

# African Americans and Afro-Latina/Latinos

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## SECTION ONE

### What is Afro-Latin America?

By [Devyn Spence Benson](#) September 4, 2016

SOURCE: <http://www.aaihs.org/what-is-afro-latin-america/>

From Mexico to Brazil and beyond, Africans and people of African descent have fought in wars of independence, forged mixed race national identities, and contributed politically and culturally to the making of the Americas. Even though Latin America imported ten times as many slaves as the United States, only recently have scholars begun to highlight the role blacks and other people of African descent played in Latin American history. This course will explore the experiences of Afro-Latin Americans from slavery to the present, with a particular focus on Haiti, Cuba, Mexico, Brazil, and Colombia. We will also read some of the newest transnational scholarship to understand how conversations about ending racism and building “raceless” nations spread throughout the Americas and influenced the Civil Rights movement in the United States.

Last Tuesday, I began my eighth year of university teaching, but my first day at my new institution – [Davidson College](#). Feeling both like a newbie (I was still unpacking boxes of books last week) and like an old pro, I dove right into teaching two introductory courses—Afro-Latin America and History of the Caribbean—passing out the course description pasted above. Both of my courses were cross-listed with Africana and Latin American Studies and fell under my purview as the new professor of Afro-Latin America. Mine is a joint position and the first untenured new hire for both [Africana](#) and [Latin American](#) Studies. I was initially shocked when I saw the advertisement last summer and remain shocked in many ways that both Africana and Latin American Studies at Davidson were interested in hiring an Afro-Latin Americanist as their first faculty position (other than chair) in two relatively young departments.

Why was I surprised? First, because while historians of Latin America and the Caribbean had studied slavery since the 1970s, few of the initial Black Studies departments included blacks outside of the United States or Africa. With the turn to more transnational and diasporic departments in the 1990s, the newly renamed Africana Studies departments began to hire more scholars working on people of African descent outside of the major regions. However, even when they did make those hires, most departments only hired one non-U.S. person and it was certainly never the first hire. Secondly, even though my research and scholarship has sat at the intersection of Latin American history and Africana Studies since I began my dissertation project on [Afro-Cuban experiences with the 1959 Cuban Revolution](#), when I first applied for faculty positions in 2007 and 2008, there were zero Afro-Latin American positions advertised.

Much of this changed as Africana Studies departments expanded to reflect the emphasis on the African Diaspora and transnational research occurring in graduate education. Henry Louis Gates’ 2011 PBS documentary series [Black in Latin America](#) opened other doors for the field. Shortly after it aired, more and more Africana Studies, Latino Studies, and even traditional departments (like history and anthropology) included Afro-Latin America in their

course offerings. And in 2013, Harvard University launched the first [Afro-Latin American Research Institute](#) in the United States as a part of the [Hutchins Center for African and African American Research](#). In many ways, the growth of the field in the United States paralleled the rise of anti-racist movements in Latin America. In the 1980s and 1990s, [afrodescendientes](#) throughout the region publicly and visibly initiated social movements that named their existence (they had often been invisible in national rhetoric) and combated racism.

But, what is Afro-Latin America and why is it an important field of study? These are the questions I posed to my class at Davidson during the first week of the semester. Students eagerly shared their ideas during a silent chalk talk activity:

“It is part of the African Diaspora.”

“Afro-Latin Americans share a history of slavery and discrimination with African Americans.”

“It’s transnational.”

Not only did they try to define the category, my students also had questions about who was included in this region/category:

“How do you measure blackness in a mixed space?”

“What about tensions between African Americans and Afro-Latinos?”

“Will we talk about anti-black racism in Latin America?”

“Where do Afro-Indigenous groups fit?”

“Do you have to speak Spanish to be Afro-Latino?”

Afro-Latin America encompasses peoples of African descent living in Latin America. Surprisingly to most North-Americans, only [4.4%](#) of Africans forced into slavery in the Americas came to the United States. The rest went to Latin America and the Caribbean and forever changed the demographics of the region. Today its estimated that 30-50% of Colombia is black or mulatto and somewhere between 73 and 100 million people of African descent live in Brazil.

