Anxieties about race played a key role in the construction of the Nicaraguan political community during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The racialization of space in particular shaped the contours of citizenship in Nicaragua, where racism operated both in the mapping of racial difference onto region and territory and the spatialization of race. As Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis observe, "Race is one way by which the boundary is . . . constructed between those who can and those who cannot belong to a particular construction of a collectivity or population." In Nicaragua the racialization of space and the spatialization of race worked to set the boundaries of citizenship and access to political power in different but related ways. The racialization of some regions claimed as part of the national territory as black or indigenous, and therefore as "inferior" and "savage," served to legitimize the political disenfranchisement of their inhabitants by Nicaraguan political elites during much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The mapping of race onto space simultaneously fueled and facilitated the spatialization of race. Thus the designation of some regions of the country as the only ones where racial others resided made it possible to imagine the remaining areas of the country as lacking any kind of racial difference. Specifically it was in contrast to the Mosquito Coast that Nicaraguan political and intellectual elites formulated key elements of Nicaraguan national identity in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth. The sociopolitical dominance on the Mosquito Coast of two mixed-race groups of mostly Afro-Amerindian descent—the Miskitu, who became coded as indigenous, and Creoles (not to be confused with criollos, i.e., Spaniards born in the Americas), who came to be seen largely as of African descent—led to the racialization of the region as black, and to a lesser extent as Indian. The marking of the Mosquito Coast as the only place where racial others were present in the nation in turn facilitated the erasure of blackness and indigeneity in western and central Nicaragua, despite the presence of black and indigenous people in those areas of the country as well. The idea of Nicaragua as a "civilized" nation in contrast to the "savage" Mosquito Coast that emerged in the nineteenth century was thus racially coded. It also served to legitimize the notion, which persisted well into the twentieth century, that citizens of western regions of the country were peculiarly entitled to exercise political power in the state as a whole, and over "uncivilized" regions in particular. As Donald S. Moore, Jake Kosek, and Anand Pandian observe, "Racialized discourses mark both living beings and geographical territories with the force of their distinctions." The racialization of space was thus a fundamental feature of nation-state formation in Nicaragua, as was the spatialization of race that it facilitated. Together these processes served to legitimize both internally colonizing state practices toward groups and regions constructed as racial others, and the political exclusion of black and indigenous costenos (as the inhabitants of the region are called).

When the newly created state of Nicaragua declared its independence from Spain in 1821 it claimed the Mosquito Coast as part of its territory, but the region's inhabitants did not consider themselves a part of the new nation. As Karl Offen notes in his essay in this volume, they prided themselves on having resisted Spanish attempts at colonization and had little in common with the inhabitants of the new Nicaraguan republic. From the founding moments of the Nicaraguan state, therefore, the Mosquito Coast has occupied an ambiguous position in the national imaginary. On the one hand the region itself was claimed as an indivisible part of the national body, but on the other hand the racial and cultural difference of costenos, combined with their claims to self-government and alliance with foreign colonial powers such as Great Britain, seemed to threaten the very existence of the new nation. This ambivalent, if not contradictory, attitude toward costenos and the territory they inhabited is constitutive of how the Mosquito Coast operated as a racialized space. It became the preeminent place of racial and cultural difference within the nation; its association with blackness and to a lesser extent indigeneity simultaneously
facilitated the myths that in the rest of the country there was no African participation in mestizaje and that indigenous people had disappeared during the colonial period.  

In this essay I analyze key moments in the formation of the Nicaraguan nation-state during the nineteenth century and early twentieth in order to show how the racialization of space and the spatialization of race operated to determine the political inclusion of subaltern racial groups from the Mosquito Coast. First, I show how Nicaraguan national identity was initially constructed in contrast to the “inferior” and “savage” Mosquito Coast during the nineteenth century. I then explain how the racialization of space that marked the region as black and indigenous was used to legitimize the internal colonizing practices of the Nicaraguan state and to justify the political exclusion of costeños until well into the twentieth century. Finally, I analyze the persistent effects of the spatialization of race on the practice of citizenship in Nicaragua today by tracing the links between current attempts to undermine the self-government rights gained by costeños and older discourses about the lesser nationalness and unfitness for citizenship of the black and indigenous inhabitants of the Mosquito Coast.

THE STRUGGLE FOR THE MOSQUITO COAST AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE NICARAGUAN NATION

Nationalism as an ideology is by definition both inclusive and exclusive. It sets boundaries between nationals and foreigners, but it may also be used to legitimize the privileged access of certain groups within the state to political power. One of the basic tenets of nationalism is that all members of the nation share a common identity that differentiates them from outsiders, and all nationals possess it equally. The historic association between the growth of nationalist movements and the induction of the masses into politics in Western Europe noted by scholars of nationalism reflects this inclusive aspect of nationalist ideologies. Yet nationalist movements may rely on the support of the lower classes without necessarily wishing to extend them full political rights.

This was certainly the case in Central America at the time of independence, where non-Europeans were a majority of the population and one of the initial spurs of the independence movements was the fear of slave and Indian uprisings by the criollo elite. Independence in Central America was declared by the criollo elite to ward off the specter of another Haitian revolution. The Acta de la independencia of the Central American Federation, enacted in 1821, bluntly explains that criollos declared independence in order to preserve their economic, political, and social dominance: “Independence from the Spanish government being the general will of the people of Guatemala . . . Mr. Political Chief should declare it in order to prevent the consequences which would be fearsome in the event that it were in fact proclaimed by the people themselves.” At the same time, however, the Central American Federation’s Constitution of 1824 specified that all inhabitants of the republic, white and nonwhite alike, were nationals. Slavery was also abolished that year, and slave traders were barred from citizenship. But as in other republics of this era, only those who had a “useful profession” or owned property could be citizens, and the citizenship of those who worked as “domestic servants close to the body” was suspended. Central American criollo ruling classes may thus have embraced nonwhite populations as their fellow nationals, but they did not necessarily conceive of them as their fellow citizens.

In Nicaragua the existential threat represented by the existence of a large nonwhite majority was exacerbated by the existence of the Mosquito Coast, where political rule was exercised by black and indigenous groups under the protection of the British. While both the Central American Federation and later the state of Nicaragua (after the Federation’s dissolution in 1838) claimed sovereignty over the Mosquito Coast, the region was never under Spain’s control during the colonial period. In the colonial era Spanish settlers resided mainly on the Pacific coast of what was to become Nicaragua, while the central region was populated mainly by indigenous groups organized in their own communities with few Spaniards or mestizos, and the Mosquito Coast was primarily under British influence. British pirates first established relations with the region’s indigenous inhabitants in the sixteenth century, and by the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries “an incipient African-Amerindian polity,” the Mosquito Kingdom, emerged parallel to the British superintendency for the Mosquito shore, as Olfen explains at greater length in his essay on the colonial Mosquitia in this volume. During this period the Spanish crown periodically tried to establish control over the Mosquito Coast, but it was not until 1783 that Britain formally recognized Spanish colonial rights to the Coast. The
British temporarily left the region, but Spain was unable to fill the resulting power vacuum, and the Mosquito Coast thus continued to enjoy relative autonomy from Spain’s colonial administration. Following Napoleon’s invasion of Spain in 1808 the British returned to the Mosquito Coast and in 1843 officially reestablished their protectorate over the Mosquito Kingdom. The impetus for doing so was the desire to gain control over a possible interoceanic canal route through Central America, as the Atlantic entrance to a Nicaraguan canal would have been located on the Mosquito Coast.

