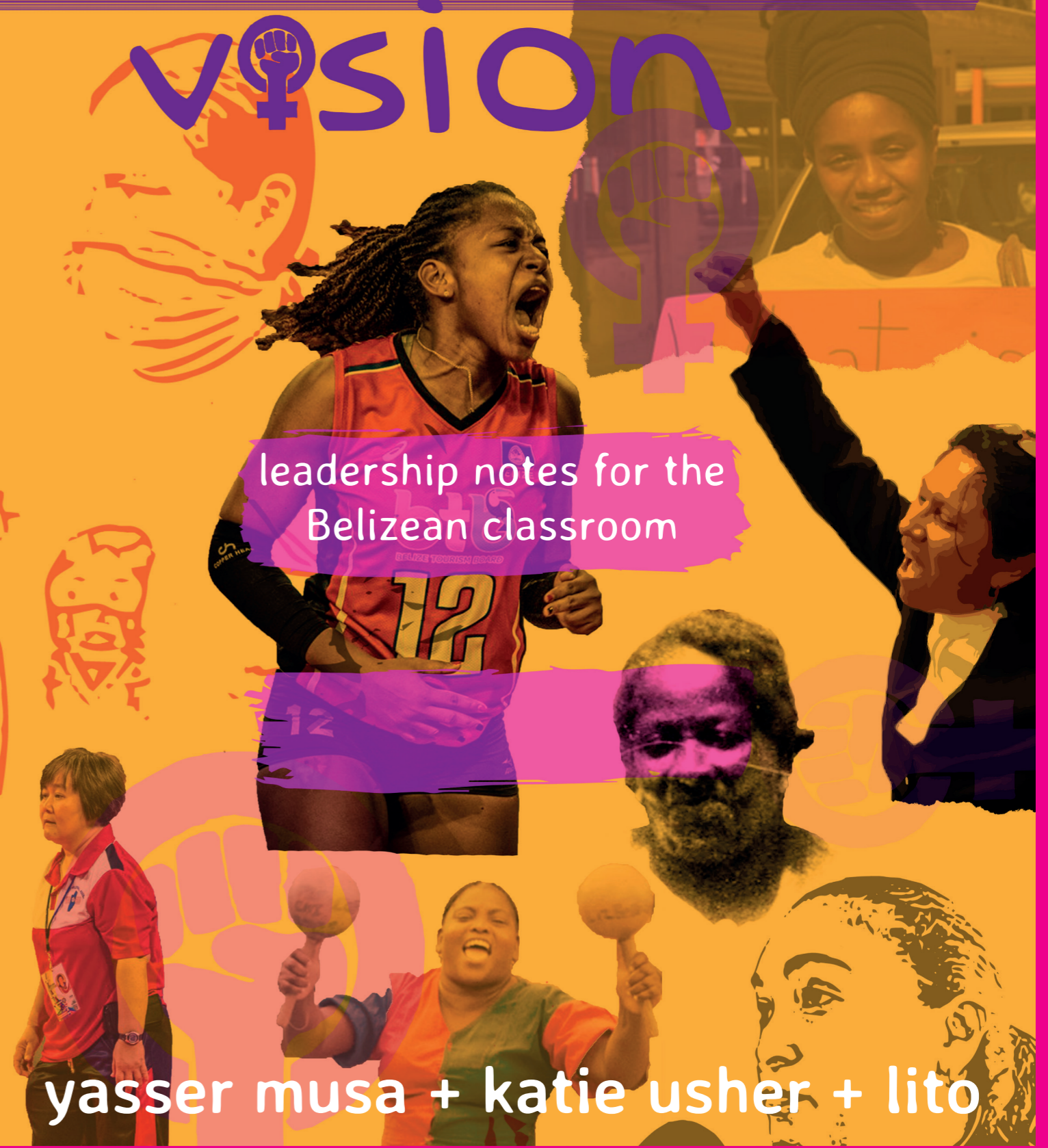




BEMBE

VISION

leadership notes for the
Belizean classroom



yasser musa + katie usher + lito



CONTENTS

1. Elfreda Reyes - revolutionary
2. Marisol Amaya - journalist
3. Felicita Cantun - culture warrior
4. Desiree Diego - world music champion
5. Zazil Ha - Maya mother
6. Cricel Castillo - pro-athlete
7. Lisa Shoman - human rights activist
8. YaYa Marin Coleman - community activist
9. Briheda Haylock - artist
10. Cristina Coc - land rights activist
11. Rosita Baltazar - dancer
12. Lupita Quan - sports activist
13. Audrey Matura - activist
14. Guadalupe Lampella - marine mother



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SOURCES:

Elfreda Reyes

Facebook post by yasser musa
3 December 2017

photo: Frantz Smith, Facebook, 1 December 2014
illustration: lito

Marisol Amaya

Channel 7 NEWS: The Mandhandling of Marisol posted (September 7, 2017)

photo: PLUS TV 8 September 2017

Felicita Cantun

Interview with Katie Usher
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photo: Channel 5 Belize, 2 October 2017

