CHASING BLACKNESS: RE-INVESTING VALUE AND MEXICO’S CHANGING RACIAL ECONOMY

BY

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DISSERTATION

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This dissertation explores how race is mobilized by “those on the bottom” within the confines of the current multicultural political arena dictated by the Mexican state as a means of access to national citizenship(s). This work adds an explicit cultural, social, and political element to the notion of “racial economy”. I argue that race, ethnicity, and culture have an historic value that helps to define their current value within the neo-liberal multicultural state and can therefore be traded in a limited number of ways. In this way, the logic of difference, based on colonial logics of race and ethnicity, dictates particular potentials and perspectives on the use and value of race and ethnicity as a cultural, social, and political commodity. These colonial logics continue to inform state sanctioned strategies for the official recognition of difference within the Mexican nation state. However, this dissertation argues that these logics are explicitly challenged by grassroots approaches to recognition and representation as witnessed by local activism and the tensions between state officials and community organizers over the means of production for self-representation. A phenomenon that I refer to as “implication”, suggests that invocations of particular histories and social phenomena, such as racism, implicate particular racial/ethnic groups in the deliberate construction of the racial past and present, and therefore can define government approaches to citizenship as the government only half-heartedly embraces the true historical treatment of its marginalized populations. The issue of choosing a social identity, then, is paramount, as all racial terms embody particular social histories and can act as mnemonic devices that trigger a number of accepted or contested social histories. For this reason, it is also argued that the tensions between government, academics, and activists over linguistic and symbolic representations of race are more than tiffs over politically correct nomenclature, and should be read as serious conflicts over social/historical representation and the power to self-
identify. Lastly, I focus on the role that conflicting “racial economies” at the U.S./Mexico border have on processes of racial formation/transformation.
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Social science research, and perhaps all scientific research, can be a lonely process. And, in the case of anthropology, the actual process of long-term ethnographic research can seem like a solitary endeavor. This solitary endeavor, or at least the appearance of the anthropologist as a lone trailblazing researcher can also be reinforced by the product of ethnographic research, which is most often times the formal ethnography, or in this case, the dissertation. However, the ethnography itself can silence or at least obscure the many professional and personal relationships that are required for its eventual materialization. Therefore, I would like to give thanks to the individuals and institutions whose presence and support, while only haunting the pages of this dissertation, have been instrumental in my personal and professional development as well as ultimate success in my graduate career. I will be forever indebted to those that have supported this “solitary endeavor”.

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Secondly, several truly amazing intellectuals have nurtured my academic/professional development over the years. I have been lucky to develop relationships with several people whose commitments to my work have far surpassed their professional and institutional obligations as advisors and mentors. Alejandro Lugo, chair of my dissertation’s committee, has been instrumental in the completion of this dissertation and my overall development as a scholar. He has taught me to be as patient as I am passionate for the work that I have dedicated myself to. Along with helping to sharpen my theoretical and analytical skills, Alejandro has been a true mentor and advisor, and a figure that I continue to emulate in my own writing, teaching, and advising. I must also give a very special thanks to Ramona Perez, for her continuing investment in me. Ramona has been instrumental in setting me on my current path and has never failed to offer any of the resources at her disposal with the singular goal being my overall success. Arlene Torres has also been a major support and motivator, taking me on as an advisee, all the while stretched to the limits with her own professional obligations. Her support has motivated me to pay it forward through my own commitment to the next generation of graduate students of color. I must also thank Marc Perry for our long conversations and his mentorship. In many ways, he has been a role model who continues to carve out a path for this young Black scholar to follow. Lastly, I would like to say thank you to my colleague Bernardo Rios for his long time friendship and support. Our countless conversations on all things academic as well as personal have allowed me to keep it all in perspective.

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For the most part, those acknowledged here are not explicitly mentioned in the pages that follow; however, their presence was always felt. The support of those mentioned, and the countless others who were not mentioned but continue to have a lasting effect on my work, have enriched my personal and professional life in an invaluable way. And, I continue to regard their support and mentorship as part of my personal wealth.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is the culmination of several years of graduate study and research. This journey began with my first study abroad experience in Oaxaca, Mexico in 2002. While in Oaxaca I was introduced to the Black communities of the Costa Chica region. It was this introduction that would spark in me the serious interest and reflection on the current usefulness and approach, both public and academic, to the issues of race, ethnicity, and the multiple forms of discrimination that surround these concepts, as well as my current interest in the politics surrounding difference.

Initially, as I was ill equipped to seriously address such issues, I attempted to fit my experiences in the Costa Chica within the then current understandings and paradigms of the African Diaspora and the African experience in the Americas. It was not until I began writing my Master’s thesis that I realized that perhaps the paradigms at my disposal were insufficient for understanding the unique situation that Blacks in Mexico currently find themselves in and the motivations surrounding their attempts to organize around a local experience of race. This recognition of the lack of legibility (Das, 2004) of the Black Movement in the Costa Chica through the then current and popular paradigms, paradigms that continue to be foundational for many studies on Blackness in the Americas, pushed me to take on a serious study of critical race theory. This study also pushed me to be critical of the concept of race itself, and the arbitrary application of racial and political paradigms to people simply due to their biology and common descent from those enslaved Africans that were spared from death through the middle passage, only to suffer the hardships of slavery as their labor helped to construct a particular modernity (and experience of this modernity) (Gilroy, 1993, Hanchard, 1999) within the Americas.
In this way it became imperative that I took seriously the ways in which a focus on the Pacific could uncover new paradigms for looking at African descendants (and ultimately race) in Latin America (Whitten and Torres, 1998) and to not allow the theorizing of the Black Atlantic to overdetermine and define my approach to African descendants and their unique experiences within the Pacific region. This focus, as I understand it, ultimately asks us to not fall prey to the potential to institutionalize theories of race, potentials that have undoubtedly turned into practice and have become responsible for the trite nature of over used paradigms, which tend to impose race, rather than liberate the subjects of academic and ethnographic investigation by maintaining certain racial traps or relying on foundational colonial logics (Bhabha, 2004, Lugo, 2008). By racial traps, I mean to draw attention to the ways in which, as Marc Perry might put it, we can often fall into a “trick bag” of sorts, when dealing with the issue of race and racism. In this way, as I argue, the work that is attempted by such paradigms can often times serve to reinforce the same colonial and imperial legacies that they attempt to undue; most often times fixing difference and essentializing the properties, experiences, and desires that we assume are naturally attached to such forms of difference. An attempt at avoiding these racial traps informs my writing here, and continues to be a work in progress.

Avoiding these racial traps is also the reason for the lack of consistency in the use of racial terminology within the majority of these chapters. The use of one overarching term to define African descendants within the Costa Chica is currently at the center of a debate between

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1 The idea of a “trick bag” is not Marc Perry’s alone, but Marc Perry elaborated upon this idea to me in many private conversations about the unstable ground upon which racial movements and politics often rest.
2 See Wilson, 2009, for two perspectives on racial economy. It is my thought that these perspectives speak more to a political economy of race. However, my initial thoughts on the existence of a racial economy, elaborated upon later in this dissertation, owe their beginnings to Wilson’s discussion and desire to continue developing the conversation around the concept of racial economy.
activists/advocates and the local and state governments in Oaxaca and Guerrero. My resistance to the use of one term to add uniformity to this dissertation may frustrate many of the readers. But, this lack of uniformity is a discursive tool that allows the reader to feel the actual fluidity of identity experienced and strategically utilized by Blacks within the Costa Chica. This utilization of multiple signifiers highlights the way that race can be context dependent and is neither socially nor biologically fixed within the Costa Chica. This lack of “racial location” is something that the Black movement (if one can use such a term), as well as the government, will have to address head-on if the current negotiations around race are to yield any practical outcomes for African descendants within the Costa Chica, and Mexico overall.

However, to create a sense of methodological and ethnographic uniformity, I have chosen to use specific terms to invoke particular meanings. For example, the term “African descendent” will be used in the following pages with regards to a diasporic and/or historical experience when referencing peoples that share a common descent from the continent of Africa. For the most part, this references an imposed commonality, but can be a useful term in referencing shared social history until a certain point. I will use the terms “Negro” and “Moreno” in much of the ethnographic work that follows, as these terms are commonly used among activists and community members as a way to reference self and kin. I will also use the term “Afro” (often hyphenated with Mexicano) in order to reference inclusion into a larger state project, as this term is often times imposed upon communities from above, due to the fact that the aforementioned terms can implicate the state in social histories and processes of racialization (discussed in chapter 8) that they would rather avoid or forget, especially with regards to current projects of inclusion and multiculturalism. I have rarely heard this term used “on the ground” by activists or community members unless referencing government projects of inclusion. Finally I use the term
“Black” when referencing individuals or communities that have shared a common experience of racialization due to their perceived racial similarities and are more and more adopting this term (even in its Spanish translation of “Negro”) to project a certain politicized identity.

In chapter 2, Chasing Blackness, I outline my methodological approach to my research. One of the issues that I take on here is the difficulty I had “chasing the present”. In my time within the Costa Chica, it was difficult finding people that had any real concrete idea about what it was that a Black movement was trying to accomplish. Many people that I spoke with were interested in the material gains that might come about by state and federal recognition. This recognition required agreement on a common racial signifier to describe and define African descendants, and was a major project taken on by Black activists and organizations, and continues presently. One of the issues that came about due to an official project of social recognition is the issue of nomenclature. How do Blacks want to be addressed? The lack of agreement about naming does not mean that there was no sense of ethnic/racial difference and belonging but it does suggest that this type of identity and movement is still in its infancy.

The question, then, became how to track this development? Listening to people talk to each other during mundane conversations sheds light on the many terms used among African descendants, but it does not get to the issue of what nomenclature those involved in the movement prefer in order to reference political and cultural identities. While in the Costa Chica I attended several organizational meetings and “consultas” where government personnel and activists discussed and argued over these issues. However, the extent to which the activists will be successful in unifying African descendants under an umbrella term remains to be seen. I believe that this issue is really one that will never be resolved, as seen by the number of terms used by African descendants throughout the diaspora, and will always be an issue that remains
important within differing political contexts. This is also true for the current invention and “remembering” of culture that is currently underway within the region. What is clear, however, is that an ethnography of the political invention of a people will require further methodological considerations, and that much work needs to be done in order to develop effective methodologies for ethnographic approaches to process rather than some of the traditional tools that focus on taking a snap shot of the pre-existing ethnographic present.

Chapter 3, An Expanded Approach to Racial Economy, outlines my development of a theoretical framework in which to view the current political process that Blacks within Mexico are currently involved. The current movement is unfolding in a manner different than movements that took place earlier in the 20th century. Take for example the Civil Rights movement and the later Afrocentric movement that took place in the United States in the 60’s, 70’s, 80’s, and 90’s as two examples (Asante, 1987 and 2011). This era offered a number of political, social, cultural, and economic possibilities that may not exist within the current neoliberal era. At the very least, race and ethnicity hold a different value in the current economic and political climate. What does it mean to come into a racial and political identity within the neoliberal moment, then?

My argument is that it is this climate that influences the potential successes and failures of racial and ethnic organizing, and creates a particular racial economy2 in which race and ethnicity can be traded for material, social, and political gains in very particular ways. Therefore, as Blackness in Mexico began to become an explicitly political identity in the late

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2 See Wilson, 2009, for two perspectives on racial economy. It is my thought that these perspectives speak more to a political economy of race. However, my initial thoughts on the existence of a racial economy, elaborated upon later in this dissertation, owe their beginnings to Wilson’s discussion and desire to continue developing the conversation around the concept of racial economy.
90’s, rather than the 1960’s and 1970’s as in many parts of Latin America (including the Caribbean) (Gonzalez, 2001, Hanchard, 1994 and 1999, Mitchell, 1985, Turner, 1985, Walters, 1993), a Black identity must be framed in a way that is relevant to the current time, and draws upon current potential and possibility. For this reason, civil rights era understandings of Black (often times read African) identity and politics are not as relevant to the current movement for recognition within Mexico. I think it important here to note that my intention is not to elaborate on a political-economy of race, but rather to demonstrate the existence of a separate ideological economy of race, in which race, due to colonial legacies, takes on its own value system and therefore becomes a framing component of peoples’ social and political being. In Mexico, and in Latin America more broadly, this racial economy can play out as the maintenance of color hierarchies (Lugo, 2008). The fact that talks and negotiations with the Mexican government are now taking place over the issue of African descendent inclusion, and that previous approaches to indigenous inclusion have complicated matters in a number of ways, will be the major ethnographic component of this chapter and will also set the stage for later ethnographic chapters.

Chapter 4, Talking About Mestizaje: History, Value, and the Racial Present, will focus on the historic value of race within Mexico and the racial foundation laid during the colonial moment. I argue that this moment created racial values within Mexico that continue to be relevant. I also make an explicit connection between the colonial moment and the racial present within Mexico, and highlight the ways in which the creation of a colonial racial economy continues to dictate racial potentials within the present. I argue here that while the colonial racial order did create a space for racial mixing, it did little to erase the negative value associated with the notion of Blackness, and maintained the positive value associated with Whiteness. It is this
notion of Blackness that activists within Mexico currently attempt to undoe. And, it is the persisting racial economy that continues to thwart Black attempts within Mexico to re-imagine race and racial value.

Chapter 5, Recognizing Culture and Making Difference Official, is an ethnographic chapter that focuses on the real process undertaken by the Federal and Oaxacan state government to make difference official. Within this chapter I focus on the process of negotiation for official recognition (never a process of equality) between local activists and advocates, state and federal institutions, and less politically active community members. This process of making difference official presents a number of traps, presented as natural aspects of difference, that local activists intuitively feel yet do not always know how to articulate. Within this chapter I explicitly focus on these traps and the fine line between equality and continued marginality that the process of recognition is constantly straddling. I argue that these traps are set by a continued reliance on colonial logics in order to frame difference and the value that this difference offers to the nation state.

Chapter 6, Citizenship, Modernity, and Multicultural Politics in Latin America, offers an extensive literature review on relevant ethnographic material, in order to give the reader a sense of how Blackness has been approached in Latin America and the ways that other Black communities in Latin America, through local and national negotiation within specific temporal contexts, have been previously organized around race. This chapter serves to add regional context to my ethnographic and theoretical approach to the current movement in Mexico. Within this chapter I give specific examples of how scholars are approaching the ways that communities have concretely and strategically mobilized around notions of race and ethnicity. I also address some of the pitfalls that have come about through a reliance on race and difference in other parts
of the Latin American region. Finally, this chapter acts as an ethnographic bridge between my ethnographic material on the process of officializing difference and the more bottom-up ethnography of personal and communal narratives surrounding race in the Costa Chica.

Chapter 7, The Art of the Narrative, is an ethnographic chapter focusing on the way that negros and morenos, with whom I spoke, tell the story of what it means to be them. This chapter focuses on a number of different narratives, ranging from how some Black activists are attempting to incorporate their communities into the Global eco-tourism industry to self professed definitions of Blackness. These narratives give a glimpse into the cultural and political project currently taking place within the Costa Chica. While I offer material on several narratives within this chapter, the bulk of the chapter focuses on the narratives of Marcelo, Lucila, and Aydee, all activists in their own right, and the way in which their narratives highlight the complexity of the Black movement and situate the movement within the contexts of art, culture, and economics. The narratives in this chapter both contradict and re-enforce negative stereotypes and shed light on activists’ own feelings and beliefs about the broader racial/political project of Blackness within the Costa Chica, and the social location that Blacks feel they currently occupy and should occupy in the social and political hierarchy.

Before continuing, I feel it is important here to add a remark regarding my approach to ethnography within the context of “thick description”. I have tried to be meticulous where possible. Regarding this meticulousness, however, I have tried to avoid thick description of individuals with regards to their phenotypic appearance. This strategy may leave the reader somewhat vexed or frustrated at particular moments when reading this dissertation. However, I think this frustration is productive for a reading of these chapters, as it highlights the ways that phenotype is simply one site of Blackness within the Costa Chica, and Mexico more broadly, and
does not allow the reader to rely on their pre-existing conceptions of the connection between race and phenotype. Also, this tension is important to taking seriously my approach to race as process, as laid out in chapter 2 below. For this reason I also leave out a phenotypic description of myself. However, through the ethnography, physical descriptions may become clear. I also add an appendix (appendix E) with photographs of several Costenos (coastal people) from the Costa Chica for those who are interested in a phenotypic view of “Blackness in Mexico.”

Secondly, regarding pseudonyms, all of the activists are referred to by their true names. All of the activists preferred that I used their true names, as they were public figures in some capacity or another. Any government officials that appear in this ethnography, as well as the “non-politically active” respondents who thought it important and worth their time to talk to me are referred to by their pseudonyms. I felt at the time of this research, and still do, that this approach was acceptable. It is these activists that are involved in the writing (or re-writing) of Mexican history through their current actions. And, it is the testimonials (Roque Ramirez, 2005) of these activists that will help to create the archive which future generations will draw upon for an understanding of the history of Mexico’s African descendants. Hopefully this ethnography will be one of the records by which their work and intentions will be measured.
CHAPTER 2: CHASING BLACKNESS: METHODOLOGY AND THE PRODUCTION OF RACIAL IDENTITY

In 2008, I decided to travel to the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, Oaxaca to investigate a myth that I had heard regarding Black communities located somewhere on the coast around the coastal urban centers of Juchitan Zaragosa and Salina Cruz. During a summer language fellowship at the Welte Institute, sponsored by a summer FLAS fellowship through SDSU’s Center for Latin American Studies, it was relayed to me that there were communities of African descendants (simply labeled “negros” by my would-be informant) living somewhere in the Isthmus region. By this time I had been conducting preliminary fieldwork on and off in Oaxaca throughout a period of about four years, and had encountered similar tales. With my curiosity sparked by this “myth of Blackness”, I decided to review maps of the region and then set out to find one of these “lost” communities. While this initial trip did not uncover any “undiscovered” Black communities, it did shed light on the shifting regional discourses on race within the many social and geographical landscapes within the region.

The idea of shifting discourses is important here, as it highlights the ways in which race has no geographical center within the state of Oaxaca and the larger Mexican nation. Rather, race becomes a part of different regional discourses (Lomnitz, 1999 and 2001) depending upon historical relevance and contexts. And, while this concept may be firmly attached to the conceptions that people have of the nation and its various regions, trips across the many borders, exemplified by the many ethnic (indigenous, negro, or mestizo) regions within Oaxaca, force one to dislodge their own conceptions of race, and to struggle with new conceptions and approaches to this amorphous concept. The title of this chapter is exemplary to my approach to this concept and its application to Mexico, specifically to the state of Oaxaca and its Black
population. Chasing Blackness! This is what I found myself doing that hot summer in 2008. I found it hard to believe that there might have still been communities of “negros” (in the Spanish pronunciation) hiding, or perhaps hidden, within the coastal jungle of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. But, pushed by this “myth of Blackness”, I decided, spurred on by my colleague Bernardo Rios, to see what I could find.

In truth this felt somewhat like I was mounting an anthropological expedition of the kind common during the times of such explorer anthropologists as Claude Levi Strauss (1974), Bronislaw Malinowski (1929), or even Melville Herskovits (1958). My first cartographical glimpse of the region came from an outdated map held in the Instituto Welte collection in the city of Oaxaca. This map (Rand McNally, 1929), from sometime in the early 20th century, gave me a very undetailed picture of the region. This glimpse was only later elaborated on by using the satellite option in Google Maps, which, by the way, confirmed the reality of the outdated map. The region had changed little from the era in which the above-mentioned original map was drafted, or the colonial maps of previous centuries for that matter, apart from the growth of the main centers of Salina Cruz and Juchitan. Enlightened by the understanding that I was heading into a very rural territory, I contemplated what provisions I might need in order to make this trip. After realizing that I did not have the money to finance such an expedition worthy of Strauss or Herskovits, complete with porters, several tents each serving a unique purpose, pack animals, or any of the other traditional/imperialist anthropological expeditionary

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3 See Cotton and Jerry forthcoming (2013) for considerations on how maps can be used in order to racialize space and reinforce notions of race/difference.
4 The Rand McNally World Atlas of 1929 offered a slightly more detailed version of previous colonial maps of the region from the 19th and 20th centuries. See bibliography for citation information.
tools, I decided to take a chance and hope that local and public transportation combined with the local tradition of hospitality would suffice.

Armed with nothing more than my backpacks and a few Nature Valley granola bars, I set out to find these communities that I had heard so much about. The problem, you see, is that no one could give me any specific details of where exactly I might find these communities of “negros”. Was I to look on the outskirts of the main Isthmus centers? Or, perhaps, I should explore the many tiny communities within the coastal jungle? I decided that it would be worth my while to do both. I arrived in Juchitan, and decided to ask around to see what I could find. Most of the people that I spoke to were willing to humor my inquiries, even though they had no interest in my “expedition”. Others gave me invaluable information, or so I thought, that would lead me to these communities just a little further down the main highway. Strangely, I also encountered this same phenomenon of locating (or perhaps dislocating) Blackness in the Costa Chica, the legitimate “negro region” of Oaxaca\(^5\), where many African descendants often told me I could find “real Black” folks in some town just up the road, but, more about this phenomenon in a later chapter. After referring to my copy of the outdated map, I decided that I would hop a bus and stop at the numerous communities that littered the highway and see what I could find out about my “long lost Blacks”.

Ultimately, this trip ended in what I would then interpret as failure. I ended up in a small town by the name of San Francisco Viejo, inhabited by the few remaining Juave speakers of the region. Needless to say, there were no signs of the long lost Black community, or public

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\(^5\) Within a cultural context, Oaxaca is known for having at least 8 distinct cultural regions. These cultural regions are promoted within the yearly Guelaguetza festival, as discussed in chapter 3. Within this context, the “costa region” is recognized as home to Oaxaca’s African descendant population. This population is referred to by the generic term “costeños” in most cases, a term that allows for a racial ambiguity that can work to both include and exclude African Descendants.
accommodations, in this small town or any other that I stopped through on this trip. I was lucky enough to meet an older fisherman in the town who knew of a family that had migrated to the United States. He told me that their unfinished house was available and said that I could set up camp inside the cement shell and make use of the "hamacas" that had been set up in the empty rooms. I purchased a few fish from the fisherman and as his wife prepared them for dinner. That night we talked about the loss of his language, the United States, and my motivation for arriving to his town.

As we talked, I was reminded of how silly my story appeared to him. Traveling the coast, looking for some kind of sign of African descendants, and ultimately getting stranded in a small town. It seemed more likely to him that I was an “illegal” immigrant from Central America, trying to stay under the radar as I made the dangerous journey up the Mexican coast towards a final destination of California in “el Norte”. I explained to him that this was not the case, and that I truly was an anthropologist, doing research in the region. Ironically, until this point, I had been making my way southward along the coast, as my (im)migrant counterparts would be making their way northward along the coast. Still unbelieving, my new fisherman friend chose to leave the issue alone. But, never did his belief that I originated from Central America stop him from offering me the upmost hospitality and the meager resources that he had at his disposal.

I had experienced the same thing earlier that day. When trying to secure transportation to the small town of San Francisco Viejo, I was accused of being an “illegal” from Central America. I explained to my accuser, the owner of a small “tiendita” in the area, that I was from California, and looking to arrive in San Francisco Viejo in order to continue up the shoreline to the main town of Salina Cruz. He responded by telling me, “you mean you want to get to
California.” Despite my best attempts to convince this man that I was from California, putting on my best Californian accent and speaking English, he would not allow himself to be fooled. But, again, he did not try to impede my journey in anyway, and gave me the information I needed to make it to the small town where the water met the land and I could encounter a “Lancha” (Mexican Spanish term for speedboat) in order to continue up the coast.

So, then, the idea of myself as an illegal immigrant from some country in Central America was not shocking when my fisherman friend in San Francisco Viejo also accused me of being Centro Americano. Could it be that the rumors of Blackness that I had heard about were a side effect of the silent callings of the United States that landed on the hopeful ears of the many Afro-Central Americans that attempt to make the journey northwards every year to the United States? Both the elder fisherman, and my store owning accuser, were willing to become accomplices in my “illegal” journey northwards. They even warned me of the dangers that would inevitably come along with such an expedition. They had told me of the many Central Americans that were taken advantage of along the way: robbed, and beaten, and even killed. Just a week before, there had been a group of immigrants, perhaps Salvadorans, that found themselves in danger in the rough seas right off the coast, when the small launch that they were traveling in capsized, and at least half of their party had drowned. One member of the group, a Black woman it was said, was seen coming out of the water modestly and unsuccessfully trying to cover her naked body as she asked for help from one of the locals.

It seemed to me, that this story was related to me from “a friend of a friend” after taking on the usual proportions of any rumor or tall tale. However, the view of myself as an illegal Central American immigrant, shared by a number of people that I met along the way, perhaps including the federal police that would later search my luggage and ask for my official
documents, sheds light on a larger regional discourse (Lomnitz, 1999 and 2001) on race and origins. The discourse of Blackness in the Isthmus region of Oaxaca is one of illegalness and foreign-ness, due to the many Black Central Americans that attempt to clandestinely make their way along the coast to the U.S./Mexico border. It is somewhat ironic, that this same discourse of foreign-ness and illegality is also found in the Costa Chica region of Oaxaca, which is located a mere six hour bus ride up the coast. I also found myself “chasing” Blackness once again, in the Costa Chica region when I returned in 2011.

Although, the people in the region would often times admit to being descended from Africanos, they would politely explain to me, that if it was “Blacks” I was looking for, I would have more success if I were to travel a little further up the road to another town, such as Santo Domingo Armenta, El Azufre, Corralero, or Collantes where I would undoubtedly find “gente negra, negra”. Part of the issue here, was that Blackness in this case was defined as skin color, rather than an ethnic or cultural category. Also, the stigma of being referred to as “negro”, often times pushes people who would be classified this way due to their skin color to deflect this moniker by explaining that there exists people “Blacker/mas negro” than they are in some other town or region. So, then, it was for these reasons that I found myself chasing Blackness in the Costa Chica region, much in the same manor that I was chasing the concept in the Isthmus region. And, it was for this reason that developing a methodology for my dissertation project was so vexing.

In 2011, this time funded by a Fulbright Garcia-Robles Scholarship, I returned to Oaxaca again in order to do long term field research in the Costa Chica, and I decided to follow up on

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Ironic because the region is known, almost mythically, for being home to negros. However, negros entering and exiting the region can be scrutinized through “legal inspections” in a way that questions their local origins and ultimately authentic national belonging. See Lucila’s narrative later in this chapter for one example.
my 2008 trip to the Isthmus of Tehuantepec to further explore my understanding of the regional approach to the discourse on Blackness. Again, I was confronted with the notion of foreign-ness and illegality. In the city of Oaxaca I had been cautioned by long time mentor Jack Corbett, that I should be careful due to the drug trafficking activity and kidnapping of immigrants that had been rumored to be taking place in the region\footnote{See Goett (2011) for a discussion of how narcotics trafficking is seized upon to apply a discourse of illegality to Blacks in Central America.}. While I did not experience any difficulty due to drug trafficking cartels while in the Isthmus region, I was once again accused of attempting to make the treacherous journey from Central America to the United States. One man that I met, a Columbian that had lived in Los Angeles, California, for many years and now made his home in Oaxaca due to deportation after a drug raid, would not be convinced that I was from California. I explained to him that I was an anthropologist, and doing research on identity politics and the burgeoning Black movement in the Costa Chica. I once again attempted to prove my origins by speaking with my best English Californian accent (a strategy that I would also employ in the Costa Chica to disprove my supposed African origins). He explained to me that my Spanish accent did not sound like any Mexican dialect that he knew of, and thought it was from Central America. He explained my fluency in English by reminding me that, “many Central American countries, such as Panama and Costa Rica, had a tradition of speaking English.” Although I could not convince him that I was not an “illegal”, he offered me firewood and a place to pitch my tent for the night, as well as a meal of seafood soup that his friend and landlord had made that evening. He even offered to hire a “lancha” for my passage across the lagoon, and said that we could leave later that evening. Remembering the Central American woman mentioned above and thinking about my own personal safety, I accepted his hospitality, with the caveat that we would leave in the lancha the next morning. When I arrived at the other end of the lagoon I was
told how to find public transportation to the main town of Juchitan. But, I was cautioned by another group of locals that I might not want to take this route as I would undoubtedly be asked for my papers by the Federal Police when we crossed paths, a situation in which I found myself in 2008, when I had mistakenly left my passport in Oaxaca City.

This last experience in the Isthmus region of Oaxaca solidified my understanding of conflicting regional discourses on race. While the idea of Blackness, and my own physical Blackness, did not seem to invoke any thoughts or attitudes about racism, it was perceived as a foreign-ness that was labeled illegal. Everyone I met was willing to help me, even if some tried to exploit what he or she perceived to be my situation. One man in San Francisco Viejo even offered to take me across the lagoon for the “affordable” price of $2000MX per person, assuming that I was a scout for a larger party of illegally traveling Central American immigrants. He explained that there was room for 14 in his small launch. The trip also solidified the understanding that the small Black movement in the Costa Chica to gain statewide and federal recognition still had plenty of work to do, as the discourse on Blackness in El Istmo was employed in a different manner than the one found in the Costa Chica. Even though this region lay less than a six-hour bus ride up the Pacific coast, Blackness, as a symbol, did not share the same meaning between the regions, and therefore invoked a completely different public conversation.

In the Costa Chica, Lucila, a friend and informant, explained to me that after leaving the country she was almost denied re-entry due to the Mexican immigration official’s perception of her as a foreigner. She explained to them that she was from Charco Redondo, a small town in the Costa Chica, but the immigration officials who continued to accuse her of faking her passport met her explanation with suspicion and accusations. She was informed that there are no
“negros” in Mexico. This is another example of the notions of illegality and foreign-ness that are attached to both the public and official discourses of Blackness in the larger nation state. Interestingly, these discourses work to keep Blackness contained within some regions, the Costa Chica for example, while simultaneously excluding Blackness from other regions, the Isthmus of Tehauntepec as another example. In this way we can see that Blacks’ claims to citizenship are contested in a number of ways, as they are only “allowed” to exist in limited sanctioned geographical regions.

What, then, does this drawn out vignette have to do with the issue of methodology as suggested by the title of this chapter? The vignette highlights the difficulties of developing a methodology for researching any aspect of Blackness beyond those elements imposed upon the population by the investigator, or by any other outside element or institution. The fact of Blackness (Fanon 1967), then, may indeed be a social fact in any region affected by the colonial importation of African enslaved individuals or within any former colonial power dealing with immigration of African descendants. However, the meaning and manner by which we utilize this fact in developing methodologies for the study of the experience of race must be dependent upon regional definitions and experiences of this fact. One thing that the regions did share was an idea that Blackness was not rooted (Gilroy, 1993, Greene, 2007) within the respective regions. While Blackness was to be found in the Costa Chica, it was something that could be better exemplified, or perhaps personified, in some other town always a bit further down the road. While in the Isthmus, Blackness could be found traveling through the region, originating from another point found outside of the country. I had encountered both of these discourses in previous field trips to both the Isthmus and the Costa Chica region. So, then, the task of developing my methodology became a difficult endeavor.
Originally I thought that I would visit the Costa Chica and locate myself in a Black town, where I would do ethnographic fieldwork on the development of the “Black Movement”. But, this was complicated by the fact that Blackness was something that continued to move. In the past, when I had arrived to a place asking questions about the political expression of Blackness or the political identification of Blackness, I would be directed to another site, a place where someone else would undoubtedly be able to better demonstrate these actions for me. While many people agreed that there were similar cultural elements shared within the region\(^8\), the negative historical and cultural stigma associated with Blackness precluded many from taking ownership of this concept. While many have discussed the cultural elements binding the community within the region (Vaughn, 2001 and Lewis, 2000, 2001, and 2006), an ethnography of the actual process of a racial awakening has proved to be more difficult. I think this difficulty lies in the challenges presented by an ethnographic approach to the actual idea of “process”.

Much of the work done within the Costa Chica relies on the use of the notion of the ethnographic present. This notion takes for granted the idea that there is an established entity to research. I think that ethnographic work by anthropologists such as Vaughn, Lewis, and others highlights this approach. The idea has been that we can arrive in a place and take a snapshot of a group of African descendants, or “Blacks”, and then use this material to elaborate on the story (historical and theoretical development) of the larger Diaspora. In many cases, the assumption of Blackness is made or applied to a group of people, and then the work is conducted accordingly (I will draw on a few examples that have made this approach the standard model further in this chapter, but for now I want to elaborate on the switch in perspective that I am arguing for).

\(^8\)A number of local dance traditions highlight this process; see Vaughn 2001 for one example.
What to do, however, if the process of laying a foundation for “becoming” (Hall, 1994) is still taking place?

I do not mean to argue that racial and ethnic identities are static once they have been established, but what I do mean to demonstrate is that there is a process of racial identity construction underway in the Costa Chica, and for this reason a snapshot of the ethnographic present is less helpful than an ethnography of that process of becoming. This approach brings to light the changing value of the concept of race and the usefulness that people apply to the concept. It highlights the fact that race can still be something that people must negotiate, and that the assumption, or fact (Fanon, 1967), of Blackness is a dangerous endeavor that can completely distort our view of a group of people. The process of negotiation points to the creation of a community as possibly the conglomeration of multiple events (see Lugo, 2008, p. 257n2 on “event”). Looking at particular events, and the ways that groups and individuals strategically approach these events can help shed light on the actual process of community construction and racial subject formation. Therefore, my research methodology regarding the Costa Chica would have to be different than a methodology designed for an ethnography of some culturally “Black” community in the United States, Brazil, or Jamaica, where a racial foundation and identity had previously been developed. I am aware that I am not the first to attempt a serious ethnography of process (M. Rosaldo, 1980, R. Rosaldo, 1989), as this ethnography is

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9 I acknowledge that the process of “becoming” is one that remains in motion. But, it is important to consider that this process leads in a number of directions (perhaps infinite) depending upon the reference point that the process draws upon. This means that the directions for development are dependent upon the foundations from which they draw support. So, then, tracing the process of becoming requires recognition of a particular foundation and context for the process of becoming. While the context of becoming within the push for political Blackness in Mexico is clear, the foundations that this process will draw upon are less clear and complicate issues of methodologies used for tracing the process and future possibilities in the Mexican case.
directly informed by the tradition of processual anthropology. But, I think that this approach to ethnography is still being experimented with in regards to studies of race due to the taken for granted nature of race and racial value. This is the epiphany that I had while conducting my research in 2011 as I struggled with a previously designed methodology that I had intuitively never fully committed to. The struggle, then, was to figure out a methodological approach that would allow for an ethnography of the process of becoming.

Much of my methodological concerns have come from the reading of older ethnographies such as those written by Zora Neal Hurston, Melville Herskovits, and the early work of W.E.B. Du Bois. While never explicitly stated, these ethnographies started on an assumption that there was a particular “something” to be studied. Zora Neal Hurston, for example, in 1935 returns to her own community to research folktales and the narratives of a culture (Blackness) that she knows to exist based on her own participation within the community (Hurston, 1992). Melville Herskovits (1934) points his attention to such places as Suriname to develop his understanding of cultural survivals, which he would also apply to the “American Negro”. And, before all of this, Du Bois (1903) gives us a portrait of the American Black in the Southern United States in his work on the “Souls of Black Folk”.

To be clear, my intention here is not to be-little the labor or the important and groundbreaking work that the three above mentioned authors were responsible for. Rather, I chose these works as examples of the ways in which a particular perspective was useful in approaching a methodology of the African Diaspora. In all three of the above-mentioned works, an assumption regarding Blackness was made and operated upon. The assumption being that Blackness was a fact to be explored. I feel that important works such as these helped to establish a methodological norm, taken from a broader anthropological practice/tradition, which was then
applied to communities throughout the African Diaspora (Beltran, 1958, 1976, Lewis, 2001, 2006, Vaughn, 2001). However, the Costa Chica forces us to interrogate this assumption and ask new questions about the notion, application, and value of race. And, I think that this is the assumption that gave me so much trouble with my previous methodology.

