

Race and Ethnicity in the formation of Panamanian National Identity: Panamanian Discrimination Against Chinese and West Indians in the Thirties

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Abstract: *The article examines the conditions governing the interrelationship between Chinese and west Indians population with the Panamanians, especially in the first half of the twentieth century. In particular, the article presents the framework in which opportunities for integration and social and economic marginalization are provided, and how Panamanians actively discriminated, but so often differentiated, with respect to different groups of foreign immigrants. It remarks the relationship between merchants-economic sector in which foreigners were widely represented and the rest of the Panamanian community as well as among foreign traders between them, as belonging to one or another nationality. The political environment of Panamanian nationalist exaltation, which allows the intensification of discriminatory and even racist legal initiatives, is also examined in detail. It also illustrates forms of political participation of immigrants, and social and political alliances that generated.*

Resumen: *El artículo examina las condiciones que regían la interrelación de la población china y afro caribeña con la población panameña que encontró a su arribo, especialmente en la primera mitad del siglo XX. En particular se presenta el marco en el que se desarrollan oportunidades de integración y de marginación social y económica, y la forma en que los panameños discriminaban activamente, pero de forma frecuentemente diferenciada, respecto a los distintos grupos de extranjeros inmigrantes. Es destacable la relación entre los comerciantes –sector económico en el que los extranjeros estaban ampliamente representados –y el resto de la comunidad panameña, así como entre los comerciantes extranjeros entre sí, según pertenecieran a una u otra nacionalidad. El ambiente político de exaltación nacionalista panameña, que permite la agudización de las iniciativas jurídicas discriminatorias e incluso racistas, también es examinado en detalle. Se ilustran además las formas de participación política de los inmigrantes, y las alianzas sociales y políticas que generaban.*

Introduction

In the 1970s, a Panamanian politician stated informally:

“The Jamaicans are anti-nationals, anti-Panamanians. They are the allies of the gringos against the Panamanian’s aspiration of obtaining sovereignty over the Canal Zone. They are not worried about learning to speak the national language [Spanish]. I don’t like them . . . and this is not discrimination against their black race. I can go anytime to Pacora and Chepo¹ and feel very comfortable among blacks of these regions. But the ‘Chombos’² . . .”³

Twenty years later, a 1995 news article repeated the same arguments:

The “arrival of big waves of West Indians initiated the racial and identity problems of Panama . . . They don’t want to be Panamanian, they are not sure if they are West Indians and probably, because of their role as the preferred children of the gringos, they tend to consider themselves North Americans.”⁴ After more than a century of presence in Panama the West Indian community is still considered a “problem for the national identity.”

In the late 1980s the traditional Chinese Panamanian community -- that is the descendants of the Chinese immigrants of the first half of the twentieth century-- saw horrified how the arrival of new Chinese immigrants in the 1980s provoked the revival of the anti-Chinese arguments used by the 1941 fascist government of Arnulfo Arias. Major Panamanian newspapers published racist anti-Chinese articles such as:

“The Chinese are the lords of retail commerce . . . They do not practice hygienic habits, they are pagans, they have habits very different from ours and the worse is that they teach them to their children born in Panama, creating a new Panamanian style that results in the loss of our national identity.”⁵ “Orientals who do not know the language who are unaware of the most basic hygiene will serve you at a butcher shop while they scratch their hooves . . . in my opinion, there can be no hope until a strong arm comes and eradicates them such as happened in 1941.”⁶

The West Indian and the Chinese communities have been present in Panama since the second half of the nineteenth century. Yet, as the aforementioned quotes show, both are still considered a menace to Panamanian identity.

In this paper, therefore, I will explore the origins of the notion Panamanian identity in the way it was established by the nationalist movements of the 1930s. Even if the notion of Panamanian identity may have been present earlier, it were the nationalist debates of the thirties that fully developed and established the idea of Panamanianess in force until this day.

This notion of Panamanianess set the parameters of who could and who could not be considered Panamanian. I will focus here in three different racial and ethnic groups the Chinese and the West Indian immigrants and in the Spanish speaking Panamanian blacks. The first two excluded and the last one included. Indeed, the “inclusion” of the Panamanian blacks was used to argue that Panamanian identity was not based on racial categories but on cultural ones.

However, the notion of Panamanianess was not the only factor affecting the integration of this groups. Despite a shared exclusion, the Chinese managed to integrate better than the West Indians. A second component of this paper is to explore their economic and demographic differences that explain their dissimilar integration.

Panamanian society has constantly questioned the right of the Chinese and West Indian community to become Panamanians. In 1904, one year after the formation of the Republic, law declared them races of prohibited immigration, a status that was reinforced by successive laws⁷ and culminated in the 1941 constitution that denied citizenship to the races under the category of prohibited immigration.

The Construction of Panamanian National Identity

In the nineteenth century, the Panamanian merchant elite imagined Panama’s future as a modern replica of the mediaeval cities of the Hanseatic league. They were proud of Panamanian commercial and transitist history, and expected that the construction of the Canal would reestablish the glorious days of the Portobelo fairs when the riches of Peru and Europe were exchanged in Panama.⁸ This notion of Panamanian history and desired future was epitomized by the motto the merchant elite gave to the young Republic in 1903, that is, *pro mundi y beneficio*.

In 1923 the Group Acción Comunal started a political campaign to challenge this vision. This middle class party was formed by the first generation of Panamanian professionals, who felt displaced by American’s dominance of managerial positions within the Panamanian government. Indeed, the first objective of their 1923 manifesto was to start a process of substitution of American professionals with Panamanian ones in the Government administration.⁹

Acción Comunal’s campaign centered around two issues: to opposed

the corruption of the traditional politicians and to reinforce “the notion of our [Panamanian] personality, through an intense nationalist campaign.”¹⁰ In their view, one of the main threats to Panamanian identity was American influence; which they sought to neutralize through the accentuation of Panamanian Spanish culture and the “dignifying of the typical Panamanian, who is the product of ethnical diversity.”¹¹ However, as we will see, their understanding of ethnical diversity was limited to the *mestizo*; neither blacks nor Chinese were considered typical Panamanians.

In the 1930s, in the midst of the world wide economic depression, Acción Comunal’s nationalism strongly appealed to the large sector of the population who was going through economic hardship and unemployment.¹² In 1931 Acción Comunal leaders’ came to power and stayed for the entire decade. For the first time in Panama’s history as an independent nation, the traditional merchant elites did not held the political power. The new president was Harmodio Arias a Harvard or Cambridge educated *mestizo* of middle class origin.

In the 1930s economic depression, Panama’s transit and commercial tradition was seen not as a source of prosperity but as both the cause of Panama’s lack of national identity and the origin of Panamanians’ displacement by foreigners. They sought to establish a new era of nationalism that would reject “the notion of Panama as a place of merchants and transit with which we have been stigmatized since the Spanish days.”¹³ Merchants, so goes the argument, tended to be foreigners who came to Panama, became rich and left without leaving any benefit to the country. Moreover, “transitisthm” was considered the cause of ephemeral moments of richness “California Gold Rush, Potosí, the canal construction, the American fleet. . .”¹⁴ that could not be the foundations of solid nationality. As an editorial of 1935 claimed, “Aún está fresco el recuerdo de la flota cuando muchos fueron los comerciantes de afuera que ganaron crecidas sumas de dinero y al hijo del país apenas si le quedó el recuerdo de aquel inesperado río de oro que cruzó el Istmo.”¹⁵ Therefore, it was time to break with this anti-national transitist and merchant past.

Besides being an economic problem, “transitisthms” was also considered the cause of undesirable immigration. Nationalist denounced the large presence of foreigners, principally those they considered incompatibly with the Panamanian culture, that is the Chinese and the West Indians. A 1934 editorial in one of the main Panamanian newspapers claimed that “*due to their geographical situation as cities of Universal transit, Panama and Colon have been in all of its eras a propitious for the development of harmful fungus of cosmopolitanism...*”¹⁶ “*Por [ser Panama] una nación cosmopolita, últimamente han estado arribando...un contingente de extranjeros, unos sin Dios, otros sin Patria y la mayoría sin Ley.*”¹⁷

The nationalist agenda to combat the problems presented by “transisthms” was to confront the economic and cultural predominance of the transisthmic zone (Panama and Colón) with a back to the “interior” program. The goal was to populate the interior and to stimulate agricultural investment. Nevertheless, as Panamanian president F.H. Arosemena complained in 1930, Panamanian national capital was not interested in rural investments.¹⁸ Consequently, the government took the problem in its hands pursuing a campaign of attracting immigrants to farm the country.¹⁹ Yet, nationalists wanted the immigrants to be of the appropriate race. According to nationalist editorials, “They should be the descendants of El Cid, that vigorous race. ... We should not forget that we lack workers, especially in agriculture... The type of immigrants that would benefit us are those that come from parts of the globe... whit similar race culture and agricultural products.”²⁰

The other face of the back to the interior program was to recover the true soul of Panamanian identity in the traditions of the interior peasants. According to an editorial, in the interior “The national traditions that form the indestructible core of the fatherland are unconsciously relived.”²¹ Yet, the true soul of the interior was a counterpart to the transisthmic zone not only because of its grounding in the land, but also because of its racial characteristics. In contrast with the cities of Panamá and Colón filled with West Indian blacks, in the interior, the *mestizo* demographic ideal of the Panamanian identity was much closer to reality. In the 1920 census 25% of Cocle’s population was American-Indian, 59.87% was *mestizo* while only 9.51% was black. This was a big contrast with the 66% of blacks in Colon. The confusion of a surprised American diplomat reveals well this fact. The diplomat had been told by Panamanians “in all seriousness that if a circle were drawn with a fifty mile radius, with Aguadulce [an interior main city] as a center, more true Panamanians would be found than in all of Panama.” He goes on saying that “Possibly the speaker meant that a large number of white persons would be included within the circle, but it is doubtful whether the true Panamanian, is pure white.”²² The confusion of this diplomat was due to the fact that he did not understand that the true Panamanians were not suppose neither white nor black, but *mestizo*.