Great Britain’s territorial designs for the Mosquito Coast could not have come at a worse time for the nascent Nicaraguan state, as the period following independence (1821–57) was one in which Nicaragua, like the rest of its Central American neighbors, was engaged in continuous intrastate and domestic civil wars. The result of the constant warfare and instability was an economy in ruins and a weak and ineffective state that could not impose order, collect taxes, improve the living conditions of its citizens, or assert its rights internationally. Taking advantage of the chaos in Nicaragua, the British sought to secure the port of San Juan del Norte, the Atlantic entrance to the proposed canal, in the name of the Mosquito king. In 1841 British forces tried (and failed) to take over the port. Again in 1848 Britain announced that the limits of the Mosquito Kingdom included San Juan del Norte, and the British Navy overpowered Nicaraguan forces guarding the port. The Nicaraguan government was forced to let the port remain in Mosquito and British hands until the dispute over the region was finally resolved in 1860. The importance of the dispute over the Mosquito Coast to Nicaragua is reflected in the claim of the country’s foreign relations secretary at the time, Sebastián Salinas, that the issue had “absorbed everyone’s attention, from that of the first magistrate to that of the last Nicaraguan.” While the idea that ordinary citizens were as preoccupied with the dispute as members of the elite strains the imagination, it is at least clear that in the course of Nicaragua’s struggle with Great Britain for control of the region Nicaraguan elites first began to articulate certain conceptions of national identity, of who they were as a nation.

Nationalism is an essentially comparative endeavor. One of the fundamental features of nationalism is the existence of other nations relative to which the standing of the nationalist’s homeland can be compared. Charles Taylor, for instance, has argued that nationalism is a response to the very modern predicament of nonrecognition by more “advanced” societies. Nonrecognition is “felt existentially as a challenge” by modernizing elites in less developed countries, he argues, because modern societies are “direct-access” societies in which belonging to the state is conceived as a direct relation between each individual citizen and the nation; it is not mediated by hierarchical relationships such as those between peasant and lord. As a result in modern societies identities are formed in a space of recognition, and nonrecognition is a matter of dignity in which the self-worth of the individual is engaged. It is this feature of modern societies that endows nationalism with its ability to bestow recognition and hence accounts for its “emotive power,” according to Taylor. The content of particular nationalist discourses is thus fundamentally shaped by elites’ perceptions of and concerns about their nation’s standing relative to other nations.

In the case of Nicaragua no event had a more profound effect on the emerging notions of national identity being forged by the country’s political and intellectual elites than the dispute with Great Britain for control of the Mosquito Coast. The dispute was extremely troubling for elites because it underscored the fragility of Nicaragua’s claim to nationhood and brought to the fore anxieties about the country’s racial composition (Was it a white, black, indigenous, or mixed-race nation?), which was crucial to its standing in the international hierarchy of nations. Indeed the nationalist discourses formulated by Nicaraguan elites in the nineteenth century relied explicitly on the racialization of space to shore up the new republic’s claim to statehood. In these national narratives the Mosquito Coast was consistently portrayed as savage in contrast to civilized Nicaragua and its black and indigenous inhabitants as incapable of self-government or political agency.

During the nineteenth century the dominant social and political groups on the Mosquito Coast (in addition to the British) were two mixed-race groups of African and Amerindian descent: Creoles and Miskitu. While the racial designation of both of these groups was ambiguous, by the late nineteenth century the former had become identified primarily as people of African descent and the latter as indigenous. The mixing process between Miskitus and Africans who arrived in the region in the seventeenth century had initially resulted in a distinction between “pure,” or Tawira, Miskitu on the one hand and Sambos, or Zambos-Mosquitos,
on the other. By the nineteenth century, however, these differences had dissolved into a single Miskitu group that was identified as indigenous or Amerindian.19

The Creoles were a group of free people of color that emerged in the late eighteenth century in the southern Mosquito Coast. Of mixed African, Amerindian, and European ancestry, they were predominantly mulattoes, the descendants of free and enslaved Africans who had arrived on the Mosquito Coast in the seventeenth century. After the departure of the British from the Coast at the end of the eighteenth century they founded maroon communities at Bluefields and the sites of other British settler communities and developed a creolized English language and hybrid culture.20 Creoles became increasingly socially and politically dominant on the Mosquito Coast over the course of the nineteenth century. As a result, a rivalry for political power in the region developed between them and the Miskitu. While the Miskitu retained control at the local level, both the Mosquito Kingdom and the Mosquito Reserve created after 1860 were governed by an advisory body to the Mosquito king, the Council of State, which was composed of Europeans and Creoles but no Miskitu.

By the middle of the nineteenth century Creoles were playing a central role in the politics and society of the Mosquito Coast. Contrary to the assertions of Nicaraguan officials in the second half of the nineteenth century, people of African descent involved in the politics of the Mosquito Coast at this time were thus not simply foreign Jamaican blacks.21 Jamaican and other West Indian immigrant laborers began arriving in the region in the late nineteenth century to work in the developing enclaves controlled by U.S. companies (a migratory stream that would reach its peak during the early part of the twentieth century). As was the case with the Miskitu, where Tavira and Zambos-Mosquitos fused into one group, these immigrants were gradually integrated into the Creole group.22

The dominance on the Mosquito Coast of two Afro-Amerindian groups, one identified with blackness and the other with indigeneity, posed a challenge to Nicaragua's claims to the area. In response Nicaraguan officials deployed a discourse of civilization and savagery that was racially coded to bolster their claim of sovereignty over the Mosquito Coast.23 Nicaraguan elites were dismayed at not being recognized as a civilized nation by European states and fiercely resisted being equated with the savage Mosquito Kingdom. When, for example, France explained that it could not intervene on Nicaragua's behalf in the dispute with Great Britain because "European nations cannot, without demeaning themselves, negotiate with those little Mosquitian governments," Nicaraguan elites were powerfully reminded of the fact that in the minds of Europeans there was little difference between them and the inhabitants of the Mosquito Coast, and hence of the precariousness of their claims to civilization.24 The desire to align Nicaragua with civilized nations as opposed to the savage Mosquito Kingdom is a constant theme in Nicaraguan government correspondence and proclamations of this era. Nicaraguan officials continually chided Britain for violating the international norms that governed interactions between civilized nations. In 1847 Nicaragua's supreme director (the highest office in the executive branch, later renamed the presidency) argued that the British takeover of San Juan del Norte would now serve as a model for "the savage hordes of any country under the protection of a strong Power to consider themselves with the same right to constitute a nation."

