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# The Black Carib Wars: Freedom, Survival, And The Making Of The Garifuna (Caribbean Studies Series)



## The Black Carib Wars

*Freedom, Survival, and the Making of the Garifuna*

CHRISTOPHER TAYLOR



## Synopsis

In *The Black Carib Wars*, author Christopher Taylor offers the fullest, most thoroughly researched history of the Garifuna people of St. Vincent, and their uneasy conflicts and alliances with Great Britain and France. The Garifuna--whose descendants were native Carib Indians, Arawaks and West African slaves brought to the Caribbean--were free citizens of St. Vincent. Beginning in the mid-1700s, they clashed with a number of colonial powers who claimed ownership of the island and its people. Upon the Garifuna's eventual defeat by the British in 1796, the people were dispersed to Central America. Today, roughly 600,000 descendants of the Garifuna live in Guatemala, Honduras, Belize, Nicaragua, the United States, and Canada. The Garifuna--called "Black Caribs" by the British to distinguish them from other groups of unintegrated Caribs--speak a language and live a culture that directly descends from natives of the Caribbean at the time of Columbus. Thus, the Garifuna heritage is one of the oldest and strongest links historians have to the region before European colonialism. The French, the first white people to live on St Vincent, attempted to subdue the Black Caribs but eventually developed an alliance with them. When the Treaty of Paris ostensibly handed St. Vincent to the British crown in 1763, the British clashed with the Black Caribs but, like the French, eventually formed another treaty. This cycle of attempted colonialism of St. Vincent by France and England alternately would continue for three decades. After repeated conflict and desperate measures by the European powers, the Garifuna were forced to surrender. In March 1797 the last survivors were loaded on to British ships and deported to the island of Roatán hundreds of miles away in the bay of Honduras. A little over 2,000 men, women and children were all that were left--perhaps a fifth of the Black Carib population of just two years earlier. It was a cataclysm. But the Black Caribs--the Garifuna in their own language--survived and their descendants number in the hundreds of thousands.

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## Customer Reviews

I did my masters thesis on the Second Carib War and have been writing about the Black Caribs for a series of historical novels covering their ethnogenesis and the subsequent conflicts with European colonialism. Previous to Taylor's interesting and well researched book most of what was written about the Black Carib (Garifuna) conflicts with the British was from the perspective of the English colonialists, with little in English from the French allied perspective and nothing from the Carib point of view. It appears that a more balanced view is presented by Taylor, as his bibliography includes some French writers, such as Moreau de Jonnes, who have a very different take of the Caribs when compared to colonialists such as Sir William Young, II. I found Taylor's book fascinating and it proved quite useful in doing research for my own fictional account of the times. His book should be read by anyone interested in Garifuna history, Caribbean history during the 17th and 18th centuries, imperialism in the Caribbean, or Caribbean indigenous history in general. The Black Caribs are a unique ethnic group, a blend of African and Carib Indian who still exist as an ethnic group in Central America and in significant numbers in the United States, having been largely exiled after their final defeat in 1797. They were the last indigenous group in the West Indies to resist European colonialism, maintaining their freedom for nearly three hundred years on St. Vincent despite challenges by the Europeans who eventually expelled or eliminated most Caribs from the rest of the Lesser Antilles, (with the exception of Dominica). Over the years the Caribs of St. Vincent absorbed Africans who either escaped from nearby islands, were somehow acquired by the Caribs, or were shipped wrecked on the islands' reefs. Their leader for nearly a generation was Joseph Chatoyer, killed in the first major battle of the Second Carib War as he and his French allies were on the verge of expelling the English from the St. Vincent Island's capital of Kingstown. Now with St. Vincent and

the Grenadines being an independent country their parliament has made Chief Chatoyer their first national hero and the day of his martyrdom a national holiday. I recommend Taylor's book to lovers of history who enjoy reading about those interesting episodes in the past that are rarely mentioned in mainstream history books. To read an interview with Taylor about his research see[...]

I know next to nothing on the Carib wars as virtually nothing has been done on the subject except for short Wikipedia articles which are junk. also as not a huge amount of wars were fought in the West Indies this book was a welcomed addition to my library as I love 18th century history. the book tells the story of the two wars the Black Caribs fought with the British on the Caribbean island of St. Vincent in 1769-1773 and 1795-1797. (FYI the Caribs were not slaves but mixed Native and African descent) and they had some support from the French, who captured the island from the British in 1779 during the American war of Independence. the Caribs did not want the British to take over their island so they fought them in two wars in the later 1700s and as I said before they received support from the French in I believe the Second Carib war. in 1795 their leader was the Carib Joseph Chatoyer. he was killed in a raid by the British but the Caribs fought on for another year even threatening Kingstown before the British finally defeated them. the British exiled many of them to islands in Honduras and other central American countries, thus producing the Black Garifuna of today. the author writes in very good detail and a fabulous book I can not put down. I really hope they will do a novel and some movies in the future on this subject called the Black Caribs. I strongly recommend this book to anyone interested in history, especially those who like Garifuna and/or Caribbean history. every Garifuna in the world must read this book to inform them about their rich and proud history!

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