Even if the nationalist campaign proposed a defense of the Panamanians to the competition of all foreigners it was exceptionally strong against the Chinese and the West Indians immigrants. Panamanian racism in conjunction with West Indians’ successful competition with Panamanian for jobs in the Canal Zone and the Chinese large share of the retail trade made both communities particularly vulnerable in times of economic depression. Both, indeed, were attacked and vilified in by the nationalist Press of the 1930s.

Despite those similarities, however, one group ended up being more

satisfactorily integrated into Panamanian society than the other. According to Ramón Mon, from the late forties to the eighties Chinese immigration to Panama almost stopped, and the Chinese community managed to incorporate into Panamanian society, “*participating actively in the social and political events of the nation.*”²³ It was not until the mid 1980’s, when a new wave of Chinese immigrants came to Panama --most of them illegally-- that this process of incorporation was disturbed. Contrary to the Chinese, the West Indians, despite being a stable community without waves of immigration since the 1920s, never felt incorporated into Panamanian society.

The West Indian Community

The 1970s and 1991 quotations in the introduction of this paper show the traditional justifications for Panamanian antagonism against the West Indian community. Panamanian antagonism is not racial discrimination, but legitimate nationalism against a community that belongs to the English-American culture. The West Indians, so goes the argument, do not want to become Panamanian and have allied themselves with the American imperialist presence in Panama against Panamanian national interest.

The scholarly response to Panamanian antagonism against West Indians has been varied. In contrast to Panamanian mainstream opinion, which makes a strong distinction between West Indians and blacks of colonial origin, the Panamanian scholar, Melva Lowe Ocran, has grouped together West Indians and Panamanian blacks. She has argued that Panamanian antagonism toward the West Indians is not cultural but racial. She studied Panamanian school textbooks and national symbols and concluded that they excluded Panamanian colonial blacks from Panamanian nationality as much as they excluded the West Indian. In Lowe Ocran’s view, the words of the famous Panamanian poet, Ricardo Miró, “from the dark forest of all my wondering I don’t know if I am Indian or if I am Spanish” reflect the construction of a Panamanian identity around Spanish and American Indian culture, excluding the black component.²⁴

Melva Lowe’s accurate explanation of the racist component of the Panamanian antagonism against West Indian, falls short, however, in her analysis of the Spanish-speaking blacks. To say that Panamanian national identity excluded all blacks, Panamanians and West Indians alike, is not enough. She does not consider the fact that Spanish-speaking blacks could have considered themselves more similar to white and *mestizo* Panamanians than to the West Indians. Besides, she never asks the cause of Panamanians insistence on distinguishing West Indian blacks from Spanish-speaking blacks and what the role of this differentiation has been in the construction of Panamanian national identity.

The most frequent scholarly explanations of the lack of incorporation of West Indians into Panamanian society, however, have underestimated Panamanian racism, centering its analysis, instead, on the American role in the creation of racial antagonism in Panama.²⁵ With some variations, the argument contends that Americans introduced segregation to Panama, which was previously a country with a greater degree of racial tolerance. According to this argument, United States segregation in the Canal Zone generated a sharp division between Panamanian and West Indian workers. The American's racial definitions that did not distinguish between degrees of blackness and gathered together *Latinos*, *mulattos* and blacks, and this offended Panamanians. Therefore, Panamanian reaction to segregation was a strong effort to be distinguished from West Indian blacks, and to separate from them. The problem with this explanation is that it does not consider Panamanian racism before the creation of the Canal Zone to see if the American presence in Panama, in fact, increased previous racist traditions that went back to colonial times.

The West Indians in the Nationalist Argument

As we saw, most explanations of the origins of racial antagonism between blacks and whites in Panama are based on the American presence in Panama. According to this perspective, segregationist practices were introduced in Panama with the creation of the Canal Zone. Previously, so goes the argument, Panama was a country characterized by racial tolerance. What I claim, instead, is that the presence of the Canal Zone and the large immigration of West Indians, not only did not increment Panamanian racism, but helped to incorporate the Spanish-speaking black into Panamanian national identity.

Until the end of the nineteenth century, there was a clear differentiation and antagonism between Spanish-speaking blacks and whites.²⁶ This was reflected in the colonial urban arrangement of Panama which divided the city into white and black zones. The white elites lived inside the walls of Panama City (the *intramuros*) and the black population lived outside the walls in the “*arrabal* of Santa Ana.” When the political transformations of the nineteenth century allowed the political participation of the black population, Panamanian blacks grouped together in what was labeled as the black liberal party. The Panamanian elites were worried by blacks' politics. Mariano Arosemena, a prominent white historian, echoed the elites' anxiety when he defined black political activity as “scandalous, criminal and alarmist.”²⁷

By the 1930s, however, racial distinctions between Spanish blacks and whites seems to be gone from the nationalist discourse. At this time, the category of blackness apparently was only applied to the West Indians. If in the

nineteenth century the elites considered all blacks, without ethnic distinctions, as “criminal and scandalous”, in the 1930s the only “criminals” were the West Indian blacks. Apparently, the otherness of the Spanish black was replaced by that of the West Indian black, an “other” that was not only black but also culturally different. How did this substitution take place?

The first and most obvious change is that distinctions that were previously made in terms of race, in the thirties were made in terms of culture. The 1904 law specified as prohibited immigrants the blacks who did not speak Spanish. Latin American blacks, at least legally, were allowed to immigrate without restrictions. This reveals an attempt in the official discourse to substitute or hide racial distinctions using a cultural-ethnic language. What was officially forbidden, was not the black race, but the black-English culture. This theme is recurrent in Panamanian literature: Panamanian antagonism toward West Indians is not racial but cultural. Olmedo Alfaro, writing in his 1924’s book The West Indian Danger in Central America stated that “The West Indian is not yet a danger, but it will be one tomorrow...The friends of the Castilian language and of the Latin culture resent the deferment of the solution of this problem... The difference between the black West Indian and the colored men developed under the Indian-American (*Indoamericana*) civilization is evident, not only for his [inferior] status in the English colonies, but also because of the respect that the colored races have enjoyed in our societies for the nobility of their character and their assimilation of our highest moral virtues.”²⁸ In 1930, when Felipe Escobar analyzed the problems of Panamanian national identity, he was worried about the consequences of the Canal Zone’s racial practices and West Indian immigration for Panamanian racial homogeneity and democracy. According to him, before Americans and West Indians came to the Isthmus, “*Panamanians lived unaware of racial shades...which made the [Panamanians] a fertile field for the achievement of the sociological ideal of democracy: the white, the Indian, the black, the mestizos and mulattos cohabited in our land as a big tribe without worries and prejudices.*” That “*racial paradise*” was ruined by American racism and the West Indian culture which “*under the weight of a recent tradition of slavery, lacks the necessary psychological characteristics to acquire the self-assurance and dignity of free people.*”²⁹

If one part of the process of incorporation of the Panamanian black was the substitution of racial categories for ethnic-cultural ones, would this mean that the Spanish-speaking black was incorporated into the national identity as a black, and that therefore Afro-Spanish characteristics became a part of Panamanian identity? The data seems to suggest that the answer is no. As Melva Lowe has revealed, Panamanian identity was conceived as *mestizo*, that is, the result of the mixture of Indian and white. The Panamanian imagined themselves to

be the descendants of Vasco Núñez de Balboa --the discoverer of the Pacific Ocean-- and Anayansi, his Indian lover. This imagined origin is well described in the poem of Ricardo Miró “She (Anayansi) will give him love and glory so that he can write the most beautiful page in history; and that foreign warrior will be the king of your home and will give you his language and will give you his race.”³⁰

How did the Panamanian Spanish-speaking black fit into a national identity formed around the figure of the *mestizo*? What seems to have happened is that when confronted with the presence of the black West Indian, the Spanish black ceased to be black and actually became “*mestizo*”. The national integration of the Spanish black depended on his “*mestizoization*.” In the 1920s, Demetrio Korsi in one of his poems suddenly transformed the colonial black neighborhood of Panama, Santa Ana, into a *mestizo* neighborhood. He reserved “blackness” solely for the West Indian neighborhood of Calidonia.³¹ This process of creating a strong distinction between “*mestizo*” blacks and “real” blacks was also mirrored in one of the characters in the Novel *La Tragedia del Caribe*, a mulatto called “the dark black” (*el negro moreno*): “The well known mulatto was so paradoxical and peculiar that even his nickname enveloped a notable curiosity: because the rub is that one cannot be “black” and dark (*moreno*) at the same time.”³²

What is even more revealing about the process of *mestizoization* of the Panamanian blacks are the 1920 and 1930 census categories for the racially mixed population. After the American Indian population of the transisthmian area was exterminated during the first decades of the conquest, the populations of the two main cities of the country have been predominately black. In 1607 blacks were 70% of Panama City’s population,³³ and in the first half of the nineteenth century the “dark castes” were 86%³⁴ of the city population. In 1607, Indians and *mestizos* were only 1.6% of Panama city’s population. This proportion was maintained until the nineteenth century when only 2.7% of the city population was Indian and *mestizo*. In the 1920 census the racial composition that had characterized Panama City since colonial times changed dramatically. The predominantly black and mulatto population suddenly became *mestizo*. *Mestizos* increased from 2.8% of the population in the nineteenth century to 44.1% of the population in 1920. Furthermore, it is important to point out that this census did not have a mulatto category. The 1930 Census added the category of mulatto, but, the proportion of people classified as mulatto is strikingly low compared with the *mestizo* category (4.8% of *mulattos* and 53% of *mestizos* for the whole country). Since there was neither major migration of Indians and *mestizos* into Panama City nor emigration of blacks and *mulattos* to explain this demographic change, all the descendants of black and white unions must have been grouped

under the category of *mestizo*. The 1920 census also shows that 95% of the *mestizos* of Panama and 87% of the *mestizos* of Colon city were Catholics, and, therefore can be presumed not to be West Indian immigrants. This confirms our finding that only Spanish-speaking descendants of black and white miscegenation tended to be grouped under the category of *mestizo*, while almost all West Indians were considered black.