It would encourage "savage hordes" in all parts of the world to "put themselves on equal footing with civilized States, which would place limits on civilization, and establish disorder and universal anarchy."25 The dispute over the Mosquito Coast thus played a pivotal role in the evolving self-understanding of Nicaragua's ruling class in the postindependence era. It led political and intellectual elites to construct a vision of their new nation that was premised on the opposition between civilized Nicaragua and the savage Mosquito Kingdom.

NEITHER BLACK NOR INDIAN: CIVILIZED NICARAGUA VERSUS THE SAVAGE MOSQUITO COAST

Nicaraguan officials' fear of being equated with the savage Mosquito Kingdom was rooted in part in anxieties about race. As a state run by blacks and Indians the Mosquito Kingdom violated prevailing ideas about race, which endorsed racial hierarchies based on the notion that only certain "races" (which were understood to be distinct human groups characterized by permanent inherited physical differences) were capable of being civilized.26 This kind of racialist thought, which assigned different characteristics to different nonwhite races, was the underpinning of the Nicaraguan claim that the Mosquito Kingdom was savage and inferior.
Nicaraguan officials could not understand how the British government could recognize as a state "a savage horde that lacks all the constitutive principles of a sovereign society," while refusing to do the same for their own, much more civilized nation.24

Nicaraguan officials consistently used racist stereotypes of blacks and Indians to portray the inhabitants of the Mosquito Kingdom as incapable of governing themselves. Initially officials tended to associate the region with indigeneity, as reflected in their claims in the 1840s (at the start of the conflict with Britain over the Mosquito Coast) that the Mosquito Kingdom was savage and inferior.29 The kingdom was thus described largely in terms of savagery, as savage tribes lacking civilization could hardly make credible claims to sovereignty. The mixed Afro-Amerindian heritage of the Miskitu also lent itself to the use of racist stereotypes associated with blackness. The Miskitu were thus said to possess a number of character traits common in racist stereotypes about blacks, including drunkenness, loose morals, and indulgence. According to Nicaraguan officials, the Miskitu had been reduced to "a state of moral stupor and brutishness" by the liquor with which the British "encouraged the vice of drunkenness," and possessed loose sexual mores.30 The older daughter of King Robert Charles Frederick was said to have "manifested a greater preference for foreigners, with whom she used to share her favors to the detriment of her husband."31 The Miskitu king himself was said to be "famous at the time for his ignorance, by the deep passion with which he adored Jamaican rum, and for the generous largesse with which he gave away and ceded the lands that he was made to believe he owned."32 Nicaraguan elites delighted in mocking not only the idea of the Miskitu monarchy itself, but also the aesthetic practices adopted by the Miskitu to signify their equal standing as a nation.33 The Miskitu king's robes were described by Nicaraguan officials as consisting of "tails or a formal coat with a sash but without a shirt or drawers, which he augmented on festive days with a wig on his head like the Spaniards used."34 Such a "fantastic personage" could not be taken seriously, according to Foreign Relations Secretary Salinas.35

The officials' racist representations of the inhabitants of the Mosquito Coast were intended to discredit any claims of the latter to political agency. Nicaraguan officials consistently portrayed the Miskitu as dupes of the British. While British support for the Mosquito Kingdom clearly furthered Britain's goal of controlling an interoceanic canal route through Nicaragua, the relationship between the inhabitants of the Mosquito Coast and their British allies was far more complex than Nicaraguan officials were willing to acknowledge. In fact the British themselves were aware of the precarious nature of their alliances with the various groups that inhabited the region. In a letter from Mr. Christie, the British consul to the Mosquito Kingdom, to his superiors in London in 1848 he notes that the Miskitu king was at that point "quite submissive": "But I think it right to caution your Lordship that he may not always be so." Christie also mentions trying to please the king's mother because she "was supposed to be averse to the English connexion."36 Instead of being tricked and exploited by the British or being entirely subservient to them, the inhabitants of the Mosquito Coast chose to ally themselves with the British in order to preserve their independence from Spain and later from Nicaragua.

In fact it appears as if more often than not it was internal rivalries between Creoles and Miskitu within the kingdom and later the Mosquito Reserve that served as the impetus for the shifting alliances that these groups (and indeed different factions within each group) established with the various colonial powers vying for control of the region. In 1847, for example, Princess Agnes Ann Frederick (an aunt of the Miskitu king at the time) signed a treaty with Nicaraguan representatives recognizing Nicaraguan sovereignty over the Mosquito Kingdom and declaring that the Miskitu considered themselves Nicaraguans. In his explanation of the event to his superiors in London, Christie suggested that the motive for the alliance was Miskitu resentment of Creole dominance in the kingdom's political structure: "The native Indians ... see no right to govern in these needy and ignorant African and Creole Councilors."37 As these examples reveal, Creoles and Miskitu were not simply puppets of Britain or Nicaragua. Rather, despite being the weakest of the parties involved in the struggle for control of the Mosquito Coast, they attempted to play the various outside powers against each other in order to further their own autonomous (and multiple) political agendas.

Creole political dominance in the Mosquito Kingdom and later the Reserve would become one of the main elements of Nicaraguan officials' attempts to discredit the region's claims to sovereignty, such that by the end of the nineteenth century the region was increasingly identified with blackness. Despite Creoles' long-standing presence in the region (which certainly predated the arrival of the Nicaraguan state), Nicaraguan officials...
portrayed Creoles as foreign, inferior, and incapable of managing the political affairs of the Mosquito Coast. They referred to Creoles as “Jamaica Negroes,” implying that they were foreigners who had improperly taken control of both the Mosquito Kingdom and the Reserve. The basis for this claim was the Treaty of Managua, signed by Great Britain and Nicaragua in 1860, which recognized Nicaragua’s claims to the Mosquito Coast. According to the treaty a Mosquito Reserve would replace the Mosquito Kingdom (although encompassing a much smaller geographical area). But while the Reserve would be under Nicaraguan sovereignty, within it the Miskitu enjoyed “the right to self-government and to govern all persons residing in said district, according to their own customs, and in conformity with the rules that may on occasion be adopted by them, as long as they are not incompatible with the sovereign rights of the Nicaraguan Republic.” By officially recognizing only Miskitu rights to self-government, despite Creoles’ involvement and indeed dominance in the politics of the Mosquito Kingdom, the Treaty of Managua thus provided Nicaraguan officials seeking to bring the Mosquito Coast entirely under Nicaragua’s control with a powerful weapon to discredit the autonomous political structures established in the region.

By the late nineteenth century Nicaraguan officials sought to discredit the right to self-government of the inhabitants of the Mosquito Coast by simultaneously claiming that Creoles were foreigners with no authority to govern the Reserve and that the Miskitu had forfeited any claim to political autonomy by allowing Creoles to gain control of the region’s political structures. Following the Treaty of Managua, Nicaraguan officials would hereafter claim that the Miskitu could hardly be said to be exercising their right to self-government when the Reserve was in fact controlled by Creoles. Carlos Lacayo, the commissioner to the Mosquito Reserve appointed by the Nicaraguan government, claimed, “The self-government granted to the Mosquito Indians was eliminated and supplanted with a tribal regime by a black oligarchy.” He argued that the Miskitu could not claim that their self-government rights had been violated by Nicaragua’s forcible reincorporation of the region in 1894, given that “they are in the present case the ones to blame, because they have renounced their rights, allowing themselves to be supplanted by an invading colony of Negroes.”

