



Smithsonian Institution

Taíno: A Symposium in Conversation with the Movement

**Cosponsored by the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian
and the Smithsonian Latino Center**

September 8, 2018, 10:45 a.m.–5:30 p.m.

**Auditorium, National Museum of the American Indian
Alexander Hamilton U.S. Custom House
One Bowling Green • New York City**

Join the National Museum of the American Indian and the Smithsonian Latino Center for a symposium to celebrate the exhibition *Taíno: Native Heritage and Identity in the Caribbean*. Experts representing Indigenous studies, genetic science, anthropology, linguistics, and other academic disciplines will explore exhibition themes in dialogue with Taíno/Indigenous Caribbean community leaders and cultural workers. The symposium will explore the history of the Taíno movement, particularly through the experiences and perspectives of its participants. It seeks to support the exchange of knowledge produced within academic fields among subject experts, the diverse Taíno community, and other Caribbean people of Native descent, with a special emphasis on advancing the voices of women scholars and participants in this contemporary Native heritage movement.

Seating is available first come, first served. ASL and English/Spanish interpretation provided.

Live webcast: AmericanIndian.si.edu/multimedia/webcasts

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PROGRAM

- 10:45 a.m. **Welcome** – Kevin Gover, Director, National Museum of the American Indian
- 11:00 a.m. **Session 1 – Looking Back: Contextualizing the Taíno Movement**
Exhibition curator Ranald Woodaman (Exhibitions and Public Programs Director, Smithsonian Latino Center) moderates a conversation among veteran Taíno organizers and community leaders Elba Anaca Lugo and Valeriana Shashira Rodríguez (Consejo General de Taínos Borincanos), Jorge Estévez (Grupo Higuayagua), and anthropologist Sherina Feliciano-Santos (University of South Carolina).
- 12:30 p.m. **Lunch (on your own)**
The exhibition *Taíno: Native Heritage and Identity in the Caribbean* is open for viewing on the museum's second floor.
- 2:00 p.m. **Session 2 – Genetic Science and Genealogy: Recovering Native Ancestry**
Jessica Bardill (Concordia University), an expert working at the intersection of Indigenous studies and genetic science, moderates a conversation with genetic anthropologists Deborah Bolnick (University of Connecticut) and Jada Benn Torres (Vanderbilt University), ancient DNA specialist Hannes Schroeder (University of Leiden), and anthropologist and Indigenous community planner Carlalynne Yarey Meléndez (Naguake Community).
- 3:30 p.m. **Break**
- 3:45 p.m. **Session 3 – Looking Forward: A Shared Vision for the Taíno Movement**
Trailblazing researcher of Cuban Indigeneity José Barreiro (Assistant Director for History and Culture Emeritus, National Museum of the American Indian) and emerging scholar of contemporary Taíno identities and cultures Christina M. González (University of Texas, Austin) co-moderate a conversation with established and emerging women leaders from the Taíno/Indigenous Caribbean movement. Tai Pelli (United Confederation of Taíno Peoples), Marilyn Balana'ni Díaz (Guatu Ma-cu A Borikén), and Afro-Indigenous activist Nasha Paola Holguín discuss such questions as: Where is this Native heritage movement going? What solutions might Native knowledge offer to the broader Caribbean, especially in the wake of natural disasters like Hurricane Maria?
- 5:15 p.m. **Closing Remarks**
Eduardo Díaz, Director, Smithsonian Latino Center

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BIOGRAPHIES

Jessica BARDILL, PhD, is an assistant professor in the department of English at Concordia University. She previously served as an assistant professor of Native American literature at East Carolina University. She engages with the possibilities of biological sciences and policy, with particular emphasis on genetics and genomics by, for, and with Indigenous peoples. She has helped lead the decolonial bioethics training for the summer internship for Indigenous peoples in Genomics program (SING) in the U.S. since 2011 and in Aotearoa/New Zealand since 2016, and is working with collaborators at the University of Alberta and Simon Fraser University to start a similar workshop in Canada in 2018. Prior to her current position, she was a chancellor's postdoctoral fellow in American Indian studies at the University of Illinois and a lecturer in the Thinking Matters Program at Stanford University. She is a contributor to the *American Indian and Alaska Native Genetics Resource Guide* published by the National Congress of American Indians and has published work in *Science*, the *International Indigenous Policy Journal*, the *Handbook of Biology and Society*, and the *American Journal of Bioethics*. She received her BA in English and biology from Emory University and her PhD in English from Duke University.

