Bakange Ajak
Garifuna Reflection Paper
02.20.20
ABD 206
Dr. Moody-Freeman

The Garifuna people remind me a lot of my tribe, the Anuak. As soon as I saw the cultural wear of the Garifuna people during the first half of the event, I was immediately reminded of home.When the older women began to sing and dance their welcome song, I was reminded of the loving elder women of my community who continue to pass down the traditions and culture of the Anuak community. I was really able to relate to the struggles of keeping the tradition and culture alive in all its glory. My parents often talk about the struggle of passing down the language, dances, food, etc… of the Anuak culture without disadvantaging us from learning and basically assimilating to American culture. My parents want their children to succeed so badly within America because they grew up poor in a third world country. When my parents talk about growing up poor, they speak of another type of poor that is different to that of America's. Now, I do not want to get into the debate of comparing struggles and hardships but, when my parents talk about going without food and water for days on end, they were subjected to true starvation and malnourishment. My parents do not want the same childhood for their children which is why they try so hard to truly emerge us in American "culture." I found this to be similar in some aspects to what Rhodel was saying at the beginning of his performance.

While I was enjoying the second half of the event, Camila and I found that the music reminded both of us of some aspect of "home." For Camila, home is Argentina and for me, home is Ethiopia. The fact that we were able to reminisce about our culture and certain traditions from two completely different countries, made me realize that music really is similar around the world. I once read that aesthetics, music, and art preferences are passed down generationally.

One of Darwin's theories aims to explain this which was later explained in one of Denis Dutton's TED talks. The Darwinian Theory of Beauty says that the art of beauty and what we as individuals find attractive or aesthetically pleasing, has been passed down through evolution by our ancestors. He says that the shapes, landscapes, melodies, and paintings we are drawn to, are most likely similar to the ones our ancestors enjoyed too. My thought process when Camila and I were discussing the similarities was that maybe the same music that the Garifuna band was playing had the same aesthetics that our ancestors were listening to hundreds of years ago. It also made me wonder if our ancestors were once in close proximity geographic wise.

One of the songs that was performed by Rhodel and the Garifuna band that I believe shows the passdown of tradition and culture of the Garifuna, was the one called Trouble on the Shore/Water-front (something along these lines). Rhodel talked about the resilience of his people in being able to face the terror brought onto his community by authority figures years ago. Being able to reiterate the fear and uneasiness felt by the Garifuna during that time through a song many many years later, showed the power in storytelling through music. I also really enjoyed how not all the band members were Garifuna but they were able to play so well together and were able to fully convey the stories within each song.

The Garifuna event was one of my favorite events the ABD department has put on. I am really big on music and navigating other cultures through their music. I believe the most heart and care is put into music because it is one of the longest lasting forms of communities and traditions. So hearing the Garifuna music being played, really felt like I was experiencing them as a community first hand. From the clothing, to the women dancing, and even to the young boy dancing, I really enjoyed learning and seeing the generational passdowns from the Garifuna community.