The objections of Nicaraguan officials to Creole political power in the Reserve did not stop with their supposed status as foreigners, however; it also had everything to do with their assumed racial inferiority. Government by blacks violated the accepted racial hierarchy of the era, in which Indians were supposed to rank higher than blacks and in which neither group was thought to be capable of self-rule. From the perspective of Nicaraguan officials blacks were not fit to rule themselves or others. Lacayo argued that before reincorporation the Mosquito Coast had been ruled by “a black oligarchy, whose lack of political and administrative ethics, and the vice from which they came, would justify, even if there were no other causes, the destruction which its members have been made to suffer.” For Nicaraguan officials the mere fact of Creole political power on the Reserve justified the end of self-government in the region, since blacks had neither the right nor the capacity to govern themselves, much less others.

The inhabitants of the Mosquito Coast did not allow racist representations of the region as savage to stand unchallenged. In a letter to the British written in 1877 the Miskitu chief William Henry Clarence lists the reasons why “the Mosquito Indians [were] not willing to enter into closer connection with Nicaragua.” He discredits the claim that Nicaragua was civilized by pointing to the chaos experienced by the country during the period of anarchy following independence from Spain. In contrast, he argues, “The Reserve has maintained during the above-mentioned period a peaceful Government, whilst in Nicaragua there are continual revolutions, wars, and rumours of wars, destruction of property, &c.” Clarence also explains why the people of the Mosquito Coast could not be said to enjoy better living conditions under Nicaraguan rule than they had under their own: “There are established on the coast of the Reserve seven Mission stations, with schools, where the people are educated, and instructed to become good members of society, but nothing has been done by the Government of Nicaragua to improve the places or instruct the Mosquito people given over by the Treaty [of Managua].” He also alludes to the fact that the people of the Mosquito Coast had by this time acquired a very different national identity than that of Nicaragua: “The religion, customs, manners, and laws of Nicaragua are in no way compatible with those of the people of the Reserve.” In another letter he also describes Miskitu claims to the region in nationalist terms: “[The Miskitu] have been a free and independent people from time immemorial—long before Nicaragua became a Republic—and should be left to their own suitable manner of improvement and government.” Political elites on the Mosquito Coast

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thus clearly did not accept racist representations of themselves and their region in terms of civilization and savagery and vigorously defended their right to self-government.

The struggle for control of the Mosquito Coast was equally important to their Nicaraguan counterparts, as comparisons to the savage Coast played a central role in official discourses about Nicaraguan national identity during this era. It is also at this time that representations of the Mosquito Coast as indigenous and black in contrast to the rest of Nicaragua begin to emerge. Ultimately this racialization of space would become a central feature of the practice of citizenship in Nicaragua; it would be used to justify the internally colonizing practices of the state toward regions of the country coded as black or indigenous in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth.

THE RACIALIZATION OF SPACE IN NICARAGUA AND THE POLITICAL EXCLUSION OF COSTEÑOS

The unequal incorporation of black and indigenous costeños and the region in which they lived was a fundamental element of the state-building efforts of Nicaraguan elites following the end of the postindependence period of anarchy. In the late nineteenth century and early twentieth the civilizing and colonizing imperatives of Nicaragua's nation-building elites manifested most clearly in the drive to "reincorporate" and "Nicaraguanize" the Mosquito Coast on the one hand and dismantle indigenous communities in the Pacific and Central regions of the country on the other hand. As Edmund T. Gordon has noted, in Nicaragua the political exclusion of black and indigenous people was mapped onto region and territory. The racialization of space operated in such a way that certain regions of the country became associated with blackness and indigeneity, thus marking these spaces as (figuratively at least) both inside and outside the nation. Racialized spaces (of which the paradigmatic case is the Mosquito Coast) were seen as part of the nation insofar as the geographical terrain itself was claimed as part of the national territory, but they were also treated as if they existed outside of it insofar as their black and indigenous inhabitants were deemed unfit for citizenship. Black and indigenous costeños were thus treated as second-class citizens by the way the spaces they inhabited were racialized, as the racialization of space served to justify the internally colonizing policies adopted by Nicaragua's Conservative and Liberal elites during this period. In the case of Conservatives in particular this was one element of a wider project to reimagine the internal contours of the Nicaraguan political community in the second half of the nineteenth century in distinctly less egalitarian terms.

Following the postindependence period of anarchy Conservatives, who blamed the chaos of the era on misguided Liberal egalitarian ideas, dedicated themselves to the project of building a strong state with a dominant executive. Their efforts to reform the constitution in order to strengthen the power of the executive branch and restrict access to citizenship by means of new property qualifications for voting and running for public office put them in direct conflict with Liberals, who objected to the aristocratic bent of the reforms. The conflict between the two parties eventually led to William Walker's expedition to Nicaragua (at the Liberals' behest) and the subsequent alliance between Liberals and Conservatives to expel him from the country during the National War of 1855–57, after his alliance with the Liberals had soured. Following the National War both parties began a period of peaceful coexistence (1858–93) under the hegemony of the Conservatives, who dedicated themselves to state-building activities. During this era economic growth fueled by the promotion of agricultural exports led to general prosperity and new state institutions were created.

One of the fundamental elements of the political project pursued by Conservative elites during the second half of the nineteenth century was the unequal inclusion of nonwhites and members of the lower social strata (which tended to overlap). This aim was pursued by means of two principal policies: the attempt to restrict the highest levels of political power to the descendants of the criollo elite and the effort to bring outlying regions of the country inhabited by uncivilized blacks and Indians under direct state control. The Conservative Fruto Chamorro, who served first as supreme director and later as president of Nicaragua, claimed that states should be careful not to prostitute and desecrate such a handsome title [of citizen] and such a noble quality by granting it unconditionally, without taking into account merit, virtue and property. Social equality does not consist in making citizens of all, and in granting to all the same rights, standing and immunities.

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Giving the same rights to the evil as to the good man, to the lazy and unruly as to the hard working and peaceful, is to destroy that equality; it is to create elements of anarchy. 67

For Conservatives citizenship and individual rights were the privilege of those who possessed "virtue, merit and property," qualities that they assumed were related. The state should therefore mete out individual rights and protections sparingly.

The inegalitarian political ideology of Conservatives was reflected in the moral and property qualifications for citizenship enshrined in the constitution of 1858. This charter established that Nicaraguan citizens were individuals of all races who were twenty-one years of age or older (or eighteen-year-olds who possessed some education or were a male head of household), who were of good conduct, and who possessed property worth at least one hundred pesos or had a job or profession that produced the equivalent yearly. 68 Property requirements for running for the highest offices of the state were also introduced; citizens could run for the office of president only if they possessed four thousand pesos and for senator only if they had two thousand pesos. Conservatives also introduced moral criteria for citizenship, which was reserved for persons of "good conduct" and could be permanently lost if one was declared a fraudulent debtor, exhibited "notoriously depraved conduct" (offenses that in 1838 had merited only temporary suspension of citizenship), or showed "ingratitude toward one's parents or unjust abandonment of one's wife or legitimate children." 69 Further only married men with children could become president or senator, and only Catholics were eligible for government posts. 69 Religious freedom (which had been protected in the constitution of 1838) was also revoked, and Roman Catholicism was declared the religion of the republic.

