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Marimba, territoriality and Black identity: The power of music in assimilating and resisting

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Abstract

Music holds power; it empowers and integrates communities, transmits messages, propels a sense of identity, brings people together, and it reaches a massive population and an assortment of spaces that formal education systems do not reach. Exploring the potential music has can promote new forms of inclusion in which different cultural identities are valued equally. Acknowledging this, the paper explores Afro-Pacific music in Colombia as a space of assimilation and resistance in which black communities have raised their voices to counter hegemonic discrimination, and at the same time, they have reproduced certain stereotypes that delimit black culture. This is visible in the Petronio Álvarez Festival in Cali, Colombia.

This Festival provides a setting to analyse the tensions between black communities, the institutional abandonment, racial inequalities, and the emergence of the multicultural discourse, through the framework of redistribution, recognition, representation, and reconciliation. Those tensions are visible through the three main elements. First, the contingency of tradition, second, the link between race and territory, in the Pacific forest and the marginal urban spaces. Finally, blackness as a cultural identity that shapes values of resistance, collectiveness within the community, and autonomy towards the state, and the centrality of music and dancing.