

# Afro-American Ethnic Development in Latin America

Written by Emma Northcott

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<https://www.e-ir.info/2016/02/03/afro-american-ethnic-development-in-latin-america/>

EMMA NORTHCOTT, FEB 3 2016

### Afro-American Ethnic Development in Latin America:

#### A Transnational Evaluation of Citizenship

Afro-American populations have been marginalized in Latin America since their arrival as slaves, though they have been rhetorically incorporated into society through racial democracy ideologies. Historical legacies of discrimination and subsequent "inclusion" that is more celebrated than real have together catalyzed new types of ethno-development among Afro-Latinos. This paper attempts to explain this development through analysis of Afro-Latino populations in Mexico, Brazil, and Colombia, which will be used as case studies to provide insight into the complex nature of Afro-Latino ethno-development. Additionally, the paper will seek answers to the question of how Latin American nations' histories affect perceptions of citizenship, and how nationalism in particular facilitates or discourages ethnic pluralism. The ways in which formal and informal transnational networks impact ethno-development present a parallel topic for investigation. These analyses, taken together, will be essential for evaluation of contemporary Afro-Latino political participation.

Section two of the paper adopts a historical perspective to analyse the emergence of these issues, documenting the arrival of Africans to three different countries in Latin America and their social statuses up until the modern day. Section three examines comparative perceptions of nationalism and citizenship, and includes discussion of contemporary examples of political participation. Section four assesses the evolution of transnational advocacy networks that work to improve the lives of Afro-Latinos, as well as transnationalism's effects on ethno-development. Finally, section five evaluates the potential futures of Afro-Latino political participation. The conclusions point to the inextricable links between historical legacies, nationalist sentiments, and the emergence of transnational networks, which condition Afro-Latino ethno-development in a manner that would not occur with the exclusion of any one factor.

### African Arrival to Latin America and Documented Trajectories of Marginalization in Mexico, Brazil, and Colombia

#### *Mexico*

In Mexico, the loss of much of the indigenous labor force to war and disease led to the import of 200,000 African slaves, beginning with Hernán Cortés's first order in 1544 for five hundred Africans to provide labor for his sugarcane plantation and processing factory, or *ingenio* (Githiora 20). In an attempt to maintain social order and various degrees of mixture, colonial authorities in Mexico developed a system of social stratification based on race, culture, and socioeconomic status (Sue 11). This system survived until Mexico's War of Independence (1810-1821), at which time legal distinctions pertaining to race and slavery were abolished. Following abolition, the social value placed on whiteness remained and exists today as a vestige of colonial racial hierarchy. However, it is important to note that this system of social organization in Mexico did not resemble a purely race-based caste system, because it considered alternate factors and included some openness to social mobility.

As in other countries, Mexico saw its fair share of slave rebellions and maroonage. Many individual runaway slaves also sought to escape slavery by disappearing within the free mulatto/mestizo population (Githiora 23), where the

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national invisibility of black identity actually provided a source of protection in this case. For similar reasons, Mexico became a safe haven for enslaved Africans in North America during the nineteenth century (Githiora 32). However, the late nineteenth century marked a shift in thinking on race and national ideology. Wealth, power, and land became concentrated in the hands of foreigners and a few Mexican metropolitan elites as a result of Porfirio Díaz's relentless quest for modernization (Sue 13). This elucidates a continuation of certain economic and societal elements that upheld social structures before abolition. On the other hand, Porfirian intellectuals began to assert the idea that Mexico's mixed and predominately non-white population was blocking the country's progress (Sue 13). This racially charged claim built the foundation for Mexico's post-revolutionary national ideological pillars. These pillars, as Christina A. Sue describes, have shown great resilience over time and include the following: (1) *mestizaje*, the embracement of race mixture and lauding of the mestizo; (2) non-racism, the contention that racism does not exist in the country; and (3) non-blackness, the marginalization, neglect, or negation of Mexico's African heritage (Sue 14).

While these three ideological pillars will be essential to later discussions of ethno-development and nationalism in this paper, certain aspects are particularly relevant to black marginalization when understood from a historical perspective. Twentieth-century race mixture was supported, in part, because elites viewed it as a mechanism to whiten the country through the "dilution and eventual elimination of the country's black and indigenous population" (Sue 64). This support was not merely a result of individual ideology, but was also imposed by the state – the term "*ideología del mestizaje*" was in fact coined by then minister of education and culture José Vasconcelos in his 1921 treatise "La raza cósmica: Misión de la raza iberoamericana" (Githiora 9). The *mestizaje* pillar attests to the perception that blacks had been absorbed into the population through race mixture, thereby furthering their relative invisibility as a distinct population. This perception and the non-racism pillar, taken together, explain why there has been no official measurement of the black population since independence. Finally, the non-blackness pillar signals both a "marginalization of the historic role of blacks in Mexico and a negation of the African heritage of Mexico's mixed-race population" (Sue 17). There have been some programs and initiatives like the 1980s "Our Third Root" project aiming to provide space for the study of blackness in Mexico by increasing the amount of research, publications, and cultural events about Afro-Mexican heritage. However, because the non-blackness pillar upholds the idea that Afro-Mexicans are marginalized to the point of invisibility, their historical contributions remain largely forgotten.

## *Brazil*

Though 200,000 African slaves brought to Mexico by no means constitutes a small number, it is dwarfed by the 3.5 million Africans whom were forcibly brought to Brazil as "less reluctant" workers to replace the previously marginalized Brazilian indigenous population (Marx 49). By 1798, Brazil's population included a majority of African descent (Marx 49). Unlike the trend of increasing invisibility of blacks through their supposed absorption into the mestizo population in Mexico, by 1755 Portugal had already limited "mixed marriages" in Brazil (Marx 34). However, during slavery, descendants of Africans and Europeans commingled in Brazil in extraordinarily high numbers. This is due to the fact that the Portuguese came to Brazil initially just for conquest and trade, rather than to settle, and brought few women along with them (Marx 65). Eighteenth and nineteenth century intermarriage and the resulting intermediate social position of numerous mulattoes posed a barrier to the potential development of biracial segregation. Other complications existed – for example; many blacks post-abolition continued to work as before, but for low wages. This attests to juxtapose the United States' abolition process – with no Civil War, there was no Reconstruction (Marx 161). Though the process was indeed peaceful, it reinforced existing hierarchy and allowed the strongly unified state to avoid a potentially explosive transition away from slavery, thus maintaining white/elite social and economic power.

Despite exaltations of pre- and post-colonial race relations, mobility was in reality more celebrated than existent. Through a process that can in some ways be compared to that of Mexico, whitening was achieved without the establishment of biracial categories or official segregation. Integration of a sort was even encouraged, not to advance blacks, but to absorb and dilute them culturally as a distinct group (Marx 164). Because the black population in Brazil made up such a greater majority than that of Mexico, cultural dilution was less successful. Again, whitening of the population took place not only as a result of underlining racial ideology, but also as a product of state-sanctioned efforts to "purify the race," such as the 1891 ban on African and Asian immigration. Even without official segregation,

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Afro-Brazilians' limited mobility had substantial ramifications on their later economic positioning in society – in both 1960 and 1976, whites' average income was about twice that of non-whites.

Through the rhetorical embracement of blacks and mulattos the Brazilian state was able to maintain national unity and avoid destabilising division. African culture was even celebrated, however more substantive political and economic rights did not follow to meet the rhetoric (Marx 175). Beginning in the early twentieth century, Brazilian racial movements began with the black, urban, emergent middle class (Marx 255). For example, the Frente Negra Brasileira (established in 1931) advocated equal rights through assimilation, at least among the literate black elite suffering an increase in relative deprivation during the Depression (Marx 255). About two decades later, abundant evidence of racist attitudes, stereotypes, and inequality surfaced through UNESCO's research on global racism which was spurred by a reaction to the horrors of Nazism (Andrews 490). Brazil also came under fire from an international audience in 1950 when renowned African-American dancer Katherine Dunham was refused admission to the Hotel Esplanada in Sao Paulo. In an attempt to calm the situation, the state passed the Alfonso Arinos "anti-discrimination" law of 1951, which made racial discrimination in public spaces a felony. Unfortunately, the law made no effort to articulate programs like affirmative action to deal with the effects of past discrimination (Nascimento 204). The law was largely symbolic of state efforts to deal with current discrimination – in the thirty-four years after its implementation, there were only three convictions under the law. Consequently, Afro-Brazilians did not frequently petition the state for policy change during this period, but rather engaged in projects like the Teatro Experimental do Negro to "redeem black African values," especially between 1945 and 1964 (Marx 256). A goal of this use of drama was to "liberate the mind from duality of marginal existence" (Nascimento 204), which indicates a continued emphasis during this time period on changing the consciousness and attitudes of black people about their own social situation rather than striving for policy change from above.