Once the dominant discourse had established that the antagonism against West Indians was not racial but cultural, attacks could be “legitimately” made. West Indians were particularly vulnerable in a discourse that wanted to reinforce Panamanian “authentic” Hispanic-*mestizo* identity because they were simultaneously a racial and a cultural --anglophile-- threat. According to the newspaper, the Panamá América, Panama was menaced by a West Indian generation who “lives and grows unconnected from the native people by language, racial, and religious ties... feeling more British than Panamanian, even when they are born in Panama”³⁵ In fact, the anti West Indian campaign exploited both anti-American feelings and racial antagonism.

Since Panamanian laws gave citizenship to any person born on Panamanian soil, in the thirties the first generation of West Indians born in the Republic became Panamanian citizens.³⁶ However, attempts were made to contest the citizenship rights of Panamanian West Indians. In 1928 a constitutional amendment denied citizenship to the West Indians born in Panama until adulthood. This left a large number of Panamanian children of West Indian origin without nationality. A newspaper editorial, even when accepting the West Indians’ legal right to be Panamanian because “Panama was a Democracy, where legal equality reigns among all citizens,”³⁷ contested West Indian’s capability of becoming Panamanian. It pointed out that neither they nor their ancestors participated in the founding of Panama.³⁸ The press accused them of wanting to be Panamanian only for the “benefits which Panamanian citizenship gave to them.”³⁹ According to this argument, to become Panamanian, West Indians had to change their habits, not to do so would reveal their “flagrant indifference toward the institutions, customs and Panamanian history.”⁴⁰

Confronted with the Panamanian nationalist arguments, West Indians of the second generation accepted the necessity of cultural incorporation into Panama. At least that is the image presented by the news and editorials of the West Indians’ most important paper, The Panama Tribune.⁴¹ According to an article written by a West Indian born in Panama, if his peers were not regarded as Panamanians it was “the fault of our parents who kept us apart from the natives...[nevertheless] it was not too late to assimilate to the native customs.”⁴² It was thought that the best way to accomplish that objective was to send the West Indian children to Panamanian schools, rather than to the English-speak-

ing schools where they were sent previously. Nevertheless their attempts were made difficult by the racism manifested by teachers from government schools who raised obstacles to the admission of the West Indians children. As a West Indian news writer complained, “mothers and fathers of dark-skinned children have been made the APE of going and coming in an endeavor to their boy or girl matriculated [Sic] ... [and] their efforts have proven abortive.”⁴³ This led the West Indian community to reject the claim that Panamanian antagonism toward the West Indians were cultural and not racial. West Indians complained that they had been accused of refusing to adapt to the customs of the country, “but now that the West Indians are prepared to become Panamanian a barrier has been set up.”⁴⁴

Racial antagonism against the West Indians becomes even more clear in the way in which they were associated with criminality. The terms with which the press referred to them had strong racial overtones. “Phenomenal scandal among blacks from an Idem [sic] society” is the title of a newspaper article referring to an internal fight in a society called the “Jamaican society.”⁴⁵ In the following news articles, race is not only a constant issue, (“**blacks** get bold in Colon and reproduce scenes like those of Chicago...the individuals of that **race** assault a family house with sticks and stones”) but the press portrayed conflicts between Panamanians and West Indians in racial terms. That is black West Indians against unracialized Panamanians (“the **West Indians blacks** made up their mind and attacked Panamanians with stones and sticks”)⁴⁶

Furthermore, the local press accused the West Indians of filling the jails, the madhouses and the welfare institutions of Panama.⁴⁷ This argument was used as yet another basis for denying Panamanian citizenship to West Indians, “criminals [who] to humiliate us [declare] that they are “Panamanian”, by which expression they cause much grief,” and since --as legal citizens--they couldn’t be expelled from the country, the writer asked that a “formula for expelling them must be found.”⁴⁸

The criminalization of the West Indians was not only a press campaign but a police practice that --as the West Indians complained-- discriminated against the West Indians “to whom were denied the rights that were given to the other immigrant communities.”⁴⁹ The police did not make distinctions between “decent and non decent West Indians...taking boys and girls from the very door of their parents.”⁵⁰ According to a writer in a West Indian newspaper, the police behavior was particularly unfair because “the great crimes are not committed by our community. Murders, robbery, smuggling, drug trafficking, and white slavery are not chargeable to us. There has been only one murder in a West Indian community of 50,000 in two years and no major crime. Petty lawbreaking yes; because West Indians are arrested for acts of disorderly conduct which the

native guardians of the peace excuse or overlook in their compatriots.”⁵¹

The West Indians were also considered a job threat to Panamanians, especially in the enterprises directed by Americans, that is the Banana plantations of the Chiriqui Land Company and the Canal Zone. In fact, Panamanian antagonism was based in the concrete reality that West Indians were preferred to Panamanians for positions in the Canal Zone. In 1932, of 17,407 workers on the silver roll⁵², 10,115 were West Indians and 4,474 were Panamanians, the rest were other foreigners.⁵³ The Canal Zone’s Governor stated what he felt was the logic behind those numbers “Actually,... we have very few Panamanians of the lower classes who measure up to the average West Indian.”⁵⁴

Anti West Indians’ Panamanians considered the West Indians’ job competition unjust. According to a newspaper editor, the West Indians were preferred solely because “It is a well known fact that the Jamaican works for nothing and that he is used to bad treatment.”⁵⁵ Furthermore, as the government of Panama wrote to the Panama Canal administration, “preference is given to West Indian **workmen whose only advantage over the native is language.** ... [even if the West Indian is] less diligent, less intelligent and less loyal in the discharge of his duties.”⁵⁶ According to this logic, notwithstanding their “racial inferiority,” West Indians were preferred because they were part of the English-American culture.

Finally, West Indians were also the target of the nationalist anti imperialist discourse. They were accused of being both the accomplice of the imperialist Americans⁵⁷ and another evil consequence of the American presence in Panama. From this perspective, the West Indian presence was yet another of the many grievances the Panamanians suffered at the hands of the Americans. After the end of the Panama Canal construction the American government was supposed to return the West Indians to their islands, but, “as always,” the nationalist newspaper *Acción Comunal* complained, Americans betrayed the Panamanians by putting the United States’ interest in having cheap workers before Panamanian national interest “and Panama gives up and gives up, so states a canal treaty... who is going to pay the Panamanian, especially the Panamanian workers, the damages caused by the American government with this immigration of the Chombos under the Panama contract?”⁵⁸

The West Indians and the Socialist party

If the Chinese got the support of the merchant community, the West Indians, as workers, got support from the Panamanian Socialist Party. On the basis that racial division should not exist between workers, the Socialist openly

defended the West Indian. In the Socialist view, all workers should unite against the capitalist class which in its efforts to split the ranks of the working classes created false racial differences.⁵⁹ The Socialist deputy, Demetrio Porras, tended to defend West Indians' interest in the National Assembly.⁶⁰ He even proposed the West Indian lawyer, Pedro Rhodes, as second vice president of the republic during the election in the National Assembly in what he called his "fight against the spreading nationalism which was taking a declared racial turn."⁶¹

It is clear that the Socialist Party sought the political cooperation of the West Indians. Yet what is much less clear is the West Indian response to the Socialist call. There is a scholarly and popular tradition which has accused West Indians of identifying themselves with the white supremacist values of the British Empire and of not being cooperative with the Panamanian working people in their political struggles.⁶² Yet, the same scholarly literature has acknowledged West Indians' participation in the rent strikes of 1925 and 1935, which were two of the most intense popular political movements of the first half of the century in Panama.⁶³ This literature has also recognized their involvement in the political activities against the United Fruit Company in the Banana plantations in Panama and Costa Rica in the early decades of the 20th century. According to Bourgeois, however, the political radicalism of the West Indian workers of the 1910s and 1920 suffered a turning point in the 1930s. West Indians' upward mobility toward small planters and skilled workers in the Banana Plantations, combined with the ethnic antagonism between blacks and Hispanics made the West Indians shift their political orientations toward conservatism. Nevertheless, at least in the transisthmian area, it is hard to talk about West Indians' upward mobility in the midst of the economic crisis of the thirties with the consequent large termination of West Indian workers from their positions in the Panama Canal Zone.

What then was the relationship between the West Indian Community in the cities of Panama and Colon and the Socialist and Communist parties? The leading West Indian newspaper in Panama, *The Panama Tribune*, reported the activities of the Socialist Party without any hostility and emphasized the socialist demands for racial equality. Furthermore, an article in 1931 stated that the future of the West Indian population in Panama "is the same as that of the Panamanian working class" and asked for "cooperation among both groups [Panamanians and West Indians] to see that neither is exploited by the capitalist class."⁶⁴ In 1934, the *Panama Tribune's* description of the 5,000 participants in the Socialist party May 1st parade mentioned the participation of "many West Indian residents." In addition, the news article emphasized "the spirit of brotherhood [that] brought all races and colors together in common loyalty to the oppressed workers of the world."⁶⁵ Finally, in 1935, in the context of the rent strike, an editorial of the *Panama Tribune* declared that "by allying ourselves with that

more humane group of the native population who are striving to remedy this nefarious condition, some relief may be obtained.” However, the same editorial advised the community not to take “the law in their own hands” because “in case anything goes wrong it is [the West Indians] who will get the muddy end of the stick.”⁶⁶ With the data available, however, it is not possible to make a claim as to how widespread this sympathetic view of the socialist party was among the West Indian population. Neither is it possible to discern if there was a political division between West Indian workers and the West Indian middle class. Yet, according to an American report, it was necessary to help the Panamanians to repatriate the unemployed West Indians, because “As long as such unemployed remain a canker in Panama, just so long will there be rent strikes, communism and the resulting uneasiness.”⁶⁷

The Chinese and the Nationalist Project

Despite those similarities, however, one group was apparently more successful than the other in its degree of incorporation into Panamanian society. According to Ramón Mon from the late forties to the eighties Chinese immigration to Panama almost stopped, and the Chinese community managed to incorporate into Panamanian society, “participating actively in the social and political events of the nation.”⁶⁸ However, when in the mid 1980’s, a new wave of Chinese immigrants came to Panama --most of them illegally-- this process of incorporation was disturbed. As a consequence anti Chinese comments became popular again and the Chinese-Panamanian were forced to question their assimilation into Panamanian society.

