

**The Big Apple & Musical Migrants: Globalization**

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2018

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**Preface:**

Latino and Hispanic migrants have greatly influenced the music scene of New York City and have been influenced by the City as well. This in turn has influenced the culture of the collective and the individual. Globalization is used far too often in discourse, according to Thomas Turino, author of “Are we Global Yet?” Socialization plays a larger role in the formation of groups and cultural identity. I would agree that the westernization spreading throughout the globe is global culture, separate from globalism talked about in the news. Three types of cultural formation substitute for the term “global culture” are Immigrant Communities, Diasporas, & Cosmopolitanism. Immigrant communities are a formation of trans-state cultural communities. Typically Bilateral relations and movement between new and the original home environments and combination of practices from both locations. Diasporas are not bilateral, but rather involve multiple sites in a number of states. Both synchronically and diachronically trans-state cultural formation. Cosmopolitanism is subjective condition formed through on going relations to particular environments and external conditions. A cosmopolitan group may represent a small minority within a given country. Cosmopolitanism in the second half of the twentieth century could include modernist-socialist, and modernist-capitalist.

## **Essay:**

Using Globalist theory and through the lens of cultural formations I will examine how Puerto Rican, Dominican, and Mexican migrants and their music influenced music in New York City. First, I will examine the rationale behind the migration. Then, I will discuss the circumstances behind life in America. Next, I will introduce the characteristics of the music and the typical instruments used. Finally, I will discuss the influence of the music on the culture of the collective and the individual.

El Barrio, a sizable Latin community formed in East Harlem, NY. People migrated from Puerto Rico during the early 20th century as a result of lost wages for farmers and the addition of Puerto Rico to the U.S. territories. In the early 1950's Diasporic ideals led to social clubs formed by locals in the same town. Their clubs were created to replicate the nostalgia of their homeland. These clubs allowed for better adaptation to city life. The music of Puerto Rican migrants is characterized by expression and similar to Western European art forms. The significant forms are: seis, Aguinaldo, mapaye, and Danza. All forms fall under the style of Jibaro. Danza can be distinguished from the other musical forms because it was developed for the Elite in the urban centers of Puerto Rico. It also differs because its the only one that was written by composers of a western tradition. The term seis originates from a six couple dance and musical form. The seis is identified by the type of dance, type of text, harmonic structure, and the composer. Aguinaldo is distinguished from the other forms by the season, or time of year. It is synonymous with the giftgiving time of Christmas.

Jibaro employs the following instruments: guitar, cuatro, maracas, and the guiro. The texts of Jibaro are improvised based on each line each line consisting of six or eight syllables

with a ten-line stanza. Each set of stanza incorporates elements of homeland, nature, spirit, and love. The texts and the atmosphere of home-town social clubs in NYC led to the flourishing of Jibaro music. An important aspect of Jibaro music is the Bomba. Bomba is a collection of several instruments, for example the seguidoras, cua, and requinto, typically performed at local gatherings. During social gatherings Bomba is played along with plena. Plena differs from Bomba as a result of being a couples dance. There is little interaction between drummer and dancer. There are also more of a European musical influence. Jibaro music is quite diasporic in nature, It holds true to the original musical aspects of Puerto Ricans in NYC.

Three types of cosmopolitan musical styles are Rumba, Salsa, and SON. Rumba is a group of dance forms of African origin, that also incorporates a platform for discussions on the social and political lamentations. While, son is a type of instrumentation, that has three stages of development: Sexteto Habanero, Septeto Nacional, and Conjuntos of Rodriguez. Salsa on the other hand is a vibe and music that was invented in the New York diasporic involving Latinos, and influenced by Cuban musicians. All three styles are inclusive in nature and allow for modern adaptations. Another migrant group that recently settled in New York, are Dominicans.