Following the 1964 coup that deposed of President Goulart the new military regime served the interests of the same elite that had long dominated Brazil (Marx 171). The junta attempted to preserve the long-standing image of racial democracy by repressing its critics. In 1969, the National Security Council outlawed studies of racial discrimination as subversive, and in 1970 race categories were again omitted from the census. The military government even went so far as to exile scholars studying race (Marx 171). Consequently, authoritarianism continued to reinforce white rule under the cover of racial tolerance. During the protracted transition to democracy, civic organizations, women's groups, churches, and Afro-Brazilian associations added pressure to end authoritarian rule (Marx 173). Despite the proliferation of civic groups during the twentieth century, civil society mobilization remained isolated and weaker than the Brazilian centralized state. The Palmares Civic Center (1920), Brazilian Black Front (1930s), the Association of Brazilians of Color (1938), the Laborist Black Front (1940s), José do Patrocínio Association (1941), Union of Men of Color (1940s), Afro-Brazilian Democratic Committee (1945), and the Association of Brazilian Blacks (1945) are examples of groups/movements that were all only minimally successful in provoking awareness and change.

These groups were forerunners to the somewhat more united Movimento Negro Unificado (MNU) in the 1970s, which retained a focus on culture while also "legitimizing the struggle against racism" (Marx 257) and calling for the marriage of Afro-Brazilian identity and political power (Nascimento 208). The MNU was more radical in focus than some of its predecessors, stressing black consciousness and an "adversarial stance vis-à-vis dominant political, social, and cultural institutions and values in Brazil" (Covin 42). It also expressed an adversative interpretation of culture: the regime can and does use culture, even Afro-Brazilian culture, to work against Afro-Brazilian well-being (Covin 44). This interpretation is clearly evident in 1992 statements that "black culture in Brazil has been reduced to food, entertainment, and religion" and "political manipulation of black culture amounts to racial violence" (MNU, 1992d, 14).

Initiatives on the part of the MNU reflected a shift away from a focus on the pathology of black individuals being responsible for inequality. During the same time period (1970s and 1980s), quantitative and macro-structural approaches to the study of racial inequality were also working to push aside these earlier emphases on black social and cultural deviance (Andrews 492). Similarly, the "Black Soul" movement enabled Afro-Brazilians to present an oppositional identity to the national cultural lexicon. These cultural shifts began destabilizing the rock solid foundation of racial democracy as the dominant national ideology. Minor policy changes culminated in revisionist rhetoric surrounding the centennial of Brazilian emancipation in 1988 and anti-discrimination provisions added to the

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constitution of 1988 (Andrews 496). Consequently, grassroots movements as well as policymakers and policy implementers began to question the ideological prevalence of racial democracy.

### Colombia

Finally, the case of Colombia provides a counterpoint to the situations in Mexico and Brazil. There, African forced labor was applied to gold and platinum mining, non-plantation hacienda culture, cattle raising, transportation of merchandise along the Magdalena and Cauca rivers, construction, and domestic service (Arocha 73). Unlike in Brazil, most of the Colombian slave concentrations were dispersed and relatively small. This, as well as the huge drop in the importation of slaves after 1750, Inquisitorial repression of African religious traits and ceremonies, and military expeditions against runaway communities constituted factors working against the blossoming of institutions like Brazilian *candomblé* (Arocha 73). Afro-Colombians became dispersed throughout the country in the nineteenth century as a result of wars of independence from Spain and civil wars. On the Pacific littoral, they were able to develop fairly autonomous territorial, economic, and political formations but were “forgotten by the state due to conscious racial discrimination” (Arocha 76).

Similar to the Mexican and Brazilian cases, assimilation was a valued social norm in Colombia. The 1890 Law 89 defined “savagery” as a temporary condition to be overcome by integration into Christian civilization – this law was implemented to defend the country’s sovereignty over the tropical-forest frontiers against the threat of U.S. expansionism (Arocha 77). In many ways, this attitude reflects the Porfirian intellectuals’ claims that the black population posed a stumbling block to modernization in Mexico. The Colombian state demarcated its black population as a transitory affliction to an otherwise progressive nation, and proposed it could be dealt with in accordance with the international constructs of social Darwinism. With that goal in mind, in 1922 the state passed Law 144 incentivizing European immigration and banning non-white immigration.

The mid and late twentieth century saw the emergence of organizations that alluded to blackness more assertively. These organizations were mainly the work of a small urban intellectual elite of university students and graduates (Wade 342). Two of the most prominent organizations were the Center for Investigation and Development of Black Culture, which produced a monthly newspaper entitled *Presencia Negra* (initially funded by UNESCO) and held annual seminars aimed at teachers of black culture, as well as Cimarrón, which consisted of study groups comprised of people whom self-identified as black (Wade 343). These groups had a limited impact because neither involved a mass of black people due to socioeconomic realities – most black people in Colombia were isolated, illiterate, and/or poor. Cimarrón in particular was influenced by U.S. movements which also impacted Jamaica, Trinidad, and Guyana.

Global influences became important components of Colombia’s social projects at the same time that globalization became central to its economic endeavors. In the 1980s, the Colombian government started exploiting the Pacific coastal region for resources in order to compete economically, which instigated conflict between black and indigenous populations living in the region whom now had less access to already limited resources (Wade 345). The Regional Organization of Emberás and Wauranas (OREWA) organized meetings to defuse these ethnic conflicts, which enabled black and indigenous populations to form tenuous but significant alliances that were distinct from the social climates in Mexico and Brazil. Black/indigenous coalition-building helped bring shared issues to the fore, which led to the First Meeting of Black Communities in 1990 and the 1991 National Constitutional Assembly wherein the state eliminated assimilationism as official practice (Arocha 71). Transitory Article 55 of the new constitution required Congress to grant collective ownership rights by July 1993 to those black communities that had been occupying state-owned vacant lands on the riversides of the Pacific basin, which arguably increased the visibility of these communities.

Unfortunately, harmful stereotypes about Afro-Colombians had been fully ingrained in Colombian society even before they gained collective land rights, and the prevalence of these stereotypes certainly did not decline after the new constitution was ratified. As a result, a cultural/ethnic dimension of political organization in the Pacific region accompanied the focus on land rights as the activities of the church, Cimarrón, and the Organization of Black Communities intensified (Wade 348). These groups implored the state to recognize the history of Afro-Colombians’ past suffering as a reason to pass a comprehensive law granting collective land rights. Law 70 was finally ratified in

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August 1993, recognizing black communities as an ethnic group and focusing on defining the titling of collective land rights to whole black communities in the Pacific basin.

While Afro-Colombian political groups were primarily concerned with gaining control over resources, pleas for recognition were implicit in the negotiation procedures. In addition to material resources, state-funded and generalized education programs geared toward ethnic pluralism figured among the requests that leaders of the black movement made to the Gaviria administration in 1992, but by 1996 it had been implemented only in part (Arocha 84). Strategies of coalition-building with indigenous communities and petitioning for greater recognition and resources provide an important historical context that may be used to predict the future of Afro-Colombian political participation and movements' emphasis on ethnic pluralism.