Desiree Diego

Channel 5 Belize web:
Feb 22, 2010
Garifuna Collective and Umalali perform at Winter Olympics

illustration: Lito

Zazil Ha

<https://chactemal.com/maya>

photo: chactemal.com/maya

Cricel Castillo

Cricel Takes on bodybuilding federation
www.7newsbelize.com/sstory.php?nid=30492

photo: Kenneth Grant (Knight and Day)

Briheda Haylock

Jun 16, 2016
Artist and Curator Briheda Haylock Launches Beautiful Tragedy
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Cristina Coc

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Lisa Shoman

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YaYa Marin Coleman

The Return of YaYa Marin Coleman by Adele Ramos
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Rosita Baltazar

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illustration: lito

Lupita Quan

(information from 21 August 2018 REPORTER NEWSPAPER article The Path To Glory by William Ysaguirre <http://reporter.bz/2018/08/21/the-path-to-glory/>)

Lupita Quan on silver medal www.7newsbelize.com/sstory.php?nid=45845&frmsrch=1

illustration: lito

Audrey Matura

Audrey Matura on detention during state of emergency
<http://7newsbelize.com/sstory.php?nid=46185>

Audrey Matura on BSI, GOB, BSCFA negotiations
<https://amandala.com.bz/news/bsiasr-put-bull-caneros-audrey-matura-shepherd/>

illustration: lito

Guadalupe Lampella

Jun 29, 2016
Guadalupe Lampella Is Most Outstanding for 2016
<http://edition.channel5belize.com/archives/131255>

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photo: Oceana

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“The sea is part of me... it calls me every day”

marine mother

Guadalupe Lampella

“I raised my children working hard as a man and being a woman. I mean, not just fishing with line because I do that very little. I gain my bread by jumping in the water and using fin and mask and snorkels, as well as a Hawaiian sling and a hook. So that's the way how I made my money and now after so many years now, I still love the sea. I still love my boats and my outboard and I still get my license and my captain license and my fishing license and still, like I said, that will never change in my life because the love that I have for the sea is bigger than anything really. So I can't change that.”

29 June 2016 | edition.channel5belize.com/archives/131255

photo Courtesy: Oceana

why?

because women are omitted, erased, ignored, and diminished from our narratives

because still the teaching of african and maya OURstories must become foundation learning

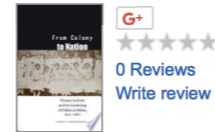
because the society did not start to melt yesterday

because we must search for the truth about how we resist, revolt and reform ourselves

because bembe is complicated...it is ancestral mobilization

The Belizean version of this resistant female subject is the Creole “*bembe*” or bully woman, Elfreda Reyes being a primary example. Indeed, *bembe* subjectivity and practice were prominent in the history of labor-nationalist mobilization in Belize, from the 1894 and 1919 riots to the more sustained efforts of the 1930s and early 1950s. They also have deeper roots, in the Caribbean’s history of slavery and emancipation.²³

intro



From Colony to Nation: Women Activists and the Gendering of Politics in ...
By Anne S. Macpherson

“The sea is part of me... it calls me every day” – Guadalupe Lampella

Bembe says katie usher when I was a small girl coming up in a very conservative-seat of government-Belmopan, the absolute worst thing to be was a BEMBE.

Don't be loud. Don't fight. Don't raise your voice. Don't swear. Don't talk back. Don't be obnoxious. Don't be seen. Shhh!

Bembes were the worst sort. The kinds that stole husbands, got drunk, fought in public, were lewd, were loose, were wanton.

And i lived that lie for a while. Wore that fear, and tried to colour within the lines of convention.

But you see, those lines are crooked, and often changing, to more and more restriction. And those lines create barriers which keep the black and brown out. The Maya, East Indian, Garifuna, (the ones without pencils), the non-academic, non elite often find that even colouring within the lines of convention, they see themselves erased from the pages of Belizean history.

Bembe in the West African context, of convening with ancestors, summoning the wisdom of ancestors and goddesses and gods. That power is so far removed from BEMBE status in modern day Kriol vernacular.

I think I know why. I ask you to read these stories and have you come to your own conclusions.

Bembe says lito is for those women that dared to live their lives as the revolution against patriarchy and other injustices. This is for those women that didn't wait to be accepted through old measures, but rather are creating their own worlds outside the oppression of authority to build a truly liberated Belizean society. Liberation is not a tangible given to you, but is rather a state of mind and of being, and these women are

the true example of what liberation is. Just like Bembe in West African culture is about energy and diversity of prayers; the collective energy of these women and the diversity of their efforts makes our Belizean society vibrant. We have a lot to celebrate about these women, but we also have more to learn from their sustained energy to bembe.

Bembe says yasser musa is for our mothers, our daughters. the next generation is here and their voices are strong and full of new and exciting wisdom and ideas. This book is for classroom as community, for teachers as empowered people, as a pedagogy of hope where we live to tell the stories of then and now from a position of emancipation the way the BEMBES teach us.

Bembé: The Rhythm of the Saints

A bembé is a party for the orishas. During a bembé the orishas are praised, saluted and entreated to join the party through ‘mounting’ one of the priests or priestesses in attendance. This is done through a confluence of the song, rhythm, and movement, all calling to the orisha in such a way that the orisha will recognise themselves in the lyrics, rhythms and dances as they have been performed for them for perhaps thousands of years.

