

Dale Aranda Interview, Los Angeles, June

Ben: Ok, first of all, let me, and you'll just talk to me the entire time

Dale: Um, okay

Ben: It's like the camera isn't even there. Um, let me have you... say and spell your name

Dale: Okay my name Dale D-A-L-E, A-R-A-N-D-A, Dale Aranda

Ben: Dale Aranda, perfect. And tell me, what do you do with GAHFU, what do you do at the school, that sort of thing?

Dale: Okay. I got here September 5th, two thousand five. Sorry two thousand ten. And, you know, I start working along with, um, the GAHFU, the Garifuna American Heritage Foundation United Inc., you know, as a teacher where I teach a little drumming, a little language, you know, a little singing in Garifuna. For the past, um, well this is my third session so like I said before in the interview, for the past two sessions, um, I teach from the alphabet, like what you see I was doing yesterday. And I, because teaching two hours to kids you cannot speak for two hours, so I incorporate a little teaching, where we learn the alphabet, we learn um about like um articles, or um things in the classroom like the chairs, the table, you know, they learn that and then they learn, they learn the songs... two songs, "This is the Day" in Garifuna and "Are you sleeping Brother John?" and then then they drum to one of, um, my icon Andy Palacio song, "Watina" which means, "I called out". That was the second week, now, sorry, the second session, now this session, the third session, we are going into them learning about the Garifuna artifacts, you know, the things that our ancestors use, or the implements, that our ancestors use in the processing of casaba? bread. That's the first, the... we talk about the yamadi? Right, so we only get to two yesterday, this is the yamadi and the yamadi is a basket which was used by our ancestors when going fishing to carry on a change of clothing, because they used to go on long fishing trips and all the... and also, to carry food. And it is also used by the, if the boat in, if the boat capsized they use it as a floater, like a life guard. And then the gadori?, and they both made out of, uh, plant that they, we call gonareh? I don't know the real name in, um, um... but they say straw, you know, but, but the Garifuna name is gonareh. You know, it's like, they have the straw there, like the... ruguma? the one to the top, that's the ruguma, that's the implement that is used for straining casaba, the grated casaba in order to make casaba bread. Right, so the gadori, we use that, um, they used to use that as a backpack where they put a place the casaba. We the Garinugu, we use two casabas. They have the poison casaba, which the casaba bread is made from, that's the one they grated and then strain then leave overnight, then they save the next day and that's in the picture. If you want a picture... of the white, that's the casaba on the comal?. That's the baking of the casaba bread. Okay. Then, then the gadori is also used like, when their working, you know, and then they don't have a babysitter, they put the baby in the gadori while they're doing their chores. So it serves as a, as a food carrier from farm, you know, and also serve as a baby carrier. That's a gadori. So that's what they are learning this week. But I'm so, I'm so glad because the Garifuna

community has given to me a lot, like, like I've explained to you before, that they, you know, with the Garifuna community, through the Garifuna community I have, I have known a lot of places and all these tours I have made, I haven't pained... paid a cent. The only paid I do is giving back through singing or through drumming. And I've been all over, my tours in nineteen ninety seven I went to France, Italy and Spain. In nineteen ninety eight I tour Mexico with late Andy Palacio from Chetumal right up to Mexico City. In two thousand I went to Miami, where I perform at the Adventura mall, um, at um, Touch of Belize two thousand. In two thousand two I went to Jamaica for one weekend, we left Belize Friday with the National Dance Company of Belize, return back to, um, Belize Sunday. In two thousand three I went to Chicago, at Wisconsin, uh, where we speak about the two black cultures of Belize, which is the Garifuna and the Creole. But right now we talking only about the Garifuna. So we travel under the name, "Black Rhythms of Belize" because we, we put free the two black cultures which is the Garifuna and the Creole. And that what we did in vertibu? um, the, ah, University in Wisconsin. And in, um, same two thousand three, I did a performance in, um, because of two thousand three, November in... in Chicago and two thousand three March in Miami with the Uniga? Dance Group. And then in two thousand five, then I went to, sorry, before that two thousand one I went back to France, Italy and Spain with the National Dance Company of Belize and two thousand five, that's when I went to Nagoya, Japan with the late Andy Palacio. So since I have gotten from the Garifuna community, now I'm giving back to the Garifuna community and I'm proud to teach, you know, what I have learnt in the past to the children. You know, and, and I'm glad because even if it is only three children out... out of the fifteen that I taught or that I teaches for the... for the entire 8 weeks, that learn something and could present to their parents I'm still glad. Because I know at least, out of that fifteen we have three that can carry on to other kids later on about the Garifuna culture.

