research adds depth to dance, often considered inconsequential and frivolous by western society.

Key words: Dance, Protest, Religion, Nationalism, Racism.

Resumen

Es común escuchar cómo la canción se ha utilizado a manera de instrumento de protesta social. La danza ha ayudado a lograr un cambio social en varias partes del mundo, pero sus contribuciones son casi ignoradas por la historia. El tango argentino y las *sociedades de tumba francesa* son considerados Patrimonio de la Humanidad. El tango, originalmente un baile social de las clases bajas cuya ejecución era considerada obscena por la clase alta argentina, tuvo que soportar la descalificación papal. Las *sociedades de tumba francesa* se desarrollaron en Haití y con el tiempo se las llegó a asociar con el régimen de Duvalier. Hoy en día sobreviven en Cuba, después de soportar la discriminación racial en los años 40 y 50. La jarana yucateca todavía sirve como vínculo entre el blanco y los miembros de la sociedad mestiza yucateca: un gesto de gratitud por parte de los primeros hacia los segundos por su solidaridad durante la Guerra de Castas. La danza de Los Seises en la Catedral de Sevilla sigue siendo una excepción notable de las danzas religiosas dentro de la liturgia católica, siendo considerada pecaminosa y prohibida en los oficios católicos. La cueca, danza folklórica nacional de Chile, ha sido ejecutada por las esposas e hijas de los desaparecidos, en protesta por la injusticia política. Los orígenes y el presente estado

del capoeira de Brasil es un ejemplo de cómo el discurso social puede continuar y modificarse para satisfacer las necesidades de la época. El tambu de Curazao es un caso actual de opresión/victoria sobre la cultura eurocéntrica dominante. Y el merengue dominicano es un caleidoscopio de formas en el que la danza puede ser utilizada dentro del discurso social. Al ubicar estas danzas en el contexto social donde ayudaron a lograr conciencia o cambio, la investigación añade profundidad al concepto de la danza, con frecuencia considerado intrascendente y frívolo por parte de la sociedad occidental.

Palabras clave: Danza, Protesta, Religión, Nacionalismo, Racismo.



About Dance

“Dance is an intimate and constitutive aspect of cultural identity, and like language, is a window to a person’s world view” (Hanna, 1992, p. 179).

Music and literature have promoted social discourse as well as social change, however little is known about the role of dance in the same arena. The oversight about the power of dance comes from two dynamic processes: 1-The ephemeral character of dance. 2-the fact that dance is always taken less seriously than literature and music in western societies. Most people are familiar with the song protest movement of the 1960s, but unaware of the role dance plays within social discourse. This research presents several dance forms within their social and historical context and discusses the role they have played in changing and/or in promoting dialogue and change.

For reasons of brevity the article only discusses those cases that are geographically related to Latin American and Caribbean studies. The discussion begins in Spain for it is the country that has given its culture and language to most of the countries discussed, it continues through the Caribbean and finishes in the Southern Cone. Several areas in the United States share boundaries with the Caribbean. The dynamics of dance as a means to protest racism in this country are very complex to include in this article. Rebellion as well as innovation have been at the center of many dance expressions in the US. And



many of those mentioned have been shaped by dancers and choreographers from the Caribbean. A discussion of their individual contributions is discussed in Thomas F. DeFrantz book included in the bibliography¹.

Dance has also been manipulated by centralized governments to transmit political ideology to the masses. In Russia the ballet *KrasniMak* [The Red Poppy] was choreographed for the Bolshoi Ballet during the Kuomintang Era². Premiered in 1927 it shows the arrival of a Russian ship to a Chinese port and the ensuing friendship between Russian sailors and the local people, a friendship that led to a rebellion of the locals against government oppression³ (Mondadori, 1981, p. 205). And in China, where the government of Chairman Mao considered classical ballet an example of its imperial past but made use of it after adopting the slogan “The Great Leap Forward” to convey its drive to achieve economic progress through the visual image of women leaping through the stage carrying red flags. In this example dance served as a vehicle to convey the new status of women who through the Revolution had attained legal equality to men in Chinese society. The Mao government also saw the advertizing potential of ballerinas’ grand jettes as perfect example of “leaping forward and travelling farther” helping China move into the twentieth century. The quintessential ballet from that era is *The Red Detachment of Women*. The classical and romantic tutus worn by ballerinas in classical ballet were replaced by the Revolution’s khaki uniforms in accordance with a government tactic to exchange the sensual character of female dresses by a homogeneous and unisex uniform that would emphasize their government’s theme of one nation with one goal (Strauss, 1977, p. 19-53).

The dance of the Seises remains an example of confrontation between the Catholic Church officials and its congregation. The Jarana as performed within the context of Merida’s Carnival festivities it’s a reminder of old alliances, a symbol of regional identity, and a marker of class differences. Ar-

1 The works of dancers-choreographers, and anthropologists Katherine Dunham [1909-2006], and Pearl Primus [1919-1994] are good examples. Dunham was American born but kept a home in Haiti, some of her choreography was influenced by dances observed in that country. Primus was born in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. Her choreographic work had influences of both African and Caribbean dance (Jonas, 1992, p. 227-229).

2 An era marked by political tensions between China and the Soviet Union.

3 Choreographed by Tikhomiroff and Lashchilin, it is accompanied to a score that includes songs from the Bolchevique Revolution and the famous International Hymn (205).

gentinean Tango is an example of social climbing. The survival of *Sociedades de TumbaFrancesa* in Cuba attest to the resilience of Haitian immigrants and their descendants while remaining living proof of how racism can endanger cultural heritage. The politically incorrect performance of *Cueca Sola* is a show of social protest. But dance has also served as an instrument of the State to create a type of nationalism based on the negation of a particular ethnic influence. The latter is the case of the Dominican Merengue.

Since the beginning of time dance has been linked to the two most important social institutions created by man: religion and government. In India *BharathaNatyan* (Dills, 2001, p. 103-113) and *Kathakali* (Jowitt, 1988, p. 219-222) dance performance convey religious stories to the faithful. In Classical Greece, Scotland and the Basque Country, dance was used to train young men in the art of war via the Greek *Tetracomos*, *Podism* and *Xiphism* (Krauss 1991: 44-45), and sword dances in both Scotland and *Euskadi* (Ysursa, 1995, p. 45-56) were an integral part of boot camp training. Throughout the history of human kind dance has been present in every social rite of passage from birth to death, as observed in painting found in Egyptian Pharaohs', funerary chambers (Udaeta de, 1989, p. 13-16).