In addition to introducing new property and moral qualifications for citizenship, which de facto excluded certain persons from political participation (especially members of lower socioeconomic strata, who were mostly nonwhite), Conservatives also created special regimes to govern savage regions of the country, which automatically disenfranchised the black and indigenous inhabitants of those areas. Conservatives characterized subaltern racial groups as responsible for the anarchy of the post-independence period, conveniently forgetting that although indigenous and other popular sectors participated in the conflicts of the era, they were not the originators of those conflicts. 70 The main causes of the anarchy were conflicts among the ruling class, but Conservatives nevertheless argued that Indians were not yet fit for citizenship. In 1854, for example, Fruto Chamorro argued that racial heterogeneity and political equality were incompatible:

The absolute equality between one [race] and the other that has tried to be established works to the detriment of the public good. The indigenous race, more underdeveloped in everything than the other, alone possesses habits, preoccupations and customs so antiquated that only time and civilization can gradually modify them; eliminating them suddenly could give rise to disturbances, clashes, and conflicts; and for the same reason, prudence suggests that special institutions be created for the regime of the Indians, adequate to their customs and character. 72

Similar arguments were made about people of African descent, whose backwardness was said to pose the greatest obstacle to the nation's progress. In an article on indolence published in 1849 the editors of the newspaper El Correo del Istmo de Nicaragua wrote:

We could develop an idea of the various degrees of laziness, by examining men, from the highest state of society, to those in the most ignorant state in the desert from the Indian, from the Negro most abandoned to inaction and brutishness among savages, to the most learned and industrious man of the great capitals: What a difference from man to man! ... men who are similar to God, men who are like beasts. 73

The republic envisioned by Conservatives was thus a profoundly inegalitarian one in which subaltern racial groups were granted rights according to their level of civilization. Conservatives sought to replace Liberal visions of a republic of equal citizens with a state in which the social, political, and economic dominance of the descendants of the criollo elite was woven into the very fabric of the political community. 74

When Liberals regained power at the end of the nineteenth century with the ascension of José Santos Zelaya (1893-1909) they removed many of the restrictions on citizenship introduced by Conservatives; they did
not, however, end the political exclusion of black and indigenous costeños. Indeed it was under the Zelaya regime that the Nicaraguan state undertook the military “reincorporation” of the Mosquito Coast by force in 1894. The political disenfranchisement of black and indigenous costeños that was a result of the internally colonizing policies of the Nicaraguan state toward the savage regions thus persisted well into the twentieth century. The Treaty of Managua contained a clause requiring the consent of the Miskitu in order for any incorporation of the Mosquito Reserve into Nicaragua to take place. As a result costeños retained some self-government rights on paper even after 1894. The Mosquito Convention of 1894, in which the Miskitu purportedly consented to becoming a part of Nicaragua, nevertheless reiterated the rights of the Miskitu to elect their own authorities, be exempt from taxes and military service, and benefit from the proceeds of all taxes extracted from the region.39 The Harrison-Altimirano Treaty of 1905 between Nicaragua and Great Britain, which superseded the Treaty of Managua, similarly guaranteed Miskitu and Creoles born before 1894 the right to exemption from taxes and military service for a period of fifty years, to continued respect for all property rights gained prior to 1894, and to live according to their own customs as long as these did not contradict Nicaraguan laws; in addition they were granted the same rights guaranteed to all Nicaraguan citizens.40 In practice, however, the Nicaraguan state never honored either the self-government or equal rights provisions of the treaties.

Instead the government followed a dual policy of political disenfranchisement and forced cultural assimilation. These policies produced very different results from their stated aims, however. Nicaraguan officials maintained that their goal was the “nationalization” of the Mosquito Coast and its inhabitants, but the policies they pursued had the effect of further alienating costeños and rendering them second-class citizens. Early in the twentieth century the governorship and other local government posts on the Coast were filled by officials from outside the region who were appointed and sent from Managua; the region’s representatives before the national legislature (senators and congressmen) were also appointed directly by the national government. This was possible due to a clause in the constitutions of 1893 and 1905 that designated as an attribute of the executive branch the “establishment of the special regime with which uninhabited regions, or those inhabited by uncivilized Indi-

ans, should be temporarily governed.”37 The racialization of space thus served to justify the political exclusion of costeños in Nicaragua during the twentieth century by coding black and indigenous regions as savage and incapable of self-rule.

By the 1920s a variant of official mestizo nationalism had emerged in Nicaragua that portrayed the country as an overwhelmingly mestizo nation and that described mestizaje as a mixing process between Spaniards and Indians in which Spanish contributions were determinant and African participation was minimized or erased outright.41 This nationalist ideology justified the political power of the descendants of the Spanish conquistadores by suggesting that only they were destined for political rule; it also served to invalidate costeño demands for self-government. A report on the Atlantic coast commissioned by the president of the republic and compiled by Frutos Ruiz y Ruiz in 1925 argued that it was not possible for the central state to name costeños as mayors or to fill other local government posts in the region because such officials needed to “possess the qualities which adorned those advanced men who during the Spanish colonization were the heralds of Civilization.”42 Naturally none could possess such qualities in as great abundance as the actual descendants of the Spanish conquistadores, the members of the great oligarchic families. The report also argued that black and indigenous costeños were simply not advanced enough to exercise political power in the region.

On the Coast the native element is of diverse uncivilized Indian races, with aboriginal languages, and furthermore, there is the imported English-speaking component of African descent. These heterogeneous tribes, so lacking in culture and so numerous, far from possessing the capacity and means necessary to govern the Coast instead need the civilized peoples of Nicaragua to come to their lands, mix with them, elevate their race, and impose Nicaraguan civilization and language.43

As late as 1925, then, the discourse of civilization and savagery was still being invoked to justify the political exclusion of black and indigenous costeños. We also see here the emergence of the spatialization of race that accompanied the racialization of space, whereby the association of the Atlantic coast with blackness and indigeneity facilitated the depiction of other areas of the country as devoid of black and indigenous people.
of other Nicaraguans, yet they were treated as anything but. Dr. George Hodgson, a prominent Creole leader in the early twentieth century, shared consternation frustrations with his friend Luis Mena Solórzano, who recorded them in his memoirs:

What is the matter ... with the government in Managua, which forgets the Coast and when it remembers us it is only to hurt us? The last time, with a simple ministerial order they took away the municipal rents from the Bluff Customs House, violating the Congress' decree. They would not cause that kind of damage to any of the country's other municipalities; furthermore, it is offensive and humiliating. They never name a native governor, nor to any of the lesser posts. ... We cannot elect our own senators and deputies, because they impose them on us from Managua and, in the majority of cases, they do not even reside in our region. We cannot elect our own mayor. ... The Department of Zelaya is not a colony of Nicaragua on the Atlantic; it is an integral part of the national territory, and we Coast people have sacred and inalienable rights that we are obliged to demand and protect.66

