



## SHIFTING MULTICULTURAL CITIZENSHIP: Trinidad Orisha Opens the Road

**N. FADEKE CASTOR**  
Texas A&M University

*The procession of Orisha folks moved down the streets of Arouca to end at the African Ancestral Site. First were the praises to the ancestors, then the granting of awards and a brief Calypso interlude before the children lined up, performing their rehearsed dance as water libations were made to cool the earth (Onile). A person of importance, a holder of political power had arrived. Claps and the Trinidad Orisha call—a warble yell produced by beating the hand against the mouth—greeted the political leader of Trinidad, Prime Minister Basdeo Panday, as he stepped onto Orisha holy land, a welcome guest. On this day he would speak to the Orisha folks and promise the support of his party and the government. And later that year in Parliament his promises would materialize.<sup>1</sup>*

As put by Pearl Eintou Springer,<sup>2</sup> then member of the newly formed Council of Orisha Elders, “We want to say that it is the first time that a Prime Minister of this country has come to be part of Orisha people business” (Orisha Family Day 1999). Prime Minister Basdeo Panday’s photo at the festival would be on the front page of both national newspapers under headlines of “Shango Rising” and “PM promises more rights for Orishas” (Trinidad Express March 22, 1999; Henry 2003:129). Panday spoke as an invited guest at the Second Annual Orisha Family Day, March 21, 1999. In the 37 years since independence he was the first Indo-Trinidadian political leader. His appearance at this Orisha festival to offer his public support, through both speech and actions, was remarkable in a country where

the religion's adherents had long been marginalized even after emerging from a history of colonial criminalization. Even more so, after his speech Panday would pour libations of water, honey, and rum on a consecrated stone on land dedicated to the African ancestors. In this article I provide a social and historical analysis of the relationship between the Orisha religion in Trinidad and the Indo-Trinidadian led government to raise some questions about black cultural citizenship and its dynamic with multiculturalism.

My approach to black cultural citizenship is informed by Aihwa Ong's definition of cultural citizenship, which refers to

the cultural practices and beliefs produced out of negotiating the often ambivalent and contested relations with the state and its hegemonic forms that establish the criteria of belonging within a national population and territory. Cultural citizenship is a dual process of self-making and being-made within webs of power linked to the nation-state and civil society. [1999:264]

For Ong cultural citizenship is plastic, flexible, and differentiated as a key-organizing concept (1999). In the postcolonial nation-state of Trinidad, citizenship is informed by cultural and spiritual practices as well as the neoliberal practices of the state (regulation of economic competition, the disciplinary powers of the police and defense forces, and the legal and judicial framework that guarantees individual rights).<sup>3</sup> I argue that critical cultural practices in Trinidad (e.g., found in aspects of Carnival, Orisha, and Emancipation) are a form of black cultural citizenship which negotiates the tensions between neoliberal modernity and a modernity informed by non-Western epistemologies and ontologies.<sup>4</sup> My interest in the intersections of multiple cultural citizenships extends to the subject here: how does a black cultural citizenship intersect with multiculturalism? Additionally, in the conclusion I return to this idea of multiple cultural citizenships to consider some questions that the aforementioned intersection raises for a wider concept of African diaspora cultural citizenship (one tied more to African descent, whether of physical or spiritual heritage) rather than a cultural citizenship tied to race (in this case conceptions of blackness).

### ORISHA IN THE PUBLIC EYE

In 1999 Orisha was on the rise while the first Indo-Trinidadian government was in power. The Orisha religion had an increasingly public profile that included major media coverage, state concessions, and the hosting of an international conference. All of this built on energy generated by the 1996 granting of Spiritual Baptist

Liberation Day as a national holiday and the earlier 1988 visit of Orisha's highest official, the Ooni Oba Okunade Sijuwade Olubuse II of Ilé-Ife, Nigeria.<sup>5</sup> I focus here on the question of the United National Congress (UNC) government's sponsorship of Orisha in an environment of ethnic party politics and competing interests (shaped by constituencies of African and Indian descendants—each with 40% of the population). How can we locate the political efficacy of Trinidad's first Indian political leader, and his decision to embrace and support African religious traditions?<sup>6</sup>