A final but major topic pertaining to Afro-Colombian marginalization is the recent legacy of state-sanctioned violence. In 1996, a coordinated offensive by the Colombian army and paramilitary forces was launched on local populations in the municipality of Riosucio on the Atrato River (Oslender 754). The attack was justified under the pretext of combating the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), and it was later extended to surrounding river basins under the name "Operation Genesis." In hindsight, it seems clear that "the indiscriminate aerial bombing was aimed principally at frightening (if not killing) the local population and emptying the territory (Oslender 756). This is largely due to the fact that no reports of direct combat between FARC guerillas and the army in the area ever surfaced. In January and February of 1997 alone, 20,000 Afro-Colombians fled to the cities. To that end, the category of the "displaced" became a normalized phenomenon in Colombian society. Many Afro-Colombians were forced to flee before their communities could even accept land titles, which attests to the state's undermining of their own conservation legislation and a reversion to resource exploitation and extraction (Oslender 758). Lastly, in 2005 Orlando Valencia, an Afro-Colombian leader from the Cuvaradó region in Chocó and an outspoken opponent of African Palm cultivation there, "disappeared." In total, an estimated 115 community members were assassinated/disappeared between 1996 and 2006 (Oslender 759). This global capitalist logic of displacement will clearly influence the development of Afro-Colombian expectations, attitudes, fears, and mobilization strategies as they relate to the state and perceptions of membership in the nation.

## Comparative Perceptions of Nationalism and Citizenship

In all three cases discussed above, the histories surrounding the arrival of Africans to Latin America profoundly inform the level and methods of political participation in various time periods, the social positioning of Afro-Latinos as a result of a range of nationalist sentiments, and modern-day perceptions of citizenship. Before delving into a comparative analysis, it is necessary to first evaluate the type and degree of both nationalism and black ethno-development in the three countries in the context of contemporary political environments.

### *Mexico*

The manufacture of historical and current national narratives in Mexico strongly influences how race operates as a social construct at the popular level. There is an unspoken but unanimous agreement upon the relevance of the ideological pillars of *mestizaje*, non-racism, and non-blackness, as analyzed in section two. This national consensus produces the reality that Mexicans' worldviews "do not give prominence to race as a basis of group categorization and action" (Sue 48). However, Mexico's history of social stratification that was informed at least partly by race complicates the tendency of Afro-Mexicans to ignore race as much as possible. As Christina A. Sue asserts, the ways in which Afro-Mexicans in Veracruz negotiate their claims to a mixed-race status in the context of racial stereotypes, nationalist sentiment, and social norms depends largely on their phenotype (Sue 50). The author dissects this argument through interviews and survey data, discovering that light-skinned Veracruzanos generally identify as white but also claim a mixed-race heritage, while brown-skinned Veracruzanos generally identify as *moreno* in a color sense and also assert a mixed-race heritage (Sue 56). Despite their parallel heritage claims, the legitimacy for asserting different skin color categories differs between the two groups – for the light-skinned Veracruzanos, whiteness does not imply or require racial purity. This evaluation is consistent with that which can be found in other Latin American contexts. For the brown-skinned Veracruzanos, their phenotype resembles the Mexican norm, thus they do not carry the burden of needing to defend their Mexicanness (Sue 56).

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The cultural repertoire of *mestizaje* allows Afro-Mexicans to fill in knowledge gaps about their ancestry while also affirming mestizo identity. Mexicans of all social backgrounds frequently conflate the idea of *mestizaje* with the idea of non-racism. The relative absence of African/Afro-Mexican history from the national discourse contributes to a worldview that justifies the current social order at all levels of society. Consequently, groups in power are able to maintain their position and uphold the pigmentocratic socioeconomic structure which is a remnant of Mexico's colonial past. The majority of Afro-Mexicans today are peasant agriculturalists, fishermen, and *campesinos* or rural proletarians and are concentrated in two areas: the central part of the state of Veracruz in the Gulf zone, and in the coastal zone known as Costa Chica (Guerrero and Oaxaca) (Githiora 37).

The confinement of Afro-Mexicans to certain regional areas allows them to deploy racial distancing strategies to evade the black label. Veracruzanos of African descent navigate the "sea of contradictions that their bodies, histories, and nationalities represent" by distancing themselves from a "fixed, concrete, and stable black identity while not completely cutting their ties to blackness" (Sue 125). One example of this distancing is Veracruzanos' tendency to discursively export blackness beyond Mexico's borders (Sue 129) – this is accomplished by holding up African-Americans in the U.S. and Afro-Cubans as the central symbols of blackness and the standards against which all other black people are compared (Sue 137). Other individuals of African descent deploy the "sun discourse" (e.g. "my skin is dark because I am a farmer and work outside") to justify their skin tone in a way that does not inculcate African heritage. Thus Afro-Mexicans engage in a "conspiracy of silence" that exists at the popular and institutional levels.

The perspective that Mexico is racism-free is part of both official discourse and popular thought, which reaffirms the consistent conflation of the three ideological pillars. For example, Mexico's 1994 report to the UN International Convention against the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) asserted a purported absence of racism in Mexico (Sue 145). Additionally, the ideological pillars helped foster a nationalist sentiment when post-revolutionary elites deployed them as symbolic boundaries in relation to the United States, which thus came to embody the racist "other" (Sue 152). As a reference point with which Mexicans make comparisons and use to consider their own political context, the United States is not a static landmark of either racism or non-racism. Arguably, it has become somewhat less useful for this purpose as Mexico has fully entered a democratization process following the end of the 71-year rule of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in 2000. The past decade has seen an increase of demands for equality and inclusion, which perhaps elucidates a gradual diminishing of the non-blackness pillar. For example, in 2010 black activists petitioned the National Institute of Statistics and Geography to include the Afro-Mexican population as a separate category in the next census (Okeowo, TIME 2009).

While Mexico has seen a very slight increase in recent political participation on the part of its black citizens, most Afro-Mexicans still do not proudly assert their black identity nor display a sense of black consciousness. These Afro-Mexicans are prone to constructing a "mixed, unstable black identity to avoid direct conflict with the non-blackness ideological pillar while affirming the *mestizaje* ideology" (Sue 141). This indicates one of the long-lasting effects of Spanish-imposed racial stratification – upward social mobility was subject to vertical cultural and racial assimilation for centuries (Githiora 40). In a case study, participants in San Nicolás readily identified themselves as members of the "negro race" (Githiora 131), though this is in part due to the fact that the term *negro* was based on European concepts of race (Githiora 148). To affirm this reality, one need not look further than the popular Mexican proverb "*Trabajar como negro para vivir como blanco.*" Yet another example is the popular cartoon *Memín Penguín*, which reflects the outlandish and antiquated visions of Africans that are reproduced in Mexican society to reinforce the idea that racist jokes are "harmless" (Githiora 180). Ultimately, Afro-Mexicans' constructions of their own identity as well as adherence to national discourses which rely on the ideological pillars of *mestizaje*, non-racism, and non-blackness are both predicated on the Mexican narrative that they live in a post-racial society.

## Brazil

Unlike Afro-Mexicans, Afro-Brazilians are a highly visible sector of society because Brazil has the second largest black population on earth, after Nigeria. Because they are such a predominant part of the social structure, black populations in Brazil are also far less prone to being ignored by contemporary study. Recent surveys lay bare the deep and racially-based inequities that face Brazilian society. A 1999 study revealed the following: blacks constitute

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45 percent of the population but 64 percent of people living below the poverty line; the average 25-year-old white Brazilian has had 8.4 years of schooling as compared to 6.1 years of schooling for the average Afro-Brazilian of the same age; and illiteracy among blacks is 20 percent, as compared to 8 percent for whites (Htun 63). These obvious inequities have led to a growing discourse about race that has been acknowledged by the state, despite the ambivalence and ideological constraint that is typical of Latin American governments with regard to race relations.

The projection of the racial democracy ideology was perhaps the most essential component of a historical equation used to construct a sense of nationalism. Anthony Marx argues that “the imperative of stability as a precondition for growth provided an overarching economic incentive for conflict control or avoidance through either racial domination or racial democracy” (Marx 186). In a highly stable and increasingly liberal nation, racial democracy proved to be the chosen path forward that would (allegedly) yield an increase in the country’s power and, more pointedly, the continued enforcement of a racial hierarchy from which white elites largely benefited.

