

Red, White, and Black: Communist Literature and Black Migrant Labor in Costa Rica

RUSSELL LEIGH SHARMAN
BROOKLYN COLLEGE-CUNY

In 1934, the still fledgling Communist Party of Costa Rica organized a massive general strike in the banana fields of Limón province on the Caribbean coast. For more than half a century the United Fruit Company (UFC), the first truly post-colonial multi-national corporation, had operated with complete autonomy in the once forgotten, sub-tropical plains of the Caribbean coast. Importing tens of thousands of black migrant laborers at the turn of the century from the British Commonwealth islands, the UFC successfully created an enclave society with its own language and its own laws.¹ But by 1934, banana production had fallen precipitously, and many black migrants had become small producers. Most of the plantation laborers were white Costa Ricans fleeing the economic depression of the highlands and Nicaraguans fleeing the aftermath of Augusto Sandino's insurgency. Led by Carlos Luis Fallas, a young lieutenant in the three-year-old Communist Party, thousands of laborers walked off the plantations, protesting the lack of adequate healthcare and decreasing wages.

The strike was a qualified success. The UFC eventually agreed to most of the demands, but the Communist Party failed miserably in its attempt to organize support among black migrants. Retribution came swiftly in the form of a new contract with the UFC and its plans to shift its entire operation to the Pacific Coast. In a companion law to the new contract, known as Article 5, black migrants were expressly prohibited from moving with the company. Left to fend for themselves on the depleted and disease ravaged soil, black migrants were at the mercy of new Costa Rican bureaucrats sent to the province to re-educate non-native settlers.

By 1950, two prominent members of the Communist Party of Costa Rica had established themselves as best-selling authors with novels set in Limón in the 1930s. In 1941, Carlos Luis Fallas published his first novel, *Mamita Yunai*, a thinly veiled memoir of his experiences in Limón as both a laborer and an organizer. A decade later, in 1950, Joaquín Gutiérrez published, *Puerto Limón*, also a "fictional" memoir of his experience as the son of a wealthy landowner during the historic strike. Both works received critical acclaim, and most often because of their portrayal of black migrant laborers. According to Ian Smart, "Carlos Luis Fallas' *Mamita Yunai* (1941) and Joaquín Gutiérrez's *Puerto Limón* (1950) are indeed the pioneering works that

put Costa Rican West Indians solidly on the literary map for the first time" (22). Lisa Davis describes *Puerto Limón* as "notable for its sympathetic portrait of the Blacks of Limón" (154). Even the noted black Costa Rican author Quince Duncan, though he would later retract his praise, wrote: "[Fallas] has produced some of the most beautiful pages about black people ever written by a Costa Rican," and "Gutiérrez [in *Puerto Limón*] has created his best black character. He has all the cultural features of the Afro-Caribbean" (14, 20).²

Indeed, blackness proved a powerful symbol of bourgeois capitalist oppression in the arsenal of communist propaganda, inextricably linking the histories of the Communist Party and black migrant labor.³ It was a symbol that the Communist International during this same period was counting on to pave its way into the Western Hemisphere. According to the Comintern, black Americans were the "Achilles heel of American Capitalism" (Caballero 23). As young intellectuals, Fallas and Gutiérrez employed this symbol to great effect. In the worlds of *Mamita Yunai* and *Puerto Limón*, the United Fruit Company was the embodiment of US imperialism, black laborers were the paradigmatic oppressed workers, and the underdeveloped, unfamiliar Caribbean province of Limón was the stage for dramatic conflict.

And yet, a close reading reveals a paradox in the theme of blackness, both in the history of communism in Costa Rica as well as the literature that was produced by its leaders. It seems that blackness, as a political and literary symbol, was a powerful image of oppressed labor, and yet its embodiment in the laborers themselves was an equally potent image of imperialism. Add to this the insidious racism of the time, and black migrant laborers became both protagonist and antagonist in a drama that white intellectuals were writing for them. The result, according to Rojas and Ovarés, for Fallas' work is that "the text oscillates between an intention to integrate Indians and Blacks and the inability to achieve that objective" (133). Lorein Powell argues that "in *Puerto Limón* we find two messages; one explicit ... that is a message of liberation for the working class, and the other implicit ... that excludes Blacks from both the elite or the working class, and places them as a sub-species of humans irredeemably condemned to exploitation" (111).