In contrast, western civilization has relegated dance to a second rate ranking. This attitude has permeated every aspect of society to the point in which dance performances, however surviving throughout time, have been looked upon as rather superfluous demonstrations of art. Dance has even been negated its rightful place among the *BellasArtes* alongside music and theater. The role of dance as a popular expression of joy prevalent in western society has contributed to the generalized misconceptions about this art from, taking away from more important roles played by dance throughout the centuries.

The survival and resilience of some of the dances discussed in this paper attest to the power they exert within their social birthplace as well as the roles acquired in the trans-national world today. Some of these dance forms are now included in Unesco's Patrimony of Humanity list, as is the case of *Argentinean Tango*, *Seises*, and *TumbaFrancesa*. However their current audiences miss much when the programs where the dances are announced fail to include the history behind the shaping and survival of the dances shown.

Spain: Rebellion Against Church Control

References to dance are present in both the Old and New Testaments⁴. In fact dance has been central to worship in many religions, including the Judeo-Christian ones. However, during the Middle Ages⁵, a time in which the body was believed to be inferior to the spirit, and given the less controllable nature of dance, the Church⁶ Fathers of the early Christian Church enforced a systematic watch and ban on dance. Experts on temptation like St. Augustine [340-430], denounced the physical evils of dance. The few dances allowed during worship were group dances⁷, processional in choreography, with men and women separated from one another to avoid the natural temptations caused by the sinuous movements of the female body⁸. But the practices were maintained by the congregation and shunned by Church officials. Church Councils kept on issuing bans on dance for more than a thousand years, especially between 1200 and 1500. In Spain government and church (Catholicism) worked together in a system of mutual legitimization that maintained the *status quo* by fear (Homza, 2006). It was under these conditions that in fifteenth-century Seville a children's dance came under the scrutiny of ecclesiastical authorities. At the cathedral of Sevilla the dance of selected and musically trained children during religious rituals was prohibited. The ban was opposed by Sevillians and the case was presented to Vatican authorities for final judgment. Two popes approved its permanence within the service ritual (Jones, 1992, p. 43-45).

Characteristic of religious feasts throughout Spain was the singing and dancing of choirboys. The responsibility of training these young men fell on the Cathedral's choir-master, who was often required to board them in his own home as well. These boys, at the beginning as few as four, were chosen for the quality of their voices. Then these boys, in preparation for their role within the church received training in Latin, mensural notation, counterpoint, plainsong, and polyphony⁹. During the seventeenth century

4 In the Old Testament: Psalms, and Exequiel (6:11), in the New Testament I Corinthians (6:19-20), Mathew (11:17), and Luke (7:32).

5 The time between the fall of the Western Roman Empire to the fall of Constantinople, roughly a period of one thousand years (Franklin, 1996, p. 46-7).

6 In this article Church refers to the Catholic Church.

7 Examples: the dance of the blessed and the dance of the angels.

8 It is characteristic of male dominated societies to blame women for all evils.

9 Mensural notation is "an early system of notation used during the thirteenth century", counterpoint refers to "two or more melodic lines sounding simultaneously", plainsong is the "common

the number of these choir boys had risen from four to six. Mention of these boys and their training appear in records from cathedrals in Granada [1520], Málaga [1579], León [1602], Lérida [1620], and Barcelona [1699]. A distinction existed between the altar boys and these choir boys: the firsts were called *mozos de coro o acólitos* and the second *mozos o clerizontesque se dicenseises*. The number of boys to be trained in this art form was regulated by Pope Eugene IV's Bull *Ad exequendum* issued on September 24, 1439 setting their numbers at six¹⁰. References to the dancing of choir boys are ample in archival information from the seventeenth century. These boys were also known as *colegiales* or *ynfantes*. The Seises were called to partake in religious celebrations like *Corpus Christi* and Octave. From 1965 on they also appeared in such secular celebrations as carnival¹¹. Originally composers created sacred themes for the boys to sing, but during the first half of the sixteenth century some of their performances were set to secular dance-songs¹² (Esses, 1992, p. 411-418).

The dance of the Seises was performed before the high altar by six children of equal height dressed as angels with gilded wings. Today the boys wear Renaissance page costumes and their number has increased to ten. Their general title "seises" has been maintained (Jonas, 1992, p. 45). The seises play castanets as they perform a stately choreography reminiscent of the pavane (Horst, 1968, p. 7-9), while singing psalms. The boys stand in two opposite rows and execute a series of to and fro, figures as well as circles and chains (Sachs, 1937, p. 337). These choreographic and musical traditions can be still observed during special sacred celebrations in Sevilla's cathedral. A worldwide television audience had the opportunity to see the dance of the seises during the public section of King Juan Carlos I of Spain's eldest daughter, Elena¹³.

designation for Gregorian chant", and polyphony is "music composed of two or more voice parts, each having individual melodic significance" (Apel, 1960, p. 72, 174, 228, and 229).

10 In Spanish "seis", hence their name "seises."

11 Carnival celebrations of those times preceded lent, an important period of sacrifice and abstinence. The tradition of pre-Lent carnivals is still alive. Some important pre-Lenten carnivals include New Orleans's Mardi Grass, Rio's carnival, and its Venice homolog.

12 Though not mentioned in texts consulted, this might have been one of the reasons for the attempt to ban seises performances in sacred spaces.

13 European Royal Houses share many of their rites of passage with their subjects. As such royal weddings, baptisms, and funerals are divided into public and private segments. It is during the public segments that members of the royal family highlight their respective countries' historical, and cultural heritage.

Cuba's Sociedades de Tumba Francesa: Surviving Exile and Racial Discrimination

During the eighteenth century the fusion of dance formations and body postures from the French Court and African rhythms and steps in the French colony of Saint Domingue gave birth to a new dance expression (Daniels, 2002, p. 32-33). In the aftermath of the Haitian Revolution, 1791-1820, these dances spread throughout the Caribbean, notably in Cuba, Grenada, and Trinidad and Tobago. In Cuba these dances became known as Sociedades de Tumba Francesa, and continued to be performed in the social gatherings of Afro-Haitians from their arrival in the Oriente province to the present. The dances were first danced by slaves in coffee plantations and, following the abolishment of slavery in Cuba in cabildos, mutual help societies within urban centers (Millet, 1989: 16-31). On their insertion into Cuban society the social gatherings of Afro-Haitians did not have a definite name, or a religious connotation. However, this changed once members of the Cuban lower classes, when invited to partake in Afro-Haitian festivities, began to observe the dances. From then on the dances were referred to as *Tumba-Francesa*. Works consulted coincides on the fact that the name *Tumba* refers to the drums which made up the orchestra, while *Francesa* was the general name given by the locals to people who spoke either French or Creole. The etymology of the term “tumba” comes from the *Bantú* language of the *Insambo* Nation (Évora, 1997, p.172).

