

What is your name?

Ilbert Sanchez

What is your gender?

Male

What ethnicity do you identify as?

Hondurian: Garifuna

What race do you identify as?

Black

Where were you born?

Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Where were your parents born?

Honduras

Is your blackness unique or does it have similarities to other ethnicities?

I have similarities to other ethnicities, when it comes to the foods we eat, the spices that we use. A lot of things that we put in soups, are what other ethnicities use as well, when it comes to seafood or the vegetables. A lot of people put potatoes and carrots. We put conch, you could put a lobster in it as well. So that's definitely something that other ethnicities have. I think that the music that we listen to as well. We listen to a lot of reggae, dancehall, calypso, soca. We also listen to bachata, salsa, meringue. That right there in its own has so many different ethnicities. We have the dancing. We dance to the rhythm of the drums which other countries do as well.

Do you feel like your blackness is questioned? If so, what aspects?

I think growing up I didn't understand the difference between being Hispanic and also still being black. So I would face internal battles understanding the deeper roots of my culture. Being able to come from a Spanish speaking country but still being able to relate to multiple races because of what's around us. Honduras is a Spanish speaking country, but that doesn't mean that I'm Spanish. So growing up, I was that black kid that spoke Spanish. These are things that I battled with; not understanding the depth of my culture, what I was first and what came after. Being Garifuna 1st and then understanding Spanish. Battling understanding my true blackness and also still being loyal to listening to Marc Anthony or like Celia Cruz. While still understanding Bob Marley, and Glen Washington or Beres. Now I don't question my blackness at all because I know that I'm black. But from someone who is African American, you're not black black. You're black but you're Spanish. It's always a but, why can't it just be black you know?

Do you believe there to be an implicit or explicit hierarchy of blackness? i.e. Is Afro-Cuban seen as lower than African-American in society?

I don't think there is at all. I think that there's a beauty of anyone being in their own lane but not necessarily it being hierarchy of who's higher than what because where would that stem from or what would that mean? There's so many nations that became independent before others, but that doesn't say that they're higher than others, you know. I think this generation is more purview to what that is and that means compared to before.

Did you grow up in a house or apartment?

An apartment.

How many people lived there?

3 people.

Which of the following rooms were in your living space? Bedroom, Bathroom, Kitchen, Dining Room, Living Room, Den, Foyer, Library, Oice, Front Porch, Back Porch, Balcony, Basement, Laundry Room, Front Yard, Back Yard

Bedroom, bathroom, kitchen, living room

A Spectrum of Blackness

Interview with Ilbert Sanchez
by Germane Barnes

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What activities did you participate or witness in the kitchen or on the porch that is unique to your culture? If you did not have a formal porch, was there a communal space that acted as a porch?

The living room was where we would have family over. We would be looking over photo albums and we would also be dancing. That's where we would eat. That's where we would make food. We would be mashing plantains in a hana. The men would mash the plantains and then would give it to the women who will be cooking the soup, machuca. It was the living room because the kitchen was never big enough. In the kitchen it really was cooking, the women would be gathered there speaking, making jokes and would also make the food for the ancestors. Anyone who passed away that year or the year before. We would actually make a plate for them and we would take it to someone's room and leave it there with the candles lit.

What type of non-conventional activities did you participate or witness in the kitchen, on the porch? If you did not have a formal porch, was there a communal space that acted as a porch?

None

What is your relationship to water?

I'm always like swimming. I can swim in any type of water. I think that's guaranteed. Being from Honduras, mostly everyone can swim. Being in the water so much you just go and learned myself. You don't get taught that. Water is an extremely important part of the culture. Especially being from Central America, we're surrounded by water and through the diaspora, us coming from the St. Vincent. We all came on a boat and we all just stayed on the edge of the water. From Honduras, Nicaragua, Belize, all the Garifunas are mainly by the water because that's where we stayed. After the migration we didn't decide to go deeper into Honduras or Belize or Guatemala. Even if you didn't know the story, you would be wonder "hmmm, how come?" This is not a coincidence why all the black towns are by the water. A lot of our traditions and history comes because we're closer water. The water represents like the trials or the trailways of where we come from. It wouldn't resonate the same if we were in the middle of the country.

In what spaces do you feel liberated?

When there are family reunions and gatherings: thanksgiving or a ritual. That's when we get a taste of the culture again with the foods, the traditions and the songs to the ancestors. Going into the churches and feeling the energy when singing in our language. This usually happens in church centers or sometimes it's on a beach, sometimes it's in a community center or someone's house in the living room.

In what spaces do you feel restricted?

I don't have any sense of restrictions anywhere actually.

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