Yet, any definition of Afro-Latin America also has to include places where people of African descent have contributed to the region’s cultures, politics, and economies even if their numbers are no longer significant, like [Uruguay](#) and Argentina where carnival celebrations reflect an African diasporic past despite being performed by dancers with mostly white skin.

To understand Afro-Latin America you also have to examine the experiences of [Afro-Latin@s](#) living in the United States, including many celebrities cast in African American roles on television, such as Laz Alonso (*Jumping the Broom*, 2011) and Tatyana Ali (*Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*). As one [article](#) demonstrated, many Afro-Latinos feel rejected by both the black and the Latino community. “It was always difficult because I was never Boricua or Black enough. Other Puerto Ricans didn’t accept me because I wasn’t a fluent Spanish speaker and too brown. I also wasn’t ‘dark’ enough to be Black.”

Despite these tensions, in areas like New York and South Florida, African Americans and Afro-Latinos have lived and worked together since the 19th century and studying those alliances and the moments when cooperation breaks down is an important aspect of Afro-Latin American Studies.

As the semester continues, my class and I will discuss these and many other themes, including contemporary topics such as hair (blacks and *mulatos* in Latin America also struggle with the terms good and [bad hair](#)), colorism, and transnational hip hop. In doing so, we will begin to see patterns about how blackness, race, and racism operate outside of the United States. Some things will be familiar like the ways [Afro-Colombian youth](#) use African American hip hop beats to protest their exclusion from employment opportunities and full citizenship rights. Other things may seem more foreign at first glance, such as the [136](#) terms used to describe skin color in Brazil.

In the end, I want my students to walk away with an understanding of the lived experience of race as a social construction. We all know race isn’t real, but studying how it works in another place makes that even clearer. The shape of race and racism shift depending on historical time period, geography, and context. To be black in Latin America isn’t the same thing as being black in the United States. But, neither is being black in the 19th century

versus today. Moreover, in a day and age where police violence is (again) taking lives in both black and brown communities, it is finally time to talk (again) about alliances between African Americans and Latinos. Understanding the rich history, culture, and politics of Afro-Latin America is an excellent place to start those discussions. By the final week of the semester, I want my students to know and embody the hashtag #BlackLivesMatterEverywhere.

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## SECTION TWO

# Latino Activists Ask, When Should Brown Lives Matter?

November 5, 2016

SOURCE: <https://www.npr.org/2016/11/05/500810442/latino-activists-ask-when-should-brown-lives-matter>

## Transcript of NPR News Radio Program

SCOTT SIMON, HOST:

The slogan *Black Lives Matter* and the movement grown up around it has become a household name, but Latino's have also been disproportionately affected by police involved killings. They don't have a similar movement. Adrian Florido from NPR's Code Switch team wanted to find out why.

ADRIAN FLORIDO, BYLINE: In 2009, police officers in Anaheim, Calif., shot and killed 35-year-old Cesar Cruz during a traffic stop. The next day, his mother, Theresa Smith, held a vigil for him. There, her 7-year-old grandson looked up at her.

THERESA SMITH: And he says, we need to protest. He really wanted people to know that they had killed his dad, you know. I said, let's do this.

FLORIDO: Smith protested outside the Anaheim Police Department nearly every Sunday for the next *two and a half* years. At first, a lot of people joined her.

SMITH: I was thinking, yeah, maybe we would have some sort of a moment 'cause we became really strong for a hot second.

FLORIDO: But as the weeks passed, fewer people came. On most Sundays, it was just Smith. This was years before Black Lives Matter started organizing around police killings. It frustrated Smith that she couldn't get more people to join her. She eventually got a settlement with police, but continued her activism. And she's talked with a lot of families about what kept them from protesting.

SMITH: Fear keeps a lot of Latinos from really joining the movement, I think. I think I've come to that conclusion. It's fear. It's fear of retaliation, of maybe being deported.

