**Abstract**

This paper has three objectives. First, we establish that although Spain has attempted to distance itself from its role in the sub-saharan African slave trade and the significance blackness plays within its borders, there exists a significant population of people of African descent from Latin America living in Spain. Second, we show Black people are living what Sadiyah Hartmann refers to as the afterlife of slavery in Latin America. We claim it is worthwhile to take into account that Afro-Latin Americans are fleeing to the country that is largely responsible for them being in Latin America and the conditions of the colonial legacy that is pushing them out of Latin America. Third, we examine the meaning of blackness in Spain today through historical and ethnographic analysis that show that Afro-Latin Americans are also living a social death in Spain. Much of the data we provide in this paper is based on semi-structured interviews the authors have conducted in Spain, that is, semi-structured interviews of twenty-five Afro-Lastin American people who have lived in Spain. Our research, as it focuses on people of African descent from Latin America living in Spain, intentionally centers the voices, research and experiences of Black people.

**Abstracto**

Este papel tiene tres objetivos. En primer lugar, establecemos que, aunque España ha intentado distanciarse de su papel en el comercio de esclavos del África subsahariana y la importancia que tiene la negritud dentro de sus fronteras, existe una importante población de afrodescendientes de América Latina que vive en España. En segundo lugar, mostramos que los negros están viviendo lo que Sadiyah Hartmann llama el más allá de la esclavitud en América Latina. Decimos que vale la pena tomar en cuenta que los afrolatinoamericanos están huyendo al país que es en gran parte responsable de que estén en América Latina y las condiciones del legado colonial que los está empujando fuera de América Latina. En tercer lugar, examinamos el significado de la negritud en la España actual a través de análisis históricos y etnográficos que muestran que los afrolatinoamericanos también están viviendo una muerte social en España. Gran parte de los datos que proporcionamos en este artículo se basan en entrevistas semiestructuradas que los autores han realizado en España, es decir, entrevistas semiestructuradas a veinticinco personas afrolatinoamericanas que han vivido en España. Nuestra investigación, al centrarse en personas afrodescendientes de América Latina que viven en España, centra intencionalmente las voces, investigaciones y experiencias de las personas negras.

**Key Words**: Social death, anti-blackness, afterlife of slavery, Afro-Latin America

**Palabres claves**: Muerte social, anti-negritud, la vida futura de la esclavitud, Afro-Latin America

**Autores**

Ethan Johnson, Professor of Black Studies, Portland State University, ejohns@pdx.edu

Joy Helena González-Gueto, Ph. D., FLACSO-Mexico, [joygonzalezgueto@gmail.com](mailto:joygonzalezgueto@gmail.com)

Vanessa Cadena Garcia, MA, [vanessa04074@gmail.com](mailto:vanessa04074@gmail.com)

Correo de electrónico de contacto: [ejohns@pdx.edu](mailto:ejohns@pdx.edu)

This paper has three main objectives. First, we establish that although Spain has attempted to distance itself from its role in the sub-saharan African slave trade and the significance blackness plays within its borders, there exists a significant population of people of African descent from Latin America living in Spain. Here we ask, why are they coming to Spain and from which countries are they primarily from? Second, we claim Black people are living what Sadiyah Hartmann refers to as the afterlife of slavery in Latin America. Our objective here is to understand what it means to move from the place your ancestors were deracinated from Africa and then not return but go to the place/country that is largely responsible for establishing this colonial legacy. We believe that's a weight that deserves consideration. Third, we examine the meaning of blackness in Spain today through historical and ethnographic analysis. Spain, not unlike many western European countries, has attempted to erase the socio-historical significance of Black Africans in its cultural and economic development, while simultaneously maintaining anti-blackness (Ortega 2019, Barranco 2011, Joy ). A significant proportion of the relatively large groups of Latin Americans and Caribbeans that fled to Spain since the mid 1990s are of African descent, that is they are Afro-Latin Americans. Our argument here is that Afro-Latin Americans are also living the afterlife of slavery in Spain. Here we ask, what is the anti-Blackness Afro-Latin Americans experience/face in Spain and how do they navigate it? We are concerned with the claims of some scholars and activists living in Spain who suggest that Black Studies in the US is imperial epistemologically in parts of Europe. In other words, they claim U.S. scholarship by Black people obfuscates important differences that occur in Spain.

Through investigation of the aforementioned foci, this project hopes to broaden theories of race/racism in Spain that have largely not considered blackness and by extension the experiences of people of African descent from Latin America in Spain.  Spain is deeply connected to the African Diaspora in Latin America and the Caribbean as it transported and enslaved millions of African people in its efforts to colonize much of the Americas. The colonial structures that Spain imposed on much of Latin America continues into the present and as a result of powerful socio-economic processes, the descendants of those enslaved people have fled to Spain in the hope to improve their life chances (Garcia y Walsh 2002; Walsh 2004).

Much of the data we provide in this paper is based on qualitative research the authors have conducted in Spain, that is, semi-structured interviews of twenty-five Afro-Lastin American people who have lived in Spain. These interviews asked the interviewees to express their ideas, feelings and experiences about anti-blackness in multiple areas of their lives, such as, work, schooling, intimate relationships, policing, leisure life and housing. To support our findings we also rely on reports, news articles, and analysis of popular culture (newspapers, magazines, social media).

Our research, as it focuses on people of African descent from Latin America living in Spain, intentionally centers the voices, research and experiences of Black people. Indeed the research group is made up of an Afro-Colombian lesbian woman, an Afro-Colombian Indigenous heterosexual woman and a Black heterosexual man from the United States. We are people who have lived many of the experiences our participants have lived. Throughout the research project we have developed our analysis through a constant back and forth discussion with the interview data and our lived experiences. In a similar vein, while not all the supporting research we cite in this paper comes from scholars of African descent, we do intentionally center their perspectives and analysis in this paper.