One of the first questions that I had to ask myself is where and when does the idea of Blackness come about in the Costa Chica? This question is directly related to a historical approach to the construction of a racialized group of people, but it also, and maybe more importantly, focuses on the place and space of a current conception of Blackness. In this way, I found myself looking for the sites of production and transmission of Blackness. I found that these sites were to be found in different places, and were also politically charged. Take, as one example, the “consultas” organized by the CDI (Comision del Desarrollo de Indigenas) to discuss a methodology for “investigaciones” into “comunidades negras” with the broader goal of incorporating the communities into the multicultural rhetoric of the Oaxacan state and the larger nation. The “consultas” were headed up by White mestizos, apart from the official inclusion of one “morena” state worker (employed by the SAI—Secretaria de Asuntos Indigenas de Oaxaca) who had ties to an organization by the name of AFRICA, which was headed by her father, who was a White mestizo. These “consultas” were designed to ultimately categorize “las comunidades afrodescendientes de Mexico” in order to be able to "officialize" difference for the overall project of state and federal recognition. These consultas, then, were official sites of racial production, as they attempted to solidify difference, in a way that would be

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10 Propaganda distributed by the CDI (see appendix B) in 2011 clearly outlines the goals of the consultas, which use terms such as “investigaciones” and “comunidades negras” and ultimately hoped to address the problem of state recognition for the “comunidades negras” of the Costa Chica.
meaningful within a pre-existing framework of multiculturalism and spoke to state and federal discourses on Blackness.

On the other hand, we have a concert held in the town of Pinotepa Nacional (Pino), which highlighted African music and story telling, in the Spanish language, by a West African activist by the name of Sebastian Esomba, currently living in Guadalajara, Mexico. Esomba is slowly amassing pieces of African material culture for an African Museum that he is constructing in Guadalajara. He entertained the crowd in Pino by playing “West African” Music on African instruments and telling the popular West African tales, in Spanish, of his childhood. He also mixed genres and sang well-known Mexican songs in West African styles. This event was sponsored by the Black activist organizations in the region, after representatives from the SAI had introduced Esomba at a meeting between activist organizations in Cuajinicuilapa. This concert represents an unofficial site of racial production, but it is no less important, and in some ways may be more important, as it challenges state and local discourses on Blackness while remaining in the hands of Black activists as opposed to the state. In this way, these sites of racial production were politically charged. And, interestingly, both of the above-mentioned sites are potentially at risk for popular scrutiny as they incorporate outward notions of race that may not speak to the lived experiences of local inhabitants. It was these types of sites, which I will explore in-depth in later chapters, that became important in my research, more so than the location of cultural elements, in thinking about the process of racial production. Pinning down these sites of racial production and exploring the ways in which they are capitalized on and exploited in the process of racial production has to be, in my opinion, the first step towards an ethnography of Blackness within the Costa Chica.
An important part of my research was uncovering the specific institutions responsible for creating and maintaining racial relationships within Mexico and the region of the Costa Chica. Many of these institutions represent state apparatuses such as national museums and institutes such as the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH). These institutions are some of the formal bodies that promote state conceptions of race and ethnicity, and continue to be responsible for defining Blackness from the top. Other important institutions are the regional Afro-Mestizo museum (El Museo de las Culturas Afromestizas) in the Costa Chica and mutual societies, such as Mexico Negro (Black Mexico) and the US based Organizacion Afro-Mexicana (The Afro-Mexican Organization) that have been developed in order to support local communities and to capitalize on the current trend of identity politics within Mexico. These are the organizations that are responsible for defining race from the bottom and engaging with the dominant conceptions of race that have become prevalent within the nation.

As the Costa Chica is part of a larger system of migrant networks, transnational organizations are also important to the process of racial construction. One such organization within Los Angeles, California is the mutual aid society La Organizacion Afro-Mexicano (The Afro-Mexican Organization). This mutual aid society was founded in order to deal with the specific social problems and cultural issues that Costa Chican migrants face within the Los Angeles area, as well as to raise funds for community projects within the Costa Chica. Important to my focus in Los Angeles was to explore in what ways La Organizacion Afro-Mexicano interacts with Oaxacan indigenous organizations in Los Angeles and how this interaction does or does not reinforce the specific types of racial interaction and discourses that have become prevalent within Mexico and the Costa Chica region.
To see how the discourses of mestizaje and multiculturalism are manifested I employed a combination of participant observation and both short and extended open-ended interviews focusing on racial identity and experiences. Interviewees included employees and visitors to the above-mentioned institutions. Specific questions included: Have you participated in the “encuentro de los pueblos negros” (an annual meeting of Black communities in the Costa Chica)? Do you think that these meetings are important for your town, and why? How do you racially identify? What does Black mean in Mexico? What is the difference between Black and indigenous in the Costa Chica? What is the meaning of mestizo/mestizaje? And, what does it mean to be multicultural?

My initial investigations, seriously beginning in 2007, allowed me to create a spatial/ethnic map of the region. Therefore, I divided my time between several communities, including Cuajinicuilapa, El Ciruelo, Corralero, Chacahua, and Puerto Escondido, to mention a few. I focused my attention on active sites of cultural construction and transmission among Blacks within the Costa Chica. These sites included the regional Museo de Las Culturas Afro-Mestizos (Cuajinicuilapa, Gue), museum exhibits, local schools, and the local organization “Mexico Negro” (El Ciruelo, Oax). Participant observation at these sites provided a unique opportunity to understand how Blacks within the Costa Chica are internalizing or confronting contemporary processes of racialization and how historical ideologies and practices are incorporated or excluded from the construction of current racial identities. These sites also shed light on the tensions that were prevalent between generations and political actors, one of which being the signifier that should be adopted for racial identification.

While I did hold individual research interviews with several Black activists, my main focus was on the group settings that were created by the “consultas” organized by the CDI and
the meetings between the Black Activist groups within the Costa Chica. I have treated these meetings as group interviews, and gained permission from the groups to record the sessions. I feel that the group setting was more important to the overall project of an ethnography that focused on process, and used the individual interviews to elaborate on questions that came from these “group interviews”. During my most recent stay in Oaxaca, from which the large majority of this information comes, this process involved over 50 people throughout a period of 10 months, and geographically spanned from the city of Oaxaca to the small Costa Chica towns of Guerrero.

When I arrived in the Costa Chica during 2011, I realized that my then current methodological approach put me in a position where I would continue to “chase Blackness”. What follows, is an attempt to simultaneously incorporate what we have learned from the past, while taking it back and starting fresh from the beginning. The current political movement in the Costa Chica gives us a unique chance to re-evaluate our understanding of race, and the ways that people are forced to re-invent the concept in changing eras. In some ways, African descendants are also chasing Blackness, as they attempt to re-invent the value that this concept has traditionally held, and to make new sense of a pre-existing racial economy.
A central question informing my research is the following: in times when specific racial and ethnic experiences and locations are under-valued in many societies (U.S., Latin America, and the Caribbean) why do a number of marginalized groups continue to organize around racial and ethnic identities? My own experiences as a Black man within the United States not only inform my own perspective on the political possibilities of race and ethnicity, but also inform my own understanding of the “value”, or negative value (or perhaps dis-value), that can be extracted from such racialized identities. While some might argue (especially in pop-culture) that we are currently coming into an era in which racial experiences are becoming less salient and are increasingly being overshadowed by class-based experiences\footnote{See Hall 1980 for a discussion of the danger of an over-reliance on the notion of class and/or historical materialist approaches to race.}, my own sense tells me that the notion of race is as powerful as ever and continues to be an important category by which many people make sense of their own lives (Essed and Goldberg, 2002).

This process of making sense has at least two sides to it. One side can be represented by the way that racialized peoples continue to locate themselves within a framework of race. By this I mean to highlight the ways that racialized people continue to internalize the many categories imposed upon them in their daily lives. The process of imposition can represent the other side of the racial coin. That is to say, many people continue to subsume people of color into the many racial categories that help them to define their own dominant place with the broader nation state. In this way, the continued use of racial categories to define the “other” allow for the continued dominance of Whiteness as an unmarked social location/position. We can take this latter consideration even further, as processes of globalization (Loomba, 1998 and
Loomba, Kaul, Bunzl, Burton, and Esty, 2005) have allowed for the sharing of values that have been placed upon racial categories within the many different regions of the world. By using the term value here, I intend to bring attention to the way in which race is seen to fit within a larger system of exchange, whether economic, social, cultural, or political.

I have chosen to refer to this larger system of exchange as a racial economy. By using the term racial economy I do not mean to refer to the way in which the fiscal or monetary economy makes use of the physical manifestation of the notion of race. Undoubtedly, a monetary economy in the United States does exist around the manifestation of race. We can see examples of specific markets centered on racial groups, such as a hair care market directed at US Blacks (Stilson, 2009), as a good example of the way that a monetary economy makes use of race. Another, more profound example, might be the way in which racial groups have found a particular niche within certain job markets. The common fetishization of undocumented Mexican migrant workers (as well as the stereotype of Mexicans in general) as ideal labor for the landscaping and larger agricultural industry in many parts of the US, or the similar fetishization of Filipina women as being better suited for the nursing industry (Manalansan, 2010), serve as real examples of the ways that the economy can often times exploit racial positions and categories. Often times these stereotypes begin to work as a hegemonic mechanism that defines a particular individual’s, as well as entire populations’, “natural” place within the larger national economy. This may also work on a regional level, as niches may be filled by other racial groups according to the availability and access to particular pockets of racialized labor. In my own experience in the fast food industry in San Diego, California, the fast food industry can be seen as dominated by Latino populations. But, in some Mid-Western small towns, such as
Champaign-Urbana, the fast food industry can be seen as largely dependent upon African American labor.

The above-mentioned examples serve as a good demonstration of the ways that monetary economies may exploit the notion of race, and how this exploitation may take different shapes and be dependent upon a number of different regional factors (race being one of several). However, this approach of looking at the monetary economy and the ways in which it exploits the notion of race would be best referred to, in my understanding, as a political economy of race, or even better a racialized economy, rather than an actual racial economy. It is my intention here to layout my understanding of a racial economy, one that allows for the trading of the notion of race in a more dynamic way, in a way that allows for individuals and communities to make use of race in a way that is not simply defined from the top by such monoliths as national and local monetary economies and governments, but in a way that may also be partially conceived from the bottom. This approach takes into account the historical notion and traditions of race in any given region and traces the ways in which these traditions culminate and are incorporated into a larger system of exchange that is under constant negotiation by those on the top and the bottom through which real people then extract both real and symbolic value. Undoubtedly, the monetary economy has to play a part in this understanding of a racial economy, but a strict focus on the monetary economy does not help us theorize the ways that individuals and communities continue to help define and extract meaning from the notion of race. Nor does it help us understand why the concept of race itself continues to be as salient as ever in private and public discourse, even as we consciously continue to attempt to abolish the notion itself. For this reason I use the term racial economy to highlight the way that race is used by those at the bottom to participate in a system of trade that depends upon racial exchange value, and to get to the underlying form of
racial relations that continue to define (on a regional as well as global scale) our modern human condition.

It would help here to lay out a brief discussion of different concepts of value and the ways that these concepts may be applied to a notion of race, and more specifically, a notion of racial value. In her 1998 article, Shelly Kagan takes on the dominant philosophical tradition of approaching “intrinsic value” as depending solely upon intrinsic properties. I think that this discussion can be useful to an understanding of racial value, as many utilize the notion of race as one that has a static and real “intrinsic value”. Kagan argues, however, that “intrinsic value may be based in part on relational properties”, and that “we should even be open to the possibility that an object’s intrinsic value may sometimes depend (in part) on its instrumental value” (Kagan, 1998, p. 277). This is not the place to open or continue a deep debate about the notion and existence of value itself. But, I think that Kagan’s evaluation of intrinsic value is a good start at understanding the ways that the meanings and value of race shift over historical periods and can therefore be useful in specific ways according to the changing relationship of different social, cultural, and political factors. Kagan’s consideration of intrinsic value also allows us to understand why it is that generations may have a different understanding of the meaning or value of race, even while they all continue to steadfastly place real value on the concept itself.

Kagan begins her analysis by explaining that the term intrinsic value may be philosophical jargon, however she argues that when “philosophers introduce the term ‘intrinsic value’ they are attempting to provide a label for a concept that does occur in ordinary thought, even if it occurs implicitly and without common label” (Ibid). I argue that the concept of race is so ingrained in modern history, that we utilize the concept within a system of exchange (racial economy), much in the way that Kagan argues that the use of the concept intrinsic value is
commonplace, even as most laymen would not agree to employing such terms as racial value or racial economy. In this way, the concept of race is assigned an intrinsic value that is simultaneously instrumental and context dependent.

While people may not consciously “believe” in an intrinsic value of race, they often times operate according to such an understanding. This understanding of intrinsic value is very useful in the formation of individual and collective identities and projects of personal worth and value\(^\text{12}\). But, such a notion of intrinsic value blurs our view of the way that race is traded for real social and political gains within particular historical eras (our current neo-liberal/multicultural era serves as one example) and continues to reinforce understandings of the essential qualities of race. For this reason, popular and political campaigns to eradicate the concept of race continue to fall victim to our unconscious understandings of race as intrinsically valuable; valuable independently of all other objects (Kagan, 1998), or possessing a type of final value (Olson, 2004). Highlighting the existence of a racial economy explicitly demonstrates that race, while being valuable on a personal or community level, has a broader, and I would argue more important, relational value or instrumental value, which makes particular racial locations only valuable with relation to something else when inserted into a certain system. This aforementioned system would be what I refer to as a racial economy. It might be argued that the continued privileging and domination of an unmarked Whiteness, or a “taken for granted”

\(^{12}\text{Take for example my preliminary research on first experiences with the word “nigger” as a racial epithet. This preliminary research suggests that the word “nigger” can be used among some to define personal and group capital (Bourdieu, 1986) by defining Whiteness against the term “nigger” and therefore defining Blackness in general. In this way, the word “nigger” is used strategically within a larger racial economy and can also be used to discipline others as well as to create a particular racial value for “niggers” and “non-niggers” within a racial economy. This same phenomenon may not work in reverse as Blacks try to appropriate the word in its self-inclusive form; i.e. “nigga”. While these attempts may not be as successful I think that the attempts themselves still try to draw value from the same pre-existing racial economy.}
foundational logic of white supremacy within modernity and modern discourse (West, 2002), is the motor and key to the prevailing existence of regional and global racial economies. However, my focus here is to theorize the existence of such economies and the way that these economies continue to spur resistance and subject-hood through racial politics and the practice of diaspora (Edwards, 2003, Manalansan, 2003, Ortner, 2006, Rosaldo, 1993).

The notion of race as intrinsically valuable has laid a foundation for the exploitation of racialized groups throughout history as well as the persistence of colonial logics regarding race and difference within modern discourse (Bhabba, 2004). A lucent example is the way that “Black” became synonymous with the noun slave and the broader social location that the noun specifically referenced. We can take for example the way in which the Spaniards created social systems within the Americas as they began their full-scale colonial projects. For the sake of a well lubricated bureaucracy, the Spaniards created two separate republics, one Spanish and one Indigenous (Poole, 2004). This system left many of the pre-existing indigenous forms of governance intact. This system also facilitated the easy extraction of resources from indigenous communities, using the pre-existing indigenous noble class as new foremen and overseers of indigenous labor. But, what of the many Blacks that were brought to the new world? These Blacks were seen, because of the racialization process, as a class of slave labor, a class that did not merit its own republic and therefore remained intimately tied to the Spanish republic. In this way we can see two types of value placed upon the racialized position of Blackness. On the one hand we have an intrinsic value placed on the racial position of Black, where there was a one-to-one correlation between the nouns Black and Slave. This meant that at one point, the definitions of both nouns were interchangeable, and that most often to be one meant to be the other.

Undeniably there are examples of the way that both Blacks and Spaniards bucked this system,
such as the ability for a freed Black to buy a certificate of Whiteness (Keating, 1995, Vinson and Restall, 2009) that officially allowed him to ascend the racial ladder. However, the existence of this “escape hatch” (Hooker, 2005, Safa, 2005), helped to reinforce the actual racial hierarchy and maintain the intrinsic value placed on the racial category of Black. Also, the process of mestizaje, which I will discuss in depth in chapter three, blurred the racial boundaries even further. Yet, the intrinsic value placed upon the Black racial category remained, and created a system in which Black blood would forever taint the social location of any mixed person who was known, phenotypically or genetically, to be of African descent, even within a social hierarchy that embraced mestizaje. In this manner, the intrinsic value placed upon the racial category of Black helped to set up a racial economy that would reverberate through the ages within Latin America, and can still be seen to operate in our modern times.

The value of Blackness could also be seen to work in another way during these early stages of the development colonial machine. As stated earlier, the Spaniards did not create or allow for a separate republic for Blacks within the colonies. These Blacks were not allowed to maintain any form of self-government, and were intimately tied to the Spanish, as both slaves and as a marker of a broader Spanish social location. I would not go as far as to push the notion of social death as outlined by Patterson (1982), as a number of scholars have painted elaborate pictures of the vibrant communities and social networks created by Blacks within the colonial period in Latin America and elsewhere (Bennett, 2003, Gomez, 1998, Price, 1973, Vinson, 2001, Von Germatin, 2006), but Blackness remained tied to Spanish-ness in a way that created a type of conditional value for both Black and Spanish. Many Spaniards would flaunt their ability to own slaves, and would even dress their slaves in a manner that overtly displayed their wealth and power (Carroll, 2001). This connection between Black and Spanish created a situation where
Black was often used as a way to define Spanish. And therefore, being Black meant to be simultaneously Spanish and non-Spanish. Spanish in the sense that Black was related to a broader Spanish system through the position of servitude, and slave labor; non-Spanish, in the sense that to be Black meant that an individual was socially everything that Spanish was not. In this way a foundational dialectic was constructed in which the racial position of Black helped to define the racial position and social location of Spanish. In fact, this argument can also be relevant to other Castas, perhaps apart from Criollo. Here we see the manner in which the intrinsic value of race (in this case Black) became relational when placed within a broader social system. The legacy of this broader social system can be seen in the manifestation of the racial economy that currently operates throughout Latin America.

The example outlined above can also be theoretically helpful in highlighting the ways that racial economies have been crafted throughout the globe. This helps to explain the ways that the notion of Black can be seen to have dissimilar value in different regions, yet continue to be salient and meaningful within local and global systems of exchange. In the conclusion of this dissertation I will give an example of the ways that regional racial economies may collide at the US/Mexico border, and the ways that im/migrants attempt to navigate these differing racial economies by employing such practices as Diaspora, itself a practice that may rely on over stated notions of intrinsic racial value. But, for now I would like to remain on the topic of value, and offer a brief consideration of the notion of negative value.

Important to this conversation on value and exchange is the consideration of the lack of value. I feel that the notion of negative value can best be used to capture the way in which a specific location can actually decrease an individual’s economic, social, or cultural capital. I would not argue that there is no value in negative value, but rather, negative value allows for a
particular location within a larger hierarchy or system of relations. I argue that race can be positively or negatively valuated depending on the situation and larger political structure in which an individual operates at any given time\(^{13}\). It is this process of valuation within particular systems of exchange that I mean to capture with the term “racial economy”. The remainder of this chapter will focus on this concept, “racial economy” and will attempt to unpack this term.

Eric Wolf argued that, “the world of humankind constitutes a manifold, a totality of interconnected processes, and inquiries that disassemble this totality into bits and then fail to reassemble it falsify reality” (Wolf, p. 03). This chapter as a whole is my attempt at drafting a theoretical framework to understand how race is embedded, in the sense highlighted by Granovetter (1985), within local, regional, national and global systems of exchange (monetary and social). And to understand how attempts to look at these “economies” as a disconnected set of relations falsifies our racial reality, and overlooks the ways that historic processes and relations between peoples and nation states currently dictate the ways that their respective populations are organized, and attempt to organize, within contemporary social orders. It is also my intention to explore how race (and by extension ethnicity and other forms of difference) begins to operate within its own system of exchange or economy, taking on particular forms of value according to a number of different contexts (Ortner, 2006). In this way I am attempting to bridge the gap between the past and the racialized present and explore the processes responsible for turning the “then” into our current understanding of the racialized “now”.

\(^{13}\) See Lugo, 2008, chapter 8 for an example of the way in which racial hierarchies articulate with gender and create a type of negative value for darker skin within the nightclub scene, and in popular culture in general, in Ciudad Juarez along the U.S./Mexico border. Also see Rosas 2011 for an example of the way in which the process of racialization negatively positions transient youth along the U.S./Mexico border.
Recently I took part in a discussion in which Karl Marx’s use of the term slave to refer to wage laborers invoked a philosophical conversation regarding the reasons that wage labor and slavery were incomparable. In a discussion of wage labor as commodity, Marx argues, “the slave did not sell his labour to the slave-owner, any more than the ox sells its services to the peasant. The slave, together with his labour, is sold once and for all to his owner. He is a commodity which can pass from the hand of the owner to that of another, he himself is a commodity, but the labor is not his commodity” (Marx, p. 251).

While the slave is a commodity, he/she is maintained as property by the slave owner, receiving the bare minimum from the slave owner in order to sustain life. The wageworker on the other hand is responsible for their own livelihood through the sale of his labor and, as Marx argues, “cannot leave the whole class of purchasers, that is, the capitalist class, without renouncing his existence” (Ibid). Marx goes on to argue that the wage laborer “belongs not to this or that capitalist, but to the capitalist class, and, moreover, it is his business to dispose of himself, that is, to find a purchaser within the capitalist class” (Ibid).

This distinction between the slave and the wage laborer seem to be clear enough. The slave is tied to the slave owner as a commodity, that is, a good purchased on the market for his/her particular use-value. Use-value here refers to the actual value of the “thing” as a commodity. For Marx, a use-value only had value in the actual use of a particular commodity. This value is only realized through consumption (Marx, 1979). This is not the same as an understanding of instrumental value, which is seen as beneficial as a means towards obtaining something else. The wage laborer on the other hand must exchange his/her labor in order to purchase commodities on the market in order to sustain the laborers life. If the distinction
between the wage laborer and the slave were so easily discernable then why would Marx use the
term slave in order to describe the wage laborer? I believe that the answer to this question goes
beyond the simple use of the term as a rhetorical tool in order to condemn the capitalist system.
In the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 Marx explains, “Whilst the division of
labor raises the productive power of labor and increases the wealth and refinement of society, it
impoverishes the worker and reduces him to a machine. Whilst labor brings about the
accumulation of capital and with this the increasing prosperity of society, it renders the worker
ever more dependent on the capitalist, leads him into competition of a new intensity, and drives
into the headlong rush of over-production, with its subsequent corresponding slump” (Marx, p. 71). Later in a lecture in 1847, Marx directly makes the connection between the wage laborer
and the slave. Marx writes,

“To say that the worker has an interest in the rapid growth of capital is only to say
that the more rapidly the worker increases the wealth of others, the richer will be
the crumbs that fall to him, the greater the number of the workers that can be
employed and called into existence, the more can the mass of slaves dependent on
capital be increased” (Marx, p. 262).

Perhaps Marx used the term “slave” as a metaphor in order to discuss the way that the wage
laborer becomes dependent on the capitalist system, a vicious cycle that does not allow for the
wage laborer to retreat from the system without risking his/her very existence. This is similar to
the plight of the slave, at least within the system then employed in the colonies, where the slave
had no control over their own life beyond the acceptance and obeisance of the slave master, and where the withdrawal of the slave from the system might be seen as a type of self-destruction\textsuperscript{14}.

As Marx’s analytical and theoretical frameworks were being formed during the same moment at which many countries in Latin America and the Caribbean were gaining their independence and formally outlawing slavery, it is quite possible that these events, such as the birth of the Haitian republic, informed Marx’s own inquiry or at least his use of the slave metaphor. While thinking about this temporal connection I began to think through the similarities and differences between the enslaved and the wage laborer and became frustrated with the subtle nuances that technically distinguished the institution of slavery from that of a system of wage labor. I then realized that maybe we, those of us involved in the above mentioned discussion, were asking, if not the wrong question, then at least one of lesser importance. I think the question that we should have been asking at this point within the discussion was not whether the wage laborer could be referred to as a slave or whether or not the institution of slavery could be seen to be a form of capitalism but, rather, how and in what ways the system of slavery may have informed the then emerging, as well as our current, organization of capitalism? This latter question does not assume that there is a strict temporal break between the two systems, but rather that one system informed (socially, culturally, politically, economically) the next (Mintz, 1985). This approach pushes us to think about the ways that the enslaved were incorporated into the emerging capitalist system, whether as freed men with access to their own labor or through some other type of coercion.

\textsuperscript{14} Again, I do not suggest a situation such as that discussed by Patterson (1982) through his concept of social death. I recognize the opportunity and perhaps even necessity for social connections that would have been available to the enslaved. What I mean to draw attention to is the real physical danger presented as a consequence of withdrawing oneself from the master-slave (and slave-master) relationship during this period.
In The Forms of Capital, Pierre Bourdieu states, “The social world is accumulated history, and if it is not to be reduced to a discontinuous series of instantaneous mechanical equilibria between agents who are treated as interchangeable particles, one must reintroduce into it the notion of capital and, with it, accumulation and all its effects” (Bourdieu, p. 96).

Bourdieu’s insights on capital and accumulation are a good way to think about the transition from slavery to a wage based economy. I do not mean to argue here that the two systems were not working simultaneously among different social strata, but here my focus is on how the incorporation of newly freed slaves into a wage-based economy was accomplished, and how the institution of slavery informed this incorporation. It would be naïve to imagine that once the enslaved of the many different colonies were freed they found themselves in a situation where the economic and social playing field had been leveled. Rather, it is more likely that the newly freed slaves found themselves in a world in which they carried the same social stigma, if not intensified by the White fear/resistance surrounding emancipation, as they had when they were enslaved. That is, a racial value had already been created. And, through a type of accumulation, this racial value had particular meanings to a system of exchange within the developing mode of production: a shifting and newly conceived form of Capitalism.

Bourdieu argues that capital is accumulated labor. In a strict economic sense then, the newly freed slaves did not possess economic capital due to the system in which they previously found themselves, where they were not able to own their own labor. But, we can look at the social stigma placed upon the newly freed as accumulated social capital, or even inherited

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15 See Wolf’s (1982) discussion of the way in which the capitalist, tributary, and kinship, modes of production could be seen to exist simultaneously, the latter two existing on the periphery or unincorporated margins, in Europe and Asia during the early development of the capitalist mode of production in Western Europe.
property\(^{16}\) (Sachar and Hirschl, 2007), accumulated/inherited throughout the years of enslavement and given a specific value within a broader social and economic system. I think that a question that has to be asked is how was this capital put to work, either by the newly freed or by the larger society in which they found themselves? If we agree with Bourdieu that, “the structure of the distribution of the different types and subtypes of capital at a given moment in time represents the immanent structure of the social world…determining the chances of success for practices” (Bourdieu, p. 97), then we must agree that the social capital accumulated at this point did not hold much positive value, at least in the sense that freed persons could transform this social capital into broader economic support. In fact, this social capital accumulated throughout the many years and generations must be seen as a form of negative capital, and therefore offering negative value. I find it interesting that while those possessing the experiences and mark of slavery must have experienced this accumulated capital as negative capital, those that had once found themselves within the position of slave master had the resources and power to transform this negative capital into positive economic capital, which benefited a “master” class in an all too familiar manner. In this way the social inheritance of race worked to uphold a system of value.

According to Sydney Mintz (1985), after freedom in the British West Indies, planters’ labor problems were resolved by the importation of foreign laborers from places such as India and China and special legislation was adopted to keep freedmen from voting and acquiring land. This assured that the newly freed did not secure livelihood independent of the sugar industry and that they did not have the possibility of using collective bargaining and strikes to negotiate wages

\(^{16}\) While Sachar and Hirschl’s focus in their 2007 work is on citizenship as an inherited form of property, I think that the notion of inheritance also applies to my discussion here of the accumulation of social capital.
and working conditions (Mintz, p. 176). To use the language of Bourdieu, planters in the West Indies used their pre-existing social and cultural capital, not only to limit the mobility of the freedmen and women, but also to maintain a previous hierarchy developed through plantation slavery. This scheme, therefore, inserted others as laborers within the hierarchy, in affect solidifying the negative social capital accumulated by the newly freed through displacement and lack of access to the labor market.

George Baca (2008) notes a similar phenomenon taking place within the United States shortly after the civil war. Baca argues that, “in the aftermath of the civil war remnants of the planter class and the emerging industrial elite began refining the racial ideas to meet the new needs of industrialization and free labor” (Baca, p. 224). In this way planters and industrialists capitalized on the negative capital accumulated by Blacks throughout the long years of institutional slavery in the United States, using this negative capital to strengthen a previous hierarchy developed 300 years prior. Baca offers a specific example from North Carolina around the turn of the 20th century, where the Democratic party focused almost all of its campaign efforts on white supremacy17 in order to disenfranchise Blacks while simultaneously promoting industrial development. Black labor would become key in the development of the North Carolina region (Baca, p. 226). Baca argues,

“It is important to keep in mind that the White Supremacy campaign of 1898, and its words and violence, transcended racial hatred, and just as much represented the efforts of North Carolina’s elite to gain control of the state legislature in order to promote industrial development” (Baca, p. 226).

In this way White supremacists in North Carolina used the pre-existing value of Blackness in a

17 White Supremacy Campaign of 1898; Baca 2008 and UNC’s North Carolina Collection online database - http://www2.lib.unc.edu/ncc/1898/history.html.
way that re-enforced a previously developed hierarchy in order to benefit the planter class and emerging industrialists within the region. Remnants of this negative value can still be seen today in “economic policies that have diverted public money from Black neighborhoods, encouraged disinvesting in industrial labor, the imploding of public schools, and the expansion of prisons over the past three decades” (Baca, p. 222). I argue that not only has the current economy developed along racial lines, but the construction of a particular value, or lack there of, of race still lingers and has become responsible for the construction of a racial economy where racialization plays into a system of exchange in which the value of race is exchangeable for specific types of capital. In the conclusion I will elaborate on what this racial economy means to current attempts to politically organize on the part of Blacks and Black migrants in Mexico and the United States. But, I think it important here to return briefly to a distinction that I feel must be made between what I call a “racial economy” and what might be perceived as a “racialized economy”.

As I understand it a racialized economy highlights the ways that particular commodities are marketed to particular groups based on the perceived, stereotypical, and/or actual needs of these groups. I think that an example of this type of racialized economy could be the many personal care products that are marketed to specific groups of peoples, such as Blacks, within the United States. In this way race does have a form of value, but the value extracted from racial designations economically benefits the market directly rather than those that have been racialized themselves and serves as a mechanism to incorporate race/ethnicity into the larger market\textsuperscript{18}.

\textsuperscript{18} One counter to this could be the potential for individual investors, also representatives of the market demographic for which they develop and market products, to profit from the need/demand for personal care products for specific racialized groups. However, the profits garnered from these niche markets benefit individuals rather than the larger groups...
This could theoretically be a value-free (at least socially) form of multiculturalism, where the market capitalizes on real physical difference without assigning a particular social value to that difference.

Another example of a racialized economy comes from my own research within the Los Angeles, California area. Due to the increasing number of Oaxacan migrants within the region a number of ethnic groceries and markets have been established within the area. At the 2009 Guelageutza Popular, sponsored by the Los Angeles based organization ORO (Organizacion Regional de Oaxaca), a number of different ethnic based commodities were available for consumption. In fact, a rather large booklet, by the name of “Guia Commercial-Los Angeles-Oaxaca”, was produced in order to highlight the numerous merchants that can be found in the area that cater to the growing Oaxacan population. Within this guide one can find anything from authentic Oaxacan cheeses (queso Oaxaca and Quesillo) to money wiring services (Guia Comercial, 2009). These are just two examples of the way in which race or ethnicity is used to incorporate groups and individuals into a larger pre-existing market economy.

On the other hand, I use the term “racial economy” as a way of calling attention to the use of race/ethnicity in a way that allows for the extraction of real value in the form of social, cultural, and economic capital. In this way race itself is situated within a larger system of exchange. I think that another example of this can be drawn from the above-mentioned Guelaguetza popular. The Guelaguetza, an indigenous term originally meaning reciprocity and hospitality, is an event that is organized as a way to highlight the many cultural and geographical regions within the state of Oaxaca. These cultural regions include, La Region de Valles Centrales (Central Valley), La Region de La Sierra Norte (Northern Highlands), La Region de La...
Mixteca (Mixtec Region), and La Region de La Costa (North Western Coastal Region) to name a few. While the Guelaguetza is used as a site of cultural transmission and transformation among the community, I see this event fitting into a larger racial economy dictated by a contemporary form of multicultural politics where the broadcasting of an indigenous identity is seen to create a certain type of social, cultural, and economic capital. The Guelaguetza does indeed bring the Los Angeles Oaxacan community together, but in highlighting an active indigenous identity it serves as a sign to the larger region and state that an active indigenous population does exist and allows for a certain type of bargaining power. This indigenous identity fits within a larger multicultural politic which values indigeneity in a number of different ways, particularly within Mexico, but also in the United States, over a general mestizo or “White” identity (Stephen, 2007).

By using the term value I mean to highlight the use of the concept, in both senses, as noted by Adam Smith. According to Smith,

“the word value, it is to be observed, has two different meanings, and sometimes expresses the utility of some particular object, and sometimes the power of purchasing other goods which the possession of that object conveys” (Smith, p. 41).

Therefore, value can be seen as “use-value” and/or “exchange-value”. As Greaber notes, to understand the meaning of value one must understand its place in a larger system (Grabber, p. 14). To understand the way in which race becomes valuable within a larger system we must also think about the process of commensuration. Commensuration can be defined as the comparison of different entities according to a common metric (Espeland and Stevens, p. 313). According to Espeland and Stevens, “commensuration is no mere technical process but a fundamental feature
of social life. Commensuration as a practical task requires enormous organization and discipline that has become largely invisible to us. Commensuration is often so taken for granted that we forget the work it requires and the assumptions that surround its use…it is symbolic, inherently interpretive, deeply political…” (Espeland and Stevens, p. 315). The work, discipline, and assumptions at play within the contemporary commensuration of race have their roots within the modern era of slavery and the contact period with the “New World” in the 15th century, where racial practices were perfected and solidified. While the legacy of racial commensuration still plays a part in a contemporary racial economy, the Guelaguetza, mentioned above, shows that racial and ethnic groups can work within the confines of a racial economy to extract new value from race and ethnicity. In this way the work and discipline at play within the process of commensuration is constantly being done, allowing for racial and ethnic groups to extract new economic value by “transforming social networks and culture into value” (Elyachar, p. 09).

Thus far, I have argued that a racial economy and, therefore, a certain racial value for Blacks (an argument that can also be applied to indigenous) was constructed with the institution of slavery and contact period in the “New World” and that a process of commensuration allows for the change and maintenance of value within this contemporary economy. I would now like to briefly turn to the specific value of Blackness for Afro-Mexicans (a problematic term which is itself context dependent) within a contemporary Mexican racial economy and attempts to re-imagine this value.

The coastal region of Oaxaca is a racially and ethnically diverse region and is home to a large number of African descendants, several indigenous groups, mestizos, and Whites a like. The region is often referred to as a “Black” region within Mexico, and is quickly becoming famous within many circles. The region is also highlighted within the Guelaguetza popular,
simply as La Costa, both in the city of Oaxaca and in the city of Los Angeles, California. The performances of the Guelaguetza are a good way to explore the way that Blackness is appropriated and given a particular value within a larger racial and ethnic hierarchy. The dances of the Costa are often highlighted within the Guelaguetza as being culturally representative of the region. One dance that is performed in the Guelaguetza festival in Oaxaca is the “Danza de Los Diablos”. This dance is practiced in many Black communities within the coastal region and is said to be, at least by many residents, representative of an African heritage. While the dance is often times presented within the festival as representative of the coast and Blackness within the region, the physical representation of Blackness is often absent within the festival. Talking with Martin, a then Los Angeles resident who has since returned to his Costa Chica community of Morelos, I found out that the dance is often times performed in the Guelaguetza by a folkloric group of mestizos rather than Blacks from the town of Pinotepa Nacional. While Blackness is symbolically represented as an ethnic element within the national landscape, its physical representation is still undervalued. In this way the Guelaguetza can play a double role, recognizing the history of Oaxaca and the historical presence of African descendants, while simultaneously rendering a contemporary presence of Blacks invisible within the state.