To further explore this, I focus on the performance of Prime Minister Panday at a gathering of different Orisha shrines, leaders, practitioners, and supporters to celebrate the faith in Trinidad. This gathering, the Orisha Family Day, was in its second year in 1999 and well on its way to establishing itself as “one of the most important public event[s] in the Orisha calendar” (Henry 2003:126). Held over three days, events included an opening march followed by prayers, speeches, musical performances, an awards ceremony, and an ancestor ritual featuring Egungun masquerade dancers.<sup>7</sup> The establishment of Orisha Family Day was important for bringing the Orisha religion into public view. The national newspapers would run major stories on the festival, with Prime Minister Panday's presence in 1999 and President ANR Robinson's the following year garnering front-page coverage. This positive attention reflected the efforts of the newly formed Council of Orisha Elders and marked a new era of cooperation in a historically decentralized religion. Through the organizing of individual shrines (religious congregations) the Orisha community was able to identify national leaders who could (and did) represent Orisha to the state. It was these changes in leadership that provided the environment for Panday's landmark visit to the Orisha Family Day festival.

Panday's presence was a “public affirmation of the religion (that) demonstrated political legitimation, providing evidence of the importance of the external forces effecting changes in the status of the religion in society” (Henry 2003:129). However, his presence was greeted both warmly and critically by the Orisha devotees, as many politicians before had made promises that never bore fruit. Cultural activist Pearl Eintou Springer was quoted in a national newspaper saying, in reference to promises of land, that “it have plenty slip between cup and lip so we asking for we deed please” (Trinidad Express, March 22, 1999). With this Panday was put on notice that his presence and words were not enough; he would be judged by his actions.<sup>8</sup>

Panday's rhetoric clearly spelled out his support for the Orisha community and set a high bar for his administration. The theme of the festival, "Many Orishas, One Family" was chosen as the focus of his remarks. In strong terms he declared,

If we fail to achieve the Orisha ideal of One Family, we shall all surely perish. In no way am I suggesting religious syncretism. We already have cultural syncretism in the creolisation of our culture. That is the most visible product of our diversity. Some say it is the most valuable dividend of our diversity. Leadership in this national mission to create one national family out of our unique diversity must come from our Orisha Elders, and from all of our country's religious leaders. That is the leadership to which we must look for the redemption and the restoration of the soul of our nation. [Second Annual Orisha Family Day Address]

In his speech are obvious allusions to creolization and syncretism as cultural (and not religious) models that address the diversity of the nation. He links this diversity to the challenge of nation building ("create one national family") while placing this project firmly in the hands of the national religious leadership and specifically in this speech into those of the Orisha elders. After a long history of persecution and denigration Panday's rhetoric was particularly noteworthy: in an unprecedented way it positioned the Orisha tradition and its elders on an equal level with other religions in Trinidad. In this same speech, he would pledge to introduce legislation granting entitlements that would be passed by Parliament later that year. This effectively moved Panday's support beyond the rhetorical, to active political sponsorship. In his project to realize "the harmony in diversity which is our nation's manifest destiny" he embraced the leadership of the Orisha movement in Trinidad and identified them as key players in his particular vision of the multicultural nation-state (Panday 2000:1).

Panday's public support would help to solidify the entrance of the Spiritual Baptist and Orisha religions into Trinidad's public sphere. This support for African traditions could be considered an implementation of the multicultural rhetoric long heard in Trinidad's independence politics as voiced by the traditional Afro-Creole leadership.<sup>9</sup> Or it could be viewed as a strategy to create alliances in the postcolonial era across traditional ethnic divisions. In the 1960s with independence came the consolidations of a largely Afro-Creole middle class in national and political leadership positions, building on an older entrenched black and creole middle class that had roots going back to the mid-19th century. The following decades witnessed the challenges to neocolonialism raised by Black Power (1970) and the subsequent

oil boom (1980) that countered the critical politics of the prior era with the increased circulation and distribution of wealth. New sectors of the working class moved into the middle class, including increasing numbers of Indo-Trinidadians. Shifting demographics between Indo-Trinidadians and Afro-Trinidadians culminated in the 1990s with changes in political leadership (discussed elsewhere in this article). This was simultaneous to the continued movement of Indo-Trinidadians from traditionally rural areas to urban areas alongside their expansion into the middle- and upper-class communities (Khan 2004a; Munasinghe 2001b). These divisions of race, ethnicity, class, and geography also extend to religion. Reflecting on Panday's sponsorship of Orisha entitlements, a middle-class shrine leader characterized him as "very savvy and smart" as he had "courted all the different religious communities, including both Orisha and the Pentecostals" (personal communication, June 13, 2007).