<https://www.cs.indiana.edu/~port/teach/205/santeria5.html>

Audrey Matura

“Those who clamor and say oh you are defending criminals - if it was their turn and it was their families, they would have wanted due process as well.”

Audrey Matura on detention during state of emergency
<http://7newsbelize.com/sstory.php?nid=46185>

“We realize that they are taking advantage of the farmers, and if nobody can't see it, then we will show them. Why pressure them into an agreement that makes them give up the ownership of their cane? How could the Prime Minister have entered negotiations and not come out with one point for the farmers. If you all realize, the farmers conceded to all three points. That can't be fair negotiations.”

Audrey Matura on BSI, GOB, BSCFA negotiations
<https://amandala.com.bz/news/bsiasr-put-bull-caneros-audrey-matura-shepherd/>

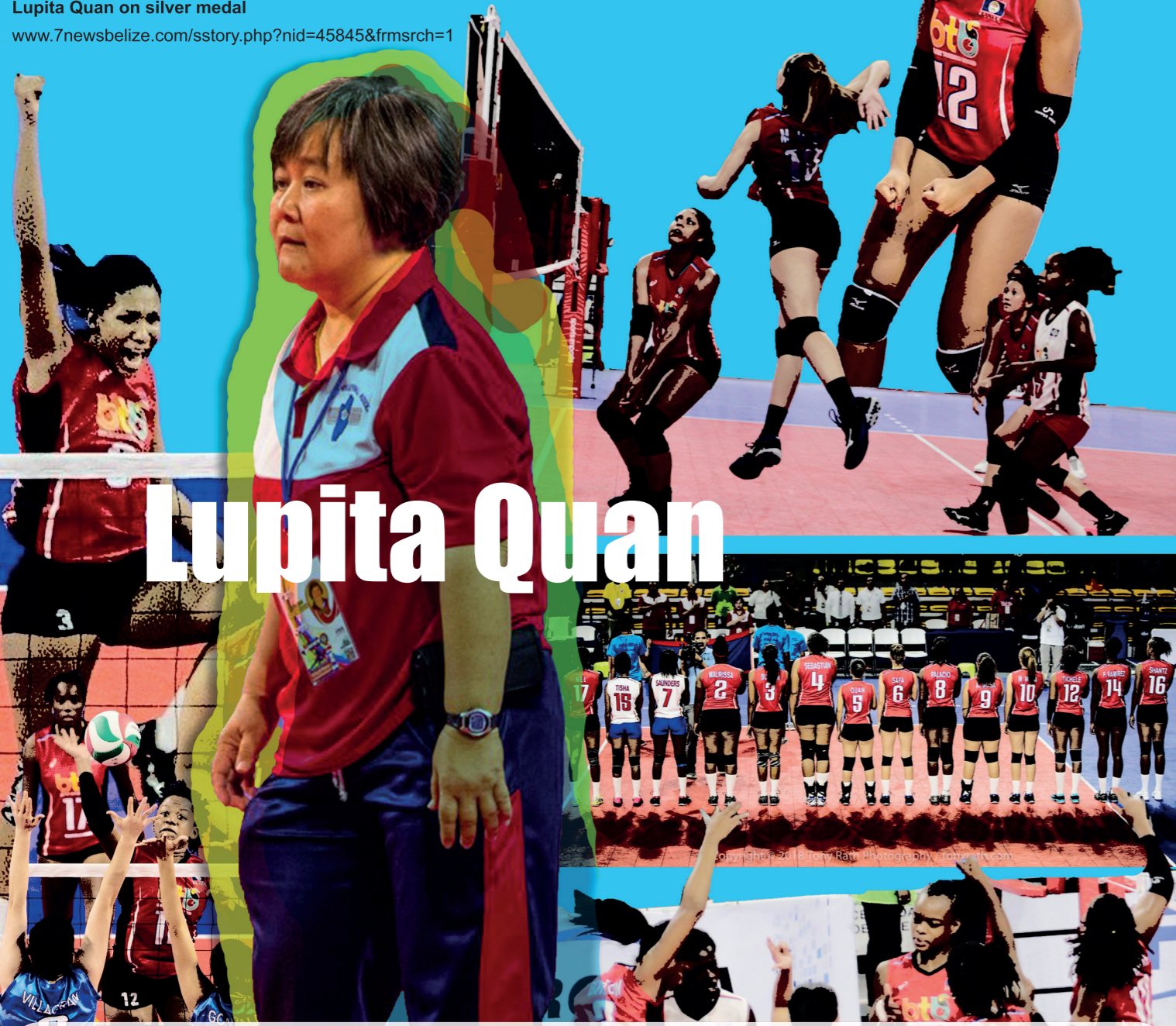
activist



"you know, not just me, but all the people involved in coaching, and in my program, and in the BVA (Belize Volleyball Association) and finally had a chance to show what we, you know, what we have been producing, and not only show it, but in front of the whole crowd and that's really, really satisfying."