Tumba dances were performed by Haitians and their descendants since their insertion in Colonial Cuba in the last decade of the eighteenth century to the 1950s. The dances have always been transmitted from generation to generation by means of an oral-kinetic tradition. But training was restricted Haitians and their descendants, in an attempt to preserve the tradition's original essence. Singing was done in Creole, the official language of Tumba gatherings. The appearance of dancing and sporting clubs in Cuba during the 1950s, and increasing levels of racial discrimination against Haitians and their descendants endangered the survival of these social dances diminishing the number of youngsters willing to maintain the tradition alive (Alen, 1986; Lammoglia 2001, p. 73-80). A favorable change came in 1959 as Tumbas became protected by Cuba's government. Government protection

made it safe¹⁴ for a second adaptation to Tumbas' survival as membership into these societies was opened to members of all races interested in the continuity of the form, provided they learn both the dances and Creole. *Sociedades de Tumba Francesa* are now included in the UNESCO list of dances patrimony of humanity.

The racial tensions that affected Tumba during the 1950s begun decades earlier as a result of seasonal migrations. These migrations brought to Cuba large numbers of Jamaicans and Haitians, as cheap labor during both sugar cane cutting and coffee gathering periods: respectively January to May and September to November. Seasonal migrants who chose to remain in the Island after these periods formed an illegal migrant group that, by virtue of their illegal migratory status became an easy exploit for business owners and politicians. Their permanence in the Island created a cheap and easily controlled group that displaced native labor competing for the same positions by accepting lower wages and which was used by Cuba's upper class against the labor unions that developed and gained strength in Cuba during the early part of the twentieth century (Moreno Fragnals, 1999, p. 98-104). Illegal Haitian migrants living in Cuba frequented Tumba gatherings. Their association with Tumbas added to the racial tension building up against illegal migrants. This contributing process is not included in other studies on Tumba published to date.

Today there are several *Sociedades de Tumba Francesa* in Cuba. Lyrics still sung in Creole. All of these clubs are located in the territory of the now extinct Cuban province of Oriente. This territory received the largest migration from Haiti in the aftermath of its Revolution. The cities of Holguin¹⁵, Santiago de Cuba, and Guantanamo are home to thriving Tumbas. The

14 The government of Fidel Castro has argued since its beginnings for more racial equality among Cubans. This in turn has apparently helped diminish some of the racial tensions that existed before the Revolution, as well as created ample space for integration. This matter is at present under criticism even from African American Associations who were staunch defenders of the Cuban Revolution up until recent months. If interested in the subject please consult the archives of both *The Miami Herald* and *El Nuevo Herald*.

15 This club is not mentioned in any of the works consulted, but was mentioned during an interview with at the time Guantanamo Tumba's Artistic Director (Nelson, 1999).

Guantanamo Tumba, known as La Pompadour, and also as TumbaFrancesa Santa Catalina de Ricci¹⁶ is considered the purest remaining example of the original Tumbas(Millet, 1989, p. 31-33; Allen, 1986, p. 21).

Dominican Republic: Merengue, Whitening Politics Of National Identity

Today's Merengue is a bubbly sensuous couples' dance apparently frivolous and carefree. However its history is filled with racial, social, and political conflict. The story of Dominican Merengue can be subdivided into five periods: birth, independence, survival, tool of the State, and transnational phenomena.

Even the term's origin is still discussed: Merengue could be a creolization of the African term *mouringue*, or the French word for a pastry made of egg whites and sugar called *meringue*. The latter associated with the French colonial custom of rewarding with a pastry the slave who danced best at their masters' soirees. What remains certain is that there are different music-dance genres throughout the Caribbean that share the name Merengue. Also true is that at one point in time the Dominican Republic and Haiti were not two separate nations but one undivided colony¹⁷. The latter adds legitimacy to the scholarly discourse in favor of the Haitian origins of Merengue. On the other hand there is a dance and musical form in Haiti called *Meringue* considered it's National Dance (Fouchard, 1988, p. 72-82).

Independence Day in the Dominican Republic is observed every 27 of February. The Dominican Republic attained independence from Spain in the 1860s, and was later occupied by Haitian forces and ruled from Port au Prince for twenty two years. The Country liberated itself from Haitian rule on February 27, 1844. Since then there has been a systematic attempt to erase any vestiges of African ancestry, associated with Haiti, from Dominican blood and history. African ancestry is at best down played to the point in

16 In honor the Italian nun who is Guantanamo's patron saint.

17 The Dominican Republic was known as Spanish Santo Domingo. The Treaty of Basil (1795) gave it to France, which unified it with French Saint Domingue , called Haiti after the Revolution. (Austerlitz, 1997, p. 9).

which Dominicans of darker skin pigmentation claim their native Caribbean ancestry and trace their lineage to the Tainos rather than acknowledging an African blood line (Nicholls, 1996, p. 79-82). It is under those premises that the Haitian meringue was appropriated by the Dominicans and whitened by minimizing the African contribution to the genre while accentuating and augmenting the Spanish and Taino ones (Seller, 2004, p. 34-40).

The birth date of Dominican meringue coincides with the Nation's Independence year, 1844. And it is so stated in every text consulted. Dominicans claim it as their own creation. There is even a story, written in 1927, a period in which Merengue was gaining currency as a national symbol that dates the birth of meringue back to February 27, 1844. The story tells of a cowardly Dominican flag bearer that abandoned ranks as the fighting became more fierce, and whose desertion was mocked in the lyrics of a new musical genre "Merengue" on the same day, during the victory celebrations of the Dominican rebels. However, Merengue was not readily accepted by the Dominican upper class that associated it with the rural areas and its peoples. Merengue's reputation was further degraded by members of the Country's intellectual class who deemed it immoral and lewd and who wrote extensively against it in their efforts to make it disappear from the country's landscape. Their first printed attack on Merengue appeared as early as 1854, only 10 years after the dance's Dominican birth, in a capitaline journal called *El Oasis*. The article prompted the expulsion of meringue from the ballrooms of the Dominican elite to the countryside, where it flourished, especially in the Cibao region. Merengue exile to the Country's rural areas proved beneficial to its development since 95% of the Dominican Republic citizens lived in these areas (Austerlitz, 1997, p. 1-25). In the long run the intellectuals' dislike of meringue and its exile to the Country's rural areas helped it consolidate the form as a national symbol, later to be used against foreign occupation.

