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**Title of the thesis**  
*ALL THE SALSA IN BETWEEN: Examining West African Influences on  
Afro-Latino Culture and Identity Through Multicultural Education  
Transformative Practices in Spanish/Portuguese Classrooms and Beyond*

**presented by**  
**Lynn Nnenna Anyanwu**

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**Dean:** Prof. Dr. Guido Sprenger  
**Advisor:** Prof. Dr. Nina Jude

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## **DEDICATION**

Para mis dos amores,  
mis principes Nigeriano-Senegalais y Nigeriano-Cubano  
Bachir e Ishmael  
you are the reason for my why

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Asé-Axe-Ashé and heart felt thank you:

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to develop knowledge of West African influences in the construction of Afro-Latino's culture and identity through diverse cultural practices. These practices solidify a person's growth, development, behaviors, and values. By exploring the West African cultural practices as seen through food, music, dance, religion, and identity consciousness; associations can be formed pointing to the significance and social meanings the West Africans impacted upon the Afro-Latino culture (Geneva Gay, retrieved 2009).

Students in Spanish and Portuguese language classrooms across the United States often question the origins of Black Hispanics/Latinos, yet many are unaware of the profound impact West African culture has had on the development of Afro-Latino identity. Culture, as a form of collective memory, is preserved and transmitted across generations, shaping who we are and influencing our sense of identity. According to Assmann (1995), cultural memory plays a pivotal role in preserving traditions and values, ensuring that cultural and ethnic influences, once learned, continue to persist throughout one's lifespan and are passed down through generations. This concept is particularly relevant when examining the African contributions to Latino culture, as these influences have remained embedded in Afro-Latino identity through cultural practices and social memory.

This study will furthermore examine a multicultural education approach to impacting knowledge of Afro-Latino history and culture among middle/high school students in Spanish, Portuguese and classes across all grade level and curriculum. One of the main focuses will be using transformative multicultural education and project-based learning to empower students to own their knowledge, to think critically, and to embrace a society that is more culturally pluralistic. In

exploring transformative multicultural education and PBL practices, it is quite possible that student's knowledge of Afro-Latino could transcend its buzz name and culminate into a social action approach which is the ultimate level of a true culturally and diverse learner (Banks, 1999).

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

|                                                                                                                 |                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Chapter 1- Introduction: Setting the Stage to Recognize Afro-Latinos.....</b>                                | <b>Pg. 1</b>   |
| <b>Chapter 2- Unveiling the Process: Research Methods for Afro-Latino Inquiry.....</b>                          | <b>Pg. 12</b>  |
| <b>Chapter 3- Theoretical Grounding: Exploring Literature and Banks' Multicultural Ed. Model.....</b>           | <b>Pg. 22</b>  |
| <b>Chapter 4- Ancestral Connections: Exploring the African Roots of Afro-Latino.....</b>                        | <b>Pg. 43</b>  |
| <b>Chapter 5- Afro-Latinos: Identity, Culture, and Continuity.....</b>                                          | <b>Pg. 68</b>  |
| <b>Chapter 6- Afro-Latinos Unit Curriculum Guide and Activities.....</b>                                        | <b>Pg. 112</b> |
| <b>Chapter 7- From Learning to Outcomes: Final Insights and Implications.....</b>                               | <b>Pg. 160</b> |
| <b>Conclusion .....</b>                                                                                         | <b>Pg. 196</b> |
| <b>Notes .....</b>                                                                                              | <b>Pg. 198</b> |
| <b>Appendix.....</b>                                                                                            | <b>Pg. 199</b> |
| <b>Declaration in accordance to § 8 (1) c) and d)<br/>of the doctoral degree regulation of the Faculty.....</b> | <b>Pg. 207</b> |
| <b>References.....</b>                                                                                          | <b>Pg. 208</b> |

## **LIST OF FIGURES**

|                                                                                  |         |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| Figure 1- Monument de la Renaissance Africaine, Dakar-Senegal.....               | Pg.11   |
| Figure 2- Obatala Concept Framework.....                                         | Pg.18   |
| Figure 3- Banks’ Three Steps to Multicultural Education.....                     | Pg.32   |
| Figure 4- Project-Based Learning Framework.....                                  | Pg.38   |
| Figure 5- Percentage of forced Atlantic Slave Migration by region 1501-1867..... | Pg. 53  |
| Figure 6- Estimated Enslaved Africans that arrived in the Americas.....          | Pg.53   |
| Figure 7- Volume and Direction- Transatlantic Slave Trade.....                   | Pg.54   |
| Figure 8- Regions, Number of Enslaved Africans by Ethnic Group 1501-1867.....    | Pg.54   |
| Figure 9- Badagry Slave Route and Point of No Return.....                        | Pg. 61  |
| Figure 10- Ouidah Slave Route Project and Point of No Return.....                | Pg. 63  |
| Figure 11- Elmina Castle, Elmina, Ghana, and Door of no return.....              | Pg. 64  |
| Figure 12- Goree Island- Slave House and Door of no Return, Dakar, Senegal.....  | Pg. 65  |
| Figure 13- Afro-Descendants Populations and Location in Latin America.....       | Pg. 70  |
| Figure 14- Garifuna Natives Interviewed, Livingston, Germany.....                | Pg. 81  |
| Figure 15- Afro-Mexican Interviewed in Costa Chica, Mexico.....                  | Pg. 86  |
| Figure 16- Afro-Puerto Rican in Loiza Affirming Afro Identity.....               | Pg. 92  |
| Figure 17- Culinary Influences from Africa to Latin America.....                 | Pg. 95  |
| Figure 18- African Influenced Music and Dance in Latin America.....              | Pg. 102 |
| Figure 19- African Based Religions in Latin America.....                         | Pg. 105 |
| Figure 20- Ifa-Santeria-Candomble Orishas Table Chart.....                       | Pg. 105 |
| Figure 21- Santeria, Palo Monte and Spiritism Practitioners.....                 | Pg. 110 |
| Figure 22- Afro-Latino PBL Format.....                                           | Pg. 166 |
| Figure 23- Workshop #1 Student Participants.....                                 | Pg. 167 |
| Figure 24- Workshop #2 Student Participants.....                                 | Pg. 168 |
| Figure 25- Workshop #3 Student Participants.....                                 | Pg. 169 |
| Figure 26- Workshop #4 Student Participants.....                                 | Pg. 170 |
| Figure 27- Workshop #5 Student Participants.....                                 | Pg. 172 |

|                                                                        |         |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| Figure 28- Teacher and Students Feedback.....                          | Pg. 174 |
| Figure 29- Student Collaboration.....                                  | Pg. 175 |
| Figure 30- Public Product Presentation.....                            | Pg. 178 |
| Figure 31- Student Reflections.....                                    | Pg. 182 |
| Figure 32- Pre and Post Test Results.....                              | Pg. 188 |
| Figure 33- Product-Performance Presentation Results.....               | Pg. 189 |
| Figure 34- Affective Outcome, UN Writing and Afro-Latino Cookbook..... | Pg. 191 |

## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction: Setting the Stage to Recognize Afro-Latinos**

The descendants of the 12.5 million Africans forcibly and brutally enslaved and brought to the diaspora are *"no longer invisible."* An African renaissance of self-awareness has emerged. Across various fields and regions, African and African-descendant achievements are being increasingly recognized. African pop culture, arts, and political influence are now visible on a global scale, promoting African social and cultural movements beyond just popular music.

In 2019, President Nana Akufo-Addo of Ghana declared the "Year of Return," calling on the African diaspora to reconnect with the continent. Similarly, monumental political strides were made in Costa Rica, where the first Black female vice president in Latin America was elected, and in the United States, where both the first Black male president and the first Black female vice president were elected. Black visibility continues to be showcased, particularly during Black History Month (founded by Carter G. Woodson in 1926) which has since spread to other parts of North America, Latin America, and Europe.

In a historic move, the United Nations declared 2015-2024 the International Decade for People of African Descent (resolution 68/237). The UN General Assembly emphasized the need to strengthen cooperation at all levels to ensure the full enjoyment of economic, social, cultural, civil, and political rights for people of African descent. The decade aims to promote respect, protection, and the fulfillment of all human rights for people of African descent.

However, reminders of racial inequality persist. The brutal murder of George Floyd in 2020 by four police officers in Minneapolis was a stark reminder of the systemic racism and violence African descendants still face worldwide. The protests and the global outcry that

followed, including the Black Lives Matter movement, made it clear that change is necessary. This change must be visible, respected, and rooted in dignity, justice, and equality. The protests displayed the deep-seated nature of racial discrimination worldwide, including in Latin America, where claims of racial harmony have often masked systemic racism.

Despite many advances, the movement for Black visibility remains dynamic, through its ebbs and flows over time. The fight to be seen and heard is ongoing, with significant progress but also persistent challenges. The civil rights movements in the United States created a legacy that continues to empower Black movements globally. In the U.S., there is growing self-empowerment among African Americans, with many taking ownership of their narratives, financially and politically rewriting their destinies.

In contrast, Afro-descendants in Latin America still face significant challenges in gaining visibility. Nevertheless, progress has been made in the past decade. Scholars, activists, and international organizations have pushed for racially just policies, such as recognizing the rights of *quilombos* and *palenques* (communities established by runaway slaves). Seventeen out of nineteen Latin American nations have adopted anti-discriminatory practices, including the inclusion of Afro-Latinos in demographic polling and legislative decisions, marking a step forward in acknowledging their rights (De La Fuente & Andrews, 2018; Davis 1995, 2010; Whitten & Torres, 1998).

Though Afro-Latin descendants did not experience large-scale civil rights movements like those in the U.S., there were significant mobilizations. Over the past 60 years, African-descendant scholars, activists, artists, and researchers across Africa, North America, and Latin America have made strides in understanding Afro-Latin identity, the legacies of African culture, and the systemic disenfranchisement of Afro-Latinos. These efforts have not only focused on the

the contributions of Afro-Latinos but have also challenged longstanding narratives of racial and ethnic erasure (De La Fuente & Andrews, 2018; Davis 1995, 2010; Whitten & Torres, 1998).

An awareness shift is underway, which challenges the myth of "*racial democracy*" in Latin America, a long-held belief that minimized the impact of systemic racism and colonial-era racial silence. Cuban scholar Roberto Zurbano referred to this as a "*culture of silence*," which allowed discrimination and subjugation to persist for centuries. As this narrative is challenged, space is opening for Afro-Latinos/as to actively engage in socio-political life and advocate for socially and racially just practices that improve their lives. These discourses are also helping to deepen the understanding of cultural dynamics in Latin America, allowing Afro-Latinos to embrace and celebrate their African ancestry more openly. Through this, they reaffirm the lasting influence of their ancestors on their cultural practices and identity today. (De La Fuente & Andrews, 2018; Davis 1995, 2010; Whitten & Torres, 1998)

### **Key Terminologies**

First, I want to clarify four key terms central to this study. The term *Afro-descendant* refers to individuals in Latin America, the Caribbean, and beyond who identify with their African heritage. This terminology gained prominence following the 2000 Santiago Conference on Racism. While the term is widely accepted, many prefer to pair "Afro" with their national origin, such as Afro-Cuban or Afro-Mexican, to emphasize their specific cultural identities (Lazcano 2018, Revista). Secondly, Afro-Latinos or Afro-Latin Americans describe people of African descent from Latin America or those of Latin American descent living elsewhere who also identify with their African heritage. This term entered broader academic usage through the efforts of Brazilian activists in 1978, later popularized in the United States by political scientists Anani Dzidzienyo and Pierre-Michel Fontaine (Andrews 2018, Revista). Third, the term Afro-

Latinx emerged in the early 2000s as a more inclusive and non-binary alternative to Afro-Latino/a in Spanish, reflecting a growing awareness of gender diversity within the community (Lazcano 2018, Revista).

Finally, *Salsa* as seen within the title of this study, is a term which literally means "sauce," and represents a dance form and musical style. In the context of this dissertation, *Salsa* serves as a metaphor for multicultural education, embodying the blending of diverse cultural elements. Afro-Latinos have played a significant role in shaping the musical and dance style Salsa by contributing their rich cultural heritage to its evolution.

### **Personal Context and Motivation**

Before delving deeper into this topic, I'd like to provide some context about myself. I am originally from Nigeria, where I was born and raised. I immigrated to the United States to pursue higher education, majoring in Spanish and Communication. Subsequently, I completed my professional studies in World Language Education. For six years, I taught in Florida before being offered a position with the Department of Defense military schools overseas. Over the past 27 years, I have taught Spanish and worked with multilingual learners across the U.S., Japan, Korea, and Germany.

Why did I choose this topic? In 2009, while teaching a lesson incorporating music by Choquibtown, an Afro-Colombian hip-hop activist group, a student asked if they were from the United States. When I explained that they were Colombian, the student expressed surprise and asked, "There are Black people in Colombia?" This question opened a crucial teachable moment. I asked the class if they had heard of the term "Afro-Latinos", but most had not and knew very little about this community, which has played a defining role in shaping Latin America's cultural

and historical landscape. That experience showed not only the gaps in my students' knowledge but also my own, this led me to further explore Afro-Latin American communities, history, and culture. Since then, I have traveled to several regions to deepen my understanding and share my findings with my students.

### **Historical and Demographic Context of Afro-Latinos**

Between 1501 and 1867, approximately 12.5 million enslaved Africans were forcibly transported to the Americas. Of this number, 57% were sent to Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking nations. Overall, 93% of enslaved Africans were taken to Latin America and the Caribbean, resulting in a significant Afro-descendant population in these regions (Eltis & Richardson 2010).

Today, an estimated 134 to 150 million people, or roughly 33% of the population in Latin America, identify as Afro-descendants (Afro-Latinos/Afro-Latinx) (PAHO, 2021; HUD; PERLA). In the United States, approximately 6 million adults identified as Afro-Latino or Afro-Latinx in 2020, according to data from the Pew Research Center. Afro-descendants have profoundly influenced Latin American society, politics, history, and culture through their enduring practices and contributions. Yet, despite their vast influence, Afro-Latinos have long been rendered invisible in many aspects of Latin American history and society.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to develop a comprehensive curriculum guide for teaching Afro-Latino history, culture, and identity, with a particular emphasis on African influences, to students in grades 6-12 enrolled in Foreign Language Spanish and Portuguese classes in the United States. This curriculum aims to thoughtfully integrate Afro-Latino contributions into

wider educational framework, ensuring that these influences are meaningfully incorporated into world language instruction.

### **Rationale for the Study**

The rationale for this study lies in the need to recognize and make visible the Afro-Latino population, a group that has historically been overlooked in world language education. By addressing this gap, the study seeks to promote diversity and inclusion, equipping students with the knowledge necessary to engage thoughtfully with these cultural histories. Furthermore, it aligns with educational standards, which contributes to a more equitable and inclusive learning environment.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study is grounded in the principle of decolonizing education by introducing a novel curriculum that is directly applicable to Spanish and Portuguese classrooms for grades 6-12. It aims to address existing gaps in the world language curriculum by emphasizing the representation and visibility of Afro-Latino voices. Through this approach, the curriculum promotes a learning environment that encourages students to reflect on their own cultures while appreciating the diversity of others. It empowers students to engage in meaningful discussions about identity, ethnicity, nationality, and heritage, while also challenging biases, stereotypes, and oppressive narratives. The curriculum advocates for social justice, promoting empathy, unity, equity, and the pursuit of transformative change.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guide this study:

1. What prior knowledge do students have about the history and culture of the Afro-Latino population?
2. What are effective methods for educating students about the African influences, history, cultural practices, and current challenges faced by the Afro-Latino population?
3. How can students demonstrate their learning outcomes from the lessons?
  - Sub-question 3.1: In what ways can students showcase the knowledge they have acquired about Afro-Latino history and culture?
  - Sub-question 3.2: How can students demonstrate recognition and visibility of Afro-Latino cultural practices?
  - Sub-question 3.3: How can students exhibit transformative thinking and perspectives influenced by the knowledge gained from Afro-Latino workshops?

### **Evolution of Research**

When this research began ten years ago, reference points were scarce, and much of the necessary information had to be gathered through on-site visits or by consulting historical archives and libraries. However, the landscape has significantly evolved. For instance, Costa Rica recently elected its first Afro-Costa Rican vice president, and many Latin American countries have now included Afro-Latinos in their national censuses. Consequently, students today are less surprised to learn that Black populations exist in Latin America (which is a sign of progress). Still, much work remains to be done.

Initially in 2010, this research originally focused on the educational and anthropological dimensions of Afro-Latino identity. Its primary aim was to conduct a cultural anthropological exploration of four West African countries (Nigeria, Ghana, Benin, and Senegal) and ten

Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking countries in Latin America, including Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Guatemala, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Argentina, and Brazil. Over the course of nine years, five field study trips were conducted: Puerto Rico (2010), Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, and Cuba (2011), Colombia, Argentina, and Cuba (2013), Nigeria, Ghana, Benin, and Senegal (2018), and Guatemala, Colombia, Mexico, and Cuba (2019). These field studies aimed to gather qualitative data through ethnographic methodologies, including community observations, interviews, surveys, and interactions with local community members, elders, and activists.

To ensure authenticity, the approach to fieldwork remained casual and informal, enabling greater trust and rapport with community members. This facilitated more genuine and personal observations of Afro-Latino communities, allowing for a deeper understanding of their lived experiences, artifacts, cultural practices, and enduring African influences. By facilitating open and relaxed interactions, I was able to engage more effectively with participants, creating opportunities for rich storytelling and uncovering subtle perspectives that might otherwise have been overlooked.

One central focus of these field studies was identifying the Afro-Latino communities often neglected or fading into obscurity in Latin America. The research aimed to explore the African influences that have persisted over time and how these influences have shaped the cultural identities of Afro-Latinos, both on a national level and within local communities. In the West African context, the research also sought to reconnect Africans with their Afro-descendant counterparts in Latin America, especially through heritage and remembrance tourism in former slave trading towns. This exploration examined how these connections have evolved and the extent to which Africans and Afro-Latinos have formed meaningful reconnections.

Given my personal background as a Nigerian Spanish teacher married to a Cuban practitioner of African-based religion, my African and Afro-Latino worlds are intertwined in daily life. This personal connection provided a unique platform for me to serve as both an observer and participant, collecting oral data (griotic information) and incorporating lived experiences into my research. As Anne Bailey notes in her book *African Voices of the Atlantic Slave Trade*, "The narrator is now one of the characters, and the telling of the story is part of the story being told"(pg. 7). In chapters four and five of this study, the "voices of color" sections explore these personal and communal observations.

While many scholars have previously researched and written extensively about African descendants in Latin America (such as Henry Louis Gates, Jr., in his influential travelogue *Blacks in Latin America*, and the works of George Reid Andrews and Peter Wade) this research aims to connect these findings to contemporary young scholars, particularly those in secondary education. In recent years, awareness of Afro-Latinos has grown through popular culture, music, social media, and sports. However, many remain unaware of the diverse challenges and African influences that define the lives of Afro-descendants, particularly those in marginalized communities across Latin America. This gap in knowledge underscores the continued relevance of this research.

### **Chapter Structure**

This study is organized into seven chapters. Chapter One, the introductory chapter accentuate the topic and sets the stage for the research. Chapter two details the methodology. Chapter three evaluates the current literature on teaching culture in Spanish/Portuguese classrooms, as well as Banks multicultural education theory and approaches that will be

incorporated into the study. It also introduces methods of transformational education, with a particular focus on project-based learning to enhance Afro-Latino awareness.

Chapter four examines the four West African countries from which the majority of the 12.5 million Africans were forcibly taken and shipped to the Americas. It explores their roles in fostering remembrance and reconnection with their diasporic descendants. Chapter five focuses on the enduring African cultural practices and artifacts in Latin America, examining the diversity of Afro-Latino communities and assessing whether forms of remembrance and reconnection with Africa still exist. It also reviews recent research on Afro-Latin Americans.

Chapter six presents a multicultural education unit lesson plan, incorporating an interactive website to engage students with Afro-Latino people, products, practices, and communities. This unit is designed for implementation in Spanish and Portuguese world language classrooms, as well as in other subject areas. Chapter seven provides an evaluation of the unit lesson plan's effectiveness, based on assessment results and student feedback. It also discusses the implications and limitations of the study. The chapter concludes with recommendations and reflections on how to further develop Afro-Latino studies in educational settings.

This research aims to create actionable awareness of Afro-Latino people and culture, particularly within the framework of secondary education. By incorporating project-based learning and transformational education, the study seeks to engage students in critical discussions about identity, heritage, and diversity. The study's significance aligns with broader global efforts to celebrate and reclaim African heritage, exemplified by figure 1 the *African Renaissance Monument* in Dakar, Senegal (a symbol of resilience, cultural pride, and the enduring spirit of African descendants worldwide). Just as the monument stands as a testament to

the strength and unity of African people, this research facilitates a socially and racially just educational paradigm, encouraging students to connect with and honor their own cultural histories. Ultimately, the study contributes to a mental shift that supports the ongoing Black renaissance movement in Latin America, which advocates for a more inclusive and equitable understanding of African heritage within educational spaces.

**Figure 1-**  
**African Renaissance Monument,**  
**Dakar, Senegal**



## Chapter Two

### Unveiling the Process: Research Methods for Afro-Latino Inquiry

This research adopts a mixed method approach to explore the African influences on Afro-Latino culture, as well as their socio-cultural contributions and visibility. Mixed methods combine both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, which offers a holistic framework that allows for a deeper understanding of complex phenomena (Creswell, 2014). This approach is well suited for studying the intricacies of Afro-Latino identity and culture, which includes both individual lived experiences and collective historical narratives. Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2012) emphasize that mixed methods enable researchers to address research questions from multiple angles, which enhances the richness and accuracy of data collection. In this study, the combination of qualitative insights with quantitative assessments allows for a depth of analysis of how Afro-Latino history, culture, and identity are taught and understood in educational contexts.

#### ***Qualitative Methodology: Interpretive Approach***

The qualitative component of this study draws on *phenomenology* and *ethnography* to capture the lived experiences of Afro-Latino individuals and students experiences interacting with the novel curriculum. *Phenomenology* focuses on understanding the essence of shared experiences (Collins, 2010), while *ethnography* delves into the cultural practices of these communities within their specific social and historical contexts (Yin, 2014). *Ethnography*, as an immersion method, offers an in-depth examination of Afro-Latino communities, emphasizing their rituals, religious practices, storytelling traditions, and communal expressions such as music and dance.

The research employed a variety of qualitative methods to gather in-depth, narrative-based data that would offer insights into identity, cultural preservation, and the influence of African heritage on Afro-Latino communities. Central to this approach were interviews and focus groups, which allowed participants to share their personal experiences and perceptions in their own words. These interactions provided a rich source of data, which made it possible to explore the nuanced ways in which Afro-Latino identities are shaped and how cultural traditions are preserved within these communities.

In addition to the interviews and focus groups, the study also incorporated observations within classroom settings. By closely observing how students engaged with the curriculum, it was possible to identify the ways in which cultural knowledge was transmitted and received. These observations provided an important context for understanding the everyday dynamics of cultural interaction and the role of formal education in shaping students' awareness of their heritage.

The research was also supplemented by participant reflections and study trip field notes. These elements allowed for the capture of immediate reactions, personal insights, and observations as they occurred during lessons or other community interactions. The participant reflections offered a window into the individuals' personal responses to the material, while the field notes documented observations and thoughts in real-time. The reflections added depth to the data by linking personal and collective experiences in a broader cultural framework. These field notes and participant reflections, enriched the observed interactions with valuable and a more detailed understanding of the ways Afro-Latino heritage is taught, preserved, and practiced. This triangulation of qualitative data sources ensures the depth and authenticity of the analysis.

This qualitative approach is important for understanding how Afro-Latino communities maintain their cultural heritage through oral histories, religious practices, music, and food. The method ensures that personal experiences are not lost within broader quantitative findings, which thus gives voice to individuals within these communities.

### ***Quantitative Methodology: Empirical Assessment***

The quantitative component of the study employs empirical tools to evaluate the effectiveness of the *Afro-Latino: No Longer Invisible* curriculum. The evaluations included are pre- and post-tests, which are administered to students to measure their baseline knowledge and understanding of Afro-Latino culture. By comparing results from before and after the curriculum, these tests provide a clear measure of any changes in students' comprehension and awareness following their participation in the program.

In addition to these tests, Likert scale questionnaires are utilized to capture student attitudes and perceptions concerning Afro-Latino identity and culture. These questionnaires serve as a valuable tool in gauging the curriculum's impact on students' awareness and engagement with the subject matter. This offers insights into how the program influences their views and interest in Afro-Latino issues (Likert, 1932, Allen & Seaman, 2007, Joshi et al., 2015).

To assess student performance more directly, a Project-Based Learning (PBL) rubric is also applied. This rubric evaluates students' work on final projects, categorizing their performance into three distinct levels: at standard, approaching standard, and below standard. Through this structured evaluation, the study can quantitatively assess how well students meet the learning objectives, providing a detailed account of their engagement and understanding as a result of the curriculum.

Together, these quantitative tools provide measurable insights into how well the curriculum improves students' comprehension of Afro-Latino history and culture.

### ***Rationale for Mixed Methods***

The mixed methods approach was selected due to the need to capture the complexity of Afro-Latino identity, which cannot be fully understood through qualitative or quantitative methods alone. Yin (2014) highlights that combining both approaches allows for a rich analysis because it draws on the strengths of each approach. In this study, the qualitative data offer rich, contextualized insights into the personal and cultural dimensions of Afro-Latino identity, while the quantitative data provide objective measurements of the curriculum's impact. By combining these approaches, the study can make a valuable contribution to both academic research and real-world use in education, helping the curriculum reflect both personal experiences and wider social trends.

### **Development of the Afro-Latino – No Longer Invisible Curriculum**

The curriculum's development was created by extensive field studies, which took place over four distinct phases:

- **First Phase (2010):** Field research was conducted in heritage sites across Nigeria, Benin, Ghana, and Senegal. This research highlighted the themes of origin and remembrance, which were the foundations for the workshops such as "Origins and Diversity" and "Home Away from Home." These workshops engage students in discussions about displacement, memory, and identity, using metaphors like the "Door of No Return" to frame these narratives.

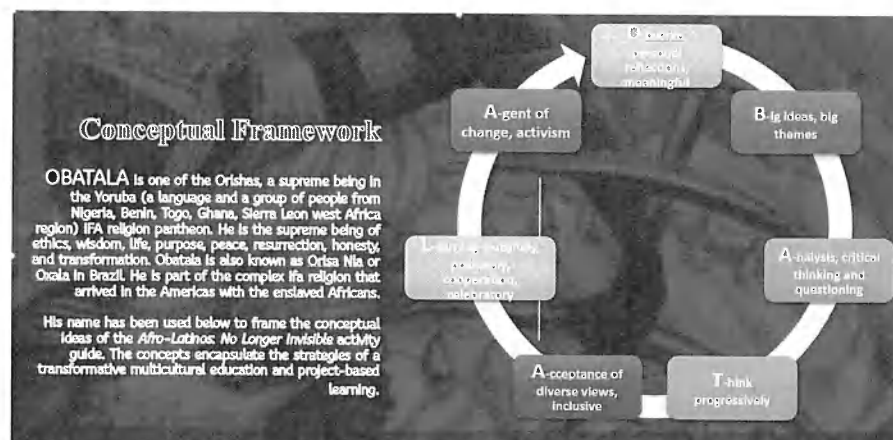
- **Second Phase (2011–2017):** The fieldwork expanded to historical Afro-Latino townships in Puerto Rico, Cuba, Mexico, Guatemala, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Brazil. This phase emphasized the themes of identity and recognition, which influenced the workshops of "Resistance and Identity through Dance." These sessions explore how Afro-Latino communities use cultural expressions such as dance to assert identity and resist marginalization. The culinary traditions explored in "Palate Memory" also stem from this phase, which connects students to their African roots through food that represent a living archive of history and cultural continuity.
- **Third Phase (2018–2021):** This phase involved the creation of the curriculum guide, accompanied by a digital platform, Afro-Latinos.org. The website is an integral part of the curriculum. It offers interactive tools and multimedia content that encourage students to engage deeply with Afro-Latino history and culture. The flexibility of the curriculum allows for its implementation in diverse educational settings, from schools to cultural centers and professional development workshops. Each lesson is designed as a workshop to promote interactive, participatory learning.
- **Fourth Phase (2022):** The curriculum was implemented in May 2022 over a four-week period, involving five classes with 110 students aged 14–17. During this period, five lessons were delivered, emphasizing the flexibility and adaptability of the curriculum. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected through observations, interviews, pre- and post-tests, and project-based assessments. This phase provided a comprehensive evaluation of the curriculum's impact on students' understanding of Afro-Latino heritage and identity.

## Conceptual Framework: OBATALA

The conceptual framework guiding this curriculum is modeled after OBATALA. Obatala is one of the Orishas, a supreme deity in the Yoruba religion (practiced by people from Nigeria, Benin, Togo, Ghana, and Sierra Leone in West Africa). He is revered as the god of ethics, wisdom, life, purpose, peace, honesty, resurrection, and transformation. Known as Orisa Nla or Oxala in Brazil, Obatala is part of the complex Ifa religious system that was brought to the Americas by enslaved Africans. His name has been used here to shape the central ideas of the "Afro-Latinos: No Longer Invisible" activity guide. These ideas reflect the principles of transformative multicultural education and project-based learning.

As seen in figure 2, each letter that spells OBATALA symbolizes key principles of multicultural education and project-based learning, which includes personal reflection, critical thinking, inclusivity, and collaboration. The framework encourages students to reflect deeply on their cultural identities, critically engage with mainstream narratives, and develop innovative approaches to learning. Through the OBATALA framework, students are not only encouraged to learn about Afro-Latino history but also to actively participate in cultural advocacy and social justice efforts.

**Figure 2- OBATALA Conceptual Framework**



## Curriculum Overview

The *Afro-Latino: No Longer Invisible* curriculum consists of ten workshops that incorporate both African heritage and contemporary Afro-Latino experiences. Each unit addresses major themes such as cultural diversity, resistance, and recognition, encouraging students to explore historical narratives and cultural contributions through a multicultural and interdisciplinary lens.

The workshops are:

- ***Unit Workshop 1: Origins and Diversity – Yo Soy (I AM)***

This workshop encourages students to reflect on their own identities through the exploration of race, ethnicity, nationality, and diversity. Through poetry and discussion, students define their sense of self, focusing on how African roots shape Afro-Latino identity.

- ***Unit Workshop 2: Doors of No Return: Africa to the Americas***

This workshop delves into the transatlantic slave trade and the enduring impacts of forced migration on Afro-Latino identity. Students explore concepts like displacement, cultural survival, and the African diaspora's role in shaping Latin American cultures.

- ***Unit Workshop 3: Home Away from Home – Africa in the Americas***

Students learn about the preservation of African heritage in the Americas, examining how Afro-Latino communities have maintained and transformed African cultural practices such as language, music, dance etc...

- ***Unit Workshop 4: Griot Journey – Oral Histories through the Power of the Drums***

Focusing on the importance of oral history, this unit explores how storytelling and music (particularly drums) preserve African traditions and communicate cultural memories across generations.

- ***Unit Workshop 5: Resistance Through Music***

This workshop examines the use of music as a form of resistance, exploring genres such as cumbia, son, and samba, which have African roots. Students analyze how these musical forms have served as expressions of identity and protest.

- ***Unit Workshop 6: Resistance and Identity through Dance***

Students explore how dance has been a powerful medium of cultural expression and resistance. The workshop traces the African influences in Afro-Latino dance forms and how they reflect the resilience and self-definition of Afro-descendant communities.

- ***Unit Workshop 7: The Door of Returns – The Orishas from Africa to the Americas***

This unit addresses the syncretism of African religious practices in Latin America. Students examine the role of Orishas in Afro-Latino spiritual practices such as Santería and Candomblé.

- ***Unit Workshop 8: Food as a Form of Cultural Remembrance***

Through this workshop, students investigate the African influences in Latin American cuisine, discussing how food can serve as a form of cultural memory and identity preservation.

- ***Unit Workshop 9: Recognition, Resistance, and Identity – Part 1***

This unit introduces students to contemporary struggles for Afro-Latino recognition, focusing on how communities use cultural expression to resist marginalization and advocate for justice.

- ***Unit Workshop 10: Recognition, Resistance, and Identity – Part 2***

A continuation of Unit 9, this workshop examines the celebration of Afro-Latino identity

in contemporary culture, emphasizing the ongoing efforts for visibility, representation, and equality.

### **Integration of Digital Tools: Afro-Latinos.org**

The website *Afro-Latinos.org* complements the curriculum in that it provides a digital platform where students can explore Afro-Latino history and culture. The layout of the website is simple yet effective. It features a top navigation bar that directs users to the main sections: "Learn," "Forum," "About," "Gallery," and "Blog." This design makes it easy for navigation, which ensures accessibility for all users, regardless of their familiarity with Afro-Latino studies.

The *Learn* section of the website is divided into subsections: *History*, *African Influences*, and *Cultural Connections*. Each of these subsections provides in-depth narratives on the cultural and historical contributions of Afro-descendants in Latin America. The *Forum* encourages collaborative discussions, and the *Blog* is regularly updated with articles and multimedia content on relevant Afro-Latino topics. These sections offer students resources and opportunities for discussion and collaboration, which helps in deepening their understanding of Afro-Latino topics.

### **Implementation of the Curriculum**

The final stage of the research involves the implementation of the curriculum in a World Language classroom (Spanish and Portuguese) for students in grades 6-12. This implementation includes pre- and post-tests to assess students' baseline knowledge and their subsequent knowledge gains, qualitative data from observations and interviews conducted during the curriculum's rollout, and quantitative assessments using questionnaires and rubric analysis of student projects. These various data sources allow for a comprehensive evaluation of the

curriculum's effectiveness in encouraging cultural understanding and promoting Afro-Latino identity.

The *Afro-Latinos: No Longer Invisible* curriculum offers a dynamic and flexible approach to teaching Afro-Latino history and culture. Through a combination of field studies, qualitative and quantitative research, and the combination of digital tools, the curriculum nurtures a depth of understanding of Afro-Latino cultural identity, resistance, and recognition. The approach encourages students to become cultural ambassadors and agents of change, which empowers them to promote Afro-Latino heritage within their own communities.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Theoretical Grounding: Exploring Literature and Banks' Multicultural Education Model**

In recent years, the importance of incorporating diverse cultural perspectives in education has gained increasing recognition. Despite its critical role in shaping linguistic, cultural, and historical narratives, the representation of Afro-Latino culture in Spanish and Portuguese language curricula, particularly for students in grades 6-12, remains minimal (Greene, 2017). To integrate Afro-Latino culture in Spanish and Portuguese language instruction broadens students' understanding of the Spanish-speaking world while also challenging the Eurocentric narratives that have historically dominated these spaces (Manning, 2014; Greene, 2017).

The history of the Afro-Latino population is closely linked to the legacies of the transatlantic slave trade and colonialism. From the 16th to the 19th centuries, millions of Africans were forcibly brought to Latin American regions such as Brazil, Cuba, Colombia, Venezuela, and the Dominican Republic (Whitten & Torres, 1998). These individuals and their descendants made significant contributions to the cultural and societal development of Latin America, though their influence has frequently been minimized or erased in mainstream historical accounts, which tend to focus on European colonizers and indigenous populations (Gates, 2011; Hine, Keaton, & Small, 2009). This marginalization mirrors broader systemic issues related to race and racism in both the U.S. and Latin America, where educational curricula often fail to represent the true diversity of the Spanish-speaking world (Ladson-Billings, 2004).

An analysis of current Spanish language curricula in the U.S. and Latin America reveals a lack of focus on Afro-Latino culture. Most widely used textbooks prioritize Spain and a select few Latin American countries, while devoting little attention to the Afro-Latino experience.

When Afro-Latino culture is mentioned, it is often done superficially, without delving into its complex historical, social, and cultural dimensions (Greene, 2017; Whitten & Torres, 1998). This exclusion reinforces narrow perceptions of Latin American identity as predominantly mestizo or white, further perpetuating stereotypes and limiting students' understanding of the diverse cultural landscape of Latin America (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

Moreover, educators frequently lack the resources or training needed to effectively teach Afro-Latino culture. In the U.S., where the Hispanic population is increasingly diverse, there is a pressing need for educational materials that reflect the full spectrum of Latin American identities, including Afro-Latinos (López, 1996). Similarly, in Latin America, the continued absence of Afro-Latino representation in educational materials contributes to the invisibility of these communities and perpetuates the legacy of colonialism that continues to shape racial and social hierarchies (Telles, 2004; Anderson, 2007). This lack of representation has significant implications for all students, particularly Afro-Latino students, who may feel that their heritage is not valued or recognized (Martínez, 2000; Telles, 2004).

The integration of Afro-Latino culture into Spanish and Portuguese language curricula is vital for several reasons. First, it offers students a more accurate and detailed understanding of the Spanish and Portuguese speaking world. Latin America is home to a wide array of racial and ethnic groups, with Afro-Latinos playing an essential role in the region's identity (Whitten & Torres, 1998). By exploring Afro-Latino history, literature, and cultural expressions, students develop a deeper appreciation for the complexities of Latin American identity, which is often oversimplified in traditional curricula (Hernández, 2013).

Secondly, an Afro-Latino curriculum promotes cultural competence and social justice. In a globalized society, it is increasingly important for students to engage with diverse cultural

contexts and histories. Understanding Afro-Latino contributions helps students challenge stereotypes, question biases, and cultivate empathy for others (Gay, 2018; Banks, 2015). Moreover, incorporating Afro-Latino culture into curricula serves as a tool for addressing broader issues of race and racism, prompting students to thoughtfully examine social inequalities and consider how they can encourage a more inclusive and equitable world (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

Finally, for Afro-Latino students, the inclusion of their culture in the curriculum has the potential to significantly enhance their sense of identity and belonging. Research shows that students are more engaged and motivated when they see themselves and their communities reflected in the educational material (Gay, 2018; Greene, 2017). For Afro-Latino students, studying their own culture in the classroom can affirm the value of their heritage and validate their experiences, thereby promoting greater academic success and self-confidence (Whitten & Torres, 1998; Gay, 2018).

Implementing an Afro-Latino curriculum requires a multifaceted approach, involving revisions to existing curricula, the development of new educational resources, and comprehensive professional development for educators (Banks, 2015). The growing diversity within both the U.S. and Latin America makes it imperative that Spanish and Portuguese language instruction reflects the full spectrum of cultural identities present in the Spanish and Portuguese speaking world (López, 1996). By incorporating Afro-Latino culture into the curriculum, educators can help students foster cultural competence and affirm the identities of Afro-Latino students and their communities (Gay, 2018; Greene, 2017).

## **Bank's Multicultural Transformative Pedagogy**

*"To come to terms with diversity of voices within is an educative task for society, for the individual, and for the school. It is what growing up means in a multicultural society and in a multicultural world." (Erickson, 1997 pg. 37)*

By the year 2050, it is projected that nearly half of the U.S. population will be people of color, with Latino immigrants and African Americans representing significant portions of this growth (Banks, 2013; Passel & Cohn, 2008). As the traditional Anglocentric hegemony grapples with the implications of this demographic shift, both students and educators are being challenged to rethink, reformulate, and reconceptualize a strong global consciousness with transnational objectives. This evolving consciousness is essential in navigating societal struggles that persist within and beyond national boundaries, such as racism, sexism, colorism, homophobia, and intolerance toward religion and special needs (Gay, 2018; Banks, 2013). Scholars have speculated that Western hegemony will align with shared socio-political and economic powers, thus necessitating the development of skills such as flexibility, empathy, and critical thinking to meet the demands of globalization (Appiah, 2006; Bauman, 2013).

To address these challenges, the education system is increasingly incorporating terms like student engagement, 21st-century teaching, project-based learning, student-centered approaches, cultural pluralism, and diverse perspectives into instructional practices (Banks, 2015; Gay, 2018). Additionally, educators are under pressure to raise student achievement scores and meet high stakes testing requirements. This has led to the exploration of multicultural education as a practical solution to cater to the needs of diverse learners and to promote inclusivity in the classroom (Nieto, 2010; Sleeter, 2017).

## **Historical Context of Multicultural Education**

Multicultural education has evolved through numerous phases, heavily influenced by the foundational scholarship of thought leaders such as Sonia Nieto, James Banks, Geneva Gay, Ricardo Garcia, and Christine Sleeter (Banks, 2013; Gay, 2009). These scholars have constructed various epistemological frameworks that shape the field's theory, practice, and implementation. Historically, the emergence of multicultural education can be traced to the early 20th century, when nativism in the U.S. promoted xenophobia against new immigrants such as Italians, Jews, and Poles, who were perceived as threats to the Anglo-Saxon, "white" identity (Jacobson, 1998). These new immigrants, unlike earlier European settlers, were seen as culturally and religiously incompatible with American values, and thus, harsh immigration laws were enacted (Banks, 2005).

In response to this xenophobia, the intercultural education movement of the 1920s emerged. It sought to promote identity retention for immigrants while advocating for democratic citizenship that emphasized equality, freedom, and justice (Banks, 2005). The intercultural educators argued for a more inclusive education system that would challenge the exclusionary practices of schools and society. By the late 1920s, intercultural and intergroup education movements began to focus on school reform by highlighting the importance of diversity and inclusivity for marginalized groups (Banks, 2005; Grant & Ladson-Billings, 1997).