While Martin’s own physical appearance allows for his racial/ethnic identity to be more fluid than some, he tells me that he does identify with Blackness, as many of his family members would be considered Black or “negro” in both the US and Mexico. Martin is also a part of a dance group that practices the Danza de Los Diablos in Los Angeles, California. At the Guelaguetza Popular in Los Angeles, the Coastal region is also represented, complete with the familiar appropriation of Blackness. While Martin’s group did not perform the Danza de Los Diablos at the Los Angeles Guelaguetza, Blackness was symbolically present. Between dance
performances the folkloric groups perform skits that are supposed to be representative of the common cultural exchanges that take place within the different regions. In one skit a man was trying to convince a potential lover that he was sexually potent and would be a good romantic partner. The woman responded by saying that the only thing his penis was good for was urinating. The most interesting thing about this interaction was not the content, but the use of language within the skit. The young man referred to the young woman as “prieta” (dark one), and she referred to him as “mi negro” (my Black one). Some might argue that these terms have been adopted into a common Mexican lexicon, and are commonly used by a majority of Mexicans, even as terms of endearment, in a number of different regions and through the use of media, in particular television. But, taken within a particular regional context (Lomnitz, 2001) within the Guelaguetza, these terms take on a conspicuous racial connotation. In this way Blackness is represented at the Guelaguetza, but in a way that serves the purposes of the indigenous community. All of the performers were of “indigenous” decent (all but two that is, who visually appeared to be of Asian descent, which was later confirmed to be Korean. Their presence may be explained by the value given to multicultural education in the US), and the performances of these indigenous bodies re-enforced the contemporary notion of Oaxaca as “the indigenous state” within Mexico and allows for the Oaxacan community in Los Angeles to exploit this perception.

Though Martin did not perform at the Guelaguetza he was aware of the cultural event. Martin is the secretary of a new (at the time of this writing) organization created by Oaxacans from the Costa Chica region of Mexico, by the name of “Organizacion Afro-Mexicana”. Individuals from the Costa Chica created the Organization in order to provide support for those that remain back in the Costa Chica. The Organization has 501c3 non-profit status from the U.S.
government, and for now is strictly a U.S. organization. German Acevedo, the president of the organization, tells me that the organization is attempting to provide their home communities with medical attention and resources that the government does not provide. The organization itself gives particular insight into the way in which groups negotiate a contemporary racial economy. In a conversation with German, I asked him why organize as a “Black” organization? German responded that their original intent was not to organize around the idea of race, but instead to organize around a regional identity. After having conversations with Father Glyn Jemmot (Discussions that Father Glyn himself interprets in a dissimilar manner), a priest, political organizer, and member of the Oaxacan based group “Mexico Negro” living in Oaxaca for the last twenty years, they decided to name the organization “Organizacion Afro-Mexico”. While not all of the members would identify as Afro-Mexican or “negro” the naming of the organization points to an attempt to exploit a particular multicultural moment in which race/ethnicity is given a particular value and invokes a particular type of capital. It is my opinion that this strategy is a direct response to the success of indigenous organizing around ethnicity within Mexico during the past decades. The Organizacion Afro-Mexico group, and others like it in Mexico, demonstrate how the contemporary negative value of Blackness within Mexico is being challenged and is now in the process of being re-imagined. The re-valuation of Blackness could be a reason why Martin’s group did not perform at the Guelaguetza in Los Angeles. I am not arguing that there is hostility between the groups within Los Angeles, although there are some tensions between indigenous and Blacks within Oaxaca, but that a re-imagining of Blackness may not fit into a contemporary system of exchange utilized by Los Angeles’ larger indigenous Oaxacan community.
While I did not get an opportunity to sufficiently explore how racial experiences within the United States and interaction with U.S. Blacks is changing Afro-Mexicans’ conceptions of race, the question is important to thinking through alternative national and regional economies of race. In crossing the physical border between Mexico and the United States migrants also cross a number of ideological borders and boundaries (Lugo, 2000, 2008, Stephen, 2007). Local and regional histories and national identities make for differing values of race and ethnicity within different locations, therefore defining the different parameters and possibilities of racial exchange. It is my opinion that the organizing strategies adopted by both indigenous and Afro-Mexicans in Los Angeles are strategies developed within Mexico due to particular forms of multicultural politics within the nation, specifically the state of Oaxaca (a point that will be further developed below). The possibilities open to these strategies may be different in the United States due to differing racial histories and discourses. A similar valuing of indigeneity in the United States may work in favor of indigenous Oaxaquenos (see Stephen, 2007 for counter example), but I believe that organizing around Blackness, while simultaneously making a distinction between U.S. Blacks, may only serve to alienate Afro-Mexicanos from both groups.

My starting point for this chapter has been the question of why groups continue to organize around experiences and histories of race. My conclusion is that a racial economy, which can work in conjunction with a larger monetary economy, still makes race a relevant point of organization. With this chapter I have attempted to theoretically expand on the idea of racial economy and how individuals and groups maneuver within racial economies in order to create value from previous processes of racialization. The creation of a racial economy during the contact period within the “New World” has been responsible for setting a specific value of race for racialized peoples within a larger system of social and economic exchange. Within this
system of economic and social exchange Blackness was viewed vis-à-vis Spanishness and indigeneity. While this racial economy continues to be contested and negotiated by a number of social groups, they are still somewhat confined by the creation of particular racial value. The following chapter will directly address the above-mentioned system of economic and social exchange within Mexico by interrogating the influence and effect that mestizaje has historically had on Blacks in Mexico. Within this chapter I will demonstrate how mestizaje, as a racial economy, continues to shape the particular forms of value that are presently available to Afro-Mexicanos in the neoliberal multicultural moment, and how a persistent racial economy continues to thwart Black attempts at cultural and social organization in the Costa Chica.
CHAPTER 4: TALKING ABOUT MESTIZAJE: HISTORY, VALUE, AND THE RACIAL PRESENT

The Costa Chica on the pacific shores of Guerrero and Oaxaca has been promoted as a, if not the, African descendant region within Mexico. The highlighting of the many pueblos on the coast belonging to a perceived “Black region” has begged the asking of numerous questions concerning the concept and realities of race within the nation of Mexico as well as questioning the logic of mestizaje as a defining social framework. The African descendant communities along the southern Oaxacan coastline have been incorporated into the nation in a similar manner to that of the indigenous communities within Mexico. In one sense the communities have been labeled traditional, located in a social and geographical backwater that speaks to anti-modern relics of Mexico’s past. In another sense the inhabitants of these communities have been interpreted within the discourse of mestizaje, in the case of African descendants read as an absence of tradition, arguing against the existence of cultural and ethnic “authenticities”. My use of authentic does not draw upon the reconceptualization of the modern nation brought about by the earlier work of Boas and Du Bois as outlined by Briggs (2005), where through the lens of multiculturalism hybridized cultures become “inauthentic” (Briggs, p. 92)\(^\text{19}\). While I am not aware of the use of the term authenticity among African descendants or Black activists within Mexico, I use the term authenticities in the sense that the distinct social locations occupied by Mexico’s Black citizens, as well as other members of the global African Diaspora, have allowed for hybrid yet “authentic” cultural development specific to particular locations/nation states. In

\(^{19}\) Here, rather than “authenticity”, I think that Bhabha's notion of hybridity (1994) would be more relevant to discussing the creation of culture in the Costa Chica. In this way the shared practices unifying and distinguishing communities within the Costa Chica are authentic while simultaneously a work in progress. These shared practices can then also be seen to influence other's who would not identify racially as “Negro”.

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this sense African descendants within Mexico can be seen to be the owners of specific cultural forms and subjectivities that, while effected by the rhetoric of mestizaje, can be viewed as distinct from mestizo culture in a manner similar to indigenous communities. By utilizing this shift in perception, African descendants within Mexico are allowed an identity apart from that created by the contemporary rhetoric of mestizaje. The negative connotation of the term “negro”, a hold over from the distinct racial system imposed by the Spanish conquistadors, as well as a global slave market, has made the question of “authenticity” even more perilous. For this reason the term Moreno, perhaps a reification or reinterpretation of the casta system, has become the preferred term for many Black inhabitants of the Costa Chica (Lewis, 2000, 2001, 2006).

In her text, Hall of Mirrors, Laura Lewis highlights the power dynamic within the caste system utilized by Spanish colonialism. Lewis argues that this system allowed for more social movement and a dynamic that does not exist within a system of strict racial hierarchy (2003) where a type of “one-drop” rule may be employed in order to institutionally and socially exclude specific individuals from particular racial groups’ access to resources. While the caste system plays on race and space in different ways than a strict racial hierarchy, the persistence of race and biology, or phenotype, can still be seen to play an important role within the caste system (Safa, 1998). Biological and therefore social qualities were seen to be inherent or endemic to specific caste positions. These assumed biological and social features point to a process of racialization that cannot be overlooked and are important to the creation of racial subjectivities and community imaginations (Omi and Winant, 1994). The experience of race is meaningful in a number of aspects and resistance to institutionalized forms of racism may lead to alliances built upon this experience of racialization. While racialized Black identities may be discordant
depending upon regional locations and specific national periods, the consequences of race are meaningful to everyday life and expressed socially and politically through local identities that can consequently bind individuals through a larger sense of community. Thus while the term Moreno may highlight the reality of miscegenation, the term may still speak to racial and racialized identities, i.e. Blackness, within African descendant communities in the Costa Chica. Therefore, rather than the concept of an imagined Black community being an import, that is to say simply based on foreign histories of racism (especially within the United States) (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1999) and 20th century foreign racial politics, the existence of a “Black community” within Mexico may be a historic feature beginning with the first African descendants to set foot in New Spain.

With the arrival of the Spanish comes a system of racial and caste hierarchies that would affect the development of later African descendant communities. The free and enslaved, or Mulatto and African, involvement in the colonization process does not only speak to the role of African descendants in the economic and social development of the colonies and later the Mexican nation, but also to the diversity and complexity inherent within any community. Such social categories as free and enslaved undoubtedly affected the development of distinct racial and social identities between and among Blacks in Mexico (Vinson, 2001). However, uniformed discrimination and the process of racialization, that is the value ascribed to biology and phenotype along with the shared experience of race, may have been responsible for the creation of subjectivities common in many aspects to African descendants (Gomez, 1998), similar to Du Bois’ understanding of diasporic cosmopolitanism (Briggs, 2005). In this vein Ben Vinson

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20 Cosmopolitanism here refers to Dubois’s understanding that experiences through such processes as colonialism and imperialism create a common ground between Blacks in Asia, the Americas, and other parts of the diaspora. Briggs argues that Dubois’s work, beginning
argues for the creation of a race based Black community or communities fostered by the leadership of Black militia officers that had been allowed certain levels of social mobility (2001). As a result negros and pardos became Afro-Mexicans, or more regionally specific, communities of Afro-Veracruzanos or Afro-Yucatecos (Restall, 2000, Vinson, 2001).

Ted Vincent’s (1994) research on the role of Black’s in the struggle for independence highlights the existence of these communities. Vincent argues that the communities on the coast played a major role in the war effort for independence and that the issue of race and slavery were important, if not fundamental, to such historical Mexican independence figures as Vicente Guerrero and Jose Maria Morelos (1994). While Blacks from coastal communities fought in many battles against the Spanish forces, these battles often placed African descendants against each other. The opposing views of African descendants and their choosing, or succumbing to coercion by the Spanish, to fight on the side of the Spanish colonies does not speak to the lack of a “Black community”, but rather highlights the complexities and diversity, as well as possibly competing agendas, within a Black community, and all communities. Vincent argues that the impetus for many Blacks to fight for the independence of the Mexican nation was to end the Spanish Caste system (1994). While the success of the independence movement may have reconfigured the previous colonial relationship, the pre-existing caste system and race based discrimination, perhaps shifting somewhat, were maintained on many levels. The national project installed within Mexico during the post independence period brings with it the beginnings of an ideological erasure of race, and thus any official notion of a “Black community”, that may have only played out in perception rather than practice or reality. That is,

with "Souls of Black Folk" (1903) and later works (1925 (1968) 1945) “places cosmopolitanism in dialogic relationships with vernacularism” (2005, p. 77), even though this connection may be credited to other later works such as Bhabha (1996) and Appiah (2001).
the re-imagining of “The Mexican” and the consequent discourse within the context of the 
emerging nation state did not necessarily coincide with the racial realities or legacy of the 
previously instated caste system. The question remains, what happened to Mexico’s Black 
community/communities?

Utilizing the part of the body of literature that explores the presence of Blacks within 
Mexico this chapter will explore this question; what happened to Mexico’s Black communities? 
The exploration of this question will take place in three parts, the developing Black presence and 
construction of Black communities within colonial Mexico, the ideological erasure of these 
communities and the Black presence within Mexico beginning with independence, and finally 
the resurgence of Black identities within Mexico, specifically within the Costa Chica and the 
resistance that this movement has met due to post-colonial imaginations of Mexican-ness and the 
legacy of mestizaje. Important to this question of (re)emerging racial identities is the role that 
Diaspora and immigration are playing on the formation of racial subjectivities among Blacks in 
the Costa Chica as well as the influences of indigenous political mobilizations on African 
descendants’ understandings of their own social locations within the nation. As research on this 
latter consideration is scarce, it is my hope that this chapter will raise broader questions relating 
to local experiences of race and the ways in which these experiences inform our understandings 
of the African Diaspora.

The Colonial Presence and Discordant Identities:

The Black presence within Latin America dates to the early sixteenth century with the 
the existence of Black participation in the settlement process and the incorporation of Africans
and their descendants within militia groups aimed at domestic defense. While the presence of these Africans and their descendants is well documented demographically, the question of community building and the development of identities within these groups remains underexplored. Forced to rely on archival documentation, the above-mentioned research points to the ways in which the caste system played out in creating racialized groups and placing these groups within an institutional racial and ethnic hierarchy. This archival research has also shed a dim light on the ways in which African descendants within Mexico historically utilized these hierarchies in forming their own communities. Among the many forms of nomenclature used to distinguish Blacks from their colonial counterparts, Spaniards, Mestizos, and Indigenous, the most utilized terms are those of Pardo, Negro, and Mulatto. While these terms had clear racial meanings, they were utilized and applied differently between Spaniards and Blacks in both personal and institutional capacities (Vinson, 2001). Closer examination of the use of these terms draws attention to the varied historical experiences of race among indigenous, Blacks, and Spaniards within specific historical eras (Omi and Winant, 1994). This section briefly focuses on the presence of these groups within Mexico and the development of Black communities or colonial consciousness within colonial Mexico.

Herman Bennett (2003) argues that in 1640, the year the Portuguese slave trade to the Spanish Americas “officially” ended, colonial Mexico contained the second largest population of enslaved Africans and the highest population of free Blacks within the Americas (p. 01). Within a century of Cortes’ expedition into New Spain, Portuguese slave traders had brought 110,000 enslaved Africans to the region. By 1646, the census counted 116,529 persons of African descent in colonial Mexico, and by 1810 Bennett argues that the free Black population numbered over 600,000, or 10% of the total population (2003, p. 01). By this time the free population
considerably outnumbered that of the enslaved population within Mexico. While Bennett’s numbers of free Blacks do not speak to the existence, by any means, of a consciously unified community, the numbers are important to understanding the potential for the mobilization of unifying racial and ethnic ties among these free Blacks.

While the imposition of racial hierarchies was also utilized by African descendants, the large population would have created opportunities for communities to develop among individuals identifying with the same caste markers. I would like to point out here that my focus on Black communities goes beyond the mobilization of race for governmental politics in the sense of resource appropriation and recognition, and speaks to the strategies that satisfy the basic cultural and physical needs of individuals. Rather than seeing the mobilization of race as a strategy to simply counter the institution of slavery, it is important to recognize the everyday meanings of race and ethnicity and the ways in which communities mobilize around familiarity in order to maintain and re-create culture. While meanings of race are constantly negotiated on both institutional and social levels, my intention here is to focus on the social outcomes of everyday experiences of race (Omi and Winant, 1994). Bennett argues,

“Africans and persons of African descent created communities that expanded the boundaries of the households in which they served as slaves and bridged cultural divisions. Yet even as “Angolans” formed communities with individuals from ‘Lamba Land’, for example, they retained their newly imposed ethnic identities” (2003, p. 82).

Bennett’s argument here highlights the use of community in two distinct ways. While African descendants began to create networks among themselves, based on a sense of generic “Blackness” (and all of the value that this term referenced), the use of imposed ethnicities helped
to maintain ethnic boundaries that were meaningful on personal levels and perhaps also helped to maintain a sense of the past.

Bennett goes on to argue that these ethnic boundaries also influenced the choice of marriage partners among these multilevel communities (2003, p. 82). Maintained ethnicities may have also allowed for the utilization of experiences and racialized bodies as sites of familiarity, which in turn fostered the fortification of ethnic and racial communities. Within these communities it is doubtless that the caste system played a role in communal hierarchies, but the caste system itself may have been utilized in different capacities from within. Napolitano’s (2002) use of the concept of prisms of belonging can be useful here in understanding how people express different situated selves under different circumstances. According to Napolitano, the purpose of prisms of belonging “is to indicate the heterogeneous perceptions, feelings, desires, contradictions, and images that shape the experiences of space and time” (Napolitano, 2002, p. 09). While pointing to the variance of experiences within communities, Napolitano’s concept can also be applied to understanding the varied experiences of society and social phenomenon between groups, leading to what have been called vernacular modernities (Napolitano, 2002).

Bennett (2003) argues that identity for African descendants was not a preordained essence in the New World, but rather it was carefully constructed. This careful construction of identity drew upon experiences within the context of slavery and other institutional exclusions and inclusions, but must have been formed by experiences of family and community, or internal understandings of selfhood as well. In this sense identities become multiple, as well as political, and are mobilized as means for different ends within different contexts. My intention here is not to explore historical identity formation among African descendants, as this project may be
impossible based on the analysis of archival records. Rather I hope to highlight the way in which race and the process of racialization were felt differently and employed differently within different capacities; one being institutional and another being communal (Omi and Winant, 1994). This recognition is important in uncovering a continued sense of community throughout the colonial period and into the current moment. With this recognition, the continued existence of Black communities within Mexico is less of a phenomenon, that is a group that somehow miraculously escaped the modern project of nationhood, and can be considered more of a deliberate cultural process.

Ben Vinson acknowledges the importance of confraternities and cabildos in preserving and developing facets of Black culture within Mexico while simultaneously providing material assistance to free Blacks in times of need (Vinson 2000, p. 02, Von Germeten, 2006). Confraternities were utilized by African descendants within Mexico as community organizations as well as ways in which to highlight Blacks own incorporation into larger Spanish society. Von Germeten (2006) provides an exhaustive study of the different Black confraternities within Mexico, and the ways in which these organizations were used not only to provide for community needs, but to foster social mobility as well. She explains that participation within confraternities may not have been an individual’s only source of personal or communal identity, but that race did influence an individual’s experience within a confraternity (2006). Confraternities were created based on identities formed both before and after enslavement. According to Von Germeten,

“Some confraternities characterized their members as from a specific African place of origin and others extended membership only to mulattos or Blacks,
making a distinction between individuals identified by these racial labels” (Von Germeten, p. 192).

Von Germeten goes on to argue that confraternity founders worked hard at preventing anyone with a different racial designation from becoming organizational leaders (2006, p. 192). Later confraternities of the eighteenth century were subject to the same effects of the caste system as seen within the broader society. The eighteenth century brings with it a shift in the labels of confraternities, as they integrate members of the different castes. No longer are the confraternities of this period labeled negro or “Black”, but rather reflect the Spanish authorities’ preference for the term mulatto.

The militia also played an important part in reinforcing Black identities. Ben Vinson asks two important questions, 1) “given that colonial Mexico was a society where ‘racial drift’ and even ‘passing’ were possible, did the mulatto or pardo (someone of African, Spanish, and Indigenous decent) ever feel a racial identity as such, and 2) did free-coloreds bond or feel a race based affinity, especially considering that racial discourse during the colonial period was largely defined by and worked for the benefit of others” (2001)? Vinson’s questions are important in exploring the ways in which race was experienced from the bottom, or inside, rather than from the top, or within an institutional context. While the militia may have provided more opportunities for African descendants than civilian life, race became even more salient within the lives of militiamen. Vinson argues that,

“By enrolling in the free-colored corps, soldiers participated in an institution that was often segregated and defined by race. As a result, upon joining, race assumed added meaning in their lives, perhaps more so than for the average Mexican colonist” (2001, p. 4).
Joining the militia allowed for the creation of new networks with other persons of color (Vinson: 4). While the logic of Whitening holds that social mobility is gained through the eroding of racial connections, for militia members mobility comes with an even more pronounced racial identity. For Blacks, participation in the militia brought with it more opportunity than were available to these individuals within civilian life. These opportunities were sometimes the basis for internal rifts among African descendants. This reinforces the notion that racial identities were strongly predicated upon the heavy desire for privilege, however when threats to the soldiers’ rights emanated from outside of their own organization, militiamen utilized a unified front (Vinson, 2001). While the caste system infiltrates even the militia units, the meanings of these different nomenclatures were negotiated among the militiamen themselves and may have been employed within different contexts. Vinson argues that the use of the same terms, pardo and moreno, varied between the crown and soldiers, and that this variance in use reflects separate racial outlooks (2001).

This difference in racial outlook is important to the continued existence of racialized Black communities within Mexico, especially within the face of the caste system and the possibilities of social mobility brought about by “Whitening”. The utilization of “Whitening” as a strategy to social mobility may have been only part of the reality of race for Mexico’s African descendants. Bennett argues that, “for Africans and their descendants, the imposed patterns of social stratification and their own community boundaries were very different phenomena” (2003, p. 125). This highlights the ways in which African descendants in Mexico were not only subjected to the caste system, but were also aware of the processes involved in the project of racialization and therefore utilized the same process to create communities based on racial subjectivities. These communities, while affected by the racial hierarchies at play within the
caste system, may have also incorporated individuals from the various castes, while simultaneously maintaining racial or ethnic identities. As Carroll (1991) notes, the family played a large part in the socialization process, and undoubtedly the changing racial dynamics within this same institution in Mexico would be responsible for allowing for the recognition of racial and communal ties. That is to argue that while racial mixing may have allowed for the adoption of strategies for social mobility within an institutional context, within a communal context race may have been the tie that bound Black communities together rather than facilitating racial cleavages. Napolitano’s (2001) prisms of belonging again become helpful in highlighting the many lenses available to racialized subjects of New Spain.

Bennett argues that in the seventeenth century,

“Mexico’s diverse and growing creole population displayed a marked affinity for other Blacks and mulattos in the selection of matrimonial sponsors. Although this pattern reflected the currency of hypergamia - the phenomenon wherein one parent’s heritage carried greater weight in defining offspring - it also magnifies the metamorphosis of race into culture” (2003, p. 110).

The creation and maintenance of Black social networks speaks to the vitality of multiple Black communities, as well as the existence of multiple Black identities or racialized consciousnesses. Mexican independence brings with it the question of nationality, which while perhaps not threatening the existence of these communities and identities, threatens the institutional recognition of Black-ness as difference within Mexico, and begins a process of erasure that is facilitated by the promotion of the benefits of the process of “Whitening” in the period after the Mexican revolution, and later the official adoption of the discourse of mestizaje.
The Move to Independence and the Effect of Mestizaje:

Ted Vincent argues that the Mexican war for independence was not only a struggle for national independence, but can also be seen as a social revolution (1994). According to Vincent, “those of African heritage in Mexico had special incentives to fight, were encouraged to join the struggle, and provided many participants and leaders” (1994, p. 257). What is of interest here for my purposes is to highlight the existence of vibrant Black communities at the beginning of the war for independence, and even the mobilization of these communities around issues of race and the discrimination imposed by the cast system. In this sense, Blacks’ involvement in the independence effort can be understood as a racial project, as defined by Omi and Winant (1994). While Vincent may overlook is the importance of communal ties after the war, as he argues that Blacks’ involvement in the war for independence was aimed mostly at the possibility to assimilate, his essay is important to point out the lived consequences of race during the first decade of the nineteenth century. The imposition of the caste system not only created racial boundaries, but it allowed for resistance predicated on issues of race. According to Vincent, Hidalgo, during the first months of the conflict, declares the abolition of slavery and caste laws. After Hidalgo’s death in 1811, Morelos takes up the cause and calls for the banning of slavery and caste distinctions, as well as elaborating on indigenous rights (Vincent, p. 259). Vincent suggests that for the “darker” people of Mexico the revolution spoke of equal opportunity and social integration (1994, p. 259).

The question of integration becomes important throughout Latin America and the Caribbean during the nineteenth century. A succession of colonial states gain independence
throughout the nineteenth century. The beginning of the century witnesses Haiti’s independence in 1803, with Colombia following in 1819, and Brazil and Ecuador initiating their own national periods in 1822. With the beginning of these national periods in Latin America comes the question of defining, not only the nation, but the national citizen as well. For the newly conceived Latin American countries this question becomes “the Indian question”. One of the strategies imposed to answer this question is the adoption of policies of “Whitening” to genetically weed out the biological influences of the “inferior races”. Colombia reflects one example of the adoption of this strategy, while it was hoped that through intermarriage and mortality genetic assimilation could be achieved within Colombia (Larson, 2004). According to Larson, this strategy was predicated on the sense of Whiteness as a pathway to modernity while non-Whiteness symbolized the opposite end of this spectrum anti-modernity.

In 1821, Mexico, having achieved official independence, is faced with the same question confronting other Latin American nations. The question of the national citizen seems to be answered by the discursive and rhetorical erasure of race, promoted as equality, and the adoption of a class based system. According to Vincent, a series of laws are drafted shortly after independence, which reflect the importance of racial equality during this period. Law #303, for example, prohibits public officials from speaking disparagingly of any citizen’s ethnic background. Another example comes through law #313, which prohibited the use of race in any government document and in any church records such as marriage, baptism, and death (1994, p. 272). While these laws may have been interpreted as successes for indigenous and Blacks within Mexico, as Vincent argues that incorporation within the larger social system was one of the main goals of African descendant participation in the conflict, these concessions may have played out

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21 See Chasteen (2011) for similar approaches in countries such as Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay during the same period in the second half of the 19th century.
only officially, and the institutional dismantling of the caste system does not necessarily speak to the end of discrimination or an experience of race for Mexico’s Black communities.

The myriad of critiques of the colorblind approach to contemporary multicultural projects, as helping to continue to foster inequality, can be seen to illustrate this point. Vincent cites Aguirre Beltran’s (1946) “La Poblacion Negra”, where Aguirre Beltran argues that, “the one transcendent event of the revolution for independence” was “the change from a system of caste to class” (Vincent, p. 260). While the adoption of a class system may allow for the projection of a singular Mexican system, the reality of this class system may have only served to reinstate the caste system, and perpetuate the former exclusion of citizens based on race.

The numerous considerations of Brazil’s social system reflect the entanglement of the social phenomena of race and class. While Brazil was once projected as the successful model of racial mixing within Latin America based on the writings of such authors as Freyre (Martinez-Echazabal, 1998), later studies show that the experience of the lower classes is also an experience of race within the larger social system (Hanchard, 1994). Access to social mobility within Brazil, for example, has historically come through the process of Whitening, yet race still plays a part in creating a cap for social mobility in general. The same can be said for social mobility within Mexico, which comes through a process of Whitening through mestizaje. While studies on social mobility and the current meaning of race within Mexico are becoming more numerous, I think that one of the best examples of this is highlighted by my own experience in the field and beyond. While discussing my interest in African descendants in Mexico with several Mexicanos and Chicanos (both in Mexico and the US), a repeated anecdote often arises. My interlocutors often told me, “one of my relatives (sister, aunt) is negro” or “moreno”. This is often followed by the qualification “mas negro que tu” (even Blacker than you). It is interesting
that this strategy serves to create boundaries between “us and them”, even within the same family, as a relative’s racial signifier from the previous generation may have no effect on current affiliation. This example highlights the processes of Whitening involved within the discourse of mestizaje (Lugo, 2008, Safa, 1998, Whitten and Torres, 1998), as some view Blackness as an escapable quality, while those unsuccessful or devoid of access to this strategy may view Blackness in more than simply phenotypic terms.

While the mixing process during the nineteenth century in Mexico is not promoted under the rhetoric of mestizaje, there are similarities within the process. Martinez-Echazabal argues that mestizaje “is a foundational theme in the Americas, particularly in those areas colonized by the Spanish and the Portuguese” (1998, p. 21). During the nineteenth century, according to Martinez-Echazabal, mestizaje is a recurrent trope, linked to the search for “lo Americano”. This discovery of the unique American is instrumental to the many national projects under construction in Latin America in the nineteenth century. Martinez-Echazabal goes on to argue that during the period of what she refers to as the period of national consolidation and modernization (1920s-1960s) “mestizaje underscored the affirmation of cultural identity as constituted by ‘national character’” (1998, p. 21), specifically for my interests here, lo Mexicano.

With the help of Vasconcelos (1925) and others, the post revolutionary twentieth century gives birth to the images of the mestizo and the mulatto (Martinez-Echazabal, 1998), within the context of nation state consolidation. Vasconcelos, while projecting a project of equality through

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However, there is also another side to this story, where family ties help to create an identity of “negro”, even among those who would not socially feel the imposition of the racialized term. Martin, an activist discussed in another chapter, personifies this possibility, as he himself identifies with “negro” even as his own phenotype often times avoids racial scrutiny therefore not attracting the imposition of Blackness from without. This strategy can be capitalized on by different individuals depending upon the context, but does not preclude racial affinity or the perception of one’s self as “negro”.

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mixing, can ultimately be seen to endorse a broader project of Whitening. Vasconcelos argues that through the voluntary extermination of the negative qualities of the inferior races (through mixing) the cosmic race can take its place within Latin America (Vasconcelos, 1979). While Vasconcelos argues that all of the races have something to offer to the mixing process, a system of values or hierarchies is imposed upon the races or “roots”, with the ultimate positive value being placed on Whiteness. Within the rhetoric of mestizaje, Whiteness is ultimately linked to modernity (Safa, 1998), while the perpetuation of the “inferior races” is seen as a threat to the achievement of modernity and the ability for Mexico to take its place on the global stage.

Helen Safa argues that, “although mestizaje affirmed race mixture, it maintained White supremacy through a hegemonic discourse of blaqueamiento (Whitening)” (1998, p. 05). This process of blaqueamiento (Godreau, Reyes Cruz, Franc Ortiz, Cuadrado, 2008, Whitten and Torres, 1992, 1998) is in opposition to the strategy of strict exclusion adopted during the same period in the United States. Safa suggests that the use of domination in the United States and the use of hegemony, or coercion, within Latin America both bring about forms of White supremacy (1998). Not only do these two racial strategies bring about similar forms of White supremacy (while perhaps bringing about dis-similar racial economies), they also allow for the maintenance of Black communities and identities, or even broader racial consciousnesses. For example, within the U.S., hypodescent, culminating in the one-drop rule, has led to the historical visibility of Blackness among the United States Black population. This visibility has also fostered the development of a visible “Black culture” within the U.S. as well. The one-drop rule is a way for the larger society or nation to visibly identify Blackness within an institutional sense. In this sense hypodescent should be viewed more as a tool for recognition with multiple uses, both from above and below, rather than proof of the existence of a “Black culture” or community. Relying
on hypodescent as connotative of the existence of Blackness overlooks the ways in which Blackness is lived among individuals and how race may be utilized to create communities from the ground up. What I suggest is that the one-drop rule does not get at the conflicts within communities over issues of skin color and cultural authenticity that exist within the “Black community” in the United States, on the other hand, disputes over phenotype do not negate the existence of cultural and political communities.

Similarly, mestizaje may also foster the creation of communities and consciousness based on race and ethnicity, even while institutionally employing hegemonic processes of “national” homogeneity. Going back to Bennett’s consideration of the disparities between racial boundaries utilized by the state and local communities, while mestizaje may have been utilized on an institutional level for the appropriation of privileges and resources, it may have been less important for the development of racial identities. What I am suggesting here is that the racialization processes employed by the rhetoric of mestizaje may have allowed for the unification of individuals based on shared racial subjectivities, and that inter-group (read caste) conflicts, as seen both in Latin America and in the U.S., are simply inherent to any racialized group. Here I intend to highlight the creation of culture, as argued by Bennett (2003) that both hypodescent and mestizaje overlook. A focus on culture highlights the ways in which Black communities may have maintained their existence as a contestation to the forces of the national project and mestizaje. While the national and post-revolutionary periods in Mexico may have forced a renegotiation of race among Blacks in Mexico, the legacy of colonization remains and the effects of the racialization process during the colonial period cannot simply be imagined away through later discourses of nation and mestizaje. Alonso (1995) demonstrates the creation of a “warrior spirit” within the mestizo communities of the northern Mexico border during the
colonization period. This state sanctioned identity later became oppositional to post-revolutionary projects but remained ingrained in community consciousness (Alonso, 1995). As Omi and Winant argue, racial formation is shaped by actually existing race relations in any given historical period (1994), racial formation may have followed a similar development as the “warrior spirit” of Alonso’s northern border communities, and rather than erase racial consciousness among African descendants the national and post-revolutionary periods in Mexico may have served to create a type of Du Boisian “double-consciousness”\textsuperscript{23} within Mexico’s Black communities.

Most recently mestizaje has been drawn upon to promote heterogeneity, rather than homogeneity. Martinez-Echazabal argues “since the 1980s, the concept of mestizaje has come to play an important role in the recognition of the plurality of cultural identities (1998, p. 21). According to Lomnitz (2008), the 1980s brings with it the beginning of the neo-liberal turn in Mexico. I now turn to this moment and the consequences of neo-liberalism on the utilization of cultural politics of difference by indigenous groups and more recently by African descendants within Mexico, and the ways in which these groups have engaged with the pre-existing rhetoric of mestizaje and exclusion.

\textsuperscript{23} The Souls of Black Folk (1903)
The Neo-Liberal Moment and Potential for Political/Cultural Mobilization:

Claudio Lomnitz (2008) argues that the neo-liberal moment in Mexico is ushered in by the economic collapse of 1982. The economic crisis within Mexico at this time brings with it the broad program of structural change that has been labeled with the convenient shorthand neo-liberalism (Lomnitz, 2008). The neo-liberal turn in Mexico re-arranges the relationship to resources of the many groups that were previously grouped together within the context of class and opened up the space for future identity politics as a strategy for the acquisition of resources and opposition to neo-liberal reforms focusing on privatization (Berger 2001). According to Charles Hale, neo-liberalism stands for,

A cluster of policies driven by the logic of transnational capitalism: unfettered world markets for goods and capital; pared down state responsibilities for social welfare and its citizens; opposition to conflictive and inefficient collective entitlements, epitomized by labour rights; resolution of social problems through the application of quasi market principles revolving around the primacy of the individual, such as assessment based on individual merit, emphasis on individual responsibility and the exercise of individual choice” (2002, p. 486).

Gwynne and Kay (2000) suggest that the adoption of neo-liberal policies within Latin America is based on the logic of a “lack of alternatives” argument, which is that the adoption of neo-liberal policies is seen as the only option for the competition of Latin American countries within the global market. The adoption of this alternative produced what Lomnitz calls a deep fracture in every Latin American country. A fracture between groups that were thrown at risk, and those that benefited under conditions of free trade and the shrinking state (2003, p. 24). Lomnitz argues that within Mexico the key neo-liberal reforms are implemented between 1983 and 1992.
and relied on the force of the old revolutionary party, “yet the state’s shortage of resources and its limited and well targeted aims for reform meant that its principal negotiating chip during this painful reorganization of the economy was a calibrated democratic transition (2008, p. 54).