The United States marines occupied the Dominican Republic from 1916 to 1924. The invasion was met with resistance from rural caudillos who, as early as 1917 successfully promoted guerrilla warfare against the US marines. A second process of protest was being carried out at the diplomatic level to sway international opinion against the occupation. The third form of protest developed in the form of a cultural movement celebrating the meringue and embracing the Cibao region. This region was home to many of the caudillos who subsidized the guerrillas against the marines and who danced the *Merengue Cibaeno*. Two forms of meringue existed at the time in



the Cibao; the Cibaëño and the Pambiche. Merengue Pambiche got its name from a lyric work referring to a type of fabric manufactured in Palm Beach. A strong feeling of nationalism developed a fable about the form called *Merengue Pambiche*. As the story goes the occupying marines could not sway their hips in the sensual manner required of true Latino Merengue dancers and new lyrics were written to mocking this clumsiness. This in turn gave way to the *Yankee Style Merengue*. The marines left the Dominican Republic in 1924, but their clumsiness performing the National Dance had already been converted into a metaphor for the marines' incompetence in warfare (Austerlitz, 1997, p. 30, 38-41; Sellers, 2004, p. 73-80). While this particular Merengue had become one more form of ammunition in the anti-American sentiment still alive the Caribbean Basin today, it also paved the way for the Trujillo Era.

Rafael Leonidas Trujillo ruled in Quizquella from 1930 to 1961. A man of humble birth and Afro-Haitian ancestry, he used Merengue writers¹⁸ as allies since his first political campaigning. Trujillo possessed a keen conception of the role a rural cultural expression can play in the construction of national cohesiveness and used it effectively throughout his tenure. Trujillo stressed Merengue's Hispanic roots and downplayed its Haitian ancestry, thus pleasing Dominicans at large and playing right into their dislike of everything Haitian. Once again Dominicans' racism against Afro-Haitian ancestry surfaced and played a role in the construction of national phonotype. Trujillo was shunned by the elite among other things because of his lowly birth. He returned the favor by giving preference to the "depraved" meringue, encouraging public concerts held outdoors. The latter was a subtle way to force the classes to mingle and to share a common music-dance genre with which to identify themselves¹⁹. Through meringue performance Trujillo demeaned and controlled the elite, and created consensus in the Cibao, the Nation's region with the highest representation of both whites and members of the upper class. He created a national music-dance form that enabled communication among Dominicans regardless of ethnic and class boundaries. Trujillo was wise enough to realize that controlling the subversive aspects of Merengue, with its political lyrics, he could consolidate his position as the Country's

18 In this article "writer" refers to those who created the lyrics. This division is made to emphasize the power of the written words used in Merengues' songs as political propaganda. Some writers do not compose music and viceversa.

19 A tactic geared to create National unity, certainly centered and represented by Trujillo himself, nevertheless a wise political maneuver.

absolute ruler (Austerlitz, 1997, p. 52-65; Sellers, 2004, p. 93-104). Trujillo ruled for over thirty years. Through his control of merengue lyric writers he made sure to tell Dominicans the Trujillo Gospel. And through the dance's festive, sensual, and catchy movements that appealed so much to Dominicans, he also made sure his gospel would be forever in-bedded in their collective conscience.

Trujillo enforced a policy of isolationism. He also provided no space for dissenters. Even musicians were seldom allowed to travel abroad. Those who disagreed and could afford to left the Country. But Trujillo was also aware of the powers of mass media and of the international acceptance of "whitened" Merengue and used it to his advantage to promote *Dominicanidad*. In the aftermath of the second US marines invasion of the Dominican Republic in 1965, US immigration restrictions to Dominicans were relaxed. The new policy prompted a large exodus of Dominicans to the States. Mostly have settled in New York City²⁰. This migratory trend has continued into the twenty first century. The significant Dominican presence in the US has also contributed to shape the way in which Latin Americans living in the US view themselves in the face of the racial problems still present in their host country²¹.

Today New York City has the second largest Dominican population in the world. The Dominican enclave in NYC is characterized by a constant flow of people to and from the DR. Research shows that this group defines itself as Dominican, distancing themselves from the US melting pot theory so prevalent in the US during the early and mid part of the twentieth century. Dominicans in NYC group themselves in distinctive neighborhoods and replicate many aspects of their culture²². Dominicans in the US, where race is

20 Source US Census Data.

21 The United States Census has the race "HISPANIC" under the race subheading. To the rest of the world Hispanic is not a race. Furthermore this classification "HISPANIC" is used to describe Spanish speaking Caribbean's and Latin Americans, but excludes Spaniards. US Foreign Policy towards European countries differ drastically from that afforded to the Country's geographical neighbors and fellow members of the Americas. To the US this area is composed at best by "Republicasbananeras" or banana republics. This derogatory term demeans the countries members of this group in a country, the US, with strict laws against racial discrimination. This trend begun in the late nineteenth century and persists today. See John J, Johnson's work included in the bibliography.

22 This phenomena is also palpable in Miami, Florida.

either white or black, associate themselves with other Latinos, and continue to reject black culture²³. Through it all meringue continues to be the most visible and audible symbol of Dominicaness. Latinos who have spent most or all of their life in the US are called Generation Ñ. Dominicans who belong to this group have helped pave the way for crossover artists²⁴ to gain success in the US. At the same time artists like Dominican Juan Luis Guerra and Puerto Rican Elvis Crespo have played key roles in helping Merengue gain transnational acclaim. The later is true in part due to the performers' own white, middle-upper class, educated musician status. Throughout the process of trans-nationalization Merengue has purposely continued to lose its African elements in order to gain the acceptance of Euro centric and white US followers. There is also a growing Dominican-American duality best observed in the work of the band Proyecto Uno that mixes meringue and Hip-Hop. The band sings Merengue lyrics in Spanish and Hip-Hop lyrics in English. This fusion of styles, Dominican and Puerto Rican is a perfect indicator of the new Hispanic musical style developing as a result of the transnational culture (Sellers, 2004, p. 158-177).

Tambu: Protest and Disobedience in Curaçao

Tambu comes from the West-Kongo term *ntambu*. Curaçao's Tambu refers to the drum, to the dance, to the music that accompanies it, and to the actual event where the dance and music are performed. Tambu developed during the slavery period in the Island. Following the abolishment of slavery, in 1863, Tambu performance became a symbol of poor blacks and lower and marginal classes. The drum, made out of wood is the only instrument of its kind in a Tambu "orchestra", all other instruments constructed of iron or other metals. The Tambu drum also acts as a sacred symbol before which people bring their problems and complains seeking resolution²⁵.

23 They do not associate with African Americans and do not adopt their culture symbols, even when considered to be black by the host country.