These attitudes made the traditional Chinese Panamanian community -- that is the descendant of the Chinese immigrants of the first half of the century -- question their assimilation into Panamanian society. They denounced the racism shown by the rest of the Panamanians. They gave their own version of what was Panamanian identity, trying to incorporate the contributions of the Chinese community into “panamanianness” (*lo panameño*). The Chinese Panamanian writer, Eustorgio Chon declared “One hundred thousand Chinese, who are naturalized or born Panamanian . . . while feeling proud of their race or their ethnicity, have united, come together and melted in Panama’s pot that ultimately has produced a rich and collective Panamanian identity.”⁶⁹

Like the West Indians, the Chinese were also accused of criminality and of representing an unfair economic competition to the Panamanian. Nevertheless, these accusations had different underpinnings. Unlike the West Indians, the Chinese were not accused of criminal violence by the nationalist press, but of vice and corruption. In the thirties a strong campaign was orchestrated by the

press associating Chinese with vice. The Chinese were described as persistent addicts to opium,⁷⁰ and their Clubs were considered “seething cauldrons of corruption, vice, and contraband.”⁷¹ Furthermore, they were resented for having the economic power to corrupt the authorities and, therefore, managed to remain unpunished.⁷² Often sensationalist stories were made on a very weak basis, as in the case of the confiscation of a “thick liquid” that “seemed to be opium”, and, therefore, often the accusations were proven to be false.⁷³ The Chinese were accused as well of selling clandestine lottery tickets,⁷⁴ smuggling articles from the Canal Zone⁷⁵ and of playing clandestine games.⁷⁶

However, the main accusation against the Chinese was their controlling of the retail commerce, and indeed their share ranked a second close 38.34% to the 38.88% to the Panamanians. Chinese were followed in rank order by the Americans and the Spanish.⁷⁷ In the midst of the 1930s economic crisis, a strong campaign for the nationalization of the commerce was launched which culminated in law # 70 of 1934 for the nationalization of the commerce, and in law # 9 of 1935 that demanded that 75% of the employees must be Panamanians. Even if the laws were directed against foreigners in general; newspapers tended to racialize the issue, portraying the campaign for nationalization of commerce as a conflict between “undesirable races” and Panamanians, which can be interpreted as between Chinese and Panamanians. Indeed, the first attempt at nationalizing commerce was a 1930 proposal by the Congress for restricting Chinese commercial activities to certain neighborhoods. The economic antagonism against the Chinese was also presented as the unfair competition of a race who because of its inferior standard of living could sell at cheaper prices than the Panamanians.⁷⁸ Furthermore, the inconvenience of Chinese commercial practices was also depicted in hygienic terms. According to a newspaper article the mayor had information about several Chinese who had the habit of sleeping on a bed over the vegetables that they sold. In the article they were portrayed as “sleeping very comfortably while the lettuce, the cabbage, and sweet potatoes that the people from Colon City will eat today in *sacncho* were impregnated by a breath dispelled by the Chinese’s loud snoring... That punishment should serve as a lesson for the Chinese who do not have any idea of proper hygiene and who expose the public to diseases that they themselves suffer.”⁷⁹ In this comment becomes clear that the hygienic issue was not a matter of cleanliness habits, but a fear for imaginary diseases that the Chinese could trespass to the Panamanian even if only through their sleeping breath.

The nationalist argument was the strongest national building project of the thirties, and many of its main arguments are still in force in present day writings against the presence of Chinese and West Indians in Panama. Nevertheless, the nationalist argument was not the only one. Other National projects were

more inclusive.

The Chinese and the Merchant Community

The merchant community was the architect of the merchant and transitist national identity so antagonized by the nationalist Panamanian. Since the nineteenth century, Panamanian merchant elites imagined Panama's future as a modern replica of the mediaeval cities of the Hanseatic league. They were proud of Panamanian commercial and transitist tradition.⁸⁰ They gave to the young Republic the national motto of *pro mundi y beneficio*, eliminated in 1941 by the nationalist president, Arnulfo Arias.

In the thirties this merchant view was not as articulate and evident in newspaper editorials or essays as it was in the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, the Chamber of Commerce continued to boast the cosmopolitan characteristics of Panama, which is very understandable considering that most merchants established in Panama were foreigners who controlled 62% of the retail trade.⁸¹ Merchants, as foreigners, had good reasons to be opposed to the nationalist project. This, however, not necessarily means that their inclusive discourse overcame racial lines, that it included also the Chinese merchants. After all, as we saw, Panama's laws and social discourse made strong distinctions between immigrants according to their race. White foreign merchants, therefore, could have considered themselves very different from the Chinese merchant, and not include them in their opposition to the Panamanian nationalist agenda. Nevertheless, the examination of the Panamanian Chamber of Commerce's reaction against the nationalization of commerce law, as well as its social activities suggests that the merchant community opened a space of respectability and integration into the Panamanian community for the Chinese immigrants.

In December of 1934 the Panamanian Legislative Assembly passed the law # 70, better known as the Nationalization of Commerce Law. This law established that every immigrant community was allowed to have a quota of merchants proportional to the amount of members of each immigrant community. The merchants above the quota were required to pay a special tax. The goal of this law was to increase Panamanians participation in commerce.

The reaction of the Chamber of Commerce was immediate. On January 14, 1935 the Panamanian Chamber of Commerce gathered and unanimously opposed the Nationalization of Commerce Law. The arguments they used for opposing the law are worthwhile to study because they indicate the national discourse of the wealthiest section of the merchant community, Panamanians included.

The most important fact that emerges from their public letter against the

law is that they opposed any legal distinction between Panamanian and foreigners merchants, no matter what race. They alleged that this distinction was illegal because the constitution stated that “Panamanians and foreigners are equal before the law.” Moreover, they denounced the moral injustice of a law that was hostile to people who “worked and cooperated with the sons of the country for Panama’s prosperity”, placing their idea of identity and rights on the ground of common work instead than birthright. Finally, they denounced the governments intentions of discriminating between the different immigrant communities by enforcing the law on some immigrants while excepting others. A good law, they say, should be “just and strictly applied.” They were concern by the effect the law would have on the many foreigners who would be forced to close their retail shops. This, they argue, would have “fatal consequence for the country” because nobody would replace those shops. Moreover the closing of the retail shops would cause an enormous harm to the wholesale trade. Even if in the published official letter of the Chamber they did not make distinctions between merchants by nationality, the Chamber’s concern for a law that would exempt some foreigners and persecute others, mainly retail ones, could be interpreted as a defense of the Chinese retail trade.

Besides the Panamanian Chamber of Commerce, which was comprised of different immigrant communities, some immigrants groups had their own Chamber of Commerce. The Spanish Chamber of Commerce and the Chinese Chamber of Commerce were the most notorious in the newspapers. After the promulgation of the nationalization law, the Spanish Chamber of Commerce started a campaign for the exclusion of the cities of Panama and Colon from the effects of the law. They were successful and on January 17, 1935 the government suspended the law for the cities of Panama, Colon, and Bocas del Toro. Now the law would only be enforced in the interior.⁸²

Because the interior retail trade was controlled by the Chinese, the law would particularly affect them. Indeed, after the exclusion of the cities of Panama, Colon and Bocas del Toro from the law, the Board of Directors of the Panamanian Chamber of Commerce decided to suspended their legal procedures against Nationalization law until the General Assembly got together at the end of April.⁸³ Nevertheless, in May the General Assembly of Chamber of Commerce insisted in taking legal steps toward declaring the nationalization law unconstitutional.⁸⁴ However, now the Chinese merchants took the most prominent part of the legal fight. Of the two thousand dollars collected for the legal fight by the Chamber of Commerce, according the newspaper, the main contributors were the Chinese merchants.⁸⁵ Furthermore, the legal procedure was started by an interior Chinese merchant who refused to pay the Law # 70 tax.⁸⁶

In December, 1935, one year after its promulgation, the law # 70 was

declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. The legal arguments of the Supreme Court for declaring the law unconstitutional implied a reconsideration of what nation meant for Panama on racial and legal grounds. The Supreme Court declared that the constitution not only stated that “Panamanians and foreigners were equal under the law,” but its preamble stated that the constitution was for “*todos los hombres del mundo que habiten el suelo panameño.*” Moreover, they said that the concept of nation could not be based on an exclusive racial ground because “*en ninguna de las dos Américas predomina una raza aborigen...[y] nuestra civilización es la que trajeron los descubridores, conquistadores y colonizadores, sin que contenga trazas siquiera de la que predominaba en la época precolombina*” Additionally, the Supreme Court declared, “*governar es poblar*” and Panama needed able foreigners who would help to give strength to Panama’s incipient commerce and industry.⁸⁷

On legal terms, the Chinese community benefited from the fact of being part of a large community of merchants who fought for the legal equality of all merchants without distinctions based on nationality or race. Nevertheless, one wonders what the limitations of the integration of this community were. Were foreign merchants, Chinese and not, view by the rest of Panamanian society as part of the same community? To what extent being part of Panama’s powerful and respected merchant community allowed the Chinese means of social integration and respectability?

