

Buyei Juan Lambey Institute

Mali Workshop Project

January 16, 2010

Bayera, Dangriga, BELIZE

A REPORT

Background

Buyei Juan Lambey Institute is a legal entity that came into being in 2000. The leaders, Mr. Eugene Hernandez and the late Buyei John Mariano saw the Institute as an engine for education in general regarding Garifunaduo and in particular the role and significance of the *Dabuyaba*. Both Mr. Hernandez and Mr. Mariano returned to Dangriga from the United States upon retirement, and along with their spouses and other family members have contributed immensely to the Dangriga community. Through the initiatives of Mr. Hernandez and Mr. Mariano, the Buyei Juan Lambey Institute has conducted among other activities, summer workshops in drumming and *wanaragua* dancing, skills training for income generation, exhibition of Garifuna artifacts, experimented in aqua-fishing, and gave support to *hana* and drum making by Mr. Kapi Mariano.

The Mali workshop resulted from a request by Baba John Mariano just before his illness and passing in September 2009. He saw the need for such continuous activities as he considered the *Dabuyaba* as central to *Garifunaduo*. This workshop was also in honour of Mr. Eugene Hernandez and in remembrance of Buyei John Mariano for their many contributions. It is a project as the meaning connotes some continuation in this area.

The Mali workshop project initiative was organized and sponsored by the Myrtle Palacio family grouping through the Buyei Juan Lambey Institute. It came to fruition with the support and confidence of Cannon Jerris Jones Valentine, Pastor of Christ the King Anglican Church of Dangriga, Belize. Cannon Valentine is the foremost knowledgeable person in every aspect of the *Dugu* ceremony from the drumming to *awisahani* and the calling of the *uyenu*. He is one of possibly three persons in Dangriga who can call the *Mali*. Cannon Valentine organized the agenda and was the primary facilitator for the workshop.

The Workshop

The workshop was held on Saturday, January 16, 2010 at Bayera, in Dangriga, Belize. It was the first sunny and dry day in approximately two weeks in Belize, with a gentle sea breeze blowing from the Caribbean. Bayera was the ideal venue, being the location of the Baba John Dabuyaba, which is positioned immediately in front of the sea. After the sending out the call for the workshop, the feedback was that there would be a maximum of 20 participants. By 10:30 a.m. on the day of the workshop, some 58 persons had registered and through the flexibility and initiative of Ms. Lilly the cook, we were able to provide food for a total of 64 participants.

After the welcome and introduction by Ms. Myrtle Palacio, Mr. Roy Cayetano gave an overview of our history and incorporated that with the object for a *Dugu* and symbolic meanings for the drums etc. Several questions were asked of Mr. Cayetano on his presentation leading to a lively discussion. After a short break Cannon Valentine led the discussion to the *Mali*—its significance, the symbols of the movements of the drums, the *sisira* and the calling of the *Mali*. Several questions were fielded, a few not directly on the topic that Cannon Valentine kindly guided to the satisfaction of the participants who continued the discussion into the lunch break. Lunch consisted of *darasa* or *ereba* with fish or chicken and a coleslaw, pound cake and citrus juice.

Lunch was followed by the practice of the call and response of the *Mali*, which was introduced by Cannon Valentine, and this time utilizing the drums (the music). He demonstrated the importance of synchronizing the call with the movements of the drums--up and down. Ms Gwen Nunez Gonzalez willingly exercised the calling of the *Mali* during the practical. While this was new experience to some, it was reinforcement for others.

A full *Mali* was conducted with participants putting what they learnt into practice with Cannon Valentine critically looking on. The participation of the youth who were fully engaged was very promising. The *Dabuyaba* rocked, literally, with enthusiasm and confidence. The workshop ended with *chururuti* and *Awesahani*....and with calls for more. The chiquita cola piece was a hit.

Conclusion

The objective of individuals leaving the workshop with full knowledge of calling the *Mali* was not fully met. However, understanding its significance, timing and the how was generally accomplished and with continuous practice a few experts may emerge. There were calls for more of the same from the participants, as well as workshops on the language and the *Dugu* itself. Cannon Valentine mentioned that the workshop was historic—a first—so let this workshop be the beginning, and that there be a continuation of this and other areas, led by an individual and/or youth group as we now know that one day or one occasion is not enough.

More than a half of the persons registered were young persons to the age of 21 and relatively young to the age of 40. While there were far more female participants, the presence of males particularly within the youths was heartening.

Lastly, a *dagagudou* to the ancestors was organized by Cannon Valentine with the assistance of Auntie Felo. This took place in the *Guli*—so that what we ate and drank was also shared with the ancestors in the spirit of the tradition and *Garifunaduo*.

On behalf of the Buyei Juan Lambey Institute and the Myrtle Palacio family grouping I would like to wholeheartedly give thanks the following persons:

- Cannon Jerris J. Valentine for facilitating and for his contribution of water and ereba
- Mr. Roy Cayetano for his presentation on the Overview of the Garifuna History
- Mrs. Jeremy Jacqueline Valentine Cayetano and Mrs. Lorraine Valentine for contributing the stipend of \$90.00 to the drummers
- Mrs. Digna Mariano for preparing the *Dabuyaba* and Ms. Lilly for her creativity in stretching the food and who was never flustered by the large turnout
- Ms Arreini Palacio Morgan for designing and producing the programme
- Anighi, Aniki and Arreini for the logistics on the ground on that day
- Ms. Gwen Nunez Gonzalez for assisting with the registration on Saturday
- Our elders, Auntie Felomena Arana and Auntie Lilly Garcia for assisting in guiding us along
- Mr. David Craig of CPBL for the juices and cups

Seremei toun Wabuongiute hama Aharigu. Weiriti naritagoun lau chulugua-hama.
 Many thanks to all.

I. Myrtle Palacio