



# The Healers Project:

Research Sites

<https://healers.uoregon.edu>

Welcome to our Storymap

In the first version of the site, writing about Afro/Indigenous Caribbean healers in the islands and the U.S. Pacific Northwest, it became necessary to place them in space. The PNW is not a familiar space for many Caribbean peoples; and the Caribbean islands tend to be completely unknown in the PNW. Here we have created a StoryMap that allows site visitors to get a sense of where the healers featured here are located vis-à-vis one another.

As the site has grown, the StoryMap places Caribbean geographies and histories, alongside other PNW and Latin American landscapes, relevant to all the Afro/Indigenous voices that have joined us in this digital community. Through the StoryMap we hope to then help our audiences to get a sense of the places, histories, and cultural traditions mentioned by healers in their interviews, and also build a spatial imaginary for the Pacific Northwest, Latin America and the Caribbean that is not limited by borders; but rather is deeply shaped by all the relationships and knowledge exchanges enabled by Afro/Indigenous peoples connection to their traditional plant, spiritual, and ecological medicines and knowledge across many landscapes and communities.

# 1

## The Caribbean



The Caribbean was named as such by Christian colonial conquistadores and settlers. Its name refers to the name the Spaniards gave to the Kalinago people, Carib. In truth, there were hundreds of tribal communities spread throughout the Caribbean at the time of contact, and following. This included Kalinago, Lucayo, Ciguayo, Arawac, Iñeri, Macorixeño, and many, many other peoples. The area itself was developed through movement, trade and economic expansion of Arawak peoples from the south and other indigenous peoples from the mainland in the north and to the west. Following Christian colonial settlement and the development of the slave trade, peoples of African descent from the Iberian peninsula and from across the Africa continent were brought to the islands as enslaved labor. Their first sites of labor included gold mines; then, sugar plantations, and in some cases, cattle farms. The unification of indigenous and African peoples fomented marronage – or maroon cultures: cultures produced by those who ran away from the plantations to form independent communities in the mountains and thick forests of the Caribbean islands. Marronage took place all over the Caribbean and the Americas, producing new understandings of agriculture, spirituality, food, and relationships.



## Cuba



Cuba is the Caribbean's largest island-nation. The two largest cities, La Havana and Santiago de Cuba – both powerful sites for the collective preservation of Afro-descendant traditions – are over 500 miles (867 kilometers) apart. Cuba's most Western point (Guanahacabibes) is 165 miles (67 km) from the Yucatán; its most eastern point is 67 miles (109 km) from Haiti. Santiago de Cuba, in the eastern province of Oriente, is known for its cathedral to the Virgen de la Caridad, and for its strong history of maronnage, and revolutionary resistance. Its most recognized traditional healing traditions are deeply shaped by the history of Congo and Yoruba slavery under Spanish colonial rule, the incorporation of indigenous herbalist and sacred practices, and treaties established between those communities, the Church, and Kardecian mediumship circles in the early twentieth century. The Yoruba communities maintained their ancestral healing knowledge through the systematization of a complex ceremonial tradition known as *regla de osha*; the Congo traditions were kept under the rubric of *palo monte* or *regla conga*. In Eastern Cuba, Haitian vodoun and Jamaican obeah brought by plantation workers under U.S. occupation in the early twentieth century also left a mark in Cuba's array of Afro-Indigenous healing modalities. We interviewed elders in Santiago de Cuba.