FLORIDO: According to data compiled by *The Guardian* newspaper, this year, African-Americans in the U.S. have been killed by police at more than twice the rate of Latinos, but Latinos are still more likely than whites or Asians to have been killed.

JUAN CARTAGENA: You would think there'd be a lot more of an uprising, a lot of protest activity with clear targets.

FLORIDO: This is Juan Cartagena. He works for the nonprofit [LatinoJustice](#). He says there are lots of reasons there hasn't been more movement.

CARTAGENA: Because Latino groups are very well dispersed. We have pockets of nationalities, and they dominate in one part of country across another. In some parts of the country, the witnesses to these crimes are also within the undocumented portions of our population, and therefore they're not particularly encouraged to come out.

FLORIDO: There are also language barriers, the fact that many Latino advocacy groups prefer to focus on issues like immigration and the absence of media coverage. But the work of Black Lives Matter has started to influence Latino activism.

FLORIDO: Over the summer, protesters gathered at the Mariachi Plaza in East Los Angeles after police officers shot and killed a teenage boy. Police said he fired a gun. Witnesses disputed that.

UNIDENTIFIED WOMAN: So we're out here, as you know, because last night - yesterday evening - Jesse James Romero, who was 14 years old, was murdered in cold blood by LAPD.

FLORIDO: Among the protesters was Estela Rodriguez (ph), a diminutive woman who said police had also killed her son with 17 bullets.

FLORIDO: I have to speak up for my son, she said, because he may have been worthless to them, but he was my treasure.

FLORIDO: It's time for us to unite, Rodriguez said. She called on Latina mothers hiding behind their grief to come out and fight for their children. Sol Marquez was one of the organizers of this protest. She's with a group called Centro Community Service Organization. It's organizing protests in LA each time a local Latino is killed by police. Marquez says pointing to black activism has helped her convince people to join.

SOL MARQUEZ: People are getting empowered by Black Lives Matter. It's great to be able to show them, hey, look, you're not alone. You might feel like you're alone and like it's only happening to you in your own neighborhood, but these people right across the bridge are dealing with the same thing.

FLORIDO: While this happens locally, nationally, there are also changes underway. The National Hispanic Leadership Agenda, a coalition of 40 large Latino groups, recently wrote the issue of police killings into its formal list of advocacy priorities. Hector Sanchez is the group's leader.

HECTOR SANCHEZ: This is very, very important, and this is going to systemically change the way we, as leaders - Latino leaders and organizations - engage on the issue of criminal justice.

FLORIDO: But he says this will take some time. Right now, he says, they're spending a lot of time defending immigrants and Latinos against the toxic rhetoric of this election cycle. Adrian Florido, NPR News.

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## SECTION THREE

# How African American Activists are Influencing Latinos

By [Aaron Fountain](#) July 25, 2017

SOURCE: <http://www.aaihs.org/how-african-american-activists-are-influencing-latinos/>

Politicized by [Black Lives Matter](#), Latinos across the country are calling for police reform and direct, organized actions by building coalitions with African American political activists. These actions consist of grassroots campaigns organized against [police brutality](#) and standing in solidarity with Black Lives Matter activists.

Unfortunately, some Latino advocates and civil rights organizations have seldom recognized these activities. Instead, they define Latino politics as largely focused on immigration reform and combating President Donald Trump's [anti-immigration sentiment](#). Additionally, the lack of a Latino-led national movement for police reform seems to validate claims that police shootings rarely generate outrage in Latino communities. "You would think there'd be a lot more of an uprising, a lot of protest activity with clear targets," [stated Juan Cartagena](#), president of the civil rights organization [LatinoJustice](#), during a National Public Radio segment about Latinos' inability to mobilize like Black Lives Matter activists.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Police brutality has generated outrage in Latino communities, although it hasn't occurred in every US city or among all ethnic groups. A small but vigorous group of Latino political activists have organized campaigns for police accountability and raised awareness about the plight affecting both groups. This activism has occurred at the local level, which contributes to its invisibility because these activities are not connected to any national organizations. However, recent events in various communities reveal the ways African American activism regarding police reform is shaping political organizing among Latinos just as it did in the 1960s.<sup>1</sup>

The Black Panther Party of the 1960s inspired Chicano and Puerto Rican activists to create organizations such as the Brown Berets and the Young Lords Party. In fact, African Americans even joined these organizations. Approximately [30 percent](#) of the Lords' membership included African Americans and non-Puerto Rican Latinos. Police brutality [produced](#) political organizing and even sparked [urban rebellions](#) during the 1960s and 1970s in Mexican American and Puerto Rican communities.

