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## **CHOCQUIBTOWN: Young Voices Shattering Afro-Colombian Invisibility**

In the past two years an Afro-Colombian hip-hop band from the Pacific region of Colombia has been getting a lot of attention in the media, especially after winning a Latin Grammy Award in 2010 and being nominated to several categories of the Grammy Music Awards in 2011 and 2012. In their lyrics, they claim to represent the black population of the Pacific coast, people of African descent who have traditionally lived in marginalized conditions of poverty and exploitation of different sorts. By borrowing some insights from African American criticism, the afrocentricity in *Choquibtown's* songs is explored. Additionally, through a postcolonialist approach, this band's musical production is analyzed as a voice of widespread racism and as means of resistance to political and cultural oppression.

### **Introduction**

*El saber es entender  
y el entender es saber  
dicen los viejos ancianos  
oigan bien para aprender  
para que cuando se ofrezca  
cuenten como yo conté.  
Agua y un trago  
para empezar;  
trago y panela*

*Knowing is understanding  
understanding is knowing  
old men say  
listen carefully to learn  
so that when you have the chance  
you tell as I told you.  
Water and a drink  
to start  
a drink and panela*



their pride of being who they are and where they come from. They portray people who are supposedly united through their culture, traditions, and daily life and that are aware of the power of their cultural productions.

This article will explore the songs by *ChocQuibTown* in a broader light of African American criticism and postcolonialism. Initially, I will present a brief background of Afro-Colombians that led to their current situation and subsequent responses, such as the one described by *ChocQuibTown*. Then, I will demonstrate how *ChocQuibTown's* songs revitalize and strengthen an Afro-Colombian identity, promote resistance to domination from *Andinocentrismo* (Arocha and Moreno as cited in Arocha et al 2), and help validate and promote the work of Afro-Colombian organizations by bringing Afro-Colombian issues out from the invisible into the visible. Therefore, I will briefly look at how musical production –as self-representation, self-determination, and resistance to political and cultural oppression– is part of a larger Afro-Colombian movement intending to impact all spheres of Colombian society to actually improve the living conditions for the Afro-Colombian population. I will also briefly address *ChocQuibTown's* choice of genre as an example of hybridity in its mixture of Afro-Colombian roots and African American hip-hop. I will explore if their choice of genre disregards its imperialist and neo-colonialist origin or denotes a sense of solidarity and empathy, as well as identification with the plights of black communities in the U.S.

### *Background*

*Mestizaje* or miscegenation is the key word that since the times of independence from Spain has prevailed in the Colombian national discourse. The supposed integration and intermixing of the three

racism that were brought together after the Conquest – Indians, Spanish, and African – has dominated the educational, social, and political spheres of the country to the point that racism and discrimination are not considered an issue for most of the population and, according to Wade, it has prevented ethnic mobilizations. Even though "blackness and indianness are not necessarily ignored" (Wade 341), there has been a generalized privileging of lighter skin colour. Afro-Colombians have not even enjoyed the same status that indigenous communities have (Arbeláez 28, Wade 345). Although indigenous communities have faced discrimination and poverty, they are recognized as legally protected minorities since 1890, and have received academic and institutional support. Afro-Colombians have been denied that "otherness" and, even though they are considered regular citizens (Arbeláez 28, Wade 346), they have lived in a sort of invisibility (Friedeman 1985 in Wade 341) and have been subjected to stereotyping and patronizing attitudes. This invisibility was originally self-inflicted, as in colonial times black slaves who escaped slavery established communities called *palenques* in remote locations near rivers and coasts where they remained outside of the religious and political control of colonial society (Losonczy 590). The process of independence and the abolition of slavery engrossed the population living in these remote areas, as black slaves living around mining zones and indigenous peoples moved to the areas near rivers and coasts where they coexisted for years, establishing kinship and exchanging goods and services.