With the work of Fallas and Gutiérrez, the Communist Party of Costa Rica successfully appropriated the image of blackness as a powerful force for social change, while perpetuating the denigration of blackness' embodiment in the very workers they claimed to support. This article explores this curious paradox through the histories of black migrant labor and the Communist Party in Costa Rica. Focusing on the watershed event of the banana strike of 1934, the article traces the literary appropriation of blackness in the work of communist writers. Ultimately, the role of blackness in Costa Rican communist literature reflects a particular failing of

the Communist International in the first half of the 20th century, that is, the implicit imperialism of ideology that relegated the colonized "Other" to the margins of their own struggle.

Carlos Luis Fallas

Carlos Luis Fallas, or "Calufa" as he is popularly known, was born in the highland province of Alajuela in 1909. In the prologue to his novel *Marcos Ramírez*, Fallas writes: "On my mother's side, I have peasant roots. When I was four or five years old, my mother agreed to marry a shoemaker who was very poor and already had six daughters. I was raised, well, in a proletarian home" (9). Costa Rican historian Ivan Molina argues this was merely good political strategy for a communist leader in the 1950s. According to Molina, Fallas's ancestors were prosperous farmers who sent at least one son to San José to study law, and Fallas himself "was part of the privileged 8.6 percent of the males, born between 1906 and 1915 in the entire country, that enrolled in at least one year of secondary education" (45).

Fallas moved to Limón in 1926 at just sixteen years old. Fallas had used what privilege he enjoyed in the highlands to enter the shoemaking profession, a respectable skilled trade that would become one of the flashpoints for labor organization. It seems a dispute at work, however, sent him in search of employment in the Caribbean province along with thousands of others in the 1920s: "At sixteen I traveled to Limón on the Atlantic littoral of my country, fiefdom of the United Fruit Company, the powerful North American trust that extended its banana empire to all the nations of the Caribbean" (*Marcos Ramírez* 9).

Fallas would have quickly found it difficult to employ any of his advantages in the port city. Most West Indians were not only better educated, but could speak English, the language of UFC management. According to Molina, "The very small space that existed for an immigrant like him in the universe of Limón's urban labor market was perhaps what prompted Fallas to work on the plantations of the United Fruit Company. The experience was traumatic for a young man whose model of agricultural employment was that which prevailed on the farm of his maternal grandparents" (46). Fallas spent the next five years in the "immense and shadowy banana fields of the United where [he] lived the life of a peon" (9). Still, he worked his way up from peon to tractor operator, "an unusual achievement for a wage-earner that was not Afro-Caribbean" (46).

In 1931, the year the Communist Party of Costa Rica was founded in San José, Fallas returned to the highlands where he joined the new party and became a labor organizer in the shoemaking industry. His rise in the Communist Party was meteoric. Fallas recalls, "I was involved in the organization of the first labor syndicates in

Alajuela and directed the first strikes. I was imprisoned several times and wounded in a bloody clash between workers and police in 1933" (*Marcos Ramírez* 10). In that same year, at the age of 25, Fallas was sent back to Limón with the express purpose of organizing the largest general strike in Costa Rican history.

After the banana strike of 1934, Fallas returned to San José where he was promptly arrested at the home of Manuel Mora. Fallas refused to eat until his release, which came shortly thereafter in response to public pressure. In the aftermath of the strike, Fallas became more involved with communicating the message of the Communist Party. Along with other young intellectuals like Carmen Lyra, Fallas wrote articles and essays, gave speeches and organized rallies. Not yet thirty, Fallas was not the youngest of the new communist leadership. Almost all of the principle actors in the communist movement were in their twenties or early thirties. The Communist Party gave young intellectuals the opportunity to express their ideals in a way that would never be possible in the more conservative mainstream political parties.