While police brutality and poverty united African Americans and Latinos, these coalitions often fell apart. Different [interpretations](#) of poverty among African Americans and Mexican Americans and the desire of Puerto Rican middle-class professionals to form a separate [political base](#) diminished collective efforts. White politicians also cast Puerto Ricans as a "more worthy" minority group, leading to a decline in coalition building.

This history provides some lessons for contemporary activism. Latinos are perceived as foreign, and for decades Latino and non-Latino advocates and politicians, conservatives and liberals alike, have [portrayed](#) Latinos as upwardly mobile, hard-working, and family-oriented. These portrayals have often been made with implicit references to African Americans, characterizing one group as inferior to the other. If both groups view one's gains as the other's loss, they are unlikely to seek to maintain meaningful coalitions.

Contemporary trends of politicization can also go unnoticed because of the way some [scholars](#) and [journalists](#) have framed African American-Latino relations. The two dominant portrayals cast the groups either as natural allies or as inherently in conflict. African Americans and Latinos are seen as competing in a zero-sum game for economic resources and political power. But reality and history are much more nuanced than this depiction.

[...]

Latinos are largely a young population and they face similar marginalization as African Americans in areas such as education, [housing discrimination](#), and police harassment. Both groups have lived and continue to live in the same



neighborhoods (although proximity doesn't always lead to cooperation). In 2016, a [GenForward](#) poll reported that two-thirds of young African Americans and four in ten Latinos said they or someone they knew had fallen victim to violence or been harassed by the police. As a result, politicization seemed inevitable.

This doesn't mean that a "Brown Lives Matter" movement will emerge, despite the [wishes](#) of some activists. The possibility of a Latino-led national movement parallel to Black Lives Matter is highly unlikely for several reasons. First, as writer [Sabrina Vourvoulias](#) has [noted](#), Latino activism has always been restricted by citizenship, geographic location, and national origin. Historically, pan-Latino activism has been limited to a few cities where multiple groups lived in close quarters, such as the south side of [Milwaukee](#) and San Francisco's [Mission District](#). Second, some advocacy groups, like the [National Hispanic Leadership Agenda](#), a coalition of 40 large Latino groups, have placed most of their energy on immigration. This reinforces the perception that Latinos are a single-issue group. Third, not all national origin groups have experienced the same degree of discrimination in the United States. Lastly, the term "Brown" situates mixed-race people as the norm for Latinidad and excludes Latinos who are Black, white, and Asian.

Nonetheless, Latino activism will probably continue to adopt the methods and language of Black Lives Matter for the next several years as long as meaningful police reform fails to be enacted. While organizing for police accountability remains local, it will not abate anytime soon. Rather than anticipate the creation of a "Brown Lives Matter" or a "Latino Lives Matter" movement, documenting activism at the local level can provide clues for how Latino politics—with a blend of African American political activism—will take shape in the future.

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## SECTION FOUR

# White Latino Racism on the Rise: It's Time for a Serious Conversation on Euro-Diasporic Whiteness

by [William García](#) December 21, 2015

SOURCE: <http://www.latinorebels.com/2015/12/21/white-latino-racism-on-the-rise-its-time-for-a-serious-conversation-on-euro-diasporic-whiteness/>

A common [misconception] that exists today rests on the notion that there are no racial hierarchies in Latin American countries or within the Latino communities in the United States. In other words, Latino (or Hispanic) is itself a race. For many, this conversation is a pointless squabble that halts the true need for unity amongst marginalized groups in the United States. Unfortunately, overlooking the importance of this issue has in fact delineated separation and a lack of interest in each other's problems.