Lupita Quan on silver medal

www.7newsbelize.com/sstory.php?nid=45845&frmsrch=1



Lupita Quan

Lupita Quan is a freedom fighter for the right of girls in Belize to play volleyball on the same plane as boys. Her vision is real as she has invested in the sport, of her time, money and commitment.

In August 2018 when Belize's National Volleyball Team won silver medal at the Central American Games held in Belize City at the CIVIC center that moment was in no small part to the grit and tenacity of Quan's leadership that created a system of training and competition.

Since 1988 she has been involved in the St. Catherine Academy high school volleyball program. SCA's volleyball team has dominated as national champions for ten years and city champions for over fifteen.

"Lupita built her own Stars gym in 2012, on a plot of land her mother owned," where she funds and manages a structured volleyball program for under-10, under-13, under-15 categories and other teams.

ELFREDA Reyes

We have two men on our flag. And we have two men as official National Heroes.

In an August 2017 Facebook post the thinker Valentino Shal wrote about the Global Gender Gap Report citing that in terms of political empowerment Belize ranks 133 out of 136 countries and with respect to Gender Inequality 107 of 136.

There is also a huge void and gap in our learning about women in social studies and history.

Elfreda Reyes was born a British Honduras colonial subject in 1902 and died a Belizean in 1992. She grew up in the Mesopotamia area of Belize Town. She was a domestic servant who earned less than \$2 per week. By 1924 she was a leading figure challenging colonial rule on the basis of class and gender. She was a fighter for the working class, a human rights activist before that was even a concept.

She championed gender inclusiveness which is a fundamental idea in modern citizenship.

In 1934 she took a frontline position with strikers against the oppressive Belize Estate Company (BEC). In 1935 she petitioned the BH Governor for the right to VOTE (suffrage) with the GOAL of creating a national democracy WITHOUT hierarchy, class, sex or race.

She became politically aligned to both George Price's PUP and Phillip Goldson's NIP. She was a militant leader for our nationalist aspirations, and a prominent pioneer for women's political organization in Belize.

Our school system ignores Elfreda the same way it does African and Maya history and the same way that the Caste War of the Yucatan is a blank space in our imagination. There is no cavalry coming, we must restore the truth with creativity and technology ourselves.

The big lesson of Elfreda's life is that she embodied the active citizen who took to the streets so that the force of peoples' desire for upliftment and liberation could be realized.

In December 2017 Dorla Bowman (Building People Movement) published a book Women Can Govern – The Development of Belizean Women in Politics. It is a great resource for teachers and students and should be made available across this country. I pay big respect to Ms. Bowman for her steadfast commitment in bringing important knowledge about our people into an accessible frame for us to use inside our classrooms.

Elfreda Reyes should be acknowledged as a national hero in Belize.

When we teach citizenship or the concept of democracy Elfreda's contributions must be essential learning. When we teach modern Belize she must be placed in the context of leader, activist, liberator, and grassroots mobilizer. When we teach society and culture she must be exalted as a person who in the face of incredible odds and discrimination stood up to power and inspired thousands of people to stand up too.

"those men were so coward...the women were more steadfast"

revolutionary



Marisol Amaya



journalist

Kim Barrow - who is the special envoy for women and children. Her statement says, quote, "frightening images were seen on national television of the unacceptable treatment of a female journalist by law enforcement officers...Sadly, this is not the first time that Ms. Amaya, in her capacity as a journalist, has been disrespected in plain view on national television."

It continues, quoting Simplis-Barrow directly, "Journalists should not be subjected to inhumane treatment by anyone, least of all, law enforcement officers! Ms. Amaya is a woman, mother, sister, a daughter and a journalist. I join the wider society in condemning the assault made upon her person by police officers. This reduces the image of our country and contravenes all efforts being made by many agencies to end violence against our women."

Channel 7 NEWS: The Mandhandling of Marisol posted (September 7, 2017)

ROSITA Baltazar

Rosita has performed in Belize and all over the world with the Belize National Dance Company (BNDC). She was part of the group of dancers that founded the BNDC in 1990. She died on 6 July 2015.

Rosita on dance

"It makes me a stronger person in and out, and it builds up your self-esteem. It builds up everything about a dancer. It contributes to our growth. It keeps you fit physically and mentally," she said.

Her plea to the Belizean community is very simple:

"continue supporting dance in Belize, and to the parents, continue supporting their children especially when they are in a dance program at school, continue supporting them and enroll them at the school."

<https://amandala.com.bz/news/iconic-belizean-dancer-rosita-baltazar-55-laid-rest-friday/>



Rosita
MY NAME IS FELICIA BALTAZAR, I WAS BORN ON AUGUST 16TH 1963 IN CHEWECHA LABUGA IN GUATEMALA TO ENES BALTAZAR GAMBOA AND MARYHILDA WILLIAMS BALTAZAR. THIS UNION GAVE BIRTH TO 11 CHILDREN - 6 GIRLS AND 5 BOYS. FOUR OF THE ELEVEN DEPARTED THIS WORLD WHEN THEY WERE YOUNG. I LIVED IN A THATCHED BAMBOO HOUSE NEAR THE SEA SHORE WITH MY PARENTS AND MY SIBLINGS. MY FATHER WAS A BUYE, A SPIRITUAL HEALER.
EXPLAIN STORY
Speaker

"It will be illegal for you to barge into a community if the leaders did not accept you."