24 Like Ricky Martin, Enrique Iglesias, and his father Julio before him, who have crossed over the linguistic boundaries that exist between Spanish and English recording in both languages.

25 This function of the drum is part of many African traditions and has permeated to the New World, thriving in such traditions as Santería, Candomble, and other religious beliefs. (Cabrera, 1996, p. 232-34; Voeks, 2003, p. 84-9).

Tambu was originally performed in a circle, which hints to its origins as a religious ritual. The religious aspect of this dance was lost after Catholic campaigns deemed Tambu immoral. The dance is not a couples dance, each dancer dancing alone while surrounded by other performers. The emphasis of the movement is on the hips from which all other movements originate, the knees are slightly bent, and a stomping sound is produced with the feet²⁶. The music is accompanied by lyrics which usually comment on social events, written and sung in Papiamentu. The drumming was prohibited by the Dutch colonial authorities during the eighteenth century²⁷ for fear that rebel messages would be transmitted across distances using different rhythms. A fear that prove prophetic since tambu drums were played during the Curaçao's slave uprising of 1795. From its birth Tambu lyrics have served as a means to protest racial and social discrimination as well as the policing of the Dutch government and Catholic Religion. The local language, Papiamentu, includes elements from Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, and West-African languages, and it was feared by the Dutch for being the language of the people. For this reason speaking Papiamentu was prohibited until the latter decades of the twentieth century, only appearing in Curaçao's classrooms and or school yards after the 1970s. Tambu performance was prohibited from 1710 until 1952. The freedom to hold such public performances have, however continued to be controlled by Curaçao's government. In 1996 a permit was still required for its performance to take place, and regulations included time, place, and type of drinks served during the affair as to emphasize the authorities' discomfort and fear of Tambu. Heavy drinking accompanies Tambu performance and in itself becomes a social danger. Government regulations of Tambu performance validate the stigma ascribed to it since its birth. Through it all, danced in secrecy or out in the open, Tambu performances have been an intrinsic symbol of the Curaçao's lower and oppressed class, as well as one of their most effective ways to rebel and protest (Gabri, 2002, p. 291-302).

26 This type of movement can be observed in many African dances as well as in some Afro-Caribbean counterparts, including some of the dances of Sociedades de Tumba Francesa.

27 Because in Africa drumming had many roles, including that of messenger across vast distances the colonial authorities of most Caribbean countries feared their own lack of knowledge when it came to differentiate among the diverse usages of drums, as a result drumming was banned in many Caribbean countries throughout their colonial period. In Trinidad the banning on drumming gave way to the creation of new musical instruments among them the *tambo-bambo*. (Gage, 1999, p. 173).

Noche Regional and Jaran Performance in Mérida, Yucatán: Socio-Racial Segregation vs Regional Identity

The Jarana is Yucatan's Regional Folkloric dance. Originally a social dance of the Mestizo class resulting from the fusion of Spanish and Mayan rhythms, it developed between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Jarana is a lively dance, unlike the serious and ceremonial Mayan music and dance, accompanied to music composed in 3/4 and 6/8 tempo (Perez, 1983, p. 61, 66). The Jarana has traits of the Spanish zapateado, the Jota (Herrera, 1984, p. 104-6, 122-3), and the Catalonian Sardana, as well as Andalusian airs. The Jarana is a couple's dance with limited body contact where dancers use undifferentiated foot work. The torso is kept upright and the arms arched in right angles, similar to those used in the Spanish Jota and Catalonian Sardana. The fingers are used as percussion instruments²⁸. Some performers hold a beer bottle or a serving tray with several beer bottles atop their heads as they dance. It is also common to see dancers performing atop an *almud*, or measuring wooden box of Arabic origin used in Yucatan to measure corn grains (Perez Sabido 1983: 66-67, 105).

Jarana dancers wear mestizo dress (Perez, 1983, p. 66-8, 108-14) Jarana lessons are currently part of the *curriculum* at all elementary institutions in the Yucatán area. The dance is performed year round in various venues throughout the city and neighboring towns by school children as well as by professional companies. The Jarana is also an expression of Yucatecan identity that marks the difference between Yucatan and the remaining Mexican States in a region still referred to as La Republica Independiente, in reference to the historical period during which Yucatan considered receding from the union of Mexican States (Orosa, 1991, p. 157-167). A free performance of Jarana is offered to tourists and locals alike every Monday night on the street in front of Mérida's City Hall in the city's Zocalo or center by members of the Ballet Folklórico Regional del Ayuntamiento de Mérida.

During Mérida's carnival festivities (Quiroz, 2002, p. 10), specifically during Lunes de Carnaval, also called Noche Regional, the Jarana and mestizo

28 This modality is also seen in Flamenco dancers and is referred to as "pitos."

dress take center stage as the uniting force between the different classes living in the city, as well as re-confirming old alliances between the City's white upper class and the Mestizoes who sided with their cause during the Guerra de Castas, War of Castes. This rebellion of Yucatán's Mayan population erupted in 1847 as a result of Mayan dissatisfaction with the treatment they had received first from the Spanish colonizers and later from the Mexican Government, which did not hesitate to use Mayan men in their own battles for supremacy, but which failed to give Mayans a much promised social participation and equality in Yucatán's society (Orosco, 1991, p. 171-183). In the aftermath of this chapter in Yucatan's history, and a result of the Mestizo solidarity with the upper white class, the figure of the Mestizo became less associated with the concept of half breed between Spaniards and Mayans, and climbed to the category of marker of Yucatecan identity. Today, the term Mestizo applies to everyone who wears the regional dress and by virtue of the latter accepts her/his connection with the Mayans. In contrast there is a reticence to wear Mestizo attire in those Yucatecans who still have Mestizo phenotypical characteristics. Members of this group, who have darker skin, black hair and are generally shorter than the rest of the population are still subject to racial profiling and discrimination by the remaining members of Mérida's society (Reyes, 2003, p. 109-110).

The tradition of Noche Regional began in the 1860s²⁹ in private clubs of the upper strata and has continued to our days. It is during Noche Regional that upper and lower class put aside some of their social prejudices and partake in the region's carnival festivities wearing mestizo dress. The upper class mostly restricts its participation in carnival festivities to observing the carnival's paseo as well as dancing the Jarana themselves in parties held in private clubs. Participants in paseo come mostly from the lower and middle class with few from the upper elites who also parade in floats. During this brief time there is no outside marker of class difference. However, just as the dancing of Jarana and use of mestizo attire create a Yucatecan identity, the same symbols mark the class differences that exist between Mérida's upper class and the city's mestizoes, for Jarana performance is limited to Noche Regional during carnival festivities, a night with less public attendance, and

29 It was started by young members of Mérida's upper class as a custom's carnival dance, in its origins taking place in private clubs.



a paseo observed from balconies by members of Merida’s upper class³⁰. The balconies themselves creating a physical barrier between the City’s ethnic groups (Reyes, 2003, p. 55-6; 104-112; 135-38). As such Noche Regional is both a sign of solidarity among classes and ethnic roots as well as a marker of the differences that exist among the City’s three main ethnic groups: white upper class³¹, Mestizoes, and Mayans.