The shooting of unarmed African-American teenager Trayvon Martin by [a half-Peruvian and half-White man named George Zimmerman](#), the rise of so-called Hispanic conservatives like Ted Cruz, Al Cardenas and Marco Rubio, and the examples of racist comments by Latinos in the media like [Rodner Figueroa](#), have made it impossible to have a conversation of Latinos and race. It is becoming clear that Whites from Latin America, although marginalized by Anglo-Whites, have been able to pass as honorary Whites and benefit from the inequalities formed by White Supremacy. This is not new, and it has a history.

Many people who neglect to explore the history of Latin Americans in the United States fail to analyze people like the famous white Cuban Ricky Ricardo (Desi Arnaz), who penetrated the American television series "I Love Lucy" (1951) at a time when Black people were not even allowed to perform next to White actors. Lucy (Lucille Ball) was

Arnaz' real wife, and both enjoyed a long and prosperous career in the film industry. In 1954 Arnaz was even able to get a role as the famous Don Juan.

During this time, White Latin Americans were seen as foreign, inferior and exotic and yet many passed and enjoyed White Privilege. Even [all three of John Wayne's wives were from Latin America](#) at a time when anti-Black and anti-immigrant sentiments were powerful hateful discourses. Less mentioned is the famous Afro-Puerto Rican actor [Juano Hernández](#), who to date is considered was one of the most successful pioneering Black actors of the African-American film industry. Despite Hernández being from Latin America, he had to take Black roles precisely because he was Black and experienced the same segregation as other Blacks in the United States. This was also common in Latin America, where Blacks were not allowed to be actors while Whites enjoyed wearing blackface and dehumanized black people.

[...]

The impossibility of Afro descendants from Latin America being able to play Latin American (or Latino) roles would be further marked after the Civil Rights Movement. Black people from Latin America were segregated and became part of Black communities in the United States. Eminent figures like Arturo Alfonso Schomburg, Carlos



Cooks, Chano Pozo and Mario Bauza among others formed part of the Harlem Renaissance. From the 1950s through the 1970s, there was a rise and fall of an uneasy coalition between Latinos and African-Americans. A part from the internal conflicts and White backlash that resulted from the Civil Rights Movement, the most salient aftermath was the cementing of racial essentialisms. Blackness was seen solely as African-American and Latinos became “Brown” while Whiteness became Anglo-whites. These political and racial constructions remained unquestioned until recently.

The discussion of Latino Whiteness was rarely brought up and instead focused minimally on Latino Blackness. For example, Felipe Luciano's “Jíbaro My Pretty Nigger” encouraged his

Blackness and Puertoricaness.

It appears there was a time where you could be both Black and Latino but not White and Latino. The Nuyorican movement was occurring while the Black Arts Movements was taking place as well.

So the question remains: do Latinos “Brown” themselves to create Latino as a race because the racial discourse in the United States does not allow them to be a part of it? Another more important question is this: what occurred as a result of Latinos becoming one Brown (mixed) race and Blackness [became] exclusive to African-Americans? [Answer:] Latin American markets and elites were able to carry out their anti-Black agendas, which led to the rise of all-White soap operas protected under the construction of *mestizaje* or Brownness. Afro-Latinos and Indigenous peoples were made either invisible or reduced to adopting roles as musicians and sports athletes. This benefitted African-Americans tremendously because it allowed them to fully immerse themselves within American nationalism, which required separating their history from Latinos and Afro-Latinos while envisioning Latinos in the United States as people who were never part of the nation to begin with.

As Wilson Jeremiah Moses states in his book [Black Messiahs and Uncle Toms](#) (1982): “Black messianism is the point in our cultural mythology where nationalism and assimilationism come together most strikingly” (viii). African-American sitcoms resulted in Black essentialist and racial hierarchies that excluded Afro-Latinos in the U.S and forced other Black migrants to assimilate to African Americanism. African-American sitcoms like “The Jeffersons,” “Sanford and Son” and “Good Times” were mostly Christian, monolingual and family-based. Latino sitcoms like “¿Qué Pasa USA?,” “Chico and the Man” and “A.E.S Hudson Street” were white, Christian, bilingual and also family-based.