**Latin Americans Living in Spain**

In the 1990’s powerful forms of socio-economic inequality and political crisis existed in much of Latin America and the Caribbean combined with the economic boom in Western Europe to simultaneously push and pull people primarily from Ecuador, Colombia and parts of the Spanish speaking Caribbean to Spain (Vicente 2010). Each of these countries and regions have significant African descendant populations. Spain facilitated migration of people from these countries through bi-national immigration policies to attract these Spanish-speaking people who desired greater socio-economic opportunity and political stability for themselves and often their children (Vicente 2010). Latin Americans could for example gain citizenship within two years, where for other groups not part of the European Union it was a 10 year process. As a result Spain received more immigrants from Latin America between 2002-05 than any other region (Vicente 2010).

As of 2010, approximately one third of the foreign born population living in Spain was from Latin America, reaching approximately 2 million people (Vicente 2010). The countries with the largest proportions of this population were from the Andean Region, namely Ecuador and Colombia (Vicente 2010). Ecuador’s African descendant population is estimated to be between 10 and 20 percent while Colombia’s reaches close to one third (Walsh 2011). The African descendant populations of Cuba and the Dominican Republic are even higher. It is very difficult , however, to estimate how many Afro-Latin Americans are living in Spain. Spain does not in its national census ask about racial background although estimates put this number at about 1 million people of African descent living in Spain, which is not disaggregated to include Afro-Latin Americans. We claim that through our personal experience, living and working in Spain, and the data presented above that Afro-Latin Americans represent a significant proportion of the foreign born and naturalized population, including their children, living in Spain.

Furthermore, many Afro-Latin American people may deny and/or diminish that they are of African descent. In much of Latin America, anti-blackness can and often does push people to claim intermediary categories rather than acknowledge their experiences have been powerfully shaped by being identified as a person of African descent. In addition, Spain itself has denied the existence of racism and of people of African descent as significant factors shaping social life through its policies and practices of the erasure of historical memory of enslavement and the policy of not collecting data on race. Too, in Spain, lighter skin individuals like in Latin America are often not considered black in one moment but their blackness can be referred to in the next. Arguably, however, Afro-Latin Americans comprise a significant part of the Spanish population that have come to Spain since the mid 1990s.

Spain is an important place to study the experiences of Afro-Latin Americans. Spain was deeply involved in the slave trade of Africans to the New World and through its colonial efforts in the region benefitted immensely from the enslavement of Africans. Recently, many of the descendants of these previously enslaved people have fled to Spain to improve their and their loved one’s life chances. What is it like for them to live in the country that is largely responsible for them being in the region referred to as Latin America? Too, Spain is largely responsible for establishing the colonial legacy that pushes people of African descent in Latin America to seek refuge in other countries. We find it beyond ironic that this place of refuge is the land of their former slave masters.

**De donde vienen… *Theorizing Anti-blackness in Latin America***

What is anti-blackness? As Christina Sharpe (2016) demonstrates, people of African descent throughout the world are the antithesis of what is thought of as humanity. The assertion of anti-blackness, which is the scholarly focus of Afro Pessimism, is that Black people live in a structurally antagonistic relation to what is referred to as the human. Human capacity is reserved for those who have coherent claims to it. Struggles over gender, land, and/or labor cannot be realms in which the struggle of Black people take place because these are reserved for humanity.

Through the middle passage and chattel slavery in the New World, Africans were made into commodities, fungible objects or things, with no legacy and no gender; stripped from history and land, the criteria for one to claim humanity (Wilderson 2010). ‘Social death’, as developed by Orlando Patterson (1982), is the state of the slave. He revealed in his examination of over sixty slave societies across time and space that there are three defining aspects of the slave’s non-life in comparative terms. They are: exposure to gratuitous violence, genealogical isolation/natal alienation and a general treatment of dishonor. Gratuitous violence signifies that at any time the slave can be killed, mutilated, raped and/or psychically abused for no other reason than being a slave. Natal alienation means that the children of enslaved people and their ancestors are not recognized as such. In other words there is no acknowledged filial relationship. They are alone, outside of time and space. Only humans have children and parents. These describe the general dishonor of the enslaved person. As Patterson pointed out, it is more than difficult to shake one’s being marked as such. He was concerned with the shortsightedness of an economic and legalistic definition of slavery, which often reduced the slave to the exploited laborer.

Sadiya Hartman (1997) is to whom the articulation of the concept ‘the afterlife of slavery’ is attributed. Hartman and others have more than shown that the legacy of slavery remains even though official enslavement has ended. People of African descent across the globe continue to experience gratuitous violence. Filial relationships continue to not be recognized by civil society, rendering them genealogical isolates with no land or history. Black people’s screams and demands for justice do not find grounding, which demonstrates a general condition of dishonor. Some people may claim, ‘but undocumented immigrants have their children taken from. Isn't this an example of gratuitous violence’. But the violence they experience is contingent on the transgression of a norm (i.e., the border within a specific time), however absurd it may be. The crime they have committed may be spurious to some and valid to others, however, either argument exists within time and space. What is the crime Black people have committed that grants coherency to this violence? Why have their/our children been taken from them/us? Their/our supposed crimes cannot be mapped temporally or spatially. Black people across the globe have had their children taken from them, and thus their ancestry, since the African slave trade began in Africa, the Americas and Europe up to the present moment. This is not analogous to the non-Black immigrant experience nor is elucidating this an attempt to be located as the most oppressed group, that is some form of oppression Olympics. It is a fact.