This culminated in the publication of *Mamita Yunai* in 1941. The novel actually originates in a series of articles published by Fallas in *Trabajo*, the Communist Party's newspaper, during 1940, but with its publication in 1941 it became one of the most successful works of Costa Rican literature to date, translated into more foreign languages than any other Costa Rican title. In fact, according to some, it was suspiciously successful. Many of the languages *Mamita Yunai* was published under were those of Soviet Bloc countries at the height of the Cold War in the 1950s and 1960s. Although there is no direct evidence that the Communist International financed or in any other way promoted the book, some modern critics have speculated as to its phenomenal success (Powell; Molina). As Molina asks, "To what extent is this a result of the commercial success of Calufa's texts or the result of the self-serving insertion of those same texts, whose literary value is not impugned here, into the official transnational culture of the communist universe?" (51).

Though Fallas would pen several other works of fiction and non-fiction, *Mamita Yunai* would remain his most popular. The novel is a thinly veiled autobiography of Fallas's time in Limón as a young laborer and as an official in the communist party, though not necessarily in that order. The narrative begins in 1940, with the protagonist, Sibaja, on a train bound for Limón to monitor a regional election. Sibaja is a young but experienced elections monitor for the Worker and Peasant Bloc, the political party under which the Community Party stood for elections. Much of this first half of the novel involves Sibaja's interactions with local police and other election officials, while thousands of black migrant laborers file through the jungle on their way to Panama in search of work after the devastation of the strike. The sec-

ond half of the novel takes place 14 years earlier, when a 19-year-old Sibaja is still working the banana plantations of Limón province. The strike of 1934 takes place in the space between these two main sections of the work, an implied event that radically transforms the social landscape and the young protagonist. It is the unwritten center of dramatic action, just as black laborers and the specter of blackness itself remain central to the narrative though referenced only obliquely.

Imperialism is the most obvious target of criticism in *Mamita Yunai*, and imperialism's most obvious embodiment is the UFC, from which the novel takes its name. But the title belies a more subtle characterization, that of the embodiment of the UFC itself. Black laborers are portrayed as referring to the company in their Caribbean Creole as "mamita yunai," a Spanglish phoneticization of "mommy" and "United Fruit Company." Not surprisingly, black laborers are portrayed as naïve dependents to the mother company, just as they were described during the strike of 1934. For Fallas, the embodiment of the UFC was not North American plantation management, which is hardly ever mentioned, but black laborers who, for the most part, remain loyal to their employer despite its imperialist oppression of all workers. In one telling scene, a young Sibaja and his co-workers attempt to buy provisions at a company store, only to be overcharged and insulted by the black proprietor. When the local police officer supports the black man over Sibaja and his friends, the group sulks out of the store, "cursing the Negro, the police and the United [Fruit Company]" (*Mamita Yunai* 149). For Sibaja, and Fallas, the three were often synonymous.

Inasmuch as *Mamita Yunai* is an overt critique of the UFC, it also establishes some of the most insidious racial stereotypes in Costa Rican literature. Throughout Fallas's story there are condescending references to Afro-Caribbeans, Chinese, and the various indigenous groups living along the southern coast. The southern portion of the province of Limón, Talamanca, is described as "a region populated by Indians, [who] for the most part [are] illiterate, speak almost no Spanish, and live a primitive and miserable life" (18). Throughout the novel, the diminutive term *negritos* is employed to refer to Afro-Caribbeans. When they are not infantilized, they are demonized as the narrator observes: "more than men, [the Black laborers] looked like black demons with muscles shimmering under the sun" (19). Finally, when all analogies are exhausted, *limonenses* are likened to the curiously grotesque as Fallas describes the menagerie of passengers on a coastal train: "Contemplated from a distance, the convoy would give the impression of an extravagant carnival parade, from which rose the muffled rumble of a barbaric and savage party" (19).

