I was born here: Community and Belonging in an Afro-Bolivian Town

A thesis submitted to The University of Manchester for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Ethnographic Documentary in the Faculty of Humanities

2013

Charles Sturtevant

School of Social Sciences/Anthropology
A note to the viewer/reader

This thesis consists of a film and an accompanying text. Each addresses the same ethnographic material, and responds to the same set of questions. They are fundamentally concerned with questions about how belonging is claimed and contested in the town of Chicaloma. They are both constructed as stand-alone documents, but they complement each other by emphasising different aspects of these claims and contestations. The film presents these processes and the everyday tensions that occupy Chicalomeños. The text provides historical context and analyses this material in reference to existing literature.

Though the documents are presented separately, the production of each depended on the other. The film attempts to reconstruct the social and a social and geographic spaces in which the ethnography was carried out. It calls on what MacDougal, citing Balázs, identifies as the medium’s “power to engulf the spectator in social and geographical space, [and] allow the spectator to experience films as an imaginary participant, ‘surrounded by the characters of the film’” (Balázs, 1970, MacDougal, 2006, 56). This reconstruction of social and geographic space is achieved through editing and is based on the manipulation of a viewer’s reactions by controlling the rhythm and intensity of the material. Where text seeks to explain, film seeks to elicit reactions. As a film editor orders and reorders events in order to make connections between moments that occurred in distinct times and places, she attends to the inexplicable and intangible. This attention influenced both the text and the film from the first review of the filmed material to the conclusion of the project. The first cut of the film served as a first draft of both the film and the text, and as both developed, they continued to inform each other.

Both works are set in the town of Chicaloma, the capital of the Chicaloma canton in the Yungas region of Bolivia. Before the Revolution of 1952, most of the original workers on the haciendas – referred to as colonos– were the descendants of enslaved Africans who had worked on these haciendas, producing coca, since the
colonial period. Following the revolution of 1952 and the subsequent agrarian reform of 1953, the former colonos began to establish houses in town and abandon their houses on the former hacienda estates. This process gained momentum when services – electricity and potable water – were established in town in the 70s, and 90s, respectively, and currently most residents live in the town and maintain only their fields in the lands of the former haciendas. A significant number of migrants from the highlands have arrived since then. These migrants occupied lands that had not been redistributed through the agrarian reform, either by making arrangements with the former hacienda owners or by suing for adverse possession. In cases where these lands were close to the town of Chicaloma, migrants joined existing sindicatos and participate as vecinos of the town. In cases where these lands are located at some distance from the town, migrants formed new comunidades governed by new sindicatos. They participate in the Chicaloma regional agrarian union, but do not relate to the town as vecinos. The text and the film deal almost exclusively with the original sindicatos and the town, rather than the distant, more recent communities.

The two documents are designed so that each can stand alone, and therefore can be viewed in either order. Nevertheless, since they are designed as complements to each other, I would encourage viewers to think closely about which to approach first, and ask them to pay attention to how their experience of one informs their engagement with the other. A DVD of the film is included with this text.
# Table of Contents

A note to the viewer/reader .................................................................................................................. 2
Abstract: ............................................................................................................................................ 5
Declaration: ...................................................................................................................................... 6
Copyright Statement: ......................................................................................................................... 6
Introduction: ....................................................................................................................................... 8
1. Blacks, blackness and the Bolivian nation ..................................................................................... 11
2. First arrivals .................................................................................................................................. 14
3. A history of haciendas ..................................................................................................................... 18
4. Migrants and usurpers ..................................................................................................................... 21
5. Constructing Chicaloma ................................................................................................................ 26
6. Football and Saya .......................................................................................................................... 32
7. A History of sindicatos ................................................................................................................... 37
8. Hacienda histories ......................................................................................................................... 41
9. Contested belonging: a sindicato meeting .................................................................................... 44
Conclusions: ...................................................................................................................................... 48
Bibliography: .................................................................................................................................... 51

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Abstract:

A thesis submitted to The University of Manchester for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Ethnographic Documentary in the Faculty of Humanities

Title: I was born here: Community and Belonging in an Afro-Bolivian Town 2013

This thesis consists of a film and an accompanying text. Both documents are fundamentally concerned with questions about how belonging is claimed and contested in the town of Chicaloma. The film presents these processes and the everyday tensions that occupy Chicalomeños. The text provides historical context and analyses this material in reference to existing literature. Both works are set in the town of Chicaloma, the capital of the Chicaloma canton in the Yungas region of Bolivia. Chicaloma is often represented as an Afro-Bolivian town, but the influx of large numbers of migrants from the highlands has complicated this situation. In Chicaloma, fulfilling obligations as a sindicato member or in relation to a public service committee and claims of historical permanence – particularly claims of direct descent from colonos who laboured on the pre-revolution haciendas – form the core of local citizenship practices. At stake are the means to generate income from coca sales and access to public services such as water and electricity. This project looks at how claims to belonging based on reference to historical permanence are deployed in negotiations over access to these resources, and particularly how these claims intersect with ethnoracial identity. I will analyse the tensions that arise in these claims to belonging in light of academic challenges that question the idea of citizenship as a set of rights and obligations in relation to a nation state. Particularly, I want to look at challenges which focus on practices through which people construct community – here understood broadly to mean simultaneously, town, region, religious group, productive sector, union, as well as nation (Goudsmit, 2006, Lazar, 2008, Stack, 2003, Stack and Gordon, 2007). The contradictions and tensions that arise in light of the intersection between these citizenship practices, on the one hand, and ethnoracial sensibilities on the other hand, reveal them to be fraught with tension, conflict and exclusion. This will contribute to academic literature calls into question the idea of citizenship as a set of rights and obligations in relation to a nation state, particularly literature that focuses on practices through which people construct their community and themselves in relation to that community. I draw heavily on Jan Hoffman French’s work on the relationship between legal processes and identification in the northeast of Brazil and Sian Lazar’s work on practices of citizenship and belonging in El Alto.
Declaration:

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Text:

I was born here: Community and Belonging in an Afro-Bolivian Town

2013

Charles Sturtevant
University of Manchester
School of Social Sciences/Anthropology
Introduction:

At a meeting of the sindicato "La Joya," Santos, a former officer of the sindicato, intervened in a discussion about the organisation’s bylaws, suggesting how they could better enforce compliance with social and economic obligations. He eloquently expressed the tension over what it means to belong in this community. On the one hand he identifies the kinds of normative discourses that create subjects who fulfil certain social and economic obligations. On the other, he notes the value of claims based on a historical birthright. While not contradictory, each draws its moral force from a different source:

Think about it. Sometimes we get fired up about something and we say, "Compáñeros, the vecino who doesn’t comply should pay 1,000. And ... like sheep, [we all go running off], and we vote ‘yes’." But when it’s our turn to pay that “yes”, we say “No compáñeros. How can it be 1,000? I was born here”.¹

Santos’ comment addresses the role of belonging in subject’s construction of community and sense of self in relation to this community. To what extent does belonging depend on fulfilling certain obligations and to what extent is it a question of personal history? He highlights the role that claims to belonging play in validating a position in disputes over economic and practical issues. By raising this tension, Santos aims to encourage his compáñeros to adopt formal rules that reflect the moral value of claims to belonging by birthright. These tensions remain unresolved, though, and belonging remains a point of daily contention and contestation within the community.

This project will look at the tensions apparent in claims to belonging in light of academic challenges that question the idea of citizenship as a set of rights and obligations in relation to a nation state. Particularly, I want to look at challenges which focus on practices through which people construct themselves in relationship

¹ All translations are the author’s own.
to a community – here understood broadly to mean simultaneously, town, region, religious group, productive sector, union, as well as nation (Goudsmit, 2006, Lazar, 2008, Stack, 2003, Stack and Gordon, 2007). I will do this by exploring how these kinds of citizenship practices intersect with ethnoracial sensibilities in Chicaloma, a town in the Yungas of La Paz that is commonly represented as a centre of Afro-Bolivian culture. This understanding is complicated by the fact that the influx of a significant number of immigrants from highland regions within Bolivia has altered the demographics of the canton. I draw heavily on Jan Hoffman French’s work on the relationship between legal processes and identification in the northeast of Brazil and Sian Lazar’s work on practices of citizenship and belonging in El Alto, Bolivia.

French emphasises the ways that contextual factors influence processes of identification and boundary formation. This work describes a specific legal context that offers preferential rights to favoured identity groups (indigenous peoples in the 1970s and quilombo communities after the constitution of 1988). In the town of Mocambo, different parts of the population deployed different identities as they made claims on the state for access to land that they had farmed for several generations as sharecroppers. Each sector formalised its identity around certain practices, including performances of legally recognised markers such as dance or material culture and telling of origin stories in ways that emphasise descent from a particular ethnoracial category. These gradually acquired new meanings, and came to mark the boundaries of the community in question. In this case, French focuses on legal factors that shaped practices through which people construct their own identity, though discursive, practical and political limitations also play a role. To the extent that French addresses citizenship, she casts subjects as petitioners for legally favoured status. The central question is about the relationship between the national (legal) context and local practices through which subjects establish their identities (French, 2004, 2006, 2009).

Lazar’s work deals in much more depth with the practices of collective citizenship through which people construct their community and sense of self in relation to this
community. She worked with various “nested affiliations,” including vecinos\(^2\) of a neighbourhood in El Alto and members of fish-sellers’ unions. For Lazar, participation in these nested affiliations – rather than belonging to a national community – forms the core of collective citizenship practices that are neither a legal category that brings with it an accompanying bundle of rights and responsibilities (as liberal scholars would argue), nor simply undifferentiated participation in a communitarian or collective whole (as indigenist scholars would argue), but rather a process of constructing a sense of belonging to a collective through practices that simultaneously define the community and its subjects. This argument emphasises belonging to communities that are inherently local and particular, through which citizens’ relationship to the state is mediated. While she does address national contexts such as the political party system and the peculiarities of Bolivian labour unions, her emphasis is less on how these national contexts limit or shape local practices, and more on how the community folds these contexts seamlessly into its own ongoing process of constructing itself. It is a conception of citizenship that is focused much more intently on belonging at a local level. However, it does not address the boundaries of these communities or processes through which they are formed and maintained (Lazar, 2004, 2005, 2008).

