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# Why is the Color of One's Skin so Significant in Southern Mexico?

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Why is the color of one's skin so significant in southern Mexico?

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PIM 70

Social Justice and Intercultural Relations

SIT Graduate Institute in Brattleboro, Vermont, USA

May 2015

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## **Abstract**

This capstone paper examines and addresses an ideology about race and the color of skin in Mexico. Based on research and the author's observations and experiences in Mexico, the paper will examine Mexico's ideology about race, color and how their caste system became an instrument against a community that has existed in Mexico for centuries. Further, the paper will examine how Mexican's view one's skin color as a major denominator in one's social position due to their law of exclusion and inclusion. It continues to show how colonialism influence constructed Blackness as a negative connotation, no matter their years of assimilations. The paper concludes with information to address why and how the idea of race and color is viewed amongst their "melting pot" society.

## Language and Terms

The following names and definitions explain how names are used to identify an individual along with the historical reference within Mexico and Spain. Each name is used to identify an individual not only by one's color; it explains the historical references of exclusion that continues to exist in Central and South America. This list is just an example of names used within Latin America. For example Brazil has 134 different names that are used to identify the different shades of a person's skin color.

Afromestizos – Negros and Indians

Blanco – White

Bozal – an individual born in Africa

Claro – Fair skin

Mulatto – Spaniard and Negro

Morisco – Spanish and Mulatto

Lobo – Indian and Negro

Coyote – Indian and Mulatto

Chino – Indian and Lobo

Claro Negro – light brown complexion

Moreno Clara/Claro – light brown complexion (some African descents)  
(Christina 3)

Negrito/Negrita – Black

Moreno Oscuro – African origin features, dark brown

Gueros – white skinned non-Mexicans (North Americans/Europeans)

Pardos- color of Indians skin

Zambos- mixed Indians and Blacks

Mestizo – Spanish and Indian

Castizo – Spanish and Mestizo

Criollo – European descent

Mala raza: a member of a inferior race to be utilized for the benefit of whoever might own him. (Oriol, 240)

Limpiar /mejorar la raza: to clean or to better the race (A term which embodies the whitening sentiment) (Christina, 3)

Castas – breeding (Oriol 240)

The *castas* classification of New Spain may regarded as a five-fold division:

**Peninsular Spaniards/Criollos:** were predominantly Spanish descendants of the early settlers with often some Indian admixture and later periods perhaps a little Negro. (Oriol 241)

**Mextizos:** These were less Hispanicized than the Criollos and were culturally and racially more Indian. Economically less privileged than Criollos and Spaniards, they formed a peasant type of group and supplied most of the artisans and skilled non-professionals. Distinctions between Criollos and Mestizos was not too sharp and considerable mobility across *casta* lines was possible. (Oriol 241)



**Mulattoes and Negro-Indian crosses:** Some of these were free and other slave. Towards the end of Spanish dominion mainly a free group. This entity formed a large underprivileged minority with very little opportunity to cross into more favorable *castas*. From this groups was recruited most of the Afromestizo” proletariat of the towns. (Oriol 242)

**Negros:** These had the most difficult task in avoiding their racial heritage. The majority belonged to the slave class and when free could generally expect only the most menial employment. (Oriol 242)

**Indians:** The Indians lived in a world to some extent divorced from the *castas* system. Almost a state within a state, protected by the laws and “reduced” to their villages, they tilled ancestral land and kept as much to themselves as possible. Indian *caciques* in some census reports are listed as “Indios nobles” and grouped with Spaniards and Criollos. (Oriol 242)

Third Root: A reference towards the Afromexican’s celebrating their valuable contributions to Mexico long with history.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Specifically, my goal is to introduce this subject to my family, community and academic world. Several professors have addressed the case study within the last 10 years, which has brought the subject to a forefront. Although, the issues are not new for Latin America it is new to the academic world of the United States education system. I plan to bring forth history about the Negro Mexicana's along with their struggle to exist within their own community that has been restricted by the deep roots of colonialism. The research will further expose how the struggle of one community throughout the world continues to exist due to the color of one's pigmentation. This introduces several different ideologies about race, color and societal customs towards the Mexican Negro community that is not known by most of the world.

## **Introduction**

Throughout history everyone's experience is different depending on their beliefs, assimilation or skin color in their own community. People of different skin colors have been treated differently since time has begun throughout the world. Our history books and daily experiences have shown us how the dominant groups prefer to divide communities to reestablish their power and suppression towards others. It is a way to remind others about their dominance through their powerful positions politically, economically and socially. Colonialism history repeats itself, allowing the dominant communities to dictate another's social mobility, education, limitations and their civil rights through laws and government influence. Skin color has been a large player in this game of dominance throughout the world but particularly in Mexico's social fabric.

While living and traveling in Southern Mexico for a year, I became fully aware of the importance of my skin color. It is never something that I thought about in the United States since I am continuously observed as an outsider. No matter how long my family or ancestors have resided in the United States. My skin color is still a reminder to the dominant community of our ugly historical scars from slavery and genocide of Native Americans. In Mexico, because of my privilege life as an American, my skin color perpetuated my position in society. I did not look like the blacks portrayed on television or newspapers. I was considered different; I have fair skin, curly blond hair and lived in Latin community in Mexico. That was an anomaly on it's own, there are very few Black Americans that live or travel to Southern Mexico.

My position allowed me to introduce my curiosity about their racial caste system. How was the system developed? How does this archaic system continue to exist? I was

interested in the reasoning behind the law that was written to include, but excluded a person's ancestry. I used my own reference as a way to address what we called in the US, racism or racial divide. Once I shared my story about my background and life, people were willing to share their personal stories. Stories about how names are used towards family, friends and neighbors of different skin colors. One of my friends explained how Mexican's never talk about race, as it is considered impolite amongst their social fabric. Racial problems pretend to not exist in Mexico; every birth conceals your citizenship, so the need to categorized other groups is considered unnecessary, unless they're born amongst an Indigenous tribe. In recent years, things are starting to change in several states such as Oaxaca, Puebla and Guerrero. The local municipalities have begun to categorize tribes depending on their ancestry with Negro Mexicans and Indigenous Indians within Mexico.

Mexico is a multicultural society with a long complex history effected by colonialism and slavery, one in which it's original inhabitants were uniquely Spaniards, Mayans, Aztecs and Indians. At one time Mexico was consider a "melting pot" society due to the influences by each of the following communities. Eventually, their society changed through the mixing of these communities and traditions. This began a new society in Mexico that slowly saw the changes amongst their citizens skin color. The new system of hierarchy between the new communities began to affect and alter the ideas towards their casta system. Colonialism slowly permeated Mexico that brought about new issues in Mexico's separate but one society. The melting pot idea existed but the idea of mixing communities was not something that existed within the social fabric of Mexico. Mexico perceives themselves as a non-racial community that does not see anyone

through color. With this being said, skin color continues to play a large part in the exclusion of societies in Mexico.