The reliance on such racist stereotypes to paint the image of Limón province is all the more surprising through the voice of the narrator, allegedly traveling

through Limón to alleviate the suffering of oppressed workers. Unlike Gutiérrez (see below), Fallas always identified with the working class. His experiences in the shoe factories of the highlands and on the banana plantations of the Caribbean coast legitimated his credentials as a labor organizer and a man of the people. Indeed, Fallas continues to be lauded as a writer for the Costa Rican everyman, relying on dialect and slang to convey his narrative.

But the everyman in Costa Rica, especially in the years between the strike and the civil war, was still deeply resentful of the black presence in Limón province. The "Africanization" of the Caribbean coast was directly connected to the emergence of the UFC, a corporation that had outmaneuvered local producers and excluded local workers (See Meléndez and Duncan, Bourgeois, and Harpelle). As in Fallas's novel, the most visible embodiment of the company was the ubiquitous black laborer; a struggle against one was a struggle against the other.

And yet, it is no coincidence that communism got its start in Limón⁴, for blackness, the "Achilles heel of American Capitalism," was the perfect symbol of capitalist oppression in Marxist ideology. As such, despite his tendency to demonize black laborers, Fallas is able to compassionately express their frustration as well: "There is no work, we can't cultivate the earth, they won't let us earn a living on the Pacific.... Must we die of hunger then?" Or again, "The men, with arms raised, shrunken under the weight of their great black bodies, all formed an impressive and macabre whole, resembling a parade of fugitive phantoms. From where have they come and to where are they going, dragging through the centuries the gathered weight of their scorched flesh? Where will they find their Promised Land?" (*Mamita Yunai* 21, 25). But even here, the compassion is a compassionate distance, evoking the tone of condescension criticized earlier. Images of ghoulish parades, blackness as somehow damaged whiteness ("scorched flesh"), and transient homelessness plague the preceding quote, excluding any hope of Costa Rica as that welcoming Promised Land.

Joaquín Gutiérrez

Joaquín Gutiérrez began his writing career almost a decade after Fallas blazed the path. But unlike Fallas, Gutiérrez's credentials among the working class were difficult to establish. Born to a landowner in Limón province, Gutiérrez grew up on one of the many independent farms in the province that supplied fruit to the UFC. His father would have been one of those across the table from Fallas during the strike of 1934, had he not long since taken a post as Costa Rican ambassador to the United States. Gutiérrez's first book, *Manglar*, was published in Chile, where he lived as a journalist and chess champion during the Costa Rican civil war of 1948. His second

novel, *Puerto Limón*, which focuses on labor and class struggle in the port city, was published in 1950.

While the well-traveled and erudite Gutiérrez would have found little in common with the average working class Costa Rican, something Fallas could always count on, his credentials as a communist were impeccable. During the 1960s, he spent several years in China and the Soviet Union as a translator, ensuring his reputation as a well-connected member of the Communist International. Equally at home in Santiago, Chile and San José, Costa Rica, Gutiérrez seamlessly joined his life of privilege with his leftist politics.

I met with Gutiérrez at his home outside San José in 1998, and, when asked about his education, he insisted on speaking in English. "I went away [from Limón] because there was a new university in San José," Gutiérrez explained. "The university had law and pharmacy. And so if you want to have a higher education, you have to go to the university. My older brother was studying law, and I did not want to study pharmacy."⁵

Frustrated by the limitations of higher education in Costa Rica, Gutiérrez worked odd jobs throughout the mid-1930s, avoiding the strike in Limón altogether. In 1936, Gutiérrez moved to New York to learn English: "I was one year in New York, my father sent me there. He told me, 'If you're going to be a writer, you will need more than one language.'" While in the United States, Gutiérrez perfected his chess game and began writing poetry. In the following thirty years, Gutiérrez would travel and live in Argentina, Chile, China, the Soviet Union, and occasionally, Costa Rica.⁶ His occasional stints in Costa Rica were spent building his reputation among leftist intellectuals, serving on various committees and, of course, joining the Communist Party. In China, Gutiérrez translated English into Spanish for the new communist government: "When the Chinese had their revolution, they needed translators from English to Spanish because it was very difficult to get translators from English to Chinese. So I moved with my family for two years to be a translator of English to Spanish in China." He would eventually spend four years translating in the Soviet Union as well, and several years in Chile before returning to Costa Rica and settling in the suburbs of the capital city.