Brazilian Capoeira: a Fine Line Between Game, Sport, Dance, and Racial Struggles

Some dance forms have developed out of other genres, this is the case of Capoeira. Originally believed to be a form of martial art closely associated with ancient African fighting techniques Capoeira, together with Samba have become Brazil’s greatest cultural exports.

Records of the first two hundred years of Capoeira history in Brazil, during the country’s slavery period, are at best hard to find. The first written registers of Capoeira date back to the eighteenth century, when it was at the center of social turmoil and as a result was considered a “social infirmity”. During that period Capoeira was prohibited by the Brazilian penal code. The four million plus Africans taken to Brazil as slaves struggled to maintain their ethno-cultural roots while being forced to acculturate to euro-centric ways, a process reproduced throughout the Caribbean and Latin America during the same period. The slave population of Brazil was well represented by members of three major groups: the Sudanese [Yoruba and Dahomey], the Mohammedanized Guinea-Sudanese [Malesia and Hausa], and the Bantu [Kongos, Kimbundas, and Kasanjés]. Mixed together in the plantations with the intended purpose of praying on their regional rivalries as a means to avoid rebellion, members of these groups managed to survive, some successfully escaping from their “owners”, and founding marooned villages known as *quilombos* (Almeida, 1986, p. 1-15).

30 As mentioned before some members of Merida’s upper class leave the city altogether to avoid carnival festivities.

31 Mérida’s “whites” are a mixture of many ethnic backgrounds that include among others people of Lebanese extract. It appears to the researcher that “whiteness” in the City is both determined by phenotype and by economic station.

Some scholars argue that Capoeira was first practiced within the Brazilian slave quarters, as a weapon used in rebellions and during their escape from plantations, but disguised as a dance to fool their owners who had forbidden all forms of martial training among their slaves for obvious reasons. The same theory states that Capoeira found its way into the quilombos³², and adapted to changing times by metamorphosing from rudimentary fighting style into dance (Almeida, 1986, p. 15-16; Lewis, 1992, p. 40-41). Once again the reader must be aware that some dance forms were used in ancient cultures to train soldiers in the art of fight as is the case of both Greeks and Basques (Herrera, 1984, p. 30-1). The same dynamics might have been occurring in Africa prior to the Middle Passage period.

The word Capoeira is also at the center of academic controversy: Some scholars argue the term comes from the Portuguese term *capão* for castrated rooster. A derivation followed: a cage for capons, and hence for chickens in general. The latter serves as an argument for other scholars who link Capoeira to the location of an old poultry market in Rio de Janeiro where male slaves would amuse themselves by imitating the movements of cock fighting. The fact that cocks and other birds are mentioned prominently in Capoeira songs strengthens the previously stated academic argument. Furthermore, this theory sets the origin of Capoeira in the urban setting (Lowell, 1992, p. 43), Thus opposing the rural origins theory mentioned in the previous paragraph. Some scholars argue that Capoeira is a Brazilian construction with African roots based on the existence of a group of similar “martial arts” throughout the Caribbean; among them the *Lagya* from Martinique and the Cuban *Maní*, both of which are forms of acrobatic mock combat set to music (Lewis, 1992, p. 20).

Other scholars argue that the term Capoeira comes from the Ki-Kongo root *kupura*, meaning “to play.” While the meaning of *pura* in the same language means “flying from place to place, wrestling, fighting.” Another theory places the origin of the word Capoeira in the Kongolese term *kipura*, which means cockfighting (Talmon-Chvaicer, 2008, p. 29).

32 Independent villages located in Brazil's backlands founded by slaves who had escaped the senzalas, their quarters on the plantations.



As mentioned earlier, the oldest written and oral accounts of Capoeira date back to the eighteenth century. Written descriptions and records of the *Jogo de Capoeira* were compiled by a physician named Melo de MoraisFilho who recorded the popular cultures of Brazil. The earliest reference to date about Capoeira being a sport or a martial art dates back to 1770 (Lewis, 1992, p. 43). The meaning of “play” today is not identical to its meaning in the nineteenth century. That explains why slaves caught playing Capoeira were flogged and imprisoned (Talmon-Chvaicer, 2008, p. 27).

During the last part of the eighteenth century city planning was nearly non-existent in Brazil, the lack of economic and socio-cultural planning led to the development of a vagrant population for whom the practice of Capoeira served multiple goals; game, personal defense, and means to threaten the population and help vagrants commit crimes. The latter gave Capoeira the social standing of “abominable sickness”. A systematic persecution of capoeiristas developed following the 1808 transfer of the center of the Portuguese Empire from Europe to Brazil³³, and the creation of the Guarda Real do Palacio, Brazil’s first organized police force (Almeida, 1986, p. 25).

Brazil’s social situation got worse as a series of historical events during the nineteenth century created an army of vagrants who were not absorbed by Brazilian society: freed slaves, wanderers, bums and veterans from the Paraguayan War were seduced by Capoeira. Conflict among these groups ensued thus creating the social need for a systematic repression of the game and its players. Under those conditions Capoeira arrived into the twentieth century, employed by a crosssection of Brazilian society to attain their respective goals. Vagrants, outlaws, mercenaries, some members of the upper class and politicians got involved in Capoeira as a means to riches and ballots. The latter resulted in stronger public dislike of the game and more effective government repression against it until 1930. In that year a military revolution put Getulio Vargas in power. The new leader eased off the repression of popular cultural expressions to gain public favor while paving the way for MestreBimba, or Capoeira master teacher Bimba, to restore dignity to the game (Almeida, 1986, p. 26-31).