However, by the 1950s, the fear and paranoia associated with McCarthyism, combined with a rise in "White flight" to suburban areas, led to the decline of the intercultural education movement. The McCarran-Walter Immigration Bill of 1952 further institutionalized xenophobia by establishing quotas and discriminatory immigration policies (Banks, 2005). Many of the

leading figures in the intercultural education movement retired or moved to other fields, leaving the new wave of immigrants and marginalized groups without significant institutional support.

## **The Civil Rights Movement and the Emergence of Ethnic Studies**

The 1960s marked a turning point, with the Civil Rights Movement bringing to the forefront issues of systemic racism and inequality. Despite legal advancements, overt and covert discrimination continued, particularly for African Americans. The persistent exclusion of ethnic groups called for a "cultural revitalization" grounded in the ideals of freedom and democracy (Banks, 1996). This period saw the establishment of Black Studies programs, led by scholars such as Carter G. Woodson and W.E.B. Du Bois, who sought to reconceptualize the Black experience in America (Banks, 1996). Their work laid the foundation for other ethnic studies programs, including Latino, Asian, and Indigenous studies (Grant & Ladson-Billings, 1997).

The multicultural education movement that emerged from this period built on the legacy of intercultural education, expanding its focus to include justice, equity, and identity for all marginalized groups (Banks, 2005). According to James E. Banks, multicultural education is an evolving field, continually adapting to the sociopolitical contexts in which it operates. Christine Sleeter, a leading scholar in the field, has documented the various frameworks that school districts have adopted to implement multicultural education (Sleeter, 1996).

## **The Goal of Multicultural Education**

Multicultural education, often referred to as antiracist, critical, counter-hegemonic, or emancipatory pedagogy, aims to deconstruct the myth of Western monoculturalism and homogeneity (Nieto, 1995; Sleeter & Grant, 1993; Freire, 1970). Paulo Freire's seminal work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* emphasized that children are "culturally encapsulated" during their

socialization, inheriting the value systems, beliefs, and prejudices of the dominant culture (Freire, 1970). As they enter a school system that perpetuates these monocultural ideals, minority children often face limitations in escaping these hegemonic assumptions, which undermine the value of their own cultural identities (Delpit, 1995).

In contrast, multicultural education affirms a pluralistic society that recognizes and respects cultural differences. Banks (2004) argues that multicultural education is "education for freedom" because it seeks to liberate individuals from the constraints of cultural boundaries. It empowers students to understand their own culture as well as that of others (Parekh, 1986; Perry & Fraser, 1993). Perry and Fraser encapsulate this goal, stating: "What we are talking about is creating a new tradition, telling 'new stories' that are fundamentally different by virtue of the role that lives of the historically oppressed have assumed in their construction. This is a matter of redefining American culture, not once and for all, but in the negotiated meanings that are always emerging out of a curricular process...It is in the day-to-day interactions of teachers and students, dealing with a transformed curriculum and attempting to create a transformed, democratic classroom, that the new common culture will be created and continually recreated" (Perry & Fraser, 1993, p. 236).

## **Defining Multicultural Education**

The definition of multicultural education is extensive and multi-faceted, encompassing a range of goals and practices aimed at transforming schools and society. It seeks to make educational institutions more equitable for all students by ensuring minority ethnic representations in textbooks, reforming schools at all levels, advocating for the rights of marginalized groups, and addressing the socio-economic and political distribution of power,

particularly concerning the oppression of minority groups (Banks & Banks, 1993; Gay, 2009).

Leading scholars offer various perspectives on the scope and objectives of multicultural education.

Banks and Banks emphasize that multicultural education is a continuous process that requires deliberate organization and measurable outcomes, making it a long-term commitment rather than a one-time intervention (Banks & Banks, 1993). Bennett (1990), a key figure in the field, frames multicultural education as encompassing cultural diversity, equality, ethnic studies, and the challenge to oppressive practices, all under the umbrella of intercultural education. Banks (1977) further elaborates that multicultural education focuses on class, race, gender, and marginalized special needs groups, emphasizing the need to explore conflicts, prejudice, identity, and alienation while promoting policies and practices that reflect ethnic diversity.

Similarly, Gay (2009) views multicultural education as a pedagogical reform system aimed at transforming educational organizations from within to promote academic success for all students. Fraser (1977) and Grant (1977) add that multicultural education necessitates changes in curriculum, assessment, teaching, and staffing to reflect cultural diversity effectively. Sizemore (1981) highlights the importance of studying organizations that oppose multicultural education to collect data that can strengthen the movement's advocacy efforts. Nieto (1992) argues that multicultural education is not only about changing the structure of schools but also about combating discrimination and advancing the ideals of social justice.

Multicultural education is defined by several leading scholars in the following ways:

- *"Multicultural education in the United States is an approach to teaching and learning that is based upon democratic values and beliefs and affirms cultural pluralism within culturally diverse societies and an interdependent world. It is based on the assumption*

*that the primary goal of public education is to foster the intellectual, social, and personal development of virtually all students to their highest potential" (Bennett, 1999, p. 11).*

- *"Multicultural education is at least three things: an idea or concept, an educational reform movement, and a process" (Banks & McGee Banks, 1997, p. 3).*
- *"Multicultural education is framed within a context of social justice and critical pedagogy, and it encompasses antiracist and basic education for all students from all backgrounds" (Nieto, 2002, p. 43).*
- *"The driving force in education for all our children should not be the level of wealth of the communities served by the schools. It should be the maintenance of educational standards of the highest quality for each child no matter what their ethclass or geographic location may be. The role of education in this country must be to provide for each child the most exemplary education we have the capacity to muster. Our survival as a multicultural democracy depends on it" (Washburn, 1996, p. 29).*
- *"Multicultural education is a multidisciplinary educational program that provides multiple learning environments matching the academic, social, and linguistic needs of students. These needs may vary widely due to differences in the race, sex, ethnicity, or sociolinguistic backgrounds of students. In addition to enhancing the development of their basic academic skills, the program should help students develop a better understanding of their own backgrounds and of other groups that compose our society. Through this process, the program should help students learn to respect and appreciate cultural diversity, overcome ethnocentric and prejudice attitudes, and understand the sociohistorical, economic, and psychological factors that have produced the contemporary condition of ethnic polarization, inequality, and alienation" (Suzuki, 1979, p. 34).*
- *"Multifaceted movement that encompasses a wide range of ideas, purposes, practices, and communities of discourse and interest" (Olneck, 2000, p. 45).*
- *"Multicultural education confronts not only issues of differences but also issues of power and privilege. This means challenging racism and other biases as well as the inequitable structures, policies, and practices of schools and, ultimately, of society itself. Affirming language and culture can help students become successful and well-adjusted learners, but unless language and cultural issues are viewed critically through the lens of equity and social justice, they are unlikely to have a lasting impact in promoting real change" (Nieto & Bode, 2008, p. 89).*

## **Multicultural Education in Today's Globalized Context**

Schools, organizations, and institutions across the United States and globally must implement multicultural education to meet the demands of a fast-paced, interconnected, and transnational society (Banks, 2015; Gay, 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need

for personal and meaningful social interactions, especially across diverse ethnic, class, gender, and special needs groups. Education that is culturally responsive and pluralistic is essential for promoting socio-psychological growth and well-being in increasingly diverse societies.

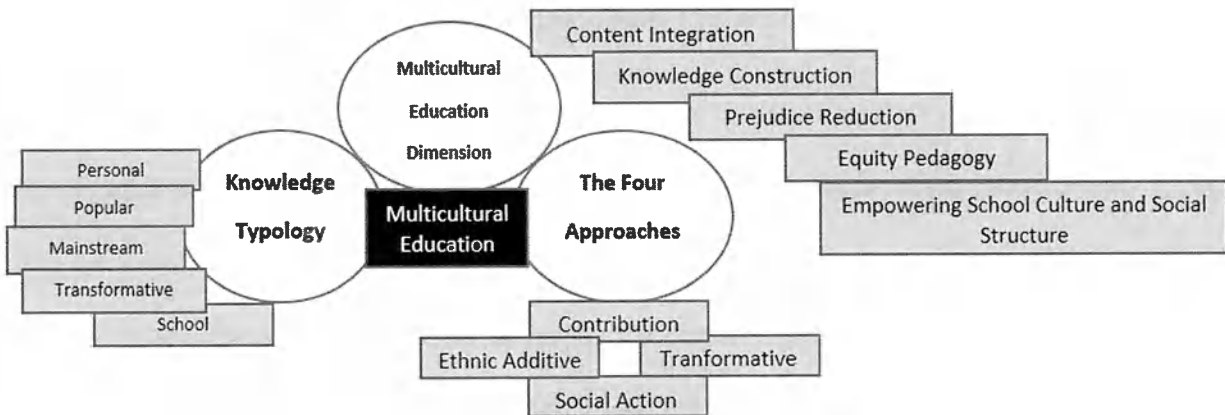
The main objectives of multicultural education are to teach cultural and ethnic knowledge, enhance personal growth, improve cross-cultural interactions, promote educational fairness, and drive social transformation (Banks, 1991). One crucial aspect of teaching cultural and ethnic knowledge is presenting students with accurate historical representations of marginalized groups, countering stereotypes, and dispelling biases (Gay, 2009). This is essential in helping students develop respect for cultural diversity, overcome ethnocentric attitudes, and gain a critical understanding of sociohistorical and economic inequalities (Suzuki, 1979).

Moreover, multicultural education fosters positive self-concept and confidence in students by cultivating a sense of pride in their cultural heritage while teaching them to appreciate and understand other cultures (Nieto, 2002). This process is co-dependent on the relationship between the teacher and the student. When students develop a positive sense of self, they are more likely to engage in personal interactions and appreciate the diversity of ethnic and cultural backgrounds (Banks, 1991).

As our world becomes more interconnected through transnational interactions, multicultural education is critical in navigating international affairs and addressing the "miseducating practices" that fail to see minority ethnic students as whole individuals (Gay, 2009). Schools must serve as the microcosm of society where these important lessons are taught, equipping students with the skills to thrive in diverse communities and become agents of change for a more inclusive society (Banks, 1991).

## James Banks' Framework for Multicultural Education

Figures 3- Banks' Three Steps to Multicultural Education



Multicultural education encompasses various ideologies, methods, and scopes. Geneva Gay notes that while there are many approaches, such as those proposed by Banks and Sleeter & Grant, they each offer different perspectives on the goals and methods of multicultural education (Gay, 2009). In this discussion, we will explore the philosophical tenets of James E. Banks, one of the leading theorists in the multicultural education movement. Banks developed a comprehensive framework for implementing multicultural education in schools and organizations, which is widely recognized for its depth and clarity.

Banks' framework comprises three key phases for effectively integrating multicultural strategies. The first phase focuses on familiarizing educators with the five dimensions of multicultural education: *knowledge construction*, *content integration*, *equity pedagogy*, *empowering school culture and social structure*, and *prejudice reduction* (Banks, 1993). Each dimension serves as a critical component in reshaping education to meet the needs of diverse student populations.

## Content Integration

Content integration requires teachers to thoughtfully introduce diverse perspectives into the curriculum, ensuring that it reflects an authentic and multicultural historical presentation. Educators must consider the group receiving the information and select content that resonates with students while addressing societal concerns and historical accuracy (Banks, 1996). Within this dimension, Banks outlines four specific strategies: *Contribution*, *Ethnic Additive*, *Transformational*, and *Social Action*.

The *Contribution* strategy involves focusing on key figures, holidays, and cultural elements but risks providing a limited, one-dimensional view of a particular culture. The *Ethnic Additive* strategy, even though it expands on the first approach, it often centers the curriculum around the perspectives of colonizers, which can result in inaccurate or superficial representations (Banks, 1993). By contrast, the *Transformational* strategy revolutionizes the curriculum by including big ideas, theories, and perspectives from a variety of cultural and national groups, promoting both diversity and unity (Banks, 2009). Finally, the *Social Action* approach encourages students to critically engage with current social issues, fostering their role as active participants in societal change. This strategy empowers students to apply theory to practice by becoming agents of change in their communities (Banks, 1996).

## Knowledge Construction

The second dimension, knowledge construction, serves as a conceptual planning tool for integrating multicultural education into classroom instruction. This process helps students recognize how knowledge is created and how it reflects the socio-economic, political, and cultural statuses of different groups (Banks, 1993). According to Banks, knowledge can be

categorized into five types: *personal/cultural knowledge*, *popular knowledge*, *mainstream academic knowledge*, *transformative knowledge*, and *school knowledge*.

*Personal/cultural knowledge* is acquired through individual experiences at home, with family, and within one's cultural community. *Popular knowledge*, in contrast, is disseminated through mass media, including print, digital, audio, and visual platforms. *Mainstream academic knowledge* refers to the traditional, Western-centric knowledge that often dominates educational settings, while *transformative knowledge* challenges this dominant narrative by introducing alternative perspectives. Lastly, *school knowledge* refers to the knowledge present in textbooks, curricula, and other resources used in schools (Banks, 2006). These different forms of knowledge are interconnected, working together to provide a comprehensive understanding of the world. Teachers use these typologies to guide students in critically assessing how knowledge is constructed, helping them filter through misinformation and develop authentic, informed conclusions (Banks, 1996).

## **Prejudice Reduction and Equity Pedagogy**

The third and fourth dimensions of Banks' model are *prejudice reduction* and *equity pedagogy*. Prejudice reduction requires a schoolwide effort aimed at modifying student behaviors and fostering a social and emotional environment conducive to lowering biases and prejudices (Banks, 1996). By incorporating schoolwide strategies to address and reduce prejudices, educators can help students develop more rational and inclusive attitudes toward diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, and social groups (Banks, 2004).

*Equity pedagogy* focuses on modifying teaching practices to accommodate the diverse academic needs of all students, regardless of race, gender, culture, or special needs (Gay, 2018).

This strategy calls on teachers to adapt their lessons and instructional styles to ensure that every student can access the curriculum and achieve academic success. Equity pedagogy goes beyond simply teaching content; it requires educators to actively engage with and address the unique learning needs of each student (Banks, 2009).

## **Empowering School Culture and Social Structure**

The final dimension in Banks' framework is *empowering school culture and social structure*. Banks argues that schools must restructure their entire environment (including the school climate, testing practices, student participation, diversity training, and attitudes toward all groups) so that it promotes inclusion and educational equity for all students (Banks, 1996). Schools must create an environment where students, teachers, and community members feel empowered and represented, regardless of their ethnic, cultural, or gender identity, or cognitive and physical abilities. This transformation can only occur when schools systematically deconstruct outdated paradigms and adopt progressive, inclusive models that encourage full participation from all members of the school community (Banks, 2009).

Banks emphasizes that successful multicultural education requires attention to all five dimensions. As he articulates: “To implement multicultural education effectively, educators must attend to each of the five dimensions...they should use content from diverse groups when teaching concepts and skills, help students to understand how knowledge is constructed, help students to develop positive intergroup attitudes and behaviors, modify their teaching strategies so that students from diverse racial, cultural, and social-class groups will learn effectively, and restructure the culture and organization of the school so that it promotes educational equity” (Banks, 1996, p. 5).

## **The Afro-Latino Curriculum Framework**

The aim of introducing students to various Afro-Latin American cultures and communities across Latin America is to help them explore the enduring influence of Africa through the lens of cultural products, practices and perspective. This approach supports an understanding of the interconnectedness of human experiences, encouraging students to connect their own lives with the experiences of others. In doing so, students can develop a broader sense of democratic citizenship and global awareness (Banks, 2004). James Banks' transformative approach offers a compelling conceptual framework for presenting the Afro-Latino curriculum, which seeks to challenge the dominant academic and popular knowledge systems that often render Afro-Latinos invisible in mainstream discourse (Banks, 1996).

The curriculum is designed to confront these biases by drawing upon the wealth of transformative scholarship that now exists on the diverse experiences of Afro-Latinos throughout the Americas. Students often come to school with personal, mainstream academic, or popular knowledge that includes biases, misconceptions, or even an absence of information about Afro-Latin American people, cultures, and histories (Gay, 2009). By incorporating these previously marginalized narratives, the curriculum expands students' literary and historical perspectives while addressing systemic prejudices and stereotypes that have historically shaped their understanding of Afro-Latin American communities (Banks, 2006).

At the core of this curriculum is the use of big concepts and universal themes that address issues endemic to Afro-Latin American cultures. These concepts are explored through cooperative learning activities that promote group collaboration, discussion, and team-based learning. Interactive strategies, such as WebQuests and other engaging projects, allow students to

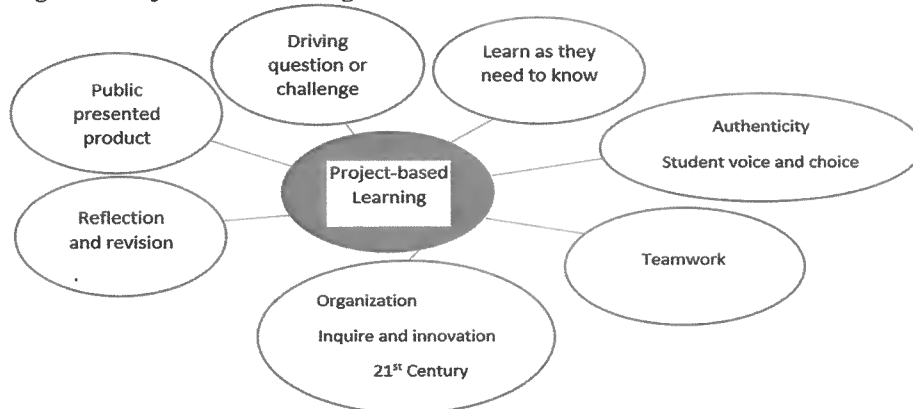
construct knowledge that reflects their interests and personal experiences, enabling them to interpret the past and envision potential futures (Dodge, 1997). This dynamic learning process facilitates a deeper personal connection to the material, making the curriculum not only pluralistic and relevant but also meaningful, progressive, celebratory, and transformative.

The Afro-Latino curriculum is built upon collective cultural knowledge, which includes “learned behaviors, beliefs, and ways of relating to people and the environment that members of a cultural group acquire through normal processes of enculturation” (Spradley, 1972, p. 5). To ensure authenticity and accuracy, the curriculum incorporates voices and stories from Afro-Latino community members, providing students with firsthand perspectives that enhance the curriculum’s depth and richness. This inclusion helps ensure that Afro-Latino histories are no longer marginalized or invisible within the broader context of Anglo-centric academic knowledge (Nieto, 2010).

Additionally, the curriculum emphasizes African influences within Afro-Latino communities through cultural identity markers such as perceptual orientation, aesthetics, values, worldviews, skills, artifacts, oral traditions, material culture, folkways, spirituality, and acts of resistance against oppression (Banks, 2006). These themes offer students an opportunity to explore Afro-Latin American history and culture in depth, building connections between the past and present, while fostering a deeper understanding of the cultural legacy that continues to shape these communities.

## Project-Based Learning

Figure 4 - Project-Based Learning Framework



The Afro-Latinos curriculum framework also aims to promote total student motivation and engagement, with Project-Based Learning (PBL) being a highly effective method for student involvement and knowledge creation. PBL enables students to investigate, explore, and critically analyze their findings about diverse Afro-Latino cultural practices and current trends, which they will then demonstrate through public presentations. As Boss (2011) explains, "Project-based learning has evolved as a method of instruction that addresses core content through rigorous, relevant, hands-on learning. Projects tend to be more open-ended... giving students more choice when it comes to demonstrating what they know" (p. 15). This method aligns with the transformational approach by promoting critical thinking through inquiry, innovation, and collaboration. As students engage with PBL, they learn by actively constructing knowledge, which aligns with transformative educational principles (Banks, 2009).

In addition, students develop their knowledge by expanding their literary and historical understanding, forming their own interpretations, and rethinking conventional conceptions. PBL presents authentic learning experiences, where students apply their knowledge in meaningful contexts. Roessingh & Chambers (2011) highlight the importance of activating learners' prior

knowledge through engaging tasks that facilitate collaboration, ultimately shaping and directing new understandings. Students are given a democratic voice and choice, personalizing the learning experience and promoting collaboration toward shared goals (Savery, 2006). This democratic approach aligns with the tenets of multicultural education, which promotes educational equity by meeting the diverse needs of all students (Banks, 2006).

PBL as part of a transformative multicultural education strategy is an essential 21st-century educational tool that equips students to face the challenges and opportunities of a diverse and globalized world (Boss, 2011). Unlike traditional end-of-unit projects, PBL requires students to engage in long-term research on a question or problem of personal or societal interest, allowing them to become experts in their field of inquiry. This process promotes critical thinking, teamwork, communication, problem-solving, and organizational skills, all of which are necessary for success in today's dynamic workspaces (Scott, 2021). Mergendoller (2007) emphasizes that PBL provides interactive, practical experiences that encourage meaningful interactions, diverse perspectives, and real-world action. Classrooms that embrace PBL create productive, innovative environments that prepare students for adult success.

For PBL to be effective, it must be designed around six key tenets: a defining question or challenge, authenticity, public presentation of the product, teamwork, organization, and reflection. John Dewey (1938), the pioneer of experiential education and PBL, emphasized the importance of "the act of thinking" as central to knowledge development. Dewey's philosophy advocates giving students the freedom to explore and interact with their environment, which leads to individual and unique adaptations and knowledge construction. Through this inquiry-driven process, students develop the skills necessary to navigate knowledge acquisition and critical thinking effectively (Mergendoller, 2007).

One challenge that students may face in PBL is defining the project question and envisioning how to execute it. Teachers, mentors, and staff must provide scaffolding and support throughout the project. This guidance ensures that students can work in teams, manage their tasks, and navigate the project independently while having access to the resources they need (Mergendoller, 2007). This support system must be integrated into the project rather than taught as isolated lessons, ensuring continuous learning and skill development.

The authenticity criterion is crucial in PBL, as students must connect their learning to real-world contexts inside and outside the classroom. Authentic projects are relatable, engaging, and motivating for students, as they reflect real-life experiences and challenges (Scott, 2021). Authenticity motivates students to engage deeply with topics of personal interest and relevance to their lives, creating an intrinsic drive to explore and solve problems (Boss, 2011). Additionally, projects that incorporate universal themes and values foster a sense of belonging and aspiration, helping students feel connected to their peers and community.

Another essential aspect of PBL is the public presentation of the final product. Rather than submitting their work solely to a teacher, students present their projects to a wider audience, including classmates, school staff, and community members. This public presentation enhances school morale and provides an opportunity for peer and community feedback, creating a collaborative learning environment (Mergendoller, 2007). The process encourages students to take pride in their work and which give them a sense of accomplishment and recognition for their efforts.

Furthermore, collaboration and teamwork are fundamental to an effective PBL. As Freire (1989) stated, “without community there can be no true education” (p. 34). Modern workplaces increasingly rely on teams to complete tasks collaboratively, and PBL simulates this environment

by encouraging students to work together toward shared goals. These collaborative workspaces enable students to build leadership skills, gain new perspectives, and engage in transparent conversations that deepen conceptual learning and critical thinking (Dewey, 1938).

Additionally, project management is another critical component of PBL. Students are required to think, plan, and execute their projects actively, developing decision-making and organizational skills in the process. This aspect of PBL fosters self-directed learning, where students take ownership of their learning journey, select areas of interest, and manage their project's progress from inception to completion (Savery, 2006). Teachers provide necessary scaffolding to ensure that students can navigate the project and reach the desired outcomes.

The final criterion in the PBL process is reflection, which is an ongoing and integral part of the learning experience. As Dewey famously noted, “we do not learn from experience. We learn from reflecting on experience” (Dewey, 1938, p. 78). Reflection allows students to gain insights into what they have learned, identify areas for further research, and develop problem-solving strategies for overcoming challenges (Mergendoller, 2007). Various methods, such as reflective writing, group discussions, and portfolio presentations, can be employed to guide students in this reflective process. According to Hattie (2009), a metacognitive approach to instruction helps students take control of their learning by setting goals, monitoring progress, and reflecting on outcomes.

In the context of an Afro-Latino curriculum, integrating Banks' concept of multicultural transformative education and project-based learning creates a dynamic and empowering educational experience. Multicultural transformative education challenges students to thoughtfully engage with the histories, contributions, and struggles of Afro-Latino communities and reshaping traditional narratives. Whereas project-based learning deepens this engagement by

encouraging students to explore Afro-Latino identities, experiences, and cultures through hands-on, collaborative projects that connect to their lived realities. Incorporating Afro-Latino culture into world language instruction ensures that students not only learn the language but also gain a deeper appreciation of the African influences that shape the rich diversity of Latin America.

## Chapter Four

### Ancestral Connections: Exploring the African Roots of Afro-Latino

*“One of the ironies of conquest is that those who are conquered often deeply influence the culture of the conquerors.” (Banks & Banks, 2019, p. 148)*

The Atlantic slave trade profoundly altered the landscape and dynamics of many nations. In Africa, it left a gaping wound of loss, sorrow, and underdevelopment. While in the Americas, it gave rise to a new group of people (a "cosmic race") grappling with identity consciousness and the creation of a new cultural identity. The American cultural tapestry consists of intricately interwoven peoples and lands that continuously redefine and challenge borders. Its histories, legacies, conquests, triumphs, discoveries, and integrations have forged dynamic synergies within the African Diaspora. The phrase "No man is an island," an organic and traditional saying, embodies the spirit of cultural and humanistic intermingling. These intermingling lay the foundation for cultural amalgamation, creating a cornucopia of people (specifically, Latinos of African descent) who deconstruct and reconstruct what it means to be a culturally pluralistic people and society, living a modern life with dignity. Thus, we begin the Afro-Latino story from its origins in Africa. As Professor George Reid Andrews asserts, *“The former plantation zones of Latin America were powerfully and irrevocably shaped by the presence of Africans and their descendants. If we wish to understand how the societies, economies, political systems, and cultures of those regions came to be what they are today, we must study the people who did much of the shaping: the members of the African Diaspora.”* (Andrews, 2004, p. 1)

Africans in the Diaspora, grappling with identity consciousness and navigating society's constant projections of prejudices and preconceived notions about their existence, fall victim to what Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie calls "the danger of a single story." In her 2009 TED Talk, *The Danger of a Single Story*, Adichie emphasizes that when we focus on a

singular narrative about a person, a people, or a place, we risk limiting our capacity for empathy and understanding. Africans in the Diaspora, searching for their history, often find that scholars writing about them also fall into this single narrative trap. This approach restricts the rich legacies of Africans to a single storyline that begins with the fifteenth century and the Transatlantic slave trade. It disregards the great empires, meaningful contributions, and complex histories of Africans before the slave trade and European colonization. Traditional history books used in classrooms fail to provide the depth needed to move beyond the singular narrative of Africans in the Americas. As a result, many Africans in the Diaspora know little of their history beyond slavery, leading to a profound loss of self-identity.

In Michael C. Mbabuike's (2000) commentary, *Africa through the Eyes of the African Diaspora*, he presents a significant quote by Karl Marx, which states: "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under the circumstances directly encountered, given, and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living." (pg.46) This quote insightfully reflects how the wrongs of the past continue to perpetuate the inner conflicts of our generations. Africans in the Diaspora still suffer the lingering consequences of slavery, colonialism, and racism, along with the complexities of identity consciousness and rebirth. This historical narrative, however, can be rewritten, as it often stems from a Eurocentric perspective focused on slavery. Those who write history have the power to perpetuate either positive or negative stories, and these narratives become ingrained in the collective psyche over time. The problem lies in equating the identity of Afro-Latin Americans solely with slavery, framing it as the starting point of their history.

Mbabuike emphasizes that "...throughout diaspora history, the idea of Africa as a prideful historical, cultural, and psychological referent point was rejected as a negative primitive absurdity." (pg. 46) He asserts that the identity of Africans in the Diaspora, and even in Africa itself, is fraught with feelings of contention, rejection, confusion, condemnation, and ambivalence. This negative self-image has been exacerbated by Africans both on the mainland and in the Diaspora, resulting in the imitation of European ways of being and living. Past events have validated Mbabuike's statement, though modern identity consciousness movements now call Africans in the Diaspora to rise above their generational struggles and transform their thinking through self-knowledge and empowerment.

The damage caused by slavery, colonialism, and racism echoes throughout Latin America, where Afro-Latinos struggle with the effects of the history they know (slavery). In sprawling urban outskirts, forgotten ghost towns, shantytowns, and impoverished communities across Latin America, Afro-Latinos live in a state of limbo, awaiting their civil rights movement to secure equality, respect, and dignity. Paulo Freire, through his books, professional life, and personal endeavors, stressed the urgency of educating the poor, marginalized, and forgotten. He believed in opening the world of education to the less fortunate and helping them personally embrace knowledge, which he viewed as cathartic and liberating. By liberating themselves from ignorance and mental oppression, individuals could in turn liberate their communities and release their oppressors from their oppressive roles. Freire argued that critical thinking, deconstructing, and reconstructing realities, as well as practicing "the practice of freedom," are key to effecting meaningful change and lasting transformation (Freire 1970, 1993).

Africans, both in the continent and the Diaspora, need educational awareness about their history. During the fieldwork observations, it was observed that the Afro-Latinos in marginalized

town, lack of ancestral cultural knowledge has led to a fragile sense of identity. To help them gain historical knowledge about their ancestry will restore the personal value diminished by centuries of oppressive subjugation and marginalization, which robbed many of their identity. When individuals take ownership of their learning and liberate their minds, they can rewrite their narrative, leading to positive change. The self-doubt and limiting beliefs that many Afro-Latinos experience can be transformed only through education about African and African diaspora histories.

In examining African diaspora history, Mbabuike identifies four categories of scholarly approaches: those that romanticize history, those that focus on moral values, those that engage in emotional blame, and those that concentrate on slavery, racism, and colonization. He argues that emotional writing, romanticizing, or using moral values when researching and writing about African and Diaspora histories is ineffective and lacks scholarly rigor. Regardless of the approach taken by scholars or activists, the focus should remain on fostering continuous and consistent discourse between Africa and emerging topics in Afro-Latino studies. The tone or intention of these scholarly works is secondary to the goal of promoting awareness at all levels. Myers, in his work on African education, echoes Freire's belief in education for freedom, asserting:

*"Some may have difficulty accepting the African cultural and historical roots... this resistance can be understood to reflect internalization of negative images, stereotypes, misinterpretations and misrepresentations of a very different way of being in the world... even some of us acknowledge African descent are fearful of suggesting that such a difference in world view exists, particularly if its cultural or racial origins are identified... in the new paradigm, our African rootedness has the cultural and historical capacity to unite all humanity..."* (Bynum, 1999, p. XIV).

## **African Diaspora History Did Not Begin with Slavery**

Africa, the "cradle of civilization," is home to the second-largest continent, with 1.3 billion people in fifty-four countries. Over a thousand ethnic groups speak more than three thousand languages and dialects, living on a landmass rich with 30% of the planet's mineral resources. Africa, with two and a half million years of human history, is regarded by many researchers as the birthplace of humanity. Its precolonial empires, kingdoms, and civilizations (including those of the Nok, Badarians, Egyptians, Nubians, Kushites, Ethiopians, Songhai, Oyo, Nri, Ashanti, Kongo, and Zulu) are revered as "creators of African culture." These nations contributed immensely to cultural, social, and technological development in the Iron Age. Ancient Egypt, Nubia, and Ethiopia "stand near the head of African culture" (Asante & Asante, 1985; Davidson, 1961, 1970, 1980) for their advancements in mathematics, science, architecture, medicine, law, religion, and the arts, which laid the foundation for much of modern civilization.

Despite the devastating remnants of the Atlantic slave trade, internal conflicts, divisiveness, and the structural and economic challenges of colonization; contemporary Africa continues to thrive. Countries across the continent are making strides in infrastructure, business, research, technology, education, and, most notably, the music and film industries. Like other regions, Africa faces political, social, and economic challenges to varying degrees. It is widely acknowledged that humanity originated in ancient Africa, and many aspects of modern life are deeply rooted in the innovations and advancements of our African ancestors. Despite this, the negative worldview of Africa, Africans, and Afro-descendants persists—a troubling projection of inferiority onto a people and continent that have given so much to the world.

So, the question remains: why has Africa's atrocious Transatlantic slave trade become the singular historical event that shapes the life narrative of Afro-descendants in the New World?

One historical event has not similarly defined the modern-day lives of Europeans, nor has it prevented them from progressing. Yet, the negative attitudes projected onto Africans and Afro descendants are not similarly applied to European cultures. In the precolonial era, African and European nations shared mutual respect, curiosity, and value for one another (Davidson, 1980). Why, then, did the notion of Black inferiority take root, and why does this racist idea persist today? The ongoing trends of racial discrimination, brutality, and injustice demand further exploration of these questions (Diop, 1974, 1987).

### **This Thing Called Race**

Race is a deeply complex and often confusing concept, particularly in relation to Afro-Latino identity and the struggles that come with it. In *Addressing the Puzzle of Race*, Samuel Coleman highlights this ambiguity, noting that there are over thirty different definitions of race in the field of social work and more than 4,000 books on the topic in a single library. This underscores the idea that the definition of race can be arbitrary and varied, with researchers often disagreeing on its exact meaning. Despite this, Coleman emphasizes that race continues to play an undeniably oppressive and discriminatory role in shaping the social, political, and economic lives of minority groups (Coleman, 2011). The concept of race is so fluid that scholars either use it without defining it or dismiss it entirely based on scientific advancements or critiques from social constructivists (Coleman, 2011). Anthropologist Frank Boas, for instance, rejected the idea of race as a biological category, arguing that racialization leads to harmful and prejudicial assumptions about people (Coleman, 2011).

Historically, race has been constructed as a tool for domination and exploitation. Cheikh Anta Diop illustrates how Europeans deliberately constructed the notion of Black inferiority

during the Transatlantic slave trade to justify their exploitation of Africans. He writes: "Inflated by their recent technical superiority, the Europeans looked down on the Black world and condescended to touch nothing but its riches" (Diop, 1974, p. 33). This equation of Blackness with inferiority was not an accident but a strategic move to legitimize the inhumane treatment of African peoples. This same racial logic extended to Latin America, where the concept of "whiteness" was similarly politicized. The process of *blanqueamiento* (whitening) aimed to increase the European population in Latin American countries, reinforcing the social and political dominance of European descendants. As Cadena (2001) points out, while many Latin American nations deny the importance of race, claiming that ethnicity matters more, this denial masks deeply entrenched racial hierarchies. These societies, Cadena argues, "legitimize discriminatory practices by appealing to culture" (Cadena, 2001, p. 45).

For Afro-Latinos, this duality of race and ethnicity creates unique challenges. They often find themselves marginalized both within broader Latin American societies and in global racial dynamics. James Banks (1995) argues that race is not a biological fact, but a social invention used by groups to differentiate themselves from others and justify unequal power structures. As he writes, "Race is a human invention constructed by groups to create ideas about the 'Other' and to defend the disproportionate distribution of rewards and opportunities within society" (Banks, 1995, p. 47). This social construct has been used to create and reinforce racial hierarchies, contributing to the marginalization of Afro-Latinos and other Afro-descendant populations.

Despite its destructive power, race as a concept can (and should) be deconstructed. Coleman notes that while the biological basis of race has been discredited, its social consequences remain very real. Research by Jablonski and Chaplin (2002) on the role of melanin, for instance, shows that skin color is simply an adaptation to ultraviolet sunlight and not

an indicator of inherent differences between people. Coleman also points out that advances in genetic research reveal that humans, regardless of superficial physical differences, are remarkably similar (Coleman, 2011). Dr. Quist-Adade similarly argues that these superficial differences have been exaggerated to serve the interests of those in power, but they can be reinterpreted in a way that promotes a more ethical understanding of human diversity (Quist-Adade, 2006).

Race, as a social construct has been weaponized historically to oppress Afro-descendant people, but this very construct can be deconstructed. By acknowledging the manipulations behind race and the racialized systems that have marginalized groups like Afro-Latinos, society can begin to dismantle the harmful effects of racism. The struggle of Afro-Latinos is deeply tied to their racialized identity, which intersects with broader patterns of discrimination faced by people of African descent globally. The way forward involves challenging the long-standing narratives that have kept Afro-Latino voices on the margins and working towards social equity through a more inclusive understanding of race and ethnicity.

## **Where the Problem Started**

Most research has concluded that "indigenous slavery," "indentured servitude," or "domestic slavery" existed in both Europe and Africa prior to the brutal Atlantic Slave Trade. "Indigenous slavery" refers to a system where individuals serve others with limited freedom. This condition occurred from being a prisoner of war, a captive paying off debt, or as punishment. Although these individuals were in a servile position, it was often considered humane and temporary. In Africa, the status of these servants was adaptable; they could ascend to royalty or work toward gaining freedom. "Domestic slavery" was connected to kinship and

differed from "chattel slavery," where individuals were treated as commodities and their descendants were also rendered into slave status. Researchers on both sides of the Atlantic Slave Trade debate agree on the devastating consequences: the collateral damage to African lives, depopulation, economic stunting, loss of identity, racism, oppression, and "systematic inhumanity." These atrocities were fueled by blatant greed and imperialism, resulting in profound historical shame (Ashun, 2017; Davidson, 1961, 1970, 1980; Green & Malvasi, 2003; Landers & Robinson, 2006).

The Portuguese initiated their territorial and commercial expansion under the guise of a "civilizing mission," aimed at converting Africans to Christianity and halting the expansion of Islam. Their goal was also to monopolize the gold trade by cutting off the middlemen (the Moors) and going directly to the source. In as such, prince Henry's explorations began in 1415 with the capture of Ceuta, where he spent years studying sub-Saharan Africa and how to access its gold. Southern Portuguese explorations beyond the Sahara were pivotal in opening the West African coastal frontier to Europe. Over the next 50 years, the Portuguese advanced their explorations: Cape Bojador (1434), Cape Blanco (1441), Cape Verde (1444), Sierra Leone (1460), San Jorge de Mina (1472), Fernando Po (1475), Mbanzakongo (1482), Cape Cruce (1486), and Cape de Buena Esperanza (1487). With each expedition, they strengthened connections with local leaders and monopolized trade in gold, copper, ivory, and enslaved labor for sugarcane cultivation and other local goods. They built forts to exclude competitors and monopolized both the gold trade and the enslavement of West Africans, many of whom were sent to work on Mediterranean sugar plantations. By 1550, it is estimated that 10% of Lisbon's population was African, cultivating sugar primarily for the consumption and pleasure of European elites (Eltis & Richardson, 2010; Student Press, 1988; Davidson, 1980; Gomez, 2020).

When Christopher Columbus sailed to the Caribbean in 1492, accompanied by conquistadors and African ladinos, territorial expansion and economic opportunism became the foundation of the Atlantic Slave Trade. Ladinos, African Catholics who spoke Spanish, were preferred over newly arrived Africans, known as "bozales." As Europeans established sugar, cotton, and tobacco plantations in the Caribbean and Latin America, and expanded gold and silver mining, their encounters with the indigenous Ciboney, Tainos, Caribs, and Amerindians brought these populations to the brink of extinction. The forced labor imposed on these native peoples, combined with exposure to European diseases like typhus, smallpox, influenza, and measles, led to their near decimation. As native populations dwindled, European plantation owners turned to white indentured servants and African ladino enslaved people from Europe. By the early 1500s, the dwindling number of white indentured servants prompted Europeans to shift their focus toward the transatlantic slave trade (Anyanwu, 2021; Best, 2010; Eltis & Richardson, 2010; Student Press, 1988; Adi, 2012; Gomez, 2020; Landers & Robinson, 2006).

There is extensive scholarly literature on the Atlantic Slave Trade, and recent research has sought to determine the exact number of Africans forcibly shipped to the Americas. The major maritime powers (the Portuguese, Spanish, French, English, Dutch, Danes, Swedes, Brandenburger, and North Americans) played leading roles in the trade. Researchers estimate that 12.5 million Africans were shipped to the Americas, with around 10.7 million surviving the Middle Passage. Enslaved Africans were taken from eight key regions along the West and East African coasts: Senegambia (6%), Sierra Leone (3.1%), Windward Coast (2.7%), Gold Coast (9.7%), Bight of Benin (16%), Bight of Biafra (12.7%), West Central Africa (45.5%), and Southeast Africa (4.3%). These regions spanned countries like Senegal, Gambia, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Cameroon, Gabon, and Angola,

among others. While the coastal regions housed the major slave ports, many enslaved Africans were also captured from inland regions like Mali, Niger, Chad, and Sudan.

Figures 5 through 8 provide a detailed breakdown of the Atlantic Slave Trade, including the regions and ethnic groups from which enslaved Africans were taken. Of the 12.5 million Africans transported to the Americas, 57% were sent to Spanish and Portuguese-speaking Latin America (Eltis & Richardson, 2010; Lovejoy, 2000; Landers & Robinson, 2006; Eakin, 2007; Martin & Wasserman, 2008; Davis, 1995).