A thought process related to the ideology of racial democracy is that of the so-called “whitening thesis.” This “thesis” relies on the assumption that in cases of racial mixture, the white genetic component would tend to dominate – an assumption that “saved Brazil from the gloomy prospect of racial degeneration and [allowed it to hold out] the hope of its one day being able to join the community of white nations” (Andrews 485). During the twentieth century, global paradigm shifts began to deconstruct the concretized Brazilian views on whitening and racial democracy. The post-World War II decolonization of Africa led to the emergence of nations governed only by blacks. This trend contradicted the central “whitening” assumption in Brazil (Skidmore 106) by helping move the nation beyond thought processes constricted to binaries of “successful white nations” and “poor, dominated, failed Third World states.” Additionally, an important element in the definition of Brazil’s “racial democracy” had always been the contrast with the United States, but the success of the Civil Rights Movement during the 1960s began dismantling that view. Finally, the military government of Brazil often intervened to suppress news that contradicted the image of racial harmony – greater liberalization did coincide with a notable increase in assertions of black identity. While this association does not necessarily imply causation, it is important to be cognizant of parallel developments in popular consciousness and state behavior.

During the early 2000s, the state initiated several important policy changes based on convictions that racism was pervasive (Htun 61). Interestingly, these policy changes were not products of the relatively rare race-based collective action of the 1970s and 1980s – no pro-affirmative action constituency was powerful enough to mobilize a threat, rich enough to offer rewards, or connected enough to promise votes on election day (Htun 62). Instead, Brazil was trying to prove its liberal credentials to the world. The government introduced quotas to address racial inequality, the President created a national affirmative action program, three ministries introduced quotas for blacks, women, and handicapped persons in hiring, the National Human Rights Program endorsed racial quotas, and three states approved laws reserving forty percent of university admission slots for Afro-Brazilians (Htun 61). Some of this state action might have been spurred on by the 2001 World Conference on Racism in South Africa, which certainly invited national soul-searching. In its attempt to paint a self-portrait of a modern and forward-thinking society, Brazil has made some serious strides in dismantling the myth of racial democracy and implementing policy that will better the lives of Afro-Brazilians.

At the same time, Afro-Brazilian attitudes reflect lingering frustration over the alarming and pervasive inequities in Brazilian society that have obvious correlation to racial categories. National attitudes and economic realities still exemplify a higher social valuation of whiteness, as stated in section two. However, economic inequality and disparate educational attainment do not tell the full story of discrimination in Brazil. A lingering effect of racial democracy is that without a defining or unifying legal racial order, Afro-Brazilians were “compelled to face prejudice in a state of great psychological confusion and without the means to group themselves into integrated racial minorities” (Marx 251). As such, many Afro-Brazilian activists have worked to highlight the idea of black linked fate and African culture as a tool for resistance and identity formation.

Conversely, culture can be used to reinforce domination as well. The state has consistently absorbed assertions of African culture with the goal of including Afro-Brazilians rhetorically if not in reality (Marx 262). Certain movements did emerge to combat the hijacking of Afro culture by the state and to promote the simultaneous inclusion of Afro-

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Brazilians to enhance democracy and the recognition of their agency. *Quilombismo* constituted the highest articulation of an Afro-Brazilian national proposal for economic organization, emphasizing a universal political alternative for a multiracial society derived from Black Nationalism (Nascimento 213). *Quilombismo* is a very advanced articulation of a utopic vision projected by certain Afro-Brazilian activists. It seems to be a currently unreasonable goal in light of the continued valuation of whiteness and low levels of black consciousness and even of black identification.

Admittedly, it may be impossible to create an even partially unified sense of black identity or a black movement in a country with such a large and diverse black population. Indeed, there is an apparent inconsistency between the simplified scheme used by the census and the wide variety of terms Brazilians commonly use to identify even the most subtle shades of skin color between black and white (Lovell and Wood 91). A comparison can be drawn here to the unstable and ambiguous nature of skin color categories self-assigned by Afro-Mexicans. In Brazil, very dark-skinned persons who are also poor are likely to be thought of – and to classify themselves – as black (*preto*), but high-status persons of the same skin tone are likely to be thought of – and to classify themselves – as brown (*moreno* or *pardo*) (Lovell and Wood 92). Hence, the boundary between brown and black is unstable and ambiguous across time and socioeconomic category, while the opposite is true of the boundary between white and black. The concepts of whitening and racial democracy thus are not merely relics of the past – they continue to promote underlining valuations of whiteness and persistent confusion felt by Afro-Brazilians about the nature of their own identities.

The ambiguous boundary between brown and black is illustrated by a study that compares racial classification schemes across different perspectives as well as income levels (Bailey et al 2012). Responses vary greatly based on perspective/dimension. The census and ascribed census formats are, in fact, the only classification schemes that yield any percentage of “brown” racial classifications. Based on the dichotomous classification schemes, the researchers claim that Brazil “appears as a country divided between whites and nonwhites with no separate social space occupied by an intermediate or mixed-race population” (Bailey et al 6). The choice of classification scheme affects how we perceive Brazil’s racial composition, and it also illuminates interesting questions about black consciousness in Brazil. For example, comparing the “forced binary” to the “post hoc binary,” we see that when self-identified “brown” Brazilians are constrained to a choice between white and black, many opt for the former (Bailey et al 10). Not only is the “brown” racial classification unstable and ambiguous, race itself is a social construct and its mutability in this context attests to the coveted nature of whiteness in Brazil. Racial democracy and trends of “whitening” are certainly not unique to Brazil. Moreover, these data sets are not sufficient evidence for grand claims about a lack of black consciousness. However, it is important to consider the relation that levels of black consciousness may have to these classification schemes. Black consciousness contributes to political mistrust and a sense of internal political efficacy, which in turn encourages policy-related participation (Shingles 76). If unstable racial identifications yield preferences for whiteness when interviewees are forced to choose between white and black, it is possible that a lingering effect of racial democracy is a depressed sense of black consciousness. Additionally, income inequality in Brazil means that poor blacks need to overcome additional hurdles to political participation, which higher levels of black consciousness could help off-set.

Be that as it may, the relatively unstable nature of Afro-Brazilian identity also does not mean that ideological constructions of whitening and racial democracy have exerted an unshaken dominance over Brazil since its inception as a nation. Black resistance against slavery started as soon as slavery began. According to Bernd Reiter, the best-documented strategies of black organizing against slavery, oppression, racism, and exclusion during slavery were the establishment of *quilombos* (free communities of runaway slaves) as well as slave rebellions (Reiter 156). Arguably, the creation of free black republics such as *quilombos* relies on a sense of shared identity. Therefore, it would be an exaggeration to claim that identity-based organizing only began to emerge following democratization four centuries later, in the same way that it would be a misstep to ignore the profound effects racial democracy wielded over such a large population of Afro-Brazilians. Challenges related to black consciousness and ethno-development are perhaps better linked to the relative silence of such a large segment of the Afro-Brazilian population (which is oftentimes a result of poverty or low education levels) than to “silence” and “identity confusion” as unilaterally applied principles.

*Colombia*



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Some explicit examples of institutionalized racism distinguish Colombia from the situations of racial democracy in Brazil and general non-acknowledgment of race differences in Mexico, though it would be inaccurate to claim that the nature of these atmospheres exonerate Brazil and Mexico from legacies of institutional discrimination. During the period between 1920 and 1950, the Colombian state condoned the publishing of hundreds of pages blaming the “inferior races,” Indian and black peoples, for the nation’s backwardness (Arocha 77). In a similar vein, the Socialist Revolutionary party during the same time period conceived a nationalist utopia including achievements by indigenous peoples but excluding Afro-Colombians (Arocha 78). Unlike in Mexico where *mestizaje* is tantamount to national ideology and Afro-Mexicans frequently substitute the term “*indio*” for “*negro*” as a self-descriptor, Colombian society contains a legacy of both tension and tenuous alliances between black and indigenous populations.