José BARREIRO, PhD, is Assistant Director for Research and Director Emeritus, Office for Latin America, Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian. A member of the Taíno Nation of the Antilles, Barreiro is a pioneering figure in Native American journalism and publishing. He co-edited, with Dr. John Mohawk, the national Native journal *Akwesasne Notes* from 1975–1984. In 1984 he co-founded the Native American Journalists Association. At Cornell University from 1984 to 2002, he served as associate director and editor-in-chief of Akwe:kon Press and the journal *Native Americas*. At the NMAI, among other initiatives, Barreiro led the Caribbean Indigenous Legacies Project (CILP), which conducts research and representational activities with Caribbean Indigenous communities, scholars, and policy makers. He co-curated the exhibitions *The Great Inka Road: Engineering an Empire* (2015) and *Taíno: Native Heritage and Identity in the Caribbean* (2018). José Barreiro's writing on American Indian topics includes *Indian Roots of American Democracy* (1988); *Indian Corn of the Americas: Gift to the World* (1989); *Indigenous Economics: Toward a Natural World Order* (1990); *View from the Shore: American Indian Perspectives on the Columbus Quincentenary* (1990); *Chiapas: Challenging History* (1994); *Panchito: Mountain Cacique* (2001); *America Is Indian Country* (2006); *Thinking in Indian: A John Mohawk Reader* (2011); and *Taíno* (2012, novel).

Deborah BOLNICK, PhD, is associate professor in the department of anthropology at the University of Connecticut. As an anthropological geneticist, she explores how sociopolitical forces, historical events, and social inequalities shape human genomic and epigenomic diversity. Bolnick analyzes DNA from ancient and contemporary peoples, in conjunction with other lines of evidence, to help reconstruct population histories in the Americas. She is also interested in the ethical, legal, and social implications of genomic research, and she studies the methods and applications of genetic ancestry testing, investigating how ancestry tests influence and are influenced by contemporary understandings of race, ethnicity, gender, and identity. Through her work, Bolnick strives to help integrate more critical, intersectional, historically marginalized, and decolonial perspectives into

science. She received her PhD in anthropology from the University of California at Davis, and is a past president of the American Association of Anthropological Genetics. She is also the co-author (with John Relethford) of *Reflections of Our Past: How Human History Is Revealed in Our Genes* (2004), and is co-organizer of the summer internship for Indigenous peoples in Genomics program.

Marilyn Balana'ni DÍAZ is an acknowledged *abuela* (elder) of the Concilio Taíno Guatu-Ma-cu a Borikén and a proud mother and grandmother. Born in New York City to Puerto Rican parents, she grew up in New York and Puerto Rico, where she is currently based. Díaz was raised, in part, by her great-grandmother, Doña Reyes Sánchez Correa, a healer from the town of Río Grande, Puerto Rico. Díaz studied natural sciences at the University of Puerto Rico, Carolina. She joined the community of Concilio Taíno Guatu-Ma-cu a Borikén in 2009 and was named a community grandmother in 2012 and *bohicia* (spiritual healer) in 2016.

Jorge ESTÉVEZ is a veteran museum educator who has developed innovative hands-on and didactic learning experiences for young people, families, and educators at the National Museum of the American Indian. As an independent researcher, Estévez has led and collaborated on multidisciplinary initiatives to document and interpret the legacy of Native peoples across the greater Caribbean region. He is a core member of the research and curatorial team that organized the exhibition *Taíno: Native Heritage and Identity in the Caribbean*. Estévez is a former member of the award-winning powwow group the Arawak Mountain Singers. He is currently the leader of Grupo Higuayagua, which organizes Native families and individuals, recovers Indigenous cultural practices, and participates in exchanges with Arawak and other Native communities.