The colonial influence brought on the need for slaves for the military against/for the Spanish crown. Mexico was at a disadvantage; their community was not equipped with enough men to construct a strong military. “Negroes were brought systemically to Mexico in accordance with agreements made between the Spanish crown and some individual or company who for a span of years had the monopoly of transporting Negro slaves (Oriol (review) 237). The black slaves serving in the military were not segregated amongst their troops as in other countries at the time of the war. Eventually, this changed during and after the war, since Black soldiers remain to reside in Mexico. This was their new home; they were not interested in returning to Africa, that life was in the pass. Mexico’s society had not considered the idea of African’s staying in Mexico as citizens; they were the new lower casta.

Starting in the early 1500’s and 1600’s the influx of slaves were beginning to saturate Mexico. Mexico was one of the largest purchasers of slaves then any other country, due to the easy access to the ports off of Mexico costal region. Africans brought into Mexico were not all slaves; many of them were employed by the military for the Spanish Crown of Spain. A large part of the military were free and educated African Blacks with families and skills that were used to improve their lives in Mexico. On the other hand there were large numbers of Africans purchase as slaves from the Iberian slave trade. “During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Mexico and Peru were the largest importers of African slaves in Spanish America and by the 1600, blacks clearly outnumbered white in Mexico.” (Christina 10) The need for slaves had several

components due to the requisite for a bigger military, agriculture laborers and domestic employees. Although, they were slaves their social mobility was completely different than the slaves in the United States. The Mexican government believed they were human beings, compared to the United States slave trade, which was thought of as private property.

Due to ramifications of war, Mexico's economic growths were poor and stagnate and development was in need. Their need to develop their economy was not on the rise along with their communities dwindling from disease and war. The Indigenous community was not able to satisfy the manpower needed to develop larger plantations. Eventually, the right to use the Indigenous community as laborers was outlawed; this crippled their economic growth. The Indigenous had their own laws that protected them due to their social traditions and norms. Mexico's new economic markets consisted of precious metals and tropical plantations; the need for large men was limited. The slave community was the new cheap labor for Mexico; not pure Spaniards or Indians. "This supposed physical superiority was used as a justification for the system of slavery and the most gross exploitation of the Negros." (Pi-Sunyer 240) Their blackness dictated their position within Mexico's society's from now on; Blacks from Africa were now employees of Mexico's elite. The White rich landowners saw this as a way to boost their production along with strengthening their personal and community's economic power.

The new community of Negro slaves in Mexico began to change the racial ideas of color and race. This brought on a new color class system; this particular new community was not considered Mexican pure breed. Slaves as previous stated were now the new lower caste in Mexico's hierarchy system. They were used as tools for

plantations owners with the intent of working slaves to the end of their lives. Slave owners in Mexico were concern about their slave's dependability, once bought from a slave trader; doctors were required to examine each one to assure their durability. Slaves were viewed as hard workers, their warfare was important to their owners.

Free and purchased Black Africans began to bring traditions, culture and food to their new community. The new color of Blackness was not apart of Mexico's heritage or history; Whiteness continued to be preferred among Mexicans. The idea of Blackness is viewed upon as the lowest social position; mixing with an African was viewed as a hindrance towards social mobility. The government made laws towards the idea of mixing between races that would assure their society a pure breed existence. The communities were encouraged to segregate within their own society; the idea of inclusion was not part of the political fabric of Mexico. Eventually, the political environment began to change; President Guerrero was the new president, he was considered by his community the "Mexican "Abraham Lincoln" (Vincent 148) for his work towards the abolishment of slavery in Mexico. He was aware of the daily obstacles that Black slaves and Indians lived with everyday. His personal experiences reminded of him of the ailments of being a particular color in Mexico. "Guerrero was of African, Indian and Spanish heritage, and he was raised in a colonial settings in which anyone African in Mexico was subjected by the Spaniards to special legal disadvantages, including the stipulation that only Africans could be made slaves." (Vincent 148)

His ethnic background influenced his decisions towards the new laws; banding of slavery and identity towards members of Mexico. President's Guerrero was requested to participate to sign a new law for peace between Spain and Mexico in 1821. The law

would assure peace and independence for Mexico and Spain but the primary goal was to protect the White elite community. President Guerrero did not agree with the new law; it prolonged segregation among Indians, Blacks and Spaniards. His new proposal addressed slavery, identity and oppression that affected Blacks and Indians on a larger platform that would hopefully improve their lives. The new law would address liberty, independence and abolishing slavery. Indians and Black communities would not be observed as separately, but citizens of Mexico. The author Theodore G. Vincent explains how the law was altered to include all citizens of Mexico no matter their color or heritage.

*“Subsequently, the Plan of Iguala, agreed to by Inturbide and Guerrero, Included Clause #12. “All inhabitants...without distinction of their European, Africans and Indian origins are citizens....with full freedoms to pursue their livelihoods according to their merits and virtues.” 14)*  
(Vincent 152)

The idea of all classes is to be considered equal, was not a mutual democratic idea for Mexico's society of White elites. The law that encouraged Mexico's civil rights movement allowed Blacks and Indians the same rights as the White elite; those who devised government policies. The new racial demographics permitted the lower castas Black Africans and Indians movement among Spaniards who were the upper crust of Mexico's society. The identity of citizens transformed the racial concepts between Whites, Indians and African Blacks. As one author explains “These discourses promoted “Afromexicans” as Mexico's “Third Root” and celebrated local culture as a valuable contribution to the national *mélange*.” (Lewis 900) Although, the law was to support the inclusion of one community into another, it formed a new identity to exclude African



Black slaves that have lived in Mexico for centuries. African Blacks had Mexican roots through their slaves owners, spouses and church birth rites.

The concept of racial inclusion initiated bigger issues within Mexico's so called melting pot. Their color classification system was use as a tool to discourage the mingling between races. This would ensure that the blood of one's community would not be contaminated by another race. Whiteness was consistently pursued by Mexico's society; Blackness was not part of their social fabric. While laws gave everyone the same so called race classification on paper: this was not true for everyone. Blackness was still viewed as a disadvantage, it continued to stunt their economical and educational growth. Who wanted to be an African Mexican in Mexico, no one, they are the lowest of the archaic casta systems. The negative attitude towards the concept of "Blackness" continues to exist on a daily bases depending on one's skin color.

My research brought me to the same question through my experience: Why is the color of one's skin so significant in Southern Mexico? A historical institutionalized concept that exist today silently in the background of our communities through out the world.

## **Literature Review**

In this section, I am presenting an overview of available resources and research that relates to my topic of Negro Mexican's. Several themes will be present itself through the research; race ideology, beliefs and archaic colonialism that continues to exist at the present time. Negro Mexican evolved from the influx of slaves for economic reasons such as agriculture and war. Why are Negro Mexican's ostracized due to their color? What roles do the archaic caste system continue to play as the ideology of color and race are viewed differently?