Costenños, as Hodgson notes, were forced to become part of Nicaragua against their will without the political rights that usually accompany such membership. Costenños also contested the arguments used by Nicaraguan elites to justify their political exclusion, such as the discourse of civilización and savagery, which they attempted to recast in their favor by inverting the equation of Nicaragua's civilization with civilization and the Atlantic coast with savagery. Creoles, for example, claimed that they were in fact more civilized than Nicaraguans of Hispanic descent as a result of their British heritage, since Anglo-Saxon nations were more advanced than Iberian nations. In a memorial presented to Congress in 1933 Senator Horacio Hodgson (a Creole) challenged the view that the Atlantic coast was uncivilized by invoking Anglo-Saxon superiority. "When the Government of Nicaragua came to this region, it did not find us enslaved," he wrote, "but as a civilized people; with a good system of education based on the methodology of the Anglo-Saxon race."66

Costenños pointed out the inherent contradictions in the nationalist rhetoric surrounding the events of 1894, specifically the paradox of Nicaraguan elites claiming as part of their nation a region whose black and
indigenous inhabitants they refused to recognize as full and equal fellow citizens. They noted that nothing was more contradictory than the argument of Nicaraguan nationalists that costenos first needed to be nationalized in order to gain full political inclusion. Or, as one Nicaraguan commentator observed with resignation shortly after 1894, "Nicaragua had to be satisfied [at present] with the physical reincorporation of the Reserve, leaving to circumstances and the passing of time the difficult task, not yet completely accomplished, of the spiritual reincorporation of the Atlantic Coast, or to put it another way the Nicaraguanization of the Mosquito." The justification for costeño political disenfranchisement was thus that only after that arduous task had been accomplished could they be entrusted with citizenship. In contrast costenos argued that they would feel they belonged to Nicaragua only when they were treated as full and equal citizens. In a letter to the president in 1925 Creole notables argued that the "reconciliation" and "true nationalization of the Atlantic Coast" that nationalists professed to so ardently desire could occur only once the central state ceased to treat the region as "a conquered and disaffected province that needs to be governed with an iron hand and forced to pay tribute." If the goal in 1894 was truly to make the Atlantic coast a part of Nicaragua, they insisted, that objective would be fulfilled only when the central state appointed costenos to fill government offices in the region and complied with the provisions on economic autonomy contained in the treaties governing reincorporation.

The unequal political inclusion of subaltern racial groups that was a fundamental element of the political project of Conservatives during the second half of the nineteenth century thus continued to shape the attitudes and policies of Nicaraguan elites (including those of the Liberals who succeeded them) toward the Atlantic coast well into the twentieth century. The colonizing and civilizing mission that late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Nicaraguan elites prescribed for themselves toward regions of the country associated with blackness or indigeneity indelibly "shaped the character and nature of the Nicaraguan national state." As Dora María Téllez observes:

The construction of the Nicaraguan national state did not denote, from its inception, the homogenous and simultaneous inclusion of all the inhabitants and regions of the territory, but instead has been a double process of inclusion and exclusion of different social classes, specific communities, or ethnic groups. The excluded in each stage have had little or no access to the basic rights derived from belonging to the greater community that is the national state.

More specifically the political exclusion of black and indigenous costenos from the Nicaraguan political community occurred because the region they inhabited was racially coded as both savage and inferior and therefore in need of colonization and civilization. The racialization of space was thus critical to the political exclusion of black and indigenous costenos in Nicaragua.

CONCLUSION: THE SPATIALIZATION OF RACE AND THE POLITICAL INCLUSION OF COSTENOS

The racialization of space associating the Atlantic coast with blackness (and to a lesser extent indigeneity) that was a central element of the nationalist discourses formulated by Nicaraguan elites in the nineteenth century and early twentieth in turn facilitated a spatialization of race that has had profound political consequences for costenos. In particular the racialization of the coast made possible the erasure of racial difference from the rest of Nicaragua, a notion that served to justify the view that only the descendants of the Spanish criollo elite who resided in the western regions of the country were suited to exercise political power. The close connections between race and place have thus had profound consequences on the practice of citizenship in Nicaragua. These legacies of spatialized racism have also proven particularly difficult to overcome. Despite the adoption in 1987 of multicultural citizenship policies that recognized a number of collective rights for costenos, including the right to regional autonomy or self-government, costeno attempts to exercise political agency and achieve political equality are still viewed with skepticism by many of their fellow citizens.

We see this clearly in contemporary attempts to dispute the legitimacy of the self-government rights gained by costenos that draw on the Atlantic coast’s association with blackness. A case in point is a political caricature of Atlantic coast regional autonomy that appeared in 2002 in La Prensa, one of the country’s leading newspapers. The objects of the political satire
are the different views surrounding regional autonomy held by black and indigenous costeños, who fought to gain collective rights, and more recent mestizo migrants to the region. The drawing is striking not only because of what it suggests about contemporary attitudes toward the rights of costeños to self-government, but also because of the way it harkens back to nineteenth-century representations of costeños. In the drawing the Atlantic coast is personified by a black man wearing dreadlocks who has enormous white lips, a broad nose, and large ears. He is holding a banner on which the word *autonomía* (autonomy) is written and is saying, emphatically, “La Costa para los costeños [The Atlantic coast for costeños]!” Meanwhile, standing nearby under the “no mia [not mine]” portion of the banner, is a mestizo *campesino*. He is uttering only a large question mark, as if wondering “What about me?” The mestizo figure carries a sack, which is presumably meant to evoke industriousness. In contrast to the black costeño figure, whose racial identity is unmistakable as a result of the exaggerated, distorted manner in which the character is drawn, the racial and ethnic identity of the mestizo figure is suggested mostly by the traditional peasant garb he is wearing. In fact the black figure is drawn in a manner characteristic of older racist caricatures of blacks rarely seen today.

Among the many noteworthy elements of this contemporary depiction of the Atlantic coast, one of the most striking is the persistent association of the region with blackness, particularly when issues of political power are at stake. It is remarkable that the coast is still being represented in this way given that Creoles and Garífuna (the other ethnoracial group in the region identified as being of African descent) are certainly not the majority of the coast’s inhabitants. In fact indigenous groups, the Miskitu in particular, represent a significantly larger proportion of the region’s population today than Creoles. Moreover mestizos (who began to arrive in the region after 1849) are not only major players in the region’s politics; they are also now a majority of the population on the Atlantic coast. As the question asked by the political cartoon makes clear, these demographic changes challenge the traditional spatialization of race in Nicaragua whereby mestizos (and only mestizos) live in western and central Nicaragua, while the Atlantic coast is the place of blackness, and to a lesser extent indigeneity. Contemporary mestizo migration to the region thus raises the prospect that black and indigenous costeños will wield political power over mestizos if they are able to effectively exercise the right to self-government gained during the 1980s, a development that would contradict long-standing ideas about who is entitled to wield political power in Nicaragua that first emerged during the nineteenth century. The fact that it is precisely such anxieties about race and the space of citizenship that are at stake in contemporary debates about costeño regional autonomy has been explicitly acknowledged by politicians from mestizo-majority areas of the coast, who want to carve out a separate department outside the jurisdiction of the two autonomous regions created in 1987. They argue that the creation of a separate department for Atlantic coast mestizos is necessary: “Blacks cannot govern us because they do not think as we do.” As was the case with the arguments of nineteenth-century Nicaraguan officials that the Mosquito Coast was undeserving of self-government because it was ruled by a foreign “black oligarchy” of Jamaican origin, mestizo Nicaraguans today find the idea of black costeños exercising political power illegitimate because of the persistence of racist ideas that
have marked the development of citizenship in the country. The mapping of racial difference onto region and territory that marked the Atlantic coast as a predominantly black (and to a lesser extent indigenous) space thus continues to justify mestizo political power in Nicaragua because it continues to figuratively and discursively construct costenos as not fully national and makes it difficult to imagine them as political equals.