Ben: Very good. Um, so you kind of touched on this but how does it make you feel to know that you're making, you're perpetuating, this Garifuna culture? How does it make you personally feel?

Dale: It make me feel great. You know, because, I was a police officer for thirteen years, um, during my time of policing I, they give me, they give me, uh a time period, yes that I could teach the Garifuna to the Garinagu people and non-Garinagu people were interested in learning about the Garifuna culture. You know, but when, after, after seeing that I found out that, you know, that the time is not enough so I decided that I would resign from the police department and then carry on in teaching about the Garifuna culture.

Ben: Very cool. And, I mean, tell me about these kids, I saw it yesterday, they're out there drumming. Give me a little about who they are, like, what, their personality. Kind of put it into words.

Dale: Well when, when um, you know, when I first met these kids, the first, um, time we start the... the school, you know, they were shy there in the beginning but I tell them, "You know what, we don't need to be shy." And I give them my story. And I say "You know if I was shy, I would have never known all these places. You know, if I would have stayed in my corner and say "Oh I don't know how to sing in Garifuna. I don't know to speak Garifuna".

But you know what, I, I let them understand, you know, don't let people discourage you because I went to one parent one day and I say, "Why you don't send your child to the school? This is not a positive thought but, you know, I'll give it to you." He said, "Oh, you know what, from what I have learned, you know, nobody has gotten a job with... with a certain kid from a Garifuna school". So I say, "You know what, we are not talking about job. But it will be good to send your child now at this age, because the child is about seven, to the school so when he get about seventeen, start going to college, he knows exactly where he... he come from and where he can go. So nobody will tell him, you know what, you are black African when he know he's a Garifuna. 'Cause we were the only black people who were never ever enslaved in the history of Belize. Right, and that's the reason why our language, our dance, our culture is so strong. Because that's what we, what our ancestors have fought, they brought us together and only the black caribs that came to Central America, because the red and yellow caribs that stood back on St. Vincent was banned by the British from speaking the Garifuna language. So only the black caribs, which were sent to Central America uphold our language, our belief and our culture. So that make me proud. And the strength of the Garinagu people is "Ouru boni, amuru noni?" I for you and you for me. And we, because we believe in procrastination this goes under the grave and that's what brings back to us our Garifuna belief that we have this communal gathering um, in summertime, that we call the dagu? It's a healing of the Garifuna families.

Ben: Very good. Um, tell me a little bit about why it's so important for these kids, or whoever, um, from this culture to learn about it?

Dale: Well it's very important, about, um for our kids to learn of our culture. Like I say, because you know we need to know where we come from and where we are going. And in learning about where you come from, you will always know where you're going. And if you don't know where you come from, then you'll be a lost child forever. Cause you be going into _____ ? still don't know where you come from. So that's the reason why I beg to our parents, you know, to our grandparents, yes you have lost the... we have lost the... the, the culture tradition because then, we ventured more into the American culture and that would cause us to lost our Garifuna culture but, thanks to GAHFU, that they brought it back to us, free of charge. You know, and with the little knowledge that I know, I'm proud to give it back to them. You know, so that's the reason why I always plea on the radio, you know, send your child, know, so we know ourselves. That we continue with the strength, "Ouru boni, amuru noni" I for you and you for me.

Ben: Perfect. Dale that...

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