Cristina land rights activist Coc

"Over three decades my communities, Maya communities of Southern Belize Q'eqchi and the Mopan Maya, thirty eight communities in particular have been fighting a very hard battle to secure rights, recognition and respect for our ancestral territory. And over the last three decades, we have tried every means we can. We tried to sit with our state to try to come to a peaceful resolution. We tried the legal system, the legal strategy and today am very hopeful and very excited to share with you at the highest court, the Caribbean Court of Justice, after an unbroken chain of decisions from lower courts that affirm our rights as indigenous people to our land, the final appellate court, for Belize, has decided in favour of the Maya people and have affirmed that Maya land tenure exists in Southern Belize and that the Maya people have rights to land and resources that they currently use and occupy"



"We are convinced that the government thinks that they can just dictate and make unilateral decisions."

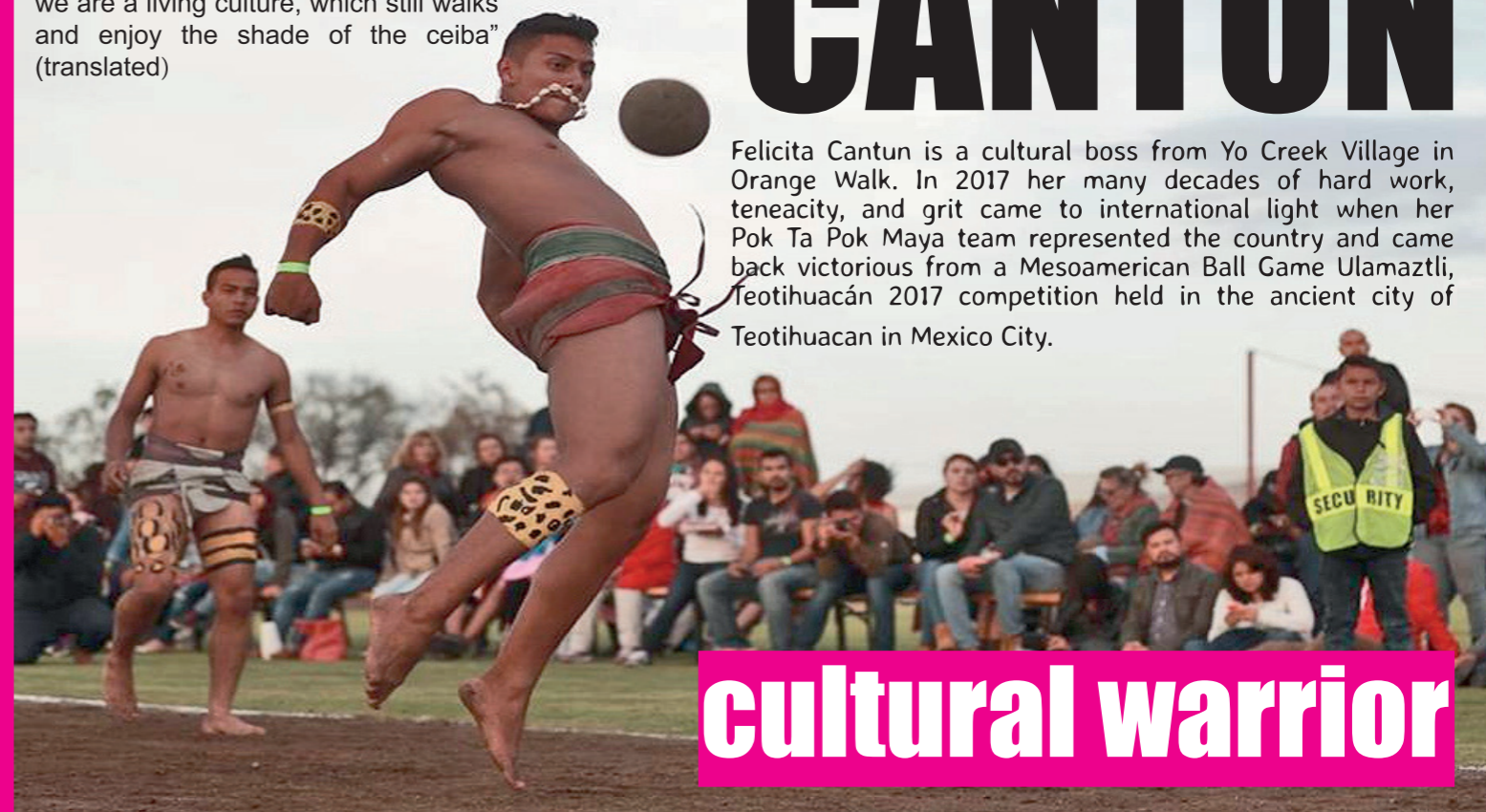
"For me it is important to share Mayan Culture so people get to know that we exist. It preserves our identity as a people. If we do not do our part we will lose our identity."