### **The Role of Negro Mexicans.**

In the last few years the topic of "Negro Mexicans" have been at the forefront of Mexico's history and politics. The idea of being black and Mexican is not something that most people assume exist, particularly if one is not educated in Negro Mexican history. In Mexico's historical background the ownership of slaves at one time was the largest market in the world connect by the Iberia slave trade. The slave trade provided an economic growth through agriculture, along with military support for Spain and Mexico. Mexican slaves slowly began to infiltrate several of their traditions such as African cuisine, music, dance and art while slowly assimilating under Mexico's culture. The slaves in Mexico were perceived the same as the lowest level of society similar to most colonialize countries throughout the world. Negro Mexican's are not viewed the same as in other counties due to their beliefs about race and color. Negro Mexicans are viewed by the color of their skin, their origin of background is not consider since their communities have existed in Mexico for centuries. For example "The distinction between the United

States and Latin American has been characterized as a “mark of origin” versus a “mark of color.” (Sue, 2)

Mexico’s ideas toward Blackness is not perceived as some of the world thinks about race, it is about a particular color or heritage background. Negro Mexicans consider themselves Mexicans not Afro-Mexicans, as in the United States black’s are consider African Americans. Although, the use of “African American” is given to the Black American community, it continues to separate communities due to one’s ethnicity. As we have experience in the last 20 years, this is a pure deception of one’s historical position within their country of origin. This is a perfect example of how words and identity can be misinterpreted or misuse due to one’s background and historical family history. In Latin American there are several names for Mexican’s due to the color of one’s skin, it is not a representation of your origin. Several names help categorize people within a community, which give the idea of opportunity, and mobility within the Latin American community but it’s a fallacy.

### **The Idea of Color**

In the following article “The Dynamics of Color” Mestizaje, Racism and Blackness in Veracruz, Mexico” by Christiana A. Sue; touches on the ideology of color and labels that identify “blackness.” Her concentration dealt with the community of Veracruz, Mexico. This is just one example of a Mexican state that has several decades of Negro Mexican’s from slave trading period of the America’s. Mexico has used labels for several decades as a tool to keep communities apart and encourage the idea that Spaniard blood is the pure blood of Mexico. The blood that is pure of Blacks and Indians give one community the idea that they are in better standing within their community. At one time

the idea of erasing discrimination/racism was implemented by President Porfirio Diaz, through a law, which would give individuals born in Mexico, Mexican citizenship. This law was thought to remove the stigmatization of one's color within one's community, regrettably the law expose the real ideas towards racism in Mexico.

The research will explore how the idea of color and identity can structure one's future and mobility. "The distinction between the social meaning of "race" and "color" become quite clear when people are asked to self-identity using an open-ended format." (Sue, pg. 8) This further allows the perpetuation of racism without expressing how one really feels about color. She furthers explains how the play of words continues to use labels as a tool to further discriminate within the Mexican community. "Given this belief, Mexico has long held a "raceblind" ideology where race talk and racial classification is deemed to be inappropriate." ( Sue pg. 8) The Negro Mexican community continues to understand the misplaced idea of assimilating in Mexico and refusal of one's African background.

### **Labels and Names; Identity**

In the following research it will show how the idea of identity continues to use words and ideology to persist the idea of Mexico as a "all-inclusive nation." The article and future research will show how skin color is very significant in the Mexican caste system. Along with beliefs about how color is perceived and digested within Mexico, which continues to live by the old world rules of color. Although, the author concentrates on one community Veracruz, Mexico, my research will not be isolated to a particular community of Negro Mexicans. The concentration of my research will deal

with the Negro Mexican community of Southern Mexico. My address one state within Mexico, since several of the same issues occur no matter what state are occupied by Negro Mexicans. Skin color in Mexico does not change due to the location of a state or community; skin color is the issue

My research will examine; Why is skin color significant in the Mexican caste system? It will examine how different names and usage of words have further separated communities due to the color of one's skin. I will show how the historical context of the "Mestizos" was use to categorize citizens of Mexico through culture, traditions and mannerism. The Negro Mexican's have particular features that are not common to the Spaniard or Indio's characteristics this is used as a tool to further cause diaspora of a community. The perception of the Negro Mexican's are believe to be dissimilar not only physically, psychologically and mannerism but beliefs. The differences were not view in a positive aspect to be shared amongst different communities or adopted from the future generation of intermarrying.

The names used will explain how it promotes the idea that racism does not exist. The definitions of each name will bring forth how one is viewed within their own community depending on their social status and family status quo. Several names are used to not lonely identity a families history, their mobility in society is silently written by their own peers. The Mexican community believes that being Negro Mexican is very different then being a Black American. Color is American continuous to be perceived as a negative connotation that being anything other then white is not a positive perspective in American

## **Weaknesses and Strengths**

There are several weaknesses within the article such as historical context of slavery, contributions of Negro Mexican's and assimilation. She does not relate the context of the slave trade to the Negro Mexican community along with their need to assimilate. The notion that the Mexican government decided to write a law that would assure an end to racism within their country, making everyone a citizen did not erase racism. The author did not address the fallacy of the law from the beginning or how the government used it to their advantage against their own people. These were individuals, who fought wars, work in their houses and picked their agriculture, which allow them to become an economic powerhouse at one time. Neither does she speak about their culture, politics or military contributions in Mexico.

The Negro contributions are important it gives a context about their lives and history in Mexico. Negro Mexicans were not just slaves; they help win several wars along with representing Spain's royalty. The history of Negro Mexicans will show how the Negro Mexican community had land, rights and mobility which was not normal for any other country that bought/sold slaves. The historical context will explain how slavery; a large and dirty secret of the Americas made Blackness a negative perception. Sharing the contributions through the research gives the perception that many of the slaves in Mexico were trained professionals in many different trades such as blacksmiths, cobbler and entrepreneurs. Many of them were not just given jobs in the agriculture world for their masters; the trades were brought from their country of origin; Africa. Although, they were considered property, they could eventually live as a free Negro's in Mexico. A slave's mobility was not only dictated by their masters but through personal

desire to become free person. Slaves were able to marry outside of their community without being punished or killed. Many married Indio's because of the similarities in traditions, customs and a desire for social mobility. This was not the case for slaves in the United States the debt paid for them was never obtainable in their lifetime, unless there were certain circumstances that gave them freedom.

The author did not touch on contributions made by Negro Mexican's within the Mexican community. The article concentrates on the Veracruz, Mexico; this is just one state of the 32, which has a Negro community in Mexico. Although, I understand that she is addressing the idea of identity she does not touch on the positive view of being labeling as a Moreno. In the Catholic religion, the Black Madonna is considered one of the highest saints, to be considered Moreno as the Madonna is a compliment. The article does not express how a government's manipulated laws to encourage assimilation and relinquish one's historical contributions from African to Mexico. Neither, does it explain how generations of "cleaning of the blood" ideology erase's history of a group of people who were bought/sold as objects and made massive contributions to Mexican food, politics and culture.

The article strengths deal with identities, labels and how labels continued to effect generations of Negro Mexicans. Her interviews reveal real conversations from people of different skin colors. Each individual share's their real life stories about their community and thoughts about intermarriage with Negro Mexicans. Several stories explain how the names and labels were designated for the skin color of one's skin and not their country of origin. Their explanation about how one is looked upon within their own community through color and how color can designate one's life and future. The stories come from

different perspectives depending on the story teller; Negro Mexican, Indio or Spaniard. She has been able to show how each one views themselves and how others' view Negro Mexicans due to their idea of color, racism and historical knowledge passed down from generations of ideology.

