

## Carlos Guillermo 'Cubena' Wilson's Literary Texts as Platforms for Social Commentary and Critique of Panamanian Society

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**Abstract :** When most people think of Panama, they immediately think of the Canal; however, the construction and the people who made it possible are often omitted and seldom acknowledged. The reality is that the construction of this waterway was achieved through forced migration and discriminatory practices toward people of African descent, specifically black people from the Caribbean. From the colonial period to the opening and subsequent operation of the Panama Canal by the United States, this paper goes through the rich layers of Panamanian history to examine the life of Afro-Caribbeans and their descendants in Panama. It also considers the role of the United States in Panama; it explores how the United States in Panama forged a racially complex country that made the integration of Afro-Caribbeans and their descendants difficult. After laying a historical foundation, the exploration of Afro-Caribbean people and Panamanians of Afro-Caribbean descent are analyzed through Afro-Panamanian writer Carlos Guillermo 'Cubena' Wilson's novels, short stories, and poetry. This study focuses on how Cubena addresses racism, discrimination, inequality, and social justice issues towards Afro-Caribbeans and their descendants who traveled to Panama to construct the Canal. Content analysis methodology can yield several significant contributions, and analyzing Carlos Guillermo Wilson's literature under this framework allows us to consider social commentary and critique of Panamanian society. It identifies the social issues and concerns of Afro-Caribbeans and people of Afro-Caribbean descent, such as inequality, corruption, racism, political oppression, and cultural identity. Analysis methodology allows us to explore how Cubena's literature engages with questions of cultural identity and belonging in Panamanian society. By examining themes related to race, ethnicity, language, and heritage, this research uncovers the complexities of Panamanian cultural identity, allowing us to interrogate power dynamics and social hierarchies in Panamanian society. Analyzing the portrayal of different social groups, institutions, and power structures helps uncover how power is wielded, contested, and resisted; Cubena's fictional world allows us to see how it functions in Panama. Content analysis methodology also provides for critiquing political systems and governance in Panama. By examining the representation and presentation of political figures, institutions, and events in Cubena's literature, we uncover his commentary on corruption, authoritarianism, governance, and the role of the United States in Panama. Content analysis highlights how Wilson's literature amplifies the voices and experiences of marginalized individuals and communities in Panamanian society. By centering the narratives of Afro-Panamanians and other marginalized groups, this researcher uncovers Cubena's commitment to social justice and inclusion in his writing and helps the reader engage with historical narratives and collective memory in Panama. Overall, analyzing Carlos Guillermo 'Cubena' Wilson's literature as a platform for social commentary and critique of Panamanian society using content analysis methodology provides valuable insights into the cultural, social, and political dimensions of Afro-Panamanians during and after the construction of the Panama Canal.

**Keywords :** Afro-Caribbean, Panama Canal, race, Afro-Panamanian, identity, history

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