Far From Home But no Less West Indian: Melva Lowe de Goodin's *De/From Barbados a/To Panama*

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The West Indian community represents another identity within Panamanian space, in contrast with the Hispanic mestizo national identity of that space. Over time these Caribbean migrants built their own entities and structures to ensure their livelihood and well-being. This paper examines this context as it appears in Melva Lowe de Goodin's *De Barbados a Panamá - From Barbados to Panama* (1999), a play written in English and Spanish. A stalwart of West Indian rights in Panama, Lowe de Goodin is founding member of the West Indian Panamanian organization, the Sociedad de Amigos del Museo Afroantillano de Panamá (SAMAAP). Members are proud of their Caribbean heritage and stress the achievements of West Indians whose labor gave rise to the Panama Canal and who made contributions to key areas of society. They advocate West Indian rights and promote vibrant displays of their culture as part of African heritage. They emphasize their legacy of difference, privileging things West Indian, setting the community apart from the local Afro-Panamanian population and marking distinction between their Anglo-Caribbean background and the local Hispanicized space they now call home. Lowe de Goodin's play brings to the stage a visual re-enactment of the West Indian voyage and cultural trajectory. Issues of racial divides and economic hardship dramatize a people in continuous adaptation and integration.