Sherina FELICIANO-SANTOS, PhD, is an assistant professor of linguistic anthropology at the University of South Carolina in Columbia. Her current research includes ethnic and racial formations and language practices in the context of Indigenous reclamations in Puerto Rico; schooling, language ideologies, and Puerto Rican migration; and race relations, communication, and policing in the U.S. South. She has published her research among the Taíno in several anthropological journals. She is generally interested in and has published on the related roles of language and historical understandings in mediating expressions and interpretations of identity and senses of belonging.

Christina M. GONZÁLEZ is a PhD candidate in sociocultural anthropology at the University of Texas at Austin, with concentrations in Native American and Indigenous studies and museum studies. A Bronx-born, Brooklyn-raised decolonizing Borikua, her doctoral research investigates contemporary Taíno identity formation and cultural development, particularly among transnational Puerto Ricans in New York City and Borikén/Puerto Rico. In addition, she has worked as a researcher for the Smithsonian's Caribbean Indigenous Legacies Project, as well as a curatorial assistant and advisor on the exhibition *Taíno: Native Heritage and Identity in the Caribbean*. González is the recipient of prestigious fellowships, including the National Science Foundation, Wenner-Gren, and the Smithsonian's Latino Museum Studies Program. She has published in *GeneWatch*, *American Indian Magazine*, and the Smithsonian's *Handbook of North American Indians*. She holds a master of arts in Māori studies from Victoria University of Wellington in Aotearoa/New Zealand and a bachelor's in political science and Latin American/Latino studies from Fordham University.

Nasha Paola HOLGUÍN is a Quisqueya-born medicinal storyteller, artist, land rights activist, and vessel for embodied healing/wholeness. Formed from a matrilineal heritage of wise women and healers, along with an academic background in psychology from CUNY-Baruch, Holguín's written and creative work intersects metaphysical Afro-Taíno intuitive wisdom, contemporary

psychoanalytic studies, and creative expression for the exploration of consciousness, liberation, and decolonization. Previously she worked in the corporatocracy of mass media, which she left behind for an ancestral calling to the protests against the Dakota Access Pipeline at Standing Rock, where she lived and resisted for five months. This initiated her journey of reconnection with Mother Earth and her life's work as an Afro-Taíno storyteller/healing vessel. Since then, she's been featured at The Schomburg Center, in *Latina* magazine, and at the National Dominican Student Conference. She also founded the creative project atabey (r)Evolution and has organized radical alternative healing clinics. Holguín is currently writing a compilation book.

Elba Anaca LUGO is a groundbreaking leader and organizer of the Taíno movement in Puerto Rico. Born in Utuado, and raised mostly on the island, Lugo first founded the music and cultural legacies group Paseo Taíno in 1978 before leading the community group Consejo General de Taínos Borincanos (founded in 1979). This nonprofit organization was created to promote, preserve, rescue, and defend Puerto Rico's Indigenous heritage for future generations. It gained international attention in 2005 for occupying the Caguana Indigenous Ceremonial Park with a coalition of other Taíno organizations to protest the sacred site's poor maintenance and demand better access for Native-descent families and groups.

Carlalynne Yarey MELÉNDEZ, PhD, is the founder and director of the Naguake Community-School Survival Center and the Naguake Indigenous Reeducation-Learning Center, both based in east-central Puerto Rico. In addition, Meléndez is the administrator and planner of Naguake Community, also located in the east-central part of the island. Her current research interests include Indigenous cultural-linguistic revitalization, community self-improvement, and community disaster preparation and survival. She uses a multidisciplinary approach that embraces anthropological, sociological, and geographical methods, including ethnography, environmental studies, and geographical information systems.

