



The Black Carib Wars: Freedom, Survival and the Making of the Garifuna

Christopher Taylor

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The Garifuna people today live all along the Caribbean littoral of Central America, from Belize, through Guatemala and Honduras down to Nicaragua, and also in some of the biggest cities of the United States. For more than two hundred years they have preserved their unique culture and language--the direct descendant of that spoken in the islands at the time of Columbus. All of them, however, trace their origin back to the island of St. Vincent--Youroumayn in their own language--where shipwrecked and runaway slaves joined together with the local Carib Indians to form a distinct society, known to the European colonists as the Black Caribs. Relations with the French veered between conflict and cooperation but when a deal struck in Paris in 1763 ceded the island to Britain, the stage was set for the Black Caribs final, desperate struggle to preserve their freedom. What followed was a series of bloody wars punctuated by periods of wary coexistence in which a small but determined people stood up to the might of the British Empire. The product of extensive original research in St. Vincent, the United Kingdom and France, *The Black Carib Wars* combines a compelling narrative with new details of the Black Caribs' fight to stay free. It draws in characters such as Daniel Defoe, the first man to describe an eruption of St. Vincent's volcano, and Captain Bligh, who belatedly brought Tahitian breadfruit to the island after his mission was interrupted by the mutiny on *The Bounty*. It looks at who the Black Caribs were, why they fought so tenaciously and how leaders such as Tourouya, Bigot and Chatoyer managed to marshal a fiercely individualistic society against the external threat. In the wake of the revolutions in France and Haiti, the Black Caribs fought their last battle, ending in agonising defeat and decimation in British captivity. *The Black Carib Wars* recounts how the survivors were shipped off to the faraway shores of Central America and what became of those who escaped deportation from St. Vincent.

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