L'établissement de familles sur des parcelles agricoles, source d'autosuffisance alimentaire, et la construction de maisons coïncident avec une ritualisation du cycle de vie de des relations sociales (...) Mais le discours local y juxtapose des modes de déplacement temporaire (navigation, orpaillage et commerce), qui

entraînent une mobilité régionale et saisonnière ainsi que la consolidation des réseaux de parentèle comme des liens commerciaux et inter-ethniques.<sup>2</sup> (Losonczy 594)

This coexistence has not been always peaceful, but has definitely benefited both parties in different aspects. In 1990, the dialogues leading to the Constitutional Reform of 1991 opened a "forum for issues on ethnicity and nationality" (Wade 346). Afro-Colombian and Indian movements lobbied and participated together in the discussions and, despite the weakness of their alliance, the new Constitution defined Colombia as a "multiethnic and pluricultural" country. This led to the development in 1993 of Law 70 (*Ley 70 de las Comunidades Negras* – Law of Black Communities) that recognized black communities as ethnic minorities, although only those in the Pacific Littoral. Regardless of the voids that this Law still has, it has certainly brought attention to the difficult conditions faced by Afro-Colombians in the Pacific Region and opened a space for further discussions and negotiations (Mosquera 174). As Agudelo puts it, "it created an ideological rupture from the traditional nationalist project that saw *mestizaje* as the most effective embodiment of the imagined nation" (as cited in Mosquera 174).

Unfortunately, the attention that this new political developments brought about, along with a renewed interest in the resources of the region and the subsequent government plans to build an interoceanic canal in the Pacific, generated a wave of violence that affected the black and indigenous population (Arbeláez 29), which again resorted

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<sup>2</sup> The settlement of families in farming plots, source of food self-sufficiency, and the building of houses coincide with a ritualization of the life cycle of social relations (...) But the local discourse is associated with some forms of temporary displacement (navigation, gold washing, and commerce) that imply a regional and seasonal mobility, as well as the consolidation of kinship networks as commercial and inter-ethnic links.

to isolation in remote areas or displacement (forced migration) to big cities like Medellín, Bogotá and Cali. Out of the almost two million and a half displaced peasants and farmers, 800,000 are Afro-Colombian, and only in the Pacific Littoral there are around 266,219 who have migrated to the cities of Buenaventura, Tumaco, Guapí and Quibdó. (Acción Social de la Presidencia de la República, as cited by Mosquera, J.D.) As Arbeláez points out, Chocó has become not only the department with less social investment per capita and less development in terms of education, health, and infrastructure, but also the one where the most brutal violence has occurred.

La "visibilisation" politique et médiatique massive et délibérée du territoire, des ressources et de la population noire par la légalisation et la médiatisation de droits collectifs sur la base de l'ethnie apparaît comme l'un des facteurs de l'inclusion brutale de la région dans la violence (Losonczy 608).<sup>3</sup>

Nowadays, the Afro-Colombian population represents approximately one fifth of the Colombian population, around ten million people. Their presence is especially visible in the Atlantic and Pacific Coast, but also in major cities like Cali, Medellín, and Bogotá. According to the latest report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the violation of human rights of indigenous peoples and Afro-Colombian communities is still a major issue, as they are profoundly affected by the crossfire of the armed conflict that tends to happen in their lands. Another report from the United Nations about Youth of African Descent in Latin America revealed that Afro-Colombian youth is clearly underprivileged in

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<sup>3</sup> The mass and deliberate political and media "visibilization" of the territory, its resources, and the black population by the legalization and mediatisation of ethnic-based collective rights appears like one of the causes of the region's brutal inclusion in the violent conflicts.

comparison with the rest of the population of other ethnicities in terms of access to shelter, basic infrastructure, water, health, education and information.

Consequently, to counteract the difficulties faced by Afro-Colombians and improve their situation in Colombia, a number of Afro-Colombian organizations and movements were created, especially after the Constitutional reform of 1991 and Law 70 of 1993. Many of these groups were initially focused on developing a collective identity with common African roots that would allow Afro-Colombian communities to be visible and included in the benefits brought about by Law 70 (Losonczy 604). But as more scholars, as well as local, national, and international organizations have joined the debate, proposal, and implementation of short-term and long-term solutions, the focus has been shifting towards a "recuperation of the past (...) not so much by what blackness was as by what it may become" (Wade 353).

As a result of the work done by some of these Afro-Colombian organizations, young people, moved by their own realities and by the ongoing dialogue on ethnic issues, decided not to remain silent in these matters. As Dennis shows in his study about Afro-Colombian hip-hop, several hip-hop bands (*Ashanty*, *Ghettos Clan*, *Flacos Flow y Melanina*, *ChocQuibTown*, *Carbono*, and *Voodoo SoulJahs*) were born after participating in activities and programs developed by Afro-Colombian organizations (277), which made them even more aware of their legacy and committed to their communities. *ChocQuibTown* was one of these groups of young people who decided to raise their voices to denounce the injustice they face and to promote unity among black people by celebrating their identity.