Some of the younger generations share their views about the idea of marrying a Moreno, Moreno Claro or Moreno Oscuro. Many of them desire to marry someone of a lighter color, to assure their next generation will be of lighter complexion. Several young men share their stories on how they were not always consider to be a candidate for dating due to the color of their skin. They continue to perpetuate the idea of "blackness" is a negative through their own search for lighter complexion mates. The older generations continue to influence their young generations due to their archaic beliefs about the idea of color and how their future will be affected due to their decisions about color.

Inclusion, I will take the research that is available and divulge the deep views and beliefs of one community about their race ideology. Although, there have been several studies about this topic I am brining forth this subject through the eyes of a young black women from the United States. A personal view from an outsider that is a Black American whose race has lived in a world of color and has her own questions about her skin color and what it represent.



## **Color and Classification**

For generation's colonized countries have used names to identify one's skin color, which remains as of today. As we know, we have been confronted with this systemic system since slavery. If you were white, your life would be better; you had land, a job and money. If you were Black you were seen as the lowest hierarchy with limited opportunities to improve ones life. The Indian community benefited on both ends. They had their own land, customs and traditions they were separate from the new community of the New Mexico. "It should be noted, however, that throughout Mexico, "whiteness" is valued." (Sue 2) This mentally has been instilled within communities for hundreds of years; people would like to believe this ideology has dissipated through out the centuries. Through out the world this systemic mindset has not altered due to the unceasing racial divide depending on your status quo. As of today, Blackness is still perceived as the most inferior color throughout the world then any other racial group.

In the last centuries, Mexico has used names to identify people by the color of their skin. This social norm is viewed as a term of endearment, not about an individual's skin color. Their mentality about color and race is far from the racial attitude found through out the world; racial attitudes amongst their society do not exist. Color is viewed as a distinction between communities along with religious traditions and dress. One author shares his finding by explaining Latin Americas' beliefs about racial division that exists today. "All of these governments are firmly convinced that the racial caste systems of colonial times has totally disappeared." (Martinez 55) As of today, this is not entirely perceived by all of Mexico's society, especially darker skin citizens. Their daily struggles

remind them of their racial divide through their political, economical and education limitations. Mexico would like everyone to believe the true bloodline is mixed throughout history, racial division does not affect their society. One community cannot exist by itself, although European characteristics or whiteness is preferred amongst Mexico's society.

In Mexico's norms there are several names shared between family, friends and locals that negate one's history. We have seen how this can become contentions varying one's position in the hierarchy of their own community. Anthropologists have introduced particular labels to identify the others in Mexico diverse community; Afro-Mexicans or Negro Mexican's. Neither of the following words exists in Mexico's racial vocabulary towards dark skin Mexican citizens. They believe the reason for having darker skin is a repercussion from extended strong rays from the sun on the tropical part of the country. Work on the coastal lines is usually labor intense jobs centered on agriculture, fishing or tending land for food. Several communities with large pockets of dark skin Mexicans are located on the coastlines of several states of Central America.

Names have been use through out history to divide communities, churches and political beliefs throughout the world. Mexico for example, perceives the use of names towards someone as a term of endearment, such as Negro. The name is not used to identify or remind one of their historical heritages, it exposes their skin color. This systematic tradition is evidently not important; they are Mexican citizens so their need for a racial divide is silently pursued. The following names describe the color of one's skin that relates to their status quo in Mexico. *Moreno* or *Casta Negro* describes dark black skin. *Obsurco Negro* describes very dark black skin. *Blanco* describes white or very fair

skin. *Claro Negro* is a light brown skin. Negrito/Negrita is another name used towards a person with black skin. *Mulato* is someone consider to be of mixed race between Créole, Black and Spaniard parents, their particular features will vary depending on what gene decides to present itself. *Bozal* is believed to be an individual who is originally from Africa with African features. These are just a few that describe a different part of their society by their skin color classification system. Each of the following names are not only labels towards one's skin, it also reveals a little part of their ancestry. Mexico would like you to believe that the following labels are about skin color, not everyone accepts or believes this theory.

Mexico's identifiers towards different color skin individuals are based also on their features and characteristics. Mulatto's for instance have more European features with straight nose, high cheekbones and straight or wavy hair. The skin can be olive or fair depending on their ancestry of both parents and bloodline. The hair color will vary from blonde, light brown to dark brown. Their features are the most desired within Mexico. They are thought of as part of the pure breed ancestry with better opportunities than their darker community. Bozal features on the other hand are described as harsh dark features with larges noses, tight curly hair and very dark skin. A Bozal man has a large contoured body along with tight curly skin and large hands. You can see their African heritage features in their face and body; some think they are harsh, forward and opinionated. This trait is not pursued or envied by other communities. Their features are not regarded, as desirable or pretty, families would rather disregard their existence. They would rather be viewed as Morenos, they believe their existence has nothing to do with Africa.

Morenos are considered to be civil and assimilated; they speak Spanish while adopting Spanish traditions and customs. Morenos can have similar characteristics of a Bozal or Mulato, but their color defines their name. Moreno's believe their place in Mexico is better than the lowest caste system of Blacks. Their history is not very different considering both communities were shipped to Mexico for one reason or another. In their eyes there is no comparison between their community and African slaves that arrived in Mexico at the same time. If the two communities were perceived with similar past, the Moreno's subsistence would be viewed to the lowest caste politically, economically and socially.

The practice of using labels in Mexico is to diminish the existence of Blackness throughout history. Blackness is not something that anyone in Mexico wants to be associated with due to the negative connotation through out history, academia or politically. The new labels given to particular parts of Mexico societies allow people of African descent from slaves to disassociate their family's bloodline. The systems of diminishing Blackness were encouraged by White Spaniards who rule the country and government policies. White Spaniards thought of themselves as the "raza (race)" of Mexico. One author explained how they justified their reasoning: "Spaniards designed non-European-based cultural groups, such as Africans and Indigenous Mexicans, "*gente sin razon*," or irrational beings <sup>65</sup>." (Carroll 88) A mindset about Blackness presented the idea of cleaning one's bloodline through marrying a fair skin person would interrupt the ancestor's gene pool. Mexico's society is well aware of the tradition of cleaning of the blood between families, to assure fair skinned children. Most citizens do not want to be

associated with a inkling of having Black blood in their family; this secret in some instances is kept for generations.

Mexico's complex society of race and color has so many intricate beliefs about the pureness of Mexico's race. Whites from Spain believe they are the pure breed of Mexico's society, along with the Mayans, Aztecs and Indios. The Indian's believe that they are the pure society of Mexico, due to their century old existence before Spain invaded Mexico. Each community believes that their community is the true bloodline of Mexico. The notion of the outsider brings up strong opinions about who is the original community no matter their skin color. As one citizen of Mexico shares his point of view about the idea of belonging to Mexico's society he ventures on the idea that everyone should be perceived as an outsider.