Felicitita

CANTUN

"The Mayas, we are not only pyramids and ball game fields, but fortunately, we are a living culture, which still walks and enjoy the shade of the ceiba" (translated)



Felicitita Cantun is a cultural boss from Yo Creek Village in Orange Walk. In 2017 her many decades of hard work, teneacity, and grit came to international light when her Pok Ta Pok Maya team represented the country and came back victorious from a Mesoamerican Ball Game Ulamaztli, Teotihuacán 2017 competition held in the ancient city of Teotihuacan in Mexico City.

cultural warrior

Desiree Diego

"Ih very emotional fi me and mek it even worse dat Lloyd noh gone pan dis tour, I have to be di one fi do most ah di lead calling ah di songs so... sometimes I think about Andy and I would ah just want get off ah stage but I have to do it. Dah something ih lef fi mek wi carry on and dah wah heavy load but we wah back it."

Channel 5 Belize web:
Feb 22, 2010
Garifuna Collective and Umalali perform at
Winter Olympics



Hailing from Belize, Guatemala, and Honduras, The Garifuna Collective consists of the best musicians from the Garifuna music scene including Desiree Diego, Sofia Blanco, and Chela Torres – leading the group. They bring together the deep cultural roots of Garifuna music, mixed with modern grooves, arrangements, and instruments. Unique hand drums, the primera and segunda, turtle shells and jawbones, guitars and bass.

world music champion

Briheda

H a y l o c k

Jun 16, 2016

Artist and Curator Briheda Haylock
Launches Beautiful Tragedy



"The concept behind me is actually, it's still a work in progress. I've been working on it for a year and a half now, so these are just little snippets of what's to come when I'm finished. So this series is called Beautiful Tragedy and it's about highlighting women issues—well psychological and emotional issues when it comes to just being a woman in society. I am focusing on relationships in a sense that we are now in a situation where monogamy is not practiced. So you have like one man and five girls on (the) side; I don't really like that situation. Dealing with men always coming at you sexually, so I have one image behind me... the phrase on his body [bleep] me. Like just putting them in that situation, how does it feel? The guy in the image looks shy about it 'cause you know sometimes they seem very aggressive and confident, but inside that's not the case. I'm looking at being a woman, an attractive woman, or just a woman on a whole, the strain that you have. It is like you are drowning, being suffocated. That's the image with the petals and the black water...it's like you are drowning in this high expectation of being pretty, which is to me unrealistic, because I feel that you should be able to be who you are and not have to always be dolled up."

Isani Cayetano (journalist)

"In your life as an artist, does this speak to the objectification of women?"

Briheda Haylock

"Yes; that is my primary focus—objectification of women. I don't believe we need to live up to the standard of being a housewife or a trophy wife or something. We are more than that; we got brains...we can accomplish anything a man can. I mean it's the twenty-first century."

brihedahaylock.weebly.com

YaYa Marin Coleman

"The Agitator", Yaya Marin-Coleman, protests the Queen Street piss house
amandala.com.bz/.../the-agitator-yaya-marin-coleman-protests-queen-street-piss-house...Nov 4, 2014 - BELIZE CITY

YaYa Marin Coleman raised concerns about St. Martin Primary ...
fiwebelize.com/yaya-marin-coleman-raised-concerns-about-st-martin-primary/
Jun 20, 2013 -

One Woman Protest at the US Embassy
edition.channel5belize.com › Featured/ Oct 9, 2014 -

UEF to hold Emancipation Day church
www.reporter.bz/general/uef-to-hold-emancipation-day-church-service/
Jul 30, 2016 - Yaya Marin-Coleman, chair of the UEF, explained that this is the third year, the foundation is holding the church service, to commemorate the ...



AMANDALA
"BELIZE'S LEADING NEWSPAPER"

Home | **Headline** | Highlights | General | Features | Sports | Letters | Editorial

THE RETURN OF YAYA MARIN-COLEMAN!

General | **Headline** — 15 May 2009 — by Adele Ramos

 **YaYa bears ice box with her personal belongings**

Kremandala radio and TV personality and journalist, Carolyn "YaYa" Marin Coleman, 42, returned to Belize on Tuesday on a 10:00 a.m. American Airlines flight out of Miami, after having passed through 7 prison facilities – oftentimes bound with waist, leg and arm shackles – within a span of less than 6 months.

Seen here with a generous smile in a photo taken by attorney Audrey Matura-Shepherd, YaYa was decked out in US Homeland Security garb and carrying a box of her personal belongings labeled by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), but was still very excited to return to loved ones who stood beside her through her ordeal in the United States and to receive a warm welcome from her many friends.

In an interview with *Amandala* today, YaYa explained that she had been sentenced to serve jail time in the United States for claiming to be a US citizen – when she is not – and voting in elections between 2001 and 2004.

She attempted to get permanent residence using a fraudulently obtained US Social Security number, court papers from the United States District Court (North District of Florida) say.