The question as to what extent all foreign merchants were view as one community by the rest of Panamanian society cannot be answer with a yes or no. On one hand, as mentioned before, the campaign for the nationalization of commerce had racial undertones, and was especially aimed against the Chinese. For example, an editorialist defended the exclusion of the cities of Panama, Colon from the effects of law arguing that the original purpose of the law was to eliminate the control of the retail trade in the interior by “a community of the same race [that is the Chinese]” that does not bring any benefit to the country and who are an unfair competition because of “their lower standard of living.” But, so goes the argument of the editorialist, this law should not affect the cities of Panama and Colon, because it would have terrible consequences for the “big trade” of those cities.⁸⁸

On the other hand, a large part of editorials and letters to the editor gathered in the same group all foreigners merchants without making racial distinctions. It was argued that in times of economic crisis and international protectionism, it was an “incurable” idealism to talk about a “universal fatherland” and of “equality between Panamanians and foreigners” because “*la mayoría del país ha creído y cree que al monopolizar prácticamente el comercio al por menor, los extranjeros desquician la estructura económica del país*” impeding

the unemployed Panamanian to employ themselves in commerce.⁸⁹ Moreover these letters tended to mix anti-foreigner feelings with class antagonism, gathering in the same group not only all foreigners, but also the rich members of the Chamber of Commerce, accused of putting their economic interest before the fatherland. A writer to the newspaper complained “*dónde esta nuestro patriotismo?... el extranjero enriquecido con el pan de nuestros hijos trata de imponerse. Son ellos los poseedores de Dios con dinero. Quieren tergiversar nuestra Constitución los miembros de la cámara de Comercio.*”⁹⁰

The intermingling of nationalist feeling with class antagonism becomes even more clear in the letter written by the Panamanian retail merchants to the Secretary of *Hacienda y Tesoro*, protesting for the Spanish Chamber’s petition against the Nationalization Law. This letter reveals a division between the Panamanian Chamber of Commerce, which gathered wealthy Panamanian merchants and supported foreign merchants, and the Panamanian small merchants who opposed the foreigners’ control of Panamanian trade. This division was also presented by the small merchants as an antagonism between white foreign merchants and dark Panamanians when they denounced foreigners pejorative remark that Panamanians were not good for commerce and, therefore, did not need a Nationalization law because “*el panameño es un negro con taparrabo, dicen otros, ¿como es posible que quiera alcanzar el grado de comerciante?*” Moreover, Panamanian small merchants had a different concept of what justice and equality under the law meant. According to them, the law was not unconstitutional because it gave all nationalities the same proportional right to practice commerce. In other words, it meant a “*justicia distributiva*” between Panamanian and foreigners which would “*abolish the social injustice of some privileged audacious [merchants] who have cornered all the riches and rights.*”⁹¹

Furthermore, small Panamanian merchants thought that the Chinese were privileged for being part of the community of foreigners. They complained that “*hay que dejar a los chinos en los puestos de los panameños porque los chinos son extranjeros y los extranjeros son sagrados.*”⁹² This view was confirmed by a letter to the editor signed by a Rafael Silvera “*a Panamanian merchant*” who accused the Spanish Chamber of Commerce of being “*comerciantes enriquecido por esa situación de privilegio en que está todo el comercio foráneo*” and for asking for the suspension of the only law that could resolve the economic situation of most Panamanians “*porque no es cierto que chinos, italianos y españoles casi analfabetas que vienen por aquí y que sólo se defienden con la avaricia, tengan mayor astucia y habilidad que los panameños.*”⁹³

The argument that the Chinese acquired room for social integration from being part of the merchant community begs the question of what type of merchants the Chinese were.

There were clearly two type of merchants the wholesalers and the retailers.⁹⁴ The Chinese community had an ethnic credit system that, according to Panamanian retailer accusations, gave the Chinese retailers advantages over the Panamanians who did not have access to that credit.⁹⁵ Whatever the truth of these accusations may be, what seems clear is that the Chinese had a different way of conducting retail trade. They specialized in selling very small quantities “*cuartillos*” to the poor,⁹⁶ and in having expanded the retail trade to the smallest towns of the interior, being sometimes not only the only shop but also the only buyers of the peasant’s agricultural products. Indeed, the government received ten memorials from Panamanians from different parts of the interior asking for a benign treatment of the Chinese, because they had helped to the development of their towns by exporting the peasants’ products.⁹⁷ Therefore, in the year between the promulgation of the nationalization law and its elimination for unconstitutionality, the government was forced to make exceptions to the law on the towns where a Chinese owned the only shop available.⁹⁸

The economic characteristic of the Chinese gave them means of social integration. The Chinese wholesalers, notable members of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, interacted with other respected members of the local merchant community through social events. In these social events, the Chinese were described in laudatory tones by the same press that in other issues tended to attack them. The party of a Chinese Masonic society was described as a “grandiose banquet attended by distinguished personalities of Panama, Colon and the Canal Zone.”⁹⁹ A party of the Cheng King Tang society is described as a select banquet attended by “elementos comerciales connotados de distintos países destacándose norteamericanos, ingleses y de otras nacionalidades... en fin destacados miembros de la sociedad y autoridades locales.” The two speakers were described as Don Ramón Ku “inteligente y brioso joven orador chino” and Don Miguel Yuen, uno de los comerciantes más serios y prestigiosos de aquí.¹⁰⁰ The description of these social events reveals that the Chinese community was rich and prestigious enough to invite the Panamanian elite, merchants as well as public officers, and that the merchant community in Panama was racially flexible enough to have social relations with the Chinese merchants, despite the fact that they were considered by the law as a race of restricted immigration.

Even if small merchants did not participated in the elegant events of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, they participate as a merchant ethnic group in the social charities of the Chinese Community, thereby receiving public gratitude from the Panamanian press. The nuns in charge of the Asilo de los Desamparados published a letter of gratitude toward the Chinese community.¹⁰¹ In the letter were listed together big Chinese merchant such as Sheung Fat y Co. who donated \$15.00 and small merchants such as George See who donated only two

pack of cookies. In another instance, the press applauded the Chinese laundry men who donated old clothes to the Red Cross for the support of the poor and the incarcerated.¹⁰² Charities and social activities of the Chinese community in the process of integrating in Panamanian Society.

The most important demographic difference between Chinese and West Indians was the difference between their sex ratio. In 1930 the sex ratio among West Indians was almost even, with 1.1 woman for every man, while among the Chinese the ratio was 1 woman for every 5 men. Because of this difference, intermarriage with Panamanian women must have been larger among the Chinese than among the West Indians. West Indians tendency to marry among themselves lead them to maintain the English language and the Protestant religion. In contrast, intermarriage must have eased acculturation for the Chinese. Indeed, the Chinese used their marriage with Panamanian women as an argument to defend themselves from the racist attacks of Panamanian press.¹⁰³

The fact that both communities had different degrees of assimilation to Panamanian Spanish and Catholic tradition is revealed by the fact that, while West Indians were constantly accused of not wanting to adapt to the Panamanian traditions, lack of assimilation was not an issue against the Chinese. Sometimes, in the midst of an anti-Chinese press campaign, it was possible to read a sympathizing news article on the “magnificence” and “harmony” of baptism of five Chinese children from five Chinese couples, “apparently an ordinary action,” in the town of Pese where “most of the town and important persons from other towns” went to celebrate the *advenimiento* (incorporation) of “five new catholic Christians.”¹⁰⁴

Furthermore, the demographic weight of both communities was very different. In 1920, the Chinese made up only 1.53% of Panama City’s population and 1.95% of Colon city’s population, while the West Indians^{105*} were 17% of Panama and 46% of Colon. Despite its small proportion, however, the Chinese immigration was extremely conspicuous because of its control of the retail trade. Consequently, both communities received an enormous negative attention from the Panamanian press of the thirties.

Finally, the Chinese and the West Indians practiced different economic activities. The Chinese were retail and wholesale merchants, while West Indians were not known for being merchants. Most West Indians were laborers, and some upper class West Indians tended to be educated professional such as, accountants, lawyers and doctors. The influence of the economic activities of these communities in the degree of their acceptance in Panamanian society is going to be the main topic of this paper.

The Panamanian Spanish-speaking blacks

Now that the racial discourse of the Panamanian government and of main national press and literature has been discussed, it is necessary to ask what happened among the black popular classes. To what extent did Spanish-speaking blacks consider themselves different from West Indians? The official answer to the racial presence of the West Indians was the “*mestizoization*” of the Spanish speaking blacks, leaving the category of blackness only to the West Indians. The question of how effective this “*mestizoization*” was among the Spanish speaking blacks, however, is still open for debate.

It is striking how the Panamanian scholarly literature has completely ignored black issues of the twentieth century that are not related to the West Indians.¹⁰⁶ In the historical literature, Spanish black surnames are present until the nineteenth century; among the most famous are those of the sixteenth century runaway slave, Felipillo, and the nineteenth century black liberal lawyer, Pedro Prestan. In the twentieth century, none of the historical figures associated with black issues have Spanish last names. All twentieth century famous blacks are West Indians. Clearly, the Panamanian scholarly literature has adopted the discursive “transformation” of the Spanish-speaking blacks into *mestizo*, leaving twentieth century black issues only for the West Indians. It is also remarkable that all the known denunciations of racism in the twentieth century have come from the West Indian community. What does the silence from the Spanish-speaking blacks mean? Does it mean that the nationalist discourse managed to assimilate them? Two salient racial events of the thirties, a racial riot in Colon and a press campaign against Cuban discrimination toward a black Panamanian athlete, can help us to understand the limits and the strengths of Panamanian racial discourse.