Gutiérrez's work runs the gamut from one of the most famous children's stories in Costa Rica, *Cocori*, to influential novels like *Puerto Limón*. Taking the cue from Fallas, Gutiérrez's work has been criticized as reinforcing some of the most damaging racial stereotypes even as he claims to support the plight of the worker in Limón. Indeed, if there are few moments of genuine empathy in Fallas's treatment of labor reform in Limón, there are even less in Gutiérrez's *Puerto Limón*. In Gutiérrez's novel, the plot revolves around three white Costa Ricans: Don Hector, the wealthy

landowner who represents the bourgeois elite; Silvano, Hector's nephew, who represents the petit bourgeois intellectual; and Paraguitas, the Nicaraguan labor organizer who represents the proletariat. These three characters come together in conflict over the plight of the mainly black laborers, but of the three black characters in the book, two die of horribly infectious diseases, and the last, Tom, is a pathetically inept foil for the philosophical debate between the main characters.

Despite Lisa Davis's startling description of *Puerto Limón* as "notable for its sympathetic portrait of the Blacks of Limón" (154), the novel is rife with racial stereotypes and condescension. As Powell observes in her reading of the novel, "Paraguitas, in his relationship with the black character [Tom], seeks to earn his trust and include him in the class struggle, but at the same time, and in spite of his eagerness, constantly manifests his racism. He has to make him see and explain it to him as though he were castrated, a large man-child, stupid and inept" (99). Though the black characters of Limón are the *raison d'être* of every white character in the novel, whether the wealthy landowner or the communist labor organizer, they remain marginalized at best, and at worst, a hindrance to the success of the communist revolution. As quoted earlier, Powell argues that Gutiérrez's novel explicitly champions the working class, while implicitly excluding blacks from that class and indeed humanity itself (111).

When I asked Gutiérrez about the accusation of racism in his novel, not surprisingly, he defended his work: "It's not true. They're liars. I love Negroes and Chinese very much. I would rather cut off my hands than write ill of another race. I have very good Negro friends." We had spoken for some time about his youth in Limón, and, insisting on using English, he continued, "My father planted bananas. [He worked] for himself. Limón at that time was very savage, very primitive." Gutiérrez described his father as a pioneer, establishing his credentials as a *limonense* as he spoke. He explained how he appreciated the "diversity of races" in Limón and how he enjoyed growing up with the "Chinese and Negroes." "When I was six or seven in my father's land, there were many Negroes who were clearing the land. My friends were the Negroes and Chinese. One Negro, Tom, like my father, walked very fast ... Tom would carry me on his shoulders. Tom Winkleman." The lone black male character in *Puerto Limón* is none other than Tom Winkleman, a reflection of the autobiographical nature of Gutiérrez's writing. It is also a reflection of the apparent contradiction between his personal connection to Limón and *limonenses* and his overtly racist characterizations. Perhaps anticipating this contradiction, Gutiérrez offered, "Racial problems? I don't think so. There are no problems. The races are so distinct that they maintain a certain distance."

Richard Jackson comments on a theme in Latin American literature con-

cerned with black experience that helps contextualize Gutiérrez's comments. Jackson contends that "though well-meaning, many twentieth-century novelists are too apologetic, patronizing, and condescending" (45). He goes on to point out that the inevitable reliance on stereotypes by white Latin American authors writing about black people not only gives "false if not one-sided images of the black," but also indicates "racist feelings toward black people among Latin American authors" (46).