This ethnography of Chicaloma will look at practices through which various nested affiliations in Chicaloma are constructed as communities, and ask how these practices intersect with ethnoracial sensibilities. I will pay particular attention to the ways in which claims to belonging are deployed and contested in relation to these nested affiliations, focusing on sindicatos and the town of Chicaloma. Claims to belonging are made and contested through discourses that emphasise historical permanence in Chicaloma, reparation for forced labour on the haciendas and the

\(^2\) Lazar draws a brief history of the term “vecinos”, and dates it to Spanish and colonial concepts of citizenship, which were based on rootedness in urban territories. In the zone of Rosas Pampas, this concept refers to a particular kind of “urban citizenship,” which emphasises territoriality rather than ethnicity. This form of citizenship is “corporate, rooted and physical” (2008, 5). Lazar identifies the junta escolar and the junta vecinal as the key locations for channelling development to construct the zone, both in a bricks-and-mortar sense and in the sense of belonging to a particular affiliation. The word is used Chicaloma as well, and seems to carry many of the same meanings particularly an association with urban life in town rather than rural life in a comunidad.
rights of those who work the land to own it, as well as citizenship practices like fulfilling social and economic obligations as vecinos of the town and members of comunidades/sindicatos. Descendants of immigrants from the highlands and descendants from the colonos who worked as labour tenants on the haciendas are positioned to make different claims to belonging. This has practical and economic consequences in that access to land and the legal support to sell coca depends on membership in a sindicato. These claims do not operate in isolation: disputes that occur in the realm of a sindicato might draw on claims to belonging that refer to the town of Chicaloma or the region of the Yungas rather than to descent from a specific hacienda. Though these negotiations rarely make direct reference to an ethnic group, they resonate differently as they intersect with categories such as Afro-Bolivian or Aymara. For instance histories that emphasise historical connection to the region may take the form assertions of direct descent from the – mostly black – colonos who laboured on the pre-revolution haciendas. On the other hand, migrants who arrived from the highlands might cite preconquest Incaic peoples as first to occupy the region. Claims to belonging are deployed in specific settings to reinforce their assertions of particular, practical rights to resources of economic and social value.

1. Blacks, blackness and the Bolivian nation

Black populations and blackness in Bolivia have received relatively little attention in academic literature both nationally and internationally. In the beginning of the 20th century, Bolivian intellectuals interested in constructing a national identity looked to a doctrine of mestizaje following the influence of Mexican social theorists (Busdiecker, 2006, Gildner, 2012, Klein, 1982, Sanjines, 2004). According to this ideology, the mixture of the best racial characteristics of both the European and the Indigenous populations flourish in the Bolivian national character. In practice, following the revolution of ’52 the Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario’s (MNR) political agenda implemented this ideology by instituting an official shift from the term “indio” to the term “campesino,” universal suffrage, agrarian reform and
universal education, all aimed at providing a guiding Spanish influence to the (still seen as backwards, but no longer officially “Indian”) rural areas. This plan was contested, beginning in the 1960s, not by challenging the existence of mestizaje as a governing principle within Bolivian society, but by challenging the value of each element that composes the mixture. Indigenista intellectuals argued for the positive valuation of indigenous cosmologies as an organizing principle for the nation (Gildner, 2012, Rivera Cusicanqui, 1987). This process of contesting the value of the European in the dialectic of mestizaje has contributed to debates about multiculturalism in the 1990s, and to the constitutional assembly of 2007 which reconstructed Bolivia as a Plurinational State (Postero, 2007, Busdiecker, 2006, 2009, Schavelzon, 2012).

Literature that does address blacks or blackness in Bolivia addresses this exclusion either by identifying black participation in Bolivian society and history or by examining the ongoing marginalisation of blackness from discourses of national identity. The existing and historically important populations of black Bolivians have not been counted in censuses, considered in multicultural education programs, acknowledged for their historical contribution to the formation of the Bolivian nation, or accepted as political equals of indigenous ethnic groups (Angola, 2010, Busdiecker, 2006, Piqueras, 2008). Activist authors have sought to redress this marginalisation by identifying African cultural or linguistic retentions and contributions to a Bolivian national cultural identity (Angola, 2003, 2010, Lipski, 2006, 2008). Others have explored the role of blacks in colonial and early republican society. Eugenia Bridikhina examined the role of black slaves and freedmen in the urban centres of the colonial period, noting their work in the royal mint in Potosí, privileged positions among servants in Spanish households and role as artisans, bakers and local merchants in the urban areas of La Plata (now Sucre), La Paz and Potosí (Bridikhina, 2007). Others explore the role of black slaves and freedmen on the eastern flank of the Andes, in viniculture, transportation, cattle ranching and as labourers on the Jesuit haciendas. In this frontier region, in a context of constant conflict with Chiriguano Indians, blacks played important roles in the economic and social life of the colony (Brockington, 2006, Olson, 2010). All of these works deal in
some way with processes of identification and expose the fluid and shifting social spaces within which individuals and communities construct themselves.

Sara Busdiecker addresses the issue of discursive marginalisation in present-day Bolivia directly. As she looks at the position of blacks within this discourse of *mestizaje*, Busdiecker identifies certain spatial patterns that locate blackness in the particular geography of the Yungas in such a way that it does not threaten the overarching discourse of a *mestizo* national identity. In other Latin American countries where national identities are defined by similar ideologies of Indian/white *mestizaje*, black populations encounter similar difficulties negotiating a space for themselves within the national identity (Anderson, 2007, Greene, 2007, Hooker, 2005, Lewis, 2000, Piqueras, 2008, Rahier, 2008). When blacks are referenced in a national context, they are almost always located in the area of the Yungas. The warm, subtropical valleys that make up the Yungas are, as Busdiecker (2006, 2009) argues, frequently reconstituted as “African” or “Like Africa,” and therefore are a “natural place” for blacks in Bolivia. She cites the pervasive account that blacks were brought to work in the mines in Potosí, were found to be poorly suited to work in the altitude and cold and subsequently transported to the Yungas.³ This account of the origin of blacks in Bolivia naturalizes the presence of blacks in the Yungas by transforming the space into “distant Africa” (Busdiecker, 2006). This sense that the Yungas is somehow “African” and therefore a natural place for black Bolivians is reinforced through a number of other references that make this connection. Busdiecker cites newspaper articles and tourist brochures that refer to the Yungas as somehow “like Africa” when they discuss blacks, as well as popular sayings that suggest blacks do not belong in the altiplano. On one particularly telling occasion, at an event attended by president Evo Morales in the Yungas town of Coroico, “the only time he acknowledged [the Afro-Bolivians in the crowd] was when, after concluding his speech, he danced Saya around Coroico’s central plaza with a young Afro-Bolivian woman on each arm, at which point he commented, ‘I feel like I’m in

³This story, though pervasive, fails to account for the ongoing presence of blacks in Potosí and historically documented presence of blacks in much of the Audiencia de Charcas throughout the colonial period, noted by Bridikhina, Brockington and Olson, among others.
Africa’” (2009, 113). By making the Yungas symbolically Africa, this discourse isolates blackness to a specific location and contains it within a particular space. As Busdiecker concludes, “even in the Yungas, then, blacks were ‘out of place,’ a people or ‘race,’ out of its natural space — which would seem to be, judging by the words of Morales, distant (in space and time) Africa” (2009, 114). Once the Yungas are reconstituted as “Africa,” blackness there is no longer a threat to Bolivian national identity. It is discursively localized, contained and excluded. On the other hand, the construction of the Yungas as an “African” space permits the inversion of this exclusion process in specific contexts in the region.

All of these works deal with a relationship between blacks and a national context. They aim to trouble the idea of Indian-white mestizaje as the foundation of a Bolivian national identity. They show that national discourses ignore blacks in Bolivia’s colonial past and confine blackness to the “African” Yungas in the present. These works do not, however, address the question of how blackness is enacted within the Yungas, the space where it is permitted. The ethnography that follows addresses these ethnoracial sensibilities not through national processes and discourses, but rather in a local and particular context. It explores the intersection between blackness in a Yungas town and processes of constructing community. I pay particular attention to the specific practices and discourses through which residents construct Chicaloma as a black (or indigenous) space, and through which they make claims to belonging in that community. This intersection between ethnoracial sensibilities on the one hand, and local citizenship practices on the other, exposes — often subtle and hidden — tension, conflict and exclusion inherent in processes of constructing community and claiming belonging.

2. First arrivals

Almost as soon as I had arrived in Chicaloma, I began to hear different histories about the origins of the town from black and indigenous residents. Each declared that they were the original inhabitants of the area, suggesting, therefore, that their claims to belonging were legitimate. The politics of memory revealed in these
histories (Stack, 2003) suggest that each group was positioned differently in relation to the identity of the town. The common sense understanding that “Chicaloma is an Afro-Bolivian town” meets with contestation from those who find themselves excluded from an Afro-Bolivian identity. The two examples I give are from Joselo, the General Secretary of the sindicato “La Joya” and from Fausto, a vecino of Chicaloma who occupies several official positions on committees such as the boundary committee and the defence committee and has written an unpublished monograph on coca cultivation throughout the Yungas. Joselo self-identifies as Afro-Bolivian, and is directly descended from former colonos who worked on the hacienda. Fausto’s parents arrived from Tiwanaku, in the La Paz altiplano separately, and were married in Chicaloma.

Joselo took me to visit the former hacienda house several times and on our first visit, he told me a particular variation on the standard story of the arrival of Afrodescendants to Chicaloma. His account has it that:

When our parents were brought to Bolivia, they didn’t arrive directly here to the Yungas. They arrived to the mines of Potosí. The Spanish people brought them because they needed labour. That is to say, that indigenous people worked in the mine and since they needed labour, they started to bring, let’s say, slaves from Africa ... They arrived to the mines of Potosí, and not only to the mines. They arrived to the hacienda owners, to the patrons that there were in those times in Potosí ... They worked for two centuries in the mines and then the little revolutions started for the foundation of Bolivia. Different revolutions started to crop up ... And once the revolution began, the people, since they were accustomed to the warm weather (because Potosí is cold) since they were accustomed to warmth, they looked for a warm place. So they escaped, practically, from the mines and arrived here. And there were different, let’s say, tribes that arrived and settled in the different places... Once they immigrated, then the patrons arrived too. So they took them again. They hunted them. But now it wasn’t like it was in the mines. So once they hunted them, or if not, they had them here as slaves, so they – our grandparents and our great grandparents – did work on the haciendas.