Dominicans settled in Jackson Heights in Queens, Washington Heights and the Lower East Side of Manhattan. By the 80's many Dominican's migrated to the United States, particularly New York. Migrants who came to New York City brought their timeless and unchanging, style of merengue tipico. During this time more than twice the emigration per capita was coming from the Dominican Republic vs Mexico. Until urbanization opened up new economic opportunities the Dominican Republic has no middle class. The experience of migration inevitably leads to transformations. The experience of migration inevitably leads to

transformations. 1/3 of undocumented Dominicans hold professional or managerial positions in the D.R. but their immigration status meant they had to work in unskilled positions in the US. Therefore many migrants are able to improve their class standing in the United States, moving from a lower position to a higher one. Return migration has resulted in the creation of a new socioeconomic class in the Ciabo, particularly in Santiago. When migrants return they become negatively class-inflected, they are termed Dominican Yorks.

Merengue tipico originated from the Dominican Republic, is the oldest style of merengue still commonly performed. It is nearly always framed as traditional by those who play it. Merengue tipico has a separate repertoire, which emphasizes traditional songs dating back to the turn of the last century. It focuses on locally based lyrics and complex, interlocking, often improvised rhythms. It includes several different rhythms also. It has been endlessly repeated in books, newspaper articles, TV, and radio programs through the use of standard instrumentation. The regionality of music has been impacted by the international migration of Puerto Ricans during the turn of the twentieth century. The music can be characterized as cosmopolitanism, based on the divisive nature of the regionality related to social class. Transnational migration have inspired many changes to the original structure of the music, making it far more accessible to others. This leads to musicians often westernizing the music and removing elements of merengue tipico in order to appear more mainstream.

Finally I would like to discuss migrants from Mexico. As a result of increased migration from Mexico to New York and New Jersey created many Diasporic communities. Migrants brought over Cumbia, a style of music played by DJ's or Sonideros. Sonideros are responsible for maintaining the music and atmosphere with light, sound, smoke, and creating a voice. The

most distinctive feature is the social structuring, which allows for the listener to enter a diaspora public sphere. The immigrant's collective imagination is kept through the journey of the sonideros, and the communities connection with their homeland. The DJ's most important and taxing job is to read into the microphone the personal dedications to the audience and dancers. This is difficult because one must invoke a tone of passion and creativity when reading words that are of the community consciousness. The Sonidero creates an inclusive experience that allows for connection with culture and others.

Mexicans are similar to Latino/Hispanic migrants with regular to social class, and language. They are dissimilar with respect to hold over political opinions and impact on socioeconomic structures. Traditionally the Church has provided the "social space" for gatherings, however as a result of rapid growth this became less favorable than "alternative social networks". The DJ's set is crucial to the structure of the social gathering. The set typically begins with a short pre-recorded tape, followed by the visualization of going through space. The audience is given the feeling of being transmitted. The DJ's persona is mixed with colorful lights, sounds, and creates a whole experience. After tripping, salsa, merengue, and bachateo play, dancers are welcomed and last the cumbia is played. The presentation is characterized by lights, sound effects, smoke machines, and the illusion of lift-off. After the landing a variety of music is played, leading up to the dancing and sound of cumbia. The immigrant's collective imagination is kept through the journey of the sonideros, and the communities connection with Mexico.

The Sonidero can best be summarized as mediators. They are trusted and recognized by the community due to their ability to use technology for maximum authority, similar to the

shaman of prehistoric cultures. This connects the migrants in America to their cultural roots and heritage in Mexico.

Puerto Rican, Dominican, and Mexican migrants and their music influenced music in New York City and as a result their culture has also been influenced and their larger respective cultural identities. Using the lenses of diasporic and cosmopolitanism we can further compare and contrast the music of Puerto Rican, Dominican, and Mexican Migrants and how culture is effected in the process. Also how social changes lead to changes in music styles and adaption of diasporic ideas to transitional cosmopolitanism. Dominican music is affected the most by migration and has adapted to a cosmopolitanism sound. Puerto Rican and Mexican music fit into the social formation of Diaspora because of the prevalence of heritage, originality, and customs. These three cultures allow us to understand more about how music evolves through migration and cultural formation.

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