The racialization of space and the concomitant spatialization of race that served to legitimate the political disenfranchisement of black and indigenous costenos in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries thus continues to shape the contours of citizenship in contemporary Nicaragua. Anxieties about race not only fundamentally influenced state formation in Nicaragua, but they continue to shape the political inclusion of black and indigenous costenos today. The irony of the civilizing and colonizing projects toward regions of the country marked as black and indigenous that were a central element of the political imaginary of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Nicaraguan elites is that they were carried out on behalf of a national political community that, when confronted with the actual bodies of black and indigenous costenos, could not conceive of them as either fully national or political equals. Unfortunately the access of black and indigenous costenos today to full and equal citizenship continues to be delimited by the ambivalent and contradictory attitudes toward the region that emerged during previous eras. The fundamental paradox with regard to race and the space of citizenship in Nicaragua first instantiated by the dispute over the Mosquito Coast has yet to be resolved. Black and indigenous costenos are both of and not of the nation: the region they inhabit is claimed as an indivisible part of the national territory, while they have yet to be seen as either fully national or embraced as political equals.

NOTES

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1 There has been much recent work, both theoretical and empirical, in a variety of disciplines (including anthropology, geography, and history) exploring the relationship between race, place, and space. Some examples are J. N. Brown, “Black Liverpool”; Delaney, “The Space That Race Makes”; Durkheim and Dixon, “The Role of Place and Metaphor”; Gilroy, The Black Atlantic; Moore, “Subaltern Struggles.”

2 Anthias and Yovel-Davis, Racialized Boundaries, 2.

3 In the field of Latin American studies a growing body of literature has begun to emerge that seeks to map how ideas of race construct social and geographical space. See, for example, Appelbaum, Muddied Waters; Appelbaum, Macpherson, and Rosembalt, Race and Nation; de la Cadena, “The Racial-Moral Politics of Place”; Orlove, “Putting Race in Its Place”; Wade, Blackness and Race Mixture.

4 The contemporary spelling of the group’s name is Miskitu, but during the nineteenth century the most common spelling was Mosquito. I use the contemporary spelling when referring to the group, but use the older term when referring to the name of the region as a whole.

5 The innovative work of Justin Wolfe and Lowell Gudmundson on the African presence in western Nicaragua in their essays in this volume represents a welcome corrective in this regard to the traditional historiography and complements similar recent work on the survival of indigenous communities in the western and central regions of the country. One of the most prominent examples of the latter is Gould, To Die in This Way.


7 On the development of these myths and their hegemonic role in nationalist discourses, see Gould, To Die in This Way; Hooker, “Beloved Enemies.”

8 See, for example, Hroch, “From National Movement to the Fully-Formed Nation”; Hobsbawm, “Mass-Producing Traditions”; Nairn, The Break-up of Britain.

9 B. Anderson, Imagined Communities, 40.


Unfortunately this claim is still uncritically reproduced in much contemporary historiography about the Atlantic coast. Notable exceptions are Goett, “Diasporic Identities”; Gordon, Disparate Diasporas.


Justin Wolfe is technically correct when he argues in his essay in this volume referring to mulatto Liberals (such as Sebastián Salinas) from San Felipe who rose to prominence in Nicaragua in the 1840s, “There is little in the record to suggest that Liberal Afro-Nicaraguans looked scornfully upon the Afro-Jamaican leadership of San Juan del Norte or the port’s numerous African American entrepreneurs as anything but their counterparts in a regional power struggle.” It is also the case, however, that the discourse of civilization and savagery that they and other Nicaraguan officials used to delegitimize Mosquitian claims to sovereignty implicitly and explicitly contested the legitimacy of black and indigenous political power as such. Indeed the “deracialized” universalism that Wolfe claims these mulatto Liberals professed was certainly not an option open to the black Creoles and indigenous Miskitu of the Mosquito Coast, precisely because of the racial overtones of the discourse of civilization and progress.

Cited in Gámiz, Historia de Nicaragua, 425.

Proclamation of the “Supreme Director of the State of Nicaragua to its Inhabitants, and to the others of Central America [12 November 1847],” enclosed in letter from Frederick Chatfield to Lord Palmerston, 24 December 1847, in United Kingdom, Foreign Office, Correspondence Respecting the Mosquito Territory, 270.

Letter from Sebastián Salinas, secretary of the government of Nicaragua, to Frederick Chatfield, 14 October 1847, in United Kingdom, Foreign Office, Correspondence Respecting the Mosquito Territory, 266.

For further discussion of ideas of race in nineteenth-century Latin America, see Stepan, The Hour of Eugenics.

Letter from Simón Orosco to Frederick Chatfield [10 November 1843], in Vegas Bolívar, 1840–1842, 317. Underlying British arguments at the time was the assumption that the Miskito, though perhaps savages, were a sovereign people, who deserved to be taken seriously as political partners. This view not only accorded with British interests at that time, but could also be justified by the historical traditions concerning relations between the Miskito and British colonial officers, soldiers and traders. In order to undermine these notions it was necessary for the USA and the countries of Central America to demonstrate that the Miskito were not in a position to decide on their own fate and that they could therefore not be considered parties to a treaty. The anti-British side therefore tended to depict a primitive, cruel tribe manipulated by Great Britain for her own purposes, whose chief had been dressed up by the British as a “puppet king.” (Wunderlich, von Oertzen, and Rosbach, The Nicaraguan Mosquitia, 36.)
The attitudes of Latin American ruling classes toward indigenous people varied considerably in the pre- and postindependence eras. During the Conquest Indians were portrayed as savage cannibals, which served the purpose of justifying the colonizing enterprise, but toward the end of the colonial era criollos rejected European views of Indians as lazy and unproductive because of their natural environment, as such ideas impacted perceptions of criollos as well. In the era preceding independence criollos therefore argued that Indians could be civilized by being brought into contact with European culture and the civilizing process fostered by the use of racial mixing as a form of whitening. After independence, when indigenous groups resisted interference by the new republican states, the pendulum swung back and Latin American elites once again portrayed Indians as savage, anarchic, and in need of forcible civilisation.

Gámiz, Historia de la costa de Mosquitos, 78.
Ibid., 212.
Ibid., 211.