### *Analysis*

*ChocQuibTown* was officially born in 2007 with the release of their album *Somos Pacífico*, but they have been writing and composing songs for eleven years. The approach to their mission of making "music with conscience and identity"<sup>4</sup> (interview with Margarita Rojas), according to Tostao, is done with a positive attitude and somehow diplomatically. They want to denounce discrimination and injustice, but they don't want to constantly accuse their audience of exercising racism, as that "may turn some listeners away from their music and its message" (Dennis 274). They seem to be well aware of the negative reactions that the first Afro-Colombian organizations (*Cimarrón* and *Centre for the Investigation and Development of Black Culture*) faced when they started denouncing racism and discriminations and were accused, even by black people, of "reverse racism," separatism, or inferiority complex (Wade 342-343, Dennis 275). Consider the following extract from the song *Oro* (Gold) that lends its title to their second album.

A mi tierra llego un fulano / Llevándose todo mi oro / a mi  
 tierra llego un fulano / llevándose todo mi oro /  
 Vestido de blanco entero / y con acento extranjero / prometió a  
 cambio de oro / dejarme mucho dinero / el tipo de quien les  
 hablo / nunca mas apareció / cogió mi metal precioso / y todo se  
 lo llevo  
 Ladrón te fuiste / con mi oro / y me dejaste / sin mi oro

*To my land a someone came / who took all my gold / To my  
 land a someone came /  
 who took all my gold  
 Dressed all in white / and with a foreign accent / in exchange  
 for gold he promised /  
 to leave a lot of money / the guy I am talking about / never  
 came back / he grabbed my precious metal / And took it all*

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<sup>4</sup> Translated from an interview in Spanish.

*Thief you left / with my gold / and you left me / without my gold*

This song represents a double denounce. It refers to the transnational companies that for many years have been allowed into the Pacific region and have exploited its precious human, geological, and biological resources and haven't contributed anything whatsoever to the development or sustainability of the region.

To' mi oro / se h'acabao / los dueños son empleados / más pobreza ha llegao / la inocencia se ha marchao / y de aquí no me voy, voy / de esta tierra yo soy, soy / mi alma es como los ríos / camino recorrido

*All my gold / is gone / the owners are employees / more poverty has come / innocence has left / and I am not leaving this land / I am from this land / my soul is like the rivers / the path traversed*

The song also connects what these foreign companies have done in the region with what the Spanish did during the Conquest: offering Indians trinkets (mirrors) of different sorts in exchange for the valuable gold.

Con solo engaño y na' má' / viniste pa' cá / a llevarte mi oro / señor...  
yo te deajo / vete con todo y espejo

*With deceit and no more / you came here / to take my gold / Sir... / I leave you / Go with your mirrors and all*

By connecting the current situation of exploitation faced by Afro-Colombians and the stripping of all our riches with the arrival of the Spanish, *ChocQuibTown* is cleverly appealing to the national *mestizo* identity that should share the pain of Afro-Colombians and indigenous peoples who are being massacred and displaced of their lands by the armed conflict, a conflict that is really about control of these bountiful lands (Arbeláez 29) and the profit that will come from

the exploitation of these resources. This issue should concern all Colombians because the Pacific Region is the richest region of the country and should be managed accordingly. Their popular song *De Donde Vengo Yo (Where I come from)* also refers to this crucial aspect of the current state of affairs for Afro-Colombians living in the Pacific littoral: the explored and unexplored riches of the land and the violent displacement of the population who legally own the land.

Monte culebra / Máquinas de guerra / Desplazamientos por  
intereses en la tierra / Subienda de pescado / Agua por todo  
lado / Se represa / Que ni el Discovery ha explotado  
Hay minas llenas de oro y platino /  
Reyes en la biodiversidad (...)