There have been moments when the structural antagonism underlying the relationship between Black people and humanity reaches such a level beyond which it cannot be contained. These moments are shot through with Black rebellion. The early 19th Century was such a moment, attested to by the many slave revolts and uprisings that occurred across the Americas and the Caribbean, north and south. Similarly, the 1960s and 70s saw Black people in the USA challenge their non-beingness in the face of civil society to a degree which had not occurred since the slave revolts. The Black Panthers and the Black Liberation Army, along with other lesser-known groups, revolted against the state in unprecedented ways, at times attacking and even killing police (Wilderson 2010, 2020). As Spillers (2011), Wilderson (2010, 2020) and Sexton (2008) each point out, it is during both of these moments when the United States discovered a wedge it could thrust into this place of antagonism in order to undermine Black consciousness and rebellion. During the early 19th Century, it was the mulatta/o figure; the late 20th Century saw the rise of multiculturalism and multiracialism.

While the discourse of multiracialism and that of mestizaje have mutually distinguishing aspects, various scholars have equated the two (Warren & Windance Twine 1997, Jasmine Mitchell 2020, Vargas Costa 2018). Multiracialism comes primarily out of the United States and has developed largely through the efforts of White, middle-class women, who have had children with Black men, to “liberate” their children’s identity from the oppressive grip of the one-drop rule, which they claim is racist (Ibrahim 2012). The discourse of multi-racialism also is relatively recent, coming into being in the late 20th century. Mestizaje was created out of the particular histories of colonialism in Latin America and the Caribbean and defines how the majority of people in the region, and the nations themselves, imagine national identity (Warren & Windance Twine 1997, Jasmine Mitchell 2020).

Recently, claims of increased levels of recorded miscegenation in the United States between White people and other racial groups have been noted as an indication that the United States is moving towards a ‘mulatto nation’, where race becomes less important and less burdensome (Sexton 2008). Much like in Latin America, the logic is that if more of us are fucking across the racial divide it must indicate that racism is disappearing. The logic is spurious at best, but many are taken by the suggestion. Evidence for this shift of acknowledgement and increasing acceptance of racial mixture can be found in mainstream media, in the development of multiracial studies across college campuses, and in the growth of self-identifying multiracial groups and identities seen in the last 30 years (Sexton 2008). In Spain, this can be seen through popular culture in the increased levels of light skinned people of African descent in commercials and advertisements. Its rare to see a dark skinned Black person in these images. However, as has been noted, where is the Black in this racially mixed utopia? The Black person in much of multiracialism is absent, s/he literally disappears.

Spillers (2011) interrogates multiracialism’s recent ascension. She asks, what's all the brouhaha over something that has been happening in the United States and y by extension in Latin America and Spain since their inception? Pointing out that racial mixture through racial terror has been one of the disavowed centerpieces to Sub-Saharan African slavery and that most Black Americans are racially mixed. This is true too, regarding the Afro-Latin Americans coming to Spain. Many of them are descendants of children and parents who were raped during the era of official slavery. She also asks more than ironically, what cure is this multiracial identity supposed to provide for this injured multiracial person who has not been able to express who they truly are? Her answer is that much like the wedge the mulatta/o of the early 19th Century drives within blackness, the multiracial person of the late 20th and early 21st Century does the work of stifling the potential of blackness “to assume the comprehensive antagonism of its structural position” (Wilderson: 301). In other words, multiracialism/*mestizaje* are inventions of white supremacy to undermine the potential for blackness to take on and uninhibitedly recognize the position of social death and to act accordingly. This analysis of racial mixture gets us back to what *mestizaje* and multiracialism have in common; they both simultaneously energize anti-blackness and fracture resistance to anti-blackness.

Mestizaje diminishes resistance to anti-blackness because it pushes many people of African descent in Latin America to move away from, negate and/or deny their blackness (Da Costa 2016, Arboleda, S. 2017, Jasmine Mitchell 2020). This phenomenon is important because in it we see how mestizaje provides an escape route from blackness. Through racial mixture one can become something else, that something else is the mulatto/a figure; the wedge that “annihilates blackness’ possibility to assume the comprehensive antagonism of its structural position”. The shadow cast by mestizaje over the centuries in Latin America is evident in the ever-present degraded position that Black people and people of African descent inhabit in the region (Vargas Costa 2018, 2017; Jaime Alves). It is revealed too, in the census (Telles, E. E., & Lim, N. 1998; Hooker 2008; Johnson 2014; Paschel 2018) results that continue to show, decade after decade, that people of African descent often identify themselves in some form of racial mixture, such as pardo/a, canela/o (cinnamon), trigo/a (wheat) and/or mulatta/o.

If as Sharpe, Wilderson and Sexton claim and demonstrate, anti-blackness is global, then Black people in Latin America exist as Black people in the United States do. The late scholar, Mark Sawyer, who focused much of his research on anti-blackness in Cuba posited that if anything, a theory should be something that travels. By that he meant it should be applicable in other regions. He was referring to W.E.B Dubois’ concept of double consciousness. He demonstrated how double consciousness functions in Latin America among Black communities, while acknowledging Latin American anti-blackness had its particularities. His reasons for doing this were to refute claims by white scholars that Black American scholars were colonizing epistemologically Latin American understanding of race and racism. What we are attempting to do here is to address the scholarship that claims a similar dynamic, but in Spain, where it claims that US scholars on blackness have carried undo weight in analysis of the Black experience in Spain. Specifically, we claim there are benefits to situating the Black experience in Spain within the concept of social death. We argue that without acknowledging this there can be no proper understanding of their experiences.