33 To avoid capture by the French army, at the time a Pan-European threat.

There is consensus about the fact that Capoeira was started by Africans and their descendants. Over time Mulato and white Brazilians have engrossed the ranks of Capoeiristas as the dance-play form has travelled from its origins into the twenty first century. In turn, this racial integration has propitiated a gradual change of Capoeira's social status. The 1930s was also a period where indigenous art reclaimed its rightful place among the arts without the need to emulate with Eurocentric standards. The Negritude movement that started in Paris and gained force in the Caribbean created a space for validating diverse roots and ancestries. In Brazil Gilberto Freyre started a movement that highlighted the positive influence of native Brazilian and African cultures in Brazilian society. By 1937 efforts were in place to forge a national identity anchored in Brazil's carnival, samba, Candomble and Capoeira, and by doing so incorporate the members of Brazil's poor economic sector into the country's social structure. The 1964-1985 military regime presented Brazil as an example of racial integration before the international community. The latter paved the way for diplomatic relations with Europe and Africa. All of these events prepared Capoeira for its exportation to the world (Talmon-Chvaicer, 2008, p. 51, 153).

Capoeira today stands for rebellion, non-cooperation with oppression and liberation. The name of Brazilian academies where the dance is taught at present tend to associate the form with slavery³⁴. Even its most commonly used uniform: white pants with no shoes refer to Capoeira's slavery past (Lewis, 1992, p. 40-41). As the 1980s witnessed the re-surfacing of Brazil's Black Movement Capoeira became one of its most important symbols (Roig, 2005, p. 24-25). Is Capoeira a game, a Martial art, or a dance? Is it African or Brazilian in origin? The debate continues as people from other ethnic and national backgrounds from around the world learn Capoeira from Brazilian masters.

Argentinean Tango, a Bridge Across Social Classes

Miscegenation played an important role in populating Argentina from its "discovery" to the end of the nineteenth century. A significant Mestizo popu-

34 Capoeira academies have such names as senzala [slave quarters], quilombo [fugitive slave communities], or pelourinho [location of the slave auction block and whipping post in Salvador (Lewis, 1992, p. 40)].

lation existed in the country until the end of that century. Argentina was also a stop in the slave trade, on its way to Chile and Peru. The traffic of African slaves in Argentina was introduced in the seventeenth century. At the end of the eighteenth century African slaves were a majority in Argentina. But the abolishment of slavery and Africans participation in the Wars of Independence reduced their numbers to insignificant figures. European migration to Argentina increased during the last part of the nineteenth century, mostly of Spanish and Italian origins, their numbers begun to change Argentina's ethnic composition. Both World Wars injected into Argentina significant amounts of German and Hebrew migrants during the twentieth century. These migrations completed the whitening of Argentina. Today ninety five per cent of the population is white (Zamorano, 1988, p.117-120).

The term Tango refers to Negroes and their merry ways, and also to closed in precincts where blacks were grouped, and from the African languages it means closed in circle, much like the embrace tango has come to signify over the years. The term Tango also appears in a legal decree from Montevideo prohibiting dance gathering of Africans known as Tangos or Tambos. Today scholars argue that the term Tango is more indebted to Africa than the dance itself (Flores, 1993, p. 11-13).

The amalgamation of the Waltz, Mazurka, Polka, chotis, Paso Doble and Quadrille was creolized in the Buenos Aires area by members of the lower classes, many of them immigrants from Europe³⁵ and transformed into what came to be known first as Milonga and later on as Tango³⁶. To a lesser extend Tango also received contributions from the Afro-Argentinean Candombé. The genre was also influenced by the Cuban Habanera, which arrived in the Bonaerense scene between 1870 and 1880 (Carpentier, 1946, p. 179-95).

The initial promoter of Tango in Buenos Aires came from the lower classes. This type inhabited the city slums and was known as "malevo" u "orillero" to mark its habitat, "lasorillas de la ciudad", the city limits. If he was big others called him "compadre" and if he was small framed and more agile he

35 During the nineteenth century famines and social unrest triggered significant European migrations to Argentina

36 Milonga precede Tango and is still danced. Musically the tempo of the Milonga is faster than that of the Tango.

was referred to as “compadrito.” Quick with the knife this type was usually an assassin for hire at the service of a landlord. *Compadres y compadritos*, males and orilleros frequented zinc huts located in the city’s outskirts known as “academias” where Tango was danced (Adellach, 1999, p.10-11).

Young men from Argentina’s upper class looking for excitement frequented these academies and learned to dance Tango. Eventually these young men taught the dance to their sisters and other young female relatives of the Buenos Aires upper class. And Tango began its ascent up the social ladder from its origins in the slums of Buenos Aires to the soirees of the richest class (Adellach, 1999, p.9-13; Bottomer, 1996, p. 7; Flores, 1993, p. 18). However, older members of the upper and ruling classes deemed it lascivious and depraved³⁷ and began a systematic repeal of the form. Regardless of social reticence Tango continued its development, achieving its present form between 1880 and 1920. Tango also met with reticence by members of the old European society as well as governments and Church. As a result Tango was banned from the courts of the Kings of Germany and Italy as well as by Pope Benedict XV (Bottomer, 1996, p. 6-10; Flores, 1993, p. 14-16). The prohibition gave way to civil disobedience.

The matter was solved after the Roman Curia, realizing that the prohibition of Tango was creating increasing social unrest, presented Pope Pius X with a washed down or less sinful tango choreography in order to convince him of the inoffensive character of the dance. The gimmick worked and See’s ban was lifted. Papal approval paved the way for Tango’s international acceptance in Europe and in Argentinean upper class balls (Flores, 1993, p. 41-49).

Today tango is danced all over the world. Students of Tango come from a variety of backgrounds that include the Far Orient, the Nordic countries, and most Latin American nations. Tango’s migrant origins appeals to Latin

37 Tango dancers hook their legs together, and caress each other tightly with their legs in a very sensual manner. The close embrace used in the dance was considered scandalous. At the turn of the nineteenth century this dance embrace and sensual movements must have raised not only an eye brow but many prayers from the more conservative sector of the Bonaerense population, not to mention the clergy. Nineteenth century standard of propriety and decorum differ dramatically from those of later centuries. When studying a particular dance it is important to place it within the social context of the period in which it was born in order to comprehend the level of acceptance or rejection it was met with upon its appearance on the social scene of their birth places.

Americans settling in other world regions, as well as to people from all over the globe.. In its own way Tango is to migrants what Cante Hondo is to Spanish Gypsies: a nostalgic cry that soothes the pain caused by their condition of exiles³⁸. Tango is included in UNESCO list of dances patrimony of humanity since September 2009.

Chile: the National Couples' Dance of Denunciation

The military dictatorship of General Pinochet caused the appearance of a social protest group known as the Arpilleras. Wives, daughters, girlfriends and other female relatives of the political desaparecidos from shanty Chilean towns, who following the abduction of their household providers were forced into Chile's economic arena. With the help of Cardinal Raul Silva Henriquez, and members of the Liberation Theological Movement, a series of organizations were created to help families of victims of political persecution. Women were organized to face their new dire needs, soup kitchens were set up to feed those affected by unemployment and sewing was encouraged as source of income. From these sewing circles came out an original form of denunciation in the form of primitive quilts called *arpilleras*. The name also applied to the women who used the quilts as vehicles to narrate their personal stories, their sorrows, their needs, and the void created by the government abduction of their men. The first arpillera workshop was started in 1974 (Agosin, 1996, p. 1-28).