*Mountain Snake / Machines of war / Displacements due to  
interest in the land / Fish rise / Water everywhere / It floods  
/ That not even Discovery (Channel) has exploited  
There are mines full of gold and platinum / Kings of  
biodiversity (...)*

This type of social and political critique as a form of resistance is not a new phenomenon in this region of the country. One of the most popular festivals in the region, el *Festival de San Pacho*, has for many years fed off the problematic of invisibility of Afro-Colombians in Colombia and the indifference of the national government towards the Pacific region. San Pacho is the name given to Saint Francis of Asisi in the Pacific region, one inherited element of the religion imposed by the Spanish colonizers. As Mosquera clearly explains, through parades of tableaux the inhabitants of the different neighborhoods of Quibdó (capital of Chocó) "weave together an intricate parable of displacements, a series of animated dramas that express political alternatives, denounce local and metropolitan hypocrisies, and advance a narrative of local utopias" (178). The contestatory nature of this festival allows Chocoans to write their

own history and expose their own views on past and present, local and national events, as opposed to national media and government accounts. Mosquera explains that, before the Constitutional Reform of 1991, the themes of the paraded tableaux revolved around the issues that preoccupied the black population: "state-sponsored marginalization, economic isolation and racism (...), alongside critiques of local and regional politics..." (178) After the Constitutional Reform many of these concerns are still enacted, but there's evidence of the growing self-awareness of what it means to be an Afro-Colombian. Therefore, the revisionist and contestational spirit of the festival could be analyzed as a form of Afro-Colombian *signifyin* –as defined by Henry Louis Gates Jr.– in the way it uses humor, irony, and parody to present critiques of the local and national governments. It also serves to reinforce identity and a sense of unity, as well as to create a "space for evolution" (Mosquera 183), since it involves music, dance, and other Afro-Colombian cultural expressions that reinforce perceptions of Afro-Colombian blackness. *ChocQuibTown's* music, just like the *Festival de San Pacho*, is multifunctional as it both preserves and transforms the cultural identity that gives origin to it (Mosquera 184).

This is vital for understanding the concept of identity today. According to Martín-Barbero, our identity is not what we think we were. For our identity to remain alive and fluid, it must not be based on what is different from external influences, but on what it integrates from outside. Otherwise, identity and culture would die, as if they remained untouched in a museum. Cultural identity should not be preserved, as preservation implies that the "object" is finished and there's no room for innovation and growth (10-13). This helps explain the evident hybridity in *ChocQuibTown's* music, defined in their Facebook page as "urban hip-hop funk." Hip-hop

came to Chocó and to Colombia in the 1980s, soon after its emergence in the US. It came through Colombians who had travelled to the US either legally or illegally, and also through TV programs and movies. In the 1990s the music and television industry helped spread rap and hip-hop in Latin markets and both legal and illegal music distribution helped hip-hop get to Afro-Colombians who were mostly living in large cities due to displacement and had become part of the national processes of modernization and globalization (Dennis 273). Instead of taking hip-hop and its accompanying paraphernalia as an imposition from U.S. music industry or as a form of neo-colonization, Afro-Colombian youth chose to borrow it due to their admiration and identification with African-American political figures and celebrities from sports as well as from the music and movie industries. This identification led to the appropriation and assimilation of certain behaviours, gestures, fashion, hairdos, and other external manifestations of the African-American identity (279). Undeniably, the fact that hip-hop comes from other members of the African diaspora is what entices the Afro-Colombian appropriation of it (Dennis 280). Returning to Martín-Barbero, hegemony is part seduction and complicity: the dominator gathers the interests of the dominated (17). Besides, even though hip-hop comes from the hegemonic U.S., it originally constituted a cultural product of African-Americans, a non-hegemonic, marginalized sub-culture within the U.S. Additionally, more authentic traditional types of music such as salsa, vallenato, or cumbia were simply not appropriate for social messages and protest (Dennis 277).

*ChocQuibTown's* "folkloric fusions" (Dennis 274) combine rap with salsa, currulao, and other Afro-Colombian rhythms and incorporate traditional instruments from Chocó such as marimbas, congas, and

tamboras. In their interview with Margarita Rojas from Colombian TV channel Caracol about their most recent album *Eso es lo que hay* (That's what there is), Slow explains that they keep experimenting with other genres (ballads in this particular album) and with their own vocal potential. They are also inviting other artists, such as Zuli Murillo, whom they refer to as Maestra Zuli Murillo, a respected singer who is traditionally played all over Chocó at New Year's Eve parties. Instead of becoming a homogenization of the hegemonic cultural product, Afro-Colombian hip-hop bands are creating a hybrid hip-hop version that is enriched by the local histories, experiences and cultural elements, sung in Spanish (Dennis 286) and full of expressions typical of the Pacific coast: *calentura* – black passion, *estar al cucho* - marginalized, *tumbao* - rhythm, *bámbara* - blessing, *caché* – good spirit or showy style (Dennis 286), *yenyere* – festive environment (Dennis 286). Afro-Colombian youth, just like other African diaspora youth in the Caribbean, have created "new stylistic possibilities without abandoning or turning their back on their inherited cultural background" (Flores 162). The connection of African diasporic youth through hip-hop in Latin America and the Caribbean helps materialize an African diasporic identity, that as Wright explains, "must somehow simultaneously incorporate the diversity of Black identities in the diaspora yet also link all those identities to show that they indeed constitute a diaspora rather than an unconnected aggregate of different peoples linked only in name" (Flores 2).