Gutiérrez in many ways embodies this "well-meaning" but ultimately "patronizing" archetype described by Jackson. Indeed, his attachment to Limón is overtly conflicted, and not only in his fiction. An autobiographical poem in the foreword of the novel claims "I was born next to the sea in Puerto Limón. And its juice boils in my heart. And still it sings its froth on my palate" (*Puerto Limón* 11). This same author paints a dreary image of the city through the eyes of his young anti-hero, Silvano:

In the street they heard the siren of a parting ship. It was a languid and melancholy moan as if the ship were leaving a part of its soul ensnared in that port... This was Puerto Limón and here life agitated in its whirlwind thousands of Criollos, Blacks, and some gringos from distant countries. And the siren seemed to wail for all of them, as if it could understand them and reverberate with their flaccid miseries, with their sleepless tremblings, with their short-lived joys. As if with its long undulating wail it could explain the inexplicable and enable the poor people to gather together in mutual comfort and unite around their pain. (128)

It is this image of Limón from which Silvano escapes at the end of the *Puerto Limón*, and in like manner Gutiérrez escaped many years ago. "Culturally, Limón is very small. It was good for the years I was there, but not now," he answered when asked if he could ever go back. One wonders if Gutiérrez's vision in *Puerto Limón* is not representative of the perceptions of many white Costa Ricans living in Limón without a sense of connection to the region; caught in a dreadful place against their will, struggling to escape.

Race and the Failure of the Revolution

Fallas and Gutiérrez, as young literary intellectuals of the Communist Party, responded to the political isolationism of black laborers during the banana strike of 1934 by de-humanizing them in their narrative recreations of the struggle. Silenced, emasculated, and demonized, the black laborer was the curiously invisible fulcrum of the revolution; the *raison d'être* of the UFC, Gutiérrez, Fallas and arguably the Communist Party of Costa Rica itself. But the failure of Fallas and Gutiérrez to adequately incorporate the black laborer in the revolution, both politically and literarily, is linked to the more general paradox of blackness in communist ideology. Indeed,

if blacks were the "Achilles Heel of American Capitalism," blackness and its embodiment would expose a critical failure of the Communist Party of Costa Rica and the Communist International to adequately account for racism in their revolutionary project.

In *The West Indians of Puerto Rico: Race, Class, and the Integration of an Ethnic Minority* (2001), Ronald Harpelle outlines a number of factors that contributed to the failure of the Communist Party to organize support among black migrant laborers during the banana strike of 1934. Chief among them were the demographic changes that took place in Limón throughout the 1920s. By the time Fallas arrived with orders to initiate the strike, many of the day laborers were white newcomers from the highlands and Nicaragua. Both groups were accustomed to the politicization of labor and open to the rhetoric of Fallas and the Communist Party. Black laborers, who had their own history of labor disputes with the UFC, were wary of Hispanic newcomers they viewed as troublemakers. Also, as Harpelle points out, many black laborers were in higher management positions, or were small landowners themselves, dependent on the UFC for their upward mobility. The fatal error made by communist labor organizers was the naïve and implicitly racist assumption that all blacks in Limón were part of the proletariat.

The response of black intellectuals in Limón to the threatened strike was swift and unequivocal. The local chapters of the UNIA quickly organized against the strikers, calling for inaction among its members. Countering the increasing propaganda in *Trabajo*, the local newspaper, *The Atlantic Voice*, carried editorials that condemned the strike. In many cases these same articles were penned by former labor activists known for their strong opposition to the UFC hiring practices in the Caribbean. Given the choice between so-called communist agitators and United Fruit, the former activists became ardent supporters of the status quo. As one editorial argued, "Whether communism is right or wrong is no concern of ours. This is Costa Rican politics. But when communism attempts to ride on the back of colored labor to its political goal, without first consulting you on your disposition in the matter, then it is high time that you are warned to sit tight and watch your own interests, lest you find yourselves worst sufferers in the end" (3).