## Puerto Rico



Puerto Rico is a U.S. territory with a strong cultural identity. The island is located between Hispaniola and the Lower Antilles. One of its most well-known natural areas is El Yunque. Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens – an important factor that differentiates the social experiences of Puerto Ricans from their neighbors in the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica and Cuba. In 017, Puerto Rico was devastated by Hurricane Maria, which prompted a massive exodus of people to cities all over the United States. Climate refugees from Puerto Rico have also settled in the Pacific Northwest. The rapid emigration of peoples off the island did not diminish Puerto Rico's cultural wealth, in particular, the survival of its Afro-descendant and Afro-indigenous communities. These communities' healing traditions draw from indigenous herbalist and spiritual practices, oftentimes intertwined with Congo traditions and Catholic psalms and prayers. Taíno Indian revival practices find strongholds on the island and the U.S. mainland, alongside the practices of historical maroon and Black communities, espiritista temples, water guardians atmanantiales in the Cordillera Central, healing virgins, sobadas, remedios, the preservation of African drums and songs in bomba and plena, Afro-Cuban regla de osha, Dominican la 21 división, and sanse. We interviewed elders from Puerto Rico's northern coast who have, since María, been moving between the island and the mainland.





The Dominican Republic shares an island with Haiti. The island is located between Cuba, Jamaica and Puerto Rico, and includes cloud forests, tropical forests, coastal forests and six unique ecosystems. There are over 400 medicinal plants that have been catalogued by biologists and ethnobotanists. The primary tradition in the Dominican Republic is *la 1 división*, with variations that include *Liborismo*, *tcha-tcha* lineages, and *congo* lineages. In many communities, there are also lineages that draw from variations rooted in Haitian *vodoun*, and there are some communities where the traditions are rooted in *Agua Dulce* and a strong hybridization with Catholic-indigenous practices. We interviewed elders who live in all three kinds of forests mentioned here, and elders who maintain distinct lineages within *la 1 división* and Catholic-indigenous practices. We also interviewed a Cuban elder who lives in the outskirts of Santo Domingo, a metropolis of over 4,000,000 people. In her case, we concentrated on her garden, which she has cultivated and expanded over a four-year period, as well as how she has incorporated her traditions as a migrant.



## Pacific Northwest



The Pacific Northwest encompasses the U.S. states of Washington and Oregon. Where we live, in Eugene, is traditionally Kalapuya land. All across the Northwest, there is a long history of indigenous survival and resistance. The historic tribes of the PNW include: the Yakamas, Wanapams, Walulas, Umatillas, Wishrams, Teninos, Watlalas, Multnomahs, Kathlamets, and Wahkiakums, Tututni, Euchre Creek, Coos, Coquilles, Alsea, Siuslaw, Yaquina, and Siletz, Tillamook tribes of the Nestucca, Nehalem, Clatsop Chinook, Cowlitz, Nisqually, Puyallup, Snoqualmie, Chehalis, Skokomish, Swinomish, Tulalip, Nooksack, Lummi, Samish, Sauk-Suiattle, Stillaguamish, among many others. After the establishment of the states of Oregon and Washington, there are nine federally recognized tribes in Oregon, and over 9 federally recognized tribes in Washington. In Oregon, this includes: The Confederated tribes of Grand Ronde, The Confederated Tribes of Siletz, The Coquille Indian Tribe, The Klamath tribe, The Confederated tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw, The Cow Creek Band of Umpqua, and the Burns Paiute tribe, the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation, the Nez Perce on the Lapwai Reservation in Idaho, and the Modoc Nation of Oklahoma. In Washington, the Puget Sound Salish tribes including the Puyallup, Snohomish, Muckleshoot, Snoqualmie, Nisqually, Skagit, Suquamish, Squaxin, Swinomish, Stillaguamish, and Sauk-Suiattle tribes. The Pacific Northwest is almost 3,000 miles away from the Caribbean. In putting a call out for Caribbean Women Healers in the PNW, we learned about tradition keepers in Portland, Seattle and Eugene. We learned about a very small community of Cubans and Dominicans spread out across the region. Puerto Ricans are by far the largest Hispanophone Caribbean community in

the PNW, many having roots that go as far back as the early 20th century, when their ancestors came to work in the Portland and Seattle ports. In 1917, Puerto Rico experienced a hurricane that dispersed its population across the Western hemisphere. The number of Puerto Ricans in our PNW community networks tripled in under a year. We interviewed an elder who migrated to the PNW from Miami, her parents having migrated from Cuba.

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