In other social and political arenas Panday was widely held to be perpetuating the tradition of ethnic based patronage by granting leadership positions, key appointments, and lucrative government contracts to Indo-Trinidadians (Meighoo 2003; Ryan 1999). These sentiments only served to fuel the Afro-Trinidadian unease and suspicion of an Indo-Trinidadian political leadership. Rather than allying these fears, Panday's backing of the Orisha movement was dismissed by many Afro-Trinidadians as mere political posturing and thus gained him little favor. "[One] of the UNC government's main efforts was to 'celebrate' diversity, and attempt to turn it into a strength. However, such efforts were often greeted with hostility by those who suspected that though apparently promoting equality, the aim was to covertly usher in Indian hegemony, undermine the positions of Afro-Trinidadians, or both" (Meighoo 2003:213). Any attempt to disrupt the dominance of Afro-creole representation in national culture and politics has been met, over the decades since independence, with public outcry from Afro-Trinidadians.

The rhetoric of ethnic party politics has shaped the landscape of national culture to the extent that race and ethnicity (alongside color and class) are implicated in every political decision. As Panday's long-standing political roots go back decades to his early 1970s leadership in the All Trinidad Sugar Worker's Trade Union (followed by almost 20 years as Leader of the Opposition), he clearly held a keen grasp of the ramifications of his support of the Orisha religion. In negotiating this ethnic terrain, Panday has drawn heavily on a multicultural rhetoric not dissimilar from that of former Prime Minister Eric Williams.<sup>10</sup> His active support for cultural traditions, both Indian and African, extends beyond rhetoric to state patronage in an attempt to expand the national imaginary beyond its Afro-Trinidadian boundaries to

become inclusive of all ethnic identities. Given this, it may be worth considering that his position was more than such posturing. It contained significant risks, indeed, alienating voting segments of the largely Afro-Trinidadian Pentecostals even as Panday courted them as well. With these factors in mind, it seems necessary to look beyond obvious political strategies for a solution to the question of what makes Panday's support of the Orisha movement politically efficacious.

How does the promotion of a particular political constituency rooted in the Orisha religion, whose members are characterized here under the rubric of black cultural citizenship, serve the interests of the state's multicultural discourse or those of Indo-Trinidadian leadership and their promotion of an "Indian" cultural citizenship? Munasinghe astutely identifies the form of multiculturalism currently promoted in Trinidad as one where difference is valorized and recognized as the basis for equality rather than equally distributed, thus creating a new homogeneity out of particular culturally appropriated heterogeneous elements.<sup>11</sup> This shift in definition and focus of multicultural rhetoric reveals an ideological shift, one demonstrated by Panday, which has proven to be politically effective for both the Indo-Trinidadian political leadership and their burgeoning middle class. An emphasis on the equal place afforded to difference in the national project (in terms of particular cultural, ethnic, or religious groups) then creates a space for the Indo-Trinidadian as culture-bearers that contribute to the nation, shifting a position that had been foreclosed in the earlier multicultural rhetoric informed by a model of creolization based on a binary racial logic of black/African and white/European.

### THE SPIRITS IN THE LAW

The process of politicization and criminalization of African-based religions has roots that stretch from British colonialism into the present. The tying together of social position and political power to culture, religion, race, and class continues to shape relations of power and formations of identity in Trinidad while informing the dynamics of national politics. These cultural politics of identity and nationalism have their historical genesis in the Spanish and British colonial regimes and their attendant Christian religions. In the 1800s the competition for social and spiritual dominance between French Catholic elites and British Protestants created an opening for non-Christian practices in the colony. However, by the 1880s "African" religions became subject to increasing persecution and control as the British asserted their social, political, and religious dominance.<sup>12</sup>