National integration presupposed a loss of ethnic identity, with the exception of indigenous forms of land tenure and government. Perhaps because Afro-Colombians have been just as consistently relegated to certain regions and also seek collective land rights, they sometimes perceive themselves as mestizos (Arocha 84). On the national level, “notions that ethnicity is solely an Indian trait and that the only truly ancestral territories are the Indian ones have persisted even after the enactment of the 1991 constitution” (Arocha 79). This reflects a lack of appreciation for African heritage as well as discrimination that is a product of pre- and post-abolition racial hierarchy, similar to that of other Latin American nations.

The relevance of these national sentiments is evident in legislation like Law 70, which institutionalized blacks as invaders, in contrast to indigenous peoples whom have always had “original” land rights (Wade 349). The perpetual juxtaposition of indigenous and Afro-Colombian members of society ensures the mutually reinforced marginalization of both communities. A conclusion drawn from the ANC debates about multicultural reforms in Colombia was that Afro-Colombians did not merit collective rights because they were not an “ethnic group” with their own language and traditions (Hooker 302). Some black activist groups subsequently reframed their Afro-Colombian identity in cultural rather than racial terms afterwards in an attempt to gain more collective rights and recognition.

Like in Brazil, Afro-Colombians called upon their African heritage to assert black identity and petition for greater recognition of rights. For example, the ideology of *cimarronismo* took the cimarrón and the Palenque as symbols of resistance to oppression and the continuity of African traditions (Wade 344). One rallying cry that developed out of this ideology is that all palenques are “crucibles of cultural resistance and the struggle for human rights.” *Cimarronismo* thus invokes a sense of communal suffering that invites people to connect their blackness to national and global histories of oppression. As will be discussed further in section four, *cimarronismo* in Colombia and *quilombismo* in Brazil began to serve as trans-local reconsiderations of *Négritude*, the literary and ideological movement against European hegemony (Ratcliff 27). In relation to this idea, supporting black mobilization in Colombia can take a variety of forms: destabilizing mainstream images of a mestizo nation, investigating and publicizing black history and ethnography, and participating in political negotiations (Wade 352).

In Colombia, these efforts to support black mobilization may be simpler in theory than in practice due to the profound psychological impact from state terror. The normalization of the phenomenon of Afro-Colombian displacement as a result of state violence leads to a “banality of displacement” which “acts as a mental barrier to taking up collective action against this dehumanizing condition” (Oslender 756). The process of Afro-Colombian displacement reaffirms the importance of collective land ownership for this community. Considering the long history of state-sanctioned discrimination against Afro-Colombians and the lack of a dominant ideology similar to that of Mexican *mestizaje*, access to communal resources and the promotion of ethnic solidarity could be potent affirmations of Afro-Colombian citizenship and membership in society at large.

## Comparative Features

There are a number of important points of comparison between the development of black identity vis-à-vis nationalism in Mexico, Brazil, and Colombia. Beginning with the chronologically earliest shared trend, these three countries are complicit in similar historical processes whereby black people became invisible (though the nature of “invisibility” varies between the countries). Christian baptism of slaves in the ports of Africa erased personal names (Arocha 76). The replacement of ethnic designations during the Atlantic passage and the adoption of masters’ family

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names after manumission furthered the process of diminishing knowledge of African heritage as a significant component of Afro-Latino life (Arocha 76). The Bourbon Reforms in Colombia later began to break down the caste system by doing away with racial terminology, which relates to the unwillingness of state institutions in both Mexico and Brazil to demarcate race categories despite the existence of social hierarchy that was at least partly based on race. Finally, wars of independence also produced an increase in the invisibility of Afro-Latinos, though perhaps in a less direct way. Desires to promote nationalistic sentiments of unity and cultural homogeneity following recently-won independence were implicit in later formulations of racial democracy and *mestizaje* ideology, as well as black confinement to certain regional areas in the case of Colombia.

Despite a lack of political and economic rights granted to Afro-Brazilians through the twentieth century, African culture was actually celebrated in Brazil. This certainly was not the case in Mexico, where even the Afro-Mexicans themselves frequently refuse to acknowledge ties to Africa. In Colombia, most of the slave concentrations were dispersed and relatively small. This, in tandem with the huge drop in the importation of slaves after 1750, Inquisitorial repression of African religious traits and ceremonies, and military expeditions against runaway slaves comprised some of the factors working against the blossoming of institutions like Brazilian *candomblé* (Arocha 73). In countries where Afro-Latino invisibility and marginalization are consistent byproducts of discrimination and assimilation as a core value, black individuals' desires for increased social mobility as well as aspirations of unified national identities tend to render memories of an African past irrelevant.

Assimilationist methods of achieving national unity decrease individuals' perceived notions of ethnic salience. Until the late 1980s, integration was the main strategy used across Latin America to establish national unity. State-doctored ideologies of harmonious coexistence were more prevalent in some countries than others; racial democracy in Brazil is one example. It deprived Afro-Brazilians of any legally explicit cause for their subordination against which they might mobilize (Marx 169). The case of Mexico provides a contrast in that the state did not strive to explicitly project visions of racial paradise, though its ideological pillars of *mestizaje*, non-racism, and non-blackness similarly repressed mobilization. As Charles Taylor stated in 1994, "to ignore people's identities or to use power to impose upon them an identity or an interpretation of their identity is to violate their collective or individual integrity" (Lehmann 107). This violation of integrity occurred systemically in Mexico, Brazil, and Colombia through state refusal to recognize racial categories during different periods of their respective histories, which forced Afro-Latinos to navigate confusing psychological terrains and attempt to establish fluid racial identities for themselves.

Vertical cultural assimilation in Mexico was a prerequisite for constructing unstable and mutable racial identities. Racial assimilation through marriage was hauntingly called "*limpiar la cria*" in Mexico and "*branqueamento*" in Brazil (Githiora 41), which led to race mixture as well as loss of memories related to an African past. Interestingly, both Mexicans and Colombians tend to perceive themselves as either mestizos or "indios," as the research of Christina A. Sue and Peter Wade substantiate. This is most likely a product of utterly ambiguous racial categories in Mexico, while it is perhaps a result of perceived linked struggle with indigenous populations in Colombia. Disparities aside, this chosen form of self-identification attests to the refutation of firmly "black" identities, which speaks to loss of historical memory, protection mechanisms due to the presence of consistent and institutionalized discrimination, socially homogenizing tendencies of state actors, and the construction of fluid racial identities as one of the only possible methods of achieving upward social mobility.

Black hopes for advancement through denial of race are certainly not unique to Latin America, so comparisons abound between the three countries studied here. In Brazil, race denial "effectively incorporated Afro-Brazilians in a pact of silence that preserved the informal racial order" (Marx 253). The "pact of silence" Christina A. Sue observes during the time of her research in Veracruz similarly elucidates the population's willingness to uphold the non-blackness pillar through consensual community silence on race. As mentioned earlier, Afro-Colombians are silenced due to the ambiguous balance between inclusion and exclusion that they experience – the "banality of displacement" frequently silences them on matters of discrimination. Despite regional confinement of black communities as common features between Mexico and Colombia, their respective "silences" differ because the historical rejection of black identity in Mexico is so protracted that contemporary Afro-Mexican populations are rarely even considered to be worthy of study.

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Forms of institutional discrimination also vary in some significant ways. The twentieth century publication of hundreds of pages blaming black and indigenous populations for Colombia's "backwardness" provides a contrast to racial democracy in Brazil and the almost complete non-acknowledgment of the black population in Mexico. At the same time, this contrast between Colombia and Brazil does not represent a polar difference. Brazil gradually broke down racial democracy as an institutionalized social construct around the time of democratization. This attests to at least minor recognition of the idea that national conversation about racialized inequality and identity differences must occur in order for the nation to modernize and develop a new conception of citizenship. Lastly, state actors and elites in all three countries often looked to the United States as a point of comparison against which they could formulate oppositional national identities that discursively denounced racism. The context of long-established notions of linked fate among black Americans in the U.S. provides an interesting counterpoint to black identity rejection, especially in Mexico and Brazil. This affirms the salience of the imposition of national ideology on communities in an effort to reinterpret history, create a homogenous/harmonious nation of equals (in name if not in reality), and decrease the likelihood of mass mobilization. At the same time, black activists in Brazil and Colombia looked to the U.S. Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s as a potential mobilization model. This is just one example of the power of transnationalism to inform similar decision making by individuals in different countries.