Tai PELLI is a liaison officer of the United Confederation of Taíno People (UCTP) and a co-founder of the Caribbean Amerindian Development Organization (CADO). She is an environmental, treaty, and Indigenous rights advocate at international, national, and local levels. She is also a member of the board of directors of the International Indian Treaty Council, an organization that represents Indigenous peoples from North, Central, and South America, the Caribbean, and the Pacific, and the first Indigenous organization to receive general consultative status from the United Nations Economic and Social Council. She is a writer, speaker, and researcher who promotes the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples globally and who has been outspoken about environmental violence and its health impacts in the Caribbean, particularly in Borikén/Puerto Rico.

Abuela Valeriana Shashira RODRÍGUEZ heads the Consejo de Ancianos de Borikén (Council of Elders of Borikén), in affiliation with the Consejo General de Taínos Borincanos. Grandmother Shashira is a highly-respected elder within her community. She has resisted environmental degradation, connected Puerto Ricans of Native descent on the island and in the United States, and worked to preserve and protect access to Taíno ceremonial centers in Puerto Rico.

Hannes SCHROEDER, DPhil, is assistant professor at the University of Copenhagen and an expert in ancient DNA. He leads his own research group at the University of Copenhagen. He has a long-standing interest in Caribbean archaeology and human migration. He is also the principal investigator of the CitiGen project (www.citigen.org), which looks at the social uses of genomic data and how they are being used to (re)shape our understanding of the past.

Jada BENN TORRES, PhD, is a genetic anthropologist, associate professor, and director of the Genetic Anthropology and Biocultural Studies Laboratory at Vanderbilt University. Torres was previously on the faculty at the University of Notre Dame in the department of anthropology. Her primary research area is the Anglophone and Hispanic Caribbean, where she explores genetic ancestry and population history of African and Indigenous Caribbean peoples. Torres has published more than fifteen peer-reviewed publications on various topics related to genetic ancestry, race, and population genetics of Caribbean populations. In addition to genetic research, she draws on the principles of community-based participatory research, which influences the approaches used to guide her research questions. She has also published on the impacts of genetic technologies on contemporary populations with specific regard to issues of race and identity. As part of this research agenda, she has published single-authored works and has collaborated independently with a genetic epidemiologist, cultural anthropologist, and a historian to examine various aspects of the medical and social meanings of genetic data as it pertains to biomedicine, race, and Caribbean history.

Ranald WOODAMAN, MAT, is the Smithsonian Latino Center's exhibitions and public programs director. His work at the Smithsonian includes the exhibitions *¡Azúcar! The Life and Music of Celia Cruz* (2005); *Posters from the Division of Community Education (DIVEDCO) of Puerto Rico, 1949–1989* (2008); *Southern Identity: Contemporary Argentine Art* (2010); *Cerámica de los Ancestros: Central America's Past Revealed* (2013); and, most recently, *Taíno: Native Heritage and Identity in the Caribbean* (2018). Currently Woodaman manages the Latino DC History Project and leads exhibition planning for a future Latino gallery on the National Mall. He is part of the leadership committee for the Latino Network of the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) and former member of the AAM's National Program Committee. He is an active member of the planning committee for the annual DC History Conference and a member of the executive committee for Smithsonian Music/Smithsonian Year of Music.



Taíno: A Symposium in Conversation with the Movement is held in conjunction with the exhibition *Taíno: Native Heritage and Identity in the Caribbean* currently on view at the museum on the second floor. The symposium is cosponsored by the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian and the Smithsonian Latino Center.

Taíno: Native Heritage and Identity in the Caribbean is a collaboration of the National Museum of the American Indian and the Smithsonian Latino Center. This exhibition and related programming are made possible through the support of the Ralph Lauren Corporation and INICIA of the Dominican Republic. Federal support is provided by the Latino Initiatives Pool, administered by the Smithsonian Latino Center.

Taíno: herencia e identidad indígena en el Caribe es una colaboración entre el Museo Nacional del Indígena Americano y el Centro Latino Smithsonian. La exposición y su programación han sido patrocinados con la generosidad de la Corporación Ralph Lauren e INICIA de la República Dominicana. Apoyo federal ha sido provisto por el Fondo de Iniciativas Latino, administrado por el Centro Latino Smithsonian.