Now, how is *ChocQuibTown* contributing to the reaffirmation of an Afro-Colombian identity? How are their songs fighting or promoting stereotypes? How do they celebrate Afro-Colombian culture, experiences, and achievements? How are they promoting social change against covert discrimination and internalized racism?

Both Fanon and Martín-Barbero coincide in the precondition for the formation of identity: in order for identity to develop there must be mediation and recognition from the other, from each other (Fanon 217, Martín-Barbero 627). "(...) I do battle for the creation of a human world – that is, of a world of reciprocal recognitions." (Fanon 218) Martín-Barbero also adds that the value of cultural expressivity lies on telling your history and being taken into account economically and politically.

By emphasizing the unity of their people in their songs, *ChocQuibTown* is helping in the construction of individual autonomies, for according to Bhabha, "(t)he property of the human being is the collective or the transindividual construction of her or his individual autonomy; and the value of human agency arises from the fact that no one can be liberated by others, although no one can liberate herself or himself without others." (6) In their videos, they reinforce this idea of unity by having Afro-Colombian and even indigenous people of all ages and in different spaces and situations sing their songs with them (*Somos Pacífico, De donde vengo yo, Oro*). These are powerful images as people join their voices to spread the message expressed in the lyrics, making it truly meaningful and full of feeling. We can see this strategy at work in *Somos Pacífico*.

Somos Pacífico, estamos unidos / Nos une la región / La pinta,  
la raza y el don del sabor

*We are the Pacific region, we are united / We are united by  
our region / by appearance, race and the gift of groove*

Ok, es toda una conexión / Como un corrillo, Chocó, Valle,  
Cauca / Y mis paisanos de Nariño / Todo este repertorio me  
produce orgullo / Y si somos tantos / Porque estamos tan al  
cucho

*Ok, this is all a connection / Like a huddle, Chocó, Valle,  
Cauca / And my fellows from Nariño / All this repertoire  
makes me proud / But if we are so many / How come we are  
in the corner*

Unidos por siempre, por la sangre, el color / Y hasta por la  
tierra / No hay quien se me pierda / Con un vínculo familiar  
que aterra

*United forever, by the blood, the color / and even by the land  
/ No one can be lost / Due to our family ties that are  
impressive*

Este es Pacífico colombiano / Una raza un sector / Lleno de  
hermanas y hermanos  
*This is the Colombian Pacific / A race a region / Full of  
sisters and brothers*

These songs raise awareness of the difficulties faced by Afro-Colombians, but they don't dwell in that fact; instead they aim to spread the seed of cultural self-awareness and pride. With such music, they want to awaken "the black" inside each listener, as expressed in their song *Son Berejú*: "Ese negro que llevas adentro te lo saco yo" (*That black person you have inside, I will bring out.*) As Dennis explains, "Afro-Colombian rappers are searching for a musical identity, which in many ways reflects a broader need for nurturing and strengthening ethnic identities" (287). In what is probably their most popular and well-known song, *Somos Pacífico*, they celebrate their African roots and hybrid traditions by telling their audience about their religious celebrations, food, idiosyncrasies, and achievements.

En el Pacífico hay de todo para que goce / Cantadores, colores,  
buenos sabores / Y muchos santos para que adores

*In the Pacific there's everything for you to enjoy / Singers,  
colours, good flavours / And many saints to adore*

(...) Donde el manjar al desayuno es plátano con queso / Y  
eso que no te he hablado de Buenaventura / Donde se baila  
el currulao, salsa un poco pega'o / Puerto fiel al pescado /  
Donde se baila aguabajo y pasillo, / al lado del río / Con mis  
prietillos

(...) *Where the delight for breakfast is ripe plantain with  
cheese / and I haven't even told you about Buenaventura /  
Where currulao and salsa, a little close, are danced / Port  
faithful to fish / Where aguabajo and pasillo are danced / by  
the river / with my black fellows*