## Transnational Advocacy Networks and Afro-Latino Ethno-Development

Section two of this paper first considered Mexico, Brazil, and Colombia as separate cases of Afro-Latino ethnic identity development as contextualized by nationalism, existing ideologies, and other frameworks. The analysis is nowhere near complete without consideration of transnational connections these countries have with one another and with other nations and institutional actors. Transnationalism is a concept which addresses the "interconnectivity between societies (or sectors of societies) that is triggered by, and in turn conditions, those social processes, political movements, and cultural networks extending beyond nation-state borders" (Roniger 315). After all, no Latin American country (or regional community within a given country) is entirely isolated from the effects of globalization and transnationalism, nor the confrontations with individual nations' histories that materialize as a result of globalization and transnationalism. Therefore, it is essential to adopt a "Janus-faced approach" in order to understand "the process of fragmentation into separate nation-states along with transnational dynamics (Roniger 318). Many Latin American nations certainly have faced unique issues and trends within their own borders, but their histories are also profoundly interwoven. Social movements in Latin America will perhaps become even less confined to state borders over time.

Specific national contexts and universalized spheres of influence do not represent conceptual poles, but rather exist on a continuum. Experiences of racial, sexual, and generational identities that are often labeled "transnational" are still constituted in relation to very specific histories, cultures, and societies (Clarke and Thomas 9). At the same time, claims to African membership are becoming increasingly de-territorialized due to globalization and opportunities to reflect on cultural heritage (Clarke 134). One example of globalization empowering notions of Black Nationalism and pan-African identity is the proliferation of satellite television. Other examples include the intentional creation of transnational alliances, NGOs, and summits.

The first "official" South American manifestation of *Pan-Africanismo* took place in Cali, Colombia, at the First Congress of Black Culture in the Americas in 1977. A central goal of the congress was for black writers and intellectuals to convene in order to construct "Pan-African literature[s] of combat" in their struggles for political and cultural liberation (Ratcliff 27). Participants negotiated a multi-lingual politics of cultural struggle, often translating between Spanish, Portuguese, English, and French. The strength of prevailing transnational forces is evident in the very ability of the congress to meet in the first place – it had the organizational support of the Colombian Foundation to Investigate Folklore, the Center of Afro-Colombian Studies, and the Cultural Association of Black Peruvian Youth, with financial and logistical assistance of UNESCO and the Organization of American States (OAS) (Ratcliff 33). Despite a wide range of international support, participants still moved to condemn "imperialistic designs" of the United States and several dictatorships in Latin America, which at the time were attempting to create a South Atlantic Treaty Organization (34). The unique makeup of the delegation, which included intellectuals, artists, and activists from a wide range of professions, prompted the delegates to propose a joint effort to confront the system of neocolonialism as an antagonistic arrangement of domination that severely limited minority progress.

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Afro-Latino ethno-development was a core topic of deliberation at the congress. Participants established four working groups in the areas of Black Ethnicity and *Mestizaje*, Philosophy and Affectivity, Social and Political Creativity, and Material and Artistic Creativity (Ratcliff 33). While the aforementioned proposals to condemn neocolonialism and promote cultural heritage opportunities attest to notions of Pan-Africanism and linked fate, the majority of the delegates “felt it was necessary to move beyond *Négritude* (the literary and ideological movement against European hegemony) and consider the specificities of their respective national situations (Ratcliff 35). However, this in no way reflects a rejection of the potent transnational networks, some of which were formed at the congress itself. Instead, delegates facilitated and nurtured international contacts and linkages with one another, presumably to draw on the wealth of knowledge, experience, and distinct cultural contexts that such networks offer. Thus these networks extended local and regional issues affecting people of African descent into a global context (Ratcliff 36). Emergent technological advances in the late twentieth century enhanced these networks over time vis-à-vis trends in globalization.

In addition to opportunities for network formations and the sharing of ideas, the 1977 congress in Colombia provided space for discussion about current issues facing Afro-Latinos, which established a precedent for the consciousness-raising World Conference against Racism in Durban, South Africa in 2001. The transnational exchange of ideas affirmed the existence of rampant discrimination, which had been previously repressed as a topic of national conversations due to racial democracy ideologies. Shared ideas and experiences were then translated into action plans and art forms as intellectuals and artists present for the congress considered the global implications of discrimination felt at the local level. Writers gained inspiration from anti-colonial and anti-Apartheid struggles occurring on the African continent and elsewhere, as well as from Afro-North American civil rights, Black Power, and Black Arts movements (Ratcliff 28). These universalized ideas were sometimes translated to reflect local contexts, such as in Eduardo de Oliveira’s poem “Banzo,” which spoke of the “nameless” Afro-Brazilians whom, despite being essential to the growth and development of the country, are nevertheless unremembered by either the national elite or black masses (Ratcliff 32).

The 1977 congress in Colombia, the 2001 conference in South Africa, and other meetings and summits fostered an increase in global consciousness about issues of discrimination while Latin American democratization simultaneously contributed to the continued breakdown of notions of racial democracy. Issue networks, presidential/legislative initiatives, and international events often “arose independently but were mutually reinforcing” (Htun 83). In Brazil, the emergence of an “issue network” in the 1990s coincided with new financial opportunities due to recent economic growth as well as political opportunities created by re-democratization. Highly educated young professionals took advantage of this environment to create new organizational forms by demonstrating the capacity to administer funds according to high standards of donors. These emergent NGOs thus gained international funding and were able to articulate their oppositional political agendas (Reiter 160). Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, ethnic development and affirmation of racialized social, economic, and political inequalities gained new relevance as elements of global and local conversations that would ultimately begin to drive policy change.

Transnational invocation of the idea of “communities of suffering” is critical for understanding institutions like Colombian *cimarronismo* and Brazilian *quilombismo*. Activists in Colombia, for example, utilize the *cimarrón* and the Palenque as symbols of resistance to oppression and the continuity of African traditions, therefore inviting people to connect their blackness to national and global histories of oppression (Wade 344). In Colombia, Afro-Latino activism placed collective rights issues at the top of the national agenda, and that surge of activism was partly due to the growing ease with which Afro-Colombians were able to locate their own perceptions of discrimination within global and local contexts. The empowering of Afro-Colombians (and indigenous populations) as “guardians” of fragile ecosystems, like what occurred under Law 70, can be set within wider global strategies and politics of sustainable development and conservationist discourses (Oslender 754). This is just one example of the confluence of interests between government institutions and regional black organizations that became a prominent trend in Colombia and elsewhere during the 1990s.

The United States also exerted influence over the black social movements of the twentieth century. From a fiscal point of view, the U.S.’s focus on combating the spread of communism in Latin America allowed for the provision of funds to some local civic organizations while severely restricting chances for the institutional survival of others (Reiter

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162). Always a nation aiming to uphold its legitimacy as an arbiter of justice and human rights (despite issues of its own that sometimes speak to the contrary), the United States was frequently an actor involved in transnational advocacy networks focused on social justice, which became major influences in world politics during the 1990s. These networks transferred ideas and resources to their local affiliates and increased the pressure on national governments to fight human rights abuses and inequality (Htun 83). The United States was not the only actor influencing the growth of interest group politics; the support of domestic and international NGOs and actors demonstrate that there is no reason to state that the U.S. will have racial politics and interest groups while Latin America will not (Sawyer 563).

Especially during the past two decades, transnational organizations began reversing the long-term neglect of race issues in Latin America. For example, in 1992 the *Red de Mujeres Afrolatinoamericanas, Afrocaribenas y la Diáspora* convened to participate in the First Encounter of Black Women of Latin America and the Caribbean conference to discuss and evaluate the situation of discrimination, violation of human rights, poverty, and cultural subordination that black women experience daily in Latin America – the conference included a network of delegates from thirty-five states and regions ([mujeresafro.org](http://mujeresafro.org)). Similarly, Brazil saw the emergence of Gelédes, a black women's association in Brazil aiming to combat race and gender discrimination. Following the establishment of groups and networks that helped raise consciousness about racial issues in Latin America through their mere existence (not to mention their activities), organizations like the Afro-Latin American Research Association and professional networks like the *Red de Abogados Afro-Colombianos* also formed.