**Figure 5- Percentage of Enslaved Africans Migration by Region 1501-1867**



**Figure 6- Estimated Enslaved Africans that Arrived in the Americas 1501-1867**

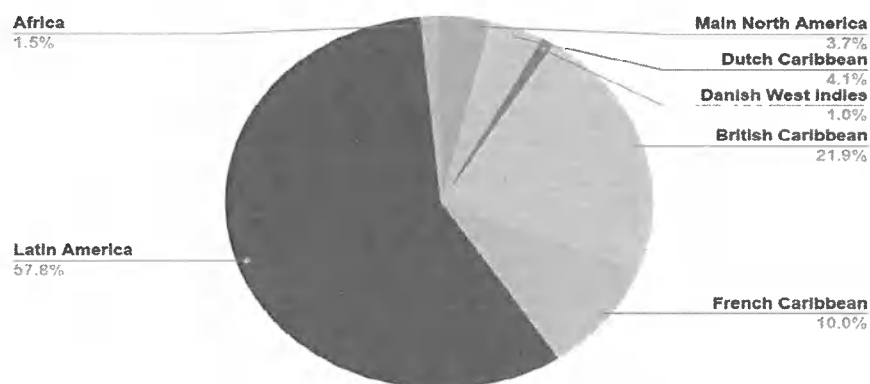
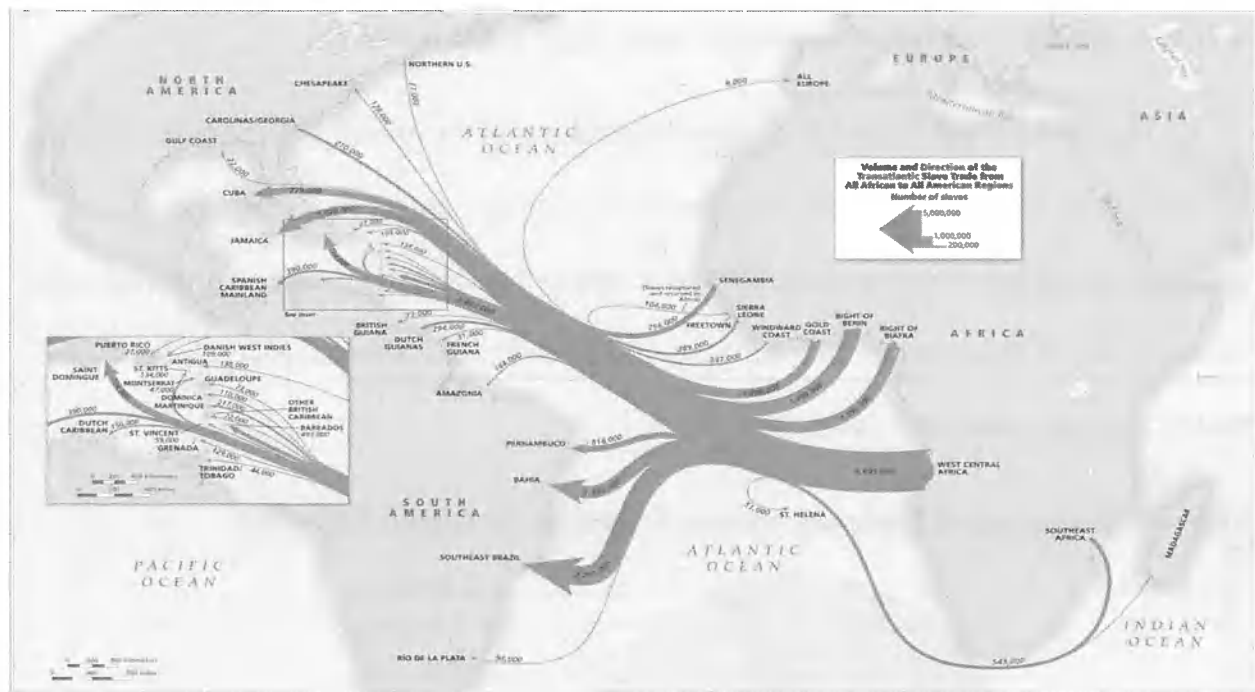


**Figure 7- Volume and Direction- Transatlantic Slave Trade 1501-1867**



(Map by Eltis & Richardson 2010)

**Figure 8- Regions, Number of Enslaved Africans by Ethnic Groups 1501-1867**

|                     | Modern Day African Countries                                                                     | Percent and number of Africans taken from that region | Ethnic groups taken from that region                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Senegambia          | Senegal, Gambia, Guinea Bissau                                                                   | 6%<br>756,000                                         | Mandingoes, Malinke, Bambara, Maninka, Soninke, Dan, Dyula, Mende, Serer, Wolof, Tucolor                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Sierra Leone        | Guinea Bissau, Guinea, Sierra Leone                                                              | 3.1%<br>389,000                                       | Serahuli, Susu, Tucolor, Mende (Mande), Gola (Gullah), Kissi, Temue                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Windward Coast      | Liberia, Ivory Coast                                                                             | 2.7%<br>337,000                                       | Gola (Gullah), Kwa, Mel, Kissi, Bassa, Gio, Kru, Mano, Senufo, Baoule, Agnis, Assines                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Gold Coast          | Ghana                                                                                            | 9.7%<br>1,209,000                                     | Akan, Asante (Sante), Ashanti (Coromantees, Coromanti, Twi, Ahanta, Assin, Ga, Denky, Kwahu, Akupem (Akwapim), Fantel (Agona subgroup), Nzima, Ewe                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Bight of Benin      | Togo, Benin, Nigeria                                                                             | 16.0%<br>1,999,000                                    | Ewe, Baribas, Fon, Whydah, Yoruba, Adja, Ogu, Mina, Kabye, Akan, Akposso, Ana-life                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Bight of Biafra     | Nigeria, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon                                                      | 12.7%<br>1,595,000                                    | Fulani (Fula), Bura, Hausa, Nupe, Tiv, Igo (Igbo), Yoruba (Yaruba), Bamun, Bamileke, Ekoi, Ibibio, Idema, Ife, Ijo, Mambila, Mumuye, Namjii, Fang (Fon, Panue), Riomunians, Bubi, Chamba                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| West Central Africa | Gabon, Republic of the Congo, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola | 45.5%<br>5,695,000                                    | Bembe, Binji, Boa, Dengese, Fang, Hemba, Jokwe (Chokwe, Tshokwe), Kongo, Kota, Kuba, Kusa, Kwele, Lega, Lengola, Luba, Luena (Lwena), Lulua, Lwaha, Mbagani, Mbala, Mbole, Ngbaka, Ngbandi, Pende, Puno, Salampasu, Songye (Songe), Sukui, Tabwa, Teke, Vili, Yaka, Yombe, Zombo, Boma, Bushongo, Bakuba, Baluba, Lunda, Bateke, Bazela, Basonge, Bajanga, Bakela, Kunda, Ntomba, Mogandu, Mongo, Ndombe, Bashi, Bakumu, Bapoto, Wasongola, Bandibu, Lueni, Kongo, Soso, Kasai, Bantu, Ngala, Buja, Bira, Kuumu. |
| Southeast Africa    | Mozambique,                                                                                      | 4.3%<br>543,000                                       | Makuwa, Tsonga, Makonde, Shangaan, Shona, Sena, Ndau.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

(Number and percentage from Eltis & Richardson 2010, Lovejoy 2009)

Several systems and laws in Latin America facilitated the use of enslaved Africans for forced labor. King John II of Portugal and King Louis XIV of France permitted the shipment of enslaved Africans to the Americas, with the French king even offering a bounty for each enslaved person who arrived. The King of Spain established the *Asiento* system, a legal contract that granted traders or companies exclusive rights to supply enslaved Africans to Spanish American colonies. The Spanish monarchy received a percentage of the profits from this trade, fostering intense competition for these contracts and promoting the legal enslavement of Africans. Additionally, the *Las Siete Partidas*, a Catholic Church doctrine, proclaimed all Catholics as equal and free, which granted leniency to ladinos (Hispanized Black Africans) compared to other enslaved Africans. This encouraged the importation of more Africans for labor (Andrews, 2004; Best, 2010; Landers & Robinson, 2006).

Furthermore, Bartolomé de las Casas, a Catholic priest, promoted the New Laws of the Indies, which influenced the Vatican to implement legislation favoring gentler treatment of indigenous peoples after years of brutality. De las Casas sympathized with native populations and, controversially, suggested that Africans should replace them in labor, claiming that Africans were more robust and less human, thus justifying the continued importation of enslaved Africans (Andrews, 2004; Best, 2010; Adi, 2012). These systems intensified the Atlantic slave trade in Latin America.

Leading scholars in the discourse on the Atlantic slave trade, such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Basil Davidson, Boubacar Barry, Henry Louis Gates Jr., Paul Lovejoy, and Walter Rodney, agree that the trade was inhumane, callous, and immoral. Some critics place the blame on European greed and expansionism, while others argue that Africans themselves played a role in selling their fellow Africans. Extensive literature examines the consequences of the trade on Africa,

emphasizing the human suffering, depopulation, insecurity, warfare, and the detrimental effects on African economies and politics. The extraordinary human suffering cannot be overstated, particularly in how it depopulated West African nations by taking their strongest and youngest individuals. Beyond enslavement, countless innocent lives were lost in raids and wars, creating widespread chaos, fear, and hopelessness throughout Africa and its diaspora.

The Atlantic slave trade became a lucrative enterprise for wealthy merchants, kings, chiefs, and traders, as cheap European goods, including guns, were exchanged for human lives. This undermined local African production and the development of skills while fueling political division and warfare. Critics, however, suggest that the number of enslaved Africans may be exaggerated, arguing that warfare was already common in the region and that the slave trade contributed to the development of nation-states both in Africa and the diaspora. Some also claim that the trade represented a mutual and equal partnership between Europeans and Africans.

Anne Bailey, however, counters this perspective, emphasizing that “the fact of the dual involvement of Europeans and Africans in the slave trade did not imply equal partnership but rather parallel lines of activity originating from different cultural and political spaces. To see Africans as partners implies equal terms and equal influence on the continent itself, but they had no direct influence on the engines behind the trade in the capital firms, the shipping and insurance companies of Europe and America, or on the plantation system in the Americas. They did not wield any influence on the budding manufacturing centers of the West” (Bailey, 2005, p 62). The slave trade was driven by wealthy traders, kings, and merchants. African leaders of large empires may have collaborated, but many small African states were forced to fight for survival, constantly fearing raids, warfare, or being manipulated into the trade.

Although some African leaders participated in the slave trade, others resisted, walled off their villages, or fought against European involvement. Davidson warned of the volatility of the times, exacerbated by gun-aided wars and the greed of Europeans, Americans, and African chiefs who sought profit from human life. He states, “Trapped in this unforeseen and fatal circumstance, pushed by their desire for European goods (and firearms often became essential to chiefly survival), or blackmailed by the fear that what one or two might refuse their rivals would consent to give, the rulers of coastal Africa surrendered to the slave trade. They struggled against its worst excesses from time to time; but the trade was always too strong for them in the end” (Davidson, 1961, 1970, 1980, p. 239). Nigerian historian Joseph Inikori (2002) also emphasized the "slave-gun cycle theory," explaining that African leaders acquired more enslaved people to obtain more guns, which they used to protect their communities from other African groups engaged in the same cycle. This vicious cycle was exacerbated by European merchants who traded guns for enslaved people. English merchants alone are estimated to have brought 1,615,309 guns into Africa, with additional firearms supplied by Portuguese, Danish, Dutch, and American traders.

Ironically, when Britain abolished slavery in 1833, it led to an increase in the trade as traffickers sought to capitalize on the final years of the transatlantic slave trade. Walter Rodney stresses that while Africans played a role in the trade, it was Europe that truly benefitted, rapidly developing its infrastructure and industries with the labor and resources of Africa, while simultaneously under developing the African continent. The Atlantic slave trade was not an equal partnership; European nations expanded their territories, wealth, and infrastructure with little risk, while Africans (excluding a few greedy rulers) lost their land, people, and political autonomy. Foreign powers dictated governance and law over African societies.

The Atlantic slave trade spanned from 1500 to 1888 in the Americas, lasting 388 years. Since the final abolition of slavery in Brazil in 1888, only 133 years have passed. In total, 521 years have elapsed since African forced labor began shaping new lands, cultures, identities, politics, languages, and histories in the Americas. The legacy of the slave trade continues to affect cultural and societal challenges today, particularly for Afro-descendants who still grapple with the systemic oppression rooted in this history. The healing process is slow, and it may take four to five centuries to fully address the sins of the past and rectify the wrongs of slavery. Only two or three generations have passed since the last abolition of slavery, and many wounds, family traumas, and toxic ideologies persist. The Atlantic slave trade left a legacy of diasporic communities, racism, and deeply rooted economic inequalities across America, Europe, and Africa. Addressing the lasting effects of this historical atrocity requires a multifaceted approach, including sufficient time, formal apologies from stakeholders, reparations, and targeted efforts to support the rebuilding of African-descendant communities. These actions are necessary to begin the process of mitigating the impacts and promoting long-term recovery and reconciliation.

## **Voices of Color #1**

Bridging the gap between Africans on the continent and in the diaspora must begin with recognizing the inherent connections that bind them: their shared African ancestry, traditions, and enduring cultural products. Edward Bruner's concept of "Black Essentialism" emphasizes this unity by framing Africans and Blacks in the diaspora as one people with a single identity. Through an "Africanist" lens, Lovejoy (2009) underlines that examining the experiences of enslaved Africans in the Americas alongside those who remained in Africa uncovers how African influences on the Americas are often ignored, yet crucial for understanding the relationship

between slavery and modernity. Lovejoy argues that a narrow focus on Eurocentric narratives neglects the profound impact of African heritage on shaping the Americas (Lovejoy, 2009).

Africans on the continent have their own constructed histories, while Afro-descendants in the diaspora possess a multitude of constructed histories, experiences, and identities. A sense of interconnectedness (or an "Afro-melding") can be achieved if both groups interpret Africa's historical events as relevant today and recognize their shared histories, products, practices and perspective as well as their divergent histories and identities. This interconnectedness encourages a sense of representation, inclusion, and "being seen," particularly in the case of Afro-descendant Latinos, who are often critically marginalized.

For the field studies, I visited several significant locations including the Bight of Biafra in Badagry, Nigeria; the Bight of Benin in Ouidah, Republic of Benin; the Gold Coast in Elmina, Ghana; and the Senegambia region, specifically Goree Island in Senegal. These revelatory trips, often referred to as "memory," "heritage," "nostalgia," "battlefield," "Thana-dark," and "remembrance" tourism (or more aptly a "transformative journey") were intended to explore how these African communities are remembering the past, reviving and sustaining these "places of memory," and making historical events relevant to contemporary life. These "social spaces" represent the intersection where "collective remembrance" meets "public discourse," enabling important public and internal reflections to spontaneously occur. In these spaces, the paradigms of peace, reconciliation, resilience, inner transformation, and truth emerge, even as visitors may experience ambivalence regarding the site's place in history (Bruner, 1996).

This form of tourism has been branded "roots" or heritage tourism, with the distinct purpose of interpreting and reconnecting with the past and identifying with ancestral roots (Hertzog, 2021; Oostindie, 2008; Rousso, 2021; Leite, 2020). Ouidah, Elmina, and Goree Island

are well-known public heritage sites. However, researchers have criticized these sites and "roots" tourism for "whitewashing" the brutal history of slavery, "commercializing" a horrific past, and engaging in the "commoditization" of heritage through standardized, pre-packaged tours with an abundance of cultural products for sale (Oostindie, 2008).

These four sites were visited in December 2013 and during the summer of 2018, over the course of ten weeks. The trips were planned independently, without the assistance of a travel agent. As a Nigerian with family ties along the West African coast, the preparation for these journeys felt adequate. Narratives from other researchers and travelers regarding their experiences and perceptions of this "branded" heritage tourism were reviewed. Many of the comments were insightful, deeply engaging, and went beyond superficial social media moments. Following the methodology of American anthropologist Edward Bruner, the approach to these experiences was framed as encounters with "performers" in the various "border zones" of forts, castles, dungeons, communities, and other touristic social spaces (Bruner, 1996).

### **Field Study 1: Badagry, Nigeria**

The first trip was to Badagry, a town along the Atlantic coast of Nigeria, which holds a pivotal place in the history of the Transatlantic slave trade. The town's location between Lagos, Nigeria, and Cotonou, Benin, made it a significant hub for the transport of enslaved Africans to the Americas. Badagry's history is embodied in sites like the Seriki Williams Abass barracoon, where enslaved Africans were held in cramped, dark cells before being shipped across the Atlantic. As we explored the Mobee Museum and the barracoon, the inhumanity of the trade was made tangible through the relics of shackles and chains that we were shown. These artifacts

brought to life the dehumanizing conditions enslaved Africans endured, offering visitors a direct, sensory connection to this painful history.

Our journey continued along the Yewa River to Gberefu Island, which was part of the slave route. This journey mirrored the forced trek enslaved Africans took from their place of capture to the waiting ships. Femi, our guide, shared the myth of the 170-year-old drinking well, believed to have caused memory loss in enslaved Africans, erasing their identity and rendering them more submissive to their captors. Though this myth has been disproven, it speaks to the psychological trauma of enslavement and the systematic efforts to strip Africans of their cultural heritage. The contrast between the stark history of the slave route and the local life continuing in the present-day Badagry (with its crumbling infrastructure and limited tourism development) added another layer of reflection on how such significant historical sites remain underutilized. Badagry is a place rich in history, yet neglected in terms of preservation, and this further underscored the need for restoration and preservation to keep this vital history alive for future generations (Fadipe, 2000, 2010).

**Figure 9- Badagry, Nigeria- Slave Route and Point of No Return**



## **Field Study 2: Ouidah, Republic of Benin**

The next stop was to Ouidah, a coastal town in Benin, which was central to the Atlantic slave trade, particularly during the 18th century when the kingdom of Dahomey was a major player in the trade of enslaved Africans. Our visit to Ouidah began with a tour of the Ouidah Museum of History, located in a former Portuguese fort. The museum's exhibits were a vivid reminder of the Afro-diasporic connections, with a particular focus on the shared cultural practices between Benin and Black Brazilians. Despite its powerful themes, the museum lacked comprehensive preservation and interactive displays, leaving visitors to process the gravity of the history on their own. The Vodun religion, deeply rooted in the cultural heritage of the region, was a recurring theme, symbolizing both spiritual continuity and the cultural resilience of the African diaspora.

Our journey along Ouidah's four-kilometer Slave Route was particularly impactful. Monuments, sculptures of Vodun deities, and artistic depictions of enslavement lined the path to the UNESCO monument, the Door of No Return. This site, symbolizing the last moments enslaved Africans spent on African soil, is a powerful space for reflection. The legends of the Tree of Forgetting, where enslaved men and women were made to walk in circles to forget their identities, echoed the themes of loss and disconnection that the slave trade wrought on millions of Africans. The use of Vodun as a cultural bridge between Africa and its diaspora, embodied through these memorials, adds to Ouidah's significance in understanding the spiritual and historical ties that remain alive across the Atlantic. The journey felt like a powerful reminder of the importance of preserving these historical sites as spaces for both remembrance and reconnection (Araujo, 2010; Forte, 2007).

**Figure 10- Ouidah, Republic of Benin- Slave Route Project, Point of No Return, Beninois Women at the Slave Route**



### **Field Study 3: Elmina, Ghana**

Elmina Castle in Ghana stands as one of the most recognized symbols of the Transatlantic slave trade. Originally a trading post for gold and ivory, it soon became one of the largest slave forts on the African coast. Our visit to Elmina highlighted the complex relationship between the local fishing community and the castle, with life continuing around a site marked by such deep historical trauma. The separation between the local population and the tourists created a division between the living history of the community and the distant remembrance of the past. The guides at the castle were well-versed in the history of the site, explaining in detail how enslaved Africans were held in dungeons for weeks or months, waiting for the ships that would take them across the Atlantic.

The Door of No Return, the focal point of the tour, was where enslaved Africans passed before boarding the ships that took them away from their homeland forever. This space, like similar sites in Badagry and Ouidah, is a haunting reminder of the violent rupture of the slave trade. The castle itself has become a pilgrimage site for members of the African diaspora, particularly African Americans, who come to reconnect with their ancestral roots. The emotional weight of the experience, combined with the stark historical realities shared by the guides, made the visit a powerful moment of reflection on the resilience and survival of African-descended

peoples. However, as with many heritage sites, the balance between the commercial aspects of the heritage site tourism and the authentic connection to the past is challenging. Elmina's role in telling the story of the Black Atlantic remains profound, offering a space for remembrance while grappling with the tension between commodification and historical integrity (Ashun, 2004, 2013, 2017; Sonmez, 2011).

**Figure 11- Elmina Castle, Ghana, Door of no return and Elmina Natives**



#### **Field Study 4: Goree Island, Senegal**

The last heritage site visited was to Goree Island, that is located off the coast of Dakar, Senegal, is one of the most iconic sites related to the Transatlantic slave trade. Boubacar Joseph Ndiaye curated the *Maison des Esclaves* (House of Slaves), which is the centerpiece of the island's historical significance. Our visit to Goree Island, like the other sites, was deeply emotional. Ndiaye's impassioned storytelling, with the dramatic use of shackles, brought the horrors of enslavement to life. His narratives made the history feel immediate and real, as we walked through the dark dungeons where enslaved Africans were held. The Door of No Return, where enslaved people took their final steps on African soil, is both a literal and symbolic threshold, representing the loss of home, identity, and connection to ancestry.

Despite the profound historical significance, the local community on Goree Island appears disconnected from the tourism economy. Peddlers and informal guides dominate the

visitor experience, but there is little engagement with authentic local storytelling. This reflects broader challenges in heritage tourism, where the commercial aspects often overshadow opportunities for local involvement and meaningful interaction. Goree's position as a major site of remembrance offers great potential for educational and cultural engagement, but these opportunities are underutilized. The island is a stark reminder of how the legacies of slavery continue to influence present-day African and diasporic identities, and how much work remains to be done in terms of community engagement and empowerment (Magnani, 2014).

**Figure 11- Goree Island, Senegal- Slave House and Door of no return, Dakar, Senegal**



### **Field Study reflections**

The field studies in Badagry, Ouidah, Elmina, and Goree Island offer a rich foundation for developing a comprehensive Afro-Latino curriculum through the lens of James Banks' transformational multicultural education approach. Banks advocates for a deeper, more inclusive understanding of history that not only recognizes diversity but also critically engages with the complex narratives of marginalized communities (Banks, 1995). The field studies provided a direct connection to the sites of enslavement, where the horrors of the Transatlantic slave trade are still physically present. These spaces, with their Doors of No Return, slave routes, and

cultural monuments, serve as vital links between the past and present, offering both physical and symbolic representation of the African diaspora's journey.

Incorporating the experiences of these sites into an Afro-Latino curriculum allows students to engage with the intersections of African and Latin American histories. The Door of No Return, found at Badagry, Ouidah, Elmina, and Goree, serves as a powerful metaphor for the forced disconnection from one's homeland, a central theme in understanding the Afro-Latino experience. These doors symbolize not only the physical departure from Africa but also the loss of identity, culture, and autonomy that enslaved Africans endured. Teaching about these sites offers Afro-Latino students a way to reconnect with their African roots and better understand how their cultural identities have been shaped by both African and Latin American influences.

The well of remembering and forgetting in Badagry and the Tree of Forgetting in Ouidah highlight how the trauma of enslavement was not just physical but psychological. These myths, while not historically accurate, symbolize the intentional efforts to erase African identities during the slave trade. Introducing these elements into the curriculum encourages students to reflect on the lasting impact of colonialism and enslavement on Afro-descendant identities and how cultural survival has been an act of resistance.

Vodun, as seen in Ouidah, represents the resilience of African spiritual and cultural practices in the diaspora. By exploring how Vodun influenced Afro-diasporic religions such as Candomblé, Santería, and Umbanda, students can understand how African heritage has been preserved and adapted in the Americas. This cultural continuity is vital for Afro-Latino students as they explore their identities, offering a sense of pride and connection to their African roots.

Banks' transformational approach emphasizes that education should empower marginalized communities by giving them the tools to critically engage with their histories. By integrating the lessons from these field studies, an Afro-Latino curriculum can help students not only learn about their past but also understand how the legacies of the slave trade continue to shape their present. The history of these sites is not just a reminder of past injustices but a call to action for students to advocate for justice, equality, and representation in modern society.

These field studies in Badagry, Ouidah, Elmina, and Goree Island offer invaluable insights into the Afro-Latino experience. Preserving these sites is vital to be able to interpret them through a transformational multicultural education lens, allows a creation of a curriculum that not only honors the past but also empowers students to shape a future rooted in understanding, pride, and empathy.

## Chapter Five

### Afro-Latinos: Identity, Culture, and Continuity

*"Afro descendants in Latin America remain largely invisible, marginalized, and subjected to both institutional and everyday racism, despite their significant contributions to the region's development and cultural identity" (Jiménez Román, 2010, p. 1).*

By the 1780s, the transatlantic slave trade forcibly transported five and a half million Africans to the Americas, compared to only one million Europeans from nations such as Britain, France, the Netherlands, Spain, and Portugal (Lovejoy, 2009, p. 62). This highlights how the racialized Atlantic slave trade reshaped the Americas, generating new cultures, economies, and the processes of "Africanization" and "creolization," as well as what Fernando Ortiz termed "transculturation." The blending of products and practices between the colonizers and the colonized gave rise to Afro-Latinos, African descendants in Latin America. While Latin Americans often celebrate their indigenous and European heritages, they simultaneously disguise their preference for whiteness and avoid discussing race by invoking the myth of "racial democracy," which suggests a harmonious racial and cultural hybridity. However, the African legacy is reluctantly acknowledged and often relegated to a footnote in historical narratives (Alberto & Hoffnung-Garskof, 2018; David & Williams, 2010).

The value system of the Latino *mestizo* (those of mixed Spanish and indigenous descent) marginalizes and renders Afro-Latinos with darker skin tones invisible, as they do not conform to *mestizo* ideals. These individuals experience a form of "double erasure;" not recognized as fully Latino and distanced from other people of color. Over the past five centuries, the stigma surrounding blackness in Latin America has persisted. In the African diaspora, assimilation and oppression stifled the development of enslaved Africans, yet their cultural legacies; transmitted

through transnationalism, products, practices, and rituals, have survived as indicators of African identity. These often-overlooked African perspectives reveal the cultural similarities and ancestral connections that permeate throughout Afro-Latin America (Alberto & Hoffnung-Garskof, 2018; Guridy & Hooker, 2018; Wade, 2018; De la Fuente & Andrews, 2018; David & Williams, 2010).

The influence of the African continent on Afro-Latin diasporic cultures is vast and intricate. The manifestation of African culture is evident in Afro-Latino music, religion, dance, food, social platforms, and identity consciousness. After six decades of activism, organizations such as NGOs, academic institutions, and artists- along with transnational collaborations involving the United Nations and various governments-have generated significant policy changes. These changes have somewhat enhanced the socioeconomic mobility and social status of Afro-Latin descendants (David & Williams, 2010).

**Figure 13- Afro-Descendants Populations and Location in Latin America**

|                    | First enslaved Africa brought and abolition | Region of high concentration of Afro-descendants in each country today               | Number and/or percentage of Afro-descendants 2010-2020 |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| Argentina          | 1587- 1861                                  | Buenos Aire<br>La Boca and San Telmo                                                 | 0.4% - 149,493 identified                              |
| Brazil             | 1530's- 1888                                | Salvador-Bahia, Rio de Janeiro,<br>Sao Paolo, Minas Gerais                           | 50.7% black or mix- 91 million                         |
| Bolivia            | 1545- 1825                                  | Yungas                                                                               | -1%- 23,330                                            |
| Chile              | 1536- 1823                                  | Arica, Parinacota                                                                    | -1%- 8415                                              |
| Colombia           | 1500- 1851                                  | Choco, Magdalena, Bolivar, Sucre, Valle,<br>Cauca, Uraba, San Andres, Santa Catalina | 9.34%- 4.7 million                                     |
| Costa Rica         | Late 1500's- 1824                           | Limon                                                                                | 7%- 400,000                                            |
| Cuba               | 1511- 1886                                  | Eastern mainly Havana,<br>Santiago                                                   | 9.3% Blacks, 26.6% mestizos                            |
| Dominican Republic | 1502- 1822                                  | San Pedro de Macoris, La Romana, Samaná                                              | mix 12.4%, 15.8% black- 7.9 million                    |
| Ecuador            | 1553- 1822                                  | Esmeraldas and the Valle del Chota, Quito,<br>Guayaquil                              | 8%- 1.1 million                                        |
| El Salvador        | 1540's- 1825                                | Sonsonate, Ahuachapan, San Miguel, La<br>Union                                       | 0.13%- 7,441 self identified                           |
| Guatemala          | 1524- 1824                                  | Livingston, Puerto Barrios and Santo<br>Tomas                                        | 1-2%- 160,000-320,000                                  |
| Honduras           | 1540- 1824                                  | departments of Cortés and Gracias a Dios                                             | 5%- 350,000                                            |
| Mexico             | 1520's- 1829                                | Costa Chica of Oaxaca, Guerrero, Veracruz,<br>Districto Federal, Baja, Leon          | 1.2 %- 1.38million                                     |
| Nicaragua          | 1630- 1838                                  | Bluefields                                                                           | 9%- 600,000                                            |
| Panama             | 1514- 1851                                  | Bocas del Toro, Almirante, Bastimentos                                               | 9.2% black, 6.8% mulattoes                             |
| Peru               | 1548- 1854                                  | Lambayeque and Piura, Lima, Callao,<br>provinces of Cafete, Chinch, Pisco, Nazca     | 10%- 2,900,000                                         |
| Puerto Rico        | 1517-1873                                   | Loiza Municipio                                                                      | 11.7%- 351,306                                         |
| Paraguay           | 1520's- 1842                                | Camba Cua, Kamba kokue, Embo<br>Emboscada                                            | 4%- 234,000                                            |
| Uruguay            | 1587- 1842                                  | Montevideo                                                                           | 9%- 270,000                                            |
| Venezuela          | 1528- 1854                                  | Barlovento, Miranda                                                                  | 2.9%- 812,000                                          |

(Retrieval from CIA reports...the exactness of data reporting on Afro-Latinos is arguable, data from census shows individual attitude towards concept of African heritage differs in countries, regions, towns, communities)

## Cultural Memory

How have the legacies of African peoples in Latin America endured through more than five centuries of oppression, marginalization, and invisibility? Visits to impoverished yet resilient Afro-Latin American communities reveal the enduring power of "cultural memory." From the religious rituals rooted in West African Ifá, to the transcendent rhythms of the drum, to the rich culinary traditions, the legacy of African culture in Latin America is both profound and enduring. The call-and-response of griot-style music, the joyous polyrhythmic dances, and the political brotherhood systems all serve to preserve cultural memory. These rituals, like the Ifá traditions in Brazil's Candomblé and Cuba's Palo Monte, the drums in Puerto Rico *bomba* and Garifuna's *punta*, or the flavors of Dominican *mangú*, Cuban *fufu*, and Mexican *mogomogo*, embody the perseverance of African identity and knowledge.

Assmann's theory of cultural memory states that "humans must find a means to maintain their nature consistently through generations" (Assmann, 2011, p. 110). This idea underscores how societies use cultural memory repeated through rituals, texts, and images- to convey a collective self-image. These generational transmissions, often facilitated through oral history (griotic traditions), resist static interpretations. Instead, modern scholars suggest that cultural transmission is fluid, transnational, transcultural, and ever-changing. Over the past 90 years, memory theory has evolved, drawing from the works of Maurice Halbwachs, Aby Warburg, Jann Assmann, Aleida Assmann, and others. Halbwachs asserted that collective memory is shaped by group affiliations and social contexts. Assmann further elaborated that cultural memory consists of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to a society and era, which serve to stabilize its self-image (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995; Tamm, 2021).

In the context of African influence in Latin America, cultural memory has played a critical role in preserving the legacies of enslaved African peoples and their descendants. The theory of cultural memory, particularly as formulated by Assmann, offers a framework for understanding how these communities have maintained and adapted their cultural identities across generations, despite centuries of systematic erasure (Assmann, 2011). The oral traditions, rituals, music, and foodways that have been passed down act as living archives, enabling African-descended communities to resist cultural amnesia (Connerton, 1989). These practices not only reflect African heritage but also serve as acts of resistance against colonial oppression and forced assimilation, allowing Afro-Latin Americans to assert their place in the broader social and historical fabric of the region (Bastide, 1978).

Cultural memory, in this sense, becomes both a shield and a vessel, protecting the spiritual, artistic, and social practices that would otherwise have been erased by colonial and post-colonial powers. As African traditions are being recreated and reinterpreted, Afro-Latin Americans form a dynamic cultural identity that navigates the tensions between cultural preservation and adaptation (Nora, 1989). From the spiritual continuity seen in Candomblé, Santería, and Vodou to the syncretic musical expressions found in salsa, reggae, and samba, the African roots in Latin America remain a potent force (Gilroy, 1993). This fusion of memory and innovation ensures that African influences are not relegated to the past but are instead living, breathing components of contemporary Latin American culture, which illustrates the fluidity and resilience inherent in the theory of cultural memory (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995).

## **The Evolution of Afro-Latin American Studies**

Over the past six decades, Afro-Latin American studies have advanced significantly, contributing to the recognition of the historical, sociopolitical, and cultural contributions of the estimated 57.8% of the 12.5 million enslaved Africans who were brought to Latin America. Pioneering scholars such as Leslie B. Rout, Jr., Arturo Alfonso Schomburg, Fernando Ortiz, and others have laid the groundwork for understanding Afro-Latin Americans' historical and cultural roles. Scholars such as George Reid Andrews, Alejandro de la Fuente, Miriam Jiménez Román, and Peter Wade have deepened this field by exploring specific regions and aspects of Afro-Latin experiences (Velázquez, 2007; De la Fuente & Andrews, 2018). Furthermore, comprehensive studies have examined various fields, from anthropology and ethnomusicology to resistance movements and identity politics. Despite this progress, scholars like María Elisa Velázquez argue that more research is needed, particularly regarding Afro-Latin women and Afro-Latin communities in countries like Mexico and El Salvador (Domínguez, 1994; Williams, 2003; Howard, 2001; Oboler & Dzidzienyo, 2016).

Mobilization, transnational collaboration, and education have been key to advancing Afro-Latin American studies and improving conditions for Afro-Latin communities. These efforts began with slave revolts and the syncretization of African and European traditions, which preserved African heritage. Over time, the black press, political movements, religious fraternities, and maroon societies continued these efforts by paving the way for contemporary black urban, ethno-territorial, and feminist movements fighting for autonomy and rights (Paschel, 2018; Andrews, 2004).

Moreover, organizations such as Brazil's Unified Black Movement (MNU), the Center for Afro-Ecuadorian Studies, and Colombia's Cimarrón, among many others, shifted public discourse and influenced policy changes around race, nation, and inequality. These movements have resulted in transnational collaborations and educational initiatives that pushed governments across Latin America to implement multicultural education policies, such as Colombia's ethno-education laws and Brazil's Law 10.639, which mandates the teaching of African history in schools. These efforts have not only contributed to the recognition of Afro-descendant rights and identities but have also played a crucial role in raising awareness about the historical and ongoing marginalization of Afro-Latino communities (Paschel, 2018; De la Fuente & Andrews, 2018; Wade, 2010; David & Williams, 2010).

## **Voices of Color:**

### **Intimate Conversations with Afro-Descendants in Diverse Communities**

Over the course of seven years, this study explored nine Latin American countries through field trips to remote and often impoverished Afro-Latin communities, including Livingston in Guatemala; San Basilio de Palenque in Colombia; Costa Chica, Oaxaca in Mexico; Loíza in Puerto Rico; Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic; Havana in Cuba; Valle del Chota in Ecuador; Chinchipe in Peru; Salvador-Bahia in Brazil; and San Andrés in Colombia. In the sweltering heat of these distant regions, we initially encountered people who were skeptical and wary of our presence. However, as time passed, the natives opened up, generously sharing their stories, community experiences, and struggles.

The primary aim of engaging with these communities was to observe their physical environments, resources, and social interactions, while also listening to their voices on issues of

identity and nationhood. As we walked through their spaces (talking, eating, and sharing daily life with the locals) certain recurring themes emerged that aligned with what we had seen in the literature. These communities are often economically disadvantaged, located in marginalized regions of their countries, and the Afro-descendant population is frequently viewed as outsiders, perceived as if they were immigrants from other nations. Though, a striking observation was their tireless effort to preserve their cultural heritage and traditional customs, even as younger generations move away, often choosing not to return, or distancing themselves from their roots through cultural assimilation. Furthermore, these communities face systemic discrimination and often express a deep sense of invisibility.

Although recent governmental policies have begun to recognize these communities, promising financial aid, job creation, rural development, and educational inclusion programs, the effects of such initiatives remain limited. There is a push for heritage appreciation programs and training in equity and identity acceptance, aimed at fostering pride in Afro-descendant ancestry. Yet, the voices we heard reflect a wide range of individual perspectives on these issues, offering a unique window into the specific challenges facing Afro-descendant populations in each location. These stories echo the experiences of other Afro-diasporic communities across the region, highlighting the ongoing struggle for visibility, cultural preservation, and social equity.

The following interview delves into the personal experiences of being an Afro-descendant in Latin America, offering a nuanced exploration of identity, belonging, and cultural preservation. Dr. Ryan Mann Hamilton, an Afro-descendant of Puerto Rican and Dominican origin, shares his lived experiences growing up in Puerto Rico and navigating the complexities of race, culture, and identity in both Puerto Rico and the United States. Through his reflections, he sheds light on the often-overlooked struggles of Afro-Latin Americans and the tension between

racial harmony narratives and the realities of exclusion and marginalization. He highlights the concept of racial harmony often promoted on the island, pointing to Puerto Rico's "three faces." Beneath the surface, however, lies a disregard for the African face and a preference for the European and Taino identities. His narrative offers a vivid portrayal of the struggles faced by Afro-Latin descendants across the region as they fight to claim their rightful place in history and nationhood.

### ***Puerto Rico/Dominican Republic***

Interview with Dr. Ryan Mann Hamilton, PhD – Afro-Descendant, Caribbean Professor at City University of New York

*Interview responses have been edited for brevity and clarity. Original length has been included in the appendix.*

*Narrative Excerpt: "Growing up, I never felt like I truly belonged anywhere. My family was Afro-Caribbean, and we moved to the U.S. when I was young. In our neighborhood, there were other kids with Latin American roots, but I always felt different. My skin color, my hair texture, my way of speaking—they marked me as 'other.' Even within the Latino community, there was this sense of not fitting in."*

This narrative reflects the interviewee's experience of being marginalized despite cultural similarities within the community, highlighting the intersection of race, ethnicity, and identity. The sense of being "othered" within a broader Latino context due to physical appearance and cultural markers like language and skin color is crucial to understanding the complexities of the Afro-Latino experience. This theme was incorporated into the Afro-Latino curriculum encouraging students to explore identity not as a single narrative but as a fluid process. By integrating stories like this into the curriculum, students engage with the idea that cultural identities within Afro-Latino communities are multifaceted and dynamic, encouraging deeper awareness of how diversity exists within ethnic groups and challenging oversimplified, dominant narratives.

*Narrative Excerpt: "People would always ask, 'What are you?' and I'd say, 'I'm Black.' But that answer never seemed enough. They wanted a story, a lineage. When I said my family was from the Caribbean, they'd nod knowingly, but then there were questions about whether I spoke Spanish, which I didn't. It felt like I had to justify my existence in every conversation."*

This passage highlights the constant scrutiny and pressure to justify racial and cultural identity, revealing the complexities of navigating societal expectations. The interviewee's experience of identity policing emphasizes how simple racial labels often fail to capture the fullness of one's background. Within the Afro-Latino curriculum, this theme was integrated to promote discussions around identity politics and how individuals define themselves. Students were encouraged to examine how such expectations affect personal and community well-being. Students were also empowered to confront and challenge these stereotypes.

*Narrative Excerpt: "Despite the confusion and the questions, my family always held onto our traditions. My grandmother would make sure we celebrated Carnival every year, even if it was just in our backyard. She said it was important to remember where we came from, to honor our ancestors. That was something we could control, something that was ours."*

This narrative underscores the importance of cultural practices in maintaining identity, even in environments where external pressures to assimilate are strong. The act of celebrating Carnival represents cultural resilience and a form of resistance to losing one's heritage. This theme was incorporated into the curriculum by emphasizing how cultural traditions serve not only as celebratory acts but also as important expressions of identity preservation. Students reflected on the role of cultural heritage in shaping identity, and how diasporic communities adapt and maintain traditions in diverse contexts. This approach encouraged students to recognize the deeper significance of cultural practices, as tools for resisting assimilation and affirming identity.

*Narrative Excerpt: "When I got older, I started to learn more about Latin America, especially the history of African people there. I realized that in many ways, their experiences were similar to ours. The music, the food, even some of the religious practices—it was all connected. It was like finding a part of myself I didn't know was missing."*

This reflection reveals the speaker's discovery of the shared cultural and historical connections across the African diaspora. Learning about the commonalities between Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Latino experiences provided the interviewee with a sense of belonging to a broader, interconnected community. This theme was incorporated into the Afro-Latino curriculum by expanding the discussions to include the shared histories, struggles, and cultural expressions of Afro-descendant communities across Latin America. The curriculum encouraged students to understand the interconnectedness of these cultural practices, prompting them to think about the role of history, migration, and culture in shaping their own identities. This approach fostered a more comprehensive understanding of the African diaspora's impact on the Americas, offering students a richer, more inclusive perspective.