The institutional persecution of African religions culminated in the Shouters Prohibition Ordinance of 1917 (SPO) that outlawed gatherings after dark,

drumming, bell ringing, and other cultural practices associated with African religions.<sup>13</sup> SPO was “modeled” on St Vincent’s 1912 prohibition of Spiritual Baptists and banned “a person from holding flowers or a lighted candle in their hands at a public meeting, ringing bell or wearing a white head tie, and from any form of shaking of the body” (Henry 2003:32; Herskovits and Herskovits 1947:345). Additional legislation, the Summary Conviction Offenses Ordinance of May 19, 1921, specifically targeted traditions included Obeah, Bongo, and drumming after 10 p.m. (and currently is still on the books). The documented persecution largely drove the practices of African-based religions underground (literally into the forest, or as described locally “the bush”). Earlier legislation in the 19th century, such as the Drum Dances Ordinance, outlawed “African” forms of religion (1869) and drumming (1883) and informed the police harassment of both faiths in the latter half of the 19th century (Glazier 1983; Henry 2003:34; Trotman 2007:234). However, the 1917 legislation put teeth behind the harassment and led to people losing their homes, livelihoods, and liberty. SPO was used against perceived “African” practices in general and often specifically targeted Orisha worshipers. The existence of these laws enabled landowners, managers, and other authorities to discriminate against members of Spiritual Baptist and Orisha congregations.<sup>14</sup> This resulted in an atmosphere of fear, secrecy, and concealment (prayer meetings often took place in the “bush” or deep forest) that has only shifted in recent decades. Thus, a history of persecution has led to the development of decentralized and independent networks of practitioners, skilled not only in secrecy but also in resistance and political action.

Following successful attempts to overturn SPO and “legalize” African-based religions in the 1940s and 1950s the Black Power movement of the 1970s initiated a change in understanding of “Africa” and her cultural and religious heritage in Trinidad. In a remarkable departure from previous decades of persecution and denigration, this change developed in the 1980s and 1990s into a revalorization of Africa that contributed to a public resurgence of African-based traditions and religions marked by significant negotiations with, and concessions from, the state.<sup>15</sup> Prior to the 1990s various administrations had varied levels of association with the Orisha and Spiritual Baptist communities from Williams to Manning that remained rhetorical (with many promises broken). Only when Panday became Prime Minister (1995–2001) was legislation passed granting entitlements to the Orisha movement. One such example is the Orisha Marriage Act No. 22 (1999), which granted state-registered Orisha priests the legal power to marry.<sup>16</sup> Implementation of the

act required mechanisms by which shrines and priests could register. While the legislation has been seen as a social and political boom, it is only rarely utilized, with very few priests having registered (Coker 1999).<sup>17</sup>

However, this legislation did create an apparatus built on state recognition, through legal incorporation of shrines, in the 1980s and early 1990s. In 1981 the Act for Incorporation of the Orisha Movement of Trinidad and Tobago, *Egbe Ile Wa*, was passed.<sup>18</sup> In the following decade the incorporated *Opa Orisha Shango* (1992) “flexed its political muscle—attending the inauguration of the new parliament and the spiritual leader, Baba Clarence Ford, offering Orisha prayers at the National Day of Prayer” (Houk 1995:126). These incorporation acts would be followed by later inclusion of the Orisha religion into the nation’s ecumenical advisory (non-governmental) board, the Inter-Religious Organization (IRO). Activist, poet, and scholar Pearl Eintou Springer initiated an application to the IRO in 1995, on behalf of the Orisha religion. Over the next six years a series of public and behind-the-scenes conflicts would ultimately resolve in favor of Orisha, who “officially” joined the IRO in 2001 (Henry 2003:86–89). This same time period saw a campaign for a national holiday (Lord Shango Day) that resulted, years later, in the 1996 passing of March 30 as Spiritual Baptist Liberation Day (Henry 2003:65–74; McNeal 2012:275; Scher 1997:317). While directed at Spiritual Baptists, the overlapping membership with Orisha devotees (alongside public perception that conflates the two religions) effectively attempted to address two faiths with one day. As recent as 2012, there are still sectors of the Orisha community advocating for a separate Orisha holiday.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, a 25-acre land grant, deeds and all, was provided for the creation of an African Spiritual Heritage Park in 2000. Prime Minister Panday described the land grant as “another step in [my] drive to bring all faiths into the mainstream of Civil Society” (2000).