While the very creation of many of these groups and networks marked progress and reflected the powerful impact of transnationalism on Afro-Latino political activity, their congresses and meetings illuminate the importance of regional and international networking to solve social, economic, political, and cultural issues. For example, in 1993 UNESCO provided funding for an international Afro-descendent forum in Caracas with participants from Europe, Latin America, Africa, and the Caribbean. UNESCO subsequently collaborated with Decenio Mundial and the regional development organization CONAC to support the creation of the *Fundación Afro-América* in Venezuela. These organizations together provided training and funding so that *Fundación Afro-América* could host multicultural music celebrations, publish the magazine “Africamerica,” convene seminars and conferences, and assist Afro-Latino business owners.

In the late 1990s, regional/international meetings of black representatives became a key facet of Afro-Latino political activity. The “Mundo Afro” movement in Uruguay promoted the first Seminar against Racism, Xenophobia, and Discrimination held in Montevideo in 1994, which exemplified an expansion of a network of Afro-Latino organizations from the regional to the continental level. Other efforts emerged in Central America to increase black solidarity, participation, and visibility with the 1995 establishment of the Central American Black Organization (CABO) in 1995. CABO has since expanded to include chapters in every Central American country (except El Salvador). Even in Mexico, a country with a relatively small Afro-Latino population, the group entitled *México Negro A.C.* began holding annual meetings to strategize and petition for constitutional recognition and other reforms. During the past decade, international organizations like the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) supported meetings of black congress people in Latin America, notably at meetings in Brazil (2003), Colombia (2004), and Costa Rica (2005). These meetings elucidate the formation of a trans-regional strategic alliance to increase the visibility, equity, and empowerment of Afro-Latinos.

Generally speaking, Afro-Latino movements and organizations do not have the financial resources to fund transnational or even regional meetings on their own. Transnationalism thus enables the interaction between these movements and international partners which are pivotal for their success. In the early 2000s, the World Bank collaborated with other institutions like the Inter-American Foundation and the IDB to create a consultative body to evaluate issues of discrimination in Latin America, which it hoped would become a permanent effort linking other institutions like the Pan-American Health Organization, the UNPD, the Ford Foundation, the Human Rights Commission of the Organization of American States (OAS), the Department for International Development of Britain, and the Rockefeller Foundation (Agudelo 2012). Institutions like the International Association of Facilitators also began supporting Afro-descendant organizations in Latin America with travel grants and community development projects. For example, they gave the Brazilian NGO Criola a \$171,000 grant to help artisans increase their market access, production, and managerial capacity; they also gave the Colombian Corporación Asesorías para el

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Desarrollo \$200,000 for leadership training programs (Lenox 154). Large international efforts such as these affirm the urgency and relevance of concerns and realities that affect Afro-Latinos' everyday lives.

The aforementioned list explaining the developments of the transnational advocacy network for Afro-Latino issues as well as regional conferences and meetings is not exhaustive, nor does it begin to cover the proliferation of Afro-Latino interest groups in individual countries, which are not the focus of this paper. Financial, rhetorical, and developmental support of Afro-Latino organizations on the part of transnational advocacy network fosters the cultural capital of those organizations' leaders while also legitimating claims of black movements in local arenas. Future expansion of transnational networks will therefore be instrumental in strengthening Afro-Latino political movements, especially in countries like Mexico where black consciousness exists in low levels and black people are more territorially confined than they are in countries like Brazil.

As illustrated above, transnational advocacy networks have provided important support to local/regional Afro-Latino organizations and have given Afro-Latino leaders and representatives an international platform to discuss their issues. However, there are several important factors to consider moving forward. Keck and Sikkink's five-part model for evaluating transnational advocacy network effectiveness is still relevant today and may be useful for analyzing Afro-Latino political movements as they relate to transnational actors. The model includes the following components of evaluation: (1) issue creation and agenda setting, (2) influence on discursive positions of states and international organizations, (3) influence on institutional procedures, (4) influence on policy change in "target actors," and (5) influence on state behavior (Keck and Sikkink 1999). When transnational actors intervene, there is also the constant danger of cooptation or relegation of the groups whom are already marginalized to a secondary decision-making status.

Especially for historically marginalized groups (black Latinos) living in newly democratized Latin American countries, cooptation is a very real concern with regard to transnational advocacy networks. Old colonial patterns may be replicated in the relation between Northern-dominated NGOs (or Western-oriented international networks) and local grassroots organizations in the South (Stahler-Sholk et al 11). This danger is heightened when organizations in the global South rely on international partners for funding. For transnational advocacy networks to work most effectively, it is crucial that they work on behalf of the desires/demands of local leaders rather than imposing solutions.

In terms of issue creation and agenda setting, it remains a constant conundrum how to best strike the balance between incorporating as many concerns as possible in the national (or international) agenda and actually being able to address specific issues. For example, many individuals and groups presumably wish for world peace, though adding a broad ideal like "world peace" to any type of agenda is nonsensical. Broad discussions of eradicating structural discrimination similarly run the risk of oversimplifying issues. At the same time, narrowly focused agendas can exclude certain groups from participation and rescind their sense of belonging to a meaningful transnational community. It is necessarily difficult to reach consensus on identification of the most pressing issues, methods of addressing said issues, and allocation of resources/development of timelines for action. Therefore, the second through fifth parts of the evaluation model (influence on states, organizations, procedures, and policy change) hinge largely on the ability of the transnational advocacy network to create an agenda that is inclusive, realistic, and action-oriented.

## **The Future of Afro-Latino Political Participation**

The process of democratization in Latin America called for at least a surface-level reevaluation of racial categories (or denial of such) as well as feelings of national membership on the part of historically marginalized groups. For those interested in promoting democracy, the general sentiment was that cultural and religious minorities had to be incorporated into the political system either by coercive means or by some mechanism of assimilation (Turner 60). However, this democratization process becomes increasingly tenuous when key actors are excluded from the national conversation. Unless affected groups have a role in determining what citizenship entails, "there is no guarantee that the resulting social construction of citizenship rights will reflect their own definition of interests" (Oxhorn 481). In order for individual nations to achieve a comprehensive view of minority/excluded group interests, social justice should prevail over simple recognition. Difficulties arise in answering the following questions: what does

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recognition itself entail? What is the state's responsibility for allocating resources? What type of participation spurs social justice? Additionally, how does the potential achievement of "social justice" (which can never truly be a terminal project) complicate existing perceptions of citizenship?

The forces of transnationalism and globalization have obscured the possibility that individual rights granted by nation-states and exercised within state borders can persist as sufficient qualities of citizenship on their own. Even from a more simplistic point of view, the enactment of international human rights law expands the definition of rights, which in turn modifies expectations about the exchange of rights and duties inherent in conceptions of national citizenship. As discussions about alternative formats for individual citizenship rights have come to the fore – namely, debates about multicultural/collective views of citizenship – a number of challenges have emerged. Governments have grappled with two contradictory values in particular: the pressure not to label or pre-judge a person's ethnic belonging, age, or gender is juxtaposed with the pressure to recognize the disadvantages afflicting a person due to discrimination or social exclusion (Lehmann 105). Multiculturalism can also lead to ghettoization, fragmentation, and violence — Ferguson is a contemporary example of this phenomenon in the United States (Roniger lecture 3/13/15). On the other hand, relying too heavily on universalism ignores differences.

As acknowledgment of racial, ethnic, and regional tensions has become more normalized with democratization, the question arises about whether countries can continue to hold themselves together as nations united on the basis of individual rights. Rodrigo Uprimny's research points toward recent trends toward diversity constitutionalism in Latin America, which gave special protections to indigenous and black communities. These constitutions often strived toward not just a pluralist national identity, but a differentiated and multicultural perception of citizenship (Uprimny 1589). However, they usually ended up taking the form of aspirational constitutions that solve problems from a monolithic perception of citizenship, but also create new problems. For example, these new constitutions tended to fossilize identities through foundational assertions about national identity and attempted to re-create new realities through the force of law.