*“The people here say [they are] Mexicans; outsiders are the ones that say “Afromexicans.’ White don’t say that they’re Spaniards.’ They say they are Mexicans. They say that we are not from here. Well, they are not from here either.” His comment suggests that whites have no more claim to Mexico than morenos, a complex theme that I now take up.” (Lewis 914)*

The outside mentally continues to keep all the communities separate in one way or another due to the color system. A color system that does not exist, nor spoken about or address locally within their own municipalities or state government. Mexico may not use racial demographics in their political process, but relinquishing one's ability to own their own beliefs about their ancestry oppresses their individuality.

## **Methodology**

The topic of my paper requires Ethnography style of research and development; it will examine two cultures living as one with separate traditions and beliefs. “In an ethnographic study, the problem statement might include thoughts about why it is important to describe and to interpret the cultural behavior of a certain groups of people or how a group is marginalized and kept silent by others.” (Creswell, 103) I will support this data through journals, books, personal stories and interviews. The information will be used as a collaboration and support of each other, which will show the differences in the historical context depending on the author or interviewee. The interviewees will be of Afro-Mexican and Spanish descent, which will allow the perspectives to bring forth different experiences due to their position within Mexico. My research will describe the history and ideology about the identity of Afro-Mexican’s in Mexico. The examination of the fundamentals of the historical background and present their issues with being Black Mexicans, Negra Mexican or Negro Mexican. There will be several problems working with the subject such as amounts of information available in English, translating interviews and staying within the boundaries of my research without getting to personal due to my own beliefs. I am not representing either community United States or Mexico through this research; my goal is to use the research as a way to start a dialog between communities that co-exist within each other.

My approach to this paper is an interpretive paradigm, which emphasizes the importance of not oppressing an individual or a community. “The participants in these interpretive projects represent underrepresented or marginalized groups, whether those differences take the form of gender, race, class, religion, sexuality, and geography.”

(Ladson-Billings 7 Donnoer, 2005) Creswell, 24, 2007) The Ethnography methodology structure uses an analysis system along with developing a historical and present situation about the topic along with introducing the subject to a different genera. “Although qualitative researchers use social sciences theories to frame their theoretical lens in studies, such as the use of these theories in Ethnography (see Chapter 4), our discussion will be limited to the interpretive lens related to societal issues and issues influencing marginalized or underrepresented groups.” (Creswell 24, 2007) I will use several sources such as electronic data, books, personal stories, periodicals, and Mexican history books from Oaxaca, Mexico and World Cat library.

My daily adventures equipped me with the ability to gather experiences through personal stories, note taking and the usage of labels towards foreigner. My experiences will bring back situations where I was unaware of the use of the labels towards me until I was informed about how color caste systems in Mexico exist. I began to ask my friends parent’s questions along with associates, artist friends and academic professors about their castes systems and how it affects the different communities, especially the Negro Mexicans. While having unofficial interviews with friends and associates, I began to notice the differences in how people were viewed along with the mentality towards different groups of Mexicans. A native Mexican notified me that they did not have racial problems similar to the United States. She explained how the idea of separation did not exist; everyone born in Mexico is a Mexican or Indigenous.

## **Colors of Experience**

My journey introduced me to some great people who were willing to discuss their civil rights and racial observations. They were willing to share their opinion and mind set on real issues about race and philosophy towards skin color. How it affects not only their societies, but also their beliefs about race are shared for generations to come. No matter what color skin someone has, everyone's family has a concern about their future generations skin color. Some of them for generations would rather keep their dark skin family members with Bozal features, a secret. It provides the family with a better assessment about their opportunities and mind set towards the next generations.

I met some interesting people who became my friends while living in Oaxaca, Mexico. I was able to meet them through different venues around town: art, education and academia. Each one has their own experiences involving skin color and identity within their own community. All of them had their own experience about race and color since their lives are so different from each other. Jesus and I became friends while meeting at a local expat café, where he was employed working in the kitchen. His experiences are profound and intricate; he has lived in the United States and Mexico. His stories about his racial experiences in each country were similar but unusual due to their ideology about skin color and racism in each country.

Jesus "Negro" Dominguez is a 20-year-old young man studying culinary arts in Mexico. He has dark skin, kinky curly hair and large Bozal features. He speaks fluent English and Spanish; he has had the opportunity to experience two different life styles; American and Mexican. At the time of our interview he resided in Oaxaca Centro, which is the main city of the state of Oaxaca. He was married with a 2 year old daughter, he is



fully aware of the obstacles she will face due to the color of her skin. Most of his friends will never have the same opportunities, due to his family's history in the US and Mexico. He has a visa so it is easy for him to travel back and forth between North and Central America. His loyalty consists of Mexico's proud Latin history along with his other side of the race spectrum of being a Cuban Negro. He is quite proud of his existence in both worlds and hope his children will also be just as proud. His community is a diverse community living amongst their own archaic color classification systems.

His parents are from two different communities, their relationship is viewed as a mixed marriage; mother is Cuban Negro, father is Mexican. His father's family is from the state of Guerrero; this community has a large Negro population due to its coastal position. Guerrero was one of the largest slave ships docking area during the slave trade period in Mexico. He has lived in Mexico, Texas and California for several years. He attended school in each country throughout his educational development so his recollection of color and race were at the forefront of today's issues. His nickname is "Negro" which was given to him since his skin is perceived as Black instead of Brown. He made me feel like we had a kindred spirit about race, color and exclusionism from our own country of origin. Our conversations were raw and interesting; we had our own perspectives from two different views of each other's country; Mexico and United States.

Our first conversation addressed his experiences living in the United States and race relations. Our conversation was raw at the beginning exchanging between Spanish and English, but it eventually became clear that we had similar views. We began to share our countries denial about race and racial identity that existed within Mexico and United States. I understood while addressing racial issues in Mexico, that I had to separate my

opinions and perceptions of his country. I also had to step back and listen to his explanations and emotions about his life that I could not understand. I made sure that my questions were from an academic forum, not a personal story. At times I wanted to share my own story, but I did not want him to be influenced by my experiences with race and color. One of our conversations during his interview in English touched on a few personal stories that he shared with me about how he felt as a Black Mexican.

**Me:** Have you ever been treated different because of your skin color in Oaxaca?

**Jesus:** Yes, I was treated different even here in Mexico its hard for me to get a job because of my characteristics they think and say your like Dominican, Puerto Rican, Cuban or your anything else except for Mexican. I don't why its not right, it might be for my dressing style, I don't know my hair cut or my face, I don't really know the real reason they say that, but I don't mind, I won't deny what I am, even my mom is Cuban, even my mom was black, I don't have nothing to be ashamed of.

**Me:** Do you see a lot of other Afro Mexican's in Oaxaca treated differently also, do you know anyone that you hang around with that you guys talked about your experiences or perceived?