A decade later, in 1983, the arpilleras devised a new mode of protest. The form involved the public performance of La Cueca, Chile's National Dance³⁹. La Cueca is couple's dance that deals with a couple's romantic story. Performing the dance with an imaginary partner, the disappeared, the arpilleras denounced the horrors committed by the government, at the same time denouncing themistreatment of political prisoners, their disappearance, and the denial to grant them a proper burial. Thus silencing their mourners. "laCueca Sola has become an important metaphor for Chilean women confronting repression and human rights violations". To enhance awareness about the government

38 The tango Madreselva is used in the movie *El Postino* to convey the feeling of loss and nostalgia experienced by those living far away from their homelands.

39 Moreno Cha, Ercilia. In *MUSIC IN LATIN AMERICAN CULTURE: REGIONAL TRADITIONS*. John M. Schechter Ed. Schirmer Books. New York, New York. 1999. 157.

abuse against political prisoners the name of the *desaparecido* is shouted by her, his partner before the dance ensues. As a form of political protest La Cueva Sola has transcended nationalities creating international awareness about this unfinished chapter in Chilean history. Sting's "They Dance Alone" and Holly Near's "Hay unamujerdesaparecida" continue to denounce this political crime throughout the world (Agosín, 1996, p. 33-37).

Since then democracy has returned to Chile. The arpillera workshops have long been closed, and only a few individual women maintain the tradition as a reminder of the Nation's political brutal past. CuecasSolas are still performed in public spaces during political demonstrations and services held in memory of the desaparecidos. The folkloric group called "Song for Life" remains committed to preserve the historical memory of a group of valiant women, their quest for survival and their dance of protest (Agosín, 1996, p. 31-33; 35-36).

Conclusion

Art is easy to control, especially when the State and organized religion need to manipulate them for their own gain. The unpredictable and free nature of dance makes it more difficult to be subjected to strict control. Dance as rebellion against the accepted norm has been present throughout the ages. In twentieth-century Spain during General Francisco Franco's regime the Sardana was performed as an expression of Catalonian nationalism. Isadora Duncan rebelled against the strict parameters of classical ballet by discarding tutus and toe shoes in favor of loose tunics and barefoot dancing.

Dance protest is presented in this article through several examples: The politically incorrect performance of La Cueva Sola in public spaces to denounce genocide actions against dissenters. The dance of the Seises as rebellion against church Cannons. And Tambu's performance as a defining aspect of what is no longer Eurocentric. Dance is also resilient by nature as proven by the survival of Sociedades de TumbaFrancesa into the twenty first century⁴⁰. Dance transcends social classes as Tango Argentino attests

⁴⁰ The cultural repercussions of the Haitian Revolution is often given second place in favor of the political impact of the same historical event. Among the possible reasons for this action is the



Andwhile reinforcing old alliances it also accentuates social and racial segregation, the Jarana being a good example. All forms discussed attest to the power of dance.

The role of dance as escape valve, guardian of roots and political voice of many oppressed nations is very palpable throughout both the African Caribbean and the African Latin American countries. However, the job is not complete, but rather an ongoing dynamic struggle for survival. The lost of its religious component in the case of Tambu, for example, demonstrate how fragile these cultural expressions still are. Racial discrimination and fear of the unknown “other” are still very present in the twenty first century, and demand constant education and watch. Anthropology, sociology and ethnology have done and continue to play a role in the preservation of humanity’s heritage, as do powerful institutions like UNESCO. However danger is always around the corner. Transnationalism plays an important role in the propagation of the world’s cultural treasures, but it has its own shortcomings: In the case of Capoeira many of its original nuisances have been lost when introduced into foreign cultures. Capoeira in Brazil is also an example of an ongoing class struggle where black Brazilians identify the dance with an art form of the still oppressed class, while those of the upper classes, on the average of lighter skin, claim that Capoeira is a Brazilian invention in a Brazil devoid of racial differences (Lewis, 1992, p. 18-19).

There is a generalized tendency to romanticize class and racial struggles. This tendency has been used by some scholars and politicians to pursue their own agendas and attain personal goals. Capoeira and Merengue more than any of the other dance forms discussed in this paper have been used in this manner by unscrupulous individuals. The aggressive like movements of the dance-game-sport known as Capoeira can, and is romanticized as a dance of rebellion and resistance among Brazilians. But researchers continue to question the true origins of this dance. The previous statement should in no way take away from the fact that Capoeira as a dance was created by members of the lower class and darker skin color and has been appropriated by those of the upper class with lighter skin pigmentation. And from that perspective

unquestionable fact that slaves who begun fighting without formal training and with rudimentary weapons managed to defeat the then formidable armies of Great Britain, France, and Spain (Geggus 2001: 4).

Capoeira does indeed have a class struggle character to it as well as a white-ning racial component. Ongoing processes like the previously mentioned one demonstrate not only the complexities of dance but the wealth of possibilities its study can provide to the comprehensive and objective study of cultures.

The Dominican Merengue offers a kaleidoscope of examples about the purposes and functions of a dance form expanding from racial whitening to political control and leading to national unity. Dominican Merengue is also an effective Caribbean ambassador to the world. However, as much as Merengues are played and performed at celebrations the world over, its dramatically rich history remains mostly unknown. There is more to dance than the superficial joy derived from its public performance. The power of dance come through each of the dances discussed.

The slave trade and the slave plantation culture were no doubt one of the most brutal chapters in human history. These systems planted the seeds of resistance and rebellion that have characterized both Latin America and the Caribbean⁴¹ ever since. Together with these seeds was planted one that has turned the region into one of the most fertile lands for the fusion of African and European cultures. The rebellious and artistic characteristics of the region pulsates through many of the dance forms presented, may they be a source of learning and humility for future generations. On his recent visit to Africa Brazil's president Luis Ignacio Lula da Silva has expressed it in the following terms: "no hay manera de devolver nuesta deuda historica con Africa. Somos deudores en todos los sentidos, en nuestra forma de ser, nuestra cultura y nuestro arte"⁴² (Lula, 2010). This quotation defines not only Brazil, but the New World at large.

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41 As well as some regions of the United States not discussed in the article.

42 We are forever indebted to Africa. Our character, our culture, and our art are part of that debt.

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