While the promotion of individual rights and citizenship is important to this democratic transition, this focus on the individual is counter to indigenous organization and community development, and negates the development of communal identities based on race, ethnicity and culture. While the previous liberal era promoted the erasure of communal identities within the context of the nation, neo-liberalism adopts a strategy of incorporation that Hale has labeled “neo-liberal multiculturalism” (2002). Within the neo-liberal multicultural model proponents of neo-liberal doctrine pro-actively endorse a substantive, yet limited, version of indigenous cultural rights, as a means to deal with their own problems and to advance their own political agendas (Hale, p. 487). Within this project the state advances multicultural rights in order to reconstitute civil society and indigenous culture in its own image, sheering them of radical excesses and inciting them to do the work of subject-formation that would otherwise fall to the state itself (Hale, p. 496). In this sense, while neo-liberal projects recognize indigenous community rights and cultures, this recognition comes with defined limits.

Hale argues that within this recognition, identity is limited to a product of individual choice rather than collective mobilization that might confront neo-liberal policies. Anti-racism is utilized in opposition to individual acts of discrimination rather than the struggle for structural equality (2002, p. 521). In these ways, multiculturalism is used to reinforce neo-liberal doctrine rather than to promote collective empowerment. Multiculturalism, within the context of neo-liberalism, thus becomes a hegemonic tool for incorporation (homogeneity), rather than the

24 See Gilroy (1990) for a discussion on the limits of anti-racism or anti-racist approaches and inequality.
embracing of heterogeneity through difference. In this sense multiculturalism, as Hale argues, “is the mestizaje discourse for new millennium, offering a parallel mix of opportunity and peril” (2002, p. 491). Ultimately, Hale argues that cultural rights movements have little choice but to occupy the spaces provided by neo-liberal multiculturalism and that they often have much to gain by doing so. Hale issues a warning here, suggesting that when groups do occupy these spaces they must assume that they will be articulated, in the Gramscian sense, with the dominant bloc, unless the decision forms part of a strategy of resistance from within, and toward a well conceived political alternative (2002).

The Zapatista movement serves as an example of the multicultural politics ushered in by the neo-liberal moment. The EZLN has chosen the latter option offered by Hale as a strategy of mobilization, working for political and structural change rather than absolute incorporation. While calling for political and structural change, the Zapatista movement relies on the utilization of an older national discourse. Lomnitz argues that the Zapatista movement “cast itself as a prolongation of the radical struggle of Emiliano Zapata in the armed phase of the Mexican Revolution” (2003, p. 23). The Zapatista struggle invoked the revolutionary past of the nation in order to contest the meaning of the nation, who represents it, and who is a member. Berger argues that in this way nation building is not simply a top-down process. The Zapatistas, suggests Berger, use a revised form of Mexican nationalism to make claims for themselves to rights of citizenship and in the process seek to reshape the nation and the Mexican state in a time honored practice in Mexico and elsewhere (2001, p. 154). Important here is the ability for the Zapatista movement to invoke the nation based on claims of citizenship while projecting an indigenous identity. This strategy has been successful partly due to the way in which the Mexican nation has been defined since the independence era (not withstanding the real effect of
U.S. and French imperial power gaining strength during the post-revolutionary period) as a mestizo nation, relying on an “honored” indigenous past. In this way the Zapatista movement can, although potentially risking cooptation, successfully call on citizenship while maintaining an indigenous identity that does not conflict with revolutionary definitions of nationality. The multiculturalism utilized here speaks to the “true” origins of the Mexican nation state as well as the revolution, a strategy perhaps not available to African descendants within Mexico.

The Zapatista movement utilizes an “equality through difference” model as outlined by Touraine (2002). Touraine problematizes the notion of equality, arguing that,

“Either equality between individuals and groups is an equality of rights, as the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen states perfectly, and not a de facto equality, and it applies to a specifically political and legal order which is above social and cultural realities, or this equality of rights implies a right to difference, which may apply to a specific social category as well as to culture” (2002, p. 543).

The Zapatista movement, as well as other social movements in Latin America, has utilized this second definition of equality in struggling for national recognition/inclusion and rights of citizenship in the face of neo-liberal reforms, while simultaneously calling upon a nationally treasured historical event. Sub-Commandante Marcos expresses the Zapatista understanding of a new politics that does not seek to take power, but rather focuses on the task “to recognize that there are differences between all of us, and that in light of this we aspire to a politics of tolerance and inclusion”. Marcos continues to argue that, “you cannot aspire to eliminate the other, that which is different, and neither can you ignore it” (Duran de Huerta and Higgins, p. 270). Marcos’ invocation of difference and inclusion resonates with Hale’s discussion of the political
space provided by neo-liberal multiculturalism, that is the strategy of inclusion (or perhaps better said commensuration) based on difference. Yet, the Zapatista call for political change and restructure is exemplary of the radical element of social politics that is clearly beyond the limits of acceptable strategies that rely on neo-liberal multiculturalism. In fact, this movement in some ways might follow neo-liberal expectations, as the space for this type of politic is set up by what Hale refers to as neo-liberal multiculturalism.

While the Zapatista example, as well as African descendant examples of social movements in Colombia and Peru (elaborated upon in Chapter 6), highlights the limits of neo-liberal multiculturalism, it cannot be denied that the neo-liberal turn has provided the space and the impetus for many social movements within Latin America. Blacks within Mexico, following indigenous/Zapatista and other African descendant struggles in Latin America, have begun to exploit the political spaces created by neo-liberal restructuring. However, this exploitation takes place in almost strict accordance with broader government agendas\textsuperscript{25}. This struggle, while still in its infancy (an adolescent 20 years old), focuses on highlighting the reality of race and is attempting to make Blackness and an experience of Blackness, or Black culture, visible within a national context.

Laura Lewis argues that for African descendants within the Costa Chica, the invocation of difference based on race goes against local identities, which have been fashioned through an idea of mestizaje (2006). Rather than the exclusion of Blacks within the project of mestizaje, Lewis argues that the mixing of indigenous and Blacks is not about the mestizo, but rather privileges the creation of the moreno (2001). While incorporating the discourse of mestizaje, Lewis’ work focuses on the creation of a unique hybrid between African descendants and

\textsuperscript{25} See chapter 5, “Recognizing Culture”, for ethnographic examples
indigenous on the Pacific coast and the exclusion of Whiteness, rather than the historical embracing of a mestizo identity. According to Lewis, her respondents do acknowledge origins linked to African, or enslaved ancestors, yet this link is not mobilized as part of their current identities. The link to African ancestors is made through a connection to shipwrecks on the coast and the human cargo within these ships. Lewis argues that these ships may speak to African descendants origins on the coast, but they simultaneously undermine claims to autochthony for Mexico’s African descendants. Rather than calling on African ancestral origins, these morenos, a term that Lewis argues is indicative of the mixture of Blacks and indigenous, rely on their hybridity to make claims to local authenticity and therefore Mexicanness (2000, 2001). Lewis does acknowledge that there have been attempts to initiate a Black movement, but that ultimately this movement has been co-opted by the Mexican government, and that generally Blacks on the Costa Chica, or at least in her field site of San Nicolas, Guerrero display a lack of interest in their African heritage (2006).

Lewis’ analysis is problematic, as it focuses on the mobilization, or lack thereof, of origins, rather than looking at the ways in which subjects have been racialized within Mexico, and the cultural connections that link the communities of the Costa Chica. The strategy that Lewis highlights is indicative of what Juliet Hooker calls the “mulatto escape hatch” (2005), and in the case of Mexico it is used to negate the social stereotypes associated with Blackness and Black bodies. The utilization of the “mulatto escape hatch” speaks to political strategies to gain access to social capital and resources, but does not allow for the inclusion of a moreno identity within a broader “Black” racial subjectivity. While Lewis’ respondents may not be interested in their African heritage, their home community of San Nicolas is located less than a thirty minute drive from the Museo de las Culturas AfroMestizas de Cuajinicuilapa (Museum of AfroMestizo
Cultures of Cuajinicuilapa) which highlights the African presence within the region and more broadly the nation. The Museo de las Culturas AfroMestizas de Cuajinicuilapa is just one example of the several competing racial projects currently underway within the region and the nation.

Vaughn suggests that there is a successful burgeoning Black movement within the Costa Chica, and directs his focus on the meanings of race in everyday life (2005). Vaughn argues that there are two discourses of Blackness in Mexico. One discourse exists in the Costa Chica, where Blackness is ubiquitous, taken for granted, and permeates people’s everyday lives. The other discourse is what Vaughn calls a “central Mexican discourse”, where the majority of Mexicans, due to the invisibility of Blackness in the interior, are unaware of the existence of Mexican Blacks (2005: 49). This invisibility, perpetuated by the “central Mexican discourse”, works to solidify the institutional or structural erasure mentioned earlier in this essay, and is at odds with Vaughn’s ubiquity discourse. The continued invisibility of Blackness within Mexico negates the political mobilization of Blackness as an authentic cultural identity within Mexico, and overlooks the historic existence of Black cultural communities within Mexico.

The continued negation of Black culture has been an obstacle for African descendant social movements within Latin America. Indigenous demands to collective rights in Latin America, including Mexico, are based on their identities as “distinct” peoples with inherent rights to the lands that they have inhabited prior to the arrival of current states, rather than making claims for rights as an oppressed minority group (Hooker, 2005). Put another way, indigenous struggles for collective rights in Latin America are based on claims of autochthony, rather than just the historic experiences of oppression. This strategy is not available to Latin
America’s African descendants because of the perceived lack of a distinct cultural tradition. Ultimately, the lack of access to distinct cultural group identities has been crucial for the continued denial of collective rights for African descendants in Latin America, and multicultural reforms continue to “determine the ‘political opportunity structure’ faced by Black and indigenous movements” in Latin America (Hooker, 2005). This multicultural playing field created by neo-liberal reforms is also affecting the way in which Mexico’s African descendants are re-imagining their own positions within the broader nation.

With this chapter I have attempted to highlight the possibility of a continued Black cultural presence within Mexico. This cultural tradition was clearly developed, as Bennett, Vinson, Restall, and Vincent demonstrate, during the colonial period. The era of independence and nationalism brought with it the need to define the national citizenry (similar to the process outlined by Anderson (1983)), and it is in this period that we see the ideological erasure of a Black presence and identity within Mexico. While this erasure may have been successful within an institutional setting, the writings discussed within this chapter show that on a communal level, issues of race and ethnicity have been important to the historic maintenance of African descendant communities during the national era.

As indigenous struggles show, the neo-liberal period has provided the impetus for struggles of citizenship and inclusion based on indigenous rights. African descendants in Latin America have followed the lead of indigenous groups in attempting to take political action for the securing of collective rights, yet these groups are confronted with specific obstacles that do

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26 There is the exception of a few notable cases such as the Garifuna of Central America and the coastal populations of Colombia who have been able to lay claim to a pre-national existence and occupation of “traditional lands”, a recognized language, some “undisturbed” cultural element, or some combination of the three (see Anderson, 2009, Ng’weno, 2007, Wade, 1993, Thorne, 2004).
not exist for the indigenous of Latin America. African descendants within Latin America are forced to prove the existence of difference based on ethnicity (read culture) rather than racial discrimination in order to participate within the field of multicultural politics framed by neo-liberal reforms. The strategy for inclusion defined by what Hale has labeled neo-liberal multiculturalism focuses on identity as a political marker. This strategy may ultimately work against African descendants that lack the ability to lay claim to autochthonous origins pre-dating the development of Latin American nations. Alberto Melucci argues that a strict focus on political mobilization over looks the cultural characteristics and everyday meanings of these identities (1985). While neo-liberal multiculturalism demands that groups politicize identities, the successes to these struggles depend on the broader national acceptance of historic/traditional cultural existence. Within Mexico, African descendants are confronted with these same problems. I argue that strategies to secure citizenship and collective rights based on politicized Black identities will not succeed without highlighting the real continued existence and maintenance of Black culture and identities throughout Mexican history despite the continued attempts of an ideological erasure of Mexican Blackness and racism. To borrow from Napolitano’s concept of “prisms of belonging”, “prisms have a refractive and, to some extent, elusive nature: what we can see through them depends on the angle we are looking through” (2002, p. 10). Looking through the prism also entails a sense of looking back, which in a political sense allows us to re-imagine how we have arrived at our present locations. The highlighting of culture is important to this process, and for Mexico’s African descendants Bonfil-Batalla’s concept of “Mexico Profundo” may take on another meaning. That is, that Mexico,

27 This is potentially a perilous endeavor in itself. See Comaroff (2006) for an example of the dangers of the re-articulation of history within contemporary narratives of the nation in South Africa.
viewed through one of Napolitano’s prisms, may be defined by an experience of Blackness. This, I think, is key to locating Black culture and the consequences of processes of racialization within Mexico, as well as understanding the current Black movement within the Costa Chica and the Nation’s overall attempt at incorporating this movement into its current conception of the multi-cultural milieu that is the Mexican Nation state.

What follows is an ethnographic example of the way in which the Oaxacan and Mexican governments are attempting to incorporate (and perhaps coopt) this movement into the broader nation state. This incorporation has brought about a number of tensions between activists and government employees. In some ways, activists and local residents rely on a more quotidian cultural, as well as historical, sense of Blackness in order to imagine their official participation and recognition within the Mexican state. However, government officials themselves rely on the rhetoric and strategies developed by neoliberal multicultural logics as a foundation for a project that incorporates difference into the present national imaginary. The actual products generated at these points of tension between quotidian experiences of being and official projects of recognition expose particular problems with the officialization of difference, about which the following chapter is dedicated.
CHAPTER 5: RECOGNIZING CULTURE AND MAKING DIFFERENCE OFFICIAL

Introduction:

The idea of difference, in fact the manifestation of this idea, is commonplace in our modern society. This idea of difference, and the naturalness that we often impart into the concept, has even become a foundational part of the way we organize in a number of contexts, i.e., culturally, socially, and politically. For example, can think about the stakes that are involved with political organization. Often times the difficulties in collaboration between ethnic and racial groups stem from our conceptions of difference and the effect that this difference has on our perceived life chances and respective public potentials. I believe that this perception of our life chances and potential public successes and failures based on our understanding of difference has real effects in the way in which individuals and communities are perceived. To deny the real effects of difference in favor of some utopic understanding of “one world, one race”, or an over embracing of the anthropological evidence that race has no real biological support is a mistake that allows us to overlook the real systemic effects brought about through the legacy of colonization and the ways that this legacy continues to effect the day to day life chances of the modern people’s that continue to inherit this legacy.

However, there seems to be a trap worked into this idea of difference, a perpetual trick that plays out in favor of colonial and imperial systems of domination. This trick, then, is that the recognition of difference plays on shared understandings of the other/race between all interested parties (Gilroy, 1990) (usually re-enforced by negative stereotypes or arguments of deficiency) and continues to draw upon and support the logics of white supremacy (West, 2002) which are foundational to modernity or at the very least ubiquitous within the modern experience of racialized peoples. Difference, when recognized in this way, works in a dialectical
relationship. That is, the embracing of difference for the spiritual, cultural, moral, and political uplift of any particular group works to also re-enforce the idea of difference, which can also work to re-enforce systems of inequality through the manifestations of the same colonial conceptions (see Bhabha, 1994) that these projects of uplift are attempting to eradicate. So then, as difference is mobilized for the potential empowering of any group, the investments placed in and upon difference (racial, economic, cultural, ethnic, etc.…) can work to solidify that difference, which in turn makes the eradication of difference an impossible feat through the continual re-investment in difference made by communities and handed down through generations. In this way the project of moral and social uplift becomes about difference itself, rather than the emancipation of any one group and the eradication of difference or its effects.

Furthermore, the investment in difference allows for a particular fetishization of difference, i.e. race, ethnicity, culture, gender, etc.…My argument is not intended to argue against the potential and power of racial organization and politics, or any other social organization, but rather I am drawing attention to the pitfalls of the fetishization of difference as valuable unto itself. So, while on the one hand difference can be used to create a sense of strength and identity among a marginalized group, which in turn creates a platform for social mobility, the fetishization of difference, on the other, can also create a paradox in which difference operates in a positive feedback loop that continues to re-enforce inequality through the appropriation or embracing of the many colonial conceptions and practices that have become foundational or inherent to the notion of difference.

28 In the case of a positive feedback loop, positive does not refer to the esthetic outcome being more or less desirable, but rather the simple re-enforcement of the system in question through a mechanism that allows for a portion of the output to fortify or magnify the system itself.
Undoubtedly, there have been many successes that have come about through the mobilization of difference as a tool, in deed a weapon utilized by marginalized peoples, as a counter to institutional and systemic forms of marginalization, including ethnocentrism, racism, sexism, and a number of other important “isms”. But, the re-enforcement of difference has also created situations in which marginalized peoples find it difficult, if not impossible, to organize beyond the often times singular lines drawn by the notion of difference (Collins, 2002, Ferguson, 2004, Riggs, 2006, Roque-Ramirez, 2003, 2007)). In this way difference works as a trap, or as a “trick bag”, that we often times find impossible to find our way out of. A personal experience might serve as one example. As a youth attending junior and high schools in which the majority of students of color (and a portion of the Anglo students) were from the lower and lower middle economic classes, the idea of difference played out in real and often times violent ways. At least once a semester the campus would be over come by what were labeled “race wars”, in which passing and lunch periods would become spaces for hand-to-hand combat (weapons, although very available, were rarely used in on campus altercations) between groups of students representing the different “races”. I often found myself a target of this climate created by the fetishization of difference, in which one day the “Mexicans” would be targeted by “Blacks”, and on another the “Mexicans” would target the “Filipinos”, and so on. In some ways this situation could be seen as a direct symptom of the effect that the penal system has on lower income youth of color, as the forms of social organization utilized within the prison and youth detention systems, manifested as the codes of the streets or respect (Anderson, 1994, Bourgois, 1996), would bleed into other institutions such as high schools that serviced many students who would ultimately have intimate experiences with the afore mentioned institutions. In other ways these
“race riots” could be seen as a type of discipline, in which students were involved in dress rehearsals for future public conflicts, perhaps less violent but none the less salient.

So, while the embracing of various types of difference has led to a number of positive developments within communities, the fetishization of this difference can have numerous negative outcomes, that not only effect the development of subjects and perceptions of self-worth and citizenship through youth experiences, but continue to follow people into public spaces. In this way the fetishization of difference as a naturally occurring phenomenon obscures the larger web of connections that bind people together beyond the lines drawn by difference through a number of social and political processes. Colonial institutions originally drew these lines of difference as they dealt with the day to day practical managing and disciplining of colonial subjects (Bhabha, 2002, West, 2002); lines that were no less important in the imagination of the modern state (Goldberg, 2002, Omi and Winant, 1986) and continue to act as a bulwark of racial organization. Currently, the fetishization of difference allows for the concept to appear as natural as other forms of difference such as biological distinction between the sexes, which therefore allows for the work that was once done by colonial institutions to continue to be done by members of the general population as well as lower level institutions such as schools, youth programs, and even leisure oriented capitalist enterprises. For example, my 12 year-old son, who is now becoming interested in romantic relationships developed a close friendship with a young girl who happens to also be “racially mixed”. At his middle school, a small charter school that does not seem to be plagued with the similar above-mentioned racial tensions that were to be found in my high school, the gym coach commented on his relationship with this young woman, and observed that “the Blaxicans were dating each other”. While I think that this was intended as a harmless recognition of difference, it served to re-enforce the naturalness of difference with
which my son is already struggling as a “tri-racial” member of our society. My youngest son, 7 years old, has also been dealing with this and was just recently asked by a few of the childcare workers at a popular gym, “what are you?” My son responded by stating that he was “Black, Mexican, and Chicano”, to which they responded, “you don’t know, we will ask your father”, as they assumed he was Filipino. He is also trying to figure out how to negotiate the lines of difference that he finds himself surrounded by.

The fetishization of difference makes the lines drawn around the notion of difference appear to be a natural phenomenon, and hides the colonial legacies of which difference continues to be a part, as well as hides the larger webs of relations that bind marginalized peoples together, both within national and global contexts. Thinking about the ways in which the lines of difference are drawn, and how state and non-governmental organizations actively work to make difference “official” can expose the fetishization of difference, and help us to uncover the real webs of relations of which marginalized peoples are a part. This chapter serves as an ethnographic example of the ways that the Mexican state, specifically in Oaxaca, and other non-governmental organizations are working to make “Blackness” an official form of difference in Mexico. This chapter also focuses on some of the potential pitfalls that could be associated with this project and the ways that the project of making “Blackness” official in Mexico can work to partially empower Blacks in Mexico while simultaneously relying on the fetishization of difference and re-enforcing the legacies of colonial forms of difference.

**The Scene:**

The United Nations’ declaration of 2011 as the “International Year for People of African Descent” can be seen, in many ways, as the ideological backdrop for the recent political
activities, both among local Oaxacan NGO’s and the Oaxacan state, regarding social, cultural, and political recognition of Mexico’s Black population. Political action regarding this struggle has been ongoing for at least 20 years, as Father Glynn Jemmot began his local organization, Mexico Negro, sometime ago in 1993, but the state of Oaxaca, and Guerrero, stepped up their attentions and began putting serious resources into the subject of recognition for African Descendants in this year (“International Year for People of African Descent”). The UN states,

> Around 200 million people who identify themselves as being of African descent live in the Americas. Many millions more live in other parts of the world, outside of the African continent. In proclaiming this International Year, the international community is recognizing that people of African descent represent a distinct group whose human rights must be promoted and protected (http://www.un.org/en/events/iypad2011/).

In this same year, the state governments of both Oaxaca and Guerrero began to strategize with ways to seriously include African descendants within the racial, ethnic and cultural milieu through recognition of existence and rights within the respective state constitutions. This process of official recognition necessarily included the setting of a number of parameters and the invention of official definitions of Blackness. This process of defining and setting parameters brought a number of groups to the table and involved a negotiation between state government, local non governmental organizations, and a number of politically active and not so active community members. It is within this forum, partly brought about by the UN declaration of the “Year of the African Descendant”, that official forms of difference were being created in 2011 in Oaxaca and Guerrero.

The methodology for the state organized portion of this project was borrowed from pre-existing methodologies developed for the inclusion of indigenous communities within the state
constitution. This borrowing of methodologies highlights the approach to cultural diversity/multiculturalism that the Mexican government has been employing over the last several years. Built into this methodology are a number of issues that created tensions between local activists and state organizations, as well as forced local community members to seriously think about their own identities and the ways in which they understand their own cultural and social development. The Comision Nacional Para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indigenas (henceforth referred to as the CDI) was the federal arm that took on the development and implementation of the methodologies that would be used to locate, in a number of physical and metaphorical senses, the Black communities of the Costa Chica. In Oaxaca, the CDI was partnered with the Secretario de Asuntos Indigenas (henceforth referred to as the SAI) to help implement the methodologies that would be used for creating the official state and federally recognized ethnic group of African descendants. A later chapter will discuss the tensions that came about regarding the project of naming, a project that is still in the works, and most likely, due to the nature of racial/ethnic politics, will continue to change far into the future. For now, this chapter will deal with the methodologies and the actual practice of making difference official. This chapter will focus specifically on Oaxaca, as field research was conducted in Guerrero as well, but the majority of CDI sponsored consultations took place in Oaxaca, even though members of local non-governmental organizations and activist groups from Guerrero also attended.

With the help of the SAI, the CDI organized a number of Consultations (consultas) that were geared at literally defining and setting a number of parameters to actually locate and situate the Black communities of the Costa Chica. The first step engaged in by the CDI was the general objective to “Reconocer mediante un proceso de consulta a las comunidades de los pueblos afrodescendientes de Mexico y sus principales caracteristicas (Recognition through a process of
consultation with the communities of African Descendant peoples of Mexico and their principle characteristics – translation mine)”. The first step in this process was to present the methodology of the consultas to a number of politically active representatives of the Black communities. This presentation was exactly that, a sort of “unveiling” of the plan to approach the Black communities. At the first meeting in Jamiltepec, Oaxaca, the plan was unveiled to the audience of about forty individuals representing a number of Black towns as well as myself and employees of the CDI and SAI. CDI representatives in the capital city of Mexico drafted the plan. As mentioned before, the methodology for this plan was taken directly from previous approaches to the recognition of indigenous communities, which overlooked the racial components that have historically been partly responsible for the development and defining of Blacks in Mexico.²⁹

One such element was the approach to naming, which was a major point of contention between the CDI representative leading this first consultation and the audience members. This tension was a direct outcome of the fact that the methodology for the location and situation, or general recognition, of the Pueblos Afrodescendientes was developed without consultation and collaboration with the activists and community members from these towns. In this way a methodology, as well as a general racial and ethnic conception, was simply imposed upon the Black communities through the already popular lens of multiculturalism utilized by the federal Mexican government. The local community members and activists were under the impression that this first meeting would be a “brain storming activity”, while the CDI was under the impression that the “professionals” would present the plan which would then get ratified by the

²⁹ See appendix C for the proposed workshops that were later engaged in within Black towns and the cultural, geographical, and economic characteristics contained within these workshops/consultas.
community. After several hours it was recognized that some of the elements within the proposed consultas such as traditional subsistence activities and the production of traditional cultural wares was not relevant or was simply misconceived within the context of Costeno communities, but my sense was that the material was not going to change, as the “professionals” ultimately “knew better”\textsuperscript{30}. This is one example of the way that federal recognition can be a double edged sword, and can often times be conceived of in a way that suits federal agendas over the actual grassroots agendas of local communities. I would like to make it clear here that I do not believe there to be, or have been, some type of heinous plot against the recognition of Black communities on their own terms by the CDI. Rather, I think that the presentation of the CDI agenda to the Black communities was simply based on a number of pre-existing logics of government, multiculturalism, race, ethnicity, etc. However, I also have to recognize that these logics are also based on colonial legacies that were themselves conceived of, somewhat heinously, with well thought out and intentional effects on Black and Indigenous communities. In these subtle ways, the racial logics and legacies of colonialism can continue to haunt current political mobilizations of difference, and are anything but benign.

The brochure circulated to the activist organizations of the Costa Chica in Oaxaca by the CDI to promote the “Consulta para la identificacion de las comunidades afrodescendientes de Mexico” asks three important questions: ¿Quienes somos (Who are we)?, ¿Donde estamos (Where are we located)?, ¿Como nos identificamos (How do we identify)? And, the intention of

\textsuperscript{30} Interestingly, Lucila, an activist from the town of Charco Redondo, was at the time engaged in a project of documenting and/or inventing a number of “authentic cultural forms” that would allow towns recognition based on cultural products such as the recognition of Santa Maria Atzompá for its green glazed pottery, or the town of San Antonio Arrazola which has become internationally known for its Alebrije figures made of copal wood. Lucila believed that this was one path to recognition and success utilized by indigenous groups that was currently out of reach coastal negro communities.
the consulta is very clear, “Por el reconocimiento de nuestras comunidades y nuestros derechos”. Interestingly the inclusive pronoun of “we” is used within the language. This inclusive pronoun includes all community members, and ultimately a racial and ethnic symbolic community of African descendants (Nuestro Pueblo), within the CDI project and simultaneously puts the community on board with the CDI sponsored project and the approach to this project. Also, the project simultaneously recognizes a group of people without taking into account the processes that were responsible for the “social forgetting” of this group. I find it interesting that at this moment of invention, history is allowed to take a back seat while a people can be brought into the present and legally (officially) be recognized without the social recognition of the processes that have made this group invisible for so many years; in effect creating this group out of thin air. So, then, once the three questions of “who are we, where are we, and how do we identify are answered”, the business of applying rights to this “new” multicultural group can be begin in earnest.

The brochure continues with a list of rhetorical sub-questions that were developed to help elaborate on the three main questions stated above and which would ultimately find their way in some form into the list of subjects addressed by the consultations themselves. Added to the list are,

¿A que tipo de actividades productivas nos dedicamos? ¿Cual es el origen e historia de nuestra comunidad? ¿Como nos organizamos al interior de nuestra comunidad? ¿Hasta donde llega nuestra comunidad? ¿Como nos gusta que nos llamen o identifiquen? ¿Cuales son nuestras autoridades propias?

The single question on the brochure that deals with any type of historical perspective is the one that asks about the “origin and history of our community”. Interestingly this is not speaking of
the origin and history of the people within the community but the actual geographic community itself. This may take on a different context when applied to some of the indigenous communities who were “allowed” (somewhat tenuously throughout different political periods) to occupy and maintain traditional spaces, apart from the lands that were taken and developed as colonial centers. But, for Black communities the question of origin and history is inter-related with the origin and history of the Spanish and later Mestizo communities in the region. The question of a unique and separate community history and origin is something that can be perceived for indigenous communities, being that the indigenous groups are autochthonous to the region, but for Blacks the question of history and origin necessarily calls for the historicizing of the African descendant within broader colonial and later Mexican history.

Without argument, the indigenous history and origin in Mexico is intimately tied to the colonial moment, but the conception of the history of indigenous and Black towns has to be intertwined with the racial and ethnic realities of the colonial and later national moments if we are to get a realistic picture of the history and origin of these communities. Asking the question of history and origin of Black communities brings up a number of important questions that the CDI did not intend to address, and is not equipped to answer, especially with the parameters set forth by the Consultations. While indigenous and Black communities have different colonial histories within Mexico, both groups are, without a doubt, products of the colonial moment, and are therefore both colonized peoples. However, because of colonial understandings of biological and cultural difference and the historical difference in official connections and functions with relation to the Spanish crown during the colonial moment (Blacks being simultaneously part and product of the colonial moment), current approaches to space and place have to make linkages to
racial and ethnic experiences of geography and the interconnections that the process of “officializing difference” overlooks.

In fact, the lands that were developed later by escaped enslaved individuals undoubtedly had once been claimed by some or another indigenous group. Take for example the small pueblo of Charco Redondo on the outskirts of the Lagunas de Chacahua National Forest. Charco Redondo is one of several towns incorporated into the larger state of Oaxaca through the county seat (Municipio) of San Pedro Tututepec, also know as Tutu. Tutu is an important symbol within the local region as it is home to a local Indigenous community museum, Yuku Saa (Cerro de Pajaro/Bird Hill), and continues to be a strategic source for the grounding of indigenous identities within the coastal region. A friend and advocate/activist by the name of Lucila Mariche Magadan explained to me that during any heavy rain one could wander through the small town and find a number of indigenous artifacts as random as shards of pottery and as specific as fully preserved figurines (see appendix E). This was also corroborated by a number of residents in Charco. While I have not been able to validate the cultural origin of these “artifacts” (most probably Mixteco, Nuu Savi in the language as Mixteco is a Nuahtl word), I think that their existence below the surface serves as a metaphor for the multiple connections between Blacks, Indigenous, and Spanish (and now mestizos) in the region. While the Spanish approach to colonization of indigenous lands utilized a strategy of partial domination and incorporation through the transfixing of Colonial capitals on pre-existing Indigenous political and ceremonial sites, the strategies of escaped enslaved individuals absolutely necessitated a similar strategy that involved “homesteading” on and in pre-existing indigenous communities, although the intention was undoubtedly less heinous, but perhaps similarly violent. In this way the heavy down pours of the rainy season in Charco can be seen to un-earth the foundations and
colonial connections that the process enacted by the Federal Government, through the CDI, continues to overlook and perhaps build upon. Furthermore, these down pours ask us to re-think the ways that colonial logics of difference continue to inform our practices and conceptions of multicultural projects of equality and the ways that the projects inspired by ideas of multicultural equality continue to set the stage for conflicts based on difference.

The Major Players:

At least five governmental organizations/institutions, and at least thirteen local (Oaxacan) non-governmental organizations are sharing the political, social, and cultural, scene outlined above (see appendix D). After discussing the organizations, and their individual goals and intentions, with Heladio Reyes, current head of the non-governmental organization ECOSTA Yutu Cuii and former mayor of San Pedro Tututepec, I was able to get a sense of the tensions and the actual work that is involved in the project of making difference official. This process has been a negotiation, perhaps not one of equality, between the government and the many local organizations created by local Black advocates and activists. ECOSTA is mainly an ecological organization founded by Heladio Reyes, who also holds a degree in agricultural engineering, which began to officially direct some of its energies and resources at African descendant issues and “Los Pueblos Negros” in 1997. During my fieldwork in 2011, Heladio and the rest of ECOSTA were planning a gathering in order to bring communities throughout the Costa Chica together to discuss some of the issues that were important to Black communities, as well as some of the issues that were being focused upon by the CDI consultas. Heladio played an instrumental role as liaison and intermediary between the CDI and the Costa Chican communities, and was a huge factor in providing a platform on which local communities could then deliver their
perspectives and concerns to the ears and voice recorders of the CDI. I was told by another respondent that Heladio’s experience and previous position as mayor made him a very respected member of the community and allowed him the unique ability to mediate conflicts and tensions between local NGO’s. While Heladio was born in the Costa Chica, in Santa Rosa de Lima, I think that his racial and cultural Mestizo background also allowed him the ability to act as mediator between both groups. Heladio was perceived as knowledgeable about coastal issues without having a governmental connection and interest in those issues. In fact, Heladio, when asked to get involved in low level disputes, presented himself in this manner as he made it clear to all present that his only interest was to facilitate the important discussion between “los Pueblos Negros” and the CDI and that his place was not to make decisions. While Heladio Reyes and ECOSTA Yutu Cuii began focusing on the ecological issues of “Los Pueblos Negros” in 1997, it was not until later that they began to help with the organization and promotion of Blackness as a political and cultural identity within the Costa Chica.

I asked Heladio why, seeing as there were already a number of local Black organizations in existence, would he find it necessary to add to this mix and direct some of ECOSTA’s already limited resources to the Black communities? Heladio explained to me that a number of organizations were less effective than they could be due to political tensions between the organizations and the effect that these tensions had on productive collaboration. In one sense, this affected the priorities of some organizations. And, in some cases the goal of rights, representation, and recognition were overshadowed by personal or professional aspirations and personal politics. I witnessed a concrete example of how personal politics effect productive collaboration. In fact, at a meeting to discuss the consultas in Cuajinicuilapa I witnessed a situation in which Heladio had to mediate between two organization heads due to a difference in
official political party affiliation. Imagine a table at which are seated a number of heads of the local Black organizations. And, positioned at this table on either side of Heladio Reyes are two individuals, one affiliated with the PRI and the other the PAN. These individuals would then engage in indirect cross talk, where one would direct their questions and concerns at Heladio, who would then turn to the other individual and relate these questions or concerns to the person at whom they were directed, even though the intended subject of the conversation undoubtedly heard the other’s concerns, but yet refused to address his colleague directly.

On a basic superficial level, this example serves to demonstrate how inter-personal tensions can lead to a lack of collaboration and productivity between groups and individuals who at the very basic level share the same overall goals and intention. But, on another level, the example highlights the ways that an investment in difference as a political tool can overshadow the overall goal of equality and change. For example, in the struggle against racism the overall goal is (or should be) the eradication of racism. So, the overall goal of any institution or organization that is created to combat racism should be that glorious day in which the institution is no longer necessary, that day when everyone in the organization can walk away because the overall mission has been accomplished. In this way an organization whose guiding motivation is the destruction of racism should ultimately be working towards its own absolution or destruction. In fact, the success of the organization should necessitate its own demise. But, when groups become official organelles of the struggle against racism, for example, or when specific problems lead to permanent institutions within national governments people can often times make investments in the institutions, which do not allow for the future dissolution of the institution, which would in effect be self destruction. In this way the perpetuation of the institution depends upon the perpetuation of the actual source, in this case racism, which was
originally the cause of the inception of the institution in the first place. So, then, an investment in difference as a vehicle for change can be a trap of our own design, and can bring about contestations, not over methodologies and practices, but about visibility and personal successes. Paul Gilroy offers another way of looking at this phenomenon with his idea of anti-antiracism (1990). Gilroy calls for an anti-antiracism to combat the dialectic that arises out of the shared conceptions of race between the right and the left and racist and anti-racists rhetoric and discourses. Gilroy argues that as long as both positions share the same conceptions of race, then one position is simply a reaction to the other and does not allow for any alternative that does not rely on these conceptions. In this way, anti-racist solutions ultimately rely on racist conceptions of the problem. This is why anti-racist solutions often times go about combating particular racial/group “pathologies” rather than interrogating the perceptions and constructions of these pathologies as products of a previous era and racial order31 (Gilroy, 1990). Therefore, anti-racist solutions often times make investments in race in order to combat racism, which paradoxically reinforce racism itself. And, investments in organizations that approach race in a similar manner

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31 One example (however outdated) of this could be the approach to the Black family from the left and from the right. The right may argue that a lack of family values within the Black community do not allow for youth success in any number of areas. And, the response from the left may be to mobilize funding and government programs to address this pathology of the family in order to level the playing field. The assumption here by the left is that ultimately the right is correct in their analysis of the Black community. This assumption does not take into account the structural forces that limit the construction and maintenance of the Black family in the U.S., and therefore any attempts to combat this pathology are ultimately directed at Blacks themselves rather than the racial economy that allows for the persistence of this phenomenon. Add to this equation the institutions and organizations that are born in the shadow of this faulty assumption and we now have a situation where livelihoods (based on employment and governmental and NGO funding) depend upon the existence of this pathology of family values. We are then left with an economic investment in these pathologies rather than the motivation to eradicate them through solutions that call for real structural ideological change. I offer this example for the sake of argument and uncovering a particular logic rather than the interrogation of the conception of the family, which is another issue.
rely on the maintenance of these organizations (and the existence of racism) to garner future returns on these investments.