*Narrative Excerpt: "I see a lot of young people struggling with the same questions I did—where do I fit in, who am I? But I also see a lot of pride, a lot of reclaiming of heritage. It's not easy, but I think we're starting to see a shift where being Afro-Caribbean or Afro-Latino isn't something to be explained—it's just who we are."*

This narrative captures the growing pride and reclamation of heritage among Afro-descendant youth, reflecting a shift toward self-definition and cultural empowerment. Within the Afro-Latino curriculum, this theme was integrated by encouraging students to engage in activities that promoted self-discovery and community empowerment. Students designed projects that connected with their heritage through oral history initiatives, cultural celebrations, and advocacy for inclusive policies.

## Voices of Color

### Livingston, Guatemala -2019

#### Interview with Martin Rolando Rodriques Royes- Ethnologist-Garifuna

*“La mayoria de nuestros ninos no conocen su cultura pero no lo doy la culpa ellos. La culpa tenemos nosotros los papas. Yo tengo tres ninos , uno de 16, uno de 14 y de 11 anos y estamos luchando. Ellos me entienden cuando les hablo el idioma pero no me transmiten el idioma....el idioma Garifuna. Eso es una de la raices que hemos perdido. Yo que he dicho a mis ninos que el espanol no es malo....yo casi recuerdo a llegar a mis 7 o 8 anos y yo no sabia hablar espanol. En la escuela cuando me mandaron, alli yo empecé a hablar espanol. Entonces yo tenia todas las raices Garifuna y no tenia verguenza que no sabia hablar espanol. Tenia orgullo de mi raiz porque es lo mio. Entonces eso es lo que ha perdido. He peleado con mis paisanos de mi raza diciendo que hay que hablarles a los ninos su idioma. Ellos me preguntan, para que les sirve? Me entra una tristeza porque vamos perdiendo dia y dia mas y mas de lo que es nosotros. Espero y confia en Dios que el nos ayudara y rescatar que no sigue perdiendo la cultura porque ya se ha perdido. Puedo decir que el 70% esta perdido de la Garifuna. Pero ya tenemos como 25% luchando que no se pierda mas y que Dios ayuda que sigue luchando y mantenga porque es nuestra raiz.*

*La Garifunas se han ido y se han mezclado. Cuando se van para los Estados Unidos es con el objetivo de salir y sacar su familia afuera no regresar y ayudar establecer la comunidad. Cuando uno se va de aqui sin mujer, se regresa con una mujer blanca. Es logica que la blanca no va a querer que el meta y sigue con la raiz Garifuna. Yo he dicho que hay un poquito de viejez de mentalidad. El que se va para los Estados Unidos, habla ingles y se olvida que es Garifuna. Es una lastima escuchar eso pero es la realidad. A Dios gracias, hay una ley de la ministerio de educacion de que el Garifuna tiene que seguir ensenandose y las escuelas en Guatemala tiene que enseñar el idioma y cultura Garifuna atra vez de talleres de historia, ensenanzas medicinales naturales y esa es una de las esperanzas que nosotros tenemos. Hace como dos anos cuando paso la ley, de hecho un amigo mio blanco de Puerto Barrio me estaba buscando para darle a su hija lecciones de Garifuna. Esta trabajando el gobierno contra la discriminacion racial y cultural porque nosotros los que vivimos aqui como negros de ir a la ciudad no nos reconocian como de Guatemala. Habia que andar con documentos como prueba porque no nos reconocian como negros aqui en Guatemala y a veces decian que eran falsos los documentos. Nos veian como de Belize o de Honduras pero ahora si, hay una reconocimiento y nos han ayudado bastante.... nos reconoce como de Guatemala ahora. Pero todavia hay unas poblaciones que no reconocen que Guatemala tiene una poblacion Negra. Tambien todavia se practica la cultura Africana. De hecho el gobierno ha puesto una casa de escuelas para eso y el gobierno sostiene eso para que la cultura este.”*

The narrative shared by the Garifuna ethnologist- Martin Rolando Rodriques Royes, provides deep insight into the cultural challenges facing the Garifuna community today,

especially the loss of language and identity among the younger generation. Royes reflects on his own experience of being raised with Garifuna language and culture, expressing pride in his roots and the ability to navigate life without knowing Spanish until his later childhood. However, the concern lies in the fact that his own children, though they understand the Garifuna language, do not speak it. This disconnect is not merely a linguistic gap, but it symbolizes a broader loss of cultural identity. Royes attributes this generational gap not only to external influences but also to the parents' failure to consistently transmit the language and culture to their children.

Royes struggle mirrors a larger, collective concern within the Garifuna community, the erosion of cultural roots, particularly through migration and the pressures of assimilation. Many Garifuna leave their homeland for the United States or other countries, they integrate into different cultural environments and, in the process, lose their connection to Garifuna traditions. Royes poignantly observes how individuals who emigrate often return with partners from outside the community, which further dilutes the cultural transmission. This migration and subsequent loss of tradition leads to what they describe as a community in decline, with 70% of the culture lost and only 25% still actively fighting to preserve it.

Despite this loss, the Royes expresses hope. He points to recent laws in Guatemala that mandate the teaching of Garifuna language and culture in schools. This initiative provides optimism that the culture can be revitalized and preserved for future generations. The involvement of allies outside the Garifuna community, such as the white friend seeking Garifuna lessons for his daughter and government initiatives against racial and cultural discrimination, also highlights a growing recognition of the importance of preserving Garifuna heritage. Cultural preservation, language loss, the impact of migration on identity, and the challenges of cultural

assimilation are key themes that emerged from Royes interview. The deep sense of pride in Garifuna identity prompts for a call to action to prevent further erosion.

Incorporating these themes into the Afro-Latino curriculum allow students to engage critically with the concept of identity and cultural preservation in the face of globalization and migration. Banks' framework encourages the inclusion of multiple perspectives, and studying about the Garifuna experience can provide a powerful case study in how minority communities navigate the pressures of assimilation while trying to maintain their cultural roots. The theme of language loss is also explored to teach students about the cultural identity connection, and how losing a language can lead to a fragmentation of that identity.

**Figure 14- Garifuna Native Interviewed in Livingston, Guatemala**



(Afro-Guatemalans of Garifuna descent, Livingston, Guatemala-photo by Lynn Anyanwu)

## **Santa Maria Cortico, Mexico- 2019**

### **Interview with Trinidad Reyes Hernandez - Municipal Authority**

*“Esta población es aproximadamente 2200 habitante y digamos 85% son afro descendientes con minimo porcentaje de raza indigena con 76% de pobreza en comparacion de otros pueblos. Todavia existe muchas que no identifica como gente afro porque uno que no saben el significado y otro niega de ser consider “negra/o.” Ahorita implementaron un programa que se llama “Raza Indigena y Afro” por organizaciones que montan proyectos para beneficiar las personas con talleres de criar las gallinas, chivos, reforestacion de la area. Esto es para que las comunidades beneficien y tengan*

*trabajos. Yo creo que es para sacar la población de la pobreza y apoyar la gente mas vulnerable la gente afro, indigena y mestizo. Ojala con el nuevo presidente el apoyo va a llegar directamente a los pueblos mas afectados. Estos son la prioridad para el desarrollo economicamente. Tambien los proyectos ensenan para mantener la cultura de aqui y otros lugares tambien. Al respecto a los jovenes, esta perdiendo y cambiando la forma de la cultura y tradiciones y lo que quiero es mantener la cultura para no se pierda, para que se continue.”*

The Afro-Mexican community that Hernandez described in this narrative faces significant challenges, not only in terms of economic hardship but also in maintaining a strong sense of cultural identity. With a population of approximately 2,200 inhabitants, of which 85% are Afro descendants, the community struggles with a poverty rate of 76%, making it one of the most vulnerable populations compared to other towns. The economic programs, such as the “*Raza Indigena y Afro*” (Indigenous and Afro Race) initiative, aim to support these communities through workshops on agriculture and reforestation, providing skills that can create jobs and offer a pathway out of poverty. However, Hernandez suggests that beyond economic support, that there is a deeper concern about the cultural identity of the Afro-descendant population, as many do not identify as Afro people, either due to a lack of understanding of what that means or out of a denial of their "blackness."

This disconnects from their Afro identity raises questions about the ongoing erosion of cultural traditions and values among the younger generation. As economic struggles dominate the community's focus, cultural preservation becomes increasingly difficult. Hernandez expresses concern over the young people who are losing and changing their cultural practices, underlining the need for efforts that not only address economic development but also help to preserve the rich cultural heritage of the Mexicans of African descent.

The introduction of economic programs and workshops is a positive step towards alleviating poverty, but Hernandez emphasizes that maintaining cultural identity is equally important. These programs, while it focuses on practical skills like raising livestock and reforesting the land, also provide space to keep traditions alive. The desire to ensure that Afro-Mexican culture continues rather than fades away reflects a broader struggle within the Afro-descendant communities in Latin America, where globalizing forces and local economic pressures often lead to cultural assimilation.

The key themes that emerge from this narrative include the intersection of poverty and identity, the struggle for cultural preservation in the face of modern challenges, and the efforts to combine economic development with the preservation of tradition. There is also cultural denial, as many members of the community either lack an understanding of their Afro roots or reject being labeled as “black.”

Incorporating these themes into the Afro-Latino curriculum would provide students with examples of how cultural identity can be both lost and reclaimed. By examining the Afro-Mexican community, students can explore the tension between economic development and cultural preservation, which teaches students how these two forces often interact in marginalized communities. The curriculum incorporates discussions around why some Afro-descendants may deny their identity and how external pressures contribute to this phenomenon. Additionally, students could explore solutions for preserving culture amidst economic struggles, possibly through community-based initiatives that both uplift economically and celebrate cultural heritage

## **Santiago Taplexla, Mexico-2019**

**Interview with Andres Veronica Silva- Agronomist Engineer -Municipal Authority**

*“La mayoría de la población como digamos , la raza afro dedicamos la siembra de maíz y la ganadería. En cuanto, hay algunas que se dedica a los chivos, ordena. Por parte del gobierno, anteriormente se contaba en algún apoyo pero con este cambio que esta, dicen que la ayuda viene directo y no habrá intermediario pero hasta ahorita no estamos viendo ese cambio. A lo mejor mas adelante se va a montar pienso yo. La discriminación, la raza negra y indígena entre nosotros mismos nos lastimamos. Para nosotros ese nos motiva y hace sentir bien con la gente que vienen para conocer nuestras raíces....que otras personas de otros países que se preocupan de nuestra costumbre....a lo mejor para nosotros nos quedamos así creyendo que éramos solos en este mundo pero parece que estamos rodeado de muchas. Que bonito tener esa facilidad de salir y conocer pero nosotros estamos acá cerraditos ....es bonito conocer a otras personas de otros países. Nos identificamos como afro descendientes que un país de África hubo en embarcación....que trajeron esclavos de África por aquí esta parte del mar.”*

In 2019, during an interview with Andrés Verónica Silva, he expressed vividly the Afro-Mexican identity and experience. His reflections paint a poignant picture of the Afro-Mexican community's connection to their land, culture, and heritage, while also calling attention to the challenges they face in navigating a changing social and political landscape. Silva emphasizes the centrality of agriculture and livestock farming in the lives of Afro-Mexican people. He shared, *"La mayoría de la población, como digamos, la raza afro dedicamos la siembra de maíz y la ganadería"* (The majority of our population, as we say, the Afro race, dedicate ourselves to planting maize and raising livestock), describing how these activities have traditionally sustained their community. The specific focus on corn cultivation and cattle rearing not only speaks to their economic foundation but also points to a deeper connection to the land. Silva notes that the community has relied on governmental assistance in the past which changes in the political landscape have disrupted. He expresses frustration at the promised reforms that have yet to materialize, which leaves the community uncertain about future support. He laments, *"Hasta ahorita no estamos viendo ese cambio"* (So far, we are not seeing that change), which underscores a sense of abandonment by the authorities, despite promises of direct aid.

However, this political marginalization is not the only challenge faced by the Afro-Mexican people of Santiago Tapextla. Silva touches upon a significant theme of internal and external discrimination, both within the Afro-Mexican community and in the broader Mexican society. *"La discriminación, la raza negra y indígena, entre nosotros mismos nos lastimamos"* (*The discrimination, the Black and Indigenous race, among ourselves we hurt each other*). This statement suggests the internalized oppression that has stemmed from historical marginalization, where both Black and Indigenous peoples have been positioned at the border of societal hierarchies. The mention of "hurting each other" underlines the divisions that discrimination can promote, creating tensions even within marginalized communities.

Despite these hardships, Silva's words also carry a tone of resilience and pride. The acknowledgement that there is outside interest in their culture and roots brings a sense of validation and belonging to the global narrative of African descendants. He asserts that, *"Para nosotros eso nos motiva y hace sentir bien con la gente que vienen para conocer nuestras raíces"* (*For us, that motivates us and makes us feel good with the people who come to learn about our roots*). The idea that people from other countries are concerned with their customs fosters a sense of pride, challenging the isolation they feel. Silva shares, *"A lo mejor para nosotros nos quedamos así creyendo que éramos solos en este mundo"* (*Perhaps we thought we were alone in this world*), reflecting the previous isolation they experienced but now recognize that they are part of a broader Afro-descendant diaspora.

Silva emphasizes this sense both geographically and socially by referencing their limited mobility. He says, *"Nosotros estamos acá cerradidos"* (*We are closed off here*), acknowledging that while they have remained relatively secluded, the opportunities to connect with others beyond their borders are vital for their growth mindset. This suggests a community that is eager

for greater cultural exchange and recognition, despite the historical and political limitations that have kept them marginalized. Moreover, the themes that emerge from Silva's interview are valuable with implications for understanding the Afro-Mexican experience, these themes are economic marginalization, internal and external discrimination, cultural pride, and the importance of global recognition. These themes are not only reflective of this community but also resonate with the extensive Afro-Latino experience.

**Figure 15- Afro-Mexicans Interviewed in Costa Chica, Oaxaca, Mexico**



(Author with Afro-Mexicans in Costa Chica, Oaxaca, Mexico-photo by Lynn Anyanwu)

## **Salvador, Brazil**

### **Interview with Renato (Bizum) Conceicao Amorim- Ethnologist/Capoeira Master**

*“Renato Conceição Amorim, Eu venho de Salvador Bahia, Brasil. Minha experiência no Brasil como afrodescendente sim houve discriminação mas, esse fato o corre em diversas nações porque de não existe uma punição correta para esse tipo de atos e por isso que é uma coisa livre em diversos países vivemos em um mundo que não existe igualdade social respeito a cor de pele no futuro você vai conhecer meu livro, que conta da minha história se chama fronteira.*

*Temos poucas leis que protegem tanto o afrodescendente, na verdade as leis do Brasil muitas coisas precisa mudar que muitas vezes beneficiam pessoas erradas e não as certas. A gente tinha muitas programas educacional para comunidade afrodescendente dentro de Salvador foram reduzidas devido planejamento de reforma política pois no governo de Lula. Tínhamos muita oportunidades e formações hoje somos limitados de tantas oportunidades.*

*Salvador Bahia, é uma segunda África, seus costumes, línguas, pratos culinários, música ritmos e manifestações folclórica identificam a maior parte da nossa raiz Africana.O*

*movimento relacionado a cultura afro-brasileira dentro do território é muito vivo de resistência, nossas ancestralidade passaram com muito sofrimento, e resistência esses fundamentos esses costumes e quem somos, de onde viemos nossos povos e as nossas raízes. Eu me considero Brasileiro porque nasce no território mas eu sou um afro descendente esse é minha origem...cor de pele Negra, descendente essa é a minha origem”*

Afro-Brazilian Ethnologist, Renato (Bizum) Conceicao Amorim, from Salvador-Brazil, offers a powerful reflection on his experiences as an Afro-descendant in Brazil. Through his narrative, several aspects of Afro-Brazilian identity and struggle become evident especially the challenges of discrimination, laws and justice, and sustaining Afro-Brazilian identity.

Renato opens by addressing the painful reality of discrimination, acknowledging its pervasiveness not just in Brazil, but globally. He says, “...*sim houve discriminação mas, esse fato o corre em diversas nações porque de não existe uma punição correta para esse tipo de atos...*” (Yes, there was discrimination, but this fact occurs in several nations because there is no correct punishment for this type of acts.) His words resonate with a broader frustration that discrimination continues to thrive. Renato’s reflections point to a structural issue in Brazil, where discrimination against Afro-descendants is not met with the consequences it deserves. Therefore, this is an indication of global systems that fail to ensure social equality regarding skin color.

Renato’s critique of Brazil’s legal system further reinforces this point. While there are laws aimed at protecting people of African descent, he asserts that they are inadequate. “*Temos poucas leis que protegem tanto o afrodescendente, na verdade as leis do. Brasil muitas coisas precisa mudar que muitas vezes beneficiam pessoas erradas e não as certas*” (We have few laws that protect people of African descent, in fact the laws of Brazil, many things need to change, which often benefit the wrong people and not the right one.) This speaks to a broader problem of systemic inequity, where legislative frameworks either fail to protect marginalized communities

or actively reinforce their exclusion. His comments reflect a deep frustration with political reform in Brazil, particularly about policies that have minimized opportunities for Afro-Brazilian communities.

Renato laments the cancellation of educational programs that were once a source of empowerment for Afro-descendants in Salvador. Under the government of President Lula, these programs flourished, providing training and opportunities for advancement. However, political shifts have resulted in a reduction of these initiatives, leaving Afro-Brazilians with fewer avenues for socioeconomic mobility. Renato explains, “...*Foram reduzidas devido planejamento de reforma política...*” (they were reduced due to political reform planning), underscoring the direct impact that government policies have on Afro-Brazilian communities. This cancellation has significantly limited the opportunities available to individuals like Renato, creating a sense of loss for what seemed like a path toward progress.

Despite these challenges, Renato speaks with pride about Salvador, Bahia, describing it as “*uma segunda África*” (a second Africa), where Afro-Brazilian culture is not just preserved but celebrated. The customs, languages, culinary traditions, music, and folklore of the region all bear the imprint of Africa, serving as living testimony to the resilience of Afro-Brazilian heritage. He says, “*O movimento relacionado a cultura afro-brasileira dentro do território é muito vivo*” (The movement related to Afro-Brazilian culture within the territory is very much alive), emphasizing the ongoing resistance that defines the Afro-Brazilian experience.

For Renato, this resistance is rooted in the history of suffering endured by Afro-descendants in Brazil. From slavery to systemic marginalization, the Afro-Brazilian community has faced profound challenges, yet they continue to assert their identity and cultural heritage. He declares that, “...*Esses fundamentos esses costumes e quem somos*” (These fundamentals, these

customs are who we are)." For Renato, his identity as an Afro-Brazilian is inseparable from this history of resistance and survival. Although he identifies as Brazilian by birth, his pride in his African heritage is palpable: "... *Eu sou um afro descendente esse é minha origem...cor de pele Negra, descendente essa é a minha origem*" (I am an Afro-descendant, that is my origin...black skin color descendant, this is my origin). In this statement, Renato encapsulates the duality of his identity-Brazilian by nationality, but deeply connected to his African roots.

The themes that emerge from Renato's narrative deeply relevant. Discrimination, legal inequity, cultural resilience, and the importance of educational opportunities are all central to his experience. Renato's reflections on discrimination and legal inequity could be used to challenge students to think critically about the role of the law in perpetuating social hierarchies. By exploring the limitations of Brazil's legal system and its failure to protect Afro-descendants, students can engage in broader conversations about justice, rights, and equality-topics that are central to the Afro-Latino experiences.

Additionally, the cultural richness of Salvador, Bahia, which Renato describes as "*uma segunda África*" (a second Africa), provides a powerful lens through which students can explore the African diaspora in Latin America. The Afro-Brazilian customs, music, and folklore Renato mentions are a testament to the cultural resistance that has preserved African heritage in Brazil for centuries. Incorporating these elements into the curriculum allows students to appreciate the depth and diversity of Afro-Latino cultures.

## The African Influences in Latin America Today

Afro-Latino, Afro-Latin American, Afro-descendant, and Afro-Latinx (a gender-neutral alternative to Afro-Latino) are terms used to describe those identified by the Merriam-Webster dictionary as “a Black person of African ancestry who is a native or inhabitant of Latin America” and “a Black person of Latin American origin and African ancestry living in the U.S.” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.) Despite the use of these terms, there is often confusion surrounding the identity of Black Latinos, as if their existence is somehow an anomaly. This confusion stems from a misunderstanding and conflation of race, nationality, ethnicity, and lingering anti-Black attitudes within Latin American communities. The fragmented, compartmentalized identity of Black Latinos originated from the caste system; a racial hierarchy imposed by Spanish colonizers during the 18th-century transatlantic slave trade. (Jones, 2018; David & Williams, 2010; Thomas III & Lewis, 2021; Brouse, 2019; Kornhaber, 2018).

The caste system was a rigid social structure that ranked individuals based on birthplace, gender, skin color, and race. At the top of this hierarchy were white individuals, while those with darker skin, particularly Africans, were placed at the bottom. Fairer-skinned individuals, closer to whiteness, enjoyed greater privileges, including access to power, wealth, and legal protections. In contrast, darker-skinned Africans were subject to discrimination, domination, and a lack of opportunity, seen as inferior in the eyes of the colonial system. This oppressive structure gave rise to the false narrative of *mestizaje* (racial mixing), or *Cubanidad* (Cubanness) in Cuba, which created the misconception that a “typical Latino” is a person of white or tan skin. This flawed perception persists, especially outside Latin America, where race is often viewed through a binary lens of black and white, further complicating the understanding of Black Latino identity

(Jones, 2018; David & Williams, 2010; Thomas III & Lewis, 2021; Brouse, 2019; Kornhaber, 2018).

According to Cuban writer and activist Roberto Zurbano, there are more than fifty terms used across Latin America—and thirty in Cuba alone—to categorize Black people. Yet, Latino societies often fetishize whiteness and light skin. This internalized racism, deeply rooted in colonialism, perpetuates the invalidation and invisibility of darker-skinned Latinos, a phenomenon known as colorism. Colorism, which is discrimination based on skin tone within one's own community, further reinforces the marginalization of Afro-Latinos. The legacy of the colonial caste system pushes many Afro-Latinos to try to "pass" as white or lighter-skinned, prioritizing Eurocentric beauty standards while distancing themselves from their African heritage (Brouse, 2019).

The result is multi-generational trauma that manifests in harmful ideologies and language, such as *mejorar la raza* ("improve the race" by marrying someone white), *pelo malo* ("bad hair"), or *para una negra, eres linda* ("for a Black girl, you're pretty"). These phrases contribute to self-hatred and a sense of invisibility for Black Latinos within their own communities. Addressing this trauma requires reclaiming and celebrating Afro-Latin identity. Amira Adawe, Executive Director of the Beautywell Project, outlines seven steps for embracing Afro-Latinidad and challenging anti-Black attitudes: educating people about their history and identity, redefining beauty standards, empowering communities of color through education and mentorship, increasing representation in all fields, reforming school curriculums to be more inclusive, and providing safe spaces for discussion and interaction (Thomas III & Lewis, 2021; Kornhaber, 2018; Branche, 1999; Brouse, 2019; Riley, 2020).

To nurture an authentic Afro-Latinidad experience, Afro-Latinos must embrace both their African and Latin American heritages as interconnected, not separate. It is important to recognize how individuals prefer to identify (whether Afro-Cuban, Afro-Chilean, Afro-Bolivian, or otherwise) since many may not be familiar with the term Afro-Latino. Celebrating Afro-Latinidad means manifesting and sustaining traditional cultural practices and values, elevating Afro-Latinos' unique contributions to history, music, dance, religion, cuisine, identity consciousness and more. It is essential to create spaces for learning, educating, and displaying Afro-Latino culture, empowering these communities to express their identities fully. Through the preservation and promotion of their cultural practices, Afro-Latinos can reclaim their African roots and reshape perceptions of Blackness within the broader Latin American context.

**Figure 16- Afro- Puerto Rican in Loiza Affirming Afro Identity**



(Celebrating their African heritage during Fiesta de Santiago Apostol in Loiza, Puerto Rica Photos by Lynn Anyanwu)

## **Culinary Influence in Afro-Latino Culture**

The Africans forcibly brought to the Americas under brutal conditions left an indelible mark on the culinary traditions across Latin America, imprinting their cultural memory through food. While working the land (cultivating, harvesting, and preparing their food sources) they reimagined and transformed the culinary landscape with unique tastes and techniques. Their

creativity was born out of necessity, using the foods available in their new environments and adapting them to reflect their cultural histories, values, and belief systems (Anyanwu, 2021). These Afro-descendant communities created dishes that symbolized resistance and cultural pride.

As Abarca (2015) states, "the palate's memories have a strong link to peoples' collective culinary subjectivities because the process of remembering takes on multiple forms of recognition. It is through the senses—smell, taste, touch, sight, and hearing—that the reproduction of (unwritten) recipes takes place" (p.106). Despite the invisibility of African culinary influences in national narratives, many of Latin America's treasured dishes originated from marginalized Afro-Latino communities (Barton, 2018; Inquai, 1998; Simon, 2022; Ferreira, 2021). These dishes symbolize resistance against cultural hegemony and express a deep pride in identity and recognition. They help create, connect, and preserve a people's history, offering a way to remember and assert cultural identity through food.

Enslaved Africans brought with them not only ingredients but also cooking techniques, methods, and flavors. These innovations sparked the creation of new culinary traditions by blending African styles with New World resources. The West African staple *fufu* (mashed yam or plantain), for example, found its way into various Afro-Latino cuisines, transforming into dishes like Cuban *fufu*, Puerto Rican *mofongo*, Dominican *mangú*, Mexican *mogo mogo*, and Garifuna *machuca* (Abarca, 2015). Rozin and Rozin's notion of "gustatory themes" (quoted by Abarca) captures how culinary traditions serve as cultural markers, imprinting histories on the palate for preservation and continuity (Simon, 2022; Ferreira, 2021; Osella & Osella, 2008).

African culinary traditions permeate Latin American cuisine in ways that are often unrecognized but are crucial to the region's gastronomic identity. West African okra soup, for instance, transformed into *quimbombó* (okra stew) in Puerto Rico and Cuba, while *moyin moyin*

(steamed bean pudding) from West Africa evolved into the Latin American *tamales*. Similarly, Senegalese *fataya* (fried dough) bears resemblance to the empanadas that are beloved throughout the region (Inquai, 1998). These African contributions to Latin American cuisine showcase how food can serve as a marker of identity and a bridge between cultural traditions.

Rice, for example, became a staple in the region thanks to the agricultural knowledge brought from the Senegambia region during the transatlantic slave trade (1500–1888). Other staples like tuber vegetables (yams, yucca, and malanga), okra from East Africa, and various spices (ginger, garlic, onions, nutmeg, cloves, cinnamon) continue to flavor Afro-Latino culinary traditions. Additionally, ingredients like sesame seeds, plantain, tamarind, and coconut milk remain integral to many Afro-Latino dishes. Through what Abarca (2015) calls "palate memories," African food traditions continue to shape cultural identity and sustain historical narratives in the present.

Teaching students about the African roots of key culinary practices emphasizes a deeper appreciation for the contributions of Afro-descendants and challenges the disappearance of their impact. By exploring how enslaved Africans creatively adapted their food traditions to the New World, students can see the resilience and cultural pride that underpin Afro-Latino history. Moreover, food serves as a powerful entry point for discussions about cultural memory, identity, and resistance. It underscores African influence in national dishes which is often celebrated as symbols of national pride as well as illustrates how marginalized communities have shaped mainstream culture in profound ways. The inclusion of these culinary traditions in the curriculum emphasizes the intersection of food, history, and identity, allowing students to engage with the past through a sensory and cultural lens.

**Figure 17- Culinary Influences from Africa to Latin America**

| <b>Countries</b>          | <b>Culinary Influences from Africa</b>                                                    |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Cuba</b>               | Fufu, Funche, tostones, quimbombó, yuca (malanga)                                         |
| <b>Puerto Rico</b>        | Mofongo, Guingambo Guisado                                                                |
| <b>Dominican Republic</b> | Hoja, Name, Mangu                                                                         |
| <b>Mexico</b>             | Mogo Mogo, black eyed beans in Guanajates, Tamales, aguas frescas                         |
| <b>Garifunas</b>          | Machuca, Dharasa, Tapado                                                                  |
| <b>Costa Rica</b>         | Gallo Pinto, Rondon                                                                       |
| <b>Panama</b>             | Seafood Guacho, Sao, Breadfruit and Saltfish, Rondon                                      |
| <b>Colombia</b>           | Pekao Ngoisao Ku Koko (fish in coco juice), Rondon, Cocada, Mondongo, sancocho colombiano |
| <b>Venezuela</b>          | Sancocho venezolano, Rondon                                                               |
| <b>Ecuador</b>            | Encocado                                                                                  |
| <b>Peru</b>               | Anticucho, Picarones, Carapulcra con sopa seca (potato spicy peanut soup), Tacu Tacu      |
| <b>Chile</b>              | Sopaipillas                                                                               |
| <b>Argentina</b>          | Fataya (Senegalese) empanada                                                              |
| <b>Brazil</b>             | Quindins, Acaçá, Acarajé, Xinxim de Galinha, Vatapá, Caruru, Quiabo, Moqueca, Feijoada    |
| <b>El Salvador</b>        | Chanfaina                                                                                 |



(Mofongo made from plantain from Puerto Rico, Palm oil-crayfish-okra-yam-pepper-cola nut traditional west African food staple found in Brazil market- photos by Lynn Anyanwu)

## Rhythm and Movement

*"Afro-descendant music and dance represent a marriage between rhythm and movement that is deeply rooted in African cultural practices... The music and dance function as cultural tools to maintain social order and express the values of fairness and justice within the community" (Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies, 2017, p. 50).*

African music and dance represent spontaneous eruptions of cultural expression, deeply rooted in self-identity and tradition. The fusion and manifestation of Afro-Latino music and rhythm are clear reflections of their African musical heritage, which remains embedded in diverse, intangible cultural traditions (Anyanwu, 2021). These art forms are visually captivating and powerful, stimulating the senses and compelling individuals to connect physically, emotionally, and spiritually. The African aesthetic in music and dance traditions across Afro-Latin America has served as a foundation for recognizing the value of these intangible heritage practices, emphasizing the need to safeguard their cultural significance (Fernandes et al., 2010; Anyanwu, 2021).

Molefi Kete Asante (1996) outlines seven African aesthetic principles-polyrhythm, polycentrism, a curve in form and sound, texture, memory interpretation, repetition, and holism-that guide the recognition of African influence in music and dance across the "Black Atlantic." These principles underscore how African musical traditions, such as Juju and Sakara music from the Yoruba of Nigeria and Yew music from the Ewe of Ghana, have influenced the musical landscapes of Afro-Latin America. Additionally, the contributions of Bantu peoples from Angola and Mozambique are evident in these practices. The music and dance styles, such as Rumba,

Bomba, Saya, Marimba, and Samba, carry the polyrhythmic intensity and euphoria that define African music.

These sacred musical rituals, which maintained their essence across the Atlantic, have played a vital role in resistance, liberation, and the preservation of cultural history. Molefi Kete Asante highlights this with this statement, "The African aesthetic and its accompanying philosophies of community, dance, and rhythm continued to survive, serving not only as a means of self-preservation but also as tools of resistance against cultural annihilation. African peoples reshaped their traditions and identities in ways that preserved the essence of their origins while adapting to new realities." (Asante, 1998, p. 138)

Music and dance forms such as Capoeira in Brazil, Bomba del Chota in Ecuador, Currulao in Colombia, and Música Negra in Peru reflect the daily struggles of Afro-descendant communities. These traditions, transmitted orally and performed through ritual invocations and rhythmic language, convey the collective socio-cultural worldview of these communities. In more recent times, these musical genres have been harnessed as vehicles for intentional expression, addressing socio-political injustices while celebrating the pride of people of African descent.

While many African diaspora music and dance forms have preserved their traditional practices, others have transcended their origins through transnational collaborations and cultural exchanges. Some have been integrated into mainstream heritage, losing their African roots in the process. Danzón, Bolero, and Marimba are examples of this phenomenon. Critics argue that Afro-diasporic forms of "traditional music" have increasingly become depoliticized, essentialized, and fetishized. Conversely, modern Afro-diasporic music can still be political. For instance, the group Kombilesa Mi from the Afro community of San Basilio de Palenque in

Colombia uses its platform to sing in the Palenquero language, highlighting socio-political issues within the community. Similarly, Capoeira in Brazil and the Bomba dance of Puerto Rico continue to express resistance, identity, and cross-sectional as well as transnational ties (Moore et al., 2018; Tremura, 2014).

As part of the Afro-Latino curriculum, it is crucial to emphasize these connections and introduce sections that provide students with tangible examples of how these cultural expressions function as both historical and contemporary narratives. In the sections "Voices of Color," Angelo, a Capoeira practitioner, speaks about the role of Capoeira in maintaining African traditions within Brazil. He stresses how Capoeira serves as a cultural and spiritual bridge that keeps Africa alive in Brazil through its practice of self-defense, rhythm, and storytelling, connecting past struggles with present-day resilience. This section will not only offer personal insights but also provide a living example of how African heritage continues to thrive across the diaspora.

## **Voices of Color**

### **Brazil**

#### **Interview with Angelo dos Anjos Oliveira - Capoeira Angola, Brazil- Lider/Mestre-**

*Yo empecé con 11 años de idade, la razón principal fue porque me enamoré cuando vi la Capoeira por primera vez, me sentí muy conectado y en segundo lugar me ayudó a no estar en la calle, como yo era un niño pobre y viviendo en una comunidad violenta, la capoeira me salvó y me dio libertad para soñar con una vida mejor.*

*Cuando empecé había muchos niños en el proyecto, al principio me costó adaptarme con tanta disciplina, pero luego aprendí muchos valores humanos y logré seguir formándome. Capoeira Angola trae una visión del mundo basada en elementos tradicionales de los pueblos de origen africana y pueblos indígenas de América del Sur, el reloj para nosotros funciona de otra manera, buscamos desarrollar una visión del mundo donde nuestros alumnos puedan aprender la importancia de la comunidad, de trabajar juntos, de aprender juntos. A veces muchos estudiantes al principio traen muchos comportamientos del macro mundo que en nuestro micro mundo funcionan de otra manera, buscamos aplicar y experimentar el concepto de "Ubuntu", yo soy porque nosotros somos.*

*La capoeira fue marginada por el hombre blanco en el pasado y hasta el día de hoy, esto ha sucedido/le sucede a la cultura de las personas que fueron y son oprimidas hasta el día de hoy. La capoeira nació del sufrimiento de los negros africanos y brasileños, se derramó mucha sangre para que existiera y siguiera viva, hubo mucho sufrimiento, pero la capoeira resistió y liberó a muchas personas, lamentablemente la visión negativa de la capoeira en Brasil. Sucedió, porque quien contó la historia de los negros en Brasil siempre fue el colonizador y hoy los negros pueden contar su propia historia.*

*La Capoeira fue criada por los africanos en Brasil, entonces la Capoeira es Brasileña con raíces y influencias africanas y también indígenas, nació de las ganas de sobrevivir. La Capoeira está siempre cambiando para adaptarse en la sociedad, pero sin perder el verdadero sentimiento de cómo nació. Yo contribuyo también para este cambio, pues llevo la Capoeira por todo el mundo, enseñando sus valores y historia. La Capoeira creció mucho, podemos encontrar capoeira en más de 180 países, la capoeira fuera de Brasil es muy valorada y respetada, ya que tiene una visión diferente de la cultura brasileña y no solo del fútbol y la samba. La capoeira es una cultura completa, tiene mucho que enseñar al mundo, música, cultura, lucha, historia, valores humanos y mucho más, seguramente ella no morirá."*

The interview with Angelo provides a rich narrative that illuminates several interconnected themes. Angelo's journey through *Capoeira* is not just a personal history, but a representation of broader Afro-Brazilian and Afro-Latino cultural struggles and transformation. Through his words, we explore the themes of identity, community, resistance, survival, and the continuous redefinition of marginalized cultures.

Angelo begins by recounting how he was introduced to Capoeira at the age of 11. He states, "*Yo empecé con 11 años de idade, la razón principal fue porque me enamoré cuando vi la Capoeira por primera vez, me sentí muy conectado y en segundo lugar me ayudó a no estar en la calle, como yo era un niño pobre y viviendo en una comunidad violenta, la capoeira me salvó y me dio libertad para soñar con una vida mejor*" (I started at the age of 11, the main reason was because I fell in love when I saw Capoeira for the first time, I felt very connected, and secondly, it helped me stay off the streets. As I was a poor child living in a violent community, Capoeira saved me and gave me the freedom to dream of a better life). This excerpt underlines the deep

emotional connection Angelo felt with Capoeira, not just as a martial art or cultural practice, but as a lifeline in an environment of poverty and violence. For Angelo, Capoeira was both a physical and psychological refuge that provided a path away from the streets and toward a sense of hope and self-worth. Capoeira for him, was a means of survival and liberation, especially coming from an Afro-Latino community that have historically been marginalized. In this context, Capoeira symbolizes the possibility of transcending social limitations, turning adversity into a catalyst for empowerment.

Angelo describes his initial struggles with the discipline required in Capoeira but quickly notes the deeper values he learned, particularly the emphasis on community. He explains, *"Capoeira Angola trae una visión del mundo basada en elementos tradicionales de los pueblos de origen africana y pueblos indígenas de América del Sur... buscamos aplicar y experimentar el concepto de 'Ubuntu, 'yo soy porque nosotros somos"* (Capoeira Angola brings a worldview based on traditional elements of African peoples and Indigenous peoples of South America... we seek to apply and experience the concept of 'Ubuntu,' I am because we are). Here, Angelo touches on the African philosophy of Ubuntu, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of all people. This principle is foundational in Capoeira, where students are not just learning physical movements but are also imbibing values of mutual respect, collaboration, and solidarity. The notion of community-where individual success is intertwined with the well-being of the group-reflects a deeply African worldview that has survived through centuries of oppression. This theme of Ubuntu challenges the individualistic values of modern society and suggests a holistic communal approach to education and life. Incorporating this philosophy into the Afro-Latino curriculum could help students develop a more collective consciousness, which helps in thinking about the self in connection to others in the greater community.

Angelo also discusses the historical marginalization of Capoeira, linking it to the wider experience of oppressed peoples. He says, *"La capoeira fue marginada por el hombre blanco en el pasado y hasta el día de hoy... la capoeira nació del sufrimiento de los negros africanos y brasileños, se derramó mucha sangre para que existiera y siguiera viva"* (Capoeira was marginalized by the white man in the past and even today... Capoeira was born from the suffering of African and Brazilian Blacks, much blood was shed for it to exist and remain alive). This statement draws attention to the violent history from which Capoeira emerged. As a practice born in the context of slavery and systemic oppression, Capoeira was historically banned and persecuted by colonial authorities in Brazil. However, it also served as a tool of resistance, allowing enslaved Africans to preserve their culture, maintain physical fitness, and resist domination. Capoeira's survival and evolution, despite attempts to suppress it, symbolize the broader resistance of African and Afro-Latino peoples against cultural erasure and subjugation.

Capoeira, in this sense, is not just a physical art but a symbol of defiance against colonial and neocolonial forces. It provides a narrative of strength and survival that is essential for understanding the Afro-Latino experience. In the Afro-Latino curriculum, this theme of resistance can be explored to teach students about the resilience of Afro-descendant cultures.

Angelo further expands on Capoeira's African and Indigenous roots and its spread globally. He remarks, *"La Capoeira fue criada por los africanos en Brasil, entonces la Capoeira es Brasileña con raíces y influencias africanas y también indígenas, nació de las ganas de sobrevivir... La Capoeira creció mucho, podemos encontrar capoeira en más de 180 países"* (Capoeira was created by Africans in Brazil, so Capoeira is Brazilian with African and also Indigenous roots, it was born from the desire to survive... Capoeira grew a lot, we can find Capoeira in more than 180 countries). This point underscores the cultural identity within

Capoeira. While it is Brazilian in origin, it carries the imprints of African and Indigenous influences. Angelo's recognition of Capoeira's adaptability and international appeal also speaks to how Afro-Latino cultural expressions evolve and spread globally. In many ways, the global presence of Capoeira can be seen as a form of cultural triumph, representing how Afro-Latino traditions are not only surviving but thriving and influencing other cultures worldwide.