4 These committees are of minor importance. They are responsible for ensuring that Chicaloma’s cantonal boundaries are maintained and respected, but little else.
This telling of the story of the arrival of blacks to the Yungas differs from the story commonly recounted in national discourses in that it has enslaved blacks escaping from Potosí during the revolutions that were responsible for the foundation of Bolivia, rather than being transported in chains by the mine owners. This enhances the claim that blacks are the original (and therefore rightful) inhabitants of the Yungas, since they arrived before there were *haciendas* and *hacienda* owners. It establishes Afro-Bolivians as agents of their own destinies, and identifies that migratory process with a goal of recreating an African social space, based on tribal organisation, in the Yungas. The interruption of this process by the arrival of *hacienda* owners then represents a violation for which reparation is due. This version also fixes Afro-Bolivian towns in the Yungas firmly in a vision of “tribal” Africa. By identifying this escape and migration with the wars of independence, he is claiming a founding role for enslaved descendents of Africa in the foundation of the country and claiming blackness as an important part of Bolivian identity. Joselo’s history troubles the discourse of Bolivia as a *mestizo* nation in much the same way that many activist authors do.

This version of history is flatly contradicted by Fausto. We visited his garden on a hillside, where he had planted walusa and other food crops. On the walk there, he complained that blacks in Chicaloma don’t know the history of the place, that they only know the history that starts once blacks arrived in the town. He claims a much longer indigenous – and specifically Inca – presence in the area, dating back to before the Spanish conquest. He cites archaeological evidence in the region, particularly buried ceramic urns, and written histories that claim that Incaic peoples migrated through the region, planting coca and food crops, staying for a few years and moving on. He is particularly adamant that blacks are mistaken when they claim to have been the first residents of Chicaloma:

I’ve heard, for example, in some meetings the Afro-Bolivians say that Afro-Bolivians were the first men who were here in Chicaloma. But it’s not so. It isn’t so. Chicaloma has always existed. I have stories from Incaic times, because they invaded Peru in 1545 and from there they passed over to Bolivia, to Charcas. They say that coca has always existed here. And in those times there weren’t any Afro-Bolivians, in
Incaic times. There weren’t any. Because the Spanish came in and they brought them as servants, as slaves, to the mines of Potosí. Since Africans are from warm places, they can’t handle the cold. And Potosí is cold. So for that reason, they sold them. In those times, they handed out Bolivia’s lands. The Spanish are the ones that handed out lands to whoever they wanted. They created patronage. So a patron was owner of a large land. That’s when the indigenous people started to work, the Incaic people. After that the Spanish from Potosí sold the Africans. That’s how the first Africans arrived.

This version of the history shares many superficial characteristics with Joselo’s, including blacks brought from Africa as slaves, work in the mines of Potosí, and black’s inability to withstand the cold in the mines there. However, it differs in some key aspects that alter its fundamental claims about who belongs in Chicaloma. It attributes the migration of blacks from Potosí to the Yungas to the designs of the Spanish owners of the mines and haciendas, rather than to blacks as their own agents. This serves both to establish that haciendas – and hacienda owners – existed in the Yungas prior to the arrival of blacks, and to counter claims of black agency in the formation of the Yungas as a social space. It denies blacks a role in the foundation of the country, except as an extension of Spanish conquest. Further, it locates the Yungas and its Incaic history firmly within national discourses of indigeneity, whiteness and mestizaje. All of this serves to counter claims both to the Yungas as an African space and to black place within a national identity.

What is at stake in these two histories is not specifically access to land. Disputes about land are generally contested in terms of rights of adverse possession based on occupation and cultivation or reparation as compensation for a history of forced labour on the haciendas. They are not typically claimed as a direct inheritance from the first inhabitants. These contested histories are fundamentally claims to Chicaloma as either a black space or an indigenous space in which certain people have a more legitimate claim to belonging than others. As we will see, claims to belonging are brought to bear in disputes over access to economic and social resources.
3. A history of haciendas

Shifts in the composition of elites that followed the agrarian reform resulted in a rearticulation of political and economic power. Commercial intermediaries, particularly those that were able to gain a foothold in MNR party politics, became power brokers and came to dominate the town in place of the *hacienda* owners. Prior to the agrarian reforms of 1953, land tenancy in the Yungas was mixed between *haciendas* and free indigenous communities (Spedding, 1997). Madeleine Leons published various studies of economic systems in the canton of Chicaloma (Leons, 1967, 1970, 1977a, 1977b, 1978, Leons and Leons, 1971). According to these works, the bulk of the land in the canton was in the ownership of a number of *haciendas* of various sizes, with a few smaller-scale landowners who did not operate *haciendas*. Access to land on the *haciendas* was granted through a variety of labour tenancy agreements, the most common of which required three days work per week on *hacienda* plantations in exchange for an amount of land – known as a *khallpa* – on which they could plant subsistence and cash crops. *Colonos* were able to expand their *khallpas* with the permission of the land owner, depending on their relationship to him and their willingness and ability to cultivate it. Cash crops were sold either to the *hacienda* owner or to travelling intermediaries from the highlands, known as *coca-takis*. The agrarian reform instituted by the MNR party in 1953 brought with it shifts in land tenancy and production in the Yungas, as well as changes to the social relations between producers and landowning elites. The reform abolished labour tenancy and mandated the distribution of lands to the tenants who farmed them. In Chicaloma, this redistribution applied only to the *khallpas* that were already under cultivation by *colonos*. *Hacienda* owners maintained control over much of the land that they had owned – both land that was already in production, and land that had not been cultivated – but without the labour provided by the *hacienda* system it was no longer profitable to continue cultivating them. The agrarian reform law mandated that the *colonos* who worked on the former *haciendas* be organised into *sindicatos* or unions, and party commissions travelled from La Paz to coordinate this process. Seven *sindicatos* were formed in Chicaloma, of which six represented a population that was almost exclusively black. These new *sindicatos* were expected to organise
life in the new comunidades of ex-colonos that were coterminous with and took their name from the former haciendas on which they worked.

People continue to use these terms – hacienda, comunidad and sindicato – to describe the nested affiliations that govern their work and relations to the land in ways that overlap and often lack clear distinctions. Hacienda and comunidad refer to a particular physical space with clearly delimited boundaries. In terms of physical spaces, people use comunidad to describe the location of their parents’ or grandparents’ houses or the place where they spent their childhood and refer to the hacienda when describing the house and outbuildings where the owner lived and conducted his business. For instance, several people told me that they lived in their comunidad when they were children, but moved to Chicaloma when they reached a certain age. Hacienda and sindicato both make reference to a shared history of suffering, organisation and struggle. For example, I spoke frequently with many members of the sindicato, “La Joya,” including its general secretary, Joselo. He frequently refers to La Joya as sindicato and hacienda in everyday speech in order to emphasise that it represents an inheritance from his parents and grandparents. A sindicato and a comunidad can both describe the group of people from a particular former hacienda. In meetings, members may refer to La Joya as a sindicato when they want to emphasise the institution or its relation to the central agrarian union, and as a comunidad when they want to emphasise members’ obligations to the group and what it means to belong. There is, however, considerable ambiguity and variation in these uses and these patterns are further complicated by the fact that some sindicatos were formed by colonos of several neighbouring haciendas who banded together in order to have a greater number of members.

The shift in economic and political practices that followed the agrarian reform resulted in changes in the composition of economic elites in the Yungas. Certain sectors managed to leverage their existing position as economic intermediaries to gain advantage in the new political parties and thereby consolidate positions as new

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5 I use the Spanish “comunidad” as it would be used in Chicaloma to refer to the any of the various communities that are territorially coterminous with, and share a name with, the former haciendas. I use the English “community” to refer more broadly to belonging in a group.
elites (Leons, 1977a, 1977b). In some cases, former *hacienda* owners living in the region would continue buying coca, issuing debt and maintaining relationships of *compadrazgo* with their former *colonos*. In other cases a former *hacienda* foreman would exploit his position, and particularly his education and ability to read and write, into a position of power within the new *sindicato*, brokering the relationship between it and the party (Heath, 1973). In Chicaloma, however, commercial intermediaries rather than former *hacienda* owners or foremen were able to consolidate significant personal networks and leverage those into power both locally and in the national political party system (Leons, 1977a, Spedding, 1997). Leons, who conducted fieldwork in Chicaloma from the 1960s through the 1980s, cites one particular *coca-taki* who had arrived in the 1940s and begun to build up a network of clients by purchasing coca and issuing credit to *colonos*, either in cash, or in credit at his store. After the agrarian reform, he continued to buy coca and controlled the two largest stores in town through family relationships. By issuing debts and extending his kinship network through relations of *compadrazgo*, he came to control the appointments to local offices and the distribution of government programs, and became “the intermediary through which government programs (such as the distribution of government-owned land) reached the local people” (Leons, 1977a, 108). This represented a shift in the system of domination, through which new elites controlled land distribution and economic production, rather than the eradication of domination by local elites. Eventually he was able to leverage his local network of clients independently of the political party: “the broker came to function qua broker independently of the party or group in power nationally so long as he could deliver the appropriate tokens of support” (Leons, 1977a). To this day, this broker is mentioned frequently as a deeply divisive figure, with vague references to the abuses he committed while he exercised power over the town.

The *sindicato* system took on less importance in Chicaloma than in other areas of Bolivia. Leons suggests that political organisation through the *sindicatos* was the domain of Indian populations, and the constitution of the town and the formation of work groups were the domain of blacks. “In Chicaloma canton, blacks formed syndicates on their own properties as required. However, these local syndicates
never were incorporated effectively into the syndicate hierarchy. These local syndicates lapsed as organs of local self-government as soon as land titles were obtained or the likelihood diminished that they easily would be... Estrangement of blacks as a group from the syndicate organization played a part... Blacks, indifferent to syndicate participation, focused their political energies not on the former haciendas but on the village of Chicaloma itself” (Leons, 1978, 490). This estrangement may have resulted from the fact that MNR’s project to construct a national identity based on mestizo peasants left little room for the inclusion of blacks in these unions, or it may reflect existing local prejudices and tensions. In any case, the near total dominance of the local social and economic situation by a single power broker with ties to the political party in power meant that the hierarchical structure of the sindicatos was not necessary for the organisation of social control. Such political organisation that did occur was focused not on the sindicatos, nor on juntas vecinales, but on local political offices within the town, such as the corregidor. These were appointed by the municipality, within the operations of the political party system. Initially, work groups, or juntas, played a role in promoting candidates for these offices, making them the main avenue for political organisation for blacks in Chicaloma. Eventually, though, even this outlet was co-opted by the broker (Leons, 1977a, 1977b). The perception of sindicato system as an indigenous space – leaving blacks to seek other avenues for political mobilisation – has undergone significant transformations in subsequent years. The increased regulatory emphasis on traditional coca producer communities, alongside the claims to historical presence of black colonos on the pre-reform haciendas has done much to alter the ethnoracial sensibilities surrounding local sindicatos.