**Conclusion:**

The process of making difference official is based on colonial conceptions of essential difference. Rather than attempting to reconcile the tensions brought about by understandings of essential forms of difference, the project to make difference official, with the ultimate goal of state and federal recognition for African descendants, could very well serve to re-enforce the tensions and forms of inequality that the project set out to displace. As African descendants in Mexico were simultaneously part and product of the colonial process through their incorporation into the Spanish Republic of New Spain, Blacks may never be able to truly claim certain types of social or cultural difference in the same way that indigenous communities can. In attempting to officialize difference without interrogating the continued colonial logics inherent in the practice and manifestations of current forms of difference and the ways in which these logics then produced Black and Indigenous subjectivities and realities, the process of making difference official may very well be seen as a colonial project in itself. We must continue to be aware of the actual things that are getting officialized when we make difference official, as well as the realities that these forms of difference create for those that continue to fall beyond the borders of officialized difference. Michaels, as interpreted through Appiah and Gates (1995) suggests, “talk of culture is not (as Du Bois so often insisted) and alternative to talk of race, but a continuation of it by other means.” (Appiah and Gates, p. 03). The process of making difference official that is underway in Mexico at the moment relies partly on the conflation of race and culture in order to construct difference as part of a continued process of racialization. I do not argue that this
process cannot bring about some benefits for African descendants within the Costa Chica and Mexico more broadly. I do, however, suggest that we look more deeply into the process and interrogate what it is that the CDI, SAI, and the grassroots organizations are struggling to recognize as official and that we take Michaels’ warning/critique seriously when he argues that “the modern concept of culture is not, in other words, a critique of racism; it is a form of racism” (1992, p. 683).

The following chapter reviews some of the ethnographic material available on the political organization of Black communities within Latin America. This chapter is important to my argument that we must seriously interrogate what it means to racially “come of age” in any particular political era, and highlights some of the strategies available to and utilized by African descendant communities within Latin America in their quest for full citizenship within the region. The chapter also acts as a bridge to help the reader arrive at the ethnographic chapter (chapter 7) on how Black Mexicans are currently constructing narratives of self and making sense of their multiple black identities in order to frame their own struggle for citizenship within the current multicultural era in Mexico.
CHAPTER 6: CITIZENSHIP, MODERNITY, AND MULTICULTURAL POLITICS IN LATIN AMERICA

Introduction:

Throughout Latin America African descendants have attempted to politically mobilize in order to fight the effects of racial discrimination and the legacies of racial slavery within the region. In the current political climate the political playing field has been framed by what Charles Hale has labeled neo-liberal multiculturalism (2002) and what Juliet Hooker (2005) has referred to as multicultural citizenship reforms. These reforms have allowed for political maneuverability among specific groups based on the projection of distinct cultural forms. In other words, these multicultural citizenship reforms have allowed marginalized and subjugated groups to mobilize around a politics of difference that contests national notions of citizenship and argue for inclusion based on these distinct cultural differences. Neo-liberal multicultural politics structure the ways in which political identities can be mobilized within the larger nation state and work with particular national histories to define acceptable forms of difference and political action. For many African descendant communities within Latin America these multicultural citizenship reforms have meant that Black communities have had to attempt to re-articulate their relationships with the broader nation, as well as re-define the meaning of Blackness within the acceptable parameters dictated by the nation state. For many communities this has meant a re-definition of themselves in the multicultural friendly language of culture and ethnicity rather than the strategic invocation of historic discrimination or racism (Hooker, 2005).

The historical project of mestizaje and its manifestation within racial discourse of the present has proven to be a barrier to the successful attempts of Black communities within Latin America, and continues to dictate the ways in which the broader Latin American nation states
perceive their African descendant subjects through a lens of race rather than culture and ethnicity. I use the phrase “project of mestizaje” to highlight the strategic construction of national character and the face of the national citizen during what Martinez-Echazabal has labeled the consolidation period in Latin America (Martinez-Echazabal, 1998). An interpretation of Afro-Latinos through the lens of mestizaje has limited the ways in which they have been able to exploit the political possibilities offered by multicultural citizenship reforms, limiting their visibility within the nation as distinct cultural groups. African descendant groups continue to be caught in between discourses of race and ethnicity as well as the discourses of nation and Diaspora. This chapter will review some of the literature focusing on the political possibilities open to Afro-Latinos within Latin America. These strategies have called for Afro-Latinos to strategically maneuver in and out of Diaspora as well as to question existing hegemonic notions of modernity in order to position themselves within the nation state and re-imagine their claims to citizenship.

Multiculturalism and A Black Politics in Latin America:

Martinez-Echazabal argues that during the 19th century mestizaje was a recurrent trope indissolubly linked to the search for lo Americano. Later during the period of national consolidation and modernization mestizaje underscored the affirmation of cultural identity as constituted by “national character”. Most recently since the late 1980’s the concept of mestizaje has come to play an important role in the recognition of the plurality of cultural identities in the region as well as in the formation of a Diaspora identity (Martinez-Echazabal, 1998). Martinez-Echazabal argues that the pendulum effect of mestizaje allows for racialized discourse to oscillate from cultural absolution to cultural relativism, from the means to a homogenous and
naturalized national cultural identity to the site of a heterogeneous postcolonial one. Martinez-Echazabal illustrates how the various paradigmatic articulations of mestizaje in Latin America, while standing against the hegemonic discourse of racialism that promotes racial binarism, have not challenged racialism itself.

In both the US and Latin America, as well as the Caribbean, Whiteness has been identified with progress and modernity and Blackness with backwardness and inferiority (Safa, 1998). In Latin America a racial continuum made it difficult to raise racial consciousness and politically mobilize Blacks because the emphasis was on individual mobility through Whitening rather than on group solidarity (Hanchard, 1994, Safa, 1998). In Latin America and the Caribbean, mestizaje is increasingly being questioned as racial consciousness is aroused through migration, economic crisis, democratization, and the politicization of racial identities (Jerry, 2013, Safa, 1998). Safa Explains that the difficulties of Blacks in Colombia, for example, are due to the treatment of the Afro-Colombian as an “ordinary” citizen, without an acknowledgement of cultural or historic difference. This has been the rule of inclusion for African descendants within Latin American countries, yet the changing political climate within Latin America is helping African descendants to contest, if not change, the rules of the game.

Wade argues that as Blacks have nucleated in Colombia they have created and maintained cultural forms that are identified as Black culture. Wade wrote, the “possibility of seeing in nationalist discourse about race mixture both a celebration of mixture and a discrimination of Blacks and Indians is a characteristic of the contradictory coexistence of mestizaje and discrimination in Columbian society” (Wade, 1993, p. 19). As with Hanchard in Brazil, Wade argues that Racism in Colombia is seen as idiosyncratic from the top and not systematized. Blacks, according to Wade, are seen by Whites to be preoccupied with race, as if
race was internal. Wade uses the term incomplejo, having a complex, to speak of the above-mentioned notion. From the bottom, Wade argues that Blacks may see race as idiosyncratic as well. As to the strategies adopted by Blacks, Wade sees two directions, one of nucleation and community and the other of assimilation and adaptation. Wade sees both of the paths mentioned above as strategies to counter racism/discrimination within Colombia. Wade argues that the lack of culture thesis (imperative to mestizaje regarding Blacks in Latin America) makes Blacks invisible within the ideological framework of mestizaje while highlighting Indian culture. This lack of culture thesis also helps to create a certain value around race for Afro-Latinos. Therefore the promotion of authenticity in some form or another (i.e., Culture) is important in allowing for Black visibility, though this approach carries with it certain traps as well. Mestizaje, then, works to create Blacks as ordinary citizens (lacking culture) while excluding them from the heart of nationhood.

Sonia Alvarez argues that culture involves a collective process of producing meanings that shapes social experience. Cultural politics is defined by Alvarez as a process enacted when sets of social actors shaped by and embodying different cultural meanings and practices come into conflict with each other (1998). For Alvarez, politics is more than just a set of specific activities in institutional spaces; they are also power struggles in a wide range of culturally defined spaces (1998). The public sphere becomes an important space here for the enacting of cultural politics. With regards to social movements Paoli and Telles argue that Social movements are important for the potential to make politics public, to constitute public arenas, and to make public actors into valid spokespersons (1998). Public arenas render state administrations permeable to demands of civil society, removing the monopoly of defining social priorities and problems from the state (Paoli and Telles, 1998). A question that I am left with
here is how the state may take advantage of public arenas as well with the use of public violence, a real/material manifestation of the state? A show of violence may legitimate a view of social actors/movements as antithetical to national character and as not only attacking the state, but the national citizenry as well. Paoli and Telles argue that organized social movements allow for the imagining of groups and individuals into political society. Therefore even counters by the state cannot negate the existence of alternative political actors, agendas, and imaginings.

The mobilization of cultural politics and the success of social movements rely to a large degree on forms of essentialism, that is, the projection of cultural and political unification. At times this unification can mirror the essential notions of cultural and racial groups historically projected by the state. Rubin, in response to Canclini’s critique that essentialist assumptions explain why projects for transformations do not manage to alter the social structure, argues that Canclini overemphasizes the effect of essential discourses on social movements (1998). Rubin argues that through agency social movements may frame victories or protests within their own frameworks. Although internal discrepancies between essentialist rhetoric and reality may exist, the group hinges on essentialist rhetoric as strategy (Rubin, 1998). According to Rubin, essentialist rhetoric may be successful when framed within a model of cultural difference. While essentialist rhetoric may overlook peoples everyday lived experiences, Rubin argues that essentialist class and ethnic discourses, when combined in ambiguous ways with other forms of belief and action, can simultaneously reflect peoples' experiences and can be of considerable strategic use. Essentialism may allow for adapting beliefs and practices to those formed by others as a form of strategy. In this way people become agents of culture in process.

Grueso, Rosero, and Escobar argue that Blacks in Columbia recognize a discourse of difference, but unite under political agenda of cultural recognition, in contrast to defining
Blackness on skin color (1998). This is because the rhetoric of equality makes oppositional ethnic discourse impossible. No longer is the solution seen by Afro-Colombians as integration, but rather citizenship (Grueso, Rosero, and Escobar, 1998). Grueso, Rosero, and Escobar see ethno-Cultural movement of Black communities as being about alternative participatory (citizenship) practices articulated through a notion of cultural difference (1998). In this way, social mobilization of Black communities in Columbia embodies a politicization of culture (cultural politics) that has visible effects on established political cultures. Grueso, Rosero, and Escobar argue that the term autonomy seeks to articulate that, “social life, work, nature, and culture can be organized differently than as mandated by dominant models of culture and the economy” (1998, p. 213). While the struggle for Autonomy may be one avenue for securing citizenship rights within the nation state, it still does not address the issue of recognition in urban spaces and how urban spaces may be seen as, if not explicitly White spaces, then anti-Black or anti-indigenous spaces. For this reason, many of the social movements around race, ethnicity, and culture take place in rural spaces where Blacks and Indigenous people can make some claim, however tenuous, to a history of occupation or autochthony. Therefore the current process of African descendant recognition in Mexico may not only officially recognize African descendants, but officially trap them in imaginations of the rural spaces and the discourses that accompany these imaginations; un/under-development, backwards, and anti-modern, to name a few.

Sara England notes the importance of maroonage to the success of the Garifuna. She acknowledges that autochthony is connected to authenticity, but that these concepts confine identity to traditional space. For Arocha, a process of inclusion has to begin with national recognition, a process currently underway in Mexico, as reflected by chapter 5. Arocha argues
that historical processes have excluded the Afro-Colombian from national memory, in effect leading to a situation where “no culture leads to no ethnicity, which leads to no inclusion” (Arocha 1998). Arocha argues that as time passed, Colombians began to perceive themselves in binary terms, as “us” and “others” (indios), while Afro-Colombians were left in a semantic limbo that approached invisibility. On the pacific littorals African descendants were able to develop relatively autonomous territorial, economic, and political formations but were forgotten by the state. Still the notions that ethnicity is solely an Indian trait and that the only truly ancestral territories are Indian ones have persisted even after the enactment of the 1991 Colombian constitution (Arocha, 1998).

Greene’s analysis is in line with that of Arocha, as he explains that in order for indigeneity to become recognizable by institutions of governance it must typically be articulated in terms of bounded territory of origin (2007). Greene argues that indigeneity is also a spatial identity geographically within, but ethno-culturally separate from, contemporary national society. There is also a temporal component within ethnic autonomy, as indigenous groups are perceived to have existed before the contemporary nation and only to exist now by virtue of a presumed continuity between past and present. This indigenous continuity is often discussed through language of direct descendance, both ethno-cultural (inheritance of language and culture) and racial (inheritors of distinct bio-ancestry) descendance (2007). The Garifuna are one of the few African descended people within Latin America who have successfully exploited this strategy for semi-autonomous territorial rights. Greene argues that this strategy is often implied in Afro-Indigenous campaigns for recognition of what Greene calls the holy trinity of multicultural people hood - Culture+Language+Territory=un pueblo (2007). Greene argues that access to all three seem to be necessary for recognition as a collective, and that to be missing one
of the elements is to be considered already absorbed by another, fully recognized collective-the state. Arocha argues that the expansion of industrialized logging, shrimp aquaculture, plantation agriculture, cattle raising, and export are part of the Colombian government's commitment to neo-liberalism, a commitment that contradicts territorial rights and sustainable development, and forces African descendant groups as well as indigenous communities to mobilize around identity politics in order to re-articulate territorial claims in the language of neo-liberal multicultural reforms.

Hale uses the term identity politics to refer to collective sensibilities and actions that come from a particular location within society, in direct defiance of universal categories that tend to subsume, erase or suppress this particularity (Hale, 1997). Hale argues that the first dimension of Latin American politics has as its key feature a challenge to the premise that a unified subject could represent (both depict and speak for) heterogeneous identities and social processes. The second dimension involves critique of the internal relations of difference within any given form of political initiative, the effort to unsettle all forms of essentialism, emphasizing the invention of tradition, the hybridity of cultures, and the multiplicity of identities (1997). Hale finds the notion of strategic essentialism, which advances the claim that people deploy essential political rhetoric as conscious strategies rather than eternal truths, problematic and offers an alternative approach. An alternative approach might be, according to Hale, to challenge the very dichotomy between essentialism and constructivism, to posit that essentialism is inherent in all speech and actions, and to focus on who is utilizing, how its effects are employed, and where the effects are concentrated (1997). While an uncritical strategic essentialism may be problematic, political unification and mobilization based on a common sense or experience of subjugation may help to develop transnational solidarities.
For England the transnational community speaks to social processes being embedded in and carried out in two national contexts simultaneously (2006). Her main argument is that transnationalization of race, class, and gender has greatly complicated the way the Garifuna, for example, are positioned vis-à-vis these systems of equality in two national contexts (2006). She illustrates how social movements are shaped and formed by negotiating structures and ideologies of race, class, and nationalism encountered in U.S and Latin America. Here the transnational focus is on fluidity of racial and ethnic categories. Transnational solidarities can go beyond particular group ties such as those that allow for the imagining of a “Garifuna Nation” and can help to articulate local racial struggles within the context of a larger global or hemispheric movement. This articulation of transnational solidarities may be one strategy for contesting the historical racial and ethnic constructions that work in tandem with neo-liberal multicultural reforms to limit the effectiveness of indigenous and African descendant political mobilization.

All over multicultural Latin America, according to Ng’weno, both indigenous and African descendants, both historically categorized in racial terms, have made claims to autonomy, self-governance and territory as ethnic groups (2007). This is a specific type of political mobilization allowed by a particular type of politics in Latin America. The 1991 constitution in Colombia has fostered this type of political mobilization by classifying African descendants in Colombia as ethnic groups. This ability to be recognized through the language of culture and ethnicity has caused Blacks in Colombia to rearticulate their relationship with the nation in the terms of ethnic difference rather than a past legal rubric of race (Ng’weno, 2007). Ng’weno argues that race and ethnicity are in a co-dependent relationship that has solidified legally in new ways with the worldwide turn towards multiculturalism (2007). In particular, according to Ng’weno, there has been solidification of ethnicity as being culturally evident and
of race as referring to physical appearance. Ng’weno argues that communities don’t necessarily think ethnicity in terms laid out by the law, and that ideas of race and ethnicity are transformed by claimants even as they make claims under specific legal structures (2007). Ethnicity claims become strategic, and are therefore ways in which negotiation becomes possible for racial groups that may not have been traditionally allowed access to ethnic discourse and cultural difference due to racialization and discourses of tradition and purity or authenticity. Within Ng’weno’s framework African descendants have become part of the national/modern history and are therefore not eligible for ethnic status in the same ways in which colonial indigenous subjects are. Racial conceptions of Blackness, according to Ng’weno, place Blacks’ origins in Africa, which works against the claims to autochthony exploited by indigenous groups. Ultimately, Ng’weno argues that for African descendants ethnicity cannot replace race, because the two are co-dependent. The difficulty then lies not in African descendants ability to organize but, rather, their ability to become politically visible and acceptable under the terms dictated by neo-liberal multicultural reforms. This ability to become politically visible and acceptable is what is at stake in the process of becoming that African descendants are presently involved in as outlined in chapters 4 and 6. However, this process is an unequal process of negotiation, and while African descendants definitely stand to gain certain political concessions, they also find themselves in a precarious position where they are forced make certain concessions of their own with regards to auto-identification, self-representation, and group rights.

Hales sees multicultural groups as restricted by neo-liberal multicultural politics and argues that neo-liberalism’s cultural project entails pro-active recognition of a minimal package of cultural rights, and an equally vigorous rejection of the rest (2002). In this way neo-liberal multiculturalism does have the potential to menace, yet Hale sees the ability for cultural activists
to work within the political framework provided by neo-liberal multiculturalism. Hale defines neo-liberalism as,

“A cluster of policies driven by the logic of transnational capitalism: unfettered world markets for goods and capital; pared down state responsibilities for social welfare of its citizens; opposition to conflictive and inefficient collective entitlements, epitomized by labor rights; resolution of social problems through the application of quasi market principles revolving around the primacy of the individual, such as assessment based on individual merit, emphasis on individual responsibility and the exercise of individual choice” (2002, p. 486).

Hale argues that most existing analysis assumes that indigenous struggles and neo-liberal ideologies stand fundamentally opposed to one another and that any observable overlap is the result of unintended consequences or prior achievement of indigenous struggles. This analysis is incomplete and misleading, according to Hale, because it neglects what he calls “neo-liberal multiculturalism’, where by proponents of neo-liberal doctrine endorse a version of indigenous cultural rights as a means to resolve their own problems and advance their own political agendas (2002). Important to Hales analysis is the focus on indigenous groups, which have been able to effectively mobilize within Latin America due to historic notions of indigenous groups’ monopoly on and ability to maintain particular authentic cultural and ethnic forms. Without access to a form of indigeneity, Afro-Latinos may not be able to maneuver within this framework provided by neo-liberalism. Hale argues “neo-liberal multiculturalism has come about in part as a response to demands for rights by the culturally oppressed and excluded” (2002, p. 490). In this sense neo-liberal multiculturalism opens up new political spaces and offers significant concessions that would have remained beyond reach (2002, p. 490). But again the ability to
exploit this new political space is dependent upon a specific group’s ability to mobilize within the historic parameters of indigeneity offered by the state.

The concessions and prohibitions of neo-liberal multiculturalism structure the playing field in which cultural politics can operate, defining which rights are legitimate and which are not, as well as what forms of political action are and are not appropriate, and even what it means to be indigenous. In this sense neo-liberal multiculturalism holds the potential for menace in that,

“political and economic actors use neo-liberal multiculturalism to affirm cultural difference, while retaining the prerogative to discern between cultural rights consistent with the ideal of liberal, democratic pluralism, and cultural rights inimical to that ideal” (2002, p. 491).

The particular histories at play within the nation work with localized neo-liberal policies to define what actions and language are acceptable within a system of neo-liberal multicultural politics.

The underlying strategy of neo-liberalism, according to Hale, is to redirect and harness the political energy of cultural rights activism rather than to directly oppose it. Hale argues that part of this strategy entails the strategic deployment of resources to those that promote acceptable cultural rights demands and punish those that do not. The focus on individual rights is important to cultural strategies within a neo-liberal framework. But while cultural mobilization is allowed to individuals and groups by neo-liberal multiculturalism as acceptable forms of mobilization, the question remains, how do communities, as well as individuals, denied access to the discourse of distinct cultural difference mobilize around the historic experience of discrimination?
Juliet Hooker focuses her attention not on the potential to mobilize around ethnicity or cultural forms but, rather, around racial discrimination. Indigenous (also a racialized group in many ways), due to historical notions, are able to mobilize around culture and claim ethnicity, argues Hooker, while the process of racialization and mixing, has questioned the legitimacy of Black claims to ethnicity and specific cultural forms (Hooker, 2005). Hooker argues, “The main cause of the disparity is the fact that collective rights are adjudicated on the basis of possessing a distinct group identity defined in cultural or ethnic terms (2005). Indians are generally better positioned than most Afro-Latinos to claim ethnic group identities separate from the national culture and have therefore been more successful in winning collective rights” (Hooker, 2005, p. 01).

Hooker states that of the fifteen Latin American countries that have implemented some type of multicultural citizenship reforms, only Brazil, Nicaragua, Honduras, Colombia, Ecuador, and Guatemala have extended some collective rights to Afro-Latinos (2005). These rights have been extended based on the specific criteria used to judge indigenous claims in the same countries. Only Honduras, Nicaragua, and Guatemala have extended to Afro-Latinos in these nations the exact same collective rights available to indigenous groups. Hooker’s focus is on the contemporary existence of racial discrimination, not simply the historic exclusion of Blacks and Indians, and she argues that active processes of racial discrimination are partly responsible for the high costs of not being White borne by both the indigenous and Black Latin Americans today.

Hooker offers three arguments as to why multicultural policies have been adopted within Latin America in the past two decades. One argument is that neo-liberal reforms challenged

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32 See chapter 5 for example of this artwork in Mexico.
indigenous local autonomy and livelihoods, which led to increased ethnic mobilization, which in turn forced Latin American governments to partially acquiesce to indigenous demands. Another argument has been that multicultural citizenship reforms were pursued by elites to enhance the domestic legitimacy of the state during a time when Governments have found it increasingly difficult to meet the needs of its citizens. A third argument puts forth the idea that neo-liberal states are meeting certain demands in order to de-legitimize other more radical collective claims (2005). I agree with hooker that neither of these arguments provides a satisfactory answer as to why Afro-Latinos have not gained the same collective rights as indigenous groups from multicultural citizenship reforms. Hooker argues that an answer to this question lies in the different ways in which Blacks and Indians have historically been racialized, a process that has affected each group’s ability to frame claims for group rights in terms of cultural difference (p. 07). According to Hooker, the criterion by which subjects have been determined to be deserving of group rights has been not whether they have suffered racial discrimination but, rather, whether they were thought to posses and could prove their status as a distinct cultural group within the larger society.

The introduction of multicultural citizenship reforms does not change the attributes associated with indigenous individuals, rather it changes the value ascribed to them, so that an ancestral culture becomes worthy of preservation, and not a sign of backwardness (Hooker 2005). This preservation is also framed within a project to preserve the nation state in some cases, as the indigenous as a symbol may be used to promote a generic national character. In this way, indigenous groups offer a particular type of value to the nation state that Blacks cannot. Therefore, this strategy is specific to indigenous groups within Latin America, as Blacks do not

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33 A process I outline in chapter 4 with regards to African descendants in Mexico.
have access to any similar national or social capital. Indigenous strategies have adopted this framework provided by multicultural citizenship reforms and based their demands on their identities as distinct peoples more so than national histories of exclusion and discrimination. I feel it is important here to highlight the agency involved with group politics, as identity shifts (Warren, 2001) signify strategic maneuverability between racial and ethnic locations for African descendants.

Shane Greene argues that how institutions of governance view their subjects is not always, and probably never, the way in which subjects of governance view themselves. Recognition of the historical racialization of a particular group by the state, made visible by affirmative action initiatives, can easily lead to an emergent politics of ethno-cultural (re)affirmation by a racial group along with anti-racist equal opportunity politics (Greene, 2007). Greene investigates the roots and routes metaphor (Gilroy, 1993) as a way to think beyond the apparent dichotomy of the indigenous as an essentially immovable (rooted) identity and the African diasporic as an essentially movable identity. Greene argues that race categories are and have always been relational: not representing things in themselves, but quasi things in relation to other quasi things (Greene, 2007, Goldberg, 1993). Greene states that race categories make no sense without reference to the cultural and historical contexts through which they are attributed different meanings, boundaries, and overlaps. In this way I see the potential for cultural politics to transform the national categories beyond those on which specific groups center, that is, that cultural politics change the actual lenses that are available through which to view cultural difference.

Greene sees his contribution as thinking through the ways in which groups re-root and re-route themselves with regards to racial categories. He argues that lo Indio and lo Negro are not
only rooted in and routed through categories like Indio and Negro, but they also actively seek to re-root and re-route these categories. This resituating takes place through a form of cultural politics as discussed above (Alvarez, 1998, Paoli and Telles, 1998, Rubin, 1998, Grueso, Rosero, and Escobar, 1998). Greene is skeptical of Gilroy’s framework when applied to Latin America, arguing that Gilroy’s focus on the northern Atlantic represents a paradigm that leaves out other disparate Diasporas, such as people of the Black Pacific or Afro Andes (see also Whitten and Torres, 1998). I argue that while a metaphor of roots and routes still applies to these populations, a focus on counter cultures of modernity might be more important here, however Greene’s point is that any discussion of roots and routes is also a discussion of re-rooting and re-routing.

While Greene’s discussion of re-rooting and re-routing implicitly speaks to the strategies exploited by African descendant groups to ground themselves within the nation state, Edmund Gordon explicitly theorizes the ways in which African descendant groups make sense of disparate diasporic ties and utilize these ties in order to lay claims to a type of rooted citizenship. Gordon argues that creole politics in Nicaragua has embodied accommodation and resistance: creole politics is not monolithic, internally consistent, or stable (1998). This can be seen as the heart of Gordon’s disparate Diasporas, connections strategically drawn upon by creole communities depending upon the needs or goals of the community. For Gordon, identity and politics are not coterminous. We can learn more about identity, Gordon argues, by tracing its relationships to past relationships with political common sense (1998). These past relationships

34 I think this is an important point here productively elaborated upon by Bhabha’s notion of hybridity (1994). Understanding hybridity as not simply a combination or assemblage of elements, but more profoundly as the creation of something brand new due to the product of any combination within a social and cultural context, asks us to rethink the ways in which individuals and communities imagine their own roots and the role that routes play in modern or present understandings of selves and communities. Therefore, we must question the ways in which people are anchored within space or any particular moment in time.
are important to Gordon’s disparate Diasporas, and to an understanding of the way in which communities can make sense of past relationships. Gordon maps shifting creole identities through time as well as strategic acquiescence and resistance to state, foreign, and White power, and later quiescence to these same forces. For my own understanding, Gordon’s work is important for thinking through the ways in which communities put historic relationships, both national and diasporic, to work, politically speaking, in order to create social maneuverability.

In “Working Culture” Wade argues that a challenge to dualism (tension between social theories that privilege practice and those that focus on discourse) can be promoted by focusing on the tension between culture as a human activity of working in the world, in which material and symbolic are unified, and culture as a commoditized object in the context of hegemonic constructions of culture which construct it as primarily a set of symbolic representations (1999). For Wade, Social location and shared experiences of actors provide raw materials for identification, while processes of organizing and strategic choice contribute crucially to construct and shape identity. This bridges the gap between a strict focus on identity and an equally exclusive focus on resources, and highlights the changing nature of identity (Wade, 1999). Wade argues that an anthropological approach must insist that economics, politics, the family, art, and identities are all equally culturally enacted in ways that have meaning and symbolic value (1999). This highlights awareness on the part of actors of the meanings and the work that culture accomplishes. For Wade, the Material and the symbolic are not separate. To imagine a national community is a meaningful material act, argues Wade, which actually constitutes that community, just as buying a national newspaper or killing in the name of the nation (1999). Wade views cultural production as both a unified process in which the material and the symbolic are in principle inseparable, as well as a process of objectification and commodification carried
out in different ways according to different views and agendas. For Wade, practice is inherently meaningful and discourse is materially grounded.

Jonathan Warren examines the ways in which Indians in Brazil manipulate meaning and practice in order to contest dominant contemporary discourse and notions of indigeneity. Warren argues that rather than decline; the indigenous population in Brazil has increased. The resurgence of Indians is due to expanding parameters of definition. Initially I had concerns with Warren's preference for the term Indian over indigenous, but the term Indian is strategic and can be productive as it serves as a rhetorical tool. The use of the term Indian invokes historical and cultural baggage, yet the term forces us to think through this baggage and the ways in which the term has been adopted by Indians and can speak to a level of inclusion that indigenous may not allow. The term Indian can also serve to implicate particular populations in the processes involved in the subjugation and marginalization of this same population. In this sense Indian can be seen as a political tool; a term that has been re-appropriated by Indians and exploded in order to broaden the parameters and meanings previously associated with it through colonial legacies. In this way redefining Indianness is based partly on self-definition rather than imposed definitions. These expanding self-definitions are what warren calls racial identity shifts, that is, shifts towards Indianness and away from Whiteness. Post-traditional Indians (a coined phrase reminiscent to counter or alternative modernities) live in the rubble of tradition, that is traditions that have been crushed by conquest (Warren, 2001). Tradition in this sense is fragmented and blanks must be filled in through imagination. Important to this concept is the meanings that one

35 This process works in a similar way in the Costa Chica, as the term “negro” leaves a bad taste in the mouth of government officials. This bad taste is really the lasting flavor of the historical process racialization and exclusion, which began in the colonial moment. Through the process of implication, the term “negro” creates a type of acid reflux within the memory of Whites in Mexico, as the term forces them confront colonial legacies that were supposedly swallowed up by the rhetoric of mestizaje and the independence era.
ascribes to these ruins. This entails, in a move that is to me reminiscent of Afrocentricity, looking to fragments of culture as a central point of reference.

The question of material benefits offered by the state through neo-liberal multicultural politics leads to what Warren calls the racial huckster thesis. The racial huckster thesis implies that individuals claim indigenous identity for the material benefits offered by the state, in an attempt to exploit identity politics and the playing field opened up by neo-liberal multiculturalism. Warren suggests that this exploitation of identity politics is only minimal impetus for Brazil’s Indian resurgence, and that the racial huckster thesis is over determined by capitalist epistemologies. Warren argues that resurgence of Indian identity comes from redefinition of the category “Indian”, which effectively changes the value of Indianness36. It should be made clear here that his value should not be assumed to be economic or material. The elimination of the fear of anti-Indian violence has allowed for the embracing of Indian identity. This could imply that Indian identity was never under valued but, rather, a strategic assessment of the value may have led to the projection of a mixed or mestizo identity due to the negative values associated with Indianness, an argument I have put forward in chapter 4 with regards to African descendants in Mexico. The mixing that took place during a climate of fear is now responsible for outsiders’ views of impurity/authenticity and outsider issues of phenotype that lead to the espousing of the racial huckster thesis. A question that arises is whether or not the resurgence of Indian identity is partly an attempt to strategically avoid the negative associations of Blackness? Warren argues that in some cases this may be true, but that in general Indian resurgence is taking place in areas where Indianness is more stigmatized than Blackness. Warren also argues that in the current climate Blackness may have more social capital than Indianness overall.

36 See chapter 3 for my elaboration on racial and ethnic value in a larger racial economy.
Warren introduces his concept of “the law of the Indian and the law of the White” (2001). These laws speak to a contradicting common sense of Indianness. While both the law of the White and the law of the Indian may rely on similar conceptions of the Indian, the law of the Indian does not place the same value on the Indian condition as the law of the White. That is to argue, the law of the Indian values an Indian way of life rather than equating the Indian with concepts such as anti-modern. In this way modernity does not threaten Indian authenticity. The law of the Indian allows for varying characteristics in defining Indian. The law of the Indian allows for multiple authenticities and therefore continued Indianness within the context of modernity, which is counter to the law of the White, which limits Indianness and renders it a relic or artifact.

Warren’s utilization of the law of the White and the law of the Indian to articulate the ways in which Indian identity in Brazil contests the notions of anti-modernity and backwardness that exist in mainstream White conceptions of indigeneity are, to me, reminiscent of Gilroy’s concept of counter cultures of modernity. For Gilroy, counter cultures of modernity are not counter to modernity and share the same sense of modernity. The idea of a counter culture of modernity, as I understand it, is a theoretical tool to understand what is happening beyond the parameters of modernity as defined by notions such as the nation state, development, etc. Countercultures of modernity speak to the effects and experiences of “modernity” as well as the product of these experiences both within and beyond the spaces of the so-called modern.

The Black condition is one of these counter cultures of modernity, as it is fundamentally a creation of modernity as well as being a contributor to the western/Euro notion of modernity. An example of this is the way in which the history of slavery is assigned to Blacks rather than a history of the west in popular analysis and discourse. Racial slavery, at least in the new world, is
the foundation of modernity (Gilroy, 1993), and therefore the Black experience cannot be
divorced from modernity but rather modernity may be contingent upon it. Music becomes a
main example of Gilroy’s concept of the Black Atlantic and the creation of counter cultures of
modernity. Gilroy argues that storytelling and music making contributed to the making of an
alternative public sphere. A question that occupies Gilroy’s theoretical attention is how do Black
expressive cultures practice remembrance (1993)? Gilroy argues that a break from the past does
not mean that traditional Africanisms do not survive, but that the significance and meaning of
these survivals get irrevocably sundered from their origins. Gilroy uses the concept of anti-anti
essentialism to bridge the gap between ontological essentialism and pluralist positions. Gilroy
argues that both ontological essentialism and pluralism are both types of essentialism and uses
the concept of anti anti-essentialism to speak to agency and creation as well as politics.

Michael Hanchard picks up on Gilroy’s concern with exploring the parameters utilized by
notions of modernity and attempts to take Gilroy’s counter cultures of modernity a step further.
Hanchard’s central question regarding modernity is how and in what ways have African
descended peoples been modern subjects? This question speaks to the ways in which African
descendants have been shaped or created by notions of modernity, both as a specific frame of
time and a discourse. Hanchard argues that only under conditions of modernity could people
defined as African utilize the very mechanisms of their subordination for their liberation.
According to Hanchard, African Diaspora scholarship is dominated by two tendencies: one being
the Herskovitzean model, which focuses on African residuals or survivals, and the other
tendency being what Hanchard calls the mobilization model; studies that focus on resistance,
both overt and veiled. Gilroy’s use of countercultures of modernity raises more questions for
Hanchard. Hanchard asks, if Afro-Modernism is a counterculture of modernity, then is it merely
an appendage of Western modernity and European modernism? Is its existence to be defined solely in terms of its critique of the west, or does its presence hint at one of several divergent paths of modernity?