**Figure 18- African Influenced Music and Dance in Latin-America**

|                             | <b>African Influenced Music and Dance in Latin-America</b>                                                                                                 |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Cuba</b>                 | Rumba, Guaguanco, Yambo, Columbia ,Son, Makuta                                                                                                             |
| <b>Brazil</b>               | Samba, Jongo, Capoeira, Lundu, Maculelê, Batuque, Afoxés, Blocos Afros, Afro-Caribbean Rhythms, Maracatu, Baião, Choro, Congos, Congadas, Quilombos, Forró |
| <b>Chile</b>                | Tumbe                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Puerto Rico</b>          | Bomba, Plena                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Dominican Republic</b>   | Palos, Gaga, Congo, Salves, Sarandunga                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Mexico</b>               | Son Jarocho, Danza de los Diablos                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Garifunas</b>            | Punta, Chumba, Hunguhungu, Mascaro, Indio Barbaro, Guanaragua, Gunchei, Luyano, Yankunnu, Parand                                                           |
| <b>Colombia</b>             | Bullerengue, Champeta, Mapale, Currulao, Músicas del Pacífico                                                                                              |
| <b>Panama</b>               | Congos, El Tamborito                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Venezuela</b>            | Baile de Tambor Tamunango Chimbangeles                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Ecuador</b>              | Marimba, Bomba del Chota                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Bolivia</b>              | Saya music, La Saya, Morenada                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Peru</b>                 | Musica Negra del Peru- festejo, zapateo, lando y zamacueca, Peruvian Marinera Dance                                                                        |
| <b>Uruguay<br/>Paraguay</b> | Candombe, Malambo-Uruguay                                                                                                                                  |



(Afro-Puerto Rican musicians in Loiza, Puerto Rico, Afro-Cubans in Santiago, Cuba, author with Orisha dancers in Santiago, Cuba- photos by Lynn Anyanwu)

## Spirituality

African spirituality in the Americas played a crucial role in the creation of identity for Afro-descendants in the diaspora. These African-based religions have served as both a blessing and a curse throughout history. Initially, they were rejected due to racialized negative perceptions and the hegemonic criticisms of the Catholic Church. Yet, the survival of these religious practices, while others (such as Islam) did not endure in the same way, stands as a testament to the strength of tradition and memory. These Africanized religions, with their diverse variations, rituals, and histories, continue to evolve, expand, and reconnect with practitioners in Africa. They also served as a unifying force among enslaved Africans from diverse regions, spanning from West Africa to as far east as Mozambique. Despite the differences in languages, cultures, and traditions, these religions provided a spiritual foundation that helped enslaved people endure oppression and suffering (Anyanwu, 2021; Johnson & Palmie, 2018; Hale, 2009).

The Ifa religion of the Yoruba people in West Africa significantly influenced the development of religions like Santería and Candomblé in Latin America. In their efforts to preserve and practice their religion, enslaved Africans syncretized their beliefs with Catholicism, masking their guiding spirits, or deities, behind Catholic saints. This syncretism allowed them

the freedom to continue their religious practices under the guise of Catholic worship. For example, Shango, a powerful spiritual force in Ifa, became syncretized with Santa Barbara; Obatala with Our Lady of Mercy or Jesus; Yemaya with Mary; Oshun with Our Lady of Charity; and Ogun with Saint Peter. This blend of traditions ensured the survival of their spiritual practices, allowing enslaved Africans to maintain a connection with their gods in a new world (Anyanwu, 2021; Johnson & Palmie, 2018; Hale, 2009).

Today, Santeria and its various forms are practiced worldwide, with a concentration in Cuba, where approximately 70% of the population practices a version of the religion. Another version of Ifa, Candomblé, is also practiced globally, with its largest following in Brazil. Practitioners of Ifa, Santeria, and Candomblé seek to connect with the orishas, powerful but fallible spirits who guide and assist with life's uncertainties. Much like the saints in Abrahamic religions, these spirits are manifestations of Olodumare (God) and require veneration through various rituals and offerings at altars. This practice the complex interplay between spiritual forces and human life in these Africanized religious traditions (Johnson & Palmie, 2018; Rodriguez & Shultz, 2021; Otero, 2013; Hale, 2009; Sandoval, 2006; Lachatañeré, 2004; Sweet, 2009).

The religious practices of Candomblé, Palo, Santeria, Spiritism, Makumbe, and others provided enslaved Africans with a means of healing and restoration-physically, spiritually, socially, and mentally. These practices helped them reclaim their identity and dignity, offering symbolic, and at times literal, opportunities to break free from their shackles and escape to freedom. For Afro-descendants in Latin America, continuing these various forms of African spirituality allows for a reconnection with Africa and their ancestral spirits. By maintaining these practices, rituals, and traditions, they contribute to the “cultural memory” of African heritage,

ensuring the preservation and continuation of the African legacy in the diaspora (Anyanwu, 2021; Rodriguez & Shultz, 2021; Otero, 2013; Hale, 2009).

**Figure 19- African Based Religions in Latin America**

|                                                       | African Influenced Religions                                                        |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Nigeria</b>                                        | IFA (Yoruba religion that influenced the Americas)                                  |
| <b>Brazil</b>                                         | -Candomblé, Umbanda, Xangô, Batuque, Catimbó, Macumba                               |
| <b>Cuba</b>                                           | -Lucumi-Santeria, Palo Mayombe, (palo monte/Reglas de Congo), Abakua<br>-Espiritism |
| <b>Colombia</b>                                       | -African ancestral syncretic spiritism                                              |
| <b>Dominican Republic</b>                             | -Dominican Vodou (Las 21 Divisiones/Los Misterios)                                  |
| <b>Ecuador</b>                                        | -African ancestral spiritism                                                        |
| <b>Garifunas<br/>(Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua)</b> | -Ancestral Spiritism                                                                |
| <b>Puerto Rico</b>                                    | -Lucumi-Santeria, Palo Mayombe, Espiritismo                                         |
| <b>Uruguay</b>                                        | -Umbanda                                                                            |
| <b>Venezuela</b>                                      | -African ancestral syncretic spiritism, (The Cult of Maria Lionza)                  |

**Figure 20- Ifa- Santeria- Candomble Orisha Table Chart**

| <b>Ifa</b>                                            | <b>Santeria</b> | <b>Candomblé</b> | <b>Catholic Saint</b> |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Shango- god of fire</b>                            | Chango          | Xango            | Saint Barbara         |
| <b>Ogun- owner of metal and war</b>                   | Oggun           | Ogum             | Saint Peter           |
| <b>Obatala- human creation and peace</b>              | Obbatala        | Oxala            | Jesus                 |
| <b>Yemanja- mother of the world</b>                   | Yemalla         | Lemanja          | Virgin Mary           |
| <b>Oshun- deity of love, beauty, sex, gold, money</b> | Ochun           | Oxum             | Mary of Mercy         |
| <b>Oya- deity of winds and storms</b>                 | Oya/Yansa       | Oya              | Virgin of Candelaria  |
| <b>Esu- deity that clears the path, gate keeper</b>   | Eleggua         | Exu              | Saint Anthony         |

## **Voices of Color**

**Interview with Reglia-Cubana-Santera (Santeria Practitioner)- Cuba/Germany 2022**

**Interview Janoy Cepeda- Priest- Palo Monte (Palo Practitioner), Havana-Cuba 2017 y Alemania 2022**

**Interview with Daisy (Spiritism Practitioner) and her Ancestral Spirit Taita Francisco-Cuba 2022**

*For brevity and clarity only excerpts of the interviews are presented here. The full interviews (Reglita, Janoy, Daisy) are included in the appendix.*

The interviews with Regla, Janoy, and Daisy offer profound personal insights into their spiritual journeys, accentuates how African-derived religions have shaped their identities, cultural connections, and experiences across different geographies. Their testimonies allow us to witness the power of tradition, the challenges of syncretism, the role of healing, and the tensions between maintaining faith in diaspora while confronting modern challenges.

Regla begins by tracing her origins in Havana, Cuba, introducing the duality of her religious identity: *"Nací con el nombre de Regla De La Caridad Ojeda Díaz en la Habana, Cuba. Mi religión es católica con transcendencia africana de la religión Yoruba"* (I was born with the name Regla De La Caridad Ojeda Díaz in Havana, Cuba. My religion is Catholic with African transcendence from the Yoruba religion). This opening reflects the cultural blending of Catholicism and Yoruba practices that is so prevalent in Afro-Cuban spirituality. As she elaborates, her initiation into the Yoruba religion was driven by necessity, particularly concerning her health: *"Me iniciaron en la religión por salud porque al nacer vine con muchos problemas de salud"* (I was initiated into the religion for my health because I was born with many health problems). Regla's experiences with illness and the spiritual interventions that followed illustrates the interconnection between physical and spiritual well-being in these traditions.

She further recalls, “*Los primeros fueron el asma que hasta hoy la tengo y otras enfermedades que han llegado con el transcurso de los años*” (The first [issue] was asthma, which I still have, and other illnesses that came over the years). These early struggles led her family to perform various spiritual rituals, cleaning her home with specific plants and engaging in ceremonies that would ultimately connect her with the Orishas. Her initiation brought her into direct contact with the Orishas, particularly Ochun, whom she identifies as her spiritual mother: “*Yo soy la hija de la Orisha Ochún que en la iglesia católica es la Caridad de Cobre, patrona de los cubanos*” (I am the daughter of the Orisha Ochun, who in the Catholic Church is Our Lady of Charity, the patroness of Cubans). This syncretism, where Orishas are aligned with Catholic saints, allowed Regla and other practitioners to maintain their African faith under the cover of Catholicism. The spiritual connection is not only personal but national, linking her to Cuba's patron saint, a figure of both religious and cultural significance.

Throughout Regla's narrative, we see the theme of rebirth and transformation. She describes how, upon receiving her initiation, “*En 2007, el 6 de agosto, me hacen santo, vuelvo a nacer*” (On August 6, 2007, they made me a saint; I was born again). This phrase speaks to the deep transformation that occurs through initiation, where an individual's spiritual journey is marked by ritual cleansing, new responsibilities, and a rebirth into a life fully dedicated to the Orishas. The ritual of shaving her head, wearing all white for an entire year, and the abstentions she followed—such as avoiding perfumes, keeping her head covered, and avoiding sexual activity for five days before engaging with her saints—demonstrates the discipline and respect required in her faith.

Regla explains, “*Hay que tener muchas reglas tocando los santos*” (There are many rules when dealing with the saints), demonstrating the sacredness of maintaining these traditions

correctly. This reverence, rooted in African cosmology, ensures the continuation of Yoruba practices in a form that remains authentic despite geographic displacement. However, her experience living in Germany complicates her ability to follow all of these customs: *"Me ha sido muy difícil mantener la religión en Alemania. No porque no hayan las cosas que necesito. Las hay. No hay muchos religiosos aquí en Alemania"* (It has been very difficult to maintain the religion in Germany. Not because the things I need aren't available—they are. But there are not many religious people here in Germany). The lack of a broader religious community and cultural context in Germany presents challenges to her spiritual practice. This echoes the struggles faced by Afro-descendants globally, who must adapt their traditions to new environments while preserving their integrity.

Similarly, Janoy shares his story of practicing Palo Monte, another Afro-Cuban religion, and the obstacles he faces in Germany. *"Para mantener mi religión en Alemania solo me mantengo ofrendando frutas y flores y rezando"* (To maintain my religion in Germany, I only offer fruits and flowers and pray), he says, acknowledging the limits imposed by the legal system, which prohibits animal sacrifices. Like Regla, he adapts his practice to fit within the constraints of his new country while preserving the core elements of his faith. Yet, this adjustment creates a sense of dislocation—he can perform his rituals fully only when he returns to Cuba: *"Al regresar a Cuba entonces sí puedo hacer mis rituales normales"* (When I return to Cuba, then I can do my normal rituals). The tension between spiritual continuity and the restriction of diaspora underscores the extensive challenges faced by Afro-Latino communities in maintaining their traditions outside their homelands.

Janoy's testimony also touches upon the importance of healing within the Palo Monte religion. He describes how priests often intervene in critical situations: *"los sacerdotes de Palo a*

*menudo tienen que salvar personas con problemas graves de salud y problemas graves de justicia*” (the priests of Palo often have to save people with serious health problems and serious justice issues). Here, spiritual power is not only for personal growth but for collective healing, addressing both physical ailments and social injustices. The ability of these traditions to serve as mechanisms for survival and protection is a central theme in both his and Regla’s experiences.

Daisy’s narrative offers another perspective on the role of ancestral spirits in Afro-Cuban religion. She describes her relationship with *Taita Francisco*, a spiritual entity who guides her healing work. “*El pasa por mí. El conversa y el le dice a la persona muchas cosas y la gente le encanta*” (He passes through me. He speaks, and he tells the person many things, and people love it). Daisy’s bond with Taita Francisco is an example of how Afro-Cuban religions maintain close ties with ancestral spirits, who not only offer guidance but also intervene in the lives of the living. She works through Taita Francisco to help others, healing without medicine but through spiritual connection: “*Hoy por hoy, por mediación de él tiro las cartas y él siempre está a mi lado*” (To this day, through him I read the cards, and he is always by my side). This illustrates the importance of ancestors and spirits in guiding practitioners and offering protection, a central feature of African religious traditions.

Daisy’s deep love and respect for her spiritual guide is palpable when she says, “*Yo lo adoro. Yo le digo que él es mi vida, que él es mi todo*” (I adore him. I tell him that he is my life, that he is my everything). Her relationship with Taita Francisco underscores the centrality of ancestors in Afro-Cuban religions, where the spirits of the past remain active participants in the present. This connection to the past not only preserves cultural memory but also provides a sense of continuity and support for practitioners.

These testimonies, when integrated into the Afro-Latino curriculum, points out the adaptability and richness of African spiritual practices in the Americas. The blending of Catholic and African traditions, as seen in Regla's experience, offers a powerful example of how enslaved Africans preserved their spiritual heritage in a hostile colonial environment. The focus on healing and spiritual protection, central to both Regla and Janoy's narratives, provides insight into how these traditions offer not only personal guidance but also community support and healing. Meanwhile, Daisy's deep connection with her ancestral spirit stresses the importance of ancestry and cultural memory in Afro-Cuban religions.

**Figure 21- Santeria, Palo Monte and Spiritism Practioners**



*Regla, practitioner of Santeria with her altar with offering for Oshun in Havan-an Orishas altar in Havana with offerings for Ogun, Chango, Oshun and Obatala, Havana- Shango altar in Lagos, Nigeria photos by Lynn Anyanwu*



*(Palo Monte practitioners in celebration of San Lazaro, Havana, Cuba- author with a Spiritism practitioner as she does her card readings- Daisy with her alter to her spiritual guide Taita- below Santeria priests and Palo Monte priests-Samples of offerings to the various spirits- Havana, Cuba-photos by Lynn Anyanwu)*



These narratives of Afro-Latino communities from countries such as Mexico, Guatemala, Colombia, Ecuador, Brazil, Peru, Cuba, and Puerto Rico offer valuable insights into the extensive Afro-Latino experiences, challenges of cultural preservation, language continuity, and racial recognition. While the visible contributions of African diaspora communities (such as music, dance, food, and spirituality) are often celebrated, many other African influences remain underrecognized. Technological contributions like metallurgy, weaving, and cloth dyeing, as well as artistic expressions in sculpting, hair styling, and traditional medicine, must be highlighted. Additionally, African influences in leadership, education, and activism, alongside the importance of family values, innovation, and cultivation, deserve greater attention. By acknowledging African linguistic contributions and hybrid languages like those of the Garifunas, Palenqueros, and Quilombolas, we can present a fuller picture of the African diaspora's profound impact on the Americas. Banks' approach provides a framework for this comprehensive education, ensuring that students understand the full scope of African influences across the Afro-Latin America diaspora.

## Chapter 6- Afro-Latinos Unit Curriculum Guide and Activities



# Afro-Latinos

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## No Longer Invisible

**RECOGNITION**

**RESISTANCE**

**IDENTITY**



Photos by Lynn Anyanwu



[www.afro-latinos.org](http://www.afro-latinos.org)



# Afro-Latinos

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## Contents

- **Introduction**
- **Curriculum Overview**
- **Conceptual Framework**
- **Unit Workshop 1- Origins and Diversity- Yo Soy (I AM)**
- **Unit Workshop 2- Doors of No Return: Africa to the Americas**
- **Unit Workshop 3- Home Away from Home- Africa in the Americas**
- **Unit Workshop 4- Griot Journey- Oral Histories through the Power of the Drums**
- **Unit Workshop 5- Resistance Through Music**
- **Unit Workshop 6- Resistance and Identity through Dance**
- **Unit Workshop 7- The Door of Returns- The Orishas from Africa to the Americas**
- **Unit Workshop 8- Food as a Form of Cultural Remembrance**
- **Unit Workshop 9- Recognition, Resistance, and Identity Part #1**
- **Unit Workshop 10- Recognition, Resistance, and Identity Part #2**
- **PBL Ideas and Assessment Rubric**



# Afro-Latinos

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## Introduction

The Afro-Latinos are people with rich diverse histories & traditions that developed the Americas and contributed to the rich tapestry of its land. Their histories did not start with slavery. They are not invisible. On December 23, 2013, the United Nation general assembly adopted a Resolution that declared ***2015-2024 The International Decade for the People of African Descent: Recognition, Justice, and Development***. This movement solidified the various mobilizations in Latin America that are fighting against Afro-Latin American marginalization and invisibility. This unit curriculum is to call attention to Afro-Latin American history, culture, contributions, and the resilience of the African legacy. The plan has two dimensions: the unit curriculum guide and an accompanied website. Both dimensions share the same mission statements-

- To educate students and our communities about the Afro-descendants in Latin America, its African influenced practices, identity, and inclusion challenges
- To facilitate the connection, dialogue, between Africans in the ancestral land and African descendants in the diaspora
- To share African, Afro-Latinos and Afro-diasporic cultural activities, resources, events, remembrance sites, and heritage tours
- To provide a platform to educate and encourage students and communities to engage in fight against discrimination, racism, damaging stereotypes, and biases and to be an active voice provoking policies for transformative change

The Afro-Latinos Unit Curriculum includes:

- An interactive website ( [www.afro-latinos.org](http://www.afro-latinos.org) )
- A unit curriculum with lesson plans, activities, and other resources



# Afro-Latinos

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## Unit Curriculum Overview

***Afro-Latinos: No Longer Invisible*** is a multicultural transformative activity guide that highlights the history, culture, and challenges of Afro-Latin Americans. The unit plan has nine lessons that help students explore the various African influenced products, practices, experiences, and perspectives throughout Afro-Latin American communities.

| Unit Workshops                                                             | Big Themes                                        |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Workshop 1</b><br>Origins and Diversity                                 | Culture, Race, Ethnicity, Nationality, Diversity, |
| <b>Workshop 2</b><br>Doors of No Return to: From Africa to the Americas    | Origins, Colonization, Mestizaje, Diaspora        |
| <b>Workshop 3</b><br>Home Away from Home- Africa in the Americas           | Home, African consciousness, Identity             |
| <b>Workshop 4</b><br>Griot Journey- Oral Histories with Power of the Drums | Stories, Message, Traditions                      |
| <b>Workshop 5</b><br>Resistance Through Music                              | Oppression, Resistance                            |
| <b>Workshop 6</b><br>Resistance and Identity through Dance                 | Movement, Freedom                                 |
| <b>Workshop 7</b><br>Remembrance through Palate Memory                     | Memory, Connection                                |
| <b>Workshop 8</b><br>The Door of Returns-Orishas from Africa to Americas   | Religion, Syncretism, Community                   |
| <b>Workshop 9</b><br>Recognition, Resistance, and Identity Part 1          | Current issues and Visibility                     |
| <b>Workshop 10</b><br>Recognition, Resistance, and Identity Part 2         | Recognition and Celebration                       |

***Afro-Latinos: No Longer Invisible*** activity guide highlights a people whose products and practices have taken center stage nationally but they themselves are disregarded. This curriculum guide shows pride, resilience, beauty, and message throughout the various cultural expressions. The activities engage the students to think critically, to appreciate diverse perspectives and cultures, to form connections with the concepts and relate personally, to question the Anglo-centered mainstream knowledge, and to form a village in the classroom where affective filters are lowered, and collaborative activities can flow. The activities are engaging, aims to meet and engage all students at their needs level, collaborative, foster 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and empower students as cultural ambassadors.

## *Afro-Latinos: No Longer Invisible*

### Conceptual Framework

**OBATALA** is one of the Orishas, a supreme being in the Yoruba (a language and a group of people from Nigeria, Benin, Togo, Ghana, Sierra Leon west Africa region) IFA religion pantheon. He is the supreme being of ethics, wisdom, life, purpose, peace, resurrection, honesty, and transformation. Obatala is also known as Orisa Nla or Oxala in Brazil. He is part of the complex Ifa religion that arrived in the Americas with the enslaved Africans. His name has been used below to frame the conceptual ideas of the *Afro-Latinos: No Longer Invisible* activity guide. The concepts encapsulate the strategies of a transformative multicultural education and project-based learning.

#### Transformative Multicultural Education

**O**-bserve, personal reflections, meaningful

**B**-ig ideas, big themes

**A**-nalysis, critical thinking and questioning

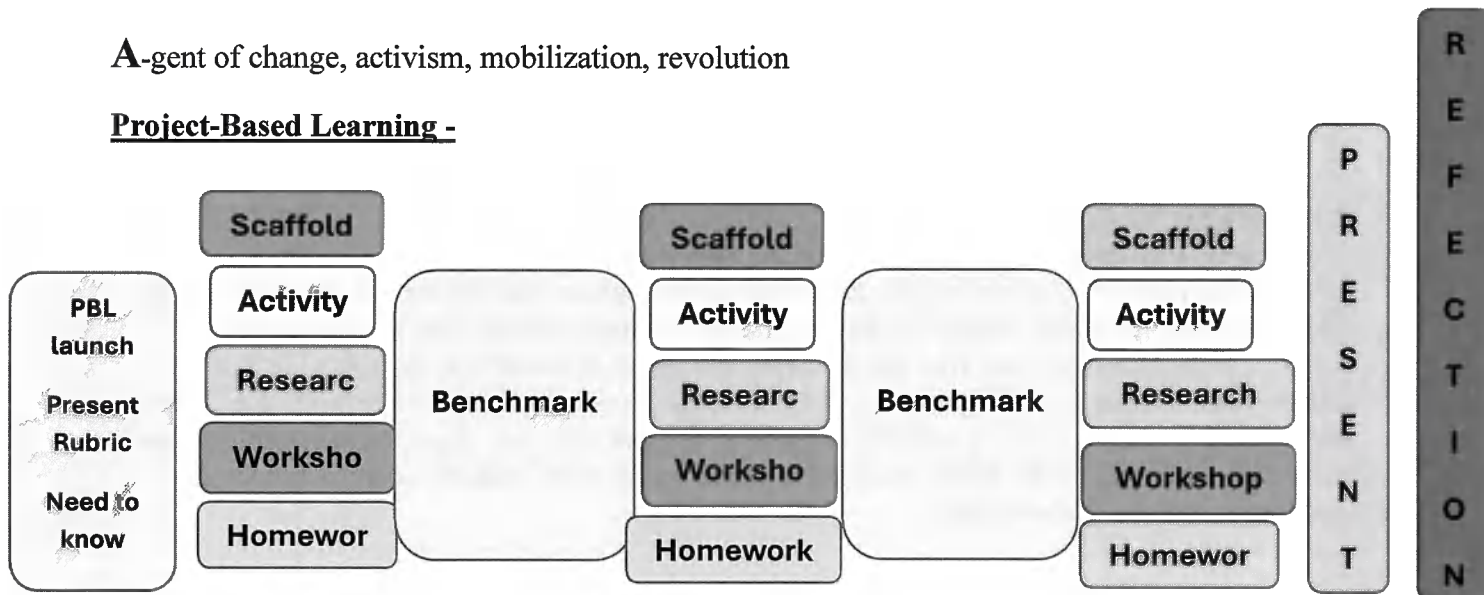
**T**-hink progressively

**A**-cceptance of diverse views, inclusive

**L**-earning truthfully, positively, cooperation, celebratory

**A**-gent of change, activism, mobilization, revolution

#### Project-Based Learning -





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## Workshop # 1- Origins and Diversity- YO SOY (I AM)

As humans we feel the need to belong. To better understand that need, we need to explore our origins and the role each person plays in this diverse world. In understanding our culture, ethnicity, nationality, identity, and role in our diverse world, we can develop a positive sense of pride and belonging and appreciation for our unique cultures, backgrounds, and histories. This unit is exploring the Afro-Latino cultures and the universal themes that connect us all.

### Objective: Students will

- Define and explore the terms race, ethnicity, nationality, and diversity.
- Explore their diverse nature by **defining** and **connecting** to their racial identity, ethnicity, nationality, and cultural value system.
- Present their defined version of self in a poem.

### Time: 2 Class periods

### Materials/resources:

- Copy of Afro-Latina Poem by Melania Luisa Marte
- Video link of Melania Luisa Marte poem...[https://youtu.be/DYfTHY2SR\\_o](https://youtu.be/DYfTHY2SR_o)
- Video link of Jellybean video.... <https://youtu.be/CqV3CK6QfcU>
- Copies of YO SOY poem template
- Sets of color paper labeled (race, ethnicity, nationality, diversity)

### Procedure:

#### A- Race, Ethnicity, Nationality, Diversity

1. Student's desk should be set-up in collaborative groups. Place a set of the labeled paper on center table for each group.
2. Start class by introducing the unit (recognizing Afro-Latino people and cultures), purpose (exploring universal themes that connects us all) and lessons objective (defining, understanding, and exploring race, ethnicity, nationality, and diversity)
3. Pose the question "How do you define race, ethnicity, nationality, and diversity?" Working in their groups, students will collaborate and write down what they think about each word on the colored paper that corresponds to that word. While walking around, give students a few minutes to complete this.

4. Invite one student from each group to stand up with the colored paper with the word “race” and they should form a line. Each student will share what their group wrote. When they are finished, they will tape the paper on one side of the board. Repeat this with the word “ethnicity” by asking another student from each group to stand and share and post paper in closter format on an area of the board. Repeat this with the words “nationality” and “diversity.”
5. Show the video Jellybean and tell students to joint down notes about what they saw and heard. The video defines the words we have been reviewing using the colorful candies- jellybeans.
6. After the video, ask students the definition of each word according to the video. Ask what differences they noticed from their initial definitions. Have students give up examples of each word. You will call out a word and they will give you example of that word....for example- teachers says nationality and students call out American, Cuban, Canadian etc...Repeat this with all four terms scaffolding towards mastery.

#### **B- YO SOY (I AM)**

1. To celebrate the class diversity, each student will write an YO SOY (I AM) poem incorporating the learned terms and various elements from their background. We will start this activity by showing the spoken word poem Afro-Latina Poem by Melania Luisa Marte.
2. After the watching the video, in groups have students share what the learned about the artist. How does she define herself? How does society define her? What is her truth about her self-identity? Have students share aloud their thoughts about the poem and the artist.
3. Now, students will define and explore their heritage using the terms in the YO SOY ( I AM) activity.
4. Pass out the activity sheet. With a partner, students can complete the activity template, rewrite and practice reading/presenting it to their partner.
5. When students have completed their YO SOY poem, they will video record their presentation. They will take turns with their partner in recording. They can turn-in video to assignment in google classroom.

#### **C- Closing: YO SOY Poem presentation**

1. Presentation of video Poems and display of diverse definitions of self in celebrations of our uniqueness.
2. Hand out the rubric for the PBL project. Have students review it for homework. Students will select PBL topic choice of interest following class.

#### **D- Enrich/Extend**

Student can study the **Afro-Latina Poem by Melania Luisa Marte**. Have student write about the many historical and social criticism that the artist writes about. Have students form connects on a personal level or social level.



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Workshop # 1- Origins and Diversity- YO SOY (I AM).....<https://youtu.be/CqV3CK6QfcU>

## Define

Race-

Nationality-

Ethnicity-

Diversity-

---

## Yo Soy (I am )

(Adapted from “Where I’m From” by George Ella Lyon)

### Fill in the blank Poem

I am \_\_\_\_\_ (your ethnicities)

From \_\_\_\_\_ (birthplace) and \_\_\_\_\_ (family ancestry, nationality, or place)

I am \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (two special characteristics, adjectives)

From \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (family traditional foods)

I am from \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (family tradition and trait)

From \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (family members)

I am from \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (family habits)

And from \_\_\_\_\_ (family habit.)

I am from \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (things you were told as a child)

And \_\_\_\_\_ (traditional family music)

From \_\_\_\_\_ (a story about family member)

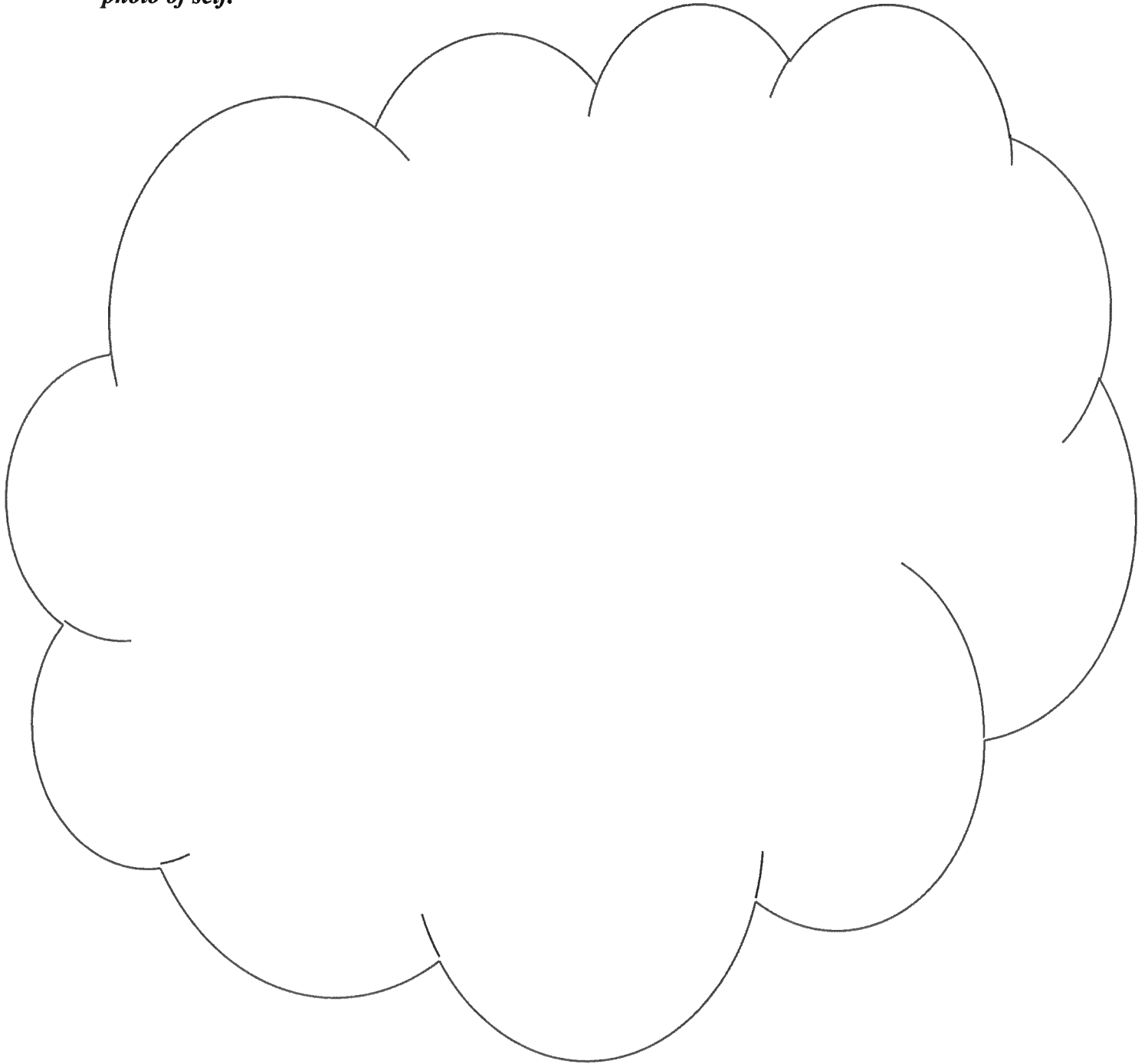
\_\_\_\_\_ (detail about story or family member)

\_\_\_\_\_ (description of family mementos, picture, treasure)

\_\_\_\_\_ (location of mementos ex: under my bed, on my wall, in my heart)

## Yo Soy (I am)

*Re-write the poem without the directions in parenthesis and add your personal illustrations or photo of self.*





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## Workshop # 2- Doors of No Return: From Africa to the Americas

As this unit explores the Afro-Latino cultures, experiences and the universal themes that ties us all, we must start from how the AFRO-latino in the Americas came to be and fill in the knowledge gaps about Africans in the Americas.

### Objective: Students will

- Explore and bridge their knowledge gaps about origins of blacks in Latin America.
- Interact with unit website to help build knowledge about Afro-Latin Americans
- Examine misconceptions of origins and identity of diasporic people
- Select a multi-step PBL research topic that they will explore, define, and present at end of unit.

**Time: 1 -2 Class periods**

### Materials/resources:

- Laptop/computer for unit website access
- Door of No Return activity sheet
- Video link...LaLa Reid exploring Afro-Latino- <https://youtu.be/7-vzx5x9JZY>

### Procedure:

#### A. Opening

1. Write the words Door of No Return, Diaspora and Afro-Latino on the board. Ask students the meaning of these words and write down their comments brainstorm style.
2. Tell them we will come back to the words after watching the short video clip of Lala Reid topic on Afro-Latinos.
3. After the video, ask students to define/comment on the words again. Write the new definitions/comments on the board. Emphasize the meanings of diaspora and Afro-Latinos.....two words that often confuse people. Ask students what was their take-away from the video? In their group, share about what they did not know and what they now know after the video. Walk around to facilitate discussions.

4. Ask students what do they know about the origins of the Afro-Latin people? Open floor for brainstorm and discussion. Clarify that we know that the colonizers came to the Americas to conquer and in doing so caused many natives to died off from harsh treatment and diseases. In as such, the colonizer brought the African slaves for forced labor. Latin-America promotes their 3 faces (European, Indigenous and African) but invisibilizes their African heritage. This Afro-latino unit is to recognize and celebrate the many African influences in Latin America.

#### **B. Unit Website ([www.afro-latino.org](http://www.afro-latino.org))**

1. Each group should have 1-2 computer/laptops to complete the activity. Pass out the activity worksheet. Display/project the website on the teacher board. Give students some minutes to log in. Navigate the website with the students, demonstrating its functionalities.
2. In their group team, students should work together to complete the activity sheet using the unit website as a guide. Students may not use other sites.
3. Walk around while interacting with the students.
4. After completion, ask students what was their AHA moment.....what did they learn?

#### **C. PBL launch**

1. Pass out PBL suggested topics, but not limited to these topics and rubric. Explain what PBL is and its tasks to completion steps. Go over the PBL rubric with students.
2. If time remains, students should start working on PBL tasks to completion.

**Closing and Assessment- Students will complete a short exit ticket**

#### **D. Enrich/Extend**

1. Have students research the west African nations where the enslaved Africans originated from. Students can make a histography and present in class.
2. Students can identity the various DOORS OF NO RETURNS in west Africa.....label the names of the forts, country and approximate number of Africans that left from there....ex: Goree-Senegal, Elmina-Ghana, etc....



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## Workshop # 2- Doors of No Return: From Africa to the Americas

Define  
**Door of No  
Return**

Define  
**Diaspora**

Define  
**Afro-Latino**

Use the following website.....<https://www.afro-latinos.org/history> to complete the following sections below

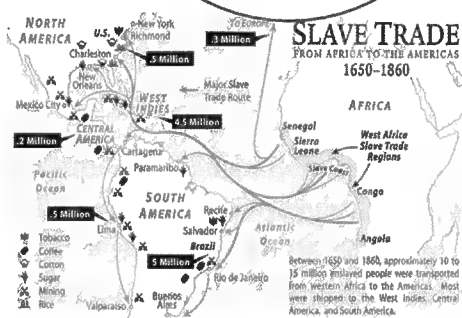
Watch video

<https://youtu.be/7-vzx5x9JZY>

1. The diverse continent of Africa has how many countries? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How many enslaved Africans were forcibly brought for forced labor in the Americas \_\_\_\_\_ and how many were estimated to have survived the middle passage- the transatlantic voyage \_\_\_\_\_?
3. Using the circles below, draw two Pie Charts and label the percentages of enslaved Africans that were taken from each African region.....AND what regions in the Americas they were brought to?

Regions from Africa

Regions in the



4. Look at the pie charts, observe the flow of the African forced migration to the Americas, what conclusions in terms of percentage and locations can you make?

6. 1501-1867 Transatlantic Slave Trade flow chart, complete the chart below

| <b>8 African Regions during the trade</b> | <b>Modern Day Names of African countries</b> | <b>Number of Enslaved Africans Taken from each region</b> | <b>Percentage of Enslaved Africans taken from each region</b> |
|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                           |                                              |                                                           |                                                               |
|                                           |                                              |                                                           |                                                               |
|                                           |                                              |                                                           |                                                               |
|                                           |                                              |                                                           |                                                               |
|                                           |                                              |                                                           |                                                               |
|                                           |                                              |                                                           |                                                               |
|                                           |                                              |                                                           |                                                               |

Using the following website.....<https://www.afro-latinos.org/history>

Color the countries or regions in Latin America where the enslaved Africans were taken to

Color the modern-day African countries (question #6 above) from where the enslaved Africans originated



How long did the Transatlantic forced migrations of enslaved Africans last? \_\_\_\_\_

What did you not know? What do you now know?

9.



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## Workshop # 3- Home away from Home- Africa in the Americas

### Palenques and Quilombos

#### Objective: Students will

- Explore, define, and expand on the notion of “home”
- Identify “diaspora” peoples in diverse communities and their formation of “home” in the new land

**Time: 1-2 Class periods**

#### Materials/resources:

- Laptop/computer for internet search
- Workshop #3 worksheet
- Link... <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=amMN0y4m7Fc>
- Link... <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SNknxK6UFOU>

#### Procedure:

##### A. Opening

1. Students should be in groups of 3-4. Have them take out a sheet of paper and draw a circle then write the word HOME in the center.
2. Together students should brainstorm the meaning of HOME. Give them a few minutes to discuss this, then have them share some of their responses.
3. Ask them “How do we create a sense of home away from home?” Have groups discuss this, then share their answers.
4. Review the term “diaspora” from previous activity. Ask students to give examples of diasporic people. Then ask them to discuss how diasporic people create a sense of home away from home. Have groups share their thoughts.
5. Tell students that this lesson will explore the African diaspora in two Latin America communities the palenques and the quilombolas. Define the terms palenques and quilombos. Then pass the activity sheet to students.
6. While watching the two short videos, students will analyze and write comments about what they are watching regarding the palenques and quilombos.

7. After watching the videos and writing the reflections. Pass out two pieces of post-it papers in two different colors. Each group receive one of each color. In group students should discuss their take-away from each video and work together to write a short summary of each video on the color post-its.
8. On the board draw two big circles with the words Palenque and quilombo written in the center. Have two volunteers from each group share by reading aloud their summary. Then post the post-it paper next to the corresponding circle.
9. Lead a class discussion on how the Palenque and quilombo communities created a sense of Africa in the Americas.....have students give examples from what they saw in the video.

**B. Formative assessment- Students can work together to finish the activity sheet.**

**C. Project Base Learning- Students continue work on project, while teacher discusses each project mission and completion steps with each student/group**

**Closing - Students will complete a short exit ticket**

**E. Enrich/Extend**

**Research the Garifunas and list ways they have maintained their African heritage and list some of the challenges.**

**Workshop # 3- Home Away from Home- Africa in the Americas**

1. Define Palenque-
2. Define Quilombo-

**San Basilio de Palenque, Colombia**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=amMN0y4m7>

Reflection on the  
Palenque. What  
did you learn?

**Quilombos, Brazil**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SNknxK6>

Reflection about  
the quilombos.  
What did you

3. How do the palenques and quilombos maintain the essence of Africa in their communities on Latin America? Give some examples of what you saw in the videos
4. What is the importance of these African settlements within the communities and globally?
5. How do you create the feeling of “home” when you are away from home? What are some rituals that you practice that connects you and makes you feel at home when you are away?

## **Workshop # 4- Griot Journey-Oral History Through the Power of the Drums**

### **Objective: Students will**

- Learn the importance of African drumming and its influence on Afro-Latino music
- Learn about the main drum types and their uses

### **Time: 1-2 Class periods**

### **Materials/resources:**

- Laptop/computer for internet search
- Large construction paper and markers
- Workshop #4 worksheet
- Community expert – drummer
- Sample djembe drums

### **Procedure:**

#### **Opening**

1. As students enter the classroom, invite them to play with the sample djembe drums. When students are settled in their seats. Ask them about the djembe drums.... how many know about these drums? What do they know about drums? As anyone ever played the drums before? In what music have they heard the drums?
2. Students are seated in groups of 2-3. Give each group a large construction paper with markers. Each group will pick a name of a drum from a grab bag.
3. Using a laptop/computer for research and paper and markers to draw, students should research their drum and draw it.
4. After drawing, groups should write down the origin of their drum and purpose/use of their drums.
5. Each group will present their drum and explain its origin and purpose of their drum. After presentation, they should post it on the wall in the classroom.
6. After student presentations, the community expert drummer will present to the students (in person or virtually) the history and uses of the drum and demonstration of the most common type of African based drum- the djembe. Expert drummer will define the term GRIOT and explain drumming culture and the POWER OF THE DRUMS. Expert will invite students for a short drum lesson. Amount of student volunteers will depend on how many drums

available. After drumming demonstration and questions and answer session, students can continue work on PBL

**B. Formative assessment- Students complete workshop #4 activity sheet.**

**C. Project Base Learning- Students continue work on project, while teacher discusses each project mission and completion steps with each student/group**

**D. Closing - Students will complete a short exit ticket or thumb up/down formative assessment questions.**

**E. Enrich/Extend**

**Research African influence musical instruments in Latin American. Try to bring the product to class or draw the product for a show, tell and touch experience.**



## Workshop # 4- Griot Journey-Oral History Through The Power of the Drums

### 1. Define Griot-

The powerful beat of the drum symbolizes the beat of the human heart. It is through this life sustaining rhythms, that the Africans rejoice, dance, sing, worship, communicate, announce, unite, and find comfort. The drums are considered as part of the oldest musical instruments in the world. It is estimated that around 1300 AD during the time of king Sundiata kingdom, the Mandinka people of West Africa region of today's Senegal, Gambia, Mali, Guinea created these drums. During the transatlantic slave trade, the enslaved Africans brought their knowledge of drum making and distinct musical style. The African traditional drums of djembe, dundun, talking drums, bougarabou, ngoma transformed into the drums of sundu, timbal, bongo, conga and cajon in African influenced music in the Americas. Music more than any other form of art is a powerful healer and unifier. We see this in the African drums and music in Latin America.