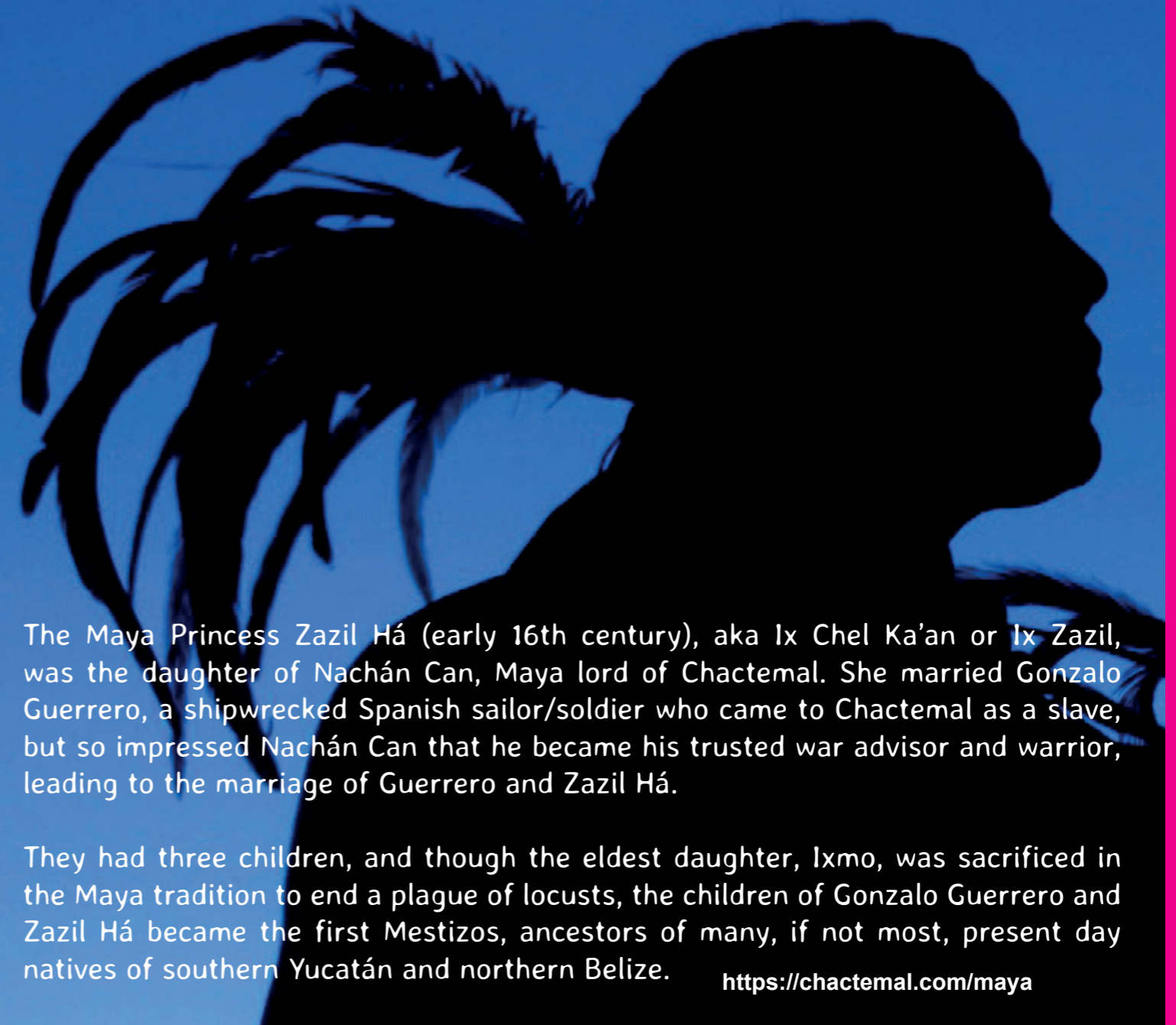
"They found evidence that I voted in 10 [state and federal] elections," YaYa told *Amandala*, adding that she had pleaded guilty to the charges.

She said that when she was asked why she did it, her response was, "I paid taxes and I will have a say-so in how government runs things."

YaYa said that on Tuesday US Department of Homeland Security officials escorted her onto the plane at the Miami International Airport, where she was made to sit at the very back. Audrey Matura-Shepherd left her assigned seat to accompany YaYa on the journey back home.

Zazil Há

Maya Mother



The Maya Princess Zazil Há (early 16th century), aka Ix Chel Ka'an or Ix Zazil, was the daughter of Nachán Can, Maya lord of Chactemal. She married Gonzalo Guerrero, a shipwrecked Spanish sailor/soldier who came to Chactemal as a slave, but so impressed Nachán Can that he became his trusted war advisor and warrior, leading to the marriage of Guerrero and Zazil Há.

They had three children, and though the eldest daughter, Ixmo, was sacrificed in the Maya tradition to end a plague of locusts, the children of Gonzalo Guerrero and Zazil Há became the first Mestizos, ancestors of many, if not most, present day natives of southern Yucatán and northern Belize.

<https://chactemal.com/maya>

Cricel Castillo

pro athlete

"I am very surprised that their defence is really that i am unethical, and I carried myself without the conduct, and blah blah because I think that I am one of the best brand ambassadors that we have as a country. I mean I am internationally known, I've been sober for three years, I don't go anywhere, everyone knows that. This is my going out. So that's actually why like, i try to have gym swag, this is me going out, I am very professional, you know. I have never cursed them. I have never disrespected them, so I find it very weird for them to use that as their defence mechanism because that is so untrue."