While I find Hanchard’s questions useful to the exploration of the Black diasporic experience, I see an attempt to draw some hard and fast lines between what Hanchard has called Afro-Modernity and the way in which Gilroy uses countercultures of modernity. While there may be particular experiences of modernity, and while subjects may be framed differently by discourses of modernity, we cannot overlook the ways in which these countercultures of modernity are dependent upon each other. Gilroy’s countercultures of modernity allows for this interaction. This is, perhaps, why Gilroy, while using the Black Atlantic as an example of the ways in which modernity exists beyond the western parameters of the concept, does not take the next step and coin the phrase Afro-Modernity, or Black modernity, and prefers to highlight the Black Atlantic as a system of diasporic interaction (1993).

Hanchard argues,

“That Afro-Modernity is no mere mimicry of western modernity but an innovation upon its precepts, forces, and features. Its contours have arisen from the encounters between people of African descent and western colonialism not only on the African continent but also in the New World, Asia, and ultimately Europe itself” (p. 247).

If this is the case then an Afro-Modernity is a particular experience of modernity and cannot be separated from a western modernity. I have to ask the question what does the concept of Afro-Modernity do for us that countercultures of modernity cannot? Hanchard argues that Afro-Modernity helps us underscore the development of horizontal relationships between political
actors in various nation states for the purpose of challenging policies in one or more nation states. Interestingly, my work in Mexico suggests that at the moment, these horizontal relationships are less important to narratives of blackness and history than are projects of grounding communities within the present in Mexico through local histories. I do not argue that this is because diasporic relationships and imaginations are not important or non-existent, but rather current political possibilities and potentials may make these relationships less relevant within projects of recognition, visibility, and legitimacy within the Costa Chica.

Hanchard discusses the idea of erased and blank slates. By erased slate, Hanchard refers to the way in which African descended peoples are imagined to have no history before the European interventions leading to the forced diasporic dispersal of African descendants. In this sense, African peoples are denied both a past and history. A blank slate refers to a slate that had yet to be written on, and when it was the narrative would be composed, or at least dictated, by western powers. Both erased slate and blank slate conceptions of the past lead to what Hanchard calls a temporal disjuncture. By temporal disjuncture, Hanchard means to illustrate the way in which African descended peoples are forced to play a game of catch up in relation to western ideals. Hanchard sees racial time as one disjunctive temporality of both western and Afro-Modernity beginning with the emergence of racial slavery. Racial time is defined by Hanchard as, “the inequalities of temporality that result from power relations between racially dominant and subordinate groups” (p. 253). Unequal relationships between dominant and subordinate groups lead to unequal temporal access to goods, services, institutions, etc. For Hanchard, time, when linked to relations of dominance and subordination, is a construct that marks inequality between various social groups. Hanchard relates three conceptual facets of racial time, waiting, time appropriation, and the ethico-political relationship between temporality and notions of
human progress (1999). Hanchard initiates a conversation with Benedict Anderson, and goes beyond the nation in theorizing diasporic understandings of imagined community, arguing that the nation is a secondary consideration within Afro-Modern politics. In this sense, perhaps time, as invoked by Hanchard is responsible for a distinct development of modernity, which hinges on the modern construction of race.

Michael Hanchard argues that race operates as a shuttle between socially constructed meanings and practices, between subjective interpretation and lived material reality. In Brazil, a Process of racial hegemony has effectively neutralized racial identification among non-Whites to a large degree, making it an impossible point of mass mobilization among afro-Brazilians in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paolo (1994). Racial hegemony, invoked by Hanchard, promotes discrimination (racial) while simultaneously denying its existence (1994). It promotes a false sense of racial equality while simultaneously reproducing social inequalities. Hanchard’s argument is that racial hegemony does not allow for labeling of social inequalities as racially motivated, and instead relies on an often-invoked class argument. For Hanchard race and class are often inseparable from historical processes. I would add that if a system (capitalist social structure) is historically tied up in racism then mobilizing around the goal of racial uplift without calling for a change in structure will prove to be a limited strategy and can only fall into the neo-liberal trap of articulation as discussed by Charles Hale (2002). This may explain the autonomous yearnings of the EZLN and African descendants in Colombia for example, but space remains an important component here, because autonomy does not get at issues of urban visibility and discourses of authenticity, tradition, or modernity used to organize neo-liberal multicultural politics. Hanchard and Gilroy attempt to approach this through ideas of Black and counter cultures of modernity. Hanchard argues that for many, racism is perceived, as well as
projected as idiosyncratic, rather than structural or institutional. This is due to racial hegemony and a discourse of class. In regards to categorization, Hanchard notes that Mulatos and other categories appear as individual offspring, not as members of groups. Without the analysis of group exchanges, there can be no claims made for group inequalities. The discursive device of categorization does not erase the impact of encounters between dominant and subordinate; what Hanchard calls soft collisions. Hanchard argues that, “when infused with dynamics of power and inequality, the memories that constitute national or common memory are related but distinct” (p. 145). I believe that this is Hanchard’s concept of Afro-modernity, but it does not highlight reliance on interaction in the same way that Gilroy’s countercultures of modernity and Black Atlantic do.

Hanchard’s analysis has been critiqued, by Bourdieu for example, as imposing his own understanding of a North American racial system on Brazilian race relations. Bourdieu subscribes to the well-known Brazilian myth of racial equality and overlooks systems of racial discrimination in operation in Brazilian society. Sansone argues that, “applying to Bahian reality the interpretive models created for the study of the Black population in the US can help to identify global processes, but it can also lead to neglect the Brazilian third world specificity. This does not mean reducing everything in the situation of Black Brazilians to a class problem, as most Brazilian intellectuals did until a couple of years ago, but simply introducing an element of relativity” (Sansone, 1997).

In an attempt to re-evaluate the concept of Diaspora, Gordon and Anderson argue for a shift in focus toward analysis of the process through which individuals identify with one another as “Black” or “African”. One question asked by the authors is whether or not an academic “truth” concerning local Blacks’ origins is more correct than their lived one? This question is
meant to question diasporic affiliations and how Diaspora is lived on the ground rather than highlight false assumptions of imagined transnational coherence. The authors see a focus on the various processes through which communities and individuals identify with one another as more valuable than concentrating on essential features common to various peoples of African descent. The question becomes how do we recognize a member (community or individual) of the African Diaspora (Gordon and Anderson, 1999)? The answer, argue the authors, “is complex and variable but typically relies on an understanding of racial categories and constructions, whether externally or internally imposed or self-ascribed” (p. 288). Gordon and Anderson argue that Black identities are not derived from dominant racial constructions but that they necessarily engage them in the effort to imagine a discrete sense of peoplehood. In this way diasporic identities are created and re-created through routes, but they are also imagined as rooted. The authors thus advocate an “ethnography of Diaspora, conceived not simply as the ethnography of various communities of African descent but, rather, as an ethnography of various forms of diasporic politics and identification” (p. 289), an ethnography that I offer through my work here on the Costa Chica. “Racial identities are not given in nature but are constructed, ascribed, affirmed, and denied. The creation and expression of these identities occur under local conditions yet take on diasporic dimensions when the people involved share symbols of a global Blackness” (p. 294). In this sense Diaspora is a subject position that individuals move in and out of (Johnson, 2007). For Johnson, becoming diasporic changes historical and territorial horizons in relation to the present. Therefore, Diaspora is valuable as it allows for the potential to imagine new forms of citizenship. However, I argue against the privileging of diasporic analysis over the specificity of local political histories and suggest that we pay close attention to the ways in which
ethnographies of local racial projects and contestations over the process of racialization can change our current conceptions of the value of race and the potentials of racial politics.

**Conclusion:**

In the current neo-liberal climate within Latin America and the Caribbean, perhaps as well as the United States, the parameters encompassing national citizenship have been redrawn, and therefore re-imagined by marginalized groups within the nation. The re-configuration of boundaries has called for the re-articulation of subjugated groups’ traditional relationships with the larger nation State. While the adoption of neo-liberal reforms have set the margins for the political playing field, neo-liberal multicultural politics have allowed for some political maneuverability within this framework, and while, as Charles Hale’s work demonstrates, relationships with the state may still be precarious, the potential to challenge traditional institutional invisibility does exist. Within this climate invocations and contestations of concepts such as Diaspora and modernity continue to be important to providing other avenues of citizenship and political imagination, allowing for the expansion of the political playing field dictated by neo-liberal multicultural politics. Within this chapter I have looked at the ways in which several different scholars are approaching the Black Diaspora within Latin America, and what possibilities they envision for future political participation in Latin America. The one theme that has linked all of these works together, and continues to be a salient theme within work on the Black Diaspora, is that identity is inherently political, and that agency and resistance, currently manifesting themselves in the form of identity politics, continue to be an active part of African descendant lives.
Within the multicultural climate the push for citizenship is predicated on the acceptance of difference rather than previous strategies of incorporation. This acceptance of difference, however, requires that groups not only prove their difference but demonstrate this difference in ways that invoke forms of authentic culture. As seen in chapter 5, there is an official process of creating difference underway in the Costa Chica. However, this process is running into difficulties due to the clash between colonial logics of difference and local perspectives based on local conceptions of self and community. Perhaps this clash is the point at which contradictions collide and meaning is made or at least negotiated, and perhaps it is within the margins in which citizenship is constructed.

Currently within Mexico, it is at these points of collision that Black Mexicans are making sense of themselves as they use the past to think about the present as well as drawing on the present to reconstruct the past. This process is inherently political and can be a tricky road to walk. The racial politics currently underway in the Costa Chica implicate both Blacks and Whites (also read Morenos and Mestizos) in the historical construction of the present and contradict official stories of mestizaje. What follows in chapter 7 is an ethnographic account of how some people are telling the narratives of what it presently means to be Black in the Costa Chica. This chapter takes seriously the call for an ethnography of the process of Diaspora, and while these narratives at times contradict each other, they ultimately show the complexity within any community.
CHAPTER 7: THE ART OF THE NARRATIVE

Introduction:

This ethnographic chapter focuses on the way that Black Mexicanos tell the story of what it means to be them. It is recognizably impossible to paint a picture of each and every individual experience and/or expression of Blackness by local Costa Chica residents. But, a snapshot of these experiences and expressions are helpful for understanding experiences that may be common to all in some way or another, and the ways in which these experiences may motivate the political process as well as define personal and communal experiences of the Costa Chica as a cultural and political racialized space. This chapter will touch upon a number of different narratives in order to create the above-mentioned snapshot. However, the main focus will be on three distinct examples ranging from how one woman is attempting to create, or remember, a distinct cultural identity through the promotion of a cultural narrative surrounding Blackness in the Costa Chica (as well as the Larger nation and Latin American region), the ways that Black activists are attempting to incorporate their communities into the Global eco-tourism industry, based on their understanding of a unique culture, history, and life ways to self professed definitions, representations, and conceptions of Blackness through artwork that has gained international attention. These narratives give a glimpse into the cultural and political project currently taking place within the Costa Chica. The narratives both contradict and reinforce negative stereotypes and shed light on activists’ own feelings and beliefs about the broader racial/political project of Blackness within the Costa Chica as well as the social location that Blacks feel they currently occupy and should occupy in the social and political hierarchy.

Briefly presenting a few of the narratives that I came across will provide some context for the main narratives that I will focus on in this chapter. These narratives were related to me
during casual conversation and were not expressed as a representation of a larger group experience or identity. These brief narratives are distinct in their form and function from the main narratives that I will focus on in the body of the chapter. Firstly, these brief narratives were not relayed to me as part of a larger group or political narrative. In fact, they were not related to me as narratives per se, but rather came out as I inquired about personal knowledge and experiences in the Costa Chica and the communities of the region. However, I would argue that these personal narratives express experiences and share qualities that bind individuals together through the region, which can then serve as a foundation or platform from and through which larger political narratives are created and contextualized.

The first narratives discussed are mainly personal stories that shed light on the ways in which people “inject” themselves into space and place as they retell stories of past experiences. These narratives are helpful in understanding how people relate their own experiences to race. In contrast, the narratives that will be the main focus of this chapter reflect personal and group projects that were conceived of as intentional political projects. These political projects explicitly rely on race as a base for their invention and presentation. In this way, some of the narratives discussed within this chapter can be seen simply as reflections on past experiences, while the main narratives show the actual process behind the construction of a narrative of self and a people, as the activists engage with “the art of the narrative”.

Three Personal Narratives of Self:

Getsemani y Liliana

Getsemani and Liliana offer two different perspectives, one positive and the other less so, on the issues of ideological and physical Blackness. I met Getsemani in Chacahua. She was originally
from another part of the Costa Chica, but had relatives in Chacahua and was there working with these relatives who owned and operated a restaurant and several cabanas. Getsemani asked me about my work and what brought me to Chacahua. I explained to her that I was an anthropologist doing research in the Coast on the current Black project for constitutional recognition. Getsemani seemed very interested in my work overall as an anthropologist. However, she was less interested in my actual research interests and topic of Black identity in the coast. This initial conversation opened up another more profound conversation regarding her personal feelings about her own racial location.

Getsemani explained to me that she did not “like” her color. When I asked her why, she found it difficult to explain and could not really offer a concrete answer. She suggested that it was easier to be “Blanco que Negro” (speaking of color), and then reiterated that she did not like her color and stayed out of the sun so that she would not get darker. This is ironic, as the majority of tourists that come to Chacahua come for the sun, surf, and the activities promoted through the eco-tourism industry. Chacahua is fast becoming known within surfing circles for a more gentle surf than that offered by the beaches in Puerto Escondido, and therefore surfers are becoming more regular tourists as they take advantage of the low cost low frill amenities. I could not get Getsemani to talk much about the subject of skin color, as she seemed to be embarrassed talking about her own “color”. This may be due to the fact that there is not much of a foundation for this identity, a positive Black identity based on phenotype, in Chacahua. There are plenty of Black folks in Chacahua, and many are quick to identify as such, identifying with the term Negro (at least in my presence), however a political identity seems to be lacking. For

37 The residents of Chacahua have been surfing their own beach for years now. In fact, several locals have been recognized through their success in national and international surf competitions at the near by beach of Zicatela in Puerto Escondido.
her part, Lucila Mariche-Magadan (discussed below), a well-known activist in Chacahua, is attempting to change this, but at the moment the political manifestation of a “Black identity” has yet to be realized.

While Getsemani did tell me that she did not like her skin color, and that “no me gusta a meterme en el sol, porque no quiero quemarme mas”, she also told me that she did defend her folks (gente) from discrimination. She related to me an experience she had in middle school in Puebla, where she lived for several years. She explained that when the class was discussing Blacks in Mexico, in a context that she did not elaborate on, many of the students had negative things to say about Blacks. Getsemani, according to her story, defended Blacks by saying that those negative things were not true, and that Blacks also had White blood, sangre Blanco, while Whites shared Black blood, sangre Negro. Clearly, Getsemani was referring to the common unions of darker and lighter skinned individuals within the region and the broader recognition of Mexico as a mestizo nation. While Getsemani would not give me any specific examples of the things that were said in the classroom, her response demonstrates the way in which her defense of Blackness does not rely on a positive construction or promotion of cultural elements, but rather a reliance on the idea, somewhat underdeveloped, of mestizaje. I think that part of the problem for Getsemani is that she does not have a foundation (historical, cultural, or political) to draw upon and which she could then defend her “gente”. Instead, she can only combat racism with the old notion, the national notion, that “we are the same”. This is much the issue with the idea of “Blackness” in the coast.

Getsemani told me that it was hard for her to be in Puebla, because “most of the people in Puebla are White (Blanca). While Getsemani relied on the historic notion of mestizaje to defend “her people”, her narrative clearly shows that she also relies on the notion of racial difference to
tell her story and to construct her own self-image. Due to the positive value that she relates to “Blanco” and the lack of a cultural foundation, a foundation that Lucila Mariche-Magadan is actively attempting to build in the surrounding area, Getsemani finds it hard to take very much pride in her “color” and continues to place negative value on her own Black skin. Alejandro Lugo (2008) gives examples of the ways that this same phenomenon of placing negative value on darker skin colors is promoted within popular culture in Mexico, specifically in the U.S./Mexico border region of Ciudad Juarez. While racism may not be out right, the same phenomenon, labeled “colorismo” by Lugo, can be seen to be prevalent within popular culture. The colonial connection between decency and lighter skin colors, therefore, continues to inform the popular nightlife scene in Ciudad Juarez through adverts that suggest that the weekends are for “pretty people”, and reinforce this popular belief with visual representations of lighter skinned “beauties” with European features (p. 142). These are the popular conceptions about color that Getsemani has internalized and why her attempts to defend her “gente” have to rely on mestizaje, or the mixing of Sangre blanco y negro, rather than more substantial elements of race and culture shared by African descendants within the region.

Shortly after speaking with Getsemani, I had a casual conversation with Liliana while we shared a camioneta ride from Chacahua to the launch landing heading toward the small Costa Chica town of Zapotal. Liliana told me of a “ciclo de video” (film festival) by the name of “Identidad Negra”, which was being promoted that spring (2011) within the immediate communities surrounding Chacahua. The themes to be tackled during this ciclo de video, according to the “official advertisement”, were; the history of slavery (historia de esclavismo), Black identity (identidad Negra), racism and discrimination (racismo y discriminacion), and Black movements (movimientos Negros). I found out later that this “ciclo de video” was
sponsored by the ecological organization Ecosta Yutu Cuii, and facilitated by local activist Lucila Mariche-Magadan. The festival was scheduled over a period of four weeks and included the local towns of Chacahua, Charco Redondo, El Azufre, La Pastoria, Lagartero, and Cerro Hermoso. These towns are some of the main towns surrounding the Lagunas de Chacahua National Park, and are easily accessible to the local surrounding communities.

After telling me of the ciclo de video, Liliana explained to me that many people do not know any history about where Blacks are from, or how they got to the coast. She informed me that she herself had been to the US and was surprised to see Blacks in the US, as she had thought that there were only Blacks in Chacahua and the surrounding area. Liliana was about 40 years old or so, and her age and knowledge about the “African Diaspora” shed some light on the relative age of the new cultural and political movement represented by such local projects as the “Identidad Negra” film festival, and how this movement has yet to really take affect within smaller communities. In fact, the larger Mexican Project of “Afro-Mexican” recognition seems to have done little for the combating of racism and the development of a strong cultural/social foundation, as witnessed by Getsemani’s narrative of her own lack of self esteem, as well as the fact that some of the institutional projects of recognition, such as the “Tercera Raiz Project” are coming from places and institutions such as UNAM in Mexico City and the Instituto Veracruzano de la Cultura.

During the 2011 “Festival MA(yo)”, May 2-15, 2011, UNAM sponsored a conference focusing on Afro-Latino issues. Interestingly this conference did not feature any presentations by local activists working in the Costa Chica region. However, a book, Afro America: La Tercera Raiz, was available for sale at the conference that presented the African presence in Mexico. This book was published by UNAM in Veracruz, and offered much of the same information focusing on routes and early African cultural forms or contributions available at the Museo in Cuajinicuilapa, however within the context of the broader region of Latin America.
Liliana had no problem referring to Blacks as Negra or Negro. She herself was quite dark in complexion and self identified as negra. Getsemani, on the other hand, who is younger (20 years of age), told me that for the most part “Negro” is a negative term. My experience with this term through countless conversations is that the value associated with the term “Negro” becomes dependent upon context and upon who and when the term is being used. Liliana for example was using the term as a way to mark inclusivity and refer to the larger group of which she also identified. While Getsemani, on the other hand, has encountered and internalized the term in more of a negative way. Getsemani may not have been able to use or even hear the word without putting it into a Black/White dichotomy, and then imparting the correct social value to each term within the dichotomy. In this way, “Negra/o” for Getsemani is always the negative counterpart of “Blanco”.

**Paolo:**

A conversation that I had with Paolo is helpful in illustrating the point of context. Paolo is a resident of Chacahua, where he and his wife run a very successful cabana and restaurant operation. Trying to get a sense of generational linkages to Chacahua, I asked Paolo if his great grandfather was also from Chacahua. He explained that he did not know his great grandfather but that he thought that he might have been from Africa. He said that he might have arrived to the Costa Chica as well with his grandfather. Paolo explained that there was a ship\(^{39}\) that landed at “Puerto Miniso”, a small beach a few kilometers outside of Collantes. From this port, “los negros desembarcaron” and began to mix with the indigenous in the Costa Chica. Paolo told me that the negros were well received by the indigenous, and elaborated on this point by relating to

\(^{39}\) See Lewis for other examples of a similar narrative of “the ship”.

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me a story about his youth. When Paolo was 18, he explained, he went to an indigenous pueblo to trade and sell fish. He told me he was well received by the indigenous community, “especially the women”. He told me and the tiny group that had become his audience, that they were enamored by his hair and skin color, and were rubbing his hair and saying “ven aca, morenito”. I asked if Negros were still well received in the indigenous communities of the coast, and he responded that yes, they were still well received.

This last response was a bit contradictory to what we had discussed in a past conversation, when he told me that there were often times tensions between negros and indigenous in the coast. However, our previous conversation was within the context of a different type of commerce. Many locals in Chacahua engage in the consumption of Marijuana. However, the actual trade of the product may bring trouble, and there seems to be some shared animosity towards those that make it their “business” to sell drugs. I also think that trouble may come from the competition between communities to capitalize on the tourist market and demand for this substance. In this way, local growers may be seen as competition, as this system then gets racialized. Cocaine, in its processed street form, complicates this relationship even more, as the coast is becoming well known for narco trafficking and the business is providing opportunities for many young morenos on the coast, both in the Costa Chica and the Isthmus region. For example, upon my arrival to Chacahua I was looking forward to reconnecting with a friend that I had made on a previous trip. While catching up with Paolo, he explained that this old friend had been murdered 20 days prior. I asked what for, and Paolo responded “por sus cosas”, which undoubtedly meant his involvement in the illicit marijuana and cocaine trade that is becoming a real issue for locals in the region. Paolo explained that when he went to the unspecified indigenous town mentioned above, “un indio”, by the last name Ramirez, invited
him to a case of beer. According to Paolo, while they sat and drank the beer and listened to mariachi music, he still kept his wits about him and was never unaware of the exits, as he was unfamiliar with the land in the community (“no sabia el terreno”).

Paolo’s narrative of his own Blackness walked the line between positive and negative value. And while he may not have internalized the negative value in the way that Getsemani had done in order to create her own self-image, Paolo was definitely aware of the ways in which Blackness could be un-anchored, or perhaps better said, simultaneously anchored to a number of social values. I find it interesting that Paolo found a way to involve Africa in his narrative. In one way, the use of Africa as a trope for a distant home land (Gohar, 2007, Harris, 2009, Howe, 1998, Mirmotahari, 2011, Shavit, 2001, Walters, 1993) can anchor those that feel as if they have no officially recognized claim to the local lands that they inhabit. However, Paolo’s invocation of Africa seems to serve another purpose. Paolo’s invocation of Africa seems to be a way to make a family connection that eluded him through the lack of knowledge of his grand fathers. Paolo’s use of Africa did not lay claim to a distant homeland, but rather laid claim to a genealogy, and allowed him to connect to past-unknown generations. This sheds light on the influence that local activists, as well as the impact that narratives of “roots”, are having on the general population and social/cultural memory.

The idea of “roots” is also something that could potentially have contradictory effects. For example, the official line of recognition offered by the federal government includes “Afro-Mexicanos” as “The Third root” of the national citizenry (La Tercera Raiz). While this rhetoric reinforces mestizaje, it also, superficially, recognizes Blacks within the actual production of the Mexican nation. At the same time, some activists and most official organelles are promoting Africa, as the place from which Blacks in the Costa Chica originated. At first glance, this seems
to be a contradiction. But, upon further inspection, the narrative of Africa as a point of origin does not have to, necessarily, counteract the national rhetoric of “The Third Root”. Getsemani unknowingly clarified this for me. I asked her about her thoughts on the idea of “La Tercera Raiz”. Among other points, Getsemani explained to me that while “raiz” is often times used as a synonym for race, at times “raiz” is better thought of and understood as roots. So, when some people say, “somos raiz”, they mean to say quite literally that, “they were sewn here” (the Costa Chica) and are continuing the process of growth in the coast that was started by their parents and grand parents. This is a good way to think about their connection, rootedness, to the past combined with their connection to Africa through origins, routedness (Gilroy, 1993), and how both of these connections can simultaneously work together. In this way, Blacks in the Costa Chica can lay claim to difference without relinquishing claims of autochthony.

Africa has even been sparked within the imagination of the younger generations, as illustrated by the following example. I asked Paolo where I could try the local preparation of Iguana. He explained to me that if I went to see some of his in-laws in the small town of Charco Redondo, they would sell me a live Iguana, which I should bring back so that Paolo’s wife could then prepare it in a traditional red mole sauce. It was not emphasized at the time that the Iguana had recently been labeled a prohibited food source by the state and federal authorities; however I only received minimal stares and chastisement from the local community. After securing my prize, I decided to walk to the edge of town and wait for the colectivo taxi that would take me back to Chacahua. On my way through the town, I met Dalia, a 16 year-old girl who worked at her father’s small miscelanea. As I sat and unsuccessfully tried to cool off I struck up a conversation with Dalia about the town and those passing by. Dalia asked me of my profession and where I originated. She was shocked to hear my response as California. I asked her where
she thought I was from, and to my surprise she responded, “Africa”. I told her that I had never been to Africa, and that I had lived in California for the majority of my life. She asked if I spoke English, and I responded with a few sentences in the English language. Still unconvinced, similar to my experience in the Isthmus as outlined in chapter 2, she told me that I must have been from Africa, as there were no Blacks in the US. Interestingly, Africa penetrates the imagination of many in the Costa Chica, but it is used as a way to talk about local racial origins, and Africa does not seem to be commonly understood as a diasporic center. So, as I sat drinking an Orange Fanta and attempting to avoid some of the hottest weather of the year, Africa, at least in the mind of Dalia, arrived in Charco Redondo. In this case Africa and my presence did not signify the mythical homeland of the Black diaspora, but the very real homeland of present day Africans (who ever “they” may be), and a Blackness that may be unique to Africa, similar, yet not the same, to a Blackness found in Charco Redondo. It was in Charco Redondo that I would eventually meet local activist Lucila Mariche-Magadan.

Three Narratives of Cultural and Political Activism:

Lucila:

Lucila is a local activist and advocate for Black recognition and rights. She works for, and in collaboration with, HHeladio Reyes and the ecological organization Ecosta Yutu Cuii. This distinction between working for and in collaboration with is important in Lucila’s case, as she works on a number of projects directly supported by Ecosta, but brings an energy and politics to the organization that is all her own. Through Ecosta Yutu Cuii, Lucila has been able to attend a number of symposiums, both locally and internationally, that focus on rights and issues related to African Descendants in Latin America and the Diaspora worldwide. If the
resources of Ecosta Yutu Cuii were not available to Lucila, she would continue to work in the Costa Chica informing other residents of forgotten local histories and the importance of self esteem and “auto-identification”⁴⁰ (auto-identificacion). Lucila’s own personal project is one that combines the importance of cultural recognition with a strong focus on local and institutional recognitions of processes of racialization, racism, and discriminatory practices. In this sense Lucila’s project is explicitly political, and this is the personal energy, perhaps unmatched in this sense by any other activist I have met, that she brings to Ecosta Yutu Cuii. Because of Lucila’s own experience of “Blackness”, her political project is both professional and personal, and has a fire and sense of immediacy that makes several others nervous. This tendency to make people nervous comes from Lucila’s style of direct engagement and her desire to un-anchor historically accepted discourses about race and racial value. While Lucila herself may not be able to explicitly articulate these discourses, she is none-the-less aware of them, as partly evidenced by her frustration and passion for her work. I spent quite a bit of time with Lucila, traveling and talking to her while she conducted her work during my last trip (2011) to the Costa Chica. Lucila is not “traditionally” educated, but has a sense of intuition and motivation for change that makes her, in my opinion, a true “organic intellectual.”

I asked Lucila about the need to promote a “Black” identity. I explained that I did not quite understand the need to promote such a racialized identity if Blacks on the coast already had access to locally understood identities such as Costenos or Morenos (often times Morenitos, as is a common reference used by “non-Blacks” from other parts of Oaxaca, Guerrero, and more broadly Mexico). Simply put, I asked Lucila, “Why identify oneself as Black (or Brown in its

⁴⁰ This term, “auto-identificacion” is not a term that is common among local residents. However, I have heard a number of local residents use the term in conjunction with self-esteem and the perceived importance of a strong racial, ethnic, and cultural self-identification.
racialy understood form? Why use that identity?” I think it took a second for Lucila to understand, or put my question into context, as witnessed by her first attempt to answer the question. Lucila explained to me that it was,

because if we accept ourselves as Blacks…because our ancestors were Black and we…if we are no longer attached to it (Black) is because our family is mixed. My dad was not Black…my mother is Black. My mom’s bloodline was stronger because we look like her. For me it’s an honor to be Black, to know that my race and ancestry is Black.

It took Lucila a minute to make sense of the actual “fact of Blackness”, and to articulate, or put that fact to work. I believe that this is because of the lack of a modern existence (and perhaps need) of the language to talk about racial and ethnic politics or difference within Mexico, especially when applied to African descendants. In contrast to the US, Black has been an un-marked position in Mexico (although an abstract sense of Blackness is present in many popular images and conversations) in many ways, and it is only recently that activists and locals are attempting to mark this position within a broader national and political context.

When I provided more context for this question, Lucila was able to elaborate on some of the benefits, not simply material, that could come with racially identifying. I asked Lucila if the

Moreno, Brown skinned, is often times a term that is applied to Costenos. This term is difficult to pin down, as sometimes it is used to refer to race, explicitly referencing people of African descent, while other times it is used to refer to people of the coast in general and the effect that the ever-present sun has on skin color. Interestingly, this term is used in a way that can simultaneously include and exclude. For example, it can be used to reference a particular rootedness within the coastal region, but can then also be used as a deflection of race depending upon the situation and the racial location of the person in question. Therefore, there is a real distinction made by people between “moreno por el sol, o por la sangre”.


government would respond positively to a type of organization around difference (cultural Blackness) that was similar to the political organization of indigenous groups? Lucila explained,

“Well that’s what we want…just like the indigenous group has recognition, has help and support through many resources that the government offers…we also want that here. The Black race does not have that here. The Black race does not have that. We want for one to be able to say, “I am Black and I need support in this project,” and for the government to follow through with the petition. And that they do not say, ‘well you are Black but in Mexico there are no Blacks.’ But the reality is something else.

Lucila’s response is telling in a number of ways. While she does acknowledge that resources are an important part of the “demands” of activists, she is also aware that there are other benefits that can come from the identification of oneself as Black, or indigenous for that matter. As undoubtedly is the case, resources are sorely needed in all communities of the Costa Chica, as “luxuries” such as basic health care and building materials can be hard to come by. But Lucila’s response also highlights the symbolic benefits of identification and government recognition. Lucila is aware of the potential for recognition to counter act the effects of invisibility and the potential rooting of discrimination and racism that recognition would offer. Potentially, recognition would allow for Blacks in the Costa Chica to make real connections between their lived realities and the historical processes that have created these realities, beyond the subscription to the naturalness of “Black inferiority” that is present in some of the narratives of Blackness to be found in the Costa Chica (Getsamani’s narrative above is just one of many examples).
Through her own self-education\textsuperscript{42} and interaction with local activists, Lucila is aware of the history of African slavery in Mexico. I asked Lucila, how Blacks got to the Costa Chica? Lucila explained that Blacks were brought as slaves,

With their hands and feet tied up. They came from the African continent. They came as a form of merchandise to perform intense labor work that the indigenous could not perform. They were brought in as an exportation material…to this continent. In this way, we learn that our ancestors did not come of their own will but were forced to come.

This information is consistent with the “propaganda” presented by the Museo de Las Culturas Afro-Mexicanas, in Cuajinicuilapa. The Museum highlights the cultural elements that may have been contributed by the enslaved as part of the construction of the local mestizo culture. However this last consideration, the idea of incorporation/contribution, is not one that is highlighted by the Museum. The “African cultures” are presented as cultural elements unto themselves, rather than one of the building blocks of Mexican culture (and beyond that the modern experience of the “Americas”) and one of the contributions of the “Tercera Raíz”. The museum also highlights the middle passage and the areas of Africa from which the majority of Africans were extracted. However, the museum stops short of a real presentation of any form of

\textsuperscript{42} I spoke with one activist and middle school teacher who explained to me that while his own political project was working towards the promotion of the historical presence of Blacks in Mexico, his official position did not allow him to incorporate this history into his rhetoric and writing curriculum, as it did not fit into the recognized general curriculum approved by the state. I also spoke with two women in Chacahua who explained that much of the education in the small towns comes through “telesegundarías” which are broadcasted from somewhere outside of the Cosat Chica and do not offer content that would be locally relevant such as local indigenous and Black history. This partly explains Lucila’s need to educate herself in these issues.
Blackness within the context of the construction of the Mexican nation, aside from the authentic survivals that were seen to be found within the surrounding town of the Costa Chica.

Lucila draws upon some of this rhetoric to tell the story of “her ancestors”, but uses her own personal knowledge of local history to fill in some of the gaps between the middle passage and the present. I asked Lucila about the ship that landed in Puerto Miniso. Lucila explained that,

It’s believed that there are still remains of the ship…they came from there and a lot of the people from that area…I remember my grandmother would tell me that they would call them the “habahengios”, because they came from the lower area towards here. So, in my community Charco Redondo, Chacahua cotton used to be cultivated and they would export it through ships. From my community they would export it through ships, and then embark it to the port of Acapulco. Back then there were no roads. So, they would travel through ships.

In Lucila’s narrative, the African continent, as a symbol, plays a role, but it does not take center stage. Nor is the continent by any means there in some ahistorical limbo awaiting the return of its long lost children. In order to avoid this trap, Lucila turns her narrative to local histories of production in the Costa Chica, specifically in the community of Charco Redondo. Lucila’s discursive move allows for a focus on the present and a connection to the past that fills in the gap between the middle passage and the present multicultural political era of which the Black movement in the Costa Chica, and more broadly Mexico, is a part. The “ship” plays a role as an artifact in the collective conscience of many Blacks in the Costa Chica, but the potential presence of ruins may be a metaphorical way to suggest the severed connection between continents, while helping to maintain a sense of history or rootedness within the region.
Lucila’s narrative of the production of cotton within the region helps to reinforce this rootedness, and helps make a historic claim to the region, one that may date back to a time before the invention of the national body. She explained to me that she was not aware of the year that the town was established, but that she knew that it was an old town, with a history of cotton production. In fact, she physically took me to the outskirts of the town to show me the remains of the plantation, or “cotton factory” as she explained it. She explained that this was the site where they (local Blacks) would work the cotton, which was later taken to the ports along with Chickens, pigs and cows. She tried to take me into the plantation for a tour, but the whole area was sectioned off by barbed wire. And, when we knocked at the gate of the current owners of the property to explain our interest in the area, we were not welcomed.

Lucila’s narrative is counter to the popular understanding, or denial, of Black existence in Mexico. Her narrative not only brings attention to the existence of a Black community (or communities) but also makes explicit connections between the past and present. These temporal connections are important, as they serve to anchor the community and draw attention to the historic processes of which they are a part. Therefore, this anchoring provides some context for the actual project of government recognition, and it brings some of the power back to the local people by allowing them to situate themselves within the process of recognition. Lucila is aware of this, as her personal project for the Costa Chica does not stop with state recognition. Rather, Lucila is looking to make people aware of the real products of processes such as historic invisibility, racism, and discrimination (as elaborated upon by Lucila’s example of foreignness); processes that may be somewhat paradoxical in practice, yet serve to define the lived experiences of Blacks within the Costa Chica communities.
I asked Lucila about her overall political goals and about one of her current social projects that she has undertaken with the support of Ecosta Yutu Cuii. Lucila explained that because “some of us have internalized discrimination”, she wants for the people to take “conscience, to accept oneself”. She explained that low self-esteem relied on stereotypes that were perpetuated by Blacks within their own communities. She explained,

“we say, ‘not you because you are Black, lazy, and do not want to work…you don’t work, you like to party.’ This is a despicable lie…because as Blacks…if we propose to finish a job we accomplish it. In my personal life, I like to be responsible…to show the opposite of what Black is thought to be.”