Offen, for example, provides a very different reading of the meaning of Miškítku aesthetic practices in his essay in this volume.

Gámiz, Historia de la costa de Mosquitos, 78.
Letter from Sebastián Salinas to Chatfield, 14 October 1847, in United Kingdom, Foreign Office, Correspondence Respecting the Mosquito Territory, 270. Wolfe identifies Salinas as one of the liberal mulattos from San Felipe who rose to prominence during this era.
Letter from Mr. Christie to Viscount Palmerston, 5 September 1848, in United Kingdom, Foreign Office, Correspondence Respecting the Mosquito Territory, 2138.

"Memoria dirigida por el Ministerio de Estado y el Despacho de Relaciones de Nicaragua a Asamblea Constituyente del mismo Estado, en Diciembre de 1847, sobre los derechos territoriales del propio país en la costa del norte llamada Mosquitos," enclosure no. 1 in Frederick Chatfield's letter to Lord Palmerston, 19 April 1848, in United Kingdom, Foreign Office, Correspondence Respecting the Mosquito Territory, 2150.


In 1867, for example, Nicaragua refused to comply with the Treaty of Managua because "the last election of the Mosquitos Chief was carried out: first, by foreigners and Creoles without the co-operation of the Indians; and secondly, against the desire of these Indians, who wish to be governed by a bastard son of the last Mosquito Chief." See memorandum and letter from Marshal Martínez, envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary of the Republic of Nicaragua, to Lord Stanley, Britain's foreign minister, 1 October 1867, in United Kingdom, Foreign Office, Correspondence Respecting the Mosquito Territory, 377.

40 Letter from Carlos Lacayo to F. H. Bingham, the British consul in Bluefields, 16 February 1894, in Cuadra Chamorro, La reincorporación de la Mosquitea, 38.
41 Letter from Carlos Lacayo to F. H. Bingham, 3 March 1894, in Cuadra Chamorro, La reincorporación de la Mosquitea, 776.
42 Ibid., 191–92.
43 Letter from Chief of Mosquito William Henry Clarence to the Earl of Derby, 6 December 1879, in United Kingdom, Foreign Office, Correspondence Respecting the Mosquito Territory, 223.
44 "Memorial to the Government of her Britannic Majesty by William Henry Clarence Chief of the Mosquitos," 4 April 1879, enclosed in Letter from Mr. Graham, British consul to Central America, to the Marquis of Salisbury, 8 May 1879, in United Kingdom, Foreign Office, Correspondence Respecting the Mosquito Territory, 376.
45 I do not discuss the Nicaraguan state's attack on indigenous communal lands in detail in this essay, as my focus is on its policy toward the Mosquito Coast. As was the case with the Mosquito Coast, however, efforts to dismantle indigenous communities and displace indigenous identities in Central and Pacific Nicaragua coincided with the emergence of discourses about the problematic nature of indigenous forms of organization and of Indians' unfitness for citizenship. For more on the Nicaraguan state's efforts to suppress indigenous communities in these regions of the country, see Gould, To Die in This Way; Téllez Argüello, ¡Mueran los indios! Wolfe, The Everyday Nation-State.
46 Gordon, Disparate Diasporas, 122.
47 "Mensaje del Director Supremo, Fruto Chamorro, a la Asamblea Constituyente del estado de Nicaragua, en el día de su instalación [22 de Enero de 1854]," in Esquivel Gómez, Las constituciones políticas, 382.
48 "Constitución Política de la República de Nicaragua [19 de Agosto de 1858]," in Esquivel Gómez, Las constituciones políticas, 421.
49 Ibid., 421–22, 425.
50 Ibid., 421, 425.
51 Indigenous groups in western and central Nicaragua participated in these struggles as a result of patron-client networks and in order to further their own political agendas, the most important element of which was to resist new taxes and other kinds of state interference in their economic activities, but they did so under the guise of supporting a faction of the ruling class. In the conflict between the Liberals of León and the Conservatives of Granada in 1844–45, for instance, Matagalpa Indians confronted Subtiava Indians on the battlefield, where many of them lost their lives. The former were allies of the Conservatives and the latter of the Liberals, both of whom used the Indians indiscriminately as cannon fodder. Indians had their own reasons for
participating in these struggles, however, one of which may have been obtaining arms to confront local authorities. See Ortega Arancibia, Cuarenta años, 61, 73, 81, 108.

52 "Mensaje del Ministerio de estado a Asamblea Constituyente," in United Kingdom, Foreign Office, Correspondence Respecting the Mosquito Territory, 2:383.


54 As Wolfe explains in his essay in this volume, this did not mean that Liberal mulattos from San Felipe were excluded from government posts in the first decades of the era of Conservative hegemony, but they never regained the prominence they achieved in the immediate post-independence period. The realignment effected by Conservatives did result in the reinscription of racial hierarchies into the distribution of political power, with a small minority of white families controlling the highest political posts and mestizos, mulattos, and Indians filling lesser government roles.


57 "Constitución Política de la República de Nicaragua [10 de Diciembre de 1893]" and "Constitución política de la República de Nicaragua [10 de Marzo de 1905]," in Esgueva Gómez, Las constituciones políticas, 508, 533.

58 For more on official mestizo nationalism in Nicaragua in the twentieth century, see Hooker, "Beloved Enemias."

59 Ruiz y Rulz, Informe sobre la Costa Atlántica, 31. Perhaps not coincidentally, Ruiz was a naturalized Nicaraguan citizen of Spanish origin.

60 Ibid., 112–13.

61 The schools run by Moravian missionaries (who had arrived on the Mosquito Coast in 1849), where instruction was in English, were a particular sore spot for Nicaraguan officials. See "Memoria de instrucción pública presentada a la Asamblea Legislativa, 1897," in Pérez Valle, Expediente de Campos Azules, 243.

62 Ruiz y Rulz, Informe sobre la Costa Atlántica, 33.

63 Ibid., 77.

64 Ibid., 75.

65 Mena Solorzano, Apuntes de un soldado, 235.

66 Cited in Cuadra Chamorro, La reincorporación, 164.

67 Ibid., 106.

68 Gordon argues that there was a shift in Creole political attitudes throughout the twentieth century, from an incipient Mosquito nationalism associated with the Mosquito Kingdom and the Reserve, which initially resulted in a rejection of the Nicaraguan state during the period immediately following the annexation of the region in 1894, to a more acquiescent position toward Nicaraguan rule from the 1930s onward (Disparate Diasporas, 51).


70 Tellez Argüello, ¿Muera la gobiernal?, 56.

71 The constitution approved in 1986 enshrined the following collective rights for costeños: to "preserve and develop their cultural identity within national unity," to regional autonomy, to "live and develop under forms of organization that correspond to their historical and cultural traditions," to bilingual education, to "the preservation of their cultures, languages, religions and customs," to the communal ownership of land, and to "the enjoyment, use and benefit of the waters and forests of their communal lands." Constitución Política de Nicaragua (Managua: Editorial el Amanecer, 1987), 30, 56–57.


276 Race and the Space of Citizenship