4. Migrants and usurpers

Another major shift in the wake of the agrarian reform of 1953 (and again following the neoliberal reforms of 1985) was increased migration throughout Bolivia,

6 A corregidor is a local authority responsible for resolving conflicts and enforcing laws that do not require police attention.
particularly from rural areas to the cities, and from the high plains to the lowlands. In Chicaloma, this migration followed two patterns, one of migrants who came to occupy lands on the former haciendas and another that formed new comunidades on the outskirts of Chicaloma canton. After the agrarian reform, hacienda owners were newly short of labour as the former colonos found it in their interest to cultivate their own land rather than that of the hacienda for a wage. In response to this shortage, several hacienda owners recruited migrants from the highlands, either as caretakers or labourers. They often paid these labourers by granting them title to some of the land that remained under their control, or the right to cultivate such land. These labourers recruited members of their villages in the highlands to migrate also. In some cases, they then sued the hacienda owner under Bolivian laws of adverse possession and won title to the land. In addition to these migrants who arrived in the town of Chicaloma and incorporated themselves into the existing structures through which the town constructs itself, other groups, arriving much later, founded seven new comunidades at some distance above Chicaloma, towards the mountains. They have organised into thoroughly consolidated sindicatos, and officially registered with the regional and departmental agrarian unions. Most of the residents of these comunidades live there permanently and only rarely make the journey into Chicaloma. While there are some ongoing conflicts, particularly over Chicaloma’s potable water system, which draws water from some of their lands, these outlying communities are not deeply involved the construction of the town of Chicaloma as a social space. Nevertheless, references to these migrants are marked with ethnoracial sensibilities that are also applied to migrants who arrived to live in town.

The histories of the arrival of migrants from the highlands are a forum in which claims to belonging are contested. Since the agrarian reform only redistributed the land that colonos were actually cultivating, and not land that was either under cultivation by the owner or uncultivated, a significant area remained in the hands of the landowners. The recently-liberated colonos preferred to work their own lands rather than seek a wage on the former haciendas, meaning that landowners often had to hire caretakers and labourers from the highlands to maintain these lands and
the *hacienda* house. Some of these caretakers used laws of adverse possession to gain access to the land for themselves or to sell to others from their village, who they convinced to migrate from their homes in the highlands. Black residents sometimes describe the means by which migrants gained access to land in terms of a usurpation of a rightful inheritance.

Tito, the current *corregidor*, tells the story of how this happened on one *hacienda* in some detail. In his telling, he cites the sacrifice of those who suffered in forced labour on the *hacienda* as a basis for a moral argument to ownership of that land. For Tito, the children of those who suffered in the *hacienda* have a right to that land through inheritance, but this right was usurped through legal trickery by migrants who arrived from the highlands:

I remember that a few men arrived first as workers. As workers, the owner, it could be me, gave them a piece of land to work. And so he goes back to his town and brings two more back from his town. He comes down here again, and he keeps bringing more, keeps bringing more, keeps bringing more. That’s how the people from the highlands got here. For example, in [one of the *haciendas*] a man rented land, and once he rented it, he started working in the interior. ... He [then] sued the owner for all of the land he had been given to work. He wound up taking over a lot of land and he started handing it out to the people who he brought. I know a lot of them. Their children are my friends, but he brought them like that. With all his rights as a tenant, he took over the authority... He’s still selling land that should have been for *colonos*. He’s still doing it. And all that our *colono* brothers should have been able to use, is being used by someone else, someone who didn’t even suffer on the *hacienda*. That should be for the children of the parents who sacrificed their lives on that *hacienda*. The children should take advantage of it. But there aren’t any children who use it. They are other people who come from somewhere else.

He goes on to contrast the events in this *hacienda* with his own, which managed to anticipate and forestall this kind of intrusion:

And that didn’t happen with us in Chuila. In Chuila it was very different. There was another man who also rented. Taking advantage of that, he wanted to do the same thing with Chuila. So we found out
about it and we got together with 18 people – 18 Afro-Bolivians – and we counteracted the suit he was making. We beat him to it and we filed suit to intervene and revert [the land to the state]. That’s how we recovered all of the land of the Chuila hacienda including the hacienda house. Because if we hadn’t, there would be another immigrant who would have put other people from his town.

Tito’s description of the immigrants as “other people who came from somewhere else” emphasises the status of immigrants as outsiders who do not belong in Chicaloma. Though not explicitly phrased in terms of ethnoracial categories, it makes oblique reference to immigrants’ status as indigenous Aymara. In Tito’s view, the arrival of migrants to hacienda lands represents a usurpation of land that, by moral right, should have gone to descendants of the colonos who worked on the hacienda. He expresses indignation that someone from the altiplano, who never suffered as a colono on the hacienda has gained ownership of land through legal trickery, playing into discourses that portray Aymara as untrustworthy, two-faced or deceitful.

Tito, along with other black Chicalomeños, views this process as a threat not in terms of a direct conflict, but rather in terms of the gradual loss of African identity through mixture and cultural change. While we discussed the history of black participation in Bolivia, I mentioned to Tito that by the end of the colonial period there were documented populations of blacks in numerous towns, particularly on the eastern flank of the Andes. I wondered how it had happened that these towns had lost that trace of black identity while Chicaloma and the other Yungas towns had kept it. Tito responded with some sadness that he feared a similar fate for Chicaloma:

> And someday the same thing is going to happen with Chicaloma. Some years from now there won’t be blacks. There won’t be Afro-Bolivians. The few of us that are here will be lost. There aren’t any. The same thing will happen in our town. And Chicaloma is known internationally for black culture, right? And it won’t exist. A little while ago a group of lots of students arrived from the University of San Andres to look for me here. They are tourism students. “We came to Chicaloma because we know of Chicaloma for this, for that, for the
other, but we’re amazed that when we look at Chicaloma we don’t find Afro-Bolivians,” they said. And it’s true! Anybody could arrive in Chicaloma, looking for an Afro-Bolivian and they’ll find fifty Aymaras in the street and ten Afro-Bolivians.

Literature on migration offers some insight into the experiences of change within a community for those who lived there prior to the migration. In her work on Turkish migration and Germany, Ruth Mandel considers an idea of deracination in place, in which the nature or makeup of a place changes to the point where people can begin to feel rootless without having ever moved. “Others have been equally affected by change though having never left home; instead home abandoned them: their natal country vanished to be replaced by the once adversarial neighbour. Can we think of former East Germans nostalgic for their old, seemingly certain lives, as living in a psychological or social diaspora, of having been deracinated from their homeland only to find themselves living an alien life on the self-same street?” (Mandel, 2008).

Tito’s expression of anxiety over the changes he sees in the composition of his town is typical of this sense of deracination in place, and particularly one that threatens to fundamentally alter the relationship between blackness and community in Chicaloma. For Tito, the construction of Chicaloma as a black space is at stake. He fears that the ethnoracial composition of the space will shift and thereby alter his position within it and his capacity to feel and make claims to belonging. Others express a similar fear in terms of a loss of racial purity. Comments such as, “there used to be lots of pure blacks here,” or, “now the race is degenerating,” were common, from blacks, immigrants and people who have both black and immigrant parents.

On the other hand, Tito recognises that the children of these migrants occupy a more ambivalent place. They were born in Chicaloma and have become his friends and, presumably, vecinos of Chicaloma. Tito recognises that the children of migrants can make legitimate – if incompletely so – claims to belonging based on their birth and their status as vecinos. Tito’s ambivalence here is particularly notable given his earlier expression of loss at the recognition that this wave of immigration is changing Chicaloma around him to the point that he himself will no longer belong. On the one hand he
expresses resentment both for the usurpation of an inheritance and for this deracination in place. On the other he recognises the partial legitimacy of the claim to belonging that his friends who were born in Chicaloma make.

5. Constructing Chicaloma

Various infrastructure projects marked particular moments in the construction of the town as a social space. In Chicaloma, these infrastructure projects mark particular moments that are indicative of changing social relations – particularly relations of economic domination – and citizenship practices. The earliest of these was the construction of a road to the town. The construction was organised by the party broker discussed by Leons. Initially residents worked in turns until the broker negotiated for a bulldozer hired by the municipality to finish the work. Since he was one of the principal intermediaries who bought coca in Chicaloma and sold it in La Paz, the broker benefitted disproportionately from the project, becoming the first resident to own a truck, and increased his margins transporting coca. Nevertheless, several older residents, particularly those who had been involved in the MNR as party loyalists, recall their work on this project as an important moment in the formation of the town, though they tend to describe it in terms similar to those in which they describe work on the haciendas. One person from La Joya included mention of the road as an afterthought to his response about days of obligatory work. Through this construction project, the new elite – largely economic intermediaries – further consolidated his influence within the town. It may also have paved the way for further shifts in the composition of the town, but residents continued to live in their comunidades until this person organised the installation of electric light in town.

Residents in their forties or older commonly recollect that, during their childhood, their families lived in houses in their comunidad. Children walked to school, which was in a two-storey building, but, aside from that, the town was just a collection of a
few thatched houses clustered along the ridge line. It was only when the electricity generator was installed in the 1970s that families began to move from their comunidades to town en masse. Tito, spoke with me about this transition:

I lived in [my comunidad] until I was six. Then we lived in town. Chicaloma used to be a few little thatched houses. Just a few houses. Then people started leaving the comunidades, buying lots from the hacienda owners, and the town started to get bigger. They lived in the comunidad, and, since an electricity generator arrived in Chicaloma, the town had light for hours. Let’s say, from seven until ten at night there was light. And seeing that, the people in the rural areas went out to buy lots to build their houses. I think it was mostly for the light. And also it could be for the school, but we came to school from the comunidades. More than anything for the light that they generated for a few hours a day. That motivated people to come live in Chicaloma and caused Chicaloma to grow into a large town.