2. Using the internet, do research of the following African and Afro-Latin drums. Draw each indicated drums and comment what type of music or occasion it is used for.

#### African Drums

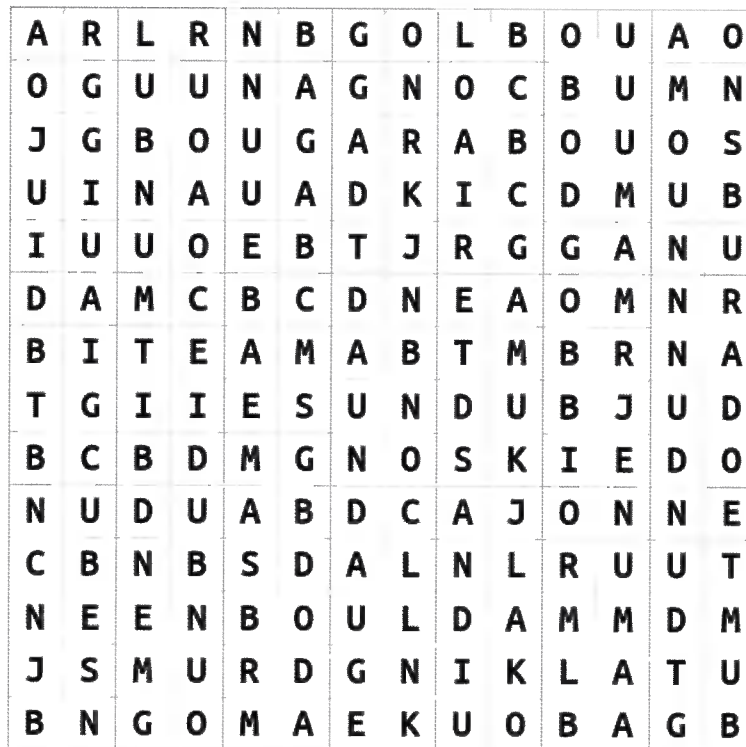
|               |               |                         |              |                        |
|---------------|---------------|-------------------------|--------------|------------------------|
| <b>Djembe</b> | <b>Dundun</b> | <b>Talking<br/>Drum</b> | <b>Ngoma</b> | <b>Bougarabo<br/>u</b> |
|---------------|---------------|-------------------------|--------------|------------------------|

#### Afro-Latin Drums

|              |               |              |              |              |
|--------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| <b>Sundu</b> | <b>Timbal</b> | <b>Bongo</b> | <b>Conga</b> | <b>Cajon</b> |
|--------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|

### 3. Power of the Drum word search

## Power of the Drums



TIMBAL  
DJEMBE  
BOUGARABOU  
BONGO  
CONGA  
TALKING DRUMS  
NGOMA  
SUNDU  
CAJON  
DUNDUN

Play this puzzle online at : <https://thewordsearch.com/puzzle/3931860/>

### 4. Listen to the various drum rhythms and describe how you hear it and your reaction towards the rhythms. What connections can you make?

Djembe - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DIWr3GRWP60>

Talking drums- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CbMMw-88eT4>

Dundun- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rRAumyyji7w>

Cajon- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A5NQZjFOR7s>

Conga vs Djembe- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IIbRuIm9MxI>

Bongo- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vcaQr-Ph6OU>

**Reflection**



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## Workshop #5- Resistance Through Music

**Musica Negra with Susana Baca, Choquibtown, Kombilesa Mi, Celia Cruz, Comafunk, Amara la Negra**

### Objective:

Students will discover Afro-Latino musical artists that have used music as a form of resistance, education, a call for action, recognition, and heritage preservation.

**Time: 1 Class period**

### Materials/resources:

- Laptop/computer for internet search
- Workshop #5 worksheet
- JAMBOARD

### Procedure:

#### A. Opening

1. As students enter the classroom, music is playing, and they should grab a laptop or seat next to a computer. Six artist names are written on the board with numbers on top of each artist. Teacher will appoint a number to each student by walking around and pointing and giving them the number. Students with the same number should seat together.
2. Introduce lesson topic – music as a form of resistance. Discuss messages in music and how music can make important statements. Lesson is learning about some important artist in Afro-Latino communities that use their music to make social/political statements about what's happening in the community.
3. The numbered groups will research their artist and present their findings in JAMBOARD interactive slide in google classroom. Each group will use Jamboard to present information with engaging research information about their artist, making sure they include how artist uses music as a form of resistance, education, call for action, recognition and/or heritage preservation. May include pictures and video/audio links. Group will do a short presentation for the class.

4. We will listen to each artist music while students are working. Jamboard slides are interactive in that all students will be working on the slides at same time and students can read and interact with other students' text and comments.

**B. Formative assessment- Students name some of the issues that the artists are singing about and how does that relate to issues in their community?**

**C. Project Base Learning- Students continue work on project, while teacher discusses each project mission and completion steps with each student/group**

**D. Closing - Students will complete a short exit ticket**

**E. Enrich/Extend**

1. **Analyze the lyrics to Celia Cruz “La Negra Tiene Tumbao” what is Celia Cruz trying to say? How is this song a form of resistance against negative stereotype of Afro-Latin women?**
2. **Analyze the lyrics to Celia Cruz “No Le Pegue a la Negra” what is Celia Cruz trying to say? How is this song a form of acknowledgement and identity**





# Afro-Latinos

(Afro-CEF) African and Afro-Descendants Cultural and Educational Forum

## Workshop #5- Resistance Through Music

### Jamming with JAMBOARD

Let us discover Afro-Latino musical artists that have used music as a form of resistance, education, a call for action, recognition, and heritage preservation.

In groups of 4 or 5 students, select one of the following artists below. Group will do research about artist, listen to their music, and focus on how artist has used music as mentioned. Divide task among group members.

When ready, students can open the JAMBOARD interactive slide in google classroom. Each group will use Jamboard to present information with engaging research information about their artist, making sure they include how artist uses music as a form of resistance, education, call for action, recognition and/or heritage preservation. May include pictures and video/audio links. Group will do a short presentation for the class.

**Choquibtown**  
**(Colombia)**

**Kombilesa**  
**Mi**  
**(Colombia)**

**Celia Cruz**  
**(Cuba)**

**Cimafunk**  
**(Cuba)**

**Amara la Negra**  
**(Dominican**  
**Republic)**

**Susana Baca**  
**(Peru)**



# Afro-Latinos

(Afro-CEF) African and Afro-Descendants Cultural and Educational Forum

## **Workshop #6- Resistance and Identity Through Dance**

### **La Bomba y La Capoeira**

#### **Objective:**

Students will discover Afro-Latino musical artists that have used music as a form of resistance, education, a call for action, recognition, and heritage preservation.

#### **Time: 2 Class period**

#### **Materials/resources:**

- Laptop/computer for internet search
- Website-[www.afro-latinos.org](http://www.afro-latinos.org)
- Workshop #6 worksheet
- Community expert- Bomba dancer
- Bomba flowing dance skirts
- Community expert- Capoeira Master

#### **Procedure:**

##### **A. Opening- Day One**

1. Lesson will need open space for movement. Clear chairs and tables in classroom or move lesson outside or to any open space.
2. Ask students to raise hand if they like to dance or have ever taken dance classes. Tell these students to form a group on one side. This will create two groups for presentation rotation. Form a circle with the groups, one group on one half on the circle and the other group on the other half of the circle.
3. Ask students to name some dances they know and have some demonstrate them. Ask students to share why they dance and what do some of those dances signify. Spend a few minutes sharing this. Introduce lesson to students- bomba and capoeira. Explain that bomba is a dance from Puerto Rico by Afro

descendants and Capoeira is a martial art form from Brazil and created by enslaved Africans. Ask students if any of them have seen and experiences this form of expressions before.

4. Introduce the community experts to the students. One group of students will circle around the Bomba expert, and the other group of students will circle around the Capoeira expert. The experts will explain the brief history of Bomba and Capoeira and how these expressions are used as a form of resistance and identity. They will demonstrate some basic steps and meaning of the movements and engage the student to practice these steps in the circle. After 20 minutes, students can rotate by switching experts and they will spend 20 minutes with the next expert.

5. Students will form one big circle again where some will showcase what they have learned. Experts will invite students in the circle to “dance out” the steps they have learn while other students clap with encouragement.

## **B. Day Two-**

6. As students enter and settle, ask students to summarize what they learned from their community experts of Bomba and Capoeira. Discuss how these dances are forms of identity and resistance. Ask students if they can think of dance styles from anywhere in the world that represents identity and resistance.

7. Show students the Bomba skirts and how it is worn. Have 3 students demonstrate wearing the skirts and practicing the basic Bomba steps that they learned.

8. Students should form groups of 4 and have several laptops/computers in their group. Pass out the activity #6 worksheet. Using the [www.afro-latinos.org](http://www.afro-latinos.org) website to research, working together students will unscramble the names of African influenced dances in Latin America. Each student in the group should take a row or column and share what they learned with the others.

9. When finished, students will select ONE row or column by coloring the row or column. Students will enter google classroom or other site that teacher has posted the links. Depending on the row or column that student selected, they will watch the dance videos for that link and write their reaction or make a connection with the dance.

### **Video links**

#### **Afro-Latin American Dances**

Chile - <https://youtu.be/JXjrAzNKHFc> and <https://youtu.be/JXjrAzNKHFc>

Mexico- <https://youtu.be/Lv4xtcvJlGo> and <https://youtu.be/Mi92Only8XI>  
 Garifunas- <https://youtu.be/nxUOvtLJWQA>  
 Puerto Rico- <https://youtu.be/4nFyLdsylgk>  
 Dominican Republic- <https://youtu.be/kYnnvOL8FPY> and  
 Ecuador- <https://youtu.be/5W7HCX5fQV8>  
 Cuba (Makuta)- <https://youtu.be/hQBpkcXOfhE>  
 Cuba (Orishas)- <https://youtu.be/DenYnTzozc0>  
 Cuba (rumba)- <https://youtu.be/bYD4waldkAA>  
 Colombia (Bullerengue)- <https://youtu.be/8oWWVTDcf3k>  
 Colombia (Champeta)- <https://youtu.be/kAql5YEXWww>  
 Argentina- <https://youtu.be/MpvVMvPvMn8>  
 Uruguay- [https://youtu.be/ir5zJc\\_oL3E](https://youtu.be/ir5zJc_oL3E) and <https://upsidedownworld.org/archives/uruguay/uruguay-spirit-of-afro-resistance-alive-in-candombe/>  
 Panama- <https://youtu.be/AFy51E2KKe8>  
 Venezuela- <https://youtu.be/KA0YgKNQXyg>  
 Bolivia- <https://youtu.be/jaNUHFIS-oo>  
 Peru- <https://youtu.be/qgah34cPa2l>  
 Brazil (samba)- <https://youtu.be/lIN-Els4VzE> and <https://youtu.be/wa8zhQYsgjA>  
 Brazil (Capoeira)- <https://youtu.be/87GhflGrhxc> and <https://youtu.be/6H0D8Valli0>  
 Brazil (maculele)- <https://youtu.be/d7MnlWU7Ad8>

**C. Formative assessment- Students show participation and understanding of the two movement styles- Bomba and Capoeira.....in circle “dance out” and completion of activity worksheet.**

**D. Project Base Learning- Students continue work on project, while teacher and experts discuss each project mission and completion steps with each student/group.**

**E. Closing – Reminder to students to work on PBL projects. Ask students to name some African influenced dances in Latin America.**

**F. Enrich/Extend- Students can use Youtube to practice some of the many Afro-Latin dances. Student can video tape their progression and share it with teacher. Or students can enroll in a salsa, samba, capoeira, bomba or any other Afro-Latin dances in their community. Show progression by videotaping dance class practices.**



# Afro-Latinos

(Afro-CEF) African and Afro-Descendants Cultural and Educational Forum

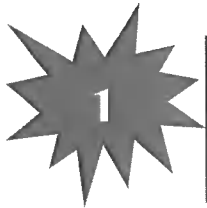
## Workshop #6- Resistance and Identity through Dance



The Afro-Latinos fusion and manifestation of their African musical and rhythmic DNA is apparent in its diverse cultural traditions in music and dance. These music and dances are visually exciting, powerful, arouses the senses, and entices you to move, feel and connect physically, emotionally, or spiritually. The African influence that we can see in the musical and dance traditions across Afro-Latin America have been the guide in recognizing the importance of heritage practices and maintaining cultural values.

These dances and rhythms have endured in major part due to the strong value and religious systems that are preserved in these Afro-descendant communities. The African influenced dances carry the polyrhythmic intensity, repetition, euphoric spirit of Juju and sakara music from the Yorubas, Nigeria and Yewe music from the Ewes, Ghana. These are sacred ritual musical practices that in crossing the Atlantic, have maintained its spirit. It also played and still plays the role of resistance, liberation, and oral cultural historian.

**Can you name some dances in your community or style of dances that you like?**



**Does the dance or dances you mentioned above have any special meaning, story, or cultural significance?**



NAME THAT DANCE.....working with a partner or in groups, use the website  
[www.afro-latinos.org](http://www.afro-latinos.org) to help unscramble these Afro-Latin regional dances



|                                                                                            |                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Afro-Latin Dance</b><br><b>From <u>Chile</u></b><br>_ U _ _ E _<br><b>#1</b>            | <b>Afro-Latin Dance</b><br><b>From <u>Brazil</u></b><br>S _ _ _ B _<br><b>#2</b>                          | <b>Afro-Latin Dance</b><br><b>From <u>Bolivia</u></b><br>_ _ _ _ Y _<br><b>#3</b>                                         | <b>Afro-Latin Dance</b><br><b>From <u>Venezuela</u></b><br>T _ _ _ _ _ R<br><b>#4</b>                            |
| <b>Afro-Latin Dance</b><br><b>From <u>Peru</u></b><br>M _ R I _ E _ A<br><b>#5</b>         | <b>Afro-Latin Dance</b><br><b>From <u>Cuba</u></b><br>_ _ _ _ _ U _ A<br><b>#6</b>                        | <b>Afro-Latin Dance</b><br><b>From <u>Puerto Rico</u></b><br>_ _ _ _ M _ _ _<br><b>#7</b>                                 | <b>Afro-Latin Dance</b><br><b>From <u>Garifuna</u></b><br>_ _ _ _ _ _ A<br><b>#8</b>                             |
| <b>Afro-Latin Dance</b><br><b>From <u>Colombia</u></b><br>C _ _ _ M P _ T _<br><b>#9</b>   | <b>Afro-Latin Dance</b><br><b>From <u>Panama</u></b><br>_ _ _ _ _ _ GO<br><b>#10</b>                      | <b>Afro-Latin Dance</b><br><b>From <u>Brazil</u></b><br>M _ _ _ U _ E L _<br><b>#11</b>                                   | <b>Afro-Latin Dance</b><br><b>From <u>Uruguay</u></b><br>_ _ _ _ _ _ DOM _ _ _<br><b>#12</b>                     |
| <b>Afro-Latin Dance</b><br><b>From <u>Cuba</u></b><br>_ _ _ _ _ B _ _<br><b>#13</b>        | <b>Afro-Latin Dance</b><br><b>From <u>Colombia</u></b><br>BULL _ _ _ _ _<br>_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _<br><b>#14</b> | <b>Afro-Latin Dance</b><br><b>From <u>Ecuador</u></b><br>M _ _ _ _ _ BA<br><b>#15</b>                                     | <b>Afro-Latin Dance</b><br><b>From <u>Dominican Republic</u></b><br>_ _ _ _ _ _ O<br><b>#16</b>                  |
| <b>Afro-Latin Dance</b><br><b>From <u>Brazil</u></b><br>C _ _ P _ _ _ IR _ _<br><b>#17</b> | <b>Afro-Latin Dance</b><br><b>From <u>Argentina</u></b><br>CANBOMBE<br>M _ _ L _ _ N _ A<br><b>#18</b>    | <b>Afro-Latin Dance</b><br><b>From <u>Mexico</u></b><br>_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _<br>De _ _ _ _ _ _<br>DIAB _ _ _ _ _<br><b>#19</b> | <b>Afro-Latin Dance</b><br><b>From <u>Cuba</u></b><br>O _ _ _ _ _ _ A _ _<br>(hint-their religion)<br><b>#20</b> |

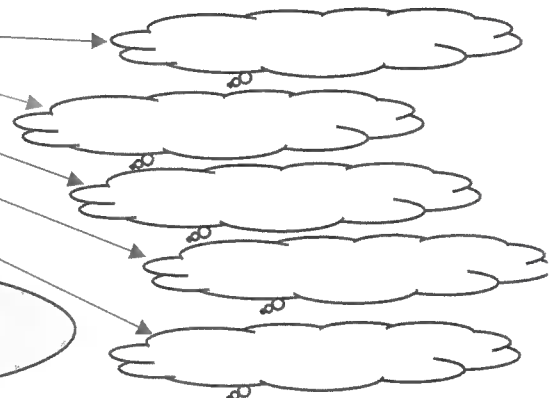
Choose 4 or 5 dances in a row (bingo style) from the chart above. Color the boxes. Write the name of your dances and the countries below. Go to your google classroom stream and click on the video links of each of your dances and write your impression of each dance below.



| Name of Dance        | Country              | Your Impression |
|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |                 |
| <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |                 |
| <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |                 |
| <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |                 |
| <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |                 |



Reflection- How are these dances a form of identity or resistance?





# Afro-Latinos

(Afro-CEF) African and Afro-Descendants Cultural and Educational Forum

## Workshop #7- The Door of Returns-The Orishas from Africa to the Americas

### Objective: Students will

- Discover the ancient Ifa religion of the Yoruba people of West Africa
- Uncover the diverse religions in Latin America that was influenced by Ifa
- Learn the term syncretism
- Discover the seven main orishas from Ifa that influenced the African based religions in Latin America

### Time: 1 Class period

### Materials/resources:

- Laptop/computer for internet search.... [www.afro-latinos.org](http://www.afro-latinos.org)
- <https://youtu.be/-ljsVaaDsMs>
- <https://scholar.library.miami.edu/emancipation/religion1.htm>
- Workshop #7 worksheet
- Pencils, markers and/or color pencils

### Procedure:

#### A. Opening

1. Students should be seated in groups of 3-4. Ask students to brainstorm in their group names of some of the world religions and to name the gods and goddesses of these religions.....groups share their thoughts.
2. Introduce today's lesson THE ORISHAS, an ancient West African religion from the Yoruba people that was brought to the Americas by the enslaved Africans. This religion has influenced the creation of similar religions in Latin America, principally Afro-based religions in Cuba, Brazil, Puerto Rico and Dominican Republic. Define the term syncretism and how it combined African-based religion and Catholic religion. Have students discuss how and why these Afro-based religions have endured in the Americas. Write the comments on the board.
3. Pass out activity #7 worksheet. Groups should have laptops/computers in their group. Have students look over the various Afro-based religions in Latin America

displaced on the chart. Tell students while watching the first video, to take notes of the seven main Orishas (spiritual forces) explained.

4. After video, groups should work together to complete the names, purpose and colors of the seven main orishas. On the board, draw seven circles with a main square in the middle with the name Las Orishas. Have volunteer students go on the board and write the names of the main orishas, color and purpose. Ask students what do the orishas remind them of and for them to form connection with what they already know.....example Oshun is similar to venus and Aphrodite etc....

5. Using the website [www.afro-latinos.org](http://www.afro-latinos.org) and <https://scholar.library.miami.edu/emancipation/religion1.htm>, students in their groups can complete the remaining activities together. Videos of the various orishas will be playing as students complete the activity.

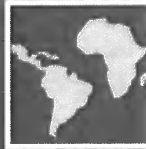
**B. Formative assessment- Completion of activity sheet and show understanding of the different Orishas by drawing presentation**

**C. Project Base Learning- Students continue work on project, while teacher discusses each project mission and completion steps with each student/group**

**D. Closing – Ask students which Orisha, they connected with and why**

**E. Enrich/Extend-**

- 1. Interview someone from the community who practices one of the African based religions from Latin America. Discover their perspective and share it with the class.**
- 2. Make a chart of 4 or 5 world religions and compare the similarities of the gods and goddesses to the Orishas.**



# Afro-Latinos

No Longer Invisible (Resistance, Identity, Remembrance)

## Workshop #7- The Door of Returns-The Orishas from Africa to the Americas

#1

### 1. Define –

African religions in the Americas have been fundamental in identity creation for Afro-descendants in the diaspora. These religions have been both a blessing and a curse at various times in history. They were often not accepted because of racialized negative perceptions. The fact that these African religious practices survived in its new form, is a testament of the power of traditions, remembrance, and identity.

The African religion that has been the most impactful and enduring in the Americas is the Yoruba religion, Ifa, also known as Orishas. The Yoruba is a language and the name of the people that speak it. They are from the west African regions of Nigeria, Benin, Togo, Sierra Leon, and Ghana. The Yoruba religion and traditions arrived at the American diaspora through the slave trade and has transformed to other religions and syncretized with Catholicism.

The Orishas are complex supernatural beings/spirits who acts as mediators between humans and the spiritual world. They can be compared to the angels of Abrahamic religions or the saints of Catholicism. Although they represent the divine, they possess humanlike qualities which makes them not perfect but relatable and practitioners can learn from them. They are governed by the supreme being Olorun/Olodumare.

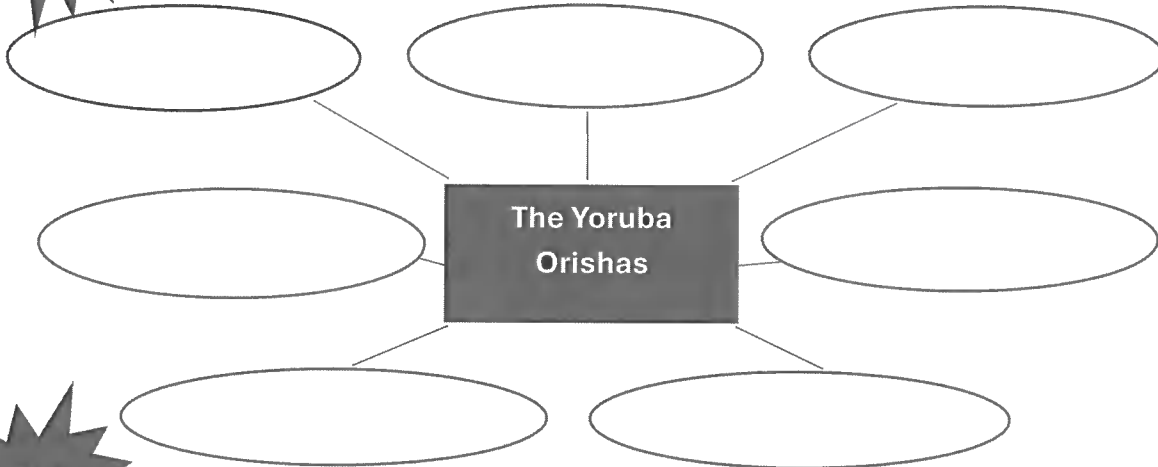
When the Yoruba slaves arrived at the Americas, they were not allowed to practice their religion. Many were forced to convert to Catholicism. They had to hide behind catholic saints to be able to practice their religion. They used the catholic saints to mask the Yoruba Orishas. This is called religious syncretism. This syncretism of religions can be seen in the religions of Cuba, Brazil, Puerto Rico, Venezuela and throughout Latin America.

|                                                        | African Influenced Religions in Latin America                                   |
|--------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Nigeria</b>                                         | <b>IFA or Orisa</b> (Yoruba religion that influenced the Afro-Latino religions) |
| <b>Brazil</b>                                          | -Candomblé-Umbanda-Xangô-Batuque -Catimbó -Macumba                              |
| <b>Cuba</b>                                            | -Lucumi-Santeria-Palo Mayombe (palo monte/Reglas de Congo)-Abakua-Espiritism    |
| <b>Colombia</b>                                        | -African ancestral syncretic spiritism                                          |
| <b>Dominican Republic</b>                              | -Dominican Vodou (Las 21 Divisiones/Los Misterios)                              |
| <b>Ecuador</b>                                         | -African ancestral spiritism                                                    |
| <b>Garifunas-<br/>(Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua)</b> | -Ancestral Spiritism                                                            |
| <b>Puerto Rico</b>                                     | -Lucumi-Santeria-Palo Mayombe-Espiritismo                                       |
| <b>Uruguay</b>                                         | -Umbanda                                                                        |
| <b>Venezuela</b>                                       | -African ancestral syncretic spiritism (The Cult of Maria Lionza)               |

## The Orishas from Africa to the Americas

#2

While there are numerous Yoruba orishas in the pantheon, we will focus on the 7 well known divine beings. While watching the video The Orisha Explained, fill out the following graphic organizer with the name, special powers, and colors of the seven orishas.....<https://youtu.be/-ljsVaaDsMs>



"Àṣẹ"  
(Aché,  
Axé)

#3

Connect the SEVEN Orishas with their syncretized catholic equivalent in the African diasporic religions of Santeria (Cuba, Puerto Rico, Venezuela), Candomblé (Brazil)  
<https://scholar.library.miami.edu/emancipation/religion1.htm>

| The Orishas- Orisa-Orixá (write the different variations of the orishas name) | The Catholic equivalent |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
|                                                                               |                         |
|                                                                               |                         |
|                                                                               |                         |
|                                                                               |                         |
|                                                                               |                         |
|                                                                               |                         |
|                                                                               |                         |

#4

Choose one of the Orishas that catches your attention or represents your energy

Which Orisha did you select?

What are the qualities and responsibilities of your Orisha?

What is the color, number, artifacts, foods etc... of your Orisha?

Compare this Orisha to a hero, other mythological pantheon deities, legend etc

Try to draw and color your Orisha

#5

Can you identify the Orishas?..... <https://youtu.be/5SIG8fkqCRg>



## Las Orishas



## Reflection

What are your thoughts about the Yoruba religion in the Americas and the pantheon of divine beings?  
How can this religion be viewed as IDENTITY or RESISTANCE in the Afro-Latino culture?



# Afro-Latinos

(Afro-CEF) African and Afro-Descendants Cultural and Educational Forum

## Workshop #8- Food as a form of Cultural Remembrance

Video- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NMYM7nyLYo8&t=1s>

### Objective: Students will

- Discover African influenced foods on Latin America
- Analyze the importance of food in the remembrance, bridging, and maintenance of culture
- Learn some recipes to share with family

**Time: 1 Class period**

### Materials/resources:

- Laptop/computer for internet search.... [www.afro-latinos.org](http://www.afro-latinos.org)
- Video link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NMYM7nyLYo8&t=1s>
- Workshop #8 worksheet
- Community experts- Puerto Rican cuisine
- Community expert- Cuban cuisine
- Community expert- Brazil
- Foods- fufu, tostones, picadillo, quimbombom, moqueca

### Procedure:

#### A. Opening

1. As students enter the classroom, have them form a circle around the table of food. Ask students to name some foods that trigger memory or has a strong meaning for them and their family...what are some foods that various cultures have and is tied with meaning...students will share their thoughts.....discuss the importance of food as sustenance, tradition, value, culture preservation.....often we learn a culture through its food.
2. Show short video about the palenqueras in Colombia and how they are maintaining their culture and identity through food.
3. After video, the community experts will share food from their culture and explain how the food has endured in their culture through “collective memory”,

which helps to connect them to their African roots. They will share their recipes and invite students to taste the products. Students can ask questions and/or share their experiences.

4. After tasting, students return to their group with laptops/computers. Each person will choose from a grab bag the name of an African influenced food and the Latin American country of origin. As a whole group, the class will create an interactive Afro-Latino cookbook with recipes, instruction, pictures, and a story of their experience. Once student receive the name of food and country, they should enter google classroom where slide formats for the cookbook has been created. Students can choose a slide and start filling in the information. They must use computer, website [www.afro-latinos.org](http://www.afro-latinos.org) and other resources to get their recipes and instructions. On the slide, they should include name of the food, heritage of the food example- Afro-Cuban, recipe, instruction and how they connect with the food. They should add a personal experience. This cookbook can also be done manually by having students write the recipe, illustrate it, then combine all the student's final product.

#### **B. Formative assessment- Completion of slide**

**C. Project Base Learning- Students continue work on project, while teacher and experts discuss each project mission and completion steps with each student/group**

**D. Closing – Have students share their experience about today's lesson through an exit ticket.**

#### **E. Enrich/Extend-**

**Students can practice preparing one of the dishes from the collective cookbook and share meal with family. Student should take picture of process and final product- family eating the meal together.**





## Afro-Latinos

(Afro-CEF) African and Afro-Descendants Cultural and Educational Forum

### Workshop #8- Food as a form of Cultural Remembrance

The enslaved Africans brought new cooking styles, techniques, items, knowledge, and re-memory of tastes. They brought creativity by using products and practices from the new world and connecting it with styles and flavors from Africa to form new culinary traditions. Unquestionably our senses keep traditions alive, and food is indeed involved in all the senses, this we can see in the African culinary imprint as it permeates through Latin American life sustenance- its food.

The African food influences can be seen in staple foods, spices, and flavorings across the region. The use of rice and rice cultivation which came across from the Sene-Gambia region during the 1500-1888 slave trade. The hearty use of the tuber root vegetables of yams-yuca-malanga, okra, sesame seeds, plantain, Jamaica, tamarind, banana, black eye beans and spices like ginger, garlic, onions, nutmeg, clove, cinnamon, coconut milk, palm oil and peppers are some of the main ingredients in Afro-Latino culinary traditions.

Video link - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NMYM7nyLYo8&t=1s>

1. What are some foods that remind you of something significant? What does that food remind you of?
2. What do you think collective memory means? What do you think cultural remembrances means?
3. How do you think food help a group of people remember things and values in their culture?
4. What are some foods that our **collective memory** helps in **cultural remembrance**?
- 5.

### African Influences Foods in the Americas



West African fufu



Cuban fufu



WF Okra



Afro-latin Okra



W. African & Latin American plantain



## **Whole Class Interactive Afro-Latino Cookbook Task**

**Choose a Spanish speaking country from a grab bag. Using the [www.afro-latinos.org](http://www.afro-latinos.org) website, research the African influenced food from that country. Select one of the food item. Go to your google classroom and open the cookbook google slide that has been created for the class. Choose a blank slide and complete the four steps- 1. Write the heritage name ex- Afro-Cuban, 2. Write the name of the food, 3. Write the recipe with measures and cooking instructions, 4. Write how you connect to that particular food, 5. Put picture of food, illustrations and designs.**



# Afro-Latinos

(Afro-CEF) African and Afro-Descendants Cultural and Educational Forum

## Workshop #9- Recognition, Resistance, and Identity Part 1

### Current Issues and Activism

#### Objective: Students will

- Learn about the current issues affecting the Afro-Latino communities in Latin America.
- Develop strategies for possible solutions to solving these societal issues against Afro-Latinos

#### Time: 1 Class period

#### Materials/resources:

- Laptop/computer for internet search.... [www.afro-latinos.org](http://www.afro-latinos.org)
- Workshop #9 worksheet
- Various video links

#### Procedure:

##### A. Opening

1. Write the terms quilombo, Palenque, cabildo, cimarron and revisit the definitions of these terms. Draw three circles on the board and write the words resistance, recognition, identity in each circle. In groups have students discuss how they would classify the words Palenque, quilombo, cabildo, cimarron.....as resistance? recognition? or identity? Students should discuss their reasons for their choice. Each group would share their views.
2. There are six short videos of around 2 minutes each showcasing various current Afro-Latinos issues across Latin America. As they watch each video and have a short discussion with their group, they will write a short reflection for each video.
3. After viewing the videos, groups will discuss the overarching themes in the videos and develop some possible solutions to help solve these problems.
4. On the board write current issues and solutions, as each group shares what they saw and their possible solutions, write them down on the corresponding board title.

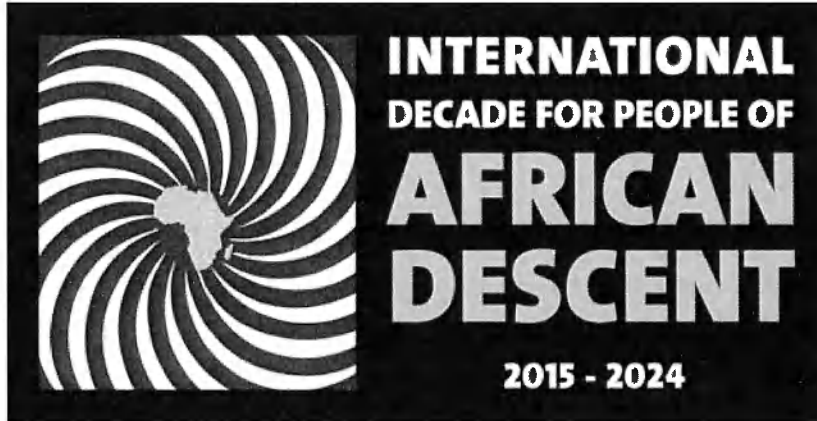
**B. Formative assessment-** Group shares current issues that were detailed and possible solutions.

**C. Project Base Learning-** Students continue work on project, while teacher discuss each project mission and completion steps with each student/group.

**D. Closing –** Exit ticket detail briefly the stage of their learning project.

**E. Enrich/Extend-**

Read about the United Nation Resolution 68/237, and give some examples of programs that have been established in support of the Decade of People of African Descent. The United Nation website to complete this task.





# Afro-Latinos

(Afro-CEF) African and Afro-Descendants Cultural and Educational Forum

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_

## 1 Workshop #9- Recognition, Resistance, and Identity Part #1

### Define

Quilombo \_\_\_\_\_

Palenque \_\_\_\_\_

Cimarron \_\_\_\_\_

Cabildo \_\_\_\_\_

United Nation Resolution 68/237 \_\_\_\_\_

2 How would you classify the defined words above, circle one of the words below?

**identity**

**resistance**

**recognition**

3 Why did you choose that word?

4 **CURRENT ISSUES- Watch the following short videos, after, write some of the issues that Afro-Latinos face. Write your comments in the boxes below.**

|                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                             |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Bolivia</b><br><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tp5o956z-80">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tp5o956z-80</a>                                    | <b>Argentina</b><br><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LFoIZoRiti4">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LFoIZoRiti4</a>   |
| <b>Cuba</b><br><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G_OzkISsyDo">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G_OzkISsyDo</a>                                       | <b>Mexico</b><br><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qvUBxSdZVzM">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qvUBxSdZVzM</a>      |
| <b>Garifunas (Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras)</b><br><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q65A9h3jd94">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q65A9h3jd94</a> | <b>Puerto Rico</b><br><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8uM83LNZmWs">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8uM83LNZmWs</a> |

#5

Reflection

**What conclusion can you make about current issues in Afro-Latin America? What are some possible solutions?**



# Afro-Latinos

(Afro-CEF) African and Afro-Descendants Cultural and Educational Forum

## **Workshop #10- Recognition, Resistance, and Identity Part #2**

### **Word cloud Activism!**

#### **Objective: Students will**

- Create a word cloud poster depicting experiences of diverse Afro-Latino heritage in Latin America to show recognition and cultural understanding.

#### **Time: 1 Class period**

#### **Materials/resources:**

- Laptop/computer for internet search.... [www.afro-latinos.org](http://www.afro-latinos.org)
- Workshop #10 worksheet
- Poster paper
- Color pencils and markers

#### **Procedure:**

##### **A. Opening**

1. As students settle down, tell them activity for today is to answer a CALL FOR ACTION. Each student will create a word cloud poster depicting the diverse Afro-Latino cultures.
2. Again to expose the students to different countries and cultures, students will pick their country from a grab bag.
3. Pass out the activity sheet #10 that details the steps to complete the word cloud poster. Websites are listed to help with the word cloud creation.

##### **B. Formative assessment- Completion of word cloud poster and display**

##### **C. Project Base Learning- Students continue work, peer edit and revision on project, while teacher discuss each project mission and completion stage with each student/group**

##### **D. Closing – Exit ticket.....brief detail on final stage of PBL before public presentation.**

**F. Enrich/Extend-** Students can design support posters, pins, t-shirts, write letters to support organizations, volunteer etc....recognizing and celebrating Afro-Latino heritages. Share product with the class.



# Afro-Latinos

(Afro-CEF) African and Afro-Descendants Cultural and Educational Forum

## Workshop #10- Recognition, Resistance, and Identity

### Word cloud Activism!

Word clouds are often used to analyze recurring themes and used as a teaching tool for helping develop students' content vocabulary, promotes higher levels in engagement and critical thinking, and optimal in classmate interactions and creativity. Art is the intent and reception of the delivery. Word cloud art will be used to display the researched recurring themes in Afro-latino discourse across the region.

1. Pick a region from below, using the [www.afro-latinos.org](http://www.afro-latinos.org) website, click the country flag on the website and research the main theme of current issues, trends, activisms, cultural artifacts, contributions etc of that region... by using the various links provided on the website

(Afro-Cuban, Afro-Argentine, Afro-Mexican, Garifunas, Afro-Colombian, Afro-Brazilian, Afro Costa Rican, Afro-Panamanian, Afro-Venezuelan, Afro-Ecuadorian, Afro-Peruvian, Afro-Bolivian, Afro-Chilean, Afro-Uruguayan, Afro-Paraguayan, Dominican, Afro-Puerto Rican)

2. Display your research findings with a word cloud creation ....in efforts to show recognition and give voice to the diverse afro-communities in Latin America. Make sure your first word is the name of the region/culture for example- Afro-Cuban or Afro-Peruvian. You can use any one of the word cloud generators below or use other familiar generators.