**Jesus:** Actually, it's a good question and I think I have the right answer, you don't treat the same cause you are dark skin, you are Negro, it's a stereotype. If you are tan or a little bit tan, Mexico just beats you up. I love my roots where I come from, as long as I am happy and I don't hurt anybody else. In the states I hated that, I got nothing against whites, but they mistreated people, they hurt you and think they bring more to the table. I don't know how you feel being here in Mexico.

**Me:** When you date what, do you look for you in a girl:

**Jesus:** Actually dating or going out, you know what I just want to say something, I don't mean to bad or a jerk, Mexican girls or anybody from the world, they say that black people or blacks they have charisma. I don't like going out with white chicks, I am not discriminating you know like brown girls or dark skin girls, my own preference they much more fun more cute, more locos, I would not say crazy, but I don't know. I like dark skinned ladies or brown skin ladies; I prefer to go out with girls from the Coasta or Vera Cruz. Its more easy to be around someone who is brown skin then a girl who is white, I mean light skinned.

Jesus, experiences have defined his life through Mexico's race and skin color ideology from his country of origin. His stories reveal a side of color that his society chooses to either ignore or selectively decided to set aside due to their impression of the "melting pot". He shares stories about how being a Negro Mexican allows others to disregard his identity by requesting he demonstrate his loyalty by reciting the Mexican anthem. The authorities have requested several times throughout his life to view his papers of citizenship that has brought out ire and humiliation. The police have the authority to do this at any time, if they have probable cause about one's racial background. Mexico is facing a new migration of immigrants from several other Latin American countries, similar to other countries in the world. His life and color of skin is a constant reminder of his low social position of the racial hierarchy throughout the world; his families' historical background dictates his future. His story is just one of many lives that is affected by decisions of a dominate group that lives by the archaic hierarchy mentally from the old roots of colonialism.

## **Experiences of Artist/Teacher**

Race and color does not mean the same depending on your reference or historical background in Mexico. I discovered this paradigm while discussing my paper with an acquaintance of a mutual friend. As we began a dialog about my experiences while living in Oaxaca, Mexico, our conversation touched on race and identity. I saw this as an opportunity to share my thoughts and ideas about race and skin color. This happened several times through my stay in Mexico with several other people that was of interest and informed about racial issues in Mexico. Each one of my candidates is from distinctly different backgrounds in education, economics and social position. Each one comes from a large family with ties to the community and education. Sabino Guiso does not have a western-based education opposite of Prof. Lopez. Several of their siblings have attended university in Mexico, encouraged by their parents. I found this to be beneficial for my research; it allowed me to not only show different aspects of thoughts, but different avenues of historical knowledge.

Depending on the interviewee's skin color I eventually understood their personal view towards skin color, how it affected their lives. Their skin color also dictated their family's economic and social position; they were both aware of this dichotomy awarded by their ancestor's origin. Professor Mario Lopez, Ph.d, had an opportunity to study abroad in Canada; he majored in Linguistics and speaks fluent English. His wife is a fair skin woman married to a professor, their social standing is considered good within their community. Although, he has never resided within United States, he believes that he has some notion of their race relations. He is not fully aware of the race relations within his

own community because they do not affect his personal community. He lives in a middle class neighborhood where he is a teacher at a local school. He is also an administrator within the school so his social position is high up on the social radar in Mexico. Educational professionals in Mexico are perceived to have a better social position than other professionals. Most of his students come from upper or middle class communities, which have limited dark skin individuals. He is not aware of the racial issues that exist as of today in Mexico. Professor Lopez has curly hair and brown skin; he is not viewed as a Negro Mexican. He shares a bit of his family's background; his mother ancestors were Negro's and his fathers were Indigenous. He does not admit or deny his Negro heritage but he does not identify as one in his social circle.

**Me:** What is your ethnic background?

**Pro. Lopez:** I was born in the valley, big family 9 children, my mother is from the coast. Yutla is where his father is from. I come from a Spanish speaking family; my father has indigenous on his side, 5 or 6 generations back. Zapotec was used within their community but in society they spoke Spanish. My mother's side 3 or 4 generations back is from Africa, so they are Black 3 or 4 generations. We know from history that Africans came as slaves at the bottom of the social level.

**Me:** What is the Third Root, where did the idea come from?

**Prof. Lopez:** Perception of the Third Root in Oaxaca, Mexico; it's interesting in many ways of the struggle fought by African Mexican's, its basically about their recognitions. In many ways in some time they were not recognized as indigenous; they actually need to fight to be able recognized a solely indigenous groups, so now constitutionally they are recognized as one of the 16 ethnic groups in Oaxaca as part of the constitutions that is. In many ways there has been discrimination against the Black in Oaxaca, many ways because they believe to isolated parts due

to the coast, many people forget about them in many way, most of them are still concentrated in this part of the city.

Some of them of started to move in the valley. One of my best friends was Black, he was Black, Black in a way, so he is basically a descendant of Black, they stood out in many way. A group of probably 80 children in my generation, in class 2 of them were black. Many people would make jokes or about their family in color. Their presence in the city is not as strong physically.

**Me:** When in Oaxaca, you don't see many of them; you don't see a lot of them. The people like the coastal areas, they stay there in a way, they like it. They are not apart of the daily discourse, but people do still make jokes about Blacks. They still make jokes

**Prof. Lopez:** I am shame to says this one of my brothers for example, when Obama's daughter came, we still have this family that we basically childhood friends belong to, Brian one of my brothers, said you should introduce Obama's daughter to this family I think this women is her Aunt. Right. So, it was a very stupid racist joke. Right, but that was the connection. Because Obama's daughter was here then the Black's became apart of people's talk.

**Prof. Lopez:**

My feeling will be yes, Usually in the states is associated with low levels of education rights, and maybe problematic of work. I don't think here is that here the issue here once again because they speak Spanish. Yes they are Black, they happen to be black, people would make fun of their color, but that is it. So, I don't think people see them as not well educated, because the language here is a huge thing in Oaxaca. They speak Spanish really well it someone who might have gone to school. For example Blacks here do not have the reputation as being aggressive or delinquents or being that. So some people would hire them for sure, they speak Spanish well, so they blend in.

**Me:** What is the meaning of Morena? I was called Morena and did not understand the meaning, until I asked a friend; who explain to mean that it was a compliment.

**Prof. Lopez:**

Morena for example is interesting, is the Virgin of Guadalupe, is a very strong figure in Mexicans, she is the psyche, she is suppose to be the Mother of Mexicans, Virgin of Guadalupe, she is called Morenita of Mexico. So, Morena is no means an insult in Oaxaca, it is a compliment, because Catholicism has a huge influence in Mexico. The mixtures here tend to be more Guenito, black is part of the spectrum. Negro is more associated with people from the coast, basically from the color, Negro. Again, it is the impression. The used of the world is commonly used in the verso in songs used to talk about someone from the coast use to talk about someone who is Black.