Albeit enormous difficulties in moving away from liberal and individualistic perceptions of citizenship, the constitutional reforms were very generous in recognizing constitutional rights of inhabitants. They also point to the opening of domestic legal systems to international human rights law, which reflects another trend tied to transnationalism (Uprimny 1592). Additionally, there is certainly value in the expansion of affirmative action policies to promote equality. Recent implementation of multicultural citizenship reforms in Latin America makes sense given the gradual, though incomplete, deterioration of racial democracy ideologies. However, only a few countries in the region (notably Brazil and Colombia) are simultaneously pursuing other legal means to combat racism in addition to the granting of collective rights, such as civil rights-type legislation (Hooker 287). While transnational forces have the potential to increase the variety of rights incorporated into Latin America's legal landscape, Afro-Latinos must first confront the dilemmas involved in the current processes of granting collective rights.

Afro-Latinos have been less successful than their indigenous neighbors in gaining collective rights under multicultural citizenship regimes. Relative population size, Afro Latinos' lack of mobilization around collective rights, and disorganization of the black movement are commonly adduced explanations for this reality (Hooker 297). These are not sufficient explanations for disparate levels of success. A better explanation for the differential granting of collective rights to black and indigenous groups is that the main criterion used to determine the recipients of collective rights in Latin America has been the possession of a distinct cultural group identity (Hooker 291). *Mestizaje* ideology in Mexico and racial democracy elsewhere compelled Afro-Latinos to diminish their cultural identity throughout history. Therefore, an inherent danger lies in Afro-Latinos' perceived need to frame their demands in terms of cultural difference in order to gain collective rights (Hooker 307). Minority groups should not need to privilege issues of cultural recognition over the struggle against racial discrimination as the basis of political mobilization. Moreover, it is not clear that collective rights based on cultural difference can even address race-based structural inequalities (Hooker 308).

This brings the analysis back to necessities for Latin American nations to move beyond discourses of recognition and begin to consider social justice reforms in response to the well-documented and protracted histories of marginalization and discrimination against Afro-Americans. However, petitions for these type of reforms in place of

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Written by Emma Northcott

simple recognition calls for higher levels and concentration of mobilization efforts. Structural inequalities in Latin America make that difficult – as outlined above, Afro-Latinos face circumstances of poverty at much higher rates than their white counterparts. Poor people will participate differently because they have much less time and resources, which makes them additionally more susceptible to populist leaders and clientelism as well as a lack of confidence in the state (Roniger lecture 1/20/15). The resource mobilization theory asserts that protest movement formation depends both on the existence of a particular grievance *and* contentious actors' access to the organizational resources that allow for a movement's dissemination and growth (Mosely and Layton 3). Therefore, protestors in Brazil are usually the same ones who participate through "conventional" vehicles and are, on average, more educated, affluent, and engaged than non-protestors (Mosely and Layton 4).

Considering the upward socioeconomic mobility of large sectors of the Brazilian population due to recent growth of the national economy, rising expectations of wealth contribute to increased mobilization. While predictions are risky, the assumption may hold that we may also see an exponential increase in demands for social justice and/or recognition on the basis of racial discrimination as more Afro-Latinos climb out of poverty. On the other hand, historical marginalization is not isolated to effects of contemporary inequality. Afro-Latinos have consistently expressed low faith in traditional representation due to state imposition of discriminatory laws as well as a more general tendency to ignore assertions of Afro-Latino culture and racial identity. Consequently, Latin American blacks are prone to feeling low levels of external efficacy, which has a negative effect on likelihood of political participation and mobilization.

Neoliberal assumptions about equal opportunity often fail to recognize structural inequalities that disproportionately affect Afro-Latinos due to historical legacies of discrimination, territorial confinement, and violence. Free market policies, in spite of reducing poverty in successful cases as that of Chile and Brazil, "[rarely] provide clear solutions in terms of modern citizenship or a wider social contract that also addresses the problems of excluded minorities" (Sznajder 428). Economic polarization leads to people living at the margins, which of course relates to racial discrimination because economic polarization does not exist in a vacuum. The intensification of social movements appears to be not only a continuation of historical resistance and mobilization of the masses, but a "specific response to the advancement of neoliberal globalization" (Stahler-Sholk et al 5). Since instances of cultural, political, and economic discrimination are mutually reinforcing traditions, identity politics become nebulous due to changing economic systems and the unique challenges these forces pose on marginal communities specifically.

Finally, a major impediment to the formation of Pan-African movements has been the assumption of cultural unity as a prerequisite to political unity (Ratcliff 29). Acknowledgment of differences and transnational awareness of similar process of marginalization in spite of these regional/national differences perhaps speaks to increased notions of linked fate. Indeed, calls for social justice rather than mere recognition push social movements beyond the strictures of shared culture as a basis for mobilization. Social movements since the 1980s exemplify "quests for solidarity derived from notions of social justice linked to shared subjective identities such as race/ethnicity or gender" (Stahler-Sholk et al 7). In light of this social justice theme, it seems likely that race will play an increasingly important role in the future of Latin American politics.

## Conclusion

In all three case studies, the histories surrounding the arrival of Africans to Latin America profoundly inform the level and methods of political participation throughout various time periods, the social positioning of Afro-Latinos as a result of a range of nationalist sentiments, and modern-day perceptions of citizenship. De jure and de facto discrimination as well as homogenizing tendencies rooted in nationalism have led to relatively low levels of black consciousness and high social valuations of whiteness. Racial democracy ideologies have only recently begun to disintegrate in countries like Brazil that have historically denied the presence of racial inequities. On the other hand, deeply rooted ideologies like *mestizaje* saturate ethno-development claims made by many Afro-Latinos, especially in countries like Mexico where they are marginalized to the point of invisibility. Disputes over collective rights additionally obscure an accurate vision of Afro-Latino identity development, with Colombia offering a prime example of this reality.



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Afro-Latinos represent a heterogeneous group that must navigate the process of legitimating and strengthening claims of black movements in local spaces through discourses of belonging to a meaningful transnational community. Therefore, both discursive and policy-oriented generalizations about the black community in Latin America are likely to be problematic. Working multiculturalism into nationalist frameworks has consequently been a constant struggle that policy leaders and implementers have faced in the wake of Afro-Latino social movements becoming more policy-based since the 1970s and 1980s.

Regional and international diffusion of ideas like Black Nationalism, Black Power, and Pan-Africanism have intensified over time through the fortification of transnational advocacy networks, and this diffusion has greatly impacted Afro-Latino ethno-development. As Afro-Latinos very gradually become wealthier and better educated, nations' strategies to mythologize present racial narratives and revise historical truisms will become less effective. Afro-Latinos' upward socioeconomic mobility in recent decades also increases the likelihood that levels of black consciousness will rise, which would in turn increase political participation. An interesting topic for future research is the study of Afro-Latinos' prescription to the idea of linked fate. Perceptions of linked fate, especially when compared to those held by African-Americans in the United States, can provide insight into the probability of political participation and the methods groups will use to accomplish their goals.

Due to the difficulties of integrating multiculturalism into nationalist frameworks and the emergence of class identity politics as a potentially effective vehicle for progressive social change, Afro-Latinos would do well to orient future movements around issues of social justice rather than petitions for mere recognition. Recent acknowledgments of racialized power differences in many countries represent a move away from racial democracy as a core ideology, so the simultaneous emergence of a transnational network advocating for Afro-Latino rights will potentially lead to an increase in Afro-Latino political participation. While predictions are risky, the historical trajectories of institutionalized discrimination and a gradual elevation of black consciousness could mean that Afro-Latino racial identification will become more salient as activist groups move their concerns into the public sphere. Therefore, race will likely play an increasingly important role in the future of Latin American politics.

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*Written by: Emma Northcott*  
*Written at: Wake Forest University*  
*Written for: Dr. Luis Roniger*  
*Date written: April 2015*