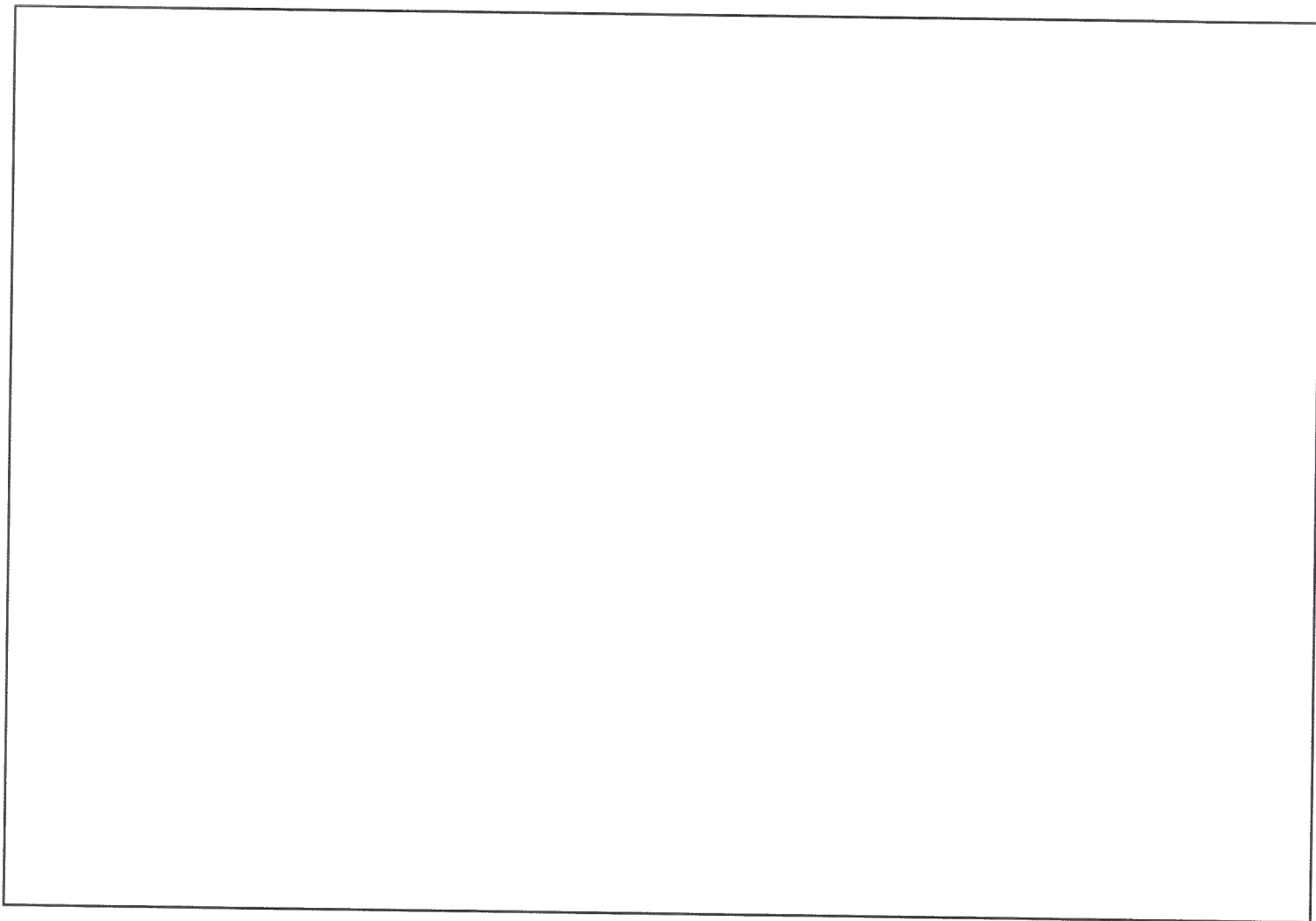
**Wordart**- <https://wordart.com/>

**Word It Out**- <https://worditout.com/>

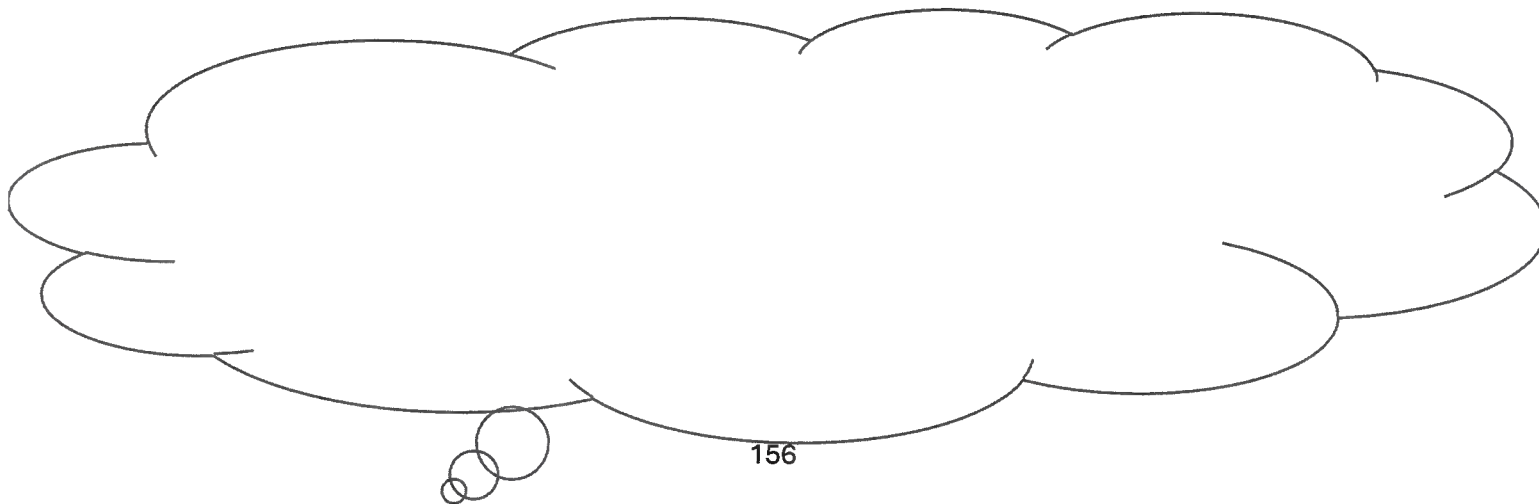
**TagCrowd**- <https://tagcrowd.com/>

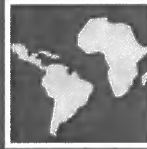
**MonkeyLearn WordCloud Generator**- <https://monkeylearn.com/word-cloud/>

- 3. Word Cloud Activism Art.....copy and paste your word cloud here and color/add more creative touches.**



- 4. How did this activity help you learn more about the various Afro-Latin communities, their contributions, current issues, and activism?**





# Afro-Latinos

(Afro-CEF) African and Afro-Descendants Cultural and Educational Forum

## Project-Based Learning Ideas and guideline for Students

**Project Name**

**Defining Question/Concerns**

### Suggested Project Ideas-Afro-Latin Perspective: Identity, Resistance, Recognition

- Historiography- any one of the Afro-Latin communities
- Heritage box- any one of the Afro-Latin heritages
- Jembe and Tambor- Power of the drums
- The Five Orishas- a recital
- Door of No Return to the Americas
- Myth of Mestizaje
- Leaders of the Afro-Latinos Resistance
- African Masks and Vejante Mascara de Santiago Loiza, Puerto Rico
- Quilombo Palmares, Brazil and Palenque San Basilio, Colombia
- Bomba, Saya, Marimba, Rumba- Dance as Identity
- Susana Baca, Chocquitown, Orishas, Celia Cruz- Music as Resistance
- Fufu, Quimbombo, Mofongo and beyond- Taste of Africa

**Length of time-**  
**Approx. Four weeks**

**Workshop-**  
**Each class for 40 minutes on various topics**

**Public Presentation Date-**



## Project Based Learning Presentation Rubric

|                                             | <b>At Standard</b><br><b>5-4</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <b>Approaching Standard</b><br><b>3</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>Below Standard</b><br><b>2-0</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Explanation of ideas and information</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-presents information clearly, concise, and logically</li> <li>-audience can easily follow</li> <li>-style for task, purpose and audience is appropriate</li> <li>-Addresses diverse perspective</li> </ul>                                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-presentation of information is not always clear and concise, logical</li> <li>-reasoning is sometimes hard to follow</li> <li>-style for task, purpose and audience may not be successful</li> <li>-attempts to diverse perspectives but not clearly</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-does not present information clearly and logically</li> <li>-lacks supporting evidence</li> <li>-difficult for audience to understand</li> <li>-Too little or too much information</li> <li>-style for task, purpose and audience is inappropriate for task</li> <li>-does not present diverse perspective</li> </ul> |
| <b>Organization</b>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-meet all requirements</li> <li>-has clear and interesting intro and conclusion</li> <li>-presentation is timed well</li> <li>-presentation is neither too short nor too long</li> </ul>                                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-meet most requirements</li> <li>-has intro and conclusion but not clear</li> <li>-presentation is timed well but may spend too much or little on a topic, a/v aid or idea</li> </ul>                                                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-does not meet requirements</li> <li>-does not have intro and/or conclusion</li> <li>- uses time poorly</li> <li>-presentation is too short or too long</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Eyes and Body</b>                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-keeps eye contact with audience most of the time</li> <li>-only glances at notes or slides</li> <li>-uses natural gestures or movements</li> <li>-looks poised and confident</li> <li>-wears clothing appropriate for the occasion</li> </ul>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-makes infrequent eye contact</li> <li>-reads notes or slides most of the time</li> <li>-uses few gestures or movements</li> <li>-shows some poise and confidence</li> </ul>                                                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-does not look at audience</li> <li>-reads notes or slides</li> <li>-does not use gestures or movements</li> <li>-lacks poise and confidence</li> <li>-wears clothing inappropriate for the occasion</li> </ul>                                                                                                        |
| <b>Voice</b>                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-speaks clearly not too quickly or slowly</li> <li>-speaks loudly enough for everyone to hear with varied tone and pace</li> <li>-rarely uses filler words</li> <li>-adapts speech for context and tasks</li> <li>-uses formal speech appropriately</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-speaks clearly most of the time</li> <li>-speaks loudly enough most of the time</li> <li>-uses filler words and inconsistent with adapting text</li> </ul>                                                                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-speaks quickly or slowly</li> <li>-speaks too softly to be understood</li> <li>-frequently uses filler words</li> <li>-does not adapt speech for text</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Presentation Aids</b>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-uses audio/visual aids or media that may add or distract from presentation or does not transition smoothly</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-uses audio/visual aids or media that may add or distract from presentation or does not transition smoothly</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-does not use audio/visual aids or media</li> <li>-attempts to use visual aid but distract from presentation</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                |

|                                           |                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Response to Audience Question</b>      | -answers audience questions clearly and completely<br>-seeks clarification, explains how the answer might be found when unable to answer a question | -answers some audience questions, but not always clearly or completely | -does not address audience questions, but not always clearly or completely<br>-goes off topic or misunderstands questions without clarification |
| <b>Participation in Team Presentation</b> | -all team members participate and contributed equally<br>-all team members are able to answer questions about the topic                             | -all team members participate, but not equally                         | -not all team members participate; only one or two speak                                                                                        |

(Rubric adapted from Buck Institute for Education)

**Total points \_\_\_\_\_/30 (participation without team)**

**At standard - 30-24    Approaching standard - 23- 13    Below standard - 12- 0**

**Total points \_\_\_\_\_/35 (participation in team)**

**At standard - 35-28    Approaching standard - 27- 15    Below standard – 14- 0**

## **Chapter Seven**

### **From Learning to Outcomes: Final Insights and Implications**

“What do you know about Afro-Latinos?” This simple question has driven the creation of this project for over a decade. The initial inquiry came from the stark silence of students, signaling a significant gap in their knowledge. Ten years later, when I posed the same question to a new group of students while launching the *Afro-Latinos: No Longer Invisible* unit, their continued lack of response reaffirmed the relevance, importance, and necessity of this project. This chapter outlines the implementation of the unit lesson plan, framed within the strategies of transformative multicultural education and project-based learning. It includes a detailed account of the outcomes, using data and student reflections, as well as documenting the learning process through photos that capture student engagement, collaboration, and interaction with the website created specifically for this unit.

#### **Student Population**

The lessons were carried out in five different classrooms at an International high school located in Germany, during the 2021-2022 academic year. The school, with a population of approximately 900 students, had 110 participants in this unit lesson, representing 13% of the student body. These students, ranging in age from 14 to 17, were enrolled in two Spanish Level 1 classes, two Spanish Level 2 classes, and one Humanities class (all of which were under my instruction). Additionally, two of the classes had the support of a paraprofessional to assist students with special needs. Each class lasted for 90 minutes every other day, totaling between 180 and 270 minutes per week. The unit lesson project unfolded over four weeks and included stages of pre-assessment, workshops, collaborative investigation, presentations, post-assessment,

and student reflections. The student participants came from a truly diverse backgrounds, encompassing differences in gender, race, class, ethnicity, nationality, religion, and socio-emotional and educational needs. This diversity enriched the learning experience, allowing for multiple perspectives during the collaborative learning process (Banks, 2015).

## **Unit Plan Framework**

The *Afro-Latinos: No Longer Invisible* unit is designed as a standards-based, cross-curricular, transformative multicultural education teaching guide. The unit is adaptable to various subjects, including English, history, humanities, social studies, Spanish and Portuguese language classes, as well as Latin American and African American studies. It consists of ten lessons or workshops, each involving interactive and collaborative activities, and a dedicated website ([www.afro-latinos.org](http://www.afro-latinos.org)) that was created to share the rich histories and cultural narratives of Afro-Latino communities across Latin America.

To ensure the lessons offer true transformative multicultural education, they must be approached with the genuine intention of telling Afro-Latino histories from their own perspective, free from judgment or bias. Students need the time and space to immerse themselves in these stories and connect the new knowledge to what they already know. The creation of knowledge cannot be rushed; it requires an environment conducive to deep reflection and meaningful inquiry.

The unit blends two educational strategies (transformative multicultural education and project-based learning) under the acronym OBATALA, which stands for: *observe meaningfully, big concepts, associations with others through analysis and critical thinking, thinking progressively, acceptance of diverse views, learning truthfully, agent of change*. These principles

are embedded throughout the unit and recur within the lessons. The fusion of these strategies benefits students by promoting 21st-century skills, including technological proficiency, collaboration, teamwork, problem-solving, and critical thinking. Additionally, it addresses diverse learning styles, encourages innovation, supports student autonomy, and promotes the construction and ownership of knowledge (Guo et al., 2020).

The curriculum is structured to transform the classroom into an Afro-Latino cultural center, creating a space for educational and cultural exchange that recognizes, shares and celebrates diverse perspectives. Afro-Latino history is not presented as an afterthought or a marginal element in the curriculum. Instead, the unit places the history, stories, people, and cultural contributions of Afro-Latinos at the forefront, emphasizing their vital role in the shaping of Latin American cultures.

The core objectives of acquiring these benefits and 21st-century life skills have been outlined and summarized. To effectively observe the outcomes and gather data on the acquired skills, the lessons and activities must be both actionable and measurable. Tools for measuring these outcomes demonstrate the students' learning process and the skills they have developed throughout the knowledge construction phase. There is a myriad of educational assessment tools available. In this project, the tools I used included observations, tests, interviews, questionnaires, rubrics, reflections, and the production of artifacts.

Additionally, to enhance data collection, I utilized a variety of methods such as website interaction logs, pre-assessments, post-assessments, individual and group reflections, and the gathering of student sample work. Formative assessments were further enriched through games, photographs of students' work, and observations of student engagement in teamwork, discussions, investigations, creative activities, and interactions with various resources. This

approach, guided by Bloom's leveled taxonomy of questioning (decoding, analyzing, applying, evaluating, and synthesizing) enables students to navigate through the learning process while simultaneously showcasing their cognitive development (Martirena, 2022).

## **Project-Based Learning Implementation**

There are five key steps in implementing an effective project-based learning (PBL) strategy, starting with a backward design approach that asks: "What is the destination, and how will students know when they have arrived?" To answer this, the first step is to introduce students to the PBL unit by presenting a rubric and having them define a guiding question. The rubric serves as a road map for students to understand their objectives and the knowledge they will need to acquire along the way. As Lamar et al. (2015) explain, "The end goal is clear from the beginning. Student learning is meaningful because they need to acquire content knowledge and skills in order to solve the problem, challenge, need, or issue that has been posed to them" (p. 125).

The next phase involves scaffolding, where the teacher provides targeted instruction, workshops, guest speakers, labs, activities, research opportunities, formative assessments, and lectures. This phase helps to fill the "need to know" gaps and offers concrete knowledge to move students toward completing their task. As John Hattie emphasizes, "Learning is hard and needs explicit teaching. It requires deliberate practice, concentration, persistence, and these are taught skills" (p. 67). Teachers play an enhanced role during this phase by providing feedback and direction, both at surface and deep levels, to guide students through the challenges of learning.

Following scaffolding, the benchmark phase allows both teachers and students to check in on project progress, offering feedback to help refine and improve the work. This process can

be informal and fluid “flow” or, for younger students, more structured and guided. After receiving feedback, students are encouraged to revise, correct, and continue their work, making the feedback process proactive, productive and ongoing. The fourth step involves presenting the final product to an audience of teachers, peers, and community members. The form of presentation can vary, from multimedia to physical objects or performances (Guo et al., 2020; Lamar et al., 2015).

The final step in the process is reflection, where students analyze their learning journey, attitudes, and emotions regarding the experience. Reflection can be personal or collective and presented in various forms, including writing, discussions, or digital platforms. This important step not only deepens students' understanding of what they have learned but also nurtures self-awareness, allowing them to identify areas for improvement and growth in future learning experiences.

## **Workshops Overview**

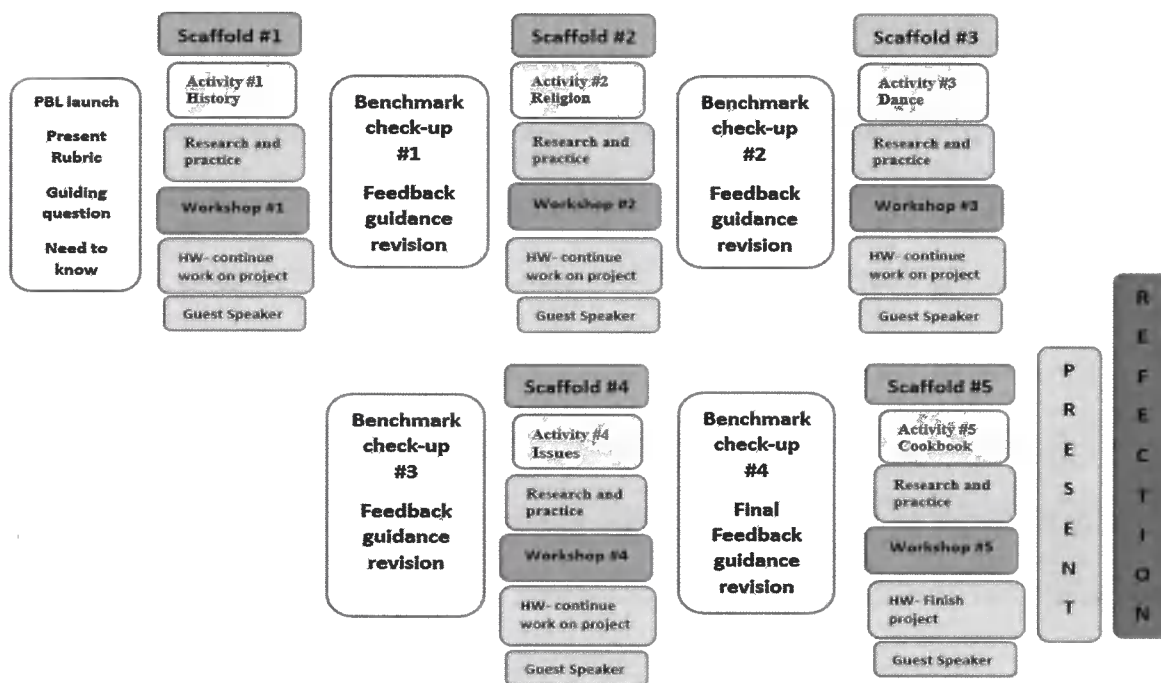
The *Afro-Latinos: No Longer Invisible* unit was designed to consist of ten lessons/workshops, five of which were implemented over a four-week period. The first step involved transforming the classroom into an Afro-Latino cultural center, providing a platform for learning about the diverse voices in Afro-Latin America. This space was intended to nurture student comfort in exploring and connecting with the cultures in various ways. One wall was transformed into a collective reflection board, displaying different Afro-descendant cultures in Latin America, alongside the slogan *Afro-Latinos: No Longer Invisible* and the global themes of recognition, resistance, and identity. This transformation emphasized the importance of the unit and encouraged engagement with Afro-Latino histories and perspectives.

Next, the unit was introduced with a launch video embedded on the class website, sparking curiosity, questions, and brainstorming discussions among students. Following this, students completed a computer-based pre-assessment on the topic. Afterward, group discussions revealed that most students had little prior knowledge of the subject and were concerned about their grades, although they were reassured that the assessment was not graded.

The rubric for the project-based learning final product was then introduced, outlining various project options. Students were encouraged to identify questions or problems they wanted to explore in relation to the unit. Although they may have lacked initial knowledge on their topics, scaffolded workshops, activities, and research were designed to support them in developing their projects, with teacher and peer feedback facilitating this process.

Due to time constraints, five workshops were selected from the ten available in the unit plan: Afro-Latino origins, religion, dance, food, and current issues. These workshops provided ample time for student development, participation, research, practice, feedback, presentations, and reflections. The choice to include origins was fundamental, as students needed to understand the historical context and genesis of Afro-Latino cultures. The inclusion of religion focused on African-based spiritual practices, which are the cornerstone of Afro-Latino communities, showcasing the enduring legacy of African worship and syncretic beliefs. Music, dance, and food were selected because of their universal appeal-these cultural platforms attract and engage people, inevitably teaching them about the values and traditions of a heritage group. It is a reminder that in travels, festivals, cultural displays, and other settings, "essentialist" forms of artifacts such as music, dance, and foods are always prominently showcased. These forms of artifacts act as cultural ambassadors, inviting people to explore and learn while enjoying themselves.

**Figure 22 –Afro-Latinos Unit Lesson Project-Based Learning Format**



## Workshop Overview

**Workshop 1: Origins and Diversity** - The implementation of origins workshop posed both challenges and rewards. Initially, students struggled with the activity worksheet, which was unclear and caused confusion. This led to a redesign, making the activity more concise, accessible, and suitable for all educational levels. Additionally, errors and missing links on the corresponding website, [www.afro-latinos.org](http://www.afro-latinos.org), required updates to ensure a smoother learning experience. After these adjustments and modifications to the lesson length, the subsequent classes ran smoothly, with students fully engaged in exploring the origins and history of Afro-Latinos through the website.

This workshop was crucial in helping students define key concepts such as origin, diaspora, diversity, ethnicity, and nationality. As they navigated the website and collaborated in groups, they not only learned about the history and identity of Afro-Latinos but also began to

reflect on and draw connections to their own backgrounds. Through this exploration, students formed a deeper understanding of their own identity in relation to the themes of cultural diversity and migration.

**Figure 23- Workshop #1**



(Students completing origins activity and interacting with the corresponding unit website-www.afro-latinos.org)

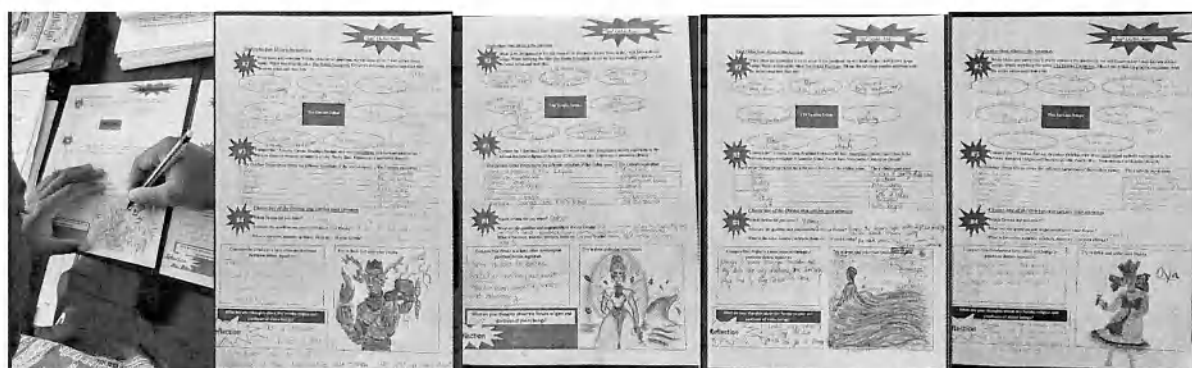
### ***Workshop 2: The Door of Returns - The Orishas from Africa to the Americas***

The *Door of Returns – The Orishas from Africa to the Americas* workshop was a highly interactive and imaginative exploration of the significance of religion in Afro-Latino cultures. Students examined how African-based religions, especially those rooted in the Orishas of the Yoruba tradition, served as tools of resistance, identity preservation, and cultural continuity in Latin America. The symbolism of the *Door of No Return* (representing the forced migration of enslaved Africans) was compared with the concept of the *Door of Returns* (*spiritual and literal return to African*), symbolizing cultural reclamation and resilience as African spiritual traditions, like Santería and Candomblé, endured and evolved in the Americas.

Students were particularly captivated by the syncretic nature of these Afro-Latino religions, comparing the Yoruba mythologies of Santería and Candomblé to those of the ancient Greeks, Romans, and Egyptians. They also explored the modern-day connections between

Orishas and popular culture, likening Orishas such as Oya and Shango to superheroes like Storm and Thor. This blending of mythology and contemporary figures sparked students' imaginations and deepened their engagement with the material. Interviews and reflections revealed that this workshop, with its personal and educational significance, became the students' favorite activity in the unit.

**Figure 24- Workshop #2- Student Participant**



(Students completing the Orishas activities. These are student's drawings of the five most common Orishas from left to right Ogun, Shango, Ochun, Yemanja, and Oya)

***Workshop 3: Resistance and Identity Through Music and Dance*** – The Afro-Latino Music and Dance activity introduced students to twenty popular Afro-Latin American regional dances and their accompanying music. After a lively discussion about students' favorite dances and the possible meanings behind them, the class worked in groups to complete a word search game that highlighted the names and origins of several Afro-Latino dances from across Latin America. Through archival videos and contemporary documentaries, students learned about the cultural significance of dances such as Puerto Rico's Bomba, Chile's Tumbe, Brazil's Capoeira, Uruguay's Candombe, Cuba's Rumba, and many more.

Music and dance were presented not just as cultural expressions but also as forms of resistance and identity preservation in Afro-Latino communities. These art forms, rooted in

African traditions, allowed enslaved and oppressed people to maintain a sense of autonomy, express resistance, and forge communal bonds. Students connected these historical traditions to their own cultural experiences, finding personal meaning in the enduring influence of Afro-Latino music and dance.

After engaging with the website resources, students were invited to try Bomba skirts, where I taught them basic techniques for using the skirts as a form of expression. Additionally, my friend, Jude Papaloko, a master drummer, taught the students virtually some basic drumming techniques, explaining the cultural meanings behind each sound. As some students practiced drumming, others focused on learning Bomba dance techniques or continued their research.

**Figure 25- Workshop #3- Student Participants**



(Students practicing basic Djembe drumming and Bomba dance from Puerto Rico)

***Workshop 4: Food as a Form of Cultural Remembrance*** was a highly engaging and interactive activity that allowed students to explore the influence of Afro-Latino cuisine across Latin America. The staple ingredients and national dishes made with rice, plantains, okra, manioc, and spices reflect the enduring legacy of Afro-Latin American culinary traditions, preserving their collective palate memory and cooking techniques. Students examined the connections between West African fufu and its adaptations in Latin America, such as Cuban fufu,

Puerto Rican mofongo, Mexican mogo mogo, Garifuna machuca, and Dominican mangu, among others. These variations demonstrate the persistence of similar food traditions across the region, highlighting the significance of food memory in shaping Afro-Latino cultural identity and connecting it to each student's personal heritage.

As part of the interactive activity, students selected a heritage culture and designed a recipe page for a collaborative cookbook, which would later be shared with teachers. They were provided with a Google Slides template, where each student had editing rights to create their recipe, complete with ingredients, instructions, and reflections on the cultural importance of the meal. The process was dynamic, with the slides projected on a large screen, allowing students to view and discuss each other's work. A parent from Colombia also contributed by bringing a traditional dish of rice, plantains, and picadillo for students to sample, while explaining the diverse uses of plantains and their role as a symbol of culinary identity throughout Latin America.

**Figure 26- Workshop #4- Student Participants**



(Students' cookbook, teachers and students displaying cookbook, students enjoying food from Afro-Colombian parent, two recipe pages from cookbook produced by students)

***Workshop 5: Recognition, Resistance, and Identity – Part 1 – Recognition, Resistance, and Identity*** activity received moderate to high levels of attention and engagement from students. In this activity, students were introduced to various contemporary challenges faced by Afro-Latino communities, such as poverty, lack of heritage recognition, discrimination, underrepresentation, struggles for land rights, nationhood, and marginalization. Students were encouraged to reflect on how these issues impact the daily lives and cultural identities of Afro-Latinos across Latin America. The activity also highlighted the diverse movements of resistance and mobilization across the region, with a particular focus on the *United Nations' declaration of the Decade for People of African Descent*.

This exploration emphasized how the fight for recognition and representation is deeply connected with the acts of resistance by Afro-Latino communities, as they strive to reclaim their heritage and assert their identity in the face of systemic oppression. Students discussed how the lack of heritage recognition and exclusion from national narratives perpetuates marginalization and limits access to resources. In groups, students brainstormed potential solutions and strategies to address these pressing issues and promote change. Their discussions underscored the need for increased representation, fight for land rights, and recognition of Afro-Latino contributions to national histories and identities.

Galvanized by the conversation, one group of students decided to respond directly to the *UN's Call for Action*, a platform designed to encourage global participation in the movement for Afro-descendant rights. They wrote letters to the *UN Decade for People of African Descent*, expressing their concerns about the challenges facing Afro-Latino communities and showing solidarity with the global fight for justice, equality, and recognition. In their letters, students called attention to the systemic discrimination and lack of representation that Afro-Latinos face,

while advocating for the protection of cultural heritage and the advancement of land rights for marginalized communities.

This activity empowered students to see themselves as potential change agents. By participating in this exercise, they not only became more informed about the global issues affecting Afro-descendant communities but also took an active role in addressing these challenges. Sample letters from the students are presented in the appendix.

**Figure 27- Workshop #5- Student Participants**



(Students engaging in Afro-Latino activism efforts, UN call for action and fundraising- photo by Lynn Anyanwu)

## **Benchmarks and Feedback**

There were four allocated benchmark sessions in the project format. These sessions allowed time for peer and teacher reviews, providing feedback on content, product, and performance progression. Feedback sessions can be structured, offering students clear criteria to guide reflection and revision, or they can be flexible and responsive to individual needs. A more structured approach is often used with younger students or those with special needs, as it provides the necessary guidance for their progress.

Moreover, feedback styles and norms vary depending on the teaching approach, the students involved, and the learning environment. The feedback protocol employed in these

sessions was adapted from El Education and Jorge Valenzuela's critique protocol, which is typically timed and structured. However, the term "critique" was removed to avoid defensiveness, and the timed element was eliminated to ensure more authentic and thoughtful responses. The remaining elements of the protocol were designed to foster meaningful and valuable feedback. The five-step process was as follows:

**Step 1:** Students presented their draft product.

**Step 2:** Peers asked clarifying questions, and students responded.

**Step 3:** Peers shared observations, using a kind tone and focusing on positive feedback.

**Step 4:** Peers offered suggestions for improvement, providing ideas, resources, and guidance.

**Step 5:** The presenting student took notes, reflected, and identified clear steps to complete the project.

The peer group feedback sessions created a collaborative atmosphere where students shared their work and received detailed, constructive feedback from their peers. Each student had a voice, and the process emphasized support and teamwork. The role of the facilitator was to ensure that students felt safe sharing their work and found value in the feedback provided. Guiding questions were used to help students focus on areas for improvement and explore research methods to address project concerns. Most important, feedback needed to be relevant and aimed at driving progress toward task completion. As Sadler (1989) points out, effective feedback "focuses not only on the task performance but also on the process and self-regulation needed to complete it" (p. 121). This understanding of feedback was central to guiding students toward completing their projects, as it helped them develop the skills necessary to monitor their own progress.

The feedback environment was open and flexible, with students making use of the available space to work in groups. Some sat and discussed their work, while others worked standing or used computers to make real-time corrections. Feedback was an ongoing and frequent process throughout the unit, fostering an engaging and dynamic learning experience.

**Figure 28- Peer and Teacher Feedback**



(Teacher and peer feedback, correction, and revision)

## **Research, Collaboration, and Community Partnerships**

The process of learning and knowledge construction is a shared responsibility between the teacher and the students. The teacher acts as a facilitator, guiding students through lessons, activities, workshops, feedback, and guiding questions, while demonstrating that learning is a skill that must be taught. The student's role involves their level of receptivity, valuing the material, and engaging actively to enable knowledge creation. The benefits of project-based learning are evident in the way students demonstrate Phil Schlechty's levels of engagement, including high authentic student engagement, commitment, and ritual compliance. Students are highly engaged because they are “immersed in work that has clear meaning and immediate value to them” (Heick, 2021, p. 3). For those students who are authentically engaged, the value is often intrinsic; for others, in the realm of ritual compliance, the value may be more extrinsic, such as aiming for a good grade.

In addition, students working in teams and collaborating to produce a public product develop essential skills in group work, project management, and navigating interpersonal dynamics, which are crucial for both professional and personal life. The images below demonstrate students collaborating in partnerships or groups, researching, practicing, and actively engaging in the tasks for their public products. Three groups partnered virtually with expert teachers from diverse Afro-Latino communities. As emphasized by John Hattie in his TED Talk, “the notion of expertise is powerful in this (teaching) business” (Hattie, 2013). Therefore, involving community experts in educating students is invaluable.

Three community experts played a key role in coaching students, helping to close learning gaps and guiding them toward product completion. One of these experts, Capoeira master Bizum from Salvador, Bahia, Brazil, taught students the basic movements of Capoeira and discussed its importance as a cultural artifact of resistance and in maintaining Afro-Brazilian identity. Haitian artist Jude Papaloko from Miami, Florida, taught students about Jembe drumming, explaining the meaning of various sound patterns and how drums served as a form of communication both in Africa and in the Afro-Latin diaspora. Dance teacher Mariel da Costa from Puerto Rico introduced students to the popular Bomba dance, explaining the significance behind the movements and its role in Afro-Puerto Rican identity and consciousness.

These partnerships represent a vital component of transformative multicultural education, as involving community members in the learning process fosters authenticity and brings real-life experiences into the educational space. Through these relationships, students find greater value and meaning in their learning, leading to higher motivation, deeper engagement with the content, and a sense of ownership over the knowledge they acquire.

**Figure 29- Student Collaboration**



(Students in teams researching and collaborating for their public product)



(Students in teams completing public product, collaborating with virtual expert teachers Jude Papaloko from Miami for drumming and Mariel da Costa from Puerto Rico for dancing)



(Student practicing with virtual expert teacher Jude Papaloko for drumming and Bizum from Brazil for Capoeira)

## **Public Product Presentation**

The public artifact presentation represents the culmination of students' willingness to engage in sustained inquiry and self-directed learning. These presentations are not private; rather, they serve as a display of students' hard work and persistence, shared with the public. The event took place in an open-concept classroom where movable walls were opened to create space for students, teachers, and staff to form an audience. A variety of products were showcased, ranging from Afro-Latino cultural performances in dance and drumming to spoken word, multimedia presentations, culture box displays, interactive projects, letter-writing, school supply donation

initiatives, and more. The presentations spanned five classes over five days. School faculty, students, and staff were invited to participate in a gallery walk where the products and artifacts were on display. During the gallery walk, attendees were encouraged to write brief reflections and post them on a collective reflection wall, fostering an environment of shared feedback and reflection.

Documentation images below capture the final outcomes of some of the public products. The student and teacher audience remained attentive, engaged, and responsive throughout the presentations. The diversity and dynamism of the products created an immersive experience, with audiences moving between gallery exhibits, sampling Afro-Latin cuisine, learning about the meaning behind traditional drum patterns in African and Afro-Latin communities, and listening to live drumming performances. Audience members were also captivated by the vibrant Bomba and Tumbe dance performances, which highlighted these dances as forms of resistance and expressions of identity consciousness.

In addition to cultural performances, audience members were encouraged to contribute school supplies. These supplies will be sent to schools in Afro-Mexican communities in the Costa Chica region near Oaxaca, Mexico. Another group of students set up a letter-writing station where audience members could write letters to the United Nations' Decade for People of African Descent. This activity aimed to engage students in global conversations, encouraging them to make their voices heard in advocating for the recognition and contributions of Afro-Latino peoples, communities, and their impact on national heritage across Latin America. As noted by Wiggins and McTighe (2005), “public products encourage students to be more thoughtful and thorough because they know that their work will be viewed by a wider audience”

(p. 154). The public nature of this artifact presentation added significance to the students' efforts and fostered a deeper level of engagement and ownership of the learning process.

**Figure 30- Public Product Presentation**



(Student multimedia presentation on palate memory and Afro-Latin cuisine, drumming performances and presentations on talking drums, Capoeira demonstration)



(Student multimedia and spoken word on the Orishas, Okra in Americas presentation, Food as cultural remembrance and tasting of Quimbombo Puerto Rican okra stew)



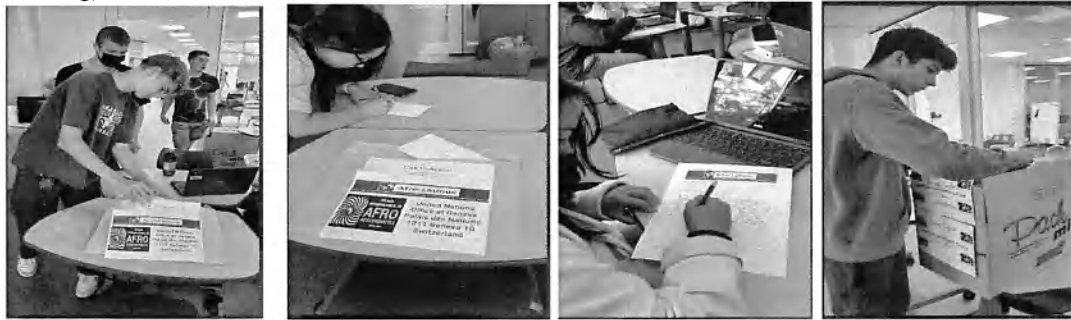
(Student interaction with products and Afro-Brazilian culture box in the Gallery Walk)



(Student interaction with products and artifacts in the Gallery Walk )



(Student performance presentations- Brazilian Capoeira, West African Djembe drumming, and Puerto Rican Bomba dancing)



(Students as change agents writing to the UN and collecting school supplies for Afro-Mexican communities in Coast Chica, Mexico)

## Reflections and Interviews

The reflective process plays an integral role in teaching and learning. It helps teachers better support students and foster the "impact" culture that Hattie promotes, while also aiding students in realizing their cognitive growth and acquired knowledge. Borton's (1970) and Driscoll's (1994) *"What?" "So What?" "Now What?"* model of reflection is a popular framework that encourages students to analyze their learning experiences, form connections, and determine what actions to take next. This model is cyclical, dynamic, and should be used regularly to guide reflection.

Throughout the Afro-Latino unit, students were regularly asked to reflect on their learning, showcasing the connections they made with the topics after workshops, feedback sessions, and their research. The reflection process was not treated as a singular event but as an ongoing part of metacognitive development. Various modes and platforms were used for

reflection, with the most collaborative being the *collective reflection wall*, where students posted their comments and thoughts using post-it notes. Students were encouraged to share something they learned or observed about the Afro-Latino heritages, workshops, and activities on this wall. This low-stakes environment allowed them to express themselves freely without fear of judgment. They could see their comments displayed alongside those of their peers and engage with one another's reflections, fostering a shared learning experience. By posting reflections, reading others' contributions, and engaging in discussions, students demonstrated the depth and cyclical nature of the reflective process. In addition to the collective wall, students participated in semi-structured interviews with prompt questions, completed Google forms, contributed to the unit's blog, and reflected on every written assignment. Some students even used post-it notes to capture "AH-HA" moments throughout the learning process.

While a teacher's goal is to witness students' cognitive development, equally important is encouraging each student's socio-emotional growth and relational capacity. During the reflection stage, the hope was that students would deepen their self-awareness and build stronger connections with their peers and teachers, with the intrinsic outcome of learning about diverse Afro-Latino cultures contributing to their character development. Encouragingly, these outcomes were observed, as students frequently spoke about how they connected what they were learning to their own life experiences.

In line with Freire's dialogical approach, students engaged in meaningful conversations with peers, teachers, community artists, and parents, allowing them to connect socio-emotionally with the content and their environment, which led to more intrinsic learning outcomes. Students explored ways to promote awareness and recognition of Afro-Latino people, culture, and contributions. Activities such as letter-writing to the UN, school supply collections, cookbook

creation, celebrating diverse cultures through artifacts, and collaborating with artists and parents within the Afro-Latin communities exemplified Borton's and Driscoll's *"Now What?"* phase of reflection. Students were intrinsically motivated by their strong connection to the content, which inspired them to act and become change agents.

The collective reflection wall and semi-structured interviews, documented in the images below, were particularly revealing. As I walked through and read the reflections, I observed clear evidence of students' metacognitive development. The interaction with the wall was fluid and inviting. I commented on several post-its that posed questions and left encouraging remarks on many observations and connections. Additionally, I posted prompt questions near the interview station to encourage further reflection. If students wished to engage in another reflection platform, they could go to the interview station with a partner to share their thoughts. One student operated the video camera while the other shared their reflection, and they switched roles once the first student finished. As Hattie (2012) notes, "Reflection allows students to deepen their learning, making it more personal and meaningful by connecting new knowledge to prior experiences" (p. 45). This iterative reflection process empowered students to not only understand what they learned but also apply it in real-world contexts, thus enhancing their overall educational experience.

In addition, the reflective interviews below revealed common themes that directly align with Research Question #3 and its sub-questions, highlighting how students demonstrated their learning outcomes, recognition of Afro-Latino cultural practices, and transformative thinking. All students indicated that they had no prior knowledge of Afro-Latino people, culture, and contributions, which is expected at the start of a unit. Most students enjoyed the unit and found the topic relevant, forming personal connections. Many expressed a deep interest in the African-

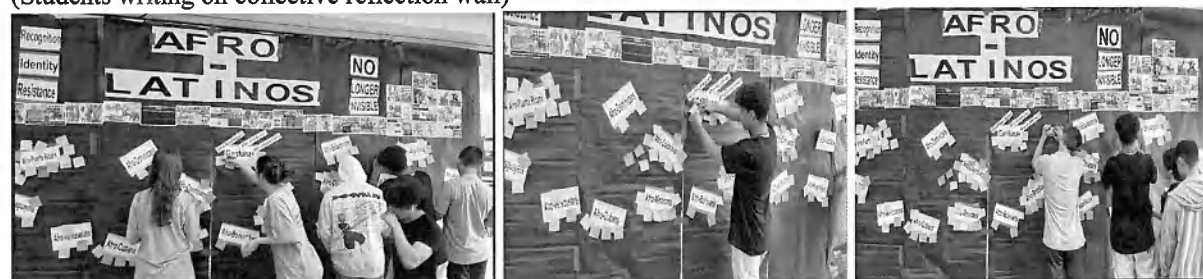
influenced religion of the Orishas, describing it as intriguing due to its connection with their personal interests. The collaboration with community artists allowed students to engage with various cultural artifacts, whether it involved eating the food, practicing the dances, producing the music, or learning from a native Orishas practitioner. These experiences made the learning process real, authentic, relatable, and valuable. Many of the students' reflections were profound in their connections and revelations, affirming the positive impact of the Afro-Latino unit on their educational experience.