**Black Social Death in Spain**

While it is clear notions of Blackness in Spain began to develop during the Moors control of the Iberian peninsula from the 7th century until the 15th, we are going to start our analysis of blackness in Spain from the 15th Century. What research is shows is that significant populations of Sub Saharan Africans lived primarily as enslaved people throughout Spain from the 15th Century and well into the 19th Century (Lowe 2012; Barranco 2011). In fact, probably the largest populations of Africans in Europe lived in Spain during the Renaissance and early modern eras (Rodríguez García, D., Habimana, Jordana T., Rodríguez Reche, C. 2021, Barranco 2011; Lowe 2012). The sub Saharan African presence in Spain during this time was largely associated with enslavement and existed all over the peninsula although more in the south then in the north. Additionally, the enslavement of African peoples was not limited to only the rich and was often distributed across social classes, which suggests that anti-blackness was not only an elite affair but one that was relatively ubiquitous through Spanish society. To provide an example of the numbers of Africans in Spain, it is suggested that enslaved Africans made up possibly more than half of the population of Sevilla in the 15th and 16th centuries (Lowe 2012). Significantly, while the abolition of African Enslavement was debated in the mid 19 century it was never abolished in Spain (Lowe 2012).

Moving to the representation of blackness and Black people in Spain, the enslavement of African peoples has been made invisible through the efforts of historians, writers and artists of the renaissance, early modern era and into the present to locate Blackness outside of the national imaginary and place it in the colonies of the new world (Ortega 2021, Lowe 2012, Barranco 2011). For example some artists of the period painted Sub Saharan Black people as White. Spain historically has never wanted to be associated with its closeness to Africa and its peoples and has consistently attempted to represent itself as a white/European nation. While the practices and processes of purity of blood or limpieza de sangre took on much greater significance in the Spanish colonies than Spain, the Spanish nevertheless did maintain a fairly strict separation and marginalization of Sub Saharan Africans in society even if they had managed to escape enslavement (Barranco 2011).

There are examples of well known Black Africans in Spain during the renaissance, however their experiences were much more the exception than the rule (Lowe 2012, Ortega 2019, Barranco 2011). In other words, blackness and slavery remained tightly bound up through the 19th century when for various reasons the practice of enslavement seemed to die out, while at the same time elites made efforts to make invisible the fact of blackness and its significance in the Iberian peninsula. By erasing blackness Spain can now claim there was no history of racism within its borders and attempt to make invisible the role and importance Sub Saharan Africans played in shaping the political, economic and cultural landscape of the nation.

There is ample evidence of anti-blackness in Spain within most institutions and daily life. For example, of the 1328 hate crimes reported in Spain in 2015 most were motivated by race and Black people are disproportionately represented as victims of these crimes (Rosati 2017). A recent study of over 1500 people of African descent in Spain demonstrates that in every mainstream institution Black people in Spain experience anti-blackness (D’ancona y Martinez (2021). Furthermore, examination of the representation of people of African descent in mainstream media demonstrates anti-blackness (Retis 2016). One of the clearest examples is the “El Negro de Whatsapp” meme, which through bait and switch tricks the viewer into coming face to face with a Black man with a huge penis. This meme is among the most popular memes ever in Spain and has generated a market of paraphernalia throughout the country (Matamoros-Fernandez 2020, Wall-Johnson 2021).

Another prominent example in the late 20th century was the murder by one policeman and three other individuals of an African descendant woman from the Dominican Republic named Lucrecia Perez in 1992. While they killed her they shouted “Black piece of shit”. David Marriott writes about Black people being seen as fecal matter in the eyes of non-Black people (2000). This expression of what blackness means is important though hard to swallow, but does nevertheless reveal how non-Black people imagine and fantasize about blackness. Marriott goes on to explain that these fantasies of non-Black people can take objective value. The murder of Lucretia is an example of that. Their fantasy was enacted. Her murder has been mythologized as the first hate crime of Spain. What is particularly revealing is an online response posted to an article that discussed her murder 20 years later. The responder wrote:

That of 1992 was a murder, that's for sure. But let's not exaggerate. I recommend to the editor to take a tour of the district of Tetuan-Alvarado-Strait in Madrid where the Dominicans live and see the plan of life of these people. This girl, Lucretia's daughter, comes to Spain to have her son… for free education and health, and numerous subsidies. Like so many others, and without contributing anything at all (2012 online response to article)

Without any hesitation the author of this response maintains that Lucretia’s Black daughter is little more than a parasite on Spanish society. The person acknowledges the murder and then does a 360 and implies that Dominicans who are mostly of African descent have no business in Spain. The author of the online response is just (a good person in their own eyes), they acknowledge Lucretia's murder, and is anti-Black. For them there is no contradiction between being just and anti-Black simultaneously. They can and do exist together. It's also important to point out Spain is responsible for the anti-blackness and colonial legacy left in the DR that has caused Lucretia and her daughter to flee. The conditions are so bad in the Dominican Republic that Lucretia’s daughter is willing to risk her child’s life in the country that murdered her mother.

Furthermore, it is not uncommon for police to stop people in the street and ask for identification papers for no other reason than their blackness. Finally, as the online responder above reveals, the ways Black people are talked to and about are telling. For example, virtually every Black person you talk to has heard one or more of the following comments: Go back to your fucking country,” “I don’t rent apartments to people like you,” “If you shower do you lose your color?” “Is that your mom or your nanny?” “Come with me, I’ll give you ten bucks,” “You can’t come in,” “Your cousins are monkeys.” Much like in Latin America racism is very pronounced in everyday experience as the above examples demonstrate.