On October 5, 1934, a Spanish-speaking black teenager, Justo Jaén, was killed in Colon by a white Panamanian policeman, Captain Delgado, while he was playing in the beach with a group of black boys --according to the police smoking marihuana.¹⁰⁷ As a consequence of his murder, there was an enormous riot in the city of Colon. Pamphlets were distributed calling for justice for the murder of a son of “humble Portobelo’s house” and arguing for nationals and foreigners to gather for the funeral of Justo Jaén. In the riot, two pharmacies owned by the Captain Delgado family and the juvenile detention center of Colon were assaulted by the mob. Reinforcements for the Colon Police came from Panama. The day after the murder, nearly 1000 people went to Justo Jaén’s funeral. Finally, Captain Delgado was arrested, and the mob calmed down.¹⁰⁸ For some people, however, the arrest of Captain Delgado was not enough. Two days later, a policeman in Colon was attacked “with sticks” by a group of Colon boys

while “several persons who looked respectable and serious [instead of helping the police, lamented the Colon Chief of Police] laughed at the policemen situation.”¹⁰⁹

Until the funeral of Justo Jaén, the press did not comment on racial issues. The press presented the riot as a consequence of the indignation of the Panamanian people, and portrayed Justo Jaén not as a black boy, but as a son of the city of Colon. Nevertheless, when incidents between the police and other teenagers continued days later, the press changed its tone. The press began to describe the rioters as delinquents, and to identify them as West Indians. Notable Panamanian supporters of the funeral manifestation, such as the lawyer Raúl Herrera and even the father of Justo Jaén, asked the people to be calm and to wait for justice to run its course.¹¹⁰

After a renowned and controversial legal battle, Captain Delgado was acquitted in February of 1935. What is crucial about his acquittal is the racial argument used by the defense. The defense presented a fantastic story about a bullet shot into the air to scare the boys, which unfortunately rebounded on a stone hitting the boy’s head. The heart of the argument, however, had to do with the social and racial conditions in Colon at the time of the murder. The defense reminded the jury of the criminal problems of Colon that were caused by the “West Indian delinquents without work” the “damned heritage of the Canal’s construction.” According to the defense, when Captain Delgado followed the boys, he was only performing his duty of protecting the “interests of the honest people” against the West Indian delinquents. The death of Justo Jaén, therefore, was “a deplorable event, a **fatality** deed.”¹¹¹ The underlying argument of the defense was that if a black Panamanian boy got killed, it was not the fault of the police, but of the West Indian blacks who brought criminal problems to Panama. The reaction of the West Indian newspaper to this argument is worthwhile citing at length:

“But colored Panamanians, no matter how dark their complexion, have always insisted that they have nothing in common with the colored West Indian; that they are of a different racial stock. The very text books of the schools have attempted to do violence to historical and ethnological facts by declaring that Africans who were brought by the conquistadors to Panama were of superior stock to those who were taken from the same part of Africa to the West Indies by the same conquistadors. Today we find two eminent attorneys vindicating the shooting to death of a young Panamanian by a police official on the grounds that the youth was dark of skin and that resembled a West Indian. Neither the fact of his birth in the national territory nor his Latin name and descent afforded him protection in life, nor in death the common gesture to human decency of posthumous laudation.... When the immigration Law of 1928 we pointed out to

colored Panamanians that prejudice was creeping insidiously across the Zone borders and that it would not be long before the color question would also be applied to them. But they insisted, like the fabled ostrich, in burying their heads in the sand of racial illusion.”¹¹²

The riot of Colon can be contrasted with another outstanding racial event of the thirties in Panama, the discrimination against black Panamanian athletes in Cuba, the host of the Regional Olympics of 1930. The Havana Yacht Club, where the swimming competitions were held, refused admittance to a black member of the Panamanian Olympic delegation, who was a deputy to the National Assembly. This caused great indignation in the Panamanian delegation, and a strong reaction from the Panamanian press, the same press that had continuously attacked the West Indians. Comments were made on the difference between Cuba “where blacks have not been well considered from a long time. Oh how awful!” and Panama, where there was “no color line between the sons of the same soil.” Moreover, the journalists argued that whatever the racial problems in Cuba, the delegate’s Panamanian citizenship and his status as a member of the delegation should have prevailed over his color. “A color that should not offend people of good sense...”¹¹³

In the riot of Colon all Panamanians reacted against the murder of the black Panamanian boy, who was not described as black, but as a “son of the city of Colon”. In the Olympics the press denounced the discrimination against Panamanian black athletes in Cuba. So far, these reactions are congruent with the Panamanian racial discourse which claims racial equality between Spanish-speaking blacks and whites. Nevertheless, Justo Jaén was killed, and his murder went unpunished, because he was black and looked like a West Indian.

Despite the fact that his son was murdered, the father of Justo Jaén did not join forces with the West Indians attacks on the police. On the contrary, he stood with the press and the authorities against the West Indians rioters. The behavior of Justo Jaén’s father was compatible with the aforementioned West Indians’ complaint that Panamanian blacks considered themselves from a different stock than the West Indians. Again, this argument fits with the Panamanian racial discourse that stated that antagonism against the West Indians was not racial but cultural.

Apparently, the presence of a large West Indian population in the cities of Panama and Colon helped the integration of Spanish-speaking blacks into the national identity. The nationalist claim that all Panamanians of Spanish background, without distinction of race, were equal, did have a certain degree of success in integrating Panamanian Spanish-speaking blacks into the national identity. This was true at least to the point of claiming that Panama was different from Cuba. Nevertheless, the price paid for this integration was discrimination

against West Indian blacks, and the silence of the black Panamanian on racial issues. This “integration” clearly did not eliminate racism toward Spanish-speaking black Panamanians. It cannot be forgotten that a Panamanian boy was killed because of his color, and that the issue of racial discrimination against Spanish-speaking black Panamanian remains a taboo subject to this day.

Conclusion

Since the formation of the Panama Republic, the West Indians and the Chinese have been considered communities whose immigration needed to be restricted. Both communities suffered from legal discrimination until the end of the Second World War, when racist policies got a bad reputation around the world because of its associations with Nazism. Both communities suffered from cultural discrimination by being considered non compatible with Panamanian national identity. Nevertheless, both immigrant groups were very from each other and had different strategies for their assimilation to the Panamanian nationality.

The Chinese immigrants were predominately male and therefore they tended to intermarry with Panamanian women. Intermarriage helped them with their incorporation into Panamanian culture. By contrast, the proportion of men and women among the West Indian immigrants was much more even. They tended to marry among themselves and to maintain their own cultural traditions.

The Chinese main economic activity was commerce, and they managed to incorporate themselves into the prestigious merchant community of Panama, using it as a powerful way for social incorporation into Panamanian society. The West Indians, instead, were workers for the Panama Canal. Some were skilled workers, some had clerical abilities or even university education. They were the middle class section of the West Indian community. Nevertheless, most West Indians were unskilled workers, and many were unemployed during the economic crisis of the thirties. Unlike the Chinese, they did not have the support of a powerful community.

The Socialists were the only supporter of the West Indian workers. This party was relatively strong in the thirties but soon after lost its preeminence. The West Indian middle class, who could have been assimilated into the Panamanian middle class, suffered from the racism of the nationalist discourse which was mainly supported by the Panamanian middle class. In fact, the arguments used against the West Indians by the nationalists of the first decades of the twentieth century have been used over and over by Panamanian intellectuals and the middle class.

Chinese were accused of monopolizing the wholesale of swine and favoring their countrymen in the sale. The answer of the Chinese was accept that they were wholesalers, but that there were Panamanian wholesales as well, and mentioned rich Panamanians last names such as Arias, Martinelli and Tack.”¹¹⁴

In another newspaper gather together “Chinos culies y magnates” denouncing that the rich Panamanian and the Chinese were monopolizing the land that the government decree for the poor in Puerto Armuelles.”¹¹⁵

In a readers letter, somebody complained that in times of penurias it made no sense to enfrascarse in the constitution, that it made no sense that Panamanians could not be helped because of the impossibility of depraving the Chinese and turkish of their economic conquest”¹¹⁶

Activities of the Chamber of Commerce, According to a proposal by a member of Acción Comunal for reorganizing the structure of the Chamber of Commerce, the chamber The Board of Directors should be constituted one member of each immigrant community elected by the members of each community (the proponent is member of an old Panamanian family Guardia-Fernandez).

Also the opposition to the Government of Harmodio Arias by under the wings of Belisario Porras who created a new party in the United Lieberal party, he resigned form Partido Liberal Doctrinario, in the opposition was Francisco Arias Paredes and they had a meeting in the Marañon district and denounced “the drift along distinct racial lines which the country was taking” “Other speakers stressed the same point in a general condemnation of the police of the present Government”¹¹⁷

The Communist Party distributing pamphlets in both English and Spanish in Colon.¹¹⁸

It is worth while mention the composition of the signatures of the letter presented this arguments and approved by the Chamber there is not a Chinese last name, there are, American companies, Jews, Last names, Traditional Panamanian last names and European last names in general. They did not represent all the members.¹¹⁹

Another newspaper article, instead, complained because in Santiago city law # 9, was being applied only to the Chinese and not to other foreigners, making “unfair exceptions”¹²⁰ because the law was general.

Of all the immigrant groups, the Chinese and the West Indians were the ones who received the most negative attention from the press. In the middle of the 1930s economic crisis, the West Indians were accused of monopolizing jobs in the Canal Zone, while the Chinese were accused of controlling the retail commerce. In reality, Americans controlled the better paying jobs in the Canal Zone, and Chinese were only a part of a large foreign merchant community --mainly

European and American-- who controlled Panamanian commerce. Nevertheless, neither Americans nor Europeans received the same amount of blame for Panamanian economic problems.