### Figure 31- Student Reflections

Student shared their reflection and they exchanged position when the first student finished.



(Students writing on collective reflection wall)



(Students interacting with the collective reflection wall)

Below are edited interviews from thirty students across the five classes that participated in the unit. The interviews were filmed using a classroom video camera, and students managed the interview stations, allowing for autonomy and freedom of expression. Prompted questions were taped to the desk for guidance. The interview station was available throughout the unit, and

students could participate at their own pace. The prompted questions were: *"What did you know or not know about Afro-Latinos? What did you learn from this unit? What were your favorite activities, and why? What are ways to recognize Afro-Latino people, culture, and contributions? How was your overall experience during this unit?"*

The following interviews capture some students' reflections after studying Afro-Latino culture and history in Spanish and Humanities classes. Students shared their initial knowledge, discoveries, and reactions to learning about Afro-Latino contributions to Latin American culture, with comments highlighting the most resonant aspects of the unit.

#### **Reflection interview #1 - Spanish 1**

- **Student 1:** I didn't know that more than 50% of the people taken from Africa were brought to Latin America, not just North America.
- **Student 2:** Yeah, I always thought African slaves were mainly going to North America, but it turns out most went to Latin America.
- **Student 3:** I also didn't know that half of the Africans from the slave trade went to Latin America. It was really surprising to me.
- **Student 4:** I didn't know most of the slaves went to Brazil and then to Colombia. That amazed me.

Students expressed surprise at learning that a significant percentage of Africans enslaved in the transatlantic slave trade were taken to Latin America, reshaping their prior understanding. This insight sparked an exploration of how Afro-Latino culture influenced various aspects of Latin American societies, such as food, music, religion, and traditions. For example, several

students were captivated by the Orishas, learning about these African deities and their cultural significance. Students connected the Orishas with the Christian saints, noting how enslaved Africans masked their gods with Christian figures to preserve their religion.

The students also reflected on the activities that allowed them to engage deeply with Afro-Latino history, including cooking, drum projects, and learning traditional dances. **Student 1** found the culinary aspects, such as discovering Afro-Venezuelan sancocho, particularly enjoyable. **Student 3** highlighted the importance of food in understanding a culture, stating, “You learn a lot about people and traditions when you eat their food.” The engagement with Orishas and other Afro-Latino cultural traditions helped students appreciate the resilience of these cultures under oppressive conditions.

#### **Reflection interview #2 - Humanities**

- **Student 2:** I didn’t realize how many hardships Afro-Latinx people faced. They’re often unrecognized.
- **Student 1:** I didn’t know about the lack of worldwide representation for Afro-Latinx communities. The variety of foods from these cultures was fascinating.

Students from the Humanities class discussed their surprise at the lack of representation and recognition of Afro-Latinx communities. They noted the importance of spreading awareness through educational platforms and media, reflecting a growing desire for broader cultural representation. One of the students highlighted that "normalizing" Afro-Latino contributions in society is key to increasing visibility.

### Reflection interview #3 - Spanish 2

- **Student 2:** Before this unit, I didn't know much about Afro-Latinos. I didn't realize how deeply they influenced Latin American culture—dishes, dances, and more.
- **Student 1:** I didn't know racism was so prevalent in Latin American countries. It's not something that's talked about a lot.

Students noted that they had little prior knowledge of Afro-Latino contributions, and many were surprised to learn how pervasive racism is in Latin America. They reflected on the importance of teaching these topics in schools and making the content more widely available. One student suggested, “We need to uplift Afro-Latino voices and make sure they're represented in media and classrooms.”

The interviews across various classes revealed a collective recognition of the underrepresented contributions of Afro-Latino communities in Latin American history and culture. Many students were astonished to learn that the majority of Africans brought to the Americas during the slave trade were sent to Latin America. This newfound awareness led to a deeper engagement with Afro-Latino cultural practices, particularly those rooted in African traditions like the Orishas and traditional dances. For many, the experiential learning activities, such as cooking and drumming, were the most impactful, allowing students to connect with the content on a personal level.

As Hattie (2012) argues, “engaging students through relevant content and authentic activities leads to deeper understanding and retention of material” (p. 78). The combination of hands-on experiences and reflective discussions contributed to students' understanding and appreciation of Afro-Latino contributions. The students consistently expressed a desire for more

comprehensive representation of Afro-Latino culture in education and media, suggesting that including these topics more prominently in school curricula would promote greater awareness and recognition of Afro-Latino history and its influence on society.

## **Key Findings and Interpretations**

In applying the Afro-Latinos curriculum guide, a series of significant findings emerged from both the workshop sessions and student engagement, this demonstrates the curriculum's effectiveness in encouraging a depth of understanding and proactive engagement with Afro-Latino heritage. These findings are from the workshop: recognition of diversity, Afro-Latino contribution, African cultural influences, socio-political struggles, personal connections with identity and heritage, empathy, inspiration for action and a shift in perspective. These findings were structured around the key research questions, which provided a framework for analyzing the curriculum's impact. Following are the research questions and how the findings answered the question.

### ***Research 1: What do students know about the history and culture of the Afro-Latino population?***

**Findings:** One of the most prominent outcomes was the recognition of the diversity within Afro-Latino communities. Students gained an awareness of the variety of experiences and identities that Afro-Latinos represent across Latin America and the Caribbean. Additionally, the curriculum emphasized the significant contributions of Afro-Latinos to the wider cultural landscape, particularly in politics, the arts, and social justice movements, it helps students appreciate the immense historical and contemporary roles Afro-Latinos play.

Another key finding was the recognition of African cultural influences within Afro-Latino cultures. Students realized how African traditions, languages, and practices continue to shape the cultural landscape of Afro-Latino communities. Furthermore, the workshops fostered an increased awareness of the social and political struggles faced by Afro-Latinos, both historically and in modern contexts.

Likewise, students began to reflect on their own identities and gained a deeper appreciation for the diverse experiences within Afro-Latino communities, while those with ties to the African diaspora or Latin America experienced a newfound pride in their heritage. The curriculum also heightened students' empathy, as they became more aware of the historical and contemporary struggles faced by Afro-Latinos, leading to a stronger emotional connection to issues of race and social justice. Cultural exchange was another key outcome, with students engaging in meaningful dialogues that promoted mutual understanding and respect for Afro-Latino traditions. Most important, the curriculum inspired students to take action, as evidenced by their participation in initiatives like letter-writing campaigns and school supply drives to support Afro-Latino communities. Finally, many students experienced a significant shift in perspective, challenging preconceived notions about Afro-Latino history and culture and leading them to think more about issues of representation.

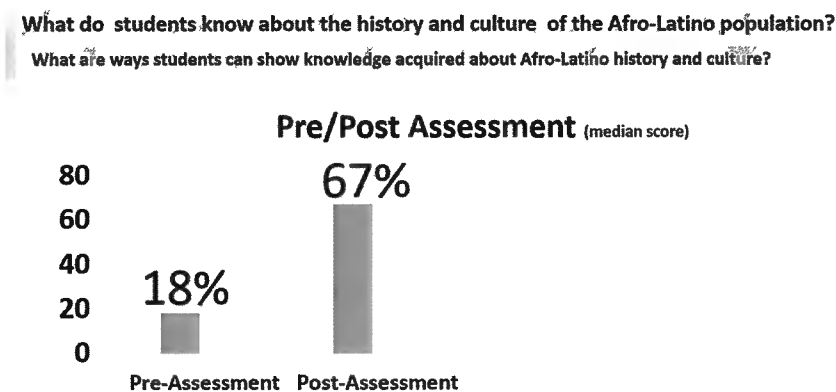
***Research questions 2: What do students know about the history and culture of the Afro-Latino population? and What are ways students can show knowledge acquired about Afro-Latino history and culture?***

**Findings:** Student learning outcomes were assessed through pre- and post-tests, which were designed to address the research questions. The pre-test results revealed a median score of 18%, indicating that students had limited prior knowledge of Afro-Latino history and culture.

However, after completing the curriculum, the post-test results showed a marked improvement, with a median score of 67%. This significant increase in scores demonstrated that students not only gained a solid understanding of Afro-Latino heritage but also developed the ability to effectively articulate and share their knowledge.

In terms of how students could demonstrate their acquired knowledge, several methods were observed throughout the curriculum implementation. One of the most prominent ways was through cultural exchange, where students engaged in discussions and presentations that encouraged the sharing of Afro-Latino cultural practices and traditions. These activities underscored the importance of cultural exchange as a means of promoting mutual understanding and respect among diverse communities. Additionally, the curriculum inspired students to consider how they could take concrete actions in support of Afro-Latino communities, highlighting the curriculum's ability to motivate students to engage in social activism.

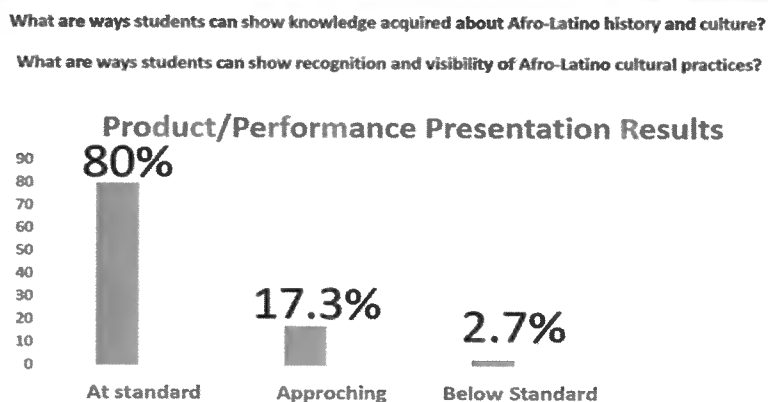
**Figure 32- Pre and Post Test results**



*Research questions 3: What are ways students can show recognition and visibility of Afro-Latino cultural practices? and What are ways students can demonstrate transformative thinking and perspective impacted by knowledge gained from the Afro-Latino workshops?*

**Findings:** The students also participated in Project-Based Learning (PBL) presentations, evaluated using a detailed rubric, which addressed the research questions. The results of these evaluations showed that 80% of students met the standard, 17.3% were approaching the standard, and 2.7% were below the standard. These findings indicated that most students were able to effectively demonstrate their understanding of Afro-Latino history and culture, as well as their ability to recognize and make visible Afro-Latino cultural practices. The PBL presentations, which included creative performances, written work, and multimedia projects, served as concrete evidence of students' engagement and learning.

**Figure 33- Product/Performance Presentation Results**



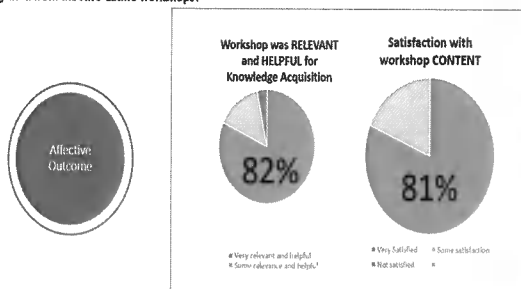
***Research question 4: What are ways students can demonstrate transformative thinking and perspective impacted by knowledge gained from the Afro-Latino workshops? Part 1***

**Findings:** One of the most critical outcomes of the curriculum was the demonstration of transformative thinking and proactive engagement. The affective outcomes from the workshops revealed that 82% of students found the content relevant and helpful for knowledge acquisition, while 81% expressed satisfaction with the Afro-Latinos curriculum guide. These responses reflected the workshops' success in not only shifting students' perspectives but also deepening their understanding of Afro-Latino history and culture.

Students demonstrated their transformative thinking through various initiatives that reflected a commitment to taking action. For example, they organized a letter-writing campaign directed to the United Nations Decade for People of African Descent Committee, advocating for greater visibility and support for Afro-Latino communities. Additionally, students coordinated a school supply donation drive for an elementary school in Livingston, Guatemala, demonstrating their willingness to support Afro-Latino communities beyond the classroom. Another notable initiative was the creation and sale of an Afro-Latino cookbook, with proceeds going toward mailing the donated school supplies. These actions illustrated the curriculum's ability to foster a sense of responsibility, empathy, and global citizenship among students, as they applied their learning in real-world contexts.

**Figure 34- Affective Outcome, UN writing and Afro-Latino Cookbook**

What are ways students can demonstrate transformative thinking and perspective impacted by knowledge gained from the Afro-Latino workshops?



## Research question 5: What are ways students can demonstrate transformative thinking and perspective impacted by knowledge gained from the Afro-Latino workshops? Part 2

**Findings:** The reflections from the students showcase various ways in which transformative thinking and shifts in perspective was demonstrated following the Afro-Latino workshops.

### Reflections

*Student 1- "...This lesson affected my views and mindset about other cultures by making me wonder the history about their cultures, the struggles they went through, and their religion."*

*Student 2- " This lesson overall changed how I think the slave trade forever. It also changed how I view my culture for the rest of my life."*

*Student 3- " I am Afro-Latino, so I've always had connection to the culture. I learned a lot though. I never knew there was so many of us. "*

*Student 4- "...In this lesson, I learned a lot about the history of Afro-Latinos. It was interesting to see how different cultures blend together to form new ones and I'd be willing to see how other syncretic cultures were formed."*

*Student 5- "...this made me less confused about my history and gave clarity to my half Afro-Latino side."*

*Student 6- "...I am grateful for this lesson and excited to learn more about different cultures."*

*Student 7- "...The Afro-Latino culture has really opened my eyes to the contributions of theirs and other different cultures around the world."*

*Student 8- "...Overall, this lesson has helped me understand the extent of the Transatlantic slave trade, and to embrace the cultures brought to the America from the forced migration."*

*Student 9- "...This lesson has affected my views and mindset about other cultures because I didn't have a good understanding of what Afro-Latino culture was before, but now I understand it and I hope to learn more."*

*Student 10- "...This lesson on Afro-Latinos helped me gain an understanding for identity, within different cultures, and compare my culture to this, for a broader understanding."*

*Student 11- "...My connection is I see myself more connected with being Afro-Latina, as a woman of Panamanian decent."*

*Student 12- "...This lesson has taught me that there is so much more to my Afro-Puerto Rican heritage that I have yet to figure out. I hope that I can continue to learn things to get closer to my ancestry than I have ever been before."*

*Student 13- "...Before this lesson, I only had the view of the Latin Americans since my father is Honduran, but now I know beyond the surface of what Afro-Latinos are going through. It changed my perspective on how I see different cultures in Latin America."*

*Student 14- "As a person of African descent, I valued this lesson, as it allowed me to learn about others of African descent. Learning about a diverse range of cultures and experiences is integral in becoming a well-rounded individual, and learning about Afro-Latino culture has opened my eyes to a new way of perceiving the world."*

These reflections are grouped and connected to the key findings of the workshops. The following are key summaries of the reflection and their connections to the findings.

### **Recognition of Diversity and Afro-Latino Contributions (Students 7, 9):**

Students gained a greater appreciation for the diversity within Afro-Latino cultures and their contributions to society. Reflections like "opened my eyes to the contributions" (Student 7) demonstrate transformative thinking, as students now recognize the global influence of Afro-Latino culture.

### **Awareness of African Cultural Influences (Students 2, 8):**

Students also deepened their understanding of the African roots of Afro-Latino culture, particularly the transatlantic slave trade's impact. Comments such as "changed how I view my culture for the rest of my life" (Student 2) and "embrace the cultures brought to America from forced migration" (Student 8) show a connection to history and its ongoing significance.

### **Understanding Socio-Political Struggles and Empathy (Students 13, 6):**

The workshops promote empathy for the socio-political struggles of Afro-Latinos. Students, like Student 13, expressed a perspective on race and identity in Latin America, as seen in "changed my perspective on how I see different cultures." This reflects a critical awareness of the challenges faced by Afro-Latino communities.

### **Personal Connection with Identity and Heritage (Students 3, 5, 11, 12):**

Many students found a deeper connection to their Afro-Latino heritage, using insights from the workshop to strengthen their sense of identity. Reflections like "I see myself more connected with being Afro-Latina" (Student 11) and "I hope to continue to learn things to get closer to my ancestry" (Student 12) show how the knowledge helped students explore and affirm their cultural backgrounds.

### **Empathy and Cultural Exchange (Students 1, 6, 10):**

The workshops also inspired students to become more curious and empathetic toward other cultures, encouraging them to reflect on histories and experiences outside their own. Reflections like "wonder about other cultures, the struggles they went through" (Student 1) demonstrate a shift in mindset and openness to learning.

### **Inspiration for Action and Perspective Shift (Students 14, 7):**

Some students were motivated to continue learning and potentially take action based on their newfound understanding. Comments like "opened my eyes to a new way of perceiving the world" (Student 14) show how the workshops inspired not just intellectual growth but also a readiness to engage more actively with the world.

Incorporating Afro-Latino history and culture into the 6-12 Foreign Language (FL) Spanish and Portuguese curriculum offers significant implications for both students and educators. It broadens students' perspectives and nurtures inclusivity. This curriculum challenges traditional narratives that often marginalize Afro-Latino contributions. To merge Afro-Latino representation in curricular texts and resources normalizes the presence of diverse cultural narratives, which in turn enhances students' understanding of Latin American heritage. This inclusive approach encourages appreciation for diverse groups and cultures and helps strengthens self-identity, and cultivates a sense of belonging among students, especially those of Afro-Latino descent.

Moreover, integrating Afro-Latino culture within the curriculum provides educators with the tools necessary to effectively teach these often-overlooked historical narratives. Likewise, providing professional development in cultural studies ensures that teachers are well-prepared to blend these contributions into their lessons. This approach aligns with the wider goals of multicultural education, which encourages cultural awareness, cross-cultural understanding, and sensitivity among students.

Furthermore, research consistently supports the value of implementing ethnic and multicultural studies in school curricula. For example, Garcia (2022) emphasizes that ethnic

studies enhance student engagement and academic achievement. Likewise, Bawa et al. (2019) from Purdue University demonstrate that multicultural education strategies promote educational equality and creates a positive multicultural attitude. Additional studies from Europe and Turkey also affirm that including cultural education into language teaching improves cross-cultural understanding, motivation, and cultural competencies (Chaika, 2023; Gene & Bada, 2005). These findings underscore the alignment between the Afro-Latino curriculum and the goals of transformative multicultural education.

### **Contributions, Limitations and Recommendations**

The creation of the Afro-Latino curriculum guide is a notable contribution to the field of Afro-Latin Studies, it provides a structured resource for educators in grades 6-12. It is supported by institutions such as the Afro-Latin American Research Institute at CUNY (2019). This guide offers lesson plans, activities, and an accompanying website, with a focus on the contributions of Afro-Latino communities in both the Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking worlds. As such, it enriches both foreign language and cultural studies by providing a more comprehensive view of Latin American history and culture.

Despite these contributions, the development and implementation of the Afro-Latino curriculum have faced some limitations. The COVID-19 pandemic posed challenges, including restricted travel to Afro-Latino communities and limited in-person collaboration with community members. Additionally, the curriculum's reliance on digital resources may prove difficult for classrooms with limited access to technology. Furthermore, teacher knowledge gaps and concerns about oversimplifying or stereotyping Afro-Latino topics have also hindered full-scale implementation. Nevertheless, teachers in Global Studies, Spanish, Humanities and Language

Arts courses have found ways to integrate elements of the curriculum into their existing lessons, which demonstrates the adaptability of the material.

Looking ahead, future studies and recommendations for the Afro-Latino curriculum should focus on amplifying the voices of Afro-Latin American women, expand Afro-Latino content in Spanish and Portuguese textbooks, and enhance teacher training and professional development. Schools should collaborate with Afro-Latino communities to create a truly representative educational environment that mirrors the rich diversity of Latin American cultures.

## **Conclusion**

*The Afro-Latinos: No Longer Invisible* curriculum guide effectively combined transformative multicultural education with project-based learning, leading to both cognitive and emotional growth in students. The integration of Afro-Latino culture into the 6-12 Foreign Language curriculum serves as a powerful decolonization tool that challenges erasure and counters anti-Blackness within Latin American contexts. This inclusive educational approach breaks down stereotypes, promotes diversity, and encourages critical thinking. Most importantly, it empowers students by providing them with a deeper understanding of their heritage, instilling pride, and recognizing their important role in shaping history. Through this transformative lens, students are better equipped to appreciate their cultural identities and to engage with the world around them in a meaningful way.

Through public presentations, reflections, and community partnerships, students not only demonstrated their grasp of Afro-Latino culture but also actively participated in meaningful social action. They engaged with their learning in collaborative, creative ways, forming a deep connection to the content. This kind of transformative education inspired students to use their

newfound knowledge to affect positive change, bringing once invisible stories of Afro-Latinos into the light, where they can be seen and valued. This project exemplifies how education can inspire not only intellectual growth but also social awareness, nurturing the next generation of informed and empowered individuals.



## Notes

1. The (see notes) markers refers to excerpts from authors research paper that was used in the unit lesson plan website [www.afro-latinos.org](http://www.afro-latinos.org). Author completed research paper document for the chapters in 2021 before the website creation. As a result, author used excerpts from the history, cuisine, music/dance sections of the research paper for website content. Markers of “see note” labeled on sessions of the text, denotes authors similar texts used in the website creation content.
2. Author embedded the “voice of color” interviews within the paper instead of placing it in the appendix section, to give space and center stage for the participants authentic experiences.



# Appendix #1-Afro-Latino Unit Website Sample Screen shot Pages

[www.afro-latinos.org](http://www.afro-latinos.org)

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[BLOG](#)
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## THE RECONNECTION OF AFRICANS & AFRO-DESCENDANTS IN LATIN AMERICA

They are people with rich diverse histories & traditions that developed the Americas and contributed to the rich tapestry of this land. Their histories did not start with slavery. They are not invisible.

[WATCH NOW](#)

## THE AFRO LATINO CONNECTION

Click To View Country info

Uruguay
 Brazil
 Argentina
 Peru
 Puerto Rico

## History

Africa, the 'cradle of civilization' houses the second largest continent with 1.3 billion people in fifty-four countries. There are well over a thousand ethnic groups who speak more than three thousand languages and linguistic variations living in land rich with 30% of the planet's mineral resources.

[LEARN MORE](#)

## HISTORY

### CRADLE OF CIVILIZATION

Africa, the 'cradle of civilization' houses the second largest continent with 1.3 billion people in fifty-four countries. There are well over a thousand ethnic groups who speak more than three thousand languages and linguistic variations living in land rich with 30% of the planet's mineral resources. Africa, with two and half million years of African consciousness that researchers reference as the birthplace of humanity. Its pre colonial empires, kingdoms, civilizations, dynasties of the Nok, Badarians, Egyptians, Nubians, Kush, Ethiopia, Songhai, ...

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## African Influences

African music and dance is a spontaneous eruption of cultural expression of self and traditions. The Afro-Latinos fusion and manifestation of their African musical and rhythmic DNA is apparent in its diverse intangible cultural traditions in music and dance.

[LEARN MORE](#)

## Resistance & Identity Consciousness

Unquestionably there is still a stigma surrounding Blackness in Latin America with over 500 years of African oneness in the Americas. The African influences in Latin America's cuisine, music and dance, religion, identity and socio-cultural landscape is astounding yet complex. They have been marginalized and placed in a double exposure. Currently NGOs, activists, academics, artists and other groups have been actively working to better the social-political and economic conditions of Latinos of African descent.

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## Religion & Spirituality

African religions in the Americas have been fundamental in identity creation for Afro-descendants in the diaspora. These religions have been both a blessing and a curse at various times in history. They were often not accepted because of racialized negative perceptions and the hegemonic criticisms from the Catholic church. The fact that these African religious practices survived in its new form, while others such as Islam did not, is a testimony of the power of traditions and memory. These Africanized religions with its variations, rituals, traditions and histories continue to transform and expand and reconnect with practitioners in Africa.

These religions united the enslaved Africans that were brought from all west Africa and as far east Africa as Mozambique- diverse groups, languages, cultures, traditions- through desperate oppression and pain. These religious practices helped to heal, restore them physically, spiritually, socially and mentally. It helped them to

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## Culinary Traditions

The Africans that were forcibly brought to the Americas to work the land under brutal conditions imparted their culinary traditions on the fabric of the Afro-descendant memory palate all across Latin America. In working the land- cultivating, harvesting, reaping, creating and storing their food source- their culinary palate was formed. These palate traditions were formed because of availability of the type of foods in their environment; their prior knowledge of preparing these foods and adapting to their situation by creatively creating dishes that communicated and described their histories, cultures, values and belief system.

Though African's culinary stamp in Latin America menu is not recognized, acknowledged and kept 'invisible', many of the national featured dishes originated from these same marginalized Afro-Latino communities. Today these national dishes are a national pride and symbolizes a movement towards resistance to hegemony of ideals. They speak of pride of identity and pride of recognition. Food helps in the transition, connection and remembrance of a people's identity. It tells the history of a narrative. It is the connection to the cultural, historical and spiritual which

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## AFRICAN INFLUENCES

### Music and Dance

African music and dance is a spontaneous eruption of cultural expression of self and traditions. The Afro-Latinos fusion and manifestation of their African musical and rhythmic DNA is apparent in its diverse intangible cultural traditions in music and dance. These music and dances are visibly exciting, powerful and arouses the senses, enticing you irresistibly to physically, emotionally or spiritually move, feel and connect.

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## Appendix #2-

### Afro-Latino Student Created Cookbook for Teachers- Sample Pages



The Africans that were brought to the Americas to work the land, imprinted their culinary traditions on the fabric of the Afro-descendant memory palate across Latin America. In working the land-cultivating, harvesting, reaping, creating and storing their food source- their culinary palate was formed. These palate traditions were formed because of availability of the type of foods in their environment, their prior knowledge of preparing these foods and adapting to their situation by creatively creating dishes that communicated and described their histories, cultures, values and belief system. Though the Africa's culinary stamp in Latin America menu is not recognized, acknowledged, and kept "invisible", many of the national treasured dishes originated from these same marginalized Afro-Latino communities. Today these national dishes are a national pride and symbolizes a movement towards resistance to hegemony of ideals. They speak of pride of identity and pride of recognition. Food helps in the creation, connection and remembrance of a people's identity; it tells the (hi)story of a people. It negotiates the socio-cultural intersectionalities which results in the formation of a palate's "collective memory".

The enslaved Africans brought new cooking styles, techniques, items, knowledge and re-memory of tastes. They brought creativity by using products and practices from the new world and connecting it with styles and flavors from Africa to form new culinary traditions. Unquestionably our senses keep traditions alive and food is indeed involved in all the senses, this we can see in the African culinary imprint as it permeates through the Latin American life sustenance- food.

The African food influences can be seen in staple foods, spices and flavorings across the region. The use of rice and rice cultivation which came across from the Seno-Gambia region during the 1500-1888 slave trade. The heavy use of the tuber root vegetables of yams-yuca-malanga, okra, sesame seeds, plantain, Jamaica, tamarind, banana, black eye beans and spices like ginger, garlic, onions, nutmeg, clove, cinnamon, coconut milk, palm oil and peppers are some of the main ingredients in Afro-Latino culinary traditions. When you experience the foods in many of the Afro-Latino communities across the region, you are in essence experiencing a taste of West Africa.

We hope you enjoy this colorful, delicious, diverse culinary legacy of Afro Latin America. AXE y Buen Provecho! With love, Senora Anyanwu and her Spanish 1, Spanish 2 and Humanities Classes.



#### Afro-COSTA RICAN

##### Name- Gallo pinto

**Recipe:** Meat all in a large skillet over medium-high heat until sizzling. Saute chopped bell pepper and onions until peppers are soft and onions are translucent, about 6-8 minutes. Add minced garlic and cook for 1 minute, until fragrant. Add black beans, reserved cooking liquid and Salsa Lizano stirring to combine. Simmer for 5 minutes, until slightly thickened and little bit of the liquid is evaporated. Toss in cooked rice and cook until heated through and most of the liquid is absorbed, but not dry, about 3-5 minutes. Stir in chopped chicken. Season to taste with additional Salsa Lizano (we added about a tablespoon extra).

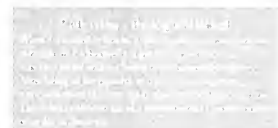
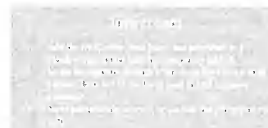
- Ingredients:**
- 2 tablespoons light-tasting oil (vegetable, extra virgin, canola)
  - 1 red bell pepper, chopped
  - 1 small onion, chopped
  - 2 cloves garlic, minced
  - 2 cups cooked black beans, in 3/4 cup reserved cooking liquid
  - 5 1/4 cup Salsa Lizano
  - 2 cups cooked rice, preferably day-old and chilled
  - 1/4 cup chopped fresh chicken



#### Reflection

My Mom and I loved this recipe so much when we were young. It was a staple in our house. I love it because it's so easy to make and it's so delicious. I love it because it's so easy to make and it's so delicious. I love it because it's so easy to make and it's so delicious.

Slide By Abby Belote



#### Cuba

**Ingredients:**  
Plantain  
Vegetable/Canola oil  
Water  
Garlic

*In my grandparents' house in Chicago, my grandma used to make tostones. She would take the right amount of tostones to eat. She would use the right amount of tostones to eat. She would use the right amount of tostones to eat.*

By: Abby Belote

#### Tostones

**Directions:**

1. Cut the ends off the plantain, and use a knife to cut through the skin of the plantain, lengthwise. Slice top to bottom, try to cut to cut through the skin, as you don't want to lose the bottom portion, which will serve as the base.
2. Cut the plantain into pieces about 1/2 inch thick.
3. Fill a large heavy-bottomed skillet with oil, and heat it to medium-high.
4. Heat the oil until it is hot, and then add the plantain pieces.
5. Fry the plantain pieces until they are golden brown, and then remove them from the oil.
6. Drain the plantain pieces on a paper towel, and then season them with salt.
7. Fry the plantain pieces again, until they are golden brown, and then remove them from the oil.
8. Drain the plantain pieces on a paper towel, and then season them with salt.

#### Garifuna

**For Instant Pot**

Add coconut oil, onion, garlic, ginger, and sweet bell pepper to the pot. Sauté 3-4 minutes until onion is soft.

Add plantains, sweet potatoes, and tomatoes.

Whisk together the coconut milk, ground annatto (achiote), and chicken broth concentrate. Add coconut milk mixture and oregano to the pot. Bring up to a boil.

Set to 4 minutes on high pressure. When time is up, do a quick pressure release.

#### Tapado

**Ingredients:**

- 1 tablespoon refined coconut oil
- 1/2 cup red onion, sweet onion, or shallot, chopped
- 1 sweet bell pepper, chopped
- 1 tablespoon ginger minced (about 1" ginger root)
- 1 teaspoon garlic minced (about 3 cloves)
- 1 green plantain, peeled and cut in 1/2" slices
- 1 medium sweet potato, peeled and cut in chunks
- 1 cup dry tomatoes, no chopping
- 1 cup lite coconut milk, see notes below
- 1 tablespoon chicken or fish broth concentrate, see notes below
- 1 teaspoon ground annatto or achiote
- 1 tablespoon fresh oregano leaves or 1 teaspoon dried
- 8 ounces firm white fish fillet
- 8 ounces shrimp, peeled and deveined
- Chopped for garnish
- sea salt and fresh ground pepper

*"I have never made this dish before, but it looks beautiful! I love it!" - Lucas Garcia*

## Appendix #3- UN Student Letter Writing- A Call for Action

### Letter #5-Student from Humanities Class



**Afro-Latinos**

(Afro-CEF) African and Afro-Descendants Cultural and Educational Forum

[www.afro-latinos.org](http://www.afro-latinos.org)

To whom it may concern:

In Humanities we are studying the cultures and religious practices of people across the world. Lately we have been studying the Afro-descendants living in Latin America. We have learned of their struggles for recognition, identity, and resistance among their fellows, from the time of their arrival in the Americas until now. The African diaspora has faced racism for centuries and they want to finally come out of invisibility. Despite this, they have contributed to and influenced music and other aspects of the world popular culture over the years. I think that a day of recognition for these underrecognized ethnicities, from Afro-Brazilians to Afro-Chileans, is a great idea. Each of these Afro-Latinos have a unique culture with a rich history and they deserve to be recognized. This letter is our way of contributing to the discussion on the topic of racism and equality, and it is an honor to do so. Thank you, the reader, for hearing this voice.

Best regards, Ashton.

Letter #6-Student from Spanish 2 and Humanities Class



**Afro-Latinos**

(Afro-CEF) African and Afro-Descendants Cultural and Educational Forum

[www.afro-latinos.org](http://www.afro-latinos.org)

6/1/22

To whom it may concern:

I am studying Afro-Latinx culture in both Humanities and Spanish at this high school in Germany with Ms. Anyawel. I have learned that despite massive amounts of oppression, Afro-Latin people have managed to thrive and create their own identity and cultures. They have represented themselves through artistic movements. Afro-Latinos constantly face invisibility, discrimination, erasure, identity consciousness, and marginalization. While there is no easy answer for this type of oppression, a step-by-step approach can be taken. Afro-Latino representation is necessary to change the perspectives of the upcoming generations. Unfortunately, the problems and issues that Afro-Latinx's face will not be solved overnight, but representation is a small step we can take towards a solution.

Sincerely,  
Madisyn Sauls

## Appendix #4- Dr. Mann FULL TEXT

### Puerto Rico/Dominican Republic

#### Interview with Dr. Ryan Mann Hamilton PhD-Afro-Descendant-Caribbean Professor at City University of New York

*My name is Ryan Mann Hamilton. At one point I considered myself and defined myself as an Afro-Latino. My mom is black of Dominican descendant and my dad is white. Right now, I define myself as an Afro-Caribbean. Partly because as I have looked into my past and understood different migrations and movements my family has made- coming from the United States as African Americans then moving to Haiti and later to Dominican Republic, some parts of my family from Cuba and I was born and raised in Puerto Rico. So, as you see, I have a mixture of cultural places and things that I incorporate into myself.*

*Thinking of race for example, I prefer to talk about experiences perhaps. Growing up in Puerto Rico, Puerto Rico being the island in the Caribbean with perhaps the most population of white, whiter folks. I always saw myself as different, and folks always pointed out to me this difference regarding my skin color. I'm not saying there aren't black folks in Puerto Rico but that was always made known to me. So earlier on I started reading Malcolm X and it had a very deep impact in how I define myself. I grew up listening to reggae. Bob Marley and Peter Tosh were my greatest heroes and thinking that and reading about Nelson Mandela and taking sort of a diasporic outlook even though I did not know what diaspora meant or was. That is how I embarked about thinking about myself, as in particular a black male.*

*My first experience in the United States was when I came here in 1998 direct from Puerto Rico. I went to California to do my undergrad. I just assumed being a Black Puerto Rican that I could fit into both- I could be a Latino and I could be Black. I did not have to choose one or the other. So, I was made known, or it was made known to me very early on that I had to be one or the other. Off course my choice was to say no, that I can be both and that I am both. 53*

*Partly because in the context of California, there are mostly Latinos from Mexico, Central America, and such. So, the presence of Blacks within those societies is there, though not acknowledged as such.*

*Obviously, my experience on the east coast have been very different. Living in New York the last four years, I could go walk down the neighborhood, and people would automatically talk to me in Spanish because they know I am Latino, and they could see those cultural traits as well. So, it is very different context in terms of where you are, how you present yourself but also how you see yourself. So, when folks talk about race, actually I have a lot of friends who I tell them I'm black and they say no you are not. I tell them what do you mean? How can you tell me what I am? And they said you are not black because you are Latino, you are Puerto Rican. I say Puerto Rican is a culture, a nationality. For example, I cannot explain that my mom is Dominican, and my dad is American does that make me less Puerto Rican because of that or more Dominican or American. Why do I have to choose? And why do people have to tell me what I am? One of the things that*

*I've always been adamant about is that I define myself and I define my life. So even the term Afro-Latino, even though I accepted it at one point in time I sort of resist it now as well because in thinking about the way it has broken down. Thinking about the Afro portion of things, what does that define? What does that talk about? And even Latino, in thinking about Latino in the US place, that naming of a population and of a whole region of people. So, how do I see myself in that mix. It's a very complicated thing. So, perhaps for myself sometimes afro descendant is a more correct and feels better to me in that regard. I feel more at ease with that classification. I know that I am black. I know my history. I can trace it back to Benin and I have done that precisely because I was never told anything. Whether in history books, whether at home, whether in my private life, it was never made known to me that to be Black was something to be proud of. So, I have taken upon myself not only in my academic career, in my social life and in my activism and everything that I do to defend that precisely because I see so many youths, not only youths, but older people who must deny that or must be ashamed of what they are or who they are precisely because society tells them to be that way. I have been blessed in many ways by a lot of different voices to continue doing the work that I do precisely because I think it's important, I know it's important. I can see the results in working with youths acknowledge that background of themselves and be happy and be proud as well.*

*It is interesting, obviously each island has its own context thinking about Blackness and the way its embraced, reviled or pushed away. Puerto Rico is an interesting place because the way Puerto Rico is always presented in history books to the public is the three faces that you see. You see the Taino, Spaniard and African. That is how Puerto Rico has always presented itself. We talk about Puerto Rico being three different cultures mixed into one, that is what makes us Puerto Rican. But if you look at the textbooks of course, that is not what is emphasized whatsoever. If there is any emphasis on Black folks at all, it is that there were slaves at one point, then they were free and then we do not talk about Blackness anymore, because we are all mixed and we no longer must reference that. But of course, if you look at the actual population of Puerto Rico, what you will see at the bottom of that is the Black population. If you look at the politics and the political representations what you will see are white faces. If you see the elites of Puerto Rico, if you look at the newspapers, the parties, the exclusive clubs- what you will see are blond, blue-eyed Puerto Ricans. So, to me that is problematic. That is not what you will see in New York, the Puerto Rican population in New York is of darker hue. To me that is the conflict of what they call Nuyorican and Puerto Rican. 54*

*If you look at Puerto Rico for example, you have specific areas that are predominantly Black like Loiza, Ponce, some places in Aguadía. Those are like enclaves, very small neighborhoods that are predominantly Black, but they just stick to themselves and the way they are talked about by the rest of the population is- well that is a place you don't want to go at night because that is dangerous, very sexualized and violent and oh you don't want to go there. The same thing happened to me when I was in Santiago, Cuba hanging out with folks, and I went to barrio Martí, and I came back to my host family, and they said- where did you go? I said to barrio Martí, and they said "allí están los negros" (that is where the blacks are) and I looked at my skin and said they did not look any different from me. The same thing of course happens in Dominican Republic. In Puerto Rico and Dominican Republic there are all these studies that claim the majority of Puerto Ricans and Dominicans have indigenous Taino blood in them. But you do not see a study that says how many of us have African blood. No one wants to see that*

*study because it will bring out a lot of things people do not want brought out. I think things are changing hopefully for the better. But at the same time, because of media influence, beauty standards, I think a lot of things are getting worse. You see actual segregations. I have a lot of friends who are Puerto Ricans, Latinos who say “los negros o los morenos” (Blacks) like we are a completely different species. Which is what was happening in the US in the 1950’s and 1960’s. Fifty plus years later we still have the way of expressing of Blackness that is reviled, fearful and outdated.*

*As beautiful as it is the celebrations (Afro-Puerto Rican cultural expressions), but I think that is part of the problem. That it is the only way that Blackness and African descendants is expressed. You can look at pretty much every Latin American country and you will find most of the natural beauty have some type of African influence. You have Bomba of Ecuador, Saya of Bolivia, in Peru you have musica Negra. In all these countries you see that but that is the only way it is expressed and talked about. Even though I want to appreciate all those things, I want to say that I know that there are more contributions based on history books. Why are these things not talked about? As in Puerto Rico, although there are three faces that are shown when talking about Puerto Rico. You have multiple museums of the Tainos in Puerto Rico and pretty much everything talks about the Spaniards and their contributions, and you have literally one small museum talking about Africa itself. It is in a non-descript place, like the size of this small room. It is two rooms full and basically as an anthropologist going in there, I’m insulted because all the display talks about of the African influences are food, some African words, and music and other than that nothing else. What about the politics? What about the thoughts? What about medicine? What about all the things that incorporate into everything like fetishes, religion? All these important things that are still present today that we choose not to talk about and that we choose not to acknowledge.*

*I think about my nephews and about the future and the children I will someday have. I do not need for them to have to struggle the way I have in thinking about “who I am” “what I am” “why do I have to defend myself to my friends that I’m black” “why do I have to walk into a store and feel uncomfortable because of my skin color.” The future is doable. Partly because racism is not something that existed for so long. As we look historically, we understand even slavery was not base upon race. It was based upon many other factors such as class and position and not about racial status. If that is a recent invention, a recent creation, I do not see how we cannot get rid of it. Racism is like the notion of the moving walkway, if you are standing still and allowing it, the walkway is still moving, racism is still going to continue. My whole desire to continue educating myself and continue learning is to me that knowledge is power.*



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Unterschrift / Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lynn Nnenna Anyanwu', written over a horizontal line.

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