Returning to the idea of social-death, we hold that the preceding examples, historical and contemporary, show that Afro-Latin Americans are living social death in Spain. They experience gratuitous violence. The children who have fled to Spain for a better life, like the efforts of Black enslaved people throughout at least the last 5 centuries further attests to how family relationships are broken again and again as a result of the original crime of the Black African slave trade. These combined with the ways Black people are spoken to and about demonstrate that Black people do not have honor in Spain and experience a violence that has no contingency. It is gratuitous.

How are Afro-Latin Americans living in Spain making sense of and navigating this context of coming from one anti-Black world to another that has some qualitative differences. Comparatively, in Spain there is less poverty, less police violence and a relatively well developed and maintained infrastructure of mainstream institutions such as transportation, schooling and health. We differentiate between the ontological and the empirical. The ontological world is understood as a structure. Black people are socially dead in the world. The empirical is how it is experienced by sentient beings. Afro-Latin Americans living in Spain experience the structure of anti-blackness within their families, school, work, on the bus, at nightclubs and in intimate relationships, that is virtually everywhere where they go.

We highlight the experiences of family because of their general length and deep connections between and among those that comprise it. Saidiyah Hartmann in her book Lose Your Mother (2008) discusses the relationship love and slavery had in Africa. Slavery existed in Sub Saharan Africa first with the Arab invasions and then within and among Sub Saharan Africans. She ruminated on how love functioned as a force binder to hold the slave within its new ‘family’. As everything had been taken from the slave, their family, their name, their origins and violence was gratuitously experienced in these communities by the slave, the slave often only had love left to keep them there. As in the Americas and the Caribbean, slave holders and their slaves often developed kin/love relationships that contributed to their acceptance and maintenance of their condition. Often the slave holder was the father of her children.

The point being is that love/kin relationships often play a role in maintaining the status of the slave, although it may seem impossible or contradictory. In Spain and Latin America, and this occurs quite often, Afro-Latin American women/men have children with men/women who don't identify as Black. The offspring of these relationships often endure throughout much of their early life the anti-blackness of the non-Black identifying partner and sometimes the Black partner. Here, Marco, a bi-sexual Afro-Brazilian, explained what it was like in his family growing up in Brazil:

Si, por su puesto, principalmente con la familia de mi padre, tengo unas tías que son bien racistas, de adolescente decían que yo iba a ser ladrón o narcotraficante por mi color de piel, siendo que he sacado las mejores notas del instituto, y mis amigos hasta el día de hoy (los que siguen vivos) son psicólogos, médicos, bailarines, artistas muy buenos, y es lo que hay; la discriminación racial familiar en Brasil y aquí es insufrible. Mi primer contacto con el racismo, fue dentro de mi propia familia.

(Yes, of course, mainly with my father's family, I have some aunts who are very racist, when I was a teenager they said that I was going to be a thief or a drug dealer because of my skin color, since I got the best grades in high school, and my friends to this day (those who are still alive) are very good psychologists, doctors, dancers, artists, and that's what it is; family racial discrimination in Brazil and here it is unbearable. My first contact with racism was within my own family.) Our translation.

He characterized his experiences in the family as insufferable and the first place he learned about anti-blackness. Portugal planted this seed of anti-blackness to which Marco refers to above. We suggest he lived social death within his family, a kind of violence tempered with love. For no other reason than his status as a Black person he was deemed to be a criminal by his aunts. He lived this experience within love/kin relations, where these same people who denigrated him also very likely had affection for him and him for them. Choice here is irrelevant. There was nowhere for Marco to flee and few who could or would console his pain. As he said, it was insufferable. Like the slave raised within an explicit anti-black world, Marco was raised in a family that was already always structured as anti-Black. This was not an uncommon experience for many of the people we interviewed.

Work also was riddled with examples of anti-blackness and revealing of a social death life. Every individual we interviewed provided examples of anti-blackness in the workplace. We cite below one example of a person who converted his anti-black treatment into a problem to be overcome and demonstrate his worthiness. Victor is a chef in a high end restaurant in Madrid. He was trained in France and came back to Spain and was hired as a lead chef. He explained how initially one of the male assistant cooks would not work with him as his assistant because he was Black. He stated, “Uno de ellos se creía el jefe máximo y lo dijo bien claro que un negro no le iba mandar a él” (One of them believed he was the top boss and made it very clear that a black man was not going to tell him what to do. (Our translation)). Later Victor proved he did deserve to be respected through gaining his bosses attention by saving him thousands of dollars in orders, he explained,

Entonces este chaval se dio cuenta realmente de que la cualificación que tenía llegaba hasta un punto y está muy bien, pero la cualificación que tengo yo tiene dos puntos más. Entonces ya no es para que me critiques a mí porque sea negro.

(So this kid really realized that the qualifications he had went up to one point and that's great, but the qualifications I have has two more points. So it's not for you to criticize me because I'm black.) Our translation.

Victor did what no one else had to at his work. He had to prove he was good enough to be a lead chef because he was Black. He did not refer to this as an example of racism or discrimination. For him it was just an obstacle to get around. Impressively, throughout his life he provided a wealth of anti-black experiences and suggested that some of his family members had not learned to integrate as well as he had with white people. Possibly, anti-blackness had become so normal that he no longer named it. It was simply a structure of life. Here my objective is not to criticize him but to reveal how some individuals find ways to move through the anti-Black world. He chose to prove he was good enough and not wallow, if you will, in what he had little control over. We would suggest that this added tax he has on his body and mind, however, does impact him negatively even though within the moment he refers to he at some level was triumphant.

