

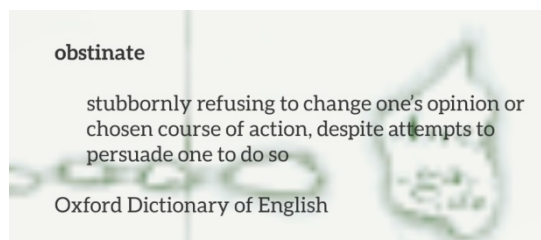


# The Cha-Chas of St. Thomas: A Prezi-presentation with written manuscript

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<p><b>Title</b></p>	<p>Our presentation is called <i>The Cha-Chas of St-Thomas</i></p>
<p><i>Amongst the Cha-Cha's</i>  <a href="http://www.kb.dk/images/billed/2010/okt/billeder/object300415/da/">http://www.kb.dk/images/billed/2010/okt/billeder/object300415/da/</a></p>  <p>DPK000869.tif</p>	<p>Looking through the digitized photographs we came upon this postcard that made us curious. Who were these people staring so intensely back on the photographer? Who turned an anthropological lens towards them in order to profit from the picturesque diversity on the Virgin Islands?</p> <p>Digitizing our curiosity we searched through the internet in order to find information – and our presentation is anachronistically mixing information from online news articles, discussions, academic sources and materials from the digitized collections of The Royal Library.</p>
 <p><a href="https://books.google.dk/books?id=PmvSk13slc0C&amp;pg=PA145&amp;dq=cha+cha+st+thomas&amp;hl=da&amp;sa=X&amp;redir_esc=y#v=onepage&amp;q=cha%20cha%20st%20thomas&amp;f=false">https://books.google.dk/books?id=PmvSk13slc0C&amp;pg=PA145&amp;dq=cha+cha+st+thomas&amp;hl=da&amp;sa=X&amp;redir_esc=y#v=onepage&amp;q=cha%20cha%20st%20thomas&amp;f=false</a></p> <p>Reference: Allsopp, R., &amp; Allsopp, J. (Eds.). (2003). <i>Dictionary of Caribbean English usage</i>. Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press.</p>	<p>According to the Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage the ChaCha's are ...</p> <p>“White Virgin Islanders of French descent” ...</p> <p>But we soon learned, that they are also known as <i>Frenchies</i> ...</p>
 <p>Reference:</p>	<p>On <i>VIMovingCenter</i>, a platform for information concerning the US virgin islands, we came across a forum discussion started off by this question:</p> <p>“who and what are the "frenchies" on STT, i heard yesterday that they are white locals and can be quite obstinate, i'm assuming they were here before the Danes and the plantation system, i don't think we have any on STX”</p> <p>So is it their obstinate nature that makes the people</p>

<http://www.vimovingcenter.com/talk/read.php?4,74406,74436>



Reference: *Oxford Dictionary of English*

portrayed in the postcard stare so intensely at the photographer? Or were historical stereotypes recirculated in this discussion thread from 2007. And were the Frenchies actually at St. Thomas before the Danes?



References:

Hillinger, C. (1987): Cha Chas Preserve a Generations-Old Identity, *Los Angeles Times*, April 12, 1987, [http://articles.latimes.com/1987-04-12/news/vw-898\\_1\\_cha-cha](http://articles.latimes.com/1987-04-12/news/vw-898_1_cha-cha)

De Albuquerque, K., & McElroy, J.L. (1985), Race and ethnicity in the United States Virgin Islands, *Ethnic Groups*. Vol. 6, pp. 125-153.

Shaw, E.B. (1934). The Chachas of St. Thomas, *The Scientific Monthly*, 38 (2), 136-145

The Frenchies or Chachas are descendants of migrants who sometime in the period between the 1850's and 1880's came to St. Thomas (the red pin) from the island Saint-Barthélemy also called Saint Bart's (the yellow pin). They were possibly descendants of Huguenots, thus protestants, from Brittany and Normandy in Northern France. Due to their religious conviction many Huguenots were deported to the French West Indies in the 1600s. However other of our sources tells us that the ChaChas in St. Thomas are Catholics, which complicates the matter of their origin.

Saint-Barthélemy was occupied by the French in 1648; it was sold to Sweden in 1784 but was returned to France in 1877 after a public vote. Thus the island was under Swedish rule at the time, when the ChaChas migrated to St. Thomas. Their situation on the barren St. Bart's was difficult, and they went to St. Thomas in hope of better opportunities.