(Endnotes)

1. Pacora and Chepo are regions with a large population of blacks of Spanish colonial origin.
2. A term of disrespect used by Panamanians in addressing the West Indian.
3. Cited by Melva Lowe Ocran. "El idioma inglés y la integración social de los panameños de origen afro-antillano al carácter nacional panameño" in Revista Nacional de Cultura, No 10, Panama, 1976, pp. 24-25.
4. Ricardo S. Newball, "Artículo sobre los negros en Panama genera comentarios," in Panamanian & Hispanic Presence, June-July 1995.
5. Gelonch, Mabel: "La inmigración china, un problema para Panamá" Diario La Prensa, Panama, September 2, 1990, cited by Eustorgio Chong Ruiz, Los chinos en la sociedad panameña, Panama, Editorial Mariano Arosemena, 1993. For a collection of anti-Chinese comments in the local Press in the late eighties and early nineties see Chong's book and Ramón Mon, "Mecanismos de adaptación e integración psicológica de los chinos como minoría étnica a la nacionalidad panameña" (Unpublished Material) University of Panama, 1994.
6. Eustorgio Chong Ruiz: Los chinos en la sociedad... p. 73.
7. For an analysis and enumeration of Panamanian laws regarding racist policies toward immigrants see Virginia Arango "La inmigración prohibida en Panamá" in Anuario de Derecho, Año XX, 1992, No 20, Panama, Universidad de Panamá.
8. See Alfredo Figueroa Navarro, Dominio y Sociedad...
9. Humberto Véles Valdés, "El Movimiento Frente Patriótico," Trabajo de Graduación, Facultad de Derecho y Ciencias Políticas, Universidad de Panamá, Panamá, 1989. p.16.
10. J. Conte Porras, Arnulfo Arias Madrid. Panama, Litho Impresora, 1980, p. 67.
11. Humberto Véles Valdés, "El Movimiento Frente Patriótico," pp. 16-17.
12. Acción Comunal was the most powerful nationalist political group in the thirties, but it was not the most radical. The thirties saw the emergence of a fascist political group called "the gray shirts" who made their main goal the elimination from Panama of "undesirable races." United States National Archives, RG 165, Military Intelligence Division 3020, "'Gray Shirts' or 'National Defense League' organized." Oct. 27, 1933.
13. J. Conte Porras, Arnulfo Arias Madrid, Panama, Litho Impresora, 1980, p. 94.
14. Estrella de Panamá, Jan. 22, 1934 and El Panamá América, Dec. 15, 1931.
15. "Compensación justa" in La Estrella de Panamá, Jan. 17, 1935.
16. "Contra los maleantes" in La Estrella de Panamá, Jan. 14, 1934.
17. "Restringida la inmigración" in El Panamá América, Dic 3, 1931.
18. Florencio Harmodio Arosemena, Mensaje dirigido por el Presidente de la República de Panama, Ingeniero Florencio Harmodio Arosemena a la Asamblea Nacional al Inaugurar sus sesiones ordinarias, Panama, Editorial Moderna, September 1930.
19. See La Estrella de Panamá, Sept. 12, 1930 for a mention of failed experiments in creating agricultural communities with north Europeans. Likewise, see El Panamá América Jan. 19, 1933 for an immigration law that exonerated immigrants, who came to pursue agricultural activities, from a monetary deposit that was required to every other immigrant.
20. Estrella de Panamá, Sept. 12, 1930.
21. La Estrella de Panamá, April 4, 1931.

22. United States National Archives, RG 59, Consular Political Reports, "the Province of Coele, Panama" March 22, 1933.

The connection between the racial and cultural underpinnings in the search of the Panamanian identity in the interior was even made in terms of music. The truly Panamanian music was the one that was not related to the black Caribbean but to the Interior "Así tenemos música de cada raza y de cada pueblo... Sucede con la música lo que con las razas, que se mezclan y se influncian entre sí... cada día nuestras composiciones pierden mas aire típico: esto debido a la mucha importancia que aquí se le da a la música cubana." El Panamá América, December 10, 1934.

23. Ramón Mon Pinzón: Historia de la migración china durante la construcción del ferrocarril de Panamá. M.A. Thesis, El Colegio de México, Mexico, 1979. p. 19.

24. Melva Lowe Ocran. "El idioma inglés..."

25. Michael Connif: Black Labor in a White Canal: Panama, 1904-1982, Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh University Press, 1985. Gerardo Maloney y George Priestley, "El grupo antillano en el proceso político panameño" in Tareas No 33, Panama, Sept-Nov 1975. Jorge Arosemena, "Los panameños negros descendientes de antillanos ¿Un caso de marginalidad social?" in Tareas No 32, Panama, Julio-Agosto 1975. Carlos Castro, "Notas para la sociología del negro antillano" in Lotería No 202, Panama, Sept. 1972.

26. For an analysis of Panama's white and black relations on colonial times see Alfredo Castillero Calvo Los Negros y mulattos libres en la historia social panameña, Panama, (s. n.), 1969. For a sociological analysis of 19th century Panamanian society and racial tensions, see Alfredo Figueroa Navarro's, Dominio y sociedad en el Panamá Colombiano (1821-1903), Panama, Impresora Panamá, 1978, and "Tensiones en el arrabal según la correspondencia consular francesa (1850-1880)in Tareas, No 39, Panama, Jul.-Sept. 1977.

27. Alfredo Figueroa Navarro. Dominio y sociedad..., p. 92. he is citing Mariano Arosemena, Apuntamientos históricos 1801-1840.

28. Olmedo Alfaro, El peligro antillano en la América Central, Panama, Imprenta Nacional, 1924. p. 7.

29. Felipe J. Escobar, El legado de los próceres: ensayo histórico-político sobre la nacionalidad panameña, Panama, Publicaciones del Instituto Nacional, 1930.

30. Ricardo Miró, "El Milagro" in: Antología poética, Panama, Edición de Rene Miró, 1976. For similar examples see Samuel Lewis, Retazos: discursos y conferencias, artículos leyendas y cuentos y ofrendas póstumas a la memoria del autor, Panama, Imprenta de la Academia, 1939. Demetrio Korsi, "Heroe Antiguo" in Antología de Panama, Barcelona, Casa Editorial Maucci, 1926.

31. Demetrio Korsi, "El Tamborito" in El viento de la montaña: Poesias, Paris, Editions "Le Livre Libre", 1926. p. 37,

32. Erasmo De la Guardia, La tragedia del Caribe, Panama, Imprenta Nacional, 1938 p. 18.

33. María del Carmen Mena García, La sociedad de Panamá en el siglo XVI, Sevilla Diputación Provincial de Sevilla, 1984. She bases her data in a description of the city made by the Audiencia de Panama in 1607.

34. Alfredo Figueroa Navarro, "Seis aproximaciones a la historia social y demográfica de la ciudad de Panamá (siglos XVIII y XIX)" in Humanidades, Tercera época/ No 2, 1994. He bases his data in the baptism records of Panama city.

35. "Toleramos una ciudadanía dual" in El Panamá América, Dec. 5, 1931.

36. "Los Panameños de padres antillanos participarán, por primera vez en la historia, en el torneo electoral" in El Panamá América, Dec. 20, 1931.

37. "Criollos' Must Speak Spanish to Obtain Political Rights" in The Panama Tribune, Aug. 4, 1935.

38. Ibid.

39. "Otra faz de la cuestión bananera" in El Panamá América, Jun. 7, 1934. For Panamanian arguments against West Indians working in the banana plantations see The Panama Tribune, June 3 and 24 of 1934. "'Criollos' Must Speak Spanish to Obtain Political Rights" in The Panama Tribune, Aug. 4, 1935.
40. "'Criollos' Must Speak Spanish to Obtain Political Rights" in The Panama Tribune, Aug. 4, 1935.
41. See for example, "Debe enseñarse con tesón instrucción cívica a los nativos hijos de antillanos y obligarlos a que aprendan castellano, sostiene el director de la Escuela Correccional, Ciril V. Thomas" in La Estrella de Panamá, Dec. 15, 1930.
42. "Loss of National Status" in The Panama Tribune, March 24, 1935.
43. "Refusal Of Public Schools to Admit Children of Alien Parents Causes Dilemma" in The Panama Tribune, May 19, 1935.
44. "A Barrier in the Schools" in the Panama Tribune, May 5, 1935.
45. El Panamá América April 13, 1931.
46. El Panamá América, Dec. 9, 1930. The emphasis is mine. Examples such as the aforementioned are very frequent in the press of the that time.
47. See, for example, "Mano Fuerte en Colón" in El Panamá América, March 21, 1935 and "Los Antillanos del Panama Contract" in Acción Comunal, Jun 18, 1931.
48. "Native Press Renew Attack on WI Community Over New Cristobal Incident" in The Panama Tribune, March, 24, 1935 is taken from the Star and Herald, March 20, 1935.
49. "Protestan los antillanos de Colón: dicen que la policía los trata con mucha discriminación" in El Panamá América, March 21 1935.
50. "Facing Issues" in The Panama Tribune, June 14, 1931.
51. "A. V. A. 's Letter" in The Panama Tribune, Feb. 23, 1930.
52. The American segregation in the Canal Zone divided the workers according to their race. The gold roll was reserved for White Americans and some elite white Panamanians. Everyone else was in the silver roll.
53. United States National Archives, RG 59, 819.504/16, July 30, 1932.
54. Ibid. This is not the place for arguing why the American Government preferred West Indian laborers, since I am concern in the attitudes of Panamanians toward the West Indians. For the relation between the American Government and the West Indians see Michael Coniff Black Labor in a White Canal..., and for the Chiriqui Land Company racial policies toward its employees see Philippe I. Bourgois, Ethnicity at Work: Divided Labor on a Central American Banana Plantation, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989.
55. "Otra faz de la cuestión bananera" in El Panamá América, Jun 7, 1934.
56. United States National Archives, RG 59 819.504/16, July 30, 1932 Emphasis is mine.
57. In claiming justice for the victims of the fire of the neighborhood of Malambo caused by the fumigation campaign "for making Panama safe for the Canal", the writer remembers that "eran esos los días de la fumigación en que sin el menor miramiento se arrojaban de las casas a los moradores y se les ponía en plena calle, enfermos y todo, mientras invadían los hogares de los panameños una turba de "ingleses de ébano" de reciente importación... para fumigar pro yanqui y beneficio" in "El fuego de Malambo una gran injusticia" in El Panamá América, Feb.. 19, 1933.
58. "Los Antillanos del Panama Contract" in Acción Comunal, Jun. 18, 1931.
59. For Socialist statements about West Indians in Panama see "Marxist Socialist Made Bid to Win Support Of "Criollos" in Coming Elections" in The Panama Tribune, August 4, 1935. "Socialist Party Affirms Friendliness to West Indians" in The Panama Tribune, May 6, 1934.
60. Morales and Porras Attack Anti-Foreign Drift In New law On Naturalization" in The Panama Tribune, Sept. 16, 1934.
61. "Demetrio Porras Names Rhodes for 2nd Vice-Pres. As gesture Against Color Bar" in The

Panama Tribune, Dept. 16, 1934.