**Me:** Do they still believe in the cleanings of the Blood; like they say Limpia de sangre (cleaning of the blood)?

**Prof. Lopez:**

Well, it's funny, not really Limpia de sangre, I think here is the stereotype of race more then blood the typical express of the coast is like to improve the race. Now, if you are marrying someone who is not actually good looking or probably not Guerita or white. Someone who is from the outside, who stands out as being white with blue eyes, that is good you are improving the race. If you are marring someone who is typical white or black, it is consider "Mi forma de raza." It is more of an issue of the skin not race rather then blood. Basically, meaning walking away from being Black darker or Moreno even worst being white with blue eyes. The whole black issues is from being from the coast, it is about the color, you may be not be black as a Moreno, but when you live their all the time you may become Black because of the sun.

My other candidate is quite the opposite; he is a famous artist that addressed racial issues in his work. Sabino Guiso, is constantly reminded of his color and position, but since he is famous his dark skin and Bozal features are not perceived as negative. His parents are from the coastal region where there large communities of Negro Mexicans. Mexican communities continue to subsist. His father's background is Itsmos and his

mother is Mexican and Zapatista. His parent's meet in Vera Cruz, neither one of them knows their families' entire ancestry. Their families complexion varies due to their family ancestry, his sister's vary from caramel to dark brown, his father's hair is tight curled, although his skin is very dark brown. He is very proud of his parent's ancestry and social position in Mexico, but there is not a moment where he or his family is not reminded of their Negro Mexican identity. His mentors throughout his artistic career have had a large influence on his artwork that represents Negro Mexican's civil rights in Mexico. Sabino wears his color with proudness and confidence that not only comes through his work of arts, but also his discussions and views.

I propositioned him into being a part of my work about my topic and he was more than happy to humor me. Each interview began with the same questions and in Spanish; we began to veer off of my prepared agenda. This allowed our conversation to touch on other issues such as personal views and experiences living as a Negro Mexican or being a descendant of the Negro slave. At first I was a bit weary about how to confront certain questions about their personal views towards a group of people that are socially and economically isolated. This community is outwardly viewed as unfamiliar through archaic laws; hypocritical social ideas and Mexico's status quo. Each question eventually brought up issues that were either important to them or a need to inform others about a community that has no real representation or identity.

Our conversations began by talking about his family and his thoughts towards the Negro Community. My agenda was to use my questionnaire as a guide to begin our conversation, it did not happen that way. I knew he was willing to talk about his personal, professional and social ideas about racial ideas. Our conversations were predominately in



Spanish but at times it would veer off to English. A friend assisted with interview as an interpreter for certain words or idioms between us.

S: So what is the typical history of afro-Mexican families?

D: My family? No, we don't know. My father a little bit.

S: As far as the understanding of whether it is ugly or beautiful

D: No, like about 10 years ago it has been picking up. Many people don't know where they are coming from. For example in the Isthmus, when I was a child, my hair was (Chino) and there was racism. There is racism for those who are very thin, those who are very fat, for those who have hair like this or like that. But that is racism of children, very innocent racism. But yeah, many people don't know where they come from, they are not very educated about that, and in the school they don't teach you anything about that. They call you "Black" but they don't know the whole story...everybody has a story behind them that is beautiful. He explains how as a child he was not aware of the many names and ideas about the Negro community.

D: Yes, but this was when I was a child. I didn't know what the term Afro-American or anything. Later I started to study. In the school they teach you something that is called "Cultura de Casta", looking at the paintings they used to do in Mexico about the racial mixes. When an indigenous Mexican would mix with a Spaniard, you would get a "Mestizo". And a "mestizo" with a Spaniard would become a "castizo" and would go back to being Spaniard. When a black would mix with an indigenous it would become a "Mulato". And a Mulato again with another indigenous it would become a "lobo." And there are a lot of terms from the "Pinturas de Castas" and they were because of (inaudible) racial. When I come to Oaxaca and started to study in the library, I started to find several books about this, and I started to get interested in the topic. And I started to study, first about the Afro-Mexicans, and later about those from Central America, and later about all that has been contributed by the characters with African roots through the world, even in the sports.

S: Is the whole coast community is all Afro-Mexican? Is it a very poor and lacking schools?

D: They are like cowboys

S: Cowboys?

D: They dress like cowboys and ride horses. They are Catholic; they didn't acquire any African traditions like in Cuba, very little here. They are more Mexican.

Our conversation exposes how different communities or countries hide or selectively alter or diminished a particular group of people for reason unbeknownst to them. A reoccurring ideology that is perpetuated around the world towards the idea of Blackness, race and color in 2014. As we have addressed in my interviews color and race are two different things. They are not the same although they are treated and viewed as the same due to the long ugly historical references from colonial influenced countries that continue to use color as a tool to separate communities economically, socially and educationally.

## **Conclusion**

The following research is an attempt to comprehend and introduce the idea of race, skin color in Southern Mexico and several different states that share the same ideology about race. The shared information is through my personal research and experiences while living in Oaxaca and traveling through Central America. During the following research process, I have found the idea of race and skin color in parts of Mexico is unusual. Mexico's stance on race is unlike most of the world, their society views discussing race as a social faux pas, so it is not addressed publicly or politically. The idea of the melting pot is one that seems like an invitation for anyone to live amongst, but this is not completely true. Their melting pot is divided not only by social economics but also skin color depending on their ancestry. An idea that has permeated itself in other countries and social fabrics that believe Blackness is a negative concept. A racial construct that is used against a particular community due to their skin color that is used to identified individuals as different due to one's pigmentation.

This social mind set towards Blackness is ingrained within Mexico's community and political representation. In the last few years the state of Oaxaca, has given recognition to the Negro Mexican community along with 16 other tribes. Both coastal communities continue to struggle due to the limited social service, economic structure or developed schools. Their disparities are not important to their outside neighbors due to their historical ethnicity and ideas about their society. Their political representation is very limited since Mexico believes that there is no need to represent a group that is not viewed as separate; Negro Mexicans citizens. Although, many understanding is that their community is still perceived as different due to their characteristic features and skin

color; BLACK. This thought process is used as a tool to further isolate a group of people due to their differences viewed as a disadvantage within their own community.

The fallacy that Mexico chooses not to recognize a group of people that they believe to be beneath them is an ideology that thrives worldwide. Mexico just happens to be the country where their old archaic caste system lingers underneath their dominant society. This old system of not addressing issue of a community further isolates and economically hinders, due to the negligence of their needs and desires. The research shows how history continues to repeat itself towards particular communities due to race. This is an old system that has existed for centuries towards minorities through out the world against a group that is considered socially lower status due to the color of their skin. The colonization of countries around the world has enhanced the idea that skin color makes you different. If, you are not Anglo Saxon, your access to education, economics and political representation is limited and continues to be stifled as of today.

As any growing civilization the idea of acceptance and inclusion is a difficult process due to the ingrained beliefs and ideas about “the other.” Societies around the world will eventually have to confront racism and discrimination issues due to the changes of our society and mixing of marriages. Governments around the world are facing racial issues within their own societies. There are several suggestions for bringing communities together such as dialog, grass roots organizations and diversity programs. Educational programs introducing the idea of exclusion and inclusion are other programs can be beneficial beginning in elementary school. These are just a few suggestions that could benefit not only the isolated community but educate the dominate community. It will take a lot of work with people from all walks of life and social economic positions to

bring racial issues to a forefront. The following suggestions is not limited too one particular group of people, it's for anyone that is excluded for one reason or another. Even, as of today 2014, developed and developing countries continue to use tactics, ideas and old archaic caste systems to continue exclusion.