The person who secured the generator that Tito refers is recognizable as the power broker in Leons’ work. His connections to the party allowed him to secure the generator, and he was able to use his role as a local power broker to organise the installation and payment of fees. The unit was housed in the building that now houses the potable water committee’s office and the health clinic nurse’s room.

When a permanent connection to the electrical grid was made, the generator was sold to another town. The arrival of this infrastructure resulted in significant changes in the composition of the region, spurring the growth of Chicaloma as a populated town.

The construction of a potable water system in the 1990s was another key moment in the growth of the town. Households contributed a certain number of days of labour to the project in order to earn a share in the cooperative, which corresponded to a single household connection. Those shares were subsequently split so that children of the original members could also have a connection. Any further shares have to be purchased at USD 200 per share, a significant cost that doesn’t include building a connection to the potable water system. The construction of the potable water

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7 The power broker’s wife was the school teacher, as well as helping him manage his network of relationships within the town.
system occurred in two phases. The first required burying a dozen miles of plumbing from the spring, along the mountainside to a storage tank and then through a distribution network throughout the town. The second required the construction of an additional intake, in order to overcome water shortages. In the present, many people speak of their experiences during the construction as a time of hardship during which they consolidated a sense of belonging to their town. Many people who were in high school at the time, either in Chicaloma or in La Paz, participated in this project, and tell entertaining stories about their experiences, the daily journeys to the work site, the steep climbs to the spring from which they would draw water, the heavy bags of cement and sand, which they had to carry up to construct the intake. They pepper these stories with humour, remembering in detail the jokes they played on each other, or the moment when a companion slipped into a puddle in a particularly dramatic fashion. One such story recalls a young woman who had recently had hair extension braids put in who fell headlong into a waist-deep puddle. As she struggled to regain her balance, and finally rose from the murky water, her new braids covered in mud, the other youth working christened her with a new nickname. “Predator! Predator!” they shouted, in reference to the dreadlocked alien warrior rising from the water in 1987 movie featuring Arnold Schwarzenegger.

These stories of sacrifice and humour describe not only a moment of shared experience of community and a rite of passage for many who were adolescents at the time, but also a moment during which Chicaloma came into being as a locus of collective identification. They serve to reinforce a claim to belonging, based both on historical presence in the town and on their record of having performed as good members of the community by contributing their labour to the growth of the town.

While both the construction of the potable water system and the arrival of the electricity generator were key moments in the construction of Chicaloma, the potable water system marks a shift in the kinds of relationships that are understood to construct the town. The arrival of the generator drew people into town and encouraged them to build houses, but it also reinforced a social structure in which certain elites secured their position through political patronage. The potable water project required an input of labour from a large number of vecinos of Chicaloma and
the formation of an organised entity which still has an important role in representing the town and serving as a site for local organisation. The resultant obra, the bricks and mortar construction of physical infrastructure, is evidence that the town is growing and developing. This is accompanied by its growth as a population centre, with two- and even three-storey buildings, and the sense that Chicaloma is an increasingly urban space. The physical construction, alongside the foundation of a bureaucratic entity that represents and organises the community, form a pivotal moment in the construction of a sense of community in the town of Chicaloma. Together, they are viewed as signs of the town’s progress and development, and its capacity to lift itself up. Lazar emphasises the importance of obras to the sense of progress in the zone of Rosas Pampas. She notes that residents demand obras from their leaders, both because they are viewed as necessary and because their construction indicates that leaders are working on behalf the community rather than serving their own interests. The junta vecinal and the junta escolar in Rosas Pampa play similar roles to the potable water committee in Chicaloma. In Rosas Pampa, the junta vecinal and the junta escolar came to serve as bureaucratic instances that represented the zone to the state and parastate actors such as NGOs, in addition to coordinating the construction of the physical, bricks-and-mortar infrastructure of the zone (Lazar, 2008).

The potable water cooperative continues to exercise a particular role in civic life within the town. A meeting of the water committee draws the whole town together, to such an extent that it is the place to conduct any business that relates to the town itself. On my first day of fieldwork in Chicaloma, I arrived to find the town nearly empty. I walked through the empty streets until I finally found someone who pointed me in the direction of the school. Nearly all of the vecinos were sitting around the concrete schoolyard, in the shade of the classroom buildings. I arrived as the meeting was closing, and the officials of the potable water cooperative were coordinating the details of the following days communal work responsibilities, and discussing the cost of new connections to the potable water system. At another

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8 “Levantarse”, in Spanish. A derogatory comment levelled at a town that is perceived to be less developed is that “this town just can’t lift itself up,” or “este pueblo no se levanta nunca.”
meeting several months later, vecinos discussed everything from the mother’s day celebrations at the local school to communal work schedules to the band for the upcoming patron saint’s day festival. Public health representatives from the hospital in Chicaloma attended, in order to discuss the performance of the doctor who staffed Chicaloma’s health clinic. Sian Lazar’s work on vecinos of the Rosas Pampas neighbourhood in El Alto serves as a useful reference for the kinds of relationships that are performed at a meeting such as this. The potable water cooperative serves as one site where vecinos are “constructing a sense of community in part by organizing themselves to develop their [town]” (Lazar, 2008, 61).9 Vecinos of Chicaloma are expected to participate in communal labour, such as clean-up days, road maintenance, and other events related to their residential zone. The bulk of these activities relating to life in the town are organised in meetings of the potable water cooperative.

In comparison, meetings of the regional agrarian union of Chicaloma – an organisation comprised of the sindicatos from the ex-haciendas alongside the new migrant comunidades on the outskirts of Chicaloma canton – deal almost exclusively with business related to economic production, union organisation, relationships between sindicatos, and relationships to the broader sindicato (and political party) system. As such, they are sites where the conflicts between the communities on the outskirts of Chicaloma Canton, and the town of Chicaloma are visible. These communities, usually referred to as the “comunidades up there,”10 are described as outsiders, belonging to a rural space, rather than the town of Chicaloma. Their residents are unlikely to participate in the construction of the town through institutions such as the potable water committee or communal work. They do, however, participate actively in the agrarian unions, attending meetings and marches. In one regional meeting of all the sindicatos in the canton of Chicaloma, these new sindicatos from outside of town had a much higher percentage of representatives in attendance than those that represented the original haciendas.

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9 Perhaps the cooperative takes on a more important role than the junta escolar in part because many vecinos of Chicaloma send their children to school in La Paz. During the time I was in Chicaloma, I rarely heard mention of the juntas vecinales that govern Chicaloma’s three urban zones.

10 In Spanish, “comunidades de arriba.”
right in town. In a conversation about the history of sindicatos in Chicaloma and their relationship to the union system broadly, Joselo initially discussed only the former haciendas that comprise the town, those whose members live in town and who work on lands in their comunidades. Only when pressed did he describe the comunidades on the outskirts of the canton, saying:

There are other comunidades from up there that got here recently, let’s say 15 or 20 years ago. They were brought here the same way. They gave them land, and then, little by little they immigrated. They’ve formed comunidades up there... It seems that one person brought them, and then that person brought another person and that person brought another, and that one another and another. That’s how they kept coming and coming and coming until they had immigrated and formed comunidades up there.

It is clear from Joselo’s remarks that he considers these comunidades and their sindicatos to belong outside Chicaloma.

Some of these comunidades carry on an ongoing conflict with the town of Chicaloma over water. They argue that Chicaloma’s potable water system is drawing from springs that rightfully belong to them. Tito describes the conflict from his perspective as a vecino in Chicaloma, saying:

Right now we have legal problems with regard to the place where we have our springs. We have problems with other immigrants who have arrived and who want to be lords and masters of the whole area, which is legally part of Chicaloma... Up there, in that one place, we have problems right now with one comunidad... Look, they arrived recently and they want to be lords and masters. They even wanted to cut off the water at one point. They just got here and we’ve got these problems with [them]... The only problem that we have right now is with ... the immigrants who arrived to work up there, and the springs that we have, which we consume here.

The vecinos of Chicaloma take this threat to cut off the water supply as a particular affront, given the role that this infrastructure project played – and continues to play – in the construction of a sense of community in the town. Relations between the town and the outlying comunidades are often described in somewhat oppositional terms, calling out the differences between in town and above town; vecinos and
immigrants; rooted and newcomer; and urban and rural. Neither Joselo nor Tito mentions blackness or indigeneity. Their statements oppose vecinos of Chicaloma broadly to rural residents of the “comunidades up there”. Yet the opposition of immigrants to vecinos and the parallels that Joselo draws between the arrival of immigrants to both the town and “up there” do complicate the social landscape and the position of immigrants in town. It is worth comparing Tito’s reaction to the children of urban immigrants to his description of the immigrants in the comunidades up there. Tito’s descriptions of these comunidades do nothing to acknowledge legitimacy of any of their claims. Since they do not participate in the construction of Chicaloma as a community – and in fact are continually threatening the potable water system – his principle relationship with them is antagonistic. They are neither vecinos nor legitimate claimants to belonging in the town of Chicaloma. The children of immigrants who live in town, however, are at once newcomers and vecinos: urban, but not rooted.

6. Football and Saya

At the conclusion of our taped interview, I asked Tito whether he had anything he wanted to add. He immediately mentioned the Saya – the drumming rhythm, singing and dance commonly associated with an African inheritance – and recounted with pride his efforts to learn to play, recover drums from older relatives and refound a group in Chicaloma. In his telling, this involved learning how to play from older residents and forming a group of well-trained players among his contemporaries and younger residents. During the 1990s, political organisations representing Afro-Bolivians also began to focus on the Saya to emphasise their unique ethnic identity. For these movements the Saya, a dance practiced in Afro-Bolivian communities, based on complex rhythmic drumming, sung couplets and energetic dancing served as a tool for representing and organizing Afro-Bolivian identity (Angola, 2003,

11 I rarely asked about Saya directly. Nevertheless, I concluded most interviews by asking if there was any other topic that the interviewee wanted to cover, and, with unnerving frequency, the interviewee launched into a discussion of Saya and Afro-Bolivian identity, often in deeply personal and emotive terms.
Angola, 2008, Busdiecker, 2006, Spedding, 1995). Several vecinos spoke animatedly of their participation as drummers or dancers in political events in the city of La Paz, to demand recognition for Afro-Bolivians. This kind of public performance serves as a locus around which identity can be organized and represented both publicly as part of political mobilization, and privately as a tool for self-representation (French, 2006, 2009). In Bolivia, as in other parts of the Andes, specific dances are frequently recognised as referents for or expressions of affiliation with a certain community, especially for indigenous communities, but also for specific groups of urban mestizos who use dance to represent and construct themselves as a group within that context (Albó and Preiswerk, 1986), and as such, dance is a site of claim-making and contestation, both locally and nationally (Mendoza-Walker, 1994, 2000). In this sense, Saya is a logical tool for representing Afro-Bolivian identity both among blacks and in wider, national contexts. Yet Saya is remarkably different from other kinds of dances performed in Bolivia, most of which are performed in marching lines (Lazar, 2008). The drumming, singing and dance also emphasise the foreignness of black Bolivians and places them in a position of outsiders seeking entry into the national society by making their African heritage explicit. Saya, therefore, publicly expresses a unique ethnic identity, one that is at once Bolivian and foreign.