Another woman I spoke with countered this stereotype of Blacks being lazy, and not wanting to work, in an interesting way. She explained to me that many men have to wake up very early in the morning in order to work with the tides and natural rhythm of fishing life. This means that in the middle of the day, one might see many men laying around in hammocks and appearing to lazily waste the day away. According to this woman, this is a misunderstanding, as the men have been working all night and into the early morning. However, the utilization of a standard “clock” to understand the daily rhythm of fishing life does not apply and can lead to misunderstandings that produce and reinforce stereotypes of laziness and frivolity (Rosaldo, 1974).

Lucila’s work attempts to add a grass-roots element to the project of Black recognition that would be lost through simple state recognition of the existence of Black communities. Lucila’s work with local communities through her “cyclo de video” project is a good example of this. Lucila explains that she shows videos in the communities that tell people that they should accept themselves and “say proudly, I am Black and I deserve respect…to be able to live and not
feel more or less than others...because we are Black people.” While Lucila is very active in issues of self-esteem and cultural promotion, she is also aware of the need for official state and federal recognition. Lucila explained that within the government,

“There is no recognition that they (Negros) exist, they are important because of...their culture, traditions...it would be good that the government shows interest by asking where these communities are located, what they do, and what they want?”

Lucila continued by expressing her frustration with the current lack of general recognition of Mexico’s Black population. She explained that the,

“Government people (officials) assume that there are only Black people in Central America, Haiti, and other countries. This is a despicable lie because they know that many were stolen from Africa. There are many Black settlements in the Pacific coast. I don’t know if they really don’t know about it or they chose to ignore it?”

As discussed earlier, Lucila has first hand experience with this historic exclusion from the popular/public imagination and representation of the Mexican citizenry, as she is often times accused of being from Central America when she is traveling or returning from beyond the coastal region. She is hesitant to explicitly accuse the government of some heinous plot, but her frustrations show that she does see the government as somewhat culpable as well as part of the potential solution to the injustice that comes along with official invisibility.

In regards to the government, Lucila explained that they had projects and recognition for the indigenous communities. She claimed that the government has argued that the indigenous people are very important because they have “culture, tradition, and an identity.” Lucila makes it
clear that Blacks in the Costa Chica need resources in order to help build physical infrastructure within the region. She explains,

“In the cultural as well as economic aspect we do not have any support from the state nor the national government. The indigenous has a lot of resources and probably more support…in our Black population we do not have that. It’s one of the privileges that as the Third Root race we do not have. The government does not say that this project is specifically for the Black community.

Lucila is actually right on track with her analysis of the situation. While “Pueblos Negros” are mentioned in the 1998 indigenous law of Oaxaca (Ley de Derechos de los Pueblos y Comunidades Indígenas del Estado de Oaxaca), their presence in the official document is an afterthought, and presented as a recognition of generic difference rather than the recognition of the Black community as a recognized cultural/ethnic group unto themselves. This is something that Lucila’s grass root level work within her community of Charco Redondo and the surrounding communities within the Costa Chica is trying to promote. Lucila understands that government recognition does not automatically equate to social and economic equality. Therefore, Lucila is attempting to promote the cultural aspects of Blackness through her work of collecting recipes, poems, unique language, and local narratives all from the surrounding communities. In this way, the grassroots work taken on by Lucila and other activists compliments the project of state and local recognition by adding a component that the government project, based on a neo-liberal logic of difference, overlooks. Lucila is attempting to take a holistic approach to difference that may counteract some tendencies to self-identify simply for the possibility of “welfare”.
Marcelo Garcia Zagilon – Ecotourism and its Limits:

Marcelo Garcia Zagilon, Don Marcelo, has first hand experience with how a political identity can work for the economic gain of communities. However, Don Marcelo, and his larger collective have found that identity and a larger politics of difference still has to compete with present discourses of conservation and sustainability that are currently influencing state and federal approaches to the region. The Lagunas de Chacahua are recognized as a national forest preserve. Therefore, Don Marcelo’s organization around a Black identity has to compete with, and ultimately gets situated within, a larger project of ecotourism. This is similar to many groups around the world who are forced to perform a certain type of authenticity within political and geographic space in order to capitalize on the trend and opportunities afforded to communities through ecotourism (Cotton and Jerry, 2013). Undoubtedly, tourists arrive in search of some unspoiled wilderness, complete with all of the wild life that this wilderness supports.43 The danger here is that people can easily become trapped within the potentials of ecotourism and the discourse of conservation that come with this potential economic strategy. This is doubly problematic when combined with nationally recognized wild lands.

Don Marcelo’s commentary offers one example of the ways that groups can get trapped within geographical conceptions of space and the real potential, or lack thereof, for self sustainability offered to the residents of the small communities within the Lagunas de Chacahua National Forest preserve in Oaxaca, Mexico. The preserve is located within the geographic region of the Costa Chica, and is an important resource for the many fishing communities that depend on the coastal resources for their livelihood. These communities depend on the resources that come directly from the Lagunas and surrounding ocean, as well as the salt that can be mined

43See the Papua New Guinea Touris Authority website at http://www.papuanewguinea.travel/usa for example.
from the near by land. Fishermen and minero de Sal, Don Marcel, makes it clear that while surrounded by an abundance of resources, the potentials to capitalize on these resources are less abundant, as local communities are officially limited by the ways in which they can interact with the environment.\textsuperscript{44}

Don Marcelo explained that he and some of his collective ecological group came up with the idea of starting a fish farm in the community of La Pastoria, which lies on the shores of the main Lagoon. This fish farm was conceived as a way to raise the economic potential of the region by capitalizing on the tourist industry’s needs for fresh, local, seafood. As it is, the communities of the Lagunas de Chacahua find a market for their products in town centers such as Puerto Escondido and Pinotepa Nacional. However, the competition is intense as fishing is the main economic strategy within the coastal towns, and there does not seem to be any serious organized unions of local fisherman. The transactions often times take place by utilizing middle men that bring the product of the coast to surrounding mountainous and indigenous communities as well as the commercial centers further into the interior, including Oaxaca City. After participating in a conversation with one such “middle-man” and a woman (Dona Mina) in Corralero, it became clear to me that this web of relationships not only transports seafood from one location to another, but a number of cultural and social elements get traded on this market as well. Dona Mina got much of her information about what was going on in the communities surrounding Corralero through her exchanged with the mestizo fish monger with whom we were talking. Undoubtedly, Dona Mina’s commentary would add to his repertoire and knowledge of

\textsuperscript{44} See Nixon (2005) for examples of the ways that western conceptions of ecology and environmentalism can impose strategies of conservation that neglect indigenous histories of land use and can disregard indigenous people’s claims to land and the resources contained within.
the goings-on in Costa Chica communities, which would help him enlighten others in the coastal mountain communities and perhaps even beyond to the city of Oaxaca.

Don Marcelo explained that when they brought the proposal to the Mexican Government of starting a large fish farm with the intention of economically supporting their local communities, they were told that the land was strictly for use as a national park, and that the development of the fish farm would be a violation of national park regulations. Interestingly, this national park is currently promoted as a popular eco-tourist destination in which visitors can see a number of local birds, caiman, turtles, iguanas, and various other sea species. Even more interesting, the people that live within this national park can unconsciously become a part of the natural landscape, even though they are simultaneously excluded from fully capitalizing on the bounty of the region, which severely limits their ability to maintain any type of local autonomy. So, as the national park becomes a preserve for wildlife and the natural (traditional and authentic) lifestyles that it supports, it also becomes a trap of poverty in which the local residents become subsumed as a local resource within the eco-tourist industry. The eco-tourism industry creates the potential for local communities to capitalize, although on a very limited scale, on the tourists’ desires to experience untouched and preserved “wildlife”, as well as the many social and economic productions of the colonial moment that have been preserved within the space of the national forest.

One of the issues that come out of this example is the difference between communal lands, occupied by many indigenous communities through the ejido system, and the non-communal lands of the section of the Costa Chica occupied by many African descendants. Further down the Southern coast of Oaxaca lies a town known as La Barra. This small town is popular for its right-point surf break. Of less popularity for local tourists is the fish farm
maintained by the local community. This fish farm gives local residents the ability to purchase affordable fish from the local fish farm and is maintained by the local community. It is not clear if the community has incorporated their operation into a larger scale economic enterprise, but the ability to create such an operation shows the difference in potential offered to indigenous and African descendants through land use and maintenance.

While Don Marcelo’s fish farm would not only support the local community through affordable access to a variety of popular fish species, it would also create the potential for local communities to begin thinking about supporting their own communities with the development of local infrastructure through the profits from the fish farm. When asked about the effect that the fish farm might have on the local fishing industry, Marcelo explained that the market for the fish farm would not be local families and individuals within the community. Rather, the fish farm would focus on the larger tourist industry within the tourist destinations of the Costa Chica and further up and down the coast. Interestingly, Marcelo (as a part of a broader collective) and the national government are both focusing on the same type of markets, those created by the eco-tourist industry. However, due to the differing perspectives on eco-tourism and sustainability the fish farm project falls beyond the purview of the Mexican Government’s intended use of the national forest space. In fact, the intentions of Don Marcelo’s project could quite possibly be seen as contradictory to the foundational logics that allow for the governmental conception of the national forest project in the first place. These logics are also employed by, and are foundational to the project of officializing difference (as discussed in chapter 5) that is currently taking place within the Costa Chica. These logics, and the processes, remain obscured by the “cultural mapping” project undertaken by the government and are then re-presented as natural elements within the final cartographical project.
In chapter 5, I elaborate on the process of making difference official to shed light on the ways in which space becomes racialized through both official and un-official apparatuses. This racialization of space can work for or against local communities’ interests, depending upon the ways in which local projects articulate with the many potentially contradictory and competing state and federal government projects. In this way the organization around difference (i.e. race) can have positive or negative outcomes, and are dependent upon the wider field of politics or webs of relations that the project is forced to become a part of. These webs of relations then have the potential to structure the ways that narratives of self are spun, maintained, and interpreted, as they situate local communities in larger social and economic projects. These projects, then, also become a part of the process of racialization and can frame the ways that narratives of self are constructed based on popular/common definitions of difference.

Don Marcelo’s own narratives of Blackness alternated between stereotypes and a genuine understanding of the history and processes behind these stereotypes. This understanding highlights the complexities involved in a political identification that revolves around Blackness, as well as the resistance by some African descendants to identification with the term “Negro” that can be found within the Costa Chica. This resistance to the term is always context dependent, as stated above, but it presents a real issue in terms of cultural and political organization, and is exacerbated by the stereotypes that Don Marcelo drew upon to clarify a popular understanding of Blackness. Don Marcelo explained to me that “El Negro le gusta los bailes, eso sí le gusta. Cuidado con el baile, y la maca… (la hamaca).” La hamaca, in many ways, becomes a trope that allows for the connection between “el Negro” and “el flojero”. In this way “la hamaca” can be seen as almost synonymous with the Negro in the stereotype, as you may be hard pressed to find one without the other…that is you may be hard pressed to find an
empty hammock. As discussed earlier, this stereotype completely overlooks the actual rhythm of a life dependent upon the bounty of the ocean. Nonetheless, it is a stereotype that has become ubiquitous in the Costa Chica, and, interestingly, a stereotype that was very often applied to Mexicans from the perspective of the US (one might recall the once popular image of the dozing or drunk Mexican sleeping under the safety of his large “sombrero” next to a fence or tree).

Don Marcelo continued with the popular stereotypes, by explaining that “…el Negro esta muy feliz aunque no tenga pa comer. Osea y las otras razas se preocupan mas por el de comer, pues osea que su familia este bien y todo eso, y el Negro casi no”. Don Marcelo thought that maybe this was the reason that the Spanish chose to enslave the Africans and send them to Mexico. He acknowledged the “fuerza” that was natural to Blacks, a strength that is commonly cited as a reason for the Spanish preference for African slaves in comparison to Indigenous peoples. Don Marcelo explained, “Fuerza, si tenemos, pero…poco le gusta estudiar.” Part of the reason for Don Marcelo’s embracing of such stereotypes may be due to personal experience, as it was explained to me that Don Marcelo’s son was chosen by the Governor of Oaxaca to receive one of two full scholarships to UNAM. This scholarship would have afforded him the opportunity to study in Mexico City with little to no expense with regards to food and housing. Don Marcelo’s son declined the scholarship, at least according to my source. However, I think that relying on the stereotype does not accurately account for Don Marcelo’s son’s resistance to education, even when presented with the opportunity of a full scholarship. Another way to approach this could be that the 12-14 hour bus ride to the capital was in effect a sentence of exile. Don Marcelo’s son declined to speak with me, even after much prodding from his father, but I think that the lack of national recognition and the state promoted connection between race and place, combined with the existence of discrimination, as witnessed by the numerous
responses outlined in this and previous chapters, could play a significant role in Don Marcelo’s son’s resistance to the experience of education outside of the Costa Chica. Undoubtedly, at the very minimum this would be a lonely several years.

Don Marcelo’s commentary relies on a number of preexisting stereotypes to make sense of the Black experience in the Costa Chica. These stereotypes may often times be reinforced by his own experience within his and other communities in the Costa Chica, as well as his personal experience with the next generation. However, I find it interesting that Don Marcelo’s personal actions, as well as those of a majority of people around him, do not fit with the overall social “facts” that these stereotypes draw upon or help to perpetuate. As witnessed by the local and federal governments’ resistance to Don Marcelo’s community fish farm project, attempts to politically and economically organize against marginalization often times fail as they do not jibe with the larger webs of relations of which they must be articulated. In this way, the stereotypes may be the only lens through which the Black experience in the Costa Chica can be perceived, even by those who continuously attempt to break out of their typecast social and economic roles. At the time of writing, Don Marcelo’s fish farm project remained unrealized.

**Aydee Rodriguez:**

Aydee Rodriguez is originally from one of the smaller towns surrounding the Oaxaca/Guerrero border, and currently lives in the local market town of Cuajinicuilapa, Guerrero. She is the owner of a small restaurant as well as a painter who works with the themes of Blackness, history, and culture. Padre Glyn Jemmott Nelson introduced me to Aydee after

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45 Pather Glyn is credited for organizing the birth of the grass-roots organization “Mexico Negro” in the early 1990’s. Originally from the Island of Trinidad, Padre Glyn has been working in the Costa Chica region for over 20 years on issues of African descendant economic, political, and cultural empowerment.
discussing a local project that “Padre Glyn” was associated with. Padre Glyn had explained to me that Aydee was very active in the local art scene and used her talents to help promote African descendant history and identity within local communities through participating in workshops geared towards these local youth. Interestingly, by the time I arrived in the Costa Chica I was already familiar with Aydee’s work, as she was featured in an exhibit at the California African American Museum in Los Angeles, California in 2009. I remember looking at the exhibit and thinking how interesting it was that this work had found a place at the African American Museum, while the issue of Blackness was somewhat sidestepped in the Guelaguetza celebration at MacArthur park (also in Los Angeles) that same year. This made it clear to me that race did cross the US/Mexico border, but was subject to translation as it was incorporated into a differing racial economy and the specific discourses that were salient at the time due to the larger webs of political relations of which race became a part. It seems to me that Aydee’s work and her specific narrative of Blackness lay somewhere between these discourses, as she attempts to promote a positive perception of Blackness in the Costa Chica.

I asked Aydee, why work with the theme of Black Culture (La Cultura Negra)? Aydee proposed to me that “La cultura Negra…en el estado de Guerrero esta olvidada.” She explained that in the small community where she was born, all of the dances and traditions were preserved from the time when Blacks arrived in the Costa Chica, and that she had grown up participating in this culture as a young child. She also explained that this culture was the impetus for her wanting to paint,

“Osea viendo y jugando y este pues cuando ya empece a pintar. Yo dije bueno, este yo voy a rescatar todo lo que es la cultura negra y este voy a llenar, que no

I found this idea of forgotten-ness interesting, as Cuajinicuilapa is one of the more known towns of the Costa Chica. The town is located on the main highway that runs from Acapulco to Puerto Escondido, and is a main route for ADO buses making the journey from Mexico City to Puerto Escondido. The town, referred to by locals as “Cuaji” was popularized by Gonzalo Aguirre Beltran’s anthropological work, *Cuajla: Esbozo Etnografico de un Pueblo Negro*. Moreover, once one enters the town, there is no doubt that the majority of the population is African descendant. It is this climate in which the forgotten-ness mentioned by Aydee exists. I asked Aydee how it could be that the culture was forgotten when one could find “gente Negra” in every corner of the town? Aydee made it clear that biology and culture did not have to go hand in hand (see Michaels, 1992). She explained that it was the culture that was forgotten, not the people. This idea of “forgotten culture”, often translated as a lack of culture, makes it possible for Blacks in Mexico to be overlooked within the project of multiculturalism, while they are simultaneously racialized. In this way, Blacks have been, until recently, forgotten and invisible within the rhetoric of multicultural politics, but still physically visible and susceptible to the real processes of racial discrimination that exist within the Costa Chica as well as the broader nation state when they happen to venture out of the region. What have also been forgotten are the historical processes that have been responsible for the creation of the Black communities within Mexico. It is this invisibility and “forgotten-ness” that Aydee’s artistic work attempts to counteract.

I argue that the Black movement in Mexico threatens to make the historical processes surrounding racialization and the marginalization or exclusion of Black communities visible. This visibility would explicitly undermine the rhetoric of mixing and racial equality.
I asked Aydee why it was important to recover Black culture in the Costa Chica and Mexico? Rather than the notions of resources and support that could come from multicultural recognition, Aydee’s response was more inline with the potential for positive self-esteem and grounding that could come from the embracing of one’s culture. Aydee argued,

…es importante porque este siempre es bonito conservarlo de nuestros antepasados no? Osea, es una cultura historic. Y, para mi es importante en lo personal y es importante porque…te decia lo traigo adentro para que tambien los ninos, los jovenes vean la obra y vean la cultura que nos dejaron como herencia nuestros antepasados y se vaya formando la idea de…osea que la conservan, osea que les quede asi en su cabecita que tenemos una, que heredamos nosotros, que nos dejaron como herencia una cultura Hermosa y que tenemos que conservarla para que no se pierda.

Aydee went on to explain that there is some success in this project, as she gives painting courses to youth on their school vacations. Aydee is well aware of the need and value of “rescatando la cultura Negra” in the current cultural and political climate, and her sense of the actual value of cultural revitalization and the potential that this revitalization has for youth empowerment finds expression through her art and her own brand of activism.

It was never Aydee’s intention to generate income from her art, and by extension capitalize, at least monetarily, on the broader theme of Black culture and history. Aydee told me
that originally she had the idea of simply filling her house with beautiful art. “…yo tenia la idea de llenar mi casa de obra, la que es tu casa y este pero nunca llegue a pensar a exponer, porque pues todo mundo se burlaba de mi trabajo. Todo mundo me decia… ‘que horrible pintas, tus Negros estan feos.’” However, due to a fortuitous meeting with Padre Glyn, Aydee’s paintings would get some international attention, and would eventually provide a modest income as well as generate interest within Mexico. Interestingly, this interest from abroad was counter to the local response to Aydee’s painting. Aydee told me that she could not believe that there was interest in her paintings. She explained, “No lo podia creer, porque…siempre este me decian cosas muy feas de mi obra y me entristecia y decia yo, pero no es asi, you tengo que seguir pintando porque ya vendi porque se buscaron.” The international interest in Aydee’s paintings motivated her to keep painting, not only for her personal enjoyment, but also as part of her larger cultural revitalization project. I asked Aydee, why people would make fun of the paintings locally if they were considered so successful in other venues? Aydee thought that maybe it could be explained by the fact that “porque a veces eh…Cuaji es una gente donde la mayoria de los habitants este somos negros pero yo pienso que saben poco de la historia y a veces la gente como que no acepta ser negro, no.” In this way, Aydee’s paintings were perceived through the local popular context of negativity, a context that seems to frame much of the perception of local Blackness and one in which local activists find themselves submerged. It was the international interest that gave Aydee the confidence in her own political project, as well as her artistic talent. But, interestingly, Aydee could not travel with her work to the US. Therefore, while the representation of Blackness had the ability to cross borders, Aydee’s physical body, much like Esperanza in Ruth Behar’s “Translated Woman” (1993), remained trapped within the Costa Chica.
Aydee related to me the many problems that she had with her visa and “credencial de elector”. She explained that “they” had written her name with one “e” as Aide, rather than Aydee. This meant that her paperwork did not match and that the “credencial” acted as a checkpoint (Jeganathan, 2004) by raising suspicion about Aydee’s legal status rather than a marker of citizenship. Also, she had trouble acquiring her visa for the United States. She told me that, “el pasaporte es rapido. Lo que es dificil es la visa para los Estados Unidos.” Because of the difficulty with acquiring a visa for the US, and the illegibility (Das, 2004) issues with her credential, Aydee’s paintings had to travel unaccompanied by the physical representation of the subject of and through which they were conceived.

Conclusion:

Within this chapter I have attempted to highlight some of the narratives surrounding Blackness that are coming out of the Costa Chica, and the political movement that continues to gain steam within the region. I have chosen to dedicate the main focus here to four narratives, as they highlight the different approaches being taken to the project of Black recognition, rights, and identity within the region. While all four of the main narratives may be focusing on different aspects, they are all tied to the same overall political project. This highlights the complexities involved with the process of recognition, a complexity that may not exist, at least explicitly, within the multicultural government project of recognition and making difference official as outlined in chapter 5.

I recognize that the narratives here may not be narratives of identity as such, but they are the narratives of the process of constructing a Black identity that is underway and continuing to develop within the Costa Chica. These narratives give us a glimpse of the processes surrounding difference that may be continually underway, and currently taking place in any given location.
The importance of Black Mexico, however, is that we can see the actual process of a foundation being laid for the political project of “Blackness” (or at least the attempt to lay a foundation for this project) through the negotiation of the racialization process. In some ways this foundation is the first necessary building block, and will be the platform upon which the narratives of future generations will be built. In this way we can see the actual process, facilitated by a concurrent government sponsored project, of racial and cultural invention. I would not argue that this invention is being pulled out of thin air, as a number of the people that I spoke with made reference to stories and traditions that were handed down from the previous generation(s). Yet, due to the lack of historic recognition and the process of invisibility facilitated by a larger official project of mestizaje, as discussed in Chapter 4, the narratives within the Costa Chica are forced to be read within the context of the present, and the current political fashion that makes these narratives salient in the present economic and multicultural climate. This means that these narratives can draw on potentials and possibilities that may not have been available to Blacks within the region, as well as throughout the diaspora, in past years. In this way, “the art of the narrative” comes through local invention based on the actual work that local racial identities are needed to accomplish and the specific roles that these identities can play within the context of the current nation state.

Aydee, for example, has painted a scene of the “naufragio” (shipwreck). As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the shipwreck, specifically the shipwreck in Puerto Miniso, becomes a way to talk about origins. I find it interesting that in the current moment, the shipwreck becomes a trope to talk about Black existence in the Costa Chica, rather than the familiar diasporic trope of the “the middle passage” (Travesia in Spanish). This suggests that the current racial project is one that is locating Blackness within the Mexican state, and therefore demanding recognition
based on the historic participation within the nation, rather than the “pre-historic” (read pre-colonial) existence of a noble society of Kings and Queens. This strategy highlights the sense of autochthony that Blacks in the Costa Chica feel, and changes the stakes of the game of politics currently surrounding race within Mexico.

In one sense, the lack of texts historicizing the presence and experience of African descendants and their role in the nation (whether racist, erroneous, or otherwise) creates a void that needs to be filled before many will really venture to bet on the actual potentials of a multicultural politics (a bet that may only yield returns for a limited time). On the other hand, this lack of “history” presents a unique space of invention. It is within this space that activists, artists, and educators such as Lucila Mariche Magadan, Aydee Rodriguez, Don Marcelo, and others are becoming the authors of the modern day narratives that will one day become the histories and documentation of histories that are so sorely lacking in forgotten regions such as the Costa Chica.
CHAPTER 8: THE POLITICS AND LIMITS OF RECOGNITION

In a very real way, the present day narratives that are being told and refashioned by negros in the Costa Chica are becoming a part of the broader historical narrative about Blackness in the region. The question of whether or not these narratives are historically accurate may be a concern for some. But, I think that this question is overshadowed by the real work that these narratives do within the region, and the productive power to provide documentation (Roque Ramirez, 2003, 2005, 2007) that these narratives hold for the residents of Costa Chica communities. Take for example, Paulo’s narrative of the shipwreck, or Naufragio, in Puerto Miniso. Whether or not Paulo’s narrative is historically accurate, especially within a chronological context, may be less important than the fact that the narrative corroborates other stories of the shipwreck, and allows for locals to root themselves within the region. In this way, the narrative counteracts the uprooting of the process of enslavement that took place so many years ago (in Paulo’s understanding less than a century), as well as the process of invisibility enacted by the rhetoric of mestizaje, and gives local communities a point of origin or an anchor through which to root (Gilroy, 1993) the Black experience within the Mexican nation state. With these narratives, the experience of blackness within the Costa Chica is re-routed through and re-rooted within (Green, 2007) the present moment.

Trouillot argues that, “human beings participate in history as both actors and as narrators” (1995, p. 02). This double position as actor and narrator can create a tension, ultimately a productive one, within official projects of recognition. The self-positioning of local communities as narrators of regional and racial histories within projects of recognition can also be read as a struggle over the means of production of history (Trouillot, 1995) through historical narratives. Within chapter 5 I gave a detailed ethnographic account of the process of making difference
official that is currently underway within the Costa Chica. This process of officializing
difference, at least from the perspective of the state, relies on, and has been conceived through,
the assumed monopoly of the means of production of historical narratives of Blackness, as well
as a monopoly on the means of production for creating officially recognizable racial identities
within the present. An example of this is the detailed list of data that the CDI set out to acquire
about the Costa Chican communities (See appendix C). This set of data, as an official document
that was then enacted upon through the consultas discussed in chapter 5, acts as one of the means
of production of narratives and identity that the state is seen to hold a monopoly over. This
official document framed the way in which recognition of the Costa Chica communities would
take place, and ultimately the official narrative, a narrative of ethnicity and culture\(^{48}\) that was to
be told. Ultimately, this narrative was to be told in a way that was conceived through past efforts
of indigenous incorporation and was recognizable within the framework of multiculturalism.

However, communities within the Costa Chica have challenged this monopoly over the
means of production of narratives and identities held by the state. One example of the direct

\(^{48}\) Whitten and Torres argue that, “Culture is an ambiguous but important term” (1998, p. 04). They go on to explain that the article “la” in Spanish elevates a concept to something refined and civilized. This has also been referred to in western society in general as the difference between culture and Culture. Whitten and Torres argue that when the term “cultura” is affixed to blackness without the article “la” it works to “demean traditions and lifeways to something ‘vernacular’, worthy of study by folklorists but insignificant in the processes of leading to higher and higher levels of Latin American civilization” (ibid). I argue that the incorporation of blackness within the overall multicultural vision of the Mexican state is conceived within a similar vein. While the CDI may not intend to demean the “cultura negra” the recognition of the cultural elements, as witnessed by the “Carta Descriptiva” (appendix 2), is within the context of difference and cultural forms that are distinct from the general Mestizo Culture of Mexico. The distinction is important for the recognition of a marginalized minority group within the boundaries of the state, however, ultimately the recognition of Blackness as a cultural element is not incorporated into the national narrative beyond the empty rhetoric of the racial contribution of African descendants as “La Tercera Raíz”. Due to the pre-existing colonial racial logics, even current attempts to incorporate Blackness into the national narrative might end in conceptual blunders such as that of Vasconcelos and his “La Raza Cosmica”.

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challenge to the monopoly of the means of production comes through the contestation over the issue of naming as discussed in chapter 5. The arguments over naming are not simply arguments over nomenclature, but can and should be read as tensions over the power of self-representation. Activists’ frustrations with terms offered, and even preferred, by the CDI show that many locals’ preference for the term “negro” is an attempt to ground present conceptions of Blackness within the context of the historical construction of the category itself. This connection to the historical production through the present condition of Blackness not only roots Blackness within the region, but it also makes the dialectical relationship between Whiteness and Blackness, Mestizos and Morenos, explicitly visible and roots Blackness within the history and memory of the nation state.

I argue that this visibility is beyond the intentions of the multicultural recognition efforts of the Mexican state. In this way, the recognition efforts of the state are definitely aimed at the recognition of a historically marginalized group, however they fall short (Hale, 2002) in their want and willingness to recognize the historical process of marginalization itself. Therefore, the state attempts to maintain its monopoly on the means of production of history by using terms such as Afro-Mexicano, or Afro-mestizo, that seem to be aimed at inclusion and the eradication of discrimination. The state’s continued monopoly on the means of production allow for any future narratives to continue to operate on pre-existing bundles of silences (Trouillot, 1998, p. 27), bundles of silences that were themselves constructed and packaged within the context of state projects. These bundles of silences operate as rhetorical tools that allow for the interpretation of Mexicanness through a particular lens.

So, then, how does activists’ preference for the term “negro” expose the dialectical relationship between “negro” and “blanco”, and make the particular bundles of silence operating
around state narratives of Blackness audible, in a way that simple visibility may not? I argue that
the phenomenon of implication plays a major part in bringing this dialectical relationship sharply in to view. During an interview with an African American for an ongoing project that I am conducting about when people first heard and made sense of the “N-word”, it was related to me by one of my respondents that he had heard the word as a small child on U.S. television while watching a then popular “western”. My respondent explained that the word had been used by a White character and directed towards one of the Black characters in the film. The respondent went on to explain that while he did not really understand what the word meant, he felt implicated by the word, as it had been directed at one of the Black characters in the film, and therefore possibly directed at him as well.

I think it is easy to understand how a young child encountering the racial epithet for the first time, or at least what was remembered as the first time, could have felt this sense of implication. I can imagine the child asking the rhetorical question, “am I a ______?” This seems to be the basic dictionary sense of the word implication. I began to wonder how far this concept could be taken, and if it could be productive in other ways. After analyzing my data and thinking about my experiences at the consultas in the Costa Chica, I began to think of how the

49 While I have not found a philosophical treatment of the phenomenon as I discuss it hear, after reflecting on the term I began to see that several authors point to implication as having the power to make something that has been taken for granted visible. See Ferguson, 2003, Gupta, 1995, and Roque Ramirez, 1995 for brief examples.

50 In the “Souls of Black folk” Du Bois presents a similar situation when he realized that he was different from the rest of the kids. Du Bois does not use this process of recognition in the same way that I use implication here, but his narrative of recognition as a process of uncovering social relationships and histories is similar. However, I use implication a theoretical concept as not directly implicating the subject, in this case my respondent, but having the power to implicate those that were previously rendered invisible within the pre-existing relationship of power. In this way, Whiteness becomes visible as a marked position rather than something that simply exists as through the logical opposition of the marked position.
process of implication may not simply work through direct one-to-one correlations, as that related to me by my respondent in 2009. The process of implication can also work indirectly to implicate others in the process of someone else’s subjugation. For example, the use of the term “negro” does not only act as a signifier to denote inclusion into a particular group. The term “negro” can also implicate other groups, in this case Whites/Mestizos, in the process that brought the group (along with the relationships of power surrounding this group) into being in the first place. This process of implication works on an intuitive level, where people recognize the dirty work that such a word does in the social world. So, then, the word (“nigger” in the case of my respondent in 1999 and “negro” in the case of the activists in the consultas in 2011) does not only recall a group of people, but the process of which the group of people were made a part. This makes it clear that the word “negro” was not a term chosen (during the phase of its conception and application) by African descendants, but a word that was imposed upon them during a particular historical moment. The silences then begin to become audible. If African descendants did not choose this word, then the imposition of the word must be representative of a broader power dynamic in which value was ascribed to at least two subject positions through the use of the word “negro” and its application to only one of those subject positions. This is the moment when the invisible becomes visible. This is the moment when whiteness becomes implicated in the social process responsible for the construction of Blackness and the interpellation (Althusser, 1970) of Blacks through the use of the word “negro”.

I do not argue that the use of the word “negro” interpellates Whites or Mestizos. Although the use of the term “negro” sets up a system by which something is seen in relation to something else, the calling into being of one person by another does not have to necessarily define or hail the other into being. However, this calling into being does begin a dialectical
relationship between the two. And, it is this dialectical relationship that the use of the term “negro” by African descendants in the Costa Chica makes all too clear. The use of the term “negro”, whether intentionally or not, calls our attention to the context in which the term was socially invented or applied. The use of this term in the present context, then, creates a link between the past and the present and forces us to deal with the legacy of which the term and the government project of recognition is a part. This link ultimately implicates Mestizos in the process that led to Black invisibility in the first place. Therefore, contestations over naming, through the phenomenon of implication, threaten to unravel the bundles of silences that Trouillot argues are a part of any historical narrative (1995, p. 27). I argue that attempts by activists in the Costa Chica to use the term “negro” are really attempts to break up the state monopoly over the means of production of historical and present narratives of Blackness.

Trouillot argues that, “narratives are occasionally evoked as illustrations or, at best, deciphered as texts, but the process of their production rarely constitutes the object of study” (1995, p. 22). Trouillot’s argument asks us to take seriously the power dynamics as well as the context in which narratives are invented, told, and refashioned. This is an important task with regards to the ways that African descendants are telling the tales of what it means to be Black in the Costa Chica, as well as for thinking about the productive power that these narratives are afforded within the context of the cultural and political climate that these narratives are a part. Thinking about the process of these narratives’ production allows us to make visible the power struggles that are a part of the racialization process, both historically and in the present, of which African descendants in the Costa Chica are a part. In this way, narratives of and about Blackness are not only historical representations and anecdotes about the people who physically represent Blackness, but they are given the power to shake up the normative discourses through which they
have been produced. In effect, these narratives have the power to implicate, if not outright
indict, the larger public as they make audible the silences around the dialectical relationships
between perceived dichotomies such as White/Black, Mestizo/Indigenous, rich/poor, urban/rural,
and so on. Therefore, narratives of Blackness (read as discrimination, culture, location, etc.)
are not simply confessions based on normative values and ideals (Ferguson, 2003) of what it
means to be Black, but rather they can be read as testimonials (Roque-Ramirez, 2005) of the
lived experience of race within the nation state which help to fill in the gap between the past and
present for African descendants within the Costs Chica. Roque Ramirez (2005) argues that, “to
connect the past to the present, to make a history a collective process of human signification
where all of us become agents for its production, is to be ‘testifying’…” (p. 119). Therefore,
testifying has the power to extract narratives of race from the context of Black history, and
transplant it, or re-insert it, into the context of the state or national history. However, the ways
that these narratives will ultimately reach the ears of the nation state will depend on their
translation within the discourses of race and nation/past and the present and the racial economy
in which the narratives are employed.

Roque Ramirez argues that, “for marginalized communities involved in struggles for
visibility, political identity, and space – the business of “cultural citizenship” – testimonies about
their existence are critical acts of documentation” (2005, p. 116). Therefore, for communities
whose narratives, or even existence as is the case of African descendants in the Costa Chica,
have been excluded from officially recognized histories, the “historical and evidentiary meanings
of (their) existence prove to be an indispensible archive in the community and beyond” (Roque
Ramirez 2005, p. 116). In this way, the communities of the Costa Chica can be seen as a living
archive (Roque Ramirez, 2005, p. 113), which provides evidence and a testament to their will
and ability to survive the silences of official narratives and histories. However, state projects of official recognition complicate the potential power and effectiveness of this archive in some dangerous ways.

Isar P. Godreau (2002) discusses the ways in which the folklorization of “Black” culture in Puerto Rico works to re-enforce a national project of Blanqueamiento, rather than subvert the historic effects of racism and the marginalization of Black communities in Puerto Rico. The inclusion of Blacks in Puerto Rico, similar to the current project of inclusion in Mexico, appears to value Blackness as one of the mestizo-izing elements of the national citizenry. However, Godreau argues that, “this inclusion and celebration is not distinct from but compliments and works together with ideologies of blanqueamiento, as it relies upon some of the same ideological principles that distance blackness to the imagined margins of the nation” (2002, p. 282). This is one of the tricks of multicultural recognition, as it positions “cultural” populations as distinct (Godreau, 2002, Goett, 2011) from the general national citizenry through a narrative of distinct genesis. In this way, the histories of “cultural populations” remain distinctly local, rather than playing a major part in the genesis of the nation state, and continue to hide the fact that the locality of “cultural populations” is an effect of their historic marginalization. Therefore, the folklorization of Black culture in Puerto Rico works to maintain the silences through which narratives of the nation operate (Godreau, 2002, Trouillot, 1995).