Vos, a Black trans women from Venezuela, stated the following regarding her work experience:

He hecho de todo. Desde cocinar, cuidar perros, cuidar viejos, trabajo sexual, dar clases.. Como de todo tipo de trabajos, pero no con contratos. También trabajos artísticos, académicos, pero todo muy inestable, que no tiene acceso a la estructura, que es una estructura que pueda sostener.

(I have done everything. From cooking, taking care of dogs, taking care of old people, sex work, teaching... I take all kinds of jobs, but not with contracts. Also artistic, academic works, but all very unstable, which do not have access to the structure, which is a structure that could sustain it.) Our translation.

Contrary to Victor, she is very clear that it is a combination of her blackness and queerness that structures her outside of civil society. We would suggest that multiple aspects of her identity may have provided her with some insights that have sharpened her analysis. While she does not use the word social death to explain her condition, she does show she lives outside of civil society and like Victor they both have to work more than hard to survive.

As with work, the overwhelming majority of the interviewees provided evidence of educational experiences in Spain that were anti-black. The curriculum did little to nothing to address the historical record and contemporary experiences of Black people in Spain. Often teachers of social science continue to present the idea that Columbus discovered America. Overall, Afro-Latin American students experience disdain, disgust and disrespect within the school system. These experiences lessened to some degree upon entering the university, however, within higher education we can accurately state there is an epistemic vacuum of the significance of blackness. Diana, an Afro-Colombian heterosexual woman, commented about her educational experiences in Spain:

Del primer año que que llego al colegio, en el que me preguntan por ejemplo, en qué trabajaba mi madre? Yo decía que era limpiadora y me miraban con cara de asco o así. Al siguiente año que me decían que mi madre le estaba robando el trabajo a sus padres, pues fue como con mucho que muy drástico, y luego también la primera barrera que noté fue la del lenguaje, porque el acento y las palabras no no eran las mismas. Entonces sí que veía que no que no podíamos ser amigos que no había interés de parte de los chicos en conocer ni mi cultura ni mi acento ni nada, y fue lo primero que el el primer cambio que yo tuve que hacer al al llegar, que fue cambiar el acento y para poder conseguir amigos porque si no no me hubiese adaptado.

(From the first year that I arrived at school they asked me, for example, what did my mother do for work? I said that she was a cleaner and they looked at me with a disgusted face or something. The following year they told me that my mother was stealing her parents' job, well it was very drastic, and then the first barrier I noticed was the language, because the accent and the words no no they were the same. So I did see that we couldn't be friends that there was no interest on the part of the girls and boys in learning about my culture or my accent or anything, and it was the first thing that I had to do when I arrived, that it was to change the accent in order to be able to make friends because otherwise I would not have adapted.) Our translation.

Diana discusses the degradation and isolation she experienced as a young student in highschool when she first arrived in Spain when she was a young lady. There was little she could do to offset her blackness, but she could change the way she spoke. Otherwise as she explained she would have been largely isolated. The way she puts it is that she had little choice. The comments about her mother taking Spanish people's jobs are akin to “go back to your country”. They didnt say ‘go back to our previous colony where we committed genocide’, which would have at least acknowledged the world as it is. As with during official slavery, Diana has no recognized claim to justice. She is always a criminal. Her only possibility lies in adaptation. Learn the language.

Diana also was willing to speak with us about her intimate relationships in Spain with white men. She explained that none of the relationships lasted and it was usually because her partner at the time would not recognize her claims of anti-blackness and suggest she was over sensitive and/or the parents discouraged the relationship. She also explained that the parents would claim she wanted their money or to rob them. In addition, Diana also like most of the interviewees, regardless of their gender or sexuality, felt exoticized within these relationships. The trope of Black hipersexuality was ever present in relationships with non-Black people. She commented regarding a young man she liked when we asked if while in highschool she had intimate relationships with any of her classmates and if race had shaped those relationships:

Pues no he tenido relaciones con personas en clase pero sí que me han llegado a gustar personas y había una barrera muy grande y eso era imposible. No te veían como una persona atractiva e incluso un,... le dije a un chico que me gustaba y me dijo que él a mí no me gustaba pero en una ocasión me hizo un comentario respecto a mis labios y a las felaciones…

(Well, I haven't had relationships with people in class, but I have come to like people and there was a very big barrier and that was impossible. They didn't see you as an attractive person and even,... I told a guy that I liked him and he told me that he didn't like me but on one occasion he made a comment about my lips and fellatio…) Our translation.

As a result various participants discussed feeling as if they were being used in relationships and that they lacked a sense of authenticity. Again, in intimate relationships as with various aspects of our interviewees life experiences she was always already located as a criminal and a thing to be utilized for whatever pleasure imaginable outside of civil society. Although not physically violent, her and others intimate relationships were psychically violent. Diana, had resolved as a result of her multiple and overlapping experiences of anti-blackness that she would never bring a child into this world.

Lastly, we think it is important to provide some degree of our participants' understanding and experiences with the police. We would highlight that Afro-Latin American men were stopped, interrogated and searched more than Afro-Latin American women. Every one of the male participants had multiple and sometimes violent interactions with the police. This is not to suggest Black women had it better, only to report on what our data revealed to us. For example Andy, a gay Afro-latin American man from the Dominican Republic, when we asked him if he had experienced discrimination in institutions he made the following statement:

En todos. Sobre todo con la policía en la calle. No hay lugar donde no haya una mirada, un comentario, un gesto. Tenemos una comunicación corporal y no sé, eso también habla. Que yo esté a tu lado y tú te apartas o te agarres el bolso.

(In all. Especially with the police on the street. There is no place where there is not a look, a comment, a gesture. We have bodily communication and I don't know, that also speaks. I may be by your side and you move away or grab your bag.) Our translation.