However, close relations between the islanders were maintained throughout the generations as told by Sebastian Greaux in 1987: "Everybody on St. Barts has relatives here on St. Thomas and vice versa. We are very close. People go back and forth between the two islands all the time."  
(in Hillinger 1987)

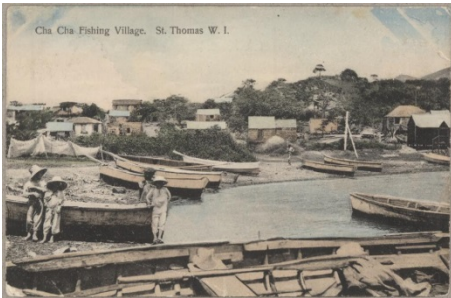


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On St. Thomas they settled as farmers and fishers around Hull Bay on the Northern side of the island as well as close to Charlotte Amalie in the fishermen's village Caranage – also called Cha Cha town – and later renamed Frenchtown. In the digitized collection we found topographical images and postcards showing the area around the Cha Cha village ...  
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References:

Williamson-Bryan, V. (n.d.). One, two, Cha Cha Cha. On *US Virgin Islands: America's Caribbean Paradise*, Travel website, <http://www.usvi.net/archives/vi-in-depth-archives/caribcat-one-two-cha-cha-cha/>

Hillinger, C. (1987): Cha Chas Preserve a Generations-Old Identity, Los Angeles Times, April 12, 1987, [http://articles.latimes.com/1987-04-12/news/vw-898\\_1\\_cha-cha](http://articles.latimes.com/1987-04-12/news/vw-898_1_cha-cha)


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We also noticed a fascination with of the people living there. The Frenchies or ChaChas have historically been mocked by other Virgin Islanders. They were teased about their language or patois, a mixture of French, Creole and English. And also about their clothes – straw hats, bare feet and the old fashioned black dresses and traditional Brittany bonnets of the women.

The label Cha-Cha seems to be a nickname ascribed to the group by other Virgins Islanders. Some of our sources suggest that “Cha-Cha” was an expression, used by the French-speaking settlers to shoo away those, who were teasing them.

In quotes from Encyclopedia Britannica from the 1980's the ChaChas were furthermore, described as “a clannish, aloof and industrious community” (see Williamson-Bryan n.d.) And in the before mentioned discussion thread from 2007 they were described as people you should not be messing with. Thus the prevailing stereotypes seem to be that they keep to themselves, are unfriendly and ill-tempered.

<p><b>Stereotypes</b></p> <p><i>Stereotypes get hold of a few 'simple, vivid, memorable, easily grasped and widely recognized' characteristics about a person, reduce everything about the person to those traits, exaggerate and simplify them, and fix them without change or development to eternity.</i>  - Stuart Hall, 1997</p> <p>Reference:  Hall, S. (1997): The Spectacle of the 'Others', in Stuart Hall (Ed.): <i>Representation – Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices</i>, London: SAGE Publications, s. 223-290</p>	<p>According to Stuart Hall: “<i>Stereotypes</i> gets hold of a few simple, vivid, memorable, easily grasped and widely recognized characteristics about a person, <i>reduce</i> everything about the person to those traits, <i>exaggerate</i> and <i>simplify</i> them, and fix them without change or development to eternity.</p>
 <p>DPK000869.tif</p> <p>Reference:  Machin, D., &amp; Mayr, A. (2012). <i>How to do critical discourse analysis: a multimodal introduction</i>. Los Angeles: SAGE.</p>	<p>Returning to the <i>Amongst the Cha-Cha's</i> postcard that initially caught our attention, we notice once again the many gazes returned towards us. In the terms of social semiotics this photographs may be described as a <i>demand image</i> .The many gazes towards the camera creates symbolic contact between the depicted individuals and the onlookers (Machin and Mayr 2012: 71) So are they actually challenging us?  <b>ZOOM</b> – Are they protesting against our anthropological gaze? Or are they simply obstinate and ill-tempered people? <b>ZOOM OUT</b>  We worry that by using this image we are perpetuating the stereotypes of the ChaChas. And after having read up on the ChaChas our reading may actually have become more prejudiced, as we read their faces with all the digitized anecdotes in mind.</p>