Saya also allows certain individuals to claim connections to historical presence in the town. When younger players remark on the drums that they have inherited from specific family members, or recollect with fondness a older relative’s favourite song, these remarks constitute a claim to belonging based on their connection to a long local history. Tito told several stories about drums he was able to recover and the men he learned to play from. Tito’s description of finding and collecting drums in order to recover the Saya focused on his connections to various older relatives:

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12 As an example of folkloric dance used to contest belonging, during the Fiesta Patronal of Chicaloma, a particular family sponsored a group to dance Tobas. This family had a conflictive relationship to the rest of the town over what many townspeople felt were the excessive bus fares that they charged to local residents, and had been barred from stopping their busses in Chicaloma. They named the dance group “Los Botados”, or “The ones who were kicked out” and heartily chanted “Even if you throw me out, I won’t go!” (“Aunque me botan, no me voy a ir”).
After our grandparents died, the Saya almost didn’t exist. Thanks to a friend, Pedro Andavez, we talked and tried to unite ourselves. We went to find drums... I went to bring a drum from Silala, near Yalica. We went to bring a Drum from Taco. We got drums here from Don Augustin Ballavian, from Don Juan Pedrero, and from Don Evengelo Pérez. The drum that I brought from Yalica was hung up in the house. I got there, I looked at the drum and I said, ‘Uncle, can I have your drum?’ ‘Take it, son, because that drum is hanging up there for no reason. There are others. Come back and get them,’ he told me. I went another time and I brought two more drums back. Then I had three, and from then on, we started organising here.

Tito’s efforts to recover drums and revive the musical tradition are phrased in terms that emphasise his relationship to former colonos. He also establishes his relationships with neighbouring communities where he had older relatives and friends. In his telling, his ability to recover and promote Saya is based on rootedness, a grounded knowledge of the area and his longstanding relationships to both the people and the space not just in Chicaloma, but in nearby haciendas as well.

He concluded with the story of a group of Italian filmmakers who convened a group to play Saya in La Paz and were able to pay those who played. Since they had arrived at a particular moment of extreme poverty in the town, this was a most welcome offer, and, according to Tito:

Some Italians arrived, offering to make a film. They took us to La Paz to do the filming. In that moment, people who had never handled the Saya, joined our group of people who were already taking steps. Many came to play Saya for the first and last time. But there was the advantage that they would pay us. .... Everyone came back with something, with an arroba of flour or five litres of cooking oil.

In telling this story, Tito distinguishes between those who participate in Saya as an expression of themselves or for love of the music and those who participate only if there is a financial motivation. These concerns about authenticity are shared by others who describe Saya as an expression of their commitment to an Afro-Bolivian identity. As the dance has become increasingly popular with audiences in the city of La Paz, there are several groups that play regularly at upper class bars, where they earn some extra income and have an opportunity to socialise with foreign tourists.
Tito then invited me to accompany him and the Chicaloma football team to a match in the town of Cañamina, some three hours distant. The team from Chicaloma was welcomed with the sound of fireworks, a receiving line and confetti. There were warm greetings between friends and family members who had not seen each other in some time. The hosts ushered their guests into a building on the plaza and the head teacher read the day’s programme. Speeches of welcome and thanks were given, and plastic dishes of roast pork and potatoes were passed around. The Chicaloma team played and sang Saya in appreciation, and the hosts listened attentively. After lunch, both teams gradually made their way to the pitch, where the hosts were busy setting up a PA system. The program included a flag-raising, the national anthem, a moment of silence and three football matches: women, seniors and the men’s first team. In a moment of confusion, the head teacher announced that the Chicaloma team would play a Saya right before the main game. As they scrambled to retrieve drums and prepared to play, the head teacher spoke animatedly about the Saya as a national, and even international heritage, and an important token of Chicaloma’s Afro-Bolivian identity. The team from Chicaloma gathered their drums and organised a circle to play and sing a few couplets. The performance – in a circle, without separate dancers, and in football uniforms – seemed to have been something other than what the head teacher expected, though, and as soon as it was over he apologetically offered that there would be another chance to see the Saya, including the women’s dance, in the plaza after the game.

The head teacher’s understanding of how a dance would be performed drew on the Andean traditions of dances: marching lines of elaborately costumed dancers performing specific steps and routines, differentiated by their gender and accompanied by a band. Following the games, the Chicaloma delegation performed Saya again, in the plaza as requested, though still in a circle, without costumes and without formal dance steps. Then our hosts invited us to return to the same building where we had started. They presented the Chicaloma delegation with cases of beer.

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and dozens of bottles of cheap mixed drinks, with more speeches. A DJ played popular music over a PA system, and periodically the Chicaloma delegation began another round of Saya. Each time, a crowd gathered outside the hall, hoisting children on their shoulders to watch through the door and windows. Finally Tito asked permission for the delegation to leave, and an hour later our hosts granted it. Around midnight the team from Chicaloma stumbled back into their contracted minivans and returned home.

This excursion highlighted a connection between outward representations of Chicaloma, football and Saya that reinforce a particularly Afro-Bolivian local character or identity. At football tournaments throughout the Yungas, the Chicaloma team is accompanied by a Saya group that drums in celebration of goals and plays throughout the match. These tournaments are an important representation of a town within the region, and men of all ages speak with pride of their youthful accomplishments on the pitch. Jean Rahier, in his analysis of the contradictions that black players on the national football team pose for the place of blackness “within/outside” Ecuador’s (officially) multicultural society, notes that “Participation in international sports competitions often provides ‘national populations’ ... with occasions to enact the official understanding of ‘national identity,’ as well as to reflect upon and revisit what and who is included in, or excluded from, the ‘national character,’ and why.” (Rahier, 2008, 149-150). The same holds for “local populations” and “local identity” as they encounter each other in inter-community tournaments and friendlies. Since Saya is associated directly with Africa and blackness, linking Saya to the Chicaloma football team reinforces the construction of Chicaloma as an Afro-Bolivian space. This association with football and blackness is not a new phenomenon, nor limited to Chicaloma. Rahier’s work highlights the discursive link between blackness and football prowess in the Andean countries. He cites the common perception that “blacks in general are in fact physically superior and well suited to play soccer” (2008, 173). In Chicaloma, the association goes back some time. The head teacher of Chicaloma, Luis, recalls the days nearly forty years ago when he played on the team and describes himself as the only white player on
Chicaloma’s side. Though he said that he “stood out like a mole”, he notes the pride he felt in playing with a team that was comprised entirely of blacks.

Both Saya and football – and particularly the conjunction of the two – not only support the discursive reproduction of Chicaloma as a black or African space, but also enable claims to belonging based on performance in these arenas. Saya and football are both discursively black spaces, according to – local and general – stereotypes of blacks as musically gifted and naturally athletic. That they serve as the public representations of the town to neighbouring towns and throughout the country establishes an outwardly black identity for Chicaloma. Internally, both arenas still carry specific ethnoracial value, though, and to take a leading role in either is to claim a mantel of blackness or to “stand out like a mole.” Still, participating in these activities – particularly in representation of Chicaloma – allows those who do to make claims to belonging. Athletes and musicians highlight their groundedness in the community of Chicaloma. Tito’s assertions that he is a central figure in the revitalisation of Saya in Chicaloma emphasise his rootedness in the area, his commitment to the culture of the town, his family connections and a grounded social knowledge of the region. Playing football, or having played football, allows athletes to make similar claims, through stories of their teammates, and the tournaments they travelled to.

7. A History of sindicatos

The organisation of political and economic reproduction in present-day Chicaloma has changed in important ways from the situation in the Yungas described by Leons and Heath during the 1960s and 1970s (Heath, 1973, Leons, 1970, 1977a, 1978). For one thing, the work groups that Leons mentions are no longer important for selecting local political authorities\(^\text{14}\) and the sindicatos have become the principal

\(^{14}\) Workgroups remain important socially and economically. Many people work together in groups that might be made up of people from a particular residential zone within town or who attend the same evangelical church. These work groups may also form microcredit groups, and serve as forums for ongoing debate about events in town, but they no longer carry any official political weight. During
forum for organising around issues of economic production and political representation beyond the limits of the town. The identification of these *sindicatos* as an indigenous space has shifted as well. Throughout Bolivia, the relationship between agricultural unions and political parties is often fraught with ideological and practical tensions. Silvia Rivera (1987) describes agrarian unions in the period following the revolution as a site of conflict between indigenous ideology and popular resistance (with all of its attendant contradictions, factionalism and infighting) on one side, and patronage and vertical control by the party in power on the other. For Rivera, this led to the emergence of an indigenous intellectual class steeped in the traditions of trade unionism. These unions continue their fraught relationship to political parties. To this day, various factions, ideological movements and individual union leaders rise to prominence in national parties through them, while at the same time political parties take advantage of their vertical structures in patronage networks (Lazar, 2004, 2008, Rivera Cusicanqui, 1987, Schavelzon, 2012).