The extensive media coverage of these actions, and the debates that surrounded them, only served to raise the profile of the Orisha religion in Trinidad. Panday leveraged this in his campaign to expand the inclusiveness of the nation and disrupt the cultural, social, and formerly political dominance of Afro-Creole culture. Since before Independence in 1962, the Afro-Creole middle-class leadership in Trinidad, drawing on a black/white binary that valorized European traditions, had laid claims not only to the development of the nation but to the national imaginary. This had left out large sectors of the population, mainly non-Christians and Indo-Trinidadians, who drew on religious and cultural traditions largely informed by African and/or Indian (and not exclusively European) heritages.



## REFLECTIONS ON THE MULTICULTURAL NATION-STATE

At the turn of the millennium the shifting grounds of the state's multicultural discourse illuminate dynamics that have brought the Spiritual Baptist and Orisha traditions further into the mainstream under the patronage of Indo-Trinidadian political leadership. The independence rhetoric of creolization, one which Panday referenced as "the most visible product of our diversity" (1999), put forth a homogeneous vision of the nation that marginalized the Indian experience and contributions to nation building while centering the role of an Afro-Creole elite in the nation (one whose values were defined against a projected European standard comparatively held high above that of denigrated "African" traditions). Subsequently, with their rise to political power, the Indian dominated UNC party faced fears and accusations of merely switching roles in the same mechanism of ethnic domination. Since Independence Trinidad's political history has conditioned the population to both accept and expect ethnic based party politics (Meighoo 2003; Premdas 1999; Ryan 1999).

The challenge in understanding Panday's support of the Orisha movement in Trinidad is related deeply to the viability of multiculturalism. In supporting the entitlement claims of particular interests (identity politics), did the state, as led by Panday, provide the stage for ethnic party politics and patronage? It is possible that he truly meant to implement policies that respected and recognized difference while supporting all groups equally—in his mission to create "one national family." His reelection in 2000 highlights the success of his political rhetoric among the largely Indo-Trinidadian segments of the population. However, his reelection was very close, with Panday having lost support of a critical block: the small sector of Afro-Trinidadians who had broken from the traditional ethnic-based affiliation of the PNM. (In the following year Panday would lose his political office through key defections from his party.<sup>20</sup>) The Afro-Trinidadian perception of state patronage of Indo-Trinidadian interests during the UNC government was not successfully countered by Panday's support of the Orisha movement. Whether his support of particular cultural identities significantly contributed to a change in the perception of Indo-Trinidadians as active participants and contributors to the nation (and the national imaginary), rather than passive outsiders, remains questionable.

Panday's cultural strategies attempted to expand the basis of national identity and cultural citizenship. It was these logics that had him, a champion of Indo-Trinidadian culture, putting state resources toward the recognition and legitimization of African-based religious practices. Having displaced the post-Independence hold on political leadership of Afro-Trinidadians, Panday's political decisions in

regard to the Spiritual Baptist and Orisha communities were directed at challenging and disrupting the prevailing multicultural norm that privileged Afro-Trinidadian contributions to the culture of the nation. Ultimately, the entitlements and legislation “not only transformed public perceptions of Orisha but also changed the position of Orisha spiritual practices in the Afro-Caribbean diaspora” (Hucks 2006:35), facilitating Trinidad Orisha’s emerging engagement with the transnational spiritual networks of Yoruba-based religions.

## CONCLUSION

A significant portion of Trinidad’s Orisha leadership today can trace their participation in the religion to the local 1970 Black Power Movement, Pan-Africanism, and other forms of political activism. Further, much of their rhetoric and political subjectivity can be tied directly back to these formative social movements. One problem my research has identified is how a black cultural citizenship that is largely informed by black nationalism coexists and negotiates the state rhetoric of multiculturalism. This became visible when examining the relationship between Panday and the 1990s momentum of the Orisha religion. One critical element was the increase in visible membership, including notable middle-class participants who had their roots in Black Power (many of whom had returned from living abroad, bringing with them an increased African diasporic frame of reference). I have identified that Trinidadian black cultural citizenship grounded in Orisha is informed by a larger African diaspora cultural citizenship that both recognizes differences of blackness and African descent while insisting on a shared basis for belonging. This embrace of difference runs largely counter to the racial essentialism represented in much of the work on Black Power and Black Nationalism.