These racially and ethnically constructed divisions not only excluded the larger diverse Black communities in the U.S., but it also formed a Blackness antithetical to Latino identity. While Latin American markets created all-White soap operas (which has become ever more transnational) the U.S media also created these divisions. In Christina Saenz-Alcántara's article [Who and What the Hell Is a White Hispanic?](#), one of the many arguments presented is that Latino Whiteness is not possible because of the myths of *mestizaje* in some way makes Latinos all equal:

For example, in the U.S., there is the [one-drop rule](#). If you have even one ancestor who is African, Asian, or indigenous, you're automatically non-white. In Puerto Rico, the one-drop rule is that you are considered white if you have even one white ancestor in the previous four generations (known as the Regla del Sacar or Gracias al Sacar [laws](#)). In the U.S., a Latino historically is not white since Latinos by definition are a mixture of Spanish, indigenous, African and Asian blood.

[...]

So where does this leave us?

## Today We are Paying the Price

The killing of Trayvon Martin by George Zimmerman caused many to revisit the notion of Latino Whiteness. The article published by Latino Rebels, [The White Hispanic' Label: Yes, People, Racism is a Latino Thing, Too](#), actually made some good points at the need to revisit race and Latino identity, while Cesar Vargas' [The Privilege of the White Hispanic: Leaving Out the Rest](#) caused, to my amazement, a stir from White Latinos. Nonetheless, we also need African-Americans to begin embracing Afro-Latinos among other Black communities who do not conform to an African American nomenclature. Unfortunately, as I had predicted, anti-Black racism has reached their doorstep. [Rodner Figueroa](#) compared Michelle Obama to a simian from the *Planet of the Apes* and was fired from Univision.

Figueroa's excuse was that he was "mixed." However, Univision, one of the most anti-Black television channels I've ever seen, made firing Figueroa seem like an oxymoron.

This Saturday, the Miss Puerto Rico winner for the Miss America pageant was suspended for [anti-Muslim tweets](#).

Last night, the African-American actor Steve Harvey was attacked on Twitter from racist White Latinos (and other Latinos as well and Anglo-whites) [who wanted Miss Colombia to win](#) the Miss Universe contest. These profile used abhorrent language, as the tweets below show. All this hatred came as a result of Harvey mistakenly naming Miss Colombia the winner instead of Miss Philippines, the real winner.



This is why we need to have a serious conversation about Latino Whiteness. But for that to happen, we need to have a serious conversation on Euro-diasporic identity and anti-Blackness. We need to have conversations on the [Casta systems](#) that are still more powerful than ever and are the permanent results of the hundreds of years of African slavery in the Americas.

White Latinos need to own up to their Whiteness because we just can't continue to afford this to continue any further. We also need African-Americans [to understand](#) that Latin America has over 200 million Afro-descendants and that going to Africa also entails going to Colombia, Brazil, Cuba and Puerto Rico, among other countries. Blackness does not have to solely mean African-American and Whiteness does not have to solely mean Anglo-white.

African-American academics need to stop erasing Afro-Latinos from African-American history.



They also have to become more open with Blackness.

They can't wrap their Blackness with the American flag, exclude other Black people in the U.S and then say that they are all about Black unity.

History has made identity constructions that are reversible. We just have to work together and be honest about where we stand in the world.

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## SECTION FIVE

# Racism and Responses to Racism in Latin America

[Arivaldo Santos de Souza](#) March 7, 2017

SOURCE: <http://thebulletin.brandtschool.de/latin-american-policy-series-3-racism-and-responses-to-racism-in-latin-america/>

This article is a continuation of the Latin American Public Policy Series and briefly [introduces] the topic “Racism and Responses to Racism in Latin America”, building upon Tanya Hernández’s thoughts, whose book: *Racial Subordination in Latin America – The Role of the State, Customary Law, and the New Civil Rights Response* (Cambridge Press, 2012) which I just translated into Portuguese. This analysis seeks to intrigue Latin Americans to think more deeply about the way people of African descent in their respective countries were (and still are) mistreated based on the arguments presented by Tanya Hernandez.