Seguimos aquí con la herencia africana / Más fuerte que  
antes / Llevando el legado a todas partes / de forma  
constante / expresándonos a través de lo cultural / música,  
artes plásticas, danza en general / acento golpia'o al hablar /  
(...) después de esto seguro hay muchísimo más

*We are still here with our African heritage / stronger than  
ever / bringing our legacy everywhere / constantly /  
expressing ourselves through culture / music, plastic arts,  
dance in general / jagged accent when we speak / (...)  
after this there's surely much more*

As Dennis points out "these Afro-Colombian rappers use whatever seems to help them highlight their 'blackness'". (290) There is, however, a slight tendency to rely on and reinforce stereotypes. In their song *De Donde Vengo Yo*, as well as in *Somos Pacífico*, there's

reference to widespread stereotypes about black people, and some specific ones about Afro-Colombians from the Pacific Coast. Traces of 400 years of Colonial discourse have permanently embedded colonial ideology in the collective national mind and it is hard to see past what is supposedly true or natural. Arbeláez found similarities between African oral traditions of Chocó and several countries in Latin American and the Caribbean and therefore concluded that they were introduced by the Spanish colonizers to create a negative image of black people (Arbeláez 25, 27). Many Afro-Colombians have internalized racism because they are not aware of how their identity was constructed in colonial times and just keep repeating the same patterns of the past.

Hay mucha calentura en Buenaventura / Y si sos chocoano  
 sos arrecho por cultura  
 (*Somos Pacífico*)

*There's a lot of passion in Buenaventura / and if you are from  
 Chocó you are horny by culture.*

Similarly, *De Donde Vengo Yo* talks about the generalized poverty and economy of survival that Afro-Colombians experience, which is partly attributed to their drinking and partying and the tendency to spend the hard-earned money in liquor. On a similar note, they also fall on the trap of spreading totalizing or essentializing views of what Afro-Colombians are, leaving little room for individuality and homogenizing the difference they want to reinforce. Of course, they are not academics who know of the concerns of postcolonialist theorists and worry about the universalization of subaltern identities starting to raise their voices; their main focus currently is the emphasis on their search for and reinforcement of an Afro-Colombian identity.

## Conclusion

By actively and intensely promoting their music nationally and internationally, *ChocQuibTown* is favoring recognition of Afro-Colombian identity and are bringing attention to the multiculturalism of Colombia and of Latin America. In their songs, they denounce invisibility, indifference, and injustice, but most importantly, portray a people who stick together, resist together, and love life despite their constant struggles. Goyo explains that their songs portray the African presence in Colombia, Colombian people of African descent who share certain lifestyles and experiences. In their Facebook page, the band characterizes its music as an "urban sound filled with joy, celebration and notes from the thick Afro-Colombian jungle". They also define their music as homage to the land where they were born, Chocó; "a land of rhythm, open hearts, tears, big struggles, and many people with a will to progress". Goyo tells Margarita Rojas that they also want to show difference and emphasize the diversity of Latin America, a heterogeneous land full of diverse people, such as Afro-Colombians, that can be found as you go from the mountain, to the rivers, or to the coast. Through their musical presence, *ChocQuibTown* is contributing to making Afro-Colombians visible and facilitating the work of the numerous Afro-Colombian organization in different areas of the country.

In the interview in Canal Caracol, they manifest their desire to keep on growing, learning, and bringing their message wherever they go. They are also happy because, through the alliance with Sony Music, one of the biggest companies in the US music industry, they will be able to distribute their albums in Colombia and the U.S. and to bring their music and identity to the whole world. By working towards promotion of their music, *ChocQuibTown* has certainly cleared a path in the jungle of indifference towards Afro-Colombians

and has given an additional thrust to Afro-Colombian organizations that can use them as a strong local role-model to engage the communities in the implementation of their programs. It is the time to empower black people to shake off historical pre-determinations and embrace, as Benjamin suggests, "the forgotten future in the past that it is necessary to redeem, liberate, and mobilize anew" (as cited in Martín-Barbero 633). *ChocQuibTown* constitutes an example of resistance to pre-determination and work towards self-determination by working together as a band and as a family to achieve common goals; therefore they constitute a tool for Afro-Colombian organizations to continue to help "the poor to become better organized and mobilized locally, regionally, and globally in order to take charge of their destinies" (Green 382).

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