Since coca cultivation, transport and sale is tightly controlled, these agricultural unions in coca-growing areas take on a particularly important role in the organisation of production and trade. The Departmental Association of Coca Producers (ADEPCOCA) plays a particularly important role in this process: it is the organisation that issues identity cards to producers and runs the legal market for coca in La Paz. This is fraught with tension, as legally transporting coca to La Paz for sale requires a producer’s card. ADEPCOCA was founded in the early 1980s, in the area around Coripata. It replaced the Acopio de Coca, a national agency set up during the Garcia-Mesa dictatorship, which was responsible for purchasing all of the coca produced in Bolivia and redistributing it to consumers. In theory, the Acopio was intended to control drug trafficking by ensuring that the state was responsible for distributing coca for consumption. In practice, the Acopio purchased coca at an artificially deflated price from producers and sold it on cheaply to favoured drug traffickers (Spedding, 1997). ADEPCOCA aimed to provide a producer-based, representative alternative that would both provide social control of coca transport.

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fieldwork, I spent some time with a work group that was known colloquially as “las negras”, since all but one of the women who worked together identified themselves as black.
and trade, and allow producers a legal path to transport their product to markets in La Paz. ADEPCOCA played a pivotal role in forcing intermediaries out of the coca trade. Its relationship with the state remains conflicted. Like many important sindicatos, party politics have historically played a key role in its leadership, and continue to do so (Leons, 1977a, Spedding, 1997, Lazar, 2008). Political parties in power use the organisation to channel resources to loyalists, and producers who are in favour with ADEPCOCA leadership will frequently use the organisation to petition the state for all sorts of projects, including schools and other infrastructure. Union leaders might go to great lengths to curry favour with politicians in order to obtain infrastructure projects for their sindicato.

U.S.-led drug policies encouraging coca eradication in Bolivia met with sharp resistance from producers and traditional consumers of coca leaf (Léons and Sanabria, 1997). This has led to a patchwork system of control defined in law 1008, which characterised production zones as traditional, transitional or illegal. This law, aimed at restricting expansion of coca plantations and gradually reducing the hectares in production, favoured traditional production zones heavily (National Congress, 1988). Within the Canton of Chicaloma, this favouritism has led ADEPCOCA to restrict the formation of new sindicatos. According to Joselo:

The thing that brings us the most problems right now is the topic of coca. For example, in ADEPCOCA, in the vice-ministry of the government, they are taking very seriously those that have been haciendas, or ex-haciendas. Comunidades that ... are new, they don’t want to take them into account for registration in ADEPCOCA. It’s for that reason that we are trying to film [the former hacienda house], so that some day they will know that the sindicato La Joya was a hacienda, or is a hacienda.

Joselo’s interest in showing the sindicato’s historical relation to the hacienda of the same name demonstrates his concern to ensure its continued presence and operation since the agrarian reform and to protect it from any potential claims against its legitimacy. This emphasis on traditional producer comunidades means that the former haciendas have come to occupy a favoured position within the sindicato system. To this end, sindicatos in Chicaloma draw on a direct connection to
the former haciendas in order to strengthen their bargaining position vis-à-vis ADEPCOCA. In this context, the sindicato system, formerly ignored and abandoned by the descendants of black colonos, has become one of the principal sites where belonging is claimed and contested in ways that have important economic consequences. Locally, the idea that the system is a venue for indigenous participation, to the exclusion of blacks, has shifted. Currently the general secretaries and other leaders of most sindicatos are black. Black Chicalomeños have also taken on positions further up the sindicato hierarchy as well, and even ascended to important roles in the MAS government, including Viceminister of Coca and Integrated Development.

A neat relationship between the lands of the former haciendas and the extensions of the current sindicatos is impossible. In some case several haciendas that banded together to form a single sindicato. Further, producers may have land in more than one former hacienda, and there is a degree of movement of producers between sindicatos. Some producers may even be members of more than one sindicato, fulfilling social and economic obligations in one, and being unofficially but practically exempted in the other. New sindicatos are discouraged by ADEPCOCA, which is tasked with enforcing the limits on production outside of “traditional” comunidades. Nevertheless, some sindicato members, feeling that they would be more favourably represented in a new sindicato, have set out on their own and sought to reorganise as one of the original haciendas that had been subsumed in a larger sindicato. These new sindicatos are in a particularly tenuous situation. They represent producers who occupy the lands of former haciendas and can claim descent from the original colonos of the hacienda but they are establishing new sindicatos to do so. As Joselo puts it, “ADEPCOCA doesn’t want to take new comunidades into account for affiliation... They say they are new comunidades, not ex-haciendas, but there are comunidades that were haciendas, that are listed as new.” In these cases, lobbying for recognition of the new sindicato draws heavily on the hacienda history to argue that, in fact, these are legitimate heirs to traditional communities. ADEPCOCA restricts not only new comunidades, but also limits the number of members in each sindicato based on historical membership and restricts access for
those who are not from the region. It does this by controlling the issuance of producers’ cards. Within a given *sindicato*, this leads to significant tension over who is able to secure an official card that legitimates their position and allows them to sell coca in the legal market in La Paz. While *sindicatos* may employ certain strategies to increase the overall number of places that are available to producers (allowing couples to join separately, for instance), increased population pressure due to migration and the number of children seeking land will eventually create an increased pressure for access to these cards. While ADEPCOCA allocates the number of cards available to each *sindicato*, the *sindicato* is responsible for determining which members are enrolled and therefore who receives a card. Each *sindicato* is also permitted to allocate a small number of “*carpetas*”, referring to a file that allows its holder to transport coca directly to markets beyond La Paz. This permission is particularly valuable, since coca fetches a much higher price in the lowlands of Santa Cruz. Other economic opportunities, such as permission to operate stalls in the coca market in La Paz are also negotiated through the *sindicato*. This makes the *sindicato* an important forum in which producers stake claims that determine economic possibilities in very real ways. As in the case described by French, access to these economic possibilities generates significant tension and division within the community (French, 2009). Negotiations are fraught and often deeply personal. Individuals deploy claims to belonging that depend not only on their own participation in a given *sindicato*, or descent from a particular *hacienda*, but on an entire range of shifting affiliations, practices, discourses and histories, which intersect with ethnoracial sensibilities and conditions, often in unspoken and subtle ways.

8. **Hacienda histories**

Descent from a *hacienda* serves as an important basis for establishing claims to belonging, particularly in relationship to a given *sindicato*. Due to the particularities of coca production, the *sindicato* system in the Yungas imposes limits that regulate production and effectively limit economic output. ADEPCOCA’s restrictions on new
sindicatos and membership numbers are a source of near constant tension, both within sindicatos and between them. In this context, Joselo, the general secretary of one of the sindicato La Joya, instantly saw the possibilities for strengthening the position of his sindicato vis-à-vis ADEPCOCA – the organisation to which sindicatos in the Yungas are affiliated. Shortly after I arrived, he asked me to do a favour for the hacienda for which he was serving as general secretary. The hacienda was in the process of re-registering with ADEPCOCA, and as part of that process was required to document its history, since the organisation explicitly favours “traditional” producer comunidades, particularly those formed from former haciendas. At the same time, some of the land that remained associated with the hacienda, including the hacienda house, had been sold to the town of Chicaloma, which was planning to build a football stadium there. Joselo recognised that the hacienda buildings were likely to be torn down as part of this project, and wanted to ensure that they were documented before that happened. He was also anxious to document the experiences of older residents who had lived on the hacienda during the days before the agrarian reform, and who could recall working on the hacienda as children or participating in the sindicato during its early days. On several occasions he gathered together a few people and took me down to the hacienda house.

With Joselo, and with other members of his sindicato, we spoke about conditions for colonos, including the weekly labour tenancy requirement of three days of work on hacienda lands and rotating shifts providing domestic services to the household. Joselo, like other Afro-Bolivians, refers to these experiences as a fundamental to claims to belonging, and views the sindicato as an inheritance from his grandparents, through his parents to his generation. For Joselo, these claims of inheritance focus particularly on the sindicato, and its role in the history of struggle expressed in terms of the revolution of 1952:

Our grandparents, more than anyone else, worked on the haciendas. They worked three days a week and the rest of the week they worked for themselves. ... [The sindicato] is very important because it’s one of the few haciendas [referring to the hacienda house] that remain in our town, and for that reason we want to ... transmit it to all the people, so that they can know how our sindicato was. This sindicato
comes from our grandparents. Now our grandparents have died, and only a few of our parents are still here.

In this account, the *sindicato* itself represents an inheritance from his grandparents. In other accounts – by Joselo and others – it is the land that is phrased as an inheritance from the former *hacienda* workers, and the *sindicato* is described as the vehicle for that inheritance. The two claims operate in different ways, but the underlying ethnoracial sensibilities are similar. Claiming the *sindicato* as an inheritance from the black *colonos* who lived on the *hacienda* marks this kind of nested affiliation as a black community. This differs significantly from the situation described by Leons, in which the *sindicato* system served the interests of *mestizo* elites and to the exclusion of blacks (1978). As the system shifted to focus on social control of coca production, prioritizing traditional communities, blacks found that ethnoracial sensibilities no longer discouraged their participation, but rather that their ethnoracial condition left them particularly well-placed to claim legitimacy as traditional communities. In light of French’s work (2009), it appears that shifts in the legal and paralegal regimes that govern accesses to resources have provoked shifts in the ethnoracial sensibilities surrounding the nested affiliations through which social life is organised in Chicaloma.

Joselo’s use of the word “grandparents” operates in a particularly ambiguous fashion here, hovering between referring to specific people who organised and managed the *sindicato* in its early days and applying to a general idea of “ancestors,” in much the same way he describes “our parents” and “our grandparents” arriving as slaves from Africa and working in the mines and on the *haciendas*. The ethnoracial sensibilities wrapped up in this claim to inheritance (whether of land or of the *sindicato*) work in an indirect fashion here. The claim makes no reference to race or ethnicity on its face, but the fact that most of the original workers on the *haciendas* in Chicaloma were black underlies it at a fundamental level. In tying the claim to an inheritance of both the land and the *sindicato* to the workers on the *hacienda* (rather than on, for instance, a moral right for workers to the land they
work, or a history of political struggle following the revolution\textsuperscript{15}) the narrative constructs the \textit{sindicato} as the rightful domain of black producers.