Cricel Takes on bodybuilding federation
www.7newsbelize.com/sstory.php?nid=30492

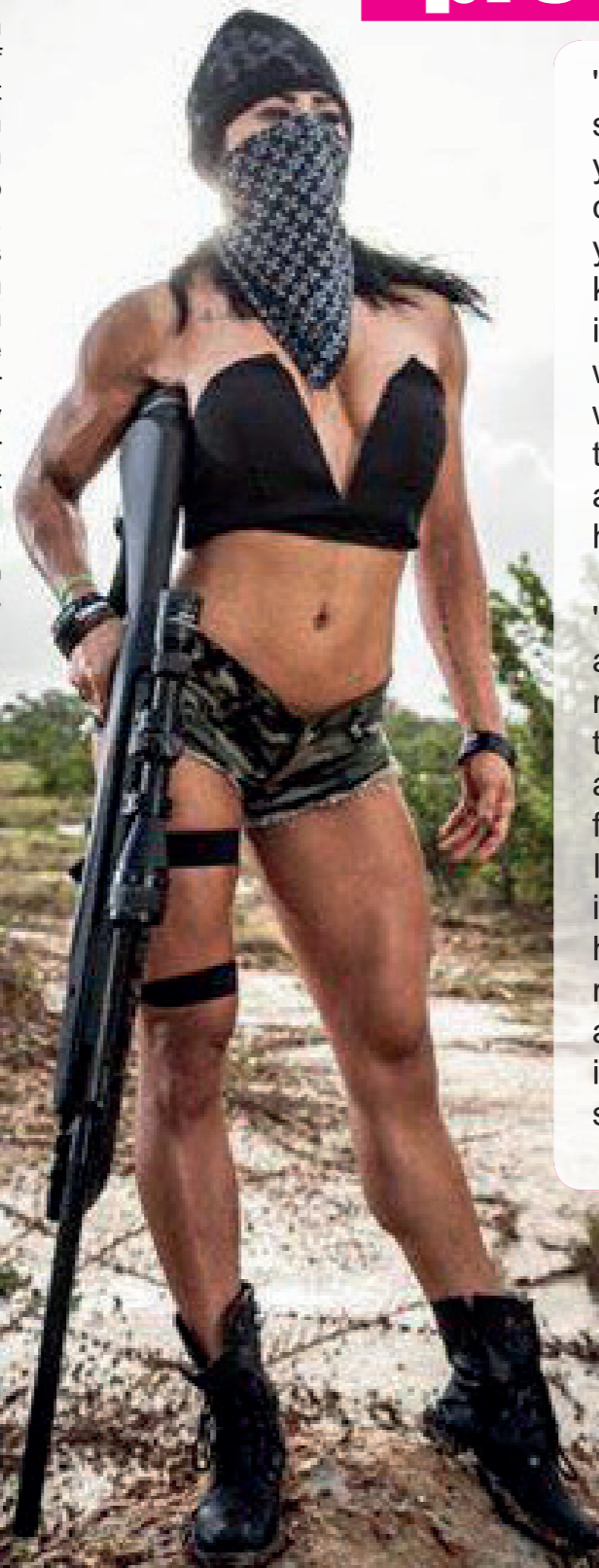


photo courtesy:
Kenneth Grant (Knight and Day)

"As the president you shouldn't just assume, you need to be well in communication with your athletes so you know what's going on, if he had done that, he would have known that I was just short of a plane ticket, which is the entire amount that he kept for himself."

"well I am not gonna apologise for the truth, I mean I didn't disrespect them, I didn't call them any names, all I, all the facebook post said, and I am sure you can read it for yourself, if they happen to put it up, the reason why Belizean athletes can not go far is because of the corrupt system that exists.."

Lisa Shoman, Senior Counsel
<http://www.7newsbelize.com/sstory.php?nid=37284>

"My perspective and I'll give it to you as the perspective of a feminist. When I was a young feminist I was (of the opinion) that if we change the law on divorce or if we change the law in the criminal code that said that once you are married you gave your consent irrevocably; if we change that the sacred institution of marriage would collapse. There is Dolores Balderamos in the back; she drove the charge to remove to a great extent not totally that law. The "sacred institution" of marriage has not collapsed but it tells you that every time there are these social movements whether it be the right for adult women to vote, the right for people of colour to own property, the right for universal adult suffrage. Every time there is one of these social movements you're told that the sky is going to fall in and that we're all going to hell in a hand basket. All that has happened Daniel is we've become a more morale society, more understanding of the fact that we all have equality before the law."

<http://amandala.com.bz/news/belizes-century-old-sodomy-law-overturned>

"None of us are free until all of us are free. And make no mistake about it! The ruling today was just the first step. It continues. The struggle continues. All of us have to be in a position of being able to enjoy our rights—whether it be Belizeans with incapacity and whether it be transgender Belizeans,"

said Orozco's attorney, Lisa Shoman, SC



human rights activist

Lisa Shoman