62. Maloney and Priestley, "El grupo Antillano..." and Philippe I. Bourgois, Ethnicity at Work... 51,52 and 104.

63. Ibid.

64. "Fraudulent Complaints" in The Panama Tribune, Feb. 15, 1931.

65. "Socialist Declare Working Class Natives And West Indians Are Alike Oppressed" in The Panama Tribune, May 6, 1934.

66. "The Rent Law" in The Panama Tribune, Feb. 42, 1935.

67. United States National Archives, RG 59, 819.00 General Conditions/104 for February 1934.

68. Ramón Mon Pinzón: Historia de la migración china durante la construcción del ferrocarril de Panamá. M.A. Thesis, El Colegio de México, Mexico, 1979. p. 19.

69. Ibid. p. 150.

70. "Llevo opio al cuartel de Policía" in El Panamá América, Dec. 21, 1930.

71. "Vibraciones" in El Panamá América, Dec. 19, 1930. See also "El Gob. Cervera pedirá que se cierren ciertos clubs chinos" in El Panamá América, Feb. 16, 1933.

72. "Capturado al fin, el gran fumadero de Juan Hu" in El Panamá América, Dec. 19, 1930 and "Vibraciones" ...

73. "Dos supuestos opiómanos son liberados" in El Panamá América, Dec. 6, 1931; "Sobreseen a Favor del Asiático A. Leon: Este se hallaba acusado de emplear un compuesto venenoso" in El Panamá América, Dec. 10, 1930 and "Es Inocente el Asiático Juan Hu" in El Panamá América, Dec. 22, 1931.

74. "El Alcalde del Dto. multo con Bs.50.00 al Chino Chen Yen por vender chance" in El Panamá América, April 15, 1931.

75. "Por vender artículos del comisariato un chino fue condenado a pagar multa" in La Estrella de Panamá, Jan. 12, 1930.

76. "Son arrestados varios chinos por sospechas" in La Estrella de Panamá, July 7 1934.

77. "Chinos y Españoles controlan el comercio" in El Panamá América, April 4, 1935, the article is citing data from the "Junta Calificadora del Comercio." Moreover, In The Blue Book, an advertising book on the important business in Panama which was published for the first and last time in 1917, there are 26 merchants listed, 8 of those 26 are Chinese. William T. Scoullar, The Blue Book, Panama, The Latin American Publicity Bureau Inc. Imprenta Nacional, 1916-1917. The Census does not divide economic activities by race or nationality.

78. "La ley contra el comercio de indeseables y la protección al nativo" in El Panamá América, Oct. 8, 1930 and Octavio Mendez Pereira, "Sobre la nacionalización del comercio" in La Estrella de Panamá, March 8, 1935.

79. "Chino multado por práctica antihigiénica" in La Estrella de Panamá, Dec. 22, 1934.

80. See Alfredo Figueroa Navarro, Dominio y Sociedad..

81. Chinos y Españoles controlan el comercio" in El Panamá América, April 4, 1935, the article is citing data from the "Junta Calificadora del Comercio." The Census does not divide economic activities by race or nation.

82. Front page, La Estrella de Panamá, Jan. 18, 1935.

83. "Sobre la reglamentación de la ley del 75% de empleados panameños se discutió ayer en la Presidencia" in El Panamá América, Jan. 26, 1935.

84. "El Comercio insiste en anular la Ley 70: para combatirla se han colectado dos mil balboas" in El Panamá América, May 17, 1935.

85. Ibid.

86. "La Corte Declara inconstitucional la Ley 70: es la que trata sobre la nacionalización del Comercio en Panamá" in El Panamá América, Dec. 19, 1935.

87. "La Corte Declara inconstitucional la Ley 70: es la que trata sobre la nacionalización del

Comercio en Panamá” in El Panamá América, Dec. 19, 1935.

88. “Sobre una ley” in La Estrella de Panamá, Jan. 15, 1935. See also “sobre una ley II” in La Estrella de Panamá, Jan. 16, 1935.

89. “La Junta Nacional Calificadora de Comercio” in El Panamá América, March 8, 1935.

90. “Sobre la Ley del Nacionalización del Comercio” in El Panamá América, Feb. 6, 1935.

91. “Los Comerciantes al por menor se dirigen al ejecutivo en contra de la pretensión de los españoles” in El Panamá América, Jan. 12, 1935.

92. “Los Comerciantes al por menor se dirigen al ejecutivo en contra de la pretensión de los españoles” in El Panamá América, Jan. 12, 1935.

93. “La Nacionalización del Comercio” in El Panamá América, Jan. 13, 1935.

94. United States National Archives, RG 59, 819.00 GENERAL CONDITIONS/105 for November 1933 pa 45 and “Se quejan de proceder de un chino: dicese que el extorsiona a los panameños” in La Estrella de Panamá, June 23, 1935 and “Dos firmas chinas niegan que ejerzan monopolio” in La Estrella de Panamá, June 25, 1935.

95. Los comerciantes al por menor se dirigen al ejecutivo en contra de la pretención de los españoles” in El Panamá América, Jan. 12, 1935.

96. See for example “Inmigración deseable” in El Panamá América, Dec. 10, 1934.

97. “Del interior piden que a los chinos los traten benignamente” in La Estrella de Panamá, June 22, 1935.

98. “En caseríos con una sola tienda se suspenden los efectos de la ley #70” in La Estrella de Panamá, June 22, 1935.

99. “Una logia China escoge nueva directiva” in La Estrella de Panamá, Jan. 14, 1930.

100. “Ecos de la bella fiesta celebrada por la sociedad Cheng Kung Tang” in La Estrella de Panamá, Sept. 22, 1930. “La Colonia China de Panama celebra hoy gran fiesta” in La Estrella de Panamá, Oct. 10, 1930.

101. “La colonia china hace regalo a un asilo” in El Panamá América, Dec. 17, 1934.

102. “Los lavaderos chinos donan ropa vieja” in El Panamá América

103. “El chino Juan Hu explicanos por una carta su presencia en el Club Chino” in La Estrella de Panamá, Dec. 20, 1930.

104. “Cinco chinos se bautizaron en Pesé” in El Panamá América, March 20 1935.

105. I am using for this percentage, the percentage of Protestant blacks, because the census did not separate races by nationality. Furthermore, the West Indian children were Panamanians citizens.

106. See El Primer Congreso del Negro Panameño: Memorias Septiembre 10 al 13. Centro de Convenciones Atlapa, Panamá 1981, Panama, INAC, 1982.

107. For the circumstances of the dead, the autopsies and the riot of October the fifth, see the news of the 6 of October 1934 in La Estrella de Panamá and El Panamá América.

108. “El Sepelio del joven Justo Jaén, en Colón, dio lugar a gran demostración de duelo” in La Estrella de Panamá, Oct. 7, 1934 and “Vast Throng At Funeral Of Slain Youth: Colon Remains Calm After Wild Rioting On Friday” in The Panama Tribune, Oct. 7, 1934.

109. “Un policía en Colon es atacado a garrotazos por los muchachos” in La Estrella de Panamá, Oct. 8, 1934.

110. “La Muchachada de Colón sigue atacando a la policía; causa enorme reacción ese proceder: la ciudadanía ha desaprobado esos actos hostiles” in El Panamá América, Oct. 9 1934. “Condena el padre de Justo Jaén los actos de violencia de los menores colonenses” in La Estrella de Panamá, Oct. 9 1934 and “El club Rotario de Colón ofrece también su asistencia moral en el caso del Capitán J.V. Delgado” in El Panamá América, Oct. 11, 1934. “Una Campaña que debe continuarse” in La Estrella de Panamá, Oct. 11 1934.

111. For a description of the arguments used by the Prosecutor and by the defense see “Fue

- absuelto el Capitán Delgado” in La Estrella de Panamá, Feb. 15, 1935. “Como clímax de una brillante defensa fue absuelto anoche el ex-capitán J.V. Delgado” in El Panamá América, Feb. 15 1935. The emphasis is mine.
112. ”The Delgado Case” in The Panama Tribune, Feb. 17 1935.
113. ”No están conformes con el trato los atletas panameños y desean regresar lo más pronto posible” in La Estrella de Panamá, March 26, 1930. “The widening color line” in The Panama Tribune, April 6, 1930. See also for this incident, “Hablando solo” in La Estrella de Panamá, March 28, 1930. Another newsarticle about the same argument is “En Venezuela no quieren a los negros aunque tengan sus papeles y sean Panameños” in El Panamá América, Dec. 17, 1930.
114. For the controversy see”se quejan de proceder de un chino: dícese que él extorsiona a los panameños” in La Estrella de Panamá, June 23, 1935. and “Dos firmas chinas niegan que ejerzan monopolio” in La Estrella de Panamá, June 25 1935.
115. “Chinos, culíes y magnates se toman las tierras que el gobierno decretó en Puerto Armuëlles para los pobres” in El Panamá América, May 18, 1935.
116. “Otra Muestra de la absorción del comercio” in El Panamá América, Mach 8, 1935.
117. “Domingo Diaz Feted on party As Dr. Porras Resingns From Party And Hits Racial Drift In Nation” in The Panama Tribune, June 30, 1935.
118. United States National Archives, RG 165 Military Intelligence Division 3020C January 30, 1936.
119. “Es atacada la Ley...” in: El Panamá América, Jan., 16 1935.
120. “Excepciones injustas” in El Panamá América, Jan. 28, 1935.