

# BIOGRAPHY



Teofilo Colon Jr (a.k.a “Tio Teo”) is a dynamic American Garifuna Photographer, Filmmaker, Writer, Blogger/Journalist born and mostly raised in Brooklyn, New York. Renowned for his groundbreaking work in preserving and promoting Garifuna Culture, he is the mastermind behind the Being Garifuna website, an influential online powerhouse platform which he founded in 2009 and is shaking up the cultural scene.

Initially a portal and an archive of news, history, and documented culture, it eventually evolved into a blog archiving the happenings of the Garifuna ethnic group. Particularly in New York City, which contains the largest population of Garifuna people outside of Central America.

In explaining what served as the Genesis for his founding of Being Garifuna, Teofilo notes,

“Growing up, I was a Total Nerd, whose head was always in the Books. As an Adult, after an embarrassing incident at a Birthday Celebration for a loved one, I decided to become a Nerd about my Cultural Heritage. Upon reading and diving into the culture by attending and photographing public Garifuna events in New York City, I used the Being Garifuna website and Facebook page to share what I learned.”

With it's sharing of the vibrant history and stories of the Garifuna people since it's founding, Being Garifuna has been recognized as an influential online platform and a vital resource for the Afro-Caribbean Central American Garifuna Community. With a lens on everything like The Happy Land Social Club Fire Tragedy to grassroots Garifuna movements, Teo's work packs a punch—blending raw talent with relentless dedication.

With a career spanning Film credits like the 1998 film Directed by Master Filmmaker Hype Williams, *Belly*, Teofilo has also worked with World Class Filmmakers like Mark Romanek (Jay-Z's Award-Winning, “99 Problems” music video) and Little X/Director X/Julien Christian Lutz. Teo's Cinema Advocacy includes producing the *Believe The Hype: An Auteur Study of Hype Williams—The Best Who Ever Did It* Presentation by Critic Armond White as part of The 2006 New York Video Festival at Lincoln Center.

When you include Teofilo's freelance photography for non-profit organizations like Friends of Crotona Park, for whom he's served as their main photographer since 2010, Teofilo blends artistic talent with cultural advocacy. Teo's Photos from Friends of Crotona Park events have been featured in The New York Daily News as well as throughout social media and the Internet.

Teofilo's contributions earned him a Recognition Award from New York City Garifuna non-profit organization, The Garifuna Coalition USA Inc in 2010. He was also honored and recognized by the 2013 New Jersey Folk Festival at Rutgers University, the oldest, continuously run Folk Festival in the United States.

The Bronx-based Non-Profit Organization, The International Honduran Central American Parade Inc also honored Teo's work in 2024. That organization has hosted the longest running Central American Independence Parade in New York as well as the Tri-State Area.

Teofilo has also been profiled by The New York Daily News, The Caribbean Life Newspaper, The NY1 Cable Network, College Journalism Students and various other entities over the years. All of these accolades have helped Teofilo cement his legacy as a trailblazer in documenting and celebrating Garifuna Heritage. In fact, Teofilo is not just documenting culture, he's redefining it, one bold frame at a time.