The idea of isolating communities due to their race or color is not an easy mindset to remove due to the historical teachings of a country. "One reason for this trend may be that *morenos*, *moreno oscuros* and *negros* are more wedded to the belief that there is no racism because they have the most at stake in upholding a national ideology that promotes racial inclusiveness and there fore are its most staunch defenders." (Sue, 14) Mexico demonstrates that their Negro community is not important politically or historically by refusing to acknowledge their existence. This ideology is not just Mexico's mindset; it has existed throughout the world on a daily bases. Colonialism whiteness propaganda was encouraged by a group of people who worked towards the idea of encouraging others to assimilate, like them; BE WHITE. This is a way of life that everyone should not only want but also desire to live by so you are not made to feel different within your own community.

During my research, I stumbled on a new movement slowly growing within Oaxaca, Mexico using art as a tool to bring about awareness of Negro Mexicans. Several local artists' from Oaxaca, Chiapas and Guerrero have used their art for years to bring awareness about the Negro Mexican's concerns. This is not a new phenomena, many civil rights fighters from the world, have use art to expose thoughts about racism and discrimination. The leaders of this movement consider their work as a "Civil Right" movement that is necessary for the next generations of Mexicans. Their objective is to

have more political representation and social services for isolated communities with large Negro presences. Negro Mexican's are proud of their Mexican heritage but their desire is to be recognized for their contributions and identity. A need to not be further excluded within their own community, to be given their own identity without being ostracized for wanting to be accepted and represent their intertwined heritage from their ancestors.

The social fabric of one's community in Latin American does not explain their whole ideology about race, as we have found out, race is not the issue. The pigmentation of one's skin is the common dominator where the subject of race is addressed. Mexico as we have learned does not view race or color in the same kaleidoscope as many countries around the world due to their silent ideas about their own people. Identity in any country has its old head reared from one's historical influence and unceasing ideas that people will endure to be separated due to old archaic ideas. Old ideas that have been passed down for centuries, even as of today, still ask the new generation works hard to figure out their position within their community. A community that is infiltrated by an old dirty secret of slavery and their offspring, which has contributed years of culture, traditions and customs, is the biggest challenge.

The idea of race and color is an emblematic that affects the world in so many ways. As of today the color of Black continues to be view negatively on a day to day basis around the world. To reiterate some of the information coming from my interviewees, as we see the outlook on race and color depending on your social status and background varies tremendously it is a very large spectrum. This spectrum can sometimes be neglected due to your position and ideology about race or not living within the so-called color of skin dichotomy. "However, it is necessary to not only address this

issue in regional isolation but also in more global terms, as color has played and continues to play, a prominent role in many parts of the world” (Sue, 14). As we see in our former colonized communities and abroad, race is and will always be a large factor in someone’s future, past and present.

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## **Appendix A**

What is the perception of Black Mexicans in Oaxaca?

How is the history of Black Mexicans perceived or shared within Mexico?

How is one perceived as a Black Mexican within Mexico?

How do Mexican families feel about their black history?

Is the idea of being Black & Mexican a proud ideology?

How do families speak about their Black family members?

Does racism exist among the 3 Roots in Mexico?

What type of things were you told about racism and blackness in Mexico as a child?

What is your opinion towards the classification of Black Mexicans by the younger Mexicans?

Since the idea of integrating everyone as a Mexican instead of having categories of different races, how do you think this has helped or hinder Mexican's acceptance of Black Mexicans within Mexico?

What are some the challenges that Black Mexican's experience on a daily basis's if any?

Do you think that Black Mexican's experience racism similar to Black Americans?

Does the Mexican government acknowledge the Black Mexicans community and do they have the same rights as everyone else, although there ancestors are from Africa?

How does your family feel about Mexicans Negro?

Do you have any Black Mexicans in your family?

What is the history surrounding Black Mexican?

What does it mean in Oaxaca to be called Moreno or Claro Moreno?

How is the Black Mexican community treated within their own Mexican community?

What is the relationship between the government and Black Mexicans?

What does it mean when someone talks about "cleaning the race"?

Why do you think there are very few Black American visiting Oaxaca?

What do you think would happen, if there were Black American's visiting Mexico?

## Appendix B

Cuál es la percepción de los mexicanos de negro en Oaxaca?

¿Cómo es la historia de los mexicanos negro percibida o compartida dentro de México?

¿Cómo se percibe como un negro mexicano dentro de México?

¿Cómo se siente acerca de su historia negra las familias mexicanas?

¿Es la idea de ser mexicano y negro una ideología orgullosa?

¿Cómo hablar familias de miembros de su familia negros?

¿Existe racismo entre las 3 raíces en México?

¿Qué tipo de cosas dijeron sobre el racismo y la negritud en México como un niño?

¿Cuál es tu opinión hacia la clasificación de los mexicanos de negro por los jóvenes mexicanos?

Desde la idea de integrar a todo el mundo como un mexicano en lugar de tener categorías de diferentes razas, ¿cómo crees esto ha ayudado o dificultar la aceptación del mexicano de negros mexicanos en México?

¿Cuáles son los desafíos que Black mexicano experiencia si de un diario cualquiera?

¿Crees racismo de ese negro mexicano experiencia similares a los estadounidenses negros?

¿El Gobierno mexicano reconoce la comunidad negra de los mexicanos y tienen los mismos derechos que todos los demás, aunque hay ancestros provienen de África?

¿Cómo se siente su familia sobre Negro de los Mexicanos?

¿Tienes alguna mexicanos negro en tu familia?

¿Cuál es la historia que rodea negro mexicano?

¿Qué significa en Oaxaca a llamarse Moreno o Claro Moreno?

¿Cómo se trata la comunidad mexicana negra dentro de su propia comunidad mexicana?

¿Cuál es la relación entre el Gobierno y los mexicanos negro?

¿Qué significa cuando alguien habla de "limpieza de la raza"?

¿Por qué crees que hay muy pocos estadounidenses de negro visitar Oaxaca?

¿Qué piensas que sucedería, si hubo negro estadounidense visita México

## Appendix C

In the parish and in the tax lists they used, in general, only ten divisions can be considered fundamental. The following classification is the one generally adopted in registers of baptism, marriage and death as well as in the censuses and tax lists in the three hundred years of colonial life.

1. ESPA OL (habitually entered in special books along with “indios nobles.”)
2. INDIO
3. NEGRO
4. Mestizo (Spanish and Indian.)
5. Castizo (Spanish and mestizo.)
6. Mulato (Spanish and Negro.)
7. Morisoco (Spanish and mulatto)
8. Lobo (Indian and Negro.)
9. Coyote (Indian and mulatto.)
10. Chino (Indian and lobo.)

(Since the terminology is historically Spanish, and since only a few of the terms could be rendered into English, it has been thought better to avoid confusion in this list by putting all classifications in Spanish.) (Roncal, 533)