In working through this dynamic I have found that consideration of black cultural citizenship in Trinidad illuminates a different form of multiculturalism; one where there is not a singular majority, and specifically not a white majority. This is important because the academic literature as well as the circulating discourse on multiculturalism is largely based on the assumption of a white majority (as in the United States). Apparent contradictions between a black cultural citizenship that arises out of Black Nationalism and multiculturalism are not as defined in Trinidad as academic theories and circulating discourses would suggest (though of course tensions do exist). I have found this even as the black cultural citizenship in Trinidad clearly evidences hallmarks of Black Nationalism (self sufficiency, self definition, social, political, religious organization, revaluation of Africa, and black subjectivity).<sup>21</sup> However, it does so while also navigating different levels of social

organization, including pluralism in the organization of society, multiculturalism in political discourse, and creolization on the level of national culture and Trinidadian identity (though contestation continues to exist between two continuums, Afro/Anglo and Afro/Indo).

Additionally, I locate the importance of a diasporic perspective that embraces the differentiation of blackness within the context of this African diasporic consciousness. Thus “black” cultural citizenship has to be specific: we must ask “whose?”, and tie that answer back to a larger conceptualization of African diaspora cultural citizenship. The tensions between “blackness” and the African diaspora come to the forefront when thinking about cultural citizenship and the religious ethnic identities of “Yoruba” priests and devotees throughout Latin America who situate themselves within the framework of the African diaspora, though ethnically and racially marked as Hispanic and largely not marked as “black” or African descended socially, politically or phenotypically. One outcome of this is the decentering of U.S. racial systems. This creates space for difference among constructions of blackness and what this means for belonging—to a community, to the nation and within the diaspora. Another outcome is the recognition of difference, which has the result in Trinidad of distinguishing within the Afro-Trinidadian community various religious, cultural, and political stances (and identifications of) black/ness and Africa/ness.

Ultimately, an examination of Basdeo Panday’s sponsorship of the Orisha religion while Prime Minister reveals a black cultural citizenship which, as informed by the Orisha religion, engages with locally informed multiculturalism (and creolization) and in doing so opens up a space for a differentiated blackness, one intimately tied to a larger transnational community of the African diaspora.

## ABSTRACT

*The political sponsorship of the Orisha religion by Trinidad’s first Indian Prime Minister, Basdeo Panday (1995–2001), reveals the dynamics and tensions between black cultural citizenship and multicultural citizenship. How do multiple cultural citizenships intersect? Specifically, in Trinidad what is the role of black cultural citizenship within a national multicultural frame where African and Indian descendants represent two roughly equal majority minority populations? The concept of cultural citizenship is challenged by the tension between Indo-Trinidadian cultural citizenship and Afro-Trinidadian cultural citizenship. Panday’s sponsorship was critical to the granting of state concessions (from land grants to a national holiday) that facilitated the Orisha religion’s movement from the margins to the mainstream in Trinidad’s public culture. This in turn has served as the foundation for an emergent black cultural*

*citizenship centered on the Orisha religion and revalorizations of Africanness and blackness. At the same time the multicultural rhetoric shifted to open space for Indo-Trinidadian contributions to national culture. Ultimately, this article asks questions that illuminate tensions between cultural citizenship, religion, and multiculturalism within the framework of the African diaspora. [cultural citizenship, multiculturalism, blackness, postcolonialism, Orisha, religion, Trinidad, Caribbean, African diaspora]*