Approximately 150 million people of African descent, members of one of the largest African Diasporas over time, live in Latin America. Even though, we people of African descent make up around 1/3 of total population in Latin American, members of the African diaspora make up more than 40 percent of the poor in Latin America and have been marginalized as undesirable to society since the abolition of slavery across the Americas.

The idea that “racism does not exist” is hegemonic in Latin America, despite the increasing number of black social movements across the region. The “myth of racial democracy”, which supports that the racial mixture (*mestizaje* in Castellano and *mestiçagem* in Portuguese) in a population is a symptom of racial harmony and absence of inequalities based in race is still influential even among scholars and well-educated citizens.



Latin Americans embrace the idea that the absence of Jim Crow racial segregation laws, which were U.S. state-mandated (not customary) laws, is such a marked contrast to the United States racial history that the region views itself as what the author named “racially innocent.” Hernández analyses this claim and found out that some facts about the historical role of the state in Latin America in regulating race were overlooked, specifically, restrictive immigration laws and racially biased customary laws.

After the abolition of slavery, Latin American nations enacted restrictive immigration laws and provided state funding explicitly focused on whitening the population and outlawing the immigration of persons of African descent. Through the operation of

immigration laws, persons of African descent were recast into their pre-emancipation status of marginalized peoples. Moreover, customary law (that is, the enforcement of unwritten laws established by long usage rather than legislative enactment) was also used as a tool of racial exclusion in Latin America after the abolition of slavery.

Before the reader assumes that his or her own home country did not take any racist action, I offer some information from the many documents brought by Tanya Hernández as a counter argument. Costa Rica banned



A police officer stands in front a banner that reads in Portuguese: "Racism is useful to arrest, judge, torture and kill" during a demonstration against racism and police violence, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Wednesday, July 20, 2016. A delegation of activists from the Black Lives Matter movement is in Rio de Janeiro to highlight racism and police violence in the Olympic city ahead of the summer games. The six United States activists are meeting over four days with families of local victims of police violence, as well as community leaders and anti-racism activists.

blacks to enter the country, Dominican Republic ordered to kill (sic!) persons of African descent, Uruguayans refused to enroll black children in elementary schools and Colombians denied (and still deny) access to land to Blacks.

Brazilians and Argentinians provided European immigrants with so much money and resources that southern Brazilian populations and Argentinians are the perfect example of a successful policy of whitening in the region. Therefore, the inhabitants of those regions look just like white Europeans. Fortunately, some countries already started doing something to tackle the challenge. For example, affirmative action policies in Brazil and legislative changes in Colombia.

After reading "Racial Subordination in Latin America", it becomes clear that Latin American States did play a role in regulating race, for example through immigration law and customary law, in the last century. This disrupts the picture of Latin America as "racially innocent." In this regard, the

region's homework now is to assess (the already implemented policies) and develop more public policies to promote racial equality and eradicate the legacy of racial inequality wrought by the historic racism of Latin American States.

Latin American States and the U.S. followed historically two different courses of action in dealing with race. It is hard to claim that racial policies in both the U.S. and Latin America influenced each other. However, as already said, Latin Americans often claimed that there is no racism in the region. One of the main arguments to support such claim is that racism is what the U.S. used to do by enforcing Jim Crow laws.

The U.S. now faces a challenge similar to Latin America in dealing with racial equality. On the one hand, Jim Crow laws are no longer in place. On the other hand, formal mechanisms for addressing racial inequality have for decades been in place. Therefore, there is a belief that the government should no longer be proactively engaged in ensuring racial equality.

A racial hierarchy continues to exist alongside a deteriorated social commitment to race-based programs. Even though the U.S. civil rights movements were somehow successful and the country even had a Black President, the U.S. have still no ground to present themselves as a "racially innocent" country and could learn a lot from the Latin American experience. Mostly if the region stops acting as "racially innocent".

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