Through this discursive illusion, the actual relationships that define Blackness are allowed to remain invisible, while real life decisions based on Blackness as a cultural and subjective position seem to appear natural and desirable by the Black community. Godreau (2002) highlights one specific example in the community of San Anton, Puerto Rico, where a government project to remodel a Black community relied on the folklorization of Black culture.
Rather than thinking through the historic relationships that produced the housing conditions within which Blacks were living, cultural rationalizations were used in order to justify remodeling the community in a way that reflected their current conditions. Godreau uses the shared patios within this housing community as a prime example. The housing communities employed a system of patios that connected clusters of houses together through a shared space. It was assumed that these shared spaces were a cultural element of the Black community that allowed for a certain type of cohesion based on cultural preference. Developers and local politicians then seized upon the “patio”, as a symbol that was used to demonstrate government sensitivity to authentic “Black traditions”. The project of rebuilding the community in a way that left these patios in tacked and maintained the cultural cohesion of the community was seen as a desired cultural element of the Black community and beneficial to the maintenance of authentic cultural forms.

However, the government failed to recognize one thing; the use of patios was not necessarily a cultural element, but an outcome of necessity due to the actual economic conditions that the community of San Anton experienced. Godreau argues,

“For the people of San Anton, it was not a choice, but rather need or lack of resources that determined most of what is considered typical housing in this community. The wood, the proximity, the small size of some houses, all index a reality of economic hardship and the strategies people have employed in order to survive and adapt. Consequently, although patios and their wooden houses may seem ‘quaint’ to the eyes of the outsiders, they may or may not be valued as ‘the most beautiful’ or the most ‘desirable’ way to live by residents” (Godreau, 2002, p. 291).
By romanticizing the patio in San Anton, government officials and activists, as part of NGO groups, failed to recognize how the organization of San Anton was as much a response to economic conditions as it was a cultural preference dictated by cultural understandings of community. Therefore, the living conditions of Blacks in San Anton continued to be conceived as idiosyncratic, rather than as a direct product of a historic relationship between race and the nation state. To quote Godreau, the government approach “demonstrated the inadequacy of an approach that romanticized the patio without considering the social relationships of power that determined it, and – more importantly – without discussing its implementation with residents” (2002, p. 291).

Godreau’s example of folklorization of culture in san Anton, makes the articulations between class and race explicitly visible and supports scholars such as Stuart Hall (1980) and Roderick Ferguson’s (2003) claims that race is ultimately a classed position and that class can be the mode through which race is felt (Hall, 1980). All of this is paramount in thinking through the effects of projects to officialize difference, as referenced in chapter 5. One of the questions that we have to ask is what is being officialized within these projects of cultural and ethnic recognition? I do not necessarily agree that discussing approaches with communities is any more important than recognizing the social relationships that have determined their experience, as we cannot assume that marginalized communities have any more knowledge of the social relationships that have determined their social locations simply due to the negative experiences of these relationships. However, I do think that Godreau’s example is important in that it explicitly demonstrates the ways that strategies to combat class experiences are often times naturalized through the concept of culture. Therefore, Blackness and poverty can become synonyms as experiences of race are read through the lens of class. The danger, then, is that
without serious analysis of the social relationships of which Black communities are a part, projects to recognize and officialize difference run the risk of instituting the belief that race does, in fact, equal class. This, then, is what Fanon meant when he argued that, that which we call the Black man is a White man’s artifact (Fanon, 1967). In this way, the officialization of “culture” can also be the officialization of poverty, inequality, discrimination, etc…as government projects set in stone the official parameters that will be used for later inclusion and exclusion in the name of racial, ethnic, and cultural recognition by the state.

I think that this is what is at stake for Black communities of the Costa Chica, and in other regions of Mexico, as government approaches the incorporation of Black communities through the lenses of ethnicity and difference. The activists that I have spoken with seem to intuitively\(^{51}\) understand this danger, as they attempt to shake up the discourses on which the government projects of recognition rely. Therefore, arguments over naming become important as they make the historic relationships between race and the state visible, and call explicit attention to the ways in which the state has been ultimately conceived through the lens of race. In this way, activists’ attempts to negotiate with local, state, and federal, governments over representation work to uncover the logics of race and the racial economies of which they are apart as their narratives implicate Whiteness, and the state to which it is attached, in the historic relationships that have led to their marginalization and invisibility in the first place.

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\(^{51}\) By using the term “intuitive” I do not mean to suggest that the activists are uneducated or simply unaware of the processes that they are attempting to combat. Rather, I mean to make a distinction between simply theorizing these relationships and the practical actions that activists take based on their real experiences of these theoretical relationships. While the activists that I spoke with may not have the theoretical language to discuss these relationships, then, they are explicitly aware of the racial logics that inform their experiences of the nation state and are directly attempting to engage with these logics and relationships.
While recognition may be dangerous, multicultural politics in Mexico are opening up a space for dialogue within which African descendants may be able to challenge the traditional modes of incorporation and access to citizenship (Postero 2005) that have been offered to them in the past. I argue that this new space of dialogue is challenging the colonial logics of race and the racial economy that they created in which Blackness (as well as indigeneity) in Mexico have historically been rooted. This means that even though the logic and rhetoric of mestizaje continue to inform the possible ways that culture and ethnicity can be interpreted, new possibilities of being for African descendants have been introduced. These new possibilities are asking African descendants to re-imagine the ways in which they conceive of themselves in relation to the broader citizenry and with regards to the nations state. It remains to be seen what type of citizen these new possibilities of being will produce. However, if the current push for recognition and citizenship rights underway in Mexico can be used as a gauge, Blackness in Mexico from this moment on will have to occupy a space as a political subjectivity, along with the current conception of Blackness as a racial and increasingly ethnic position in Mexico. It must be said that while the current racial moment underway in Mexico is only one of many defining moments for Black communities within the Costa Chica, and Mexico more broadly, this moment of officialization and institutionalization will inform the possibilities for inclusion in the near future and beyond. One of the dangers of making culture official is that it has the ability to make culture appear static. This is what the communities of the Costa Chica will be up against as they continue to work for increased recognition and incorporation into the Mexican nation state.

Interestingly, the current moment has allowed African descendants the possibility of framing their existence within the existence of the present nation state itself. This has meant
that, while Blacks are recognized in a manner that was designed for indigenous inclusion (Anderson, 2007) they have not been forced to look abroad for definitions of Blackness. It remains to be seen how this will play out, but for now the conception of Blackness is coming from within the region and nation state, and in this way the racial moment for African descendants in Mexico is locally and temporally specific more than it is diasporic. However, for Costa Chicans this local racial consciousness is complicated as racial economies collide at the U.S./Mexico border region as Costa Chicans attempt to carve out communities in Southern California and other regions of the United States. The question of diaspora becomes important for these migrants, as they themselves become diasporic (in two sense; Mexican migrants as well as Black) peoples.

Mexican immigration to the United State has long been an issue of contention (Gamio, 1929). I argue that in the current political climate of the United States, (im)migration, usually framed as an action of illegality, has had such an effect on public discourse that the U.S./Mexico border, and perhaps the broader Southwest, has been consumed by a narrative strategy that creates a discourse of the border as a racialized space. A discourse of the U.S./Mexico border as a “Latino space” can potentially frame conversations surrounding border issues within a “Brown/White” dichotomy. One of the products of this discourse has been the racialization of the border region, and the broader southwest, as a “Brown” (if not explicitly “Mexican”) space. However, this discourse is interrupted when we think about the historic investment that other communities of color have made in the U.S./Mexico border region. Take for example, the many African Americans who migrated to southwest cities such as Tulsa, Phoenix, Oklahoma City,
Los Angeles, and San Diego during the late 19th and early 20th centuries as Blacks sought relief from U.S. racist attitudes and customs (Taylor, 2003). Years later, a discourse of the southwest as a “brown” space has rendered the descendants of these Southwest Black communities somewhat invisible. A more recent history of political struggle within the region has turned attentions to the very real experiences of Latinos within the U.S./Mexico border region, and the broader Southwest. One of the ways that the U.S. racial economy accommodates this political history is by allowing for an ideological racialization of space to occur. In this way, the U.S. Southwest becomes a “Brown” space or region, much like the U.S. South has become synonymous with Blackness.

My intention here is not to challenge the lived experiences and political histories of racialized groups within either of the above-mentioned regions. I think to do so would obscure the real work that racialization does, and the ways that racial relationships become hegemonic tools in the maintenance of the nation state. Rather, I intend to use this analysis to think about the ways in which a racial economy, combined with a general logic of race, continues to define individuals’ and communities’ ability to actively engage citizenship within particular spaces. So, for example, the current racialization of the U.S./Mexico border region as a “Brown space” may position Blacks, and other groups of color within the region, in a way that disconnects these groups from their historic investments in the region. This ideological discourse is a part of the

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52 Clearly, these lands were not uninhabited and in some ways Blacks’ ability to move within the Southwest was ultimately secured by U.S. colonization efforts and imperialism through “westward” expansion and the spirit of manifest destiny. I reference a similar process that took place in Charco Redondo, Oaxaca, in chapter 7. However, I think it is dangerous and un-productive to simply view Blacks in the U.S., or Mexico, as agents of “White colonialism/imperialism”, as this obscures the larger relations of power that all of these groups are a part of (Smith, 2005).
climate that Afro-Mexican migrants find themselves in as they attempt to carve out spaces within the U.S./Mexico border region.

Many of the Afro-Mexicans that I have spoken with in Pasadena, California, have had to re-think their own ethnic, cultural, and racial allegiances within the Los Angeles area. These same allegiances serve non-Black Latinos in more productive ways in the U.S. as they afford them access to a particular inheritance promoted by the discourse of the U.S./Mexico border as a racially “Brown” or Latino space. On the ground, this has meant that Black Mexicans find themselves in situations similar to other racially Black immigrant groups, such as Jamaicans (Kirkwood, 2000, Murrell, 1999) and Dominicans (Aparicio, 2006, Bailey, 2000, 2007, Torres-Saillant and Hernandez, 1998), as they are interpellated as African-Americans and denied access to specific ethnic histories and identities. As Mexican and U.S. racial economies collide at the U.S. Mexico border, tensions that previously existed in Mexico between Black and non-Black Mexicans are also exacerbated (and extended to Mexican Americans and Chicanos) and limit possible coalitions and cross racial/ethnic alliances that Black Mexicans can exploit in the pursuit of civic engagement and participation.

This limitation of possible coalitions in the pursuit of civic engagement presents serious complications for the ways that Black Mexicans can access citizenship within the border region. Rather than a bundle of rights bestowed upon a citizen, scholars are beginning to discuss citizenship as a type of inherited property (Shachar and Hirschl, 2007). This change in perspective allows us to approach political citizenship as civic participation in another way by forcing us to think about how communities are differentially positioned with regards to civic engagement. Space plays an integral part in this equation as spatial discourses help to define the value of one’s inheritance at any given time. In this way, the racialization of the border region,
through a broader racial discourse and racial economy, has effected the real life chances for citizenship offered to Black Mexicans as differing inheritances influence their experiences of space and the potentials for political action within this space.

The racial economy that Black Mexicans find themselves within the United States disconnects these (im)migrants from both African-Americans, and other non-black Latino immigrants. On the one hand, as discussed in chapter 4, Black Mexicans can find themselves on the outside of Mexican mestizo and indigenous group’s efforts to build support and maintain their own communities within the U.S. In this way, “traditional” narratives of what it means to belong, although re-imagined within the context of the United States, continue to rely on exclusion and Black invisibility in order to work towards community cohesion based on experiences of difference and distinct origins. On the other hand, Black Mexicans’ interpellation as African American based on conceptions of racial sameness does not hold up to the distinct cultural elements, such as language (Vaughn, 2005) and a broader embracing of Mexican regional culture, that separate these communities. For my respondents in Pasadena, this double exclusion has pushed them to explore new alliances with Afro-Latino groups in Los Angeles, such as Afro-Hondurans. The racialization of the U.S./Mexico border region as a brown space and the discourse surrounding this space has meant that Black Mexicans in the U.S. are positioned in a way that forces them to explore diasporic connections. However, these connections may ultimately re-enforce their understanding of their own Blackness as a uniquely Latin American phenomenon. It remains to be seen how the second generation of those Black Mexicans that choose to stay in the U.S. will continue to make sense of this racial economy.

My initial research suggests that many of the youth will find ways to locate themselves within the U.S. Black experience and population. This is evidenced by my own experience
Whatever the case, an experience of the border region framed by a particular U.S. racial economy has positioned Black Mexicans in such a way that even after crossing the U.S./Mexico border they must continue to chase Blackness in the pursuit of citizenship.

at a wedding in Pasadena, California, where I overheard several Costa Chican youths referring to themselves as “niggas”.
REFERENCES:


APPENDIX A: MAP OF AFRO-DESCENDANT COMMUNITIES IN OAXACA

Map Courtesy of Cotton and Jerry (2013).
APPENDIX B: PROMOTIONAL FLYER FOR CDI CONSULTA

CONSULTA PARA LA IDENTIFICACIÓN DE LAS COMUNIDADES AFRODESCENDIENTES DE MÉXICO
¿A qué tipo de actividades productivas nos dedicamos?

¿Cuál es el origen e historia de nuestra comunidad?

¿Cómo nos organizamos al interior de nuestra comunidad?

¿Hasta dónde llega nuestra comunidad?

¿Cómo nos gusta que nos llamen o identifiquen?

¿Cuáles son nuestras autoridades propias?
APPENDIX C: DESCRIPTIVE PROGRAM FOR CDI CONSULTAS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIEMPO ESTIMADO</th>
<th>CAMPO</th>
<th>OBJETIVOS ESPECÍFICOS</th>
<th>PREGUNTAS DETONADORAS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|                 | DEMOGRAFÍA   | Conocer los elementos referentes al entramado de personas, hogares y grupos de personas que establecen y mantienen relaciones de diversos tipos, constituyendo una red de relaciones estables y reconocibles, que puede ser diferenciada de otras - contiguas u ocasionales. Estas relaciones se expresan regularmente bajo formas institucionalizadas como el parentesco (real y simbólico), los grupos de sexo y edad, organizaciones funcionales, el vecindario, etc. | Distribución de población por localidades o asentamientos: Nombre de la localidad:  
- ¿Por qué se llama así, cuál es la historia de ese nombre, qué significa?  
- ¿Cuántos habitantes tiene nuestra localidad?  
- ¿Cuántas casas tiene nuestra localidad?  
- ¿Cuáles son las localidades, rancherías o parcelas que se relacionan con nosotros dentro de nuestro municipio?  
- ¿Con qué otras localidades, rancherías y municipios tenemos relación que no son de nuestro municipio?  
- ¿Hay indígenas y blancos en nuestra localidad?  
- En el caso de que nuestra localidad no sea cabecera municipal, ¿hay mejores viviendo en la cabecera? (habitan en alguna colonia o barrio específico) ¿cuál es?  
Formas de agrupamiento:  
- ¿Cuáles familias y personas habitan esta comunidad?  
- ¿Esas familias y personas ¿son todas menores o “afrodescendientes”?  
Moviilidad y migración:  
- ¿Existe gente de la comunidad que emigre de manera temporal o definitiva? ¿A dónde emigran?  
- ¿Existe gente que venga a vivir a esta comunidad? ¿De dónde?  |
|                 | ECONOMÍA      | Detectar las formas de articulación de las unidades productivas familiares en diversos aspectos, como los arreglos relativos a aprovechamiento de los recursos (principalmente la tierra, el agua y | Principales actividades económicas:  
Agricultura  
- ¿Qué tipo de actividades productivas se realizan: agrícolas, hortícolas, frutícolas, ganaderas, pesqueras, forestales?  |
|                 |               |                                                                                      |                                                            |
| los bosques), los arreglos técnicos y económicos relacionados con la gestión de la producción y los arreglos sobre la prestación e intercambio de trabajo. La comunidad puede ser entonces comprendida como una unidad económica. | ¿Qué tipo de productos agrícolas se siembran?  
¿Por qué se siembran estos cultivos, etc.?  
- En el caso de nuevos tipos de cultivos, ¿cuándo fue que se introdujeron?  
- ¿Estos nuevos cultivos han modificado la forma tradicional de producción de la milpa?  
- ¿Se producen hortalizas o frutales? ¿En traspatio o plantación? ¿Para consumo familiar, local y/o mercado regional?  
- ¿En dónde se venden todos los productos agrícolas?  

**Ganadería- Productos cárnicos, queserías y lecherías**  
- ¿Se cria ganado para carne y/o leche (doble propósito)? ¿Para consumo familiar, local y/o mercado regional?  
- En el caso de los productos lácteos, ¿qué tipo de productos se producen?  
- ¿En dónde se venden todos los productos lácteos?  
- ¿En dónde se venden los productos cárnicos?  

**Actividades Forestales**  
- ¿Existe explotación forestal? ¿Para leña familiar y local, para venta u otros propósitos? ¿Hay aserradero en la comunidad? ¿Qué localidades, ejidos, rancherías, barrios o pueblos lo usan? ¿Dónde se vende la madera?  

**Otras actividades**  
- ¿Hay producción de artesanías? ¿Quiénes son los miembros de la familia que participan en la producción artesanal? ¿De qué tipo? ¿Dónde se venden?  
- ¿En qué trabajan las personas de la comunidad que no se dedican a la agricultura – ganadería? ¿Estre trabajo lo hacen dentro o fuera de la comunidad? ¿En dónde?  

**Pesca**  
- ¿Cuántas personas de esta comunidad se dedican a la pesca?  
- ¿En qué lugar pescan?  
- ¿Pescan para autoconsumo familiar o para la venta?  
- ¿En dónde venden su pezado?  
- ¿Qué tipo de pesca es el que comercializan?  
- ¿Existen cooperativas de pescadores?  

**Salinas**  
- ¿Existen salinas en esta localidad?  
- ¿Quiénes son salineros?  
- ¿Cómo realizan su actividad?  

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- ¿Complementan esta actividad con otra?
- ¿En dónde procesan la sal? ¿Es un espacio propio o rentado?
- ¿Dónde venden la sal?

**Migración y reproducción económica**

- ¿Existe la emigración en la localidad?
- ¿Hacia qué lugares viajan las personas que salen a trabajar fuera de su comunidad?
- ¿En qué se reflejan los ingresos de estas personas, cómo ayudan económicamente a la comunidad?

**Apoyos gubernamentales**

- ¿Qué programas gubernamentales de apoyo a la producción existen en la comunidad?
- ¿Qué otro tipo de programas gubernamentales existen la localidad tipo "Solidaridad", etc.?

**Ciclos festivos y calendarios productivos**

- ¿Qué tipo de productos agrícolas se siembran y en qué fechas?
- ¿En qué fechas (calendario agrícola)?
- ¿Coincide este calendario agrícola con algunas fechas del santoral católico, por ejemplo, día de la Santa Cruz con peticiones de lluvias, etc.?

**Cooperación para la producción**

- ¿Existen formas de trabajo colectivo? ¿Cuáles de ellas son organizadas por la comunidad y cuáles por agentes externos?
- ¿Se organizan para el trabajo colectivo en beneficio de la comunidad?
- ¿En qué tipo de circunstancias se da el "tejío" o trabajo voluntario?

**Sistemas de mercado y formas de intercambio**

- ¿Hay mercados fijos en la localidad?
- ¿Existen otros tipos de tianguis o mercados en la localidad? Si es así, ¿qué día se realizan estos?
- ¿De dónde vienen los comerciantes?
- ¿Qué es lo que venden?
- ¿A qué lugar van a comprar aquellas cosas que no pueden obtener del mercado local o del tianguis?
- ¿Cuánto les cuesta el posaje hacia esos lugares?
- ¿Hay intercambio o trueque de mercancías con otras comunidades o entre ustedes?
- ¿Existe acaparamiento de sus productos a la hora de sacarlos a la venta en los mercados?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IDENTIDAD: LÉNGUA, INDUMENTARIA, CULTURA CULINARIA, ARTE E HISTORIA COLECTIVA</th>
<th>Definir cómo son las relaciones que se establecen sobre prácticas culturales comunes, como los usos de la lengua, la memoria sobre la historia larga y la historia cercana, la cultura culinaria, la indumentaria y los conocimientos sobre los procesos de salud-enfermedad, dan al entramado social de un sentido de colectividad que la distingue de otras colectividades. La comunidad puede ser entonces comprendida como una unidad cultural.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| ¿Qué elementos culturales nos distinguen? | **Vocablos locales y expresiones orales**  
- ¿Qué lengua hablamos en la comunidad?  
- ¿Qué características tiene nuestra forma de hablar?  
- ¿Cuáles son los vocablos propios que pensamos que forman parte de nuestra “manera de ser”?  
- ¿Existen personas que hablen una lengua diferente, qué lengua hablan y cómo los llamamos?  

**Cultura culinaria**  
- ¿Qué platos representan la comida típica que nos representa en la comunidad?  
- ¿Cuáles son los ingredientes con los que se preparan estos platos?  
- ¿En qué momentos se elaboran?  

**Indumentaria**  
- ¿Cómo nos vestimos?  
- ¿Qué colores son nuestros preferidos para vestirnos?  
- ¿Existe una forma típica de vestirnos?  
- ¿Cómo nos gusta arreglarnos y adornarnos?  
- ¿En qué medida esta forma de vestirnos nos hace distinguirnos de los demás?  

**Historia local** (formación de la comunidad y hechos principales)  
- ¿Recuerda el origen de esta comunidad?  
- ¿Qué fue lo que hizo que esta comunidad surgiera?  
- ¿De dónde vinimos como pobladores de esta comunidad?  
- ¿Cuáles fueron los principales eventos que han sido importantes en la historia de esta comunidad?  
- ¿Se celebran o comemoran de alguna manera estos acontecimientos?  
- ¿Hay alguna manera en que los conocemos o los llaman en la región (en otro tiempo y actualmente)?  
- ¿Hay alguna manera en que se identifican a sí mismos?  

**Conocimientos tradicionales** |
| ORGANIZACIÓN SOCIAL Y PARENTESCO | Se considera a la organización social: la estructura de un conjunto de relaciones sociales dentro de un sistema social. Ellas

<p>| Relaciones de parentesco | Mutuofidelidad, compañerismo, familias extensas, quererido, relación con otros grupos etnicos |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CICLO FESTIVO Y VIDA RITUAL</th>
<th>VIDA RITUAL COMÚN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Definición</strong> de las prácticas religiosas durante todo el ciclo festivo anual y las formas de organización comunitaria para llevarlas al cabo. Estas prácticas incluyen también los sitios sagrados fuera de la localidad, así como las diferentes divinidades a las que se les tiene devoción. La realización del ciclo festivo asegura la reproducción social, económica y biológica de la comunidad al reforzar lazos intra-comunitarios y permitir la reproducción de un estilo de pensamiento que define a esta comunidad como una unidad bio-socio-cultural.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vida ritual común</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- ¿Qué fiestas y celebraciones tienen lugar en la comunidad? ¿En qué temporadas y fechas?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- ¿Cómo nos organizamos para realizar la celebración? (hermandades religiosas o sistemas de cargos (mayordomías), o bien, a través de las autoridades municipales o delegados ejidales).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- ¿Qué hacemos para celebrar o conmemorar?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- ¿Hay algún lugar sagrado y/o centro ceremonial de la comunidad?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- ¿En dónde se encuentra ubicado este centro ceremonial?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- ¿Existen otros lugares sagrados o templos que visitamos, en qué fecha acudimos a ellos?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- ¿Cuáles son los santos patronos y otras divinidades a las que se les tiene devoción?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- ¿Se visitan algunos coros o lugares cercanos al mar en algún momento del año?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TERRITORIALIDAD</td>
<td>Composición geográfica de la comunidad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definir de qué forma se da la ocupación del espacio para varios fines (el asentamiento, por ejemplo), la obtención de bienes necesarios para asegurar su vida material, la materialización de la ritualidad, el ejercicio de la autoridad y en general el aseguramiento de su reproducción social y cultural.</td>
<td>- ¿Cuáles son las localidades, ejidos, rancherías, barrios o parajes que están dentro de esta comunidad?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esta visión de territorio supera la ficción jurídica de propiedad y le atribuye la cualidad de plataforma de oportunidades, espacio de expresión cultural y de organización comunitaria. De todas maneras sus expresiones más visibles son los regímenes de propiedad y de división político-administrativa.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Régimen(s) de propiedad sobre la tierra y formas de herencia (legales y culturales)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ¿Cuáles son las localidades, ejidos, rancherías, barrios y/o parajes que están dentro de esta comunidad?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• En el territorio de la comunidad, existe algún asentamiento, familia y/o persona que no que no sea parte de la comunidad? En caso afirmativo: ¿Por qué? ¿Qué relación tiene la comunidad con ese asentamiento, familia y/o persona?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ¿Qué régimen de propiedad agraria hay en la comunidad? ¿En la comunidad quién es el dueño de la tierra?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>En caso de ejido:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- ¿Quiénes son ejidatarios?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- La comunidad coincide con el terreno de ejido? o ¿Dentro del terreno del ejido hay varias comunidades? o ¿La comunidad está dividida en varios ejidos?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- ¿Quiénes conforman el Comisariado ejidal o de bienes comunales?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- ¿Se han estado vendiendo las propiedades que antes eran ejidos?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- ¿A qué se dedican ahora estas tierras?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- ¿Sus propietarios son originarios de la localidad o de localidades cercanas?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- ¿Se solicita autorización para abrir nuevas tierras dentro del territorio de la comunidad? ¿A quién?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- ¿Las familias y personas de la comunidad pueden rentar la tierra? ¿Tienen que solicitar autorización y/o algún tipo de permiso para ello? ¿A quién?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- ¿Cuál es la forma como se hereda la propiedad de la tierra y los bienes?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- ¿Se heredan también las parcelas ejidales? ¿Quién dirige los conflictos relacionados con la herencia y la transmisión de la tierra y los bienes?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- ¿Cuántas personas son ejidatarios, propietarios privados o comunes?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- ¿Las personas que conforman el Comisariado ejidal o de bienes comunales son morenas o blancas?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- ¿Cuál es la forma como se hereda la propiedad del ganado?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- ¿Cuántas personas no tienen tierra? ¿Cómo hacen para sembrar la tierra o tener animales si no poseen la tierra?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Hay peones trabajando en los terrenos, cómo se les paga?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUTORIDAD O FORMAS DE GOBIERNO Y SISTEMAS JURÍDICOS PROPIOS</td>
<td>Definir cómo se presentan las formas de organización de las relaciones de poder y de prestigio y a la estructura que las organiza. El reconocimiento de autoridades propias implica además la aceptación de un cuerpo – difuso – de maneras de proceder en la regulación de estas relaciones y de resolución de los conflictos que puedan ocurrir al interior de las mismas. La comunidad puede ser entonces comprendida como una unidad que reconoce autoridades propias de acuerdo con sus usos y costumbres.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sistema de cargos agrarios y políticos- forma de elección y de legitimidad de la estructura y de los cargos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ¿Cuáles son los cargos de autoridad agraria? ¿Cómo se eligen y por cuánto tiempo? ¿Cuáles son las funciones y deberes en cada uno de ellos? ¿Quiénes los ocupan y por qué? ¿Son hombres y/o mujeres?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ¿Cuáles son los cargos de autoridad agraria? ¿Cómo se eligen y por cuánto tiempo? ¿Cuáles son las funciones y deberes en cada uno de ellos? ¿Quiénes los ocupan y por qué? ¿Son hombres y/o mujeres?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ¿Existen autoridades tradicionales encargadas de la celebración de las fiestas? ¿Cuáles son sus denominaciones y qué funciones? ¿Cuáles son las obligaciones de la comunidad en las fiestas y celebraciones?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ¿Quiénes ocupan los cargos de autoridad? ¿Son hombres o mujeres? ¿En qué proporción?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ¿Existe más de una autoridad religiosa local, es decir, otras filiaciones religiosas que también tienen sus representantes? ¿Cómo se negocia con ellos en cuanto al sistema de impartición de justicia, pago de celebraciones comunitarias, etc.? ¿Cobrecen a las autoridades locales?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Esquema organizacional de la comunidad (formales e informales - organigrama)

- Descripción y elaboración por los miembros de la comunidad de la organización y la jerarquía de las autoridades locales.

Atención de conflictos

- ¿Se llevan a cabo juicios en la comunidad por parte de las autoridades tradicionales? ¿Quiénes son los encargados de impartir justicia? ¿Qué tipo de delitos, faltas o conflictos se
ventilan en esos juicios? ¿Qué penas o tareas se imponen a quienes resultan sentenciados como culpables? ¿Hay algún encargo de vigilar que las sentencias se cumplan?
• ¿Existe en la comunidad algún tipo de policía? ¿A quién rinde cuentas (comunidad, ejido, municipio, estado, federación)?
• ¿Cuál es la relación entre las autoridades locales (comunitarias, tradicionales) y las autoridades ejidales, municipales, estatales y/o federales que tienen presencia en la comunidad?

Tareas, deberes y derechos
• ¿Cómo se organizan las tareas comunitarias como la siembra de la parcela escolar, el cuidado de la escuela o el centro de salud, etc.?
• ¿Cómo se adquiere un conjunto de derechos dentro de la comunidad, como el derecho a solicitar la celebración de una misa en el templo de la comunidad?

ADSCRIPCIÓN
Definir cómo se expresa el conjunto de relaciones de carácter simbólico por las cuales una colectividad se comprende a sí misma como una unidad social, económica y cultural y se atribuye, a sí misma y a sus miembros, rasgos distintivos. Uno de estos rasgos es la conciencia de su pertenencia a un pueblo determinado.

Pertenencia o no a comunidad
• ¿Cómo nos gusta que nos llamen o identifiquen?
• ¿Bajo qué características nos gustaría que nos vieran al exterior de la comunidad?
• ¿De qué forma quisiéramos ser reconocidos por las instancias gubernamentales?
• ¿Cómo les gustaría ser nombrados como colectividad?
• ¿Quiénes consideran que forman parte de esa colectividad (localidades, regiones)?
• ¿Todos los integrantes de la comunidad se identifican entre sí? ¿Por qué? ¿Cómo? ¿En qué?
• ¿Qué hay que hacer para ser miembro o integrante de esta comunidad? ¿Qué obligaciones y derechos tienen los miembros o integrantes de la comunidad?
• ¿Hay grupos al interior de la comunidad (vírico, productivo, comercial, deportivo, político)? ¿Quiénes forman parte de estos grupos? ¿Por qué?
• ¿En el territorio de la comunidad, existe algún asentamiento, familia y/o persona que no que no sea parte de la comunidad? En caso afirmativo: ¿Por qué? ¿Qué relación tiene la comunidad con ese asentamiento, familia y/o persona?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>ARTICULACIÓN</strong></th>
<th><strong>La idea de una identidad como pueblos y no sólo como comunidades</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Refiere las relaciones que se establecen entre la comunidad y otras entidades sociales y políticas del entorno, como otras comunidades, los municipios y sus agencias, las instituciones públicas federales y estatales, las empresas y las organizaciones civiles de promoción. Interesa el examen de estas relaciones en tanto dan cuenta de la asignación del estatuto de comunidad desde actores externos. | - ¿Consideramos que formamos parte de un grupo de personas más allá de nuestra comunidad? ¿Quién es este grupo?  
- ¿La base de este grupo es religiosa o más bien se basa en una forma de ser "morenos"?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Filiación religiosa</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| ¿Cuántas denominaciones religiosas existen en mi comunidad?  
¿Para ser miembro de la comunidad hay que practicar esa religión?  
¿De carrera puedo ser miembro de la comunidad y acceder a los derechos de la misma, por ejemplo a ser enterrado en el cementerio local, aún no siendo católico? |  |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>ARTICULACIÓN</strong></th>
<th><strong>¿Con qué municipios, localidades, ejidos, comunidades, barrios, rancherías o parajes establece la gente de esta comunidad un número mayor de relaciones? ¿Qué tipo de relaciones son: comerciales, amistosas, culturales, políticas, sociales y/o de parentesco, de gobierno, de intercambio...?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| - ¿Existen alguna relación entre las autoridades tradicionales y las autoridades municipales?  
- ¿Existen en el municipio algún síndico que se encargue de tratar asuntos relativos a la población morena o "afrodescendiente"? ¿Hace algo por la comunidad?  
- ¿Existen alguna relación entre las autoridades tradicionales y las autoridades estatales? ¿Cómo es? ¿Existe en el estado alguna oficina pública que se encargue de tratar los asuntos relativos a la población morena o "afrodescendiente"? ¿Hace algo por la comunidad?  
- ¿Existen en el país alguna oficina pública que se encargue de tratar los asuntos relativos a la población morena o "afrodescendiente"? ¿Hace algo por la comunidad?  
- ¿Cuál es la relación de las autoridades tradicionales con los jueces (la justicia)? En qué casos y circunstancias se llama al agente del ministerio público o a la policía para la resolución de conflictos al interior de la comunidad?  
- ¿Cuál es la relación de las autoridades tradicionales con los jueces (la justicia)? En qué casos y circunstancias se llama al agente del ministerio público o a la policía para la resolución de conflictos al interior de la comunidad?  
- ¿Qué tipo de escuelas y servicios educativos existen en la comunidad? ¿Son los adecuados? ¿Por qué?  |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>ARTICULACIÓN</strong></th>
<th><strong>¿Qué tipo de servicios de salud existen en la comunidad? ¿Son los adecuados? ¿Por qué?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Les comunidades morenas o “afrodescendientes” precisan discutir acerca de sus vivencias al ser discriminados en la sociedad en la que viven, no sólo como sujetos de derecho, sino por su fenotipo y su cultura. Sus características fenotípicas, elementos utilizados para su estigmatización, deben ser explotadas y re-Elaboradas por ellos mismos.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>INVVISIBILIDAD, RACISMO Y DISCRIMINACIÓN</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Espacios públicos y privados de discriminación</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discriminación por fenotipo y manifestaciones o cultura</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. ¿Alguna vez he sentido discriminado?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. ¿En qué situaciones me he sentido discriminado?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. ¿A qué atribuye la discriminación (género, clasa, fenotipo, etc.) a qué se d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. ¿Hemos sentido maltrato físico o psicológico por nuestro color de piel?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. ¿Cómo nos sentimos con nuestro color de piel y nuestros rasgos?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. ¿Nos gustaría ser diferentes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. ¿Cómo nos gustaría ser tratados?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Nosotros mismos nos burlamos de otros de piel más oscura?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. ¿Por qué creo que se dan estas diferencias en el trato de las personas?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. ¿Qué me gustaría cambiar a mí alrededor para que las cosas fueran distintas a como son ahora?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. ¿Se me critica por mi forma de hablar y de vestir?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. ¿Se me hace a un lado o se forman ideas de mi por ser moreno?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. De qué manera combatí la discriminación?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discriminación institucional</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. ¿He experimentado diferencias en el trato con las autoridades por tener un color de piel distinto a ser moreno?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. ¿Cómo he sido tratado en los servicios de salud por ser moreno?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. ¿Cómo he sido tratado por los profesores por ser moreno?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. ¿Se me ha negado algún derecho por ser moreno?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ejercicio de la discriminación:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. ¿Yo también discrimino? A quién? ¿Por qué?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D: ROUGH TIMELINE OF NGO AFRO POLITICAL / CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS IN COSTA CHICA

* Government Groups
  CDI
  UMSNH
  SAI
  CONAPRED
  IISUABJO

* Yearly Meetings
  Mexico Negro - Encuentro de los Pueblos Negros
  MCN - Concursos de los Diablos
  AFRICA - Foro Afro-Mexicano
  EPOCA - Encuentro del Tercer Raiz
  UNAM - Oaxaca Negra
APPENDIX E: PHOTO APPENDIX

*Photos 1, 2, 5, & 8 Courtesy of Mariana Palafox