We didnt ask specifically about the police, but he emphasized their role and impact as primary regarding his experiences of discrimination. He then goes on to explain how he was policed by the general public virtually everywhere he went. Through sight, sound and movement, he was aware of how his body was hiper serveiled. He felt he was always under suspicion. What his understanding provides is that for Black people in general and Afro-Latin Americans specifically, living in Spain was being in a police state. Not only were the official uniform wearing people paid to protect society watching, controlling and limiting Afro-Latin American people’s movement, but also the general public. Spain, like much of the world, is an historical extension of the plantation, where blackness was never not under some form of control, susceptible to violence with no contingency. Within the family, work, schooling, intimate relationships and everywhere else, Afro-Latin Americans were living the afterlife of slavery.

**Conclusion**

As Zakiyah Iman Jackson her recent book *Becoming Human* (2020) points out, there are Black scholars across time and space, such as Franz Fanon, Christina Sharpe, Aime Cesaire, Sadiya Hartmann, Frank Wilderson, Sylvia Wynter and Achille Mbembe who advocate for analysis and understanding of anti-blackness beyond that of recognition and inclusion, which would lie within what is referred to as empirical understandings of the world. Empirical analysis tends to advocate for changes in policy that would increase and or bring about racial equality. We have stated that part of our effort in this paper is to respond to scholars and activists who claim there exists a type of imperial epistemology of scholarship on blackness coming out of the United States that has dominated and/or has carried undue weight of understanding of blackness in Spain. Locating Black people as socially dead, that is an ontological analysis, is less concerned with please in policy, such as greater recognition of Black people in school textbooks and increased access to universities. Its emphasis is on sitting with our condition, because so much scholarship is advocating for inclusion and recognition, which would appear to not take history into consideration. Acknowledging social death would move us past advocating for recognition and inclusion. A social death analysis is also not saying these efforts of inclusion and recognition are not valid.

We do not refute that as a lived experience there are particular differences between being a Black person in Spain, Latin America or the United States. In Spain one is less likely to be shot and incarcerated by the police than in Latin America and the United States. In Latin America, specifically Brazil, the weight of police violence on the Black community is beyond that of the United States. Too, in much of the region, issues of poverty and lack of access to mainstream institutions are endemic to a greater degree than in the USA and Spain for Black communities. The United States locks up Black people more than any other country in the world. These examples only get at the surface of other important qualitative differences Black people in each of these regions experience. Our effort in this paper is to align ourselves with the scholars Zakiyah Iman Jackson cited above, who are more focused on the structure of anti-blackness than advocating for inclusion and recognition within a specific country or region, Not that these are unimportant endeavors.

We have attempted to demonstrate that in Spain Black people are socially dead, that is, they live outside of civil society. There is no point of reference for the violence they experience and it is ubiquitous. Since the Sub Saharan African slave trade, over 500 years, Black people’s general condition living in Spain has not changed. Throughout this period, they have experienced gratuitous violence, are genealogical isolates and dishonored. These exist together. To do gratuitous violence, one must not see the sentient being as a person. The requirement of personhood is a filial relationship at the scale of the family to the state (Wilderson 2010). This was erased for all Black people across the globe through the coupling of slavery and blackness as a result of the Atlantic Sub-Saharan slave trade. When you are marked as such, anything imaginable and as yet imagined can be done to you. The potential and real violence that can be done to you as a result of one’s lack of any historical or temporal coordinates, simultaneously reproduces the black person’s thingification. Gratuitous violence combined with genealogical isolation, one is not honorable or honored. This is social death. We are less interested in the differences of anti-blackness across countries and regions. We give greater weight to the ontological.

That being said, we acknowledge that in this paper we have contradicted ourselves by focusing on the particular experiences of Afro-Latin Americans living in Spain. We have highlighted that Afro-Latin Americans living in Spain have been forced from Africa to the Americas and the Caribbean and then to the place that originally sent them on this journey of terror. That is different from Equatorial Guineans coming to Spain in search of a better life. These people may claim they were never descendants of slaves and/or that their cultural integrity is intact to a degree that it is not for those taken to the Americas and Caribbean. There may also exist significant social class differences between Equatorial Guineans and Afro-Latin Americans. Too, the colonial structure of Africa may have hidden to a greater degree the role of anti-blackness in the everyday lives of people living there, because their masters appear to be Black. Does highlighting these differences bring us any closer to improving our condition? We think history tells us it does not.

**References**

Ángeles Cea D’ancona Miguel S. Valles Martinez (2021). “Una Aproximación a la Población Africana/Afrodescendiente en España: Identidad y acceso a derechos.” Ministerio de Igualdad Subdirección General de Relaciones Institucionales e Internacionales. España.

y Publicaciones. Centro de Publicaciones.

Alves, Jaime Amparo. *The Anti-Black City: Police Terror and Black Urban Life in Brazil.* University of Minnesota Press, 2018.

Arboleda, Santiago. *Plan Colombia: genocidio y destierro.* Editorial Académica Española, 2017.

Barranco, Margarita García. “Negroafricanas y mulatas: identidades ocultas en el Imperio Español.” Arenal: Revista de Historia de las Mujeres 18 (2011): 5-21.

Da Costa A.E. 2016. “Confounding Anti-Racism: Mixture, Racial Democracy, and Post-Racial Politics in Brazil.” Critical Sociology 42(4-5):495–513.

Garcia, J., and C. Walsh (2002). El pensar del emergente movimiento afroecuatoriano:

reflexiones de un proceso: 318. In Estudios y otras practices intelectuales Latinoamericanas en cultura y poder, ed. D. Mato, 317–26. Caracas: Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales.