9. Contested belonging: a \textit{sindicato} meeting

While I was in Chicaloma, the \textit{sindicato} La Joya – the same \textit{sindicato} of which Joselo was general secretary – was working through two related issues that brought questions of belonging to the fore. The \textit{sindicato} was required to rewrite its bylaws in order to apply for legal personhood and re-register with ADEPCOCA, and at the same time it was consolidating its list of members in preparation for the periodic process of issuing new producer’s cards. Both of these were particularly contentious problems that brought questions about belonging to the surface, both in an ideal sense in relation to the requirements that would be written into the bylaws and in real terms when faced with decision to accept or reject particular individuals. These issues were both discussed in the same meeting, and a neat distinction between the two is rarely apparent in the comments of those present. The question of whether a particular person had carried out their obligations sufficiently to merit renewed membership necessarily draws on idealised notions of what a person should contribute to the community as a \textit{sindicato} member, while questions about what criteria should be written into the bylaws brought out examples and accusations regarding specific cases and individuals. Several people with ties to the \textit{comunidad} were interested in being enrolled in the \textit{sindicato} and several others were accused of not having fulfilled their social and economic obligations as members of the \textit{sindicato}.\textsuperscript{16} There was, therefore, significant tension over who should or should not be struck from the \textit{sindicato}’s roles and also over what the general criteria for membership should be. A set of criteria based on residence in the community was impossible. The \textit{sindicatos} were initially formed as a means to organise former

\textsuperscript{15} The fact that many of the earliest \textit{sindicato} leaders were migrants or \textit{mestizos} who had leveraged intermediate roles on the \textit{haciendas} into positions of power within the community would complicate the ethnoracial sensibilities inherent in claims based on a history of political struggle.

\textsuperscript{16} These include, principally attending meetings, paying dues and fines, and attending communal work days.
colonos once the haciendas were disbanded. Once people moved to town, though, there was no longer a neat relationship between comunidad – in the sense of a place where a collection of families live – and sindicato. There is still a tendency for sindicatos to represent the descendants of former colonos of a given hacienda, but there is also a great deal of flexibility, and people do sometimes change their sindicato affiliation.

In the days leading up to the meeting, the people involved in these issues sought alliances with and favours from officers of the sindicato. Joselo was anxious to strike as many people from the list as he could in order to allow new members into the sindicato. He hoped that these would participate more actively but he was also providing places for people he believed had a greater right to be a member of the sindicato or with whom he had a personal relationship or alliance. At the meeting, and before, he was careful to phrase this goal in terms of the desires of the rank and file, rather than his own ambition. Throughout the day, there was a heated debate in which members spoke up against members who were not up to date on their quotas or their attendance at meetings. Several speakers insisted that the sindicato should not allow these lapsed members to receive producer’s cards simply by paying the reissuing fee of 56 bolivianos. The common thread of the debate was the need to meet social and economic obligations to the sindicato. Members discussed whether paying fines for missed meetings and work days could compensate for having missed them, and what those fines should be. Others called for loyalty and solidarity with the sindicato by coming out to work on communal work days, or questioned whether those members who paid such fines to keep their producer’s card would simply revert to their previous irresponsibility once the threat of losing their card had passed. One member called for the kind of participation that would help the sindicato grow and develop:

I believe that from today forward, you will write these bylaws, and I’d like these bylaws to be respected. Now, if we need to go out and work, then all of us who are here, [all need to go out]. Those who are under their mothers wing, well, parents will go out and work for our children, and those that have a family of their own, we’ll go out and work on our own. We should follow that. Now all of us who are in the
sindicato should go out and work, not just a few of us. We know who goes out to work. And others are off earning their day’s wage freely... Let’s follow this in the sindicato. Please. I believe that this way the sindicato will go well, will succeed.

This demand that members fulfil their social and cultural obligations phrases that in terms of constructing the sindicato. She argues that members should behave appropriately because that will make the sindicato better. Another member phrased a similar argument about the members who had not been contributing, but did so directly in terms of belonging – of constructing appropriate members of the sindicato:

At some point, they must have been fulfilling their work and their quotas, right? But from some moment, there’s a time that they haven’t contributed. Now they pay a quota of 56 bolivianos, but you can’t wash your hands like Pontius Pilate with 56 bolivianos. Now if they want to be in this comunidad, from the moment that they left off, up to this moment, they should pay their quotas, their work, all of that. They should pay up. Then easy they can be with us in this comunidad. Now if they don’t want to pay up, give them back their money and ciao. Just like that.

Here fulfilling social and economic obligations to the community is seen not only as exercising a set of rights and performing certain obligations, but also as a question of belonging. Instead of emphasising the responsibility to construct a community by behaving appropriately, he emphasises that appropriate behaviour allows members to make a claim to belonging in the community: “to be with us in the comunidad.” Both members make a moral argument, expressing “a strong conception of active responsibility toward the community” (Lazar, 2008, 88), in order to construct the sindicato/comunidad, and themselves as members. The first emphasises that members construct the community, while the second emphasises the role of the sindicato in constructing its members.

Nevertheless, these moral arguments about contribution to the development of the sindicato were complicated by notions of belonging as soon as the discussion moved from the general question of how members of a comunidad should behave to the specific question of what a particular individual ought to do in order to maintain
their position or be added to the roles. Parents making claims on behalf of their children frequently based those claims in the fact that their children were born in Chicaloma. For the descendants of former colonos, these claims to belonging were relatively straightforward. More contentious issues arose in the cases of those who had arrived as children. One particular case involves a man who wanted to have his wife, who had come to Chicaloma from La Paz seven years earlier, enrolled in the sindicato. He himself had come to Chicaloma many years earlier, as a small child, and was a member of the sindicato, but had nevertheless been subject of rumours that he had not been fulfilling his obligations to participate in communal work days. Questions arose about whether the fee charged by the sindicato for their enrolment should be the 500 Bolivianos assessed to non-residents or the 200 Bolivianos assessed to residents. One of the officers rose to the defence of this person,\(^{17}\) saying:

\[ \text{Compañero Benigno grew up here. He was here as a little kid. I think we can’t charge him 500. A person who gets here from somewhere else, and buys a coca plantation from Sirio, let’s say, and wants to join, then, yes, we could charge him 500, compañeros. But compañero Benigno didn’t come from La Paz to buy land directly...} \]

Others made similar arguments that, for instance, their adolescent children shouldn’t be struck from the roles because they were born in Chicaloma, even though they were living in La Paz and had not participated in work days or paid fines. For instance, one member, a migrant from the highlands whose children had not been able to participate in communal work days since they were in school in La Paz grew increasingly agitated over the course of the meeting, pacing back and forth as the discussion carried on. Eventually, he raised his hand and spoke on their behalf, saying:

\[ \text{Compañeros, my children were born here... They had cards, except for this last one, when they didn’t get cards. The reason for that was that they were all with me, and each owed a fine of 700 or 800 pesos... They are still enrolled. Only at this last card issuance did they} \]

\(^{17}\) In all likelihood, this defence was planned in advance of the meeting.
not get cards. But they keep working here. I can confirm it. They worked here. You can’t say that nobody worked here.

This claim draws its moral weight from a claim to belonging much more than on fulfilling social and economic responsibilities. His principal argument is that his children belong because they were born in Chicaloma, which he claims should be sufficient to forgive the hefty fines that they owe. He concludes by arguing that their communal work shows that they still belong. These assertions of long-term residence in Chicaloma are not necessarily based on a direct link to a given hacienda, but rather form part of a claim to belonging in a broad sense. They serve to legitimate claims to rights that are related to economic production and social welfare. Returning to Santos’ analysis, with which I opened this paper, it is clear that there is a tension between demands that draw their moral force from the fulfilment of certain social and economic obligations to the community and those that draw their moral force from claims based on rootedness in the community of Chicaloma. These claims are not generally phrased in terms of race or ethnicity, but they intersect with ethnoracial sensibilities in complicated ways. Claims to belonging make implicit reference to Chicaloma as an ethnoracially marked social space, though the value of that marking is subject to constant contestation. What is clear, though, is that belonging in a community is not simply a question of carrying certain practices in relation to that community. Rather, a number of conditions – birthplace, race, family, etc. – influence the position from which a person may make these claims, and the strategies that are likely to yield results.

Conclusions:

Citizenship practices through which vecinos construct community and claim belonging in Chicaloma include participating in a series of nested affiliations, narrating histories, representing the town in cultural and athletic events, building obras and other practices. These practices construct Chicaloma as a social space and mark it according to certain ethnoracial sensibilities. The intersection of collective citizenship practices with ethnoracial sensibilities exposes the tensions, conflict and
exclusion inherent in practices that construct community. These are not trivial issues for those involved, since the allocation of resources within these nested affiliations is frequently negotiated in terms of belonging to the community.

Narrating histories that emphasise continued presence in town, shared suffering on the haciendas, and labour spent to construct the town not only constructs the community as a social space, but also strengthens claims to belonging in it. Ethnoracial sensibilities are not necessarily considered directly in these practices, yet, claims to belonging intersect with ethnicity and race in subtle, unexpressed ways. For instance claims to belonging that draw on historical presence in Chicaloma are more powerful for those whose parents or grandparents suffered on the hacienda and struggled against it. These claims, though not made with any specific ethnoracial grounding, make reference to the black colonos who worked on the haciendas, often in terms of “grandparents”, both in the sense of real people and in the sense of ancestors more broadly. Participation in nested affiliations, by contributing labour to the construction and maintenance of obras or attending sindicato meetings, also serves to construct the community as a social space and claim belonging within it. The ethnoracial sensibilities associated with these nested affiliations are fluid and constantly contested. Within the sindicato system particularly, they have shifted dramatically as local and national contexts for economic and political organisation have shifted focus to emphasise traditional production rather than the rights of workers to own their land. Other practices, such as playing football and Saya, may make more direct reference to ethnicity and race by making direct reference to a direct reference to an African heritage, and to national discourses that mark the Yungas as an “African” space. Still, they do so in ways that support claims to belonging by linking participants to the social space, by invoking the older relatives who taught them or black teammates from years gone by. All of practices emphasise rootedness in the specific social space of Chicaloma.

It should be clear that, in this context, belonging is not a condition that an individual attains, but rather a claim that one makes or feels in relation to the community. The ethnoracial sensibilities exposed in these claims highlight how contentious and fraught they can be. In this context, citizenship is not based solely on appropriate
participation in a set of nested affiliations that intermediate between subjects and the state. Nor are citizenship rights and responsibilities doled out or claimed on the basis of birthright, identity or some other condition. Rather, local citizenship practices in Chicaloma involve making claims to belonging based on a range of conditions and sensibilities that refer to and construct community as social space.
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