But perhaps the most glaring reason Fallas failed in his appeals to black laborers was the paradox of blackness in Costa Rican communist ideology. As a symbol of oppression, there was no better image than the African slave and his indentured descendants being fed into the machine of capitalism. And there was no better symbol of imperialism than the multi-national specter of the United Fruit Company carrying on the tradition of mass displacement and the conspicuous consumption of labor. As symbols, these were irresistible additions to the material of class warfare,

brilliantly employed by Fallas and Gutiérrez in their fictionalized accounts of labor relations in the 1930s. But as flesh and bone, black laborers were still part of the “black invasion,” the eugenic nightmare of most white Costa Ricans, including highland-born Fallas and leisure-class Gutiérrez. Moreover, both had first hand experience as young men in the banana fields of Limón province. For Fallas, that experience included the dishonor of working beneath black managers who “had a level of education superior to that of Costa Ricans, and dominated the best employment options” (Molina 45).

It was a paradox endemic not only to Costa Rican communist ideology, but arguably to the ideology of the Communist International in general. Due in large measure to Lenin’s own emphasis on the central role of Europe in the teleological progression of capitalism to communism, the Comintern expended little energy on the developing world. The spread of communism in Europe would inevitably lead to its spread in the more marginal countries. As a result, the Costa Rican Communist Party was not inducted into the Communist International until 1935, four years after they were formally organized in Costa Rica. As one historian of the Latin American communist struggle argues, “the role of the colonial and underdeveloped countries, like that of the minority nationalities, was regarded as practically worthless,” (Cerdas Cruz 1) despite the fact that in Marxist ideology, none could more closely identify with the image of a global proletariat.

In the end, Fallas and Gutiérrez could not escape their own historical moment, blackness as an image of oppression could not redress the image of black people as tools of imperialism. It would take a civil war and several decades for black *limonense* writers like Quince Duncan and Eulalia Bernard to re-imagine both the image of blackness and its embodiment in black people.⁷

Notes

¹ A detailed history on Limón province can be found in Chomsky (1995) or Harpelle (2001). Other resources for the African presence in Costa Rica during the colonial period can be found in Meléndez and Duncan (1972), Gudmundson (1986), Cáceres (2000), Lobo and Meléndez (1997), and Meléndez (1999).

² Many of the works cited for this article were published in Spanish. The author made all translations to English for the purpose of consistency.

³ There are a number of excellent Spanish language resources on the history of the Communist Party in Costa Rica, including Caballero (1986), Cerdas Cruz (1993), Cerdas (1994), Gómez (1994), and Mora (2000). For an English resource, Ronald Harpelle (2001) offers a brief treatment of the Community Party in Limón during the banana strike of 1934, and Philippe Bourgois (1989) and Trevor

Purcell (1993) comment on labor in a more contemporary context.

⁴ In 1929, the Popular Party, a communist political party inspired by Jorge Vivo during an extended visit from Cuba, won a municipal council election in Puerto Limón. That same year, the party published a newspaper called "Lucha" and founded the Limón Directorate of the Communist Party. News of its foothold in Costa Rica quickly spread to regional leaders of the Comintern, and the Limón Directorate was asked by the Communist Party of Uruguay to sponsor a May Day celebration in Costa Rica and to send delegates to a Labor Congress in Montevideo. Neither materialized from the still fledgling organization, but Communism had its start, and most importantly, it started in Limón.

⁵ These and other citations belong to an unpublished interview which I conducted with the author in 1998.

⁶ For a more thorough biography of Joaquín Gutiérrez, see Gutiérrez (2000) or Arias (2002).

⁷ Quince Duncan, the most prolific and well-known Afro-Costa Rican author and academic, has written more than a dozen novels and several works of literary and social analysis since the 1960s. His most recent non-fiction work, *Contra el silencio*, is a critical examination of race and racism in the Caribbean littoral since European colonization. Eulalia Bernard, a poet and academic, has also worked to redress the image of blackness in Costa Rican letters (See Duncan 1975; Sharman 2000; Mosby 2003).

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