## NOTES

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1. This representation of events is based on a video of the 2nd Annual Orisha Family Day.
2. Pearl Eintou Springer is a poet, cultural activist and Orisha devotee. See Hucks 2006:30–33 for more on her role in the Orisha community.
3. For a historical and theoretical overview of neoliberalism see David Harvey's *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (2005). For ethnographically informed work on neoliberalism see Comaroff and John Comaroff (2001) and Ong (2006).
4. For more on this see Castor 2009.
5. The Ooni is the political and spiritual leader of the Yoruba people and the Orisha religion. For more on his visit to Trinidad and its impact see Henry 2003:78–80, Hucks and Stewart 2003:181; McNeal 2012:272. See also <http://theooni.org>, accessed March 29, 2013.
6. Though the Orisha tradition in Trinidad is described as "African," Indo-Trinidadians do participate and contribute actively to the tradition, defying the orderly classification of race and religion. Houk (1995) describes these participants as mainly interested bystanders, though he estimates their presence as being 10 percent of the Orisha tradition, including notable shrine leaders and drummers (Houk 1995:135). Additionally, Aiyejina and Gibbons (1999:198) remark, "So strong is the inter-penetration of Africa and India in Trinidad that, in the context of the Orisha tradition, Osayin is perceived by some Orisha practitioners as having an Indian dimension and Hindu deities are represented in many Orisha chapelles or in separate Hindu chapelles within the same yard." For Hindu and Orisha interpenetrations, see also Mahabir and Maharaj (1996). See McNeal (2012) for a comprehensive and insightful analysis of the interplay of Orisha and Hindu religions as two complementary facets of post-creole multiculturalism.
7. Egungun is an initiatory masquerade lineage, from the Yorùbá of southwest Nigeria, that honors the ancestors. For more, see Drewal (1992), esp. Chapter 6.
8. Springer's comment was in the context of decades of broken promises by previous administrations and political leaders. See Henry 2003:67 for more with regard to Spiritual Baptists.
9. For heuristic purposes I refer to "Afro-Creoles" in general as a category of middle-class African descendants in Trinidad, specifically active in politics and cultural development. See Castor (2009) for further differentiation of the African middle class in Trinidad.

10. In 1956 Dr. Eric Williams, a young Oxford-trained scholar, founded the People's National Movement (PNM), which brought the country to Independence in 1962. Under the party slogan "Massa Day Done" the PNM ushered in a nearly 30-year history of Afro-Trinidadian political, social, and economic dominance. For an analysis of Williams's political leadership and rhetorical strategies, see Rohlehr 1998 and Ryan 1972.
11. Two major works on East Indians and national identity in Trinidad call attention to this distinction with their titles: *Callaloo Nation: Metaphors of Race and Religious Identity among South Asians in Trinidad* (Khan 2004a) and *Callaloo or Tossed Salad?: East Indians and the Cultural Politics of Identity in Trinidad* (Munasinghe 2001b). As Khan describes it, "a 'callaloo' society (literally, a multiple-ingredient stew, also the national dish) represents Trinidad, the callaloo nation, as profoundly cosmopolitan and democratic through a coexisting diversity that results in racial harmony and other marks of modernity" (2004b:167).
12. David V. Trotman provides a detailed account of the persecution and criminalization of "African" religious practices in Trinidad during the latter part of the 19th century (2007:223–224).
13. For an overview of legislation criminalizing African religious practices in the Caribbean, see Paton (2009).
14. For a fictional accounting of this historical period and the persecution of Spiritual Baptists in Trinidad, see Earl Lovelace's *The Wine of Astonishment* (1982).
15. See Comaroff and Comaroff (2009) for more on the interplay of identity (ethnic and religious) with negotiations of legal entitlements and other forms of commodification in the neoliberal moment.
16. For a full copy of the Bill, see: <http://www.tparliament.org/legislations/b1999h10p.pdf>, accessed March 29, 2013.
17. In 2001 the National Council of Elders was recognized under the Orisha Marriage Act. Then in 2005 ten individuals, and the shrines they represented, registered as marriage officers under the auspices of the Council (Trinidad and Tobago Gazette 2001, 2005).
18. According to Hucks, this act was "the first legal enactment to legitimize the status of African-derived religions in the diaspora world" (2006:33).
19. "Orisa community repeats call for public holiday" (Trinidad Guardian, July 10, 2012).
20. In 2006 former Prime Minister Basdeo Panday was indicted for failure to disclose foreign bank account holdings in the millions while in office.
21. For an overview of Black Nationalism that aims for a middle ground between "celebratory and hypercritical accounts of Black Power and black nationalism" (2) see Eddie Glaude (2002).

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