Gueta, Joy 2022, El Cuerpo Negro y Etnografi

Hartman, Saidiya V. 1997. *Scenes of Subjection : Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth Century America*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Hartman, Saidiya V. 2008. *Lose Your Mother : A Journey along the Atlantic Slave Route.* 1st ed. New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux.

Herzog, Tamar. “How Did Early-Modern Slaves in Spain Disappear? The Antecedents.” *Republics of Letters: A Journal for the Study of Knowledge, Politics, and the Arts* 3, no. 1 (September 15, 2012).

Hooker, J. 2008. “Afro-descendant Struggles for Collective Rights in Latin America: Between Race and Culture.” *Souls*, 10:3, 279-291.

Ibrahim Habiba. 2012. *Troubling the Family: The Promise of Personhood and the Rise of Multiracialism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Johnson, Ethan. 2014. “Afro-Ecuadorian Educational Movement: Racial Oppression, Its Origins and Oral Tradition.” *Journal of Pan-African Studies* (online). Vol. 7, No. 4: 115-137.

Lowe, Kate, ‘The stereotyping of Black Africans in Renaissance Europe’, in T.F. Earle and K.J.P. Lowe (eds.), *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp. 17-47.

Marriott D. S. 2012. *On Black Men*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Matamoros-Fernández, Ariadna (2020). “El Negro de WhatsApp’ meme, digital blackface, and racism on social media.” *First Monday*, Volume 25, Number 1.

Mitchell, Jasmine. Imagining the Mulatta: Blackness in U.S. and Brazilian Media. 1 ed. University of Illinois Press, 2020.

Nogueira, C. (2012) “La muerte de mi madre sirvió para que haya menos racismo en España” <https://elpais.com/sociedad/2012/11/10/actualidad/1352560928_581520.html>

Ortega Arjonilla, Esther (2019). "Las negras siempre fuimos queer." El libro del buen Vmor: Sexualidades raras y políticas extrañas : 222-229.

Ortega Arjonilla (2021). “Céspedes y la Colonialidad del Archivo: Historias

de Negritud y Fuga en la Modernidad Española Peninsular.” Open Library of

Humanities, 7(2): 4, pp. 1–20.

Paschel Tianna S. 2018. *Becoming Black Political Subjects : Movements and Ethno-Racial Rights in Colombia and Brazil*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Patterson Orlando. 2018. Slavery and Social Death : A Comparative Study : With a New Preface First Harvard University Press paperback ed. Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Retis, Jessica (2016). “The Portrayal of Latin American Immigrants in the Spanish Mainstream Media: Fear of Compassion?” *The International Journal of Hispanic Media* V(9), October 2016, 32-45.

Rosati, Sara (2017). “Mixed Race Young People in Spain: The everyday racism black Spaniards face.” *El Pais: El periodico global* (English).

Robinson, Cedric (1983). *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition.* The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill: 125-6.

Rodríguez García, D., Habimana Jordana T., Rodríguez, Reche, C. (2021). ”Tú, cómo eres negra, harás de lobo: El debate pendiente sobre la cuestión de la raza en España.” *Perifèria, revista de recerca i formació en antropologia*, 26 (1), 29-55

Sexton Jared. 2008. *Amalgamation Schemes : Antiblackness and the Critique of Multiracialism.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Sharpe, Christina Elizabeth. 2016. *In the Wake : On Blackness and Being.* Durham: Duke University Press.

Spillers, Hortense. 2011. “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s, Too.” Trans-Scripts 1.

Sexton Jared. 2008. *Amalgamation Schemes : Antiblackness and the Critique of Multiracialism.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Telles, E. E., & Lim, N. 1998. “Does it matter who answers the race question? Racial classification and income inequality in Brazil.” *Demography*, 35(4), 465–474.

Twine, F. W. 1998. Racism in a racial democracy: The maintenance of White supremacy in Brazil. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Vargas João Helion Costa. 2018. The Denial of Anti blackness : Multiracial Redemption and Black Suffering. Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Vicente, T. L. (2010). Latin American Immigration to Spain: Evolution and Legal Status of Latin American Immigrants in Spain (1999-2009): <http://migrationeducation.de/48.1.html?&rid=162&cHash=96b3134cdb899a06a8ca6e12f41eafac>

Wall-Johnson, K. M., “[Encoding Anti-Blackness: Castration In the Digital Age](https://www.hamptonthink.org/read/encoding-anti-blackness-castration-in-the-digital-age)”

Hampton, [December 1, 2020](https://www.hamptonthink.org/read/encoding-anti-blackness-castration-in-the-digital-age). (<https://www.hamptonthink.org/read/encoding-anti-blackness-castration-in-the-digital-age>)

Walsh, Catherine (2011). “Acción Afirmativa en perspectiva afro reparativa: Hacia la nueva constitucionalidad ecuatoriana.”: 3. (<http://catherine-walsh.blogspot.com.es/2012/02/accion-afirmativa-en-perspectiva.html>).

Walsh, Katherine (2004). “Colonialidad, conocimiento y diaspora afro-andina: Construyendo etnoeducación e interculturalidad en la universidad.” In Eduardo Restrepo & Axel Rojas, ed., *Conflicto e (in)visibilidad: Retos en los estudios de la gente negra en Colombia*, 332–245. Bogotá: Editorial Universidad de Cauca: 335.

Wilderson Frank B. 2010. Red White & Black : Cinema and the Structure of U.s. Antagonisms. Durham NC: Duke University Press.

Wilderson Frank B. 2021. Afropessimism. New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation.