Race, class and national identity in black Ecuador: Afro-Ecuadorians and the struggle for human rights

David Dixon
Clark Atlanta University

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.auctr.edu/dissertations
Part of the Political Science Commons

Recommended Citation

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center. It has been accepted for inclusion in ETD Collection for AUC Robert W. Woodruff Library by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center. For more information, please contact cwiseman@auctr.edu.
ABSTRACT

POLITICAL SCIENCE

DIXON, DAVID L.  B.A. UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA, 1982
M.A. ATLANTA UNIVERSITY, 1987
CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY, 1997

RACE, CLASS AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN BLACK ECUADOR: AFRO-ECUADORIANS AND THE STRUGGLE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Advisor: Professor Guy Martin
Dissertation dated May, 1997

This study analyzed the social predicament of Ecuador's black population. The main objectives of the dissertation were to explain the low social status of Afro-Ecuadorians from a political economy perspective; to analyze the concept of race and Minority Rights as an aspect of human rights; and to focus the debate on the Republic of Ecuador's human rights policy regarding its black population.

In this methodology, political economy, race analysis and minority rights theory were developed. It was argued that in black Ecuador slavery, "concertaje," "mestizaje," racial democracy, dependency underdevelopment and white supremacy, as developed in the Ecuadorian context, have severely limited the social mobility of Afro-Ecuadorians.

The researcher concluded that developments in the political economy of Ecuador since the abolition of slavery have brought little change for the Afro-Ecuadorian population. This process of socio-economic exclusion is based on a deliberate policy that excludes Afro-Ecuadorians from civil society.
RACE, CLASS AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN BLACK ECUADOR:
AFRO-ECUADORIANS AND THE STRUGGLE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY
DAVID L. DIXON

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

ATLANTA, GEORGIA
MAY 1997
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Without the help and support of many people, the writing of this dissertation would not have been possible. I want to first thank the following individuals and institutions whose support was indispensable: Nelson Estupiñán Bass and Luz Argentina, Antonio Preciado, Juan García, Carmen Klinger, José Arce, Elizabeth Delgado, Edgar Lemos, Jacinto Fierro, Dogenes Cuero Caicero, Diego Quiroga, Rafael Savoia, Charo Quesada, María Carrión, Zanga Touré, Madonna Touré, Keith Jennings, Ajamu Baraka, Arvis Averette and my mother, Annie Stanley. Institutionally, I am grateful to the Fondo Ecuatoriano Populorum Progresso (FEPP), the Afro-Ecuadorian Cultural Center, the Comisión Ecuménica de Derechos Humanos (CEDDHU) and the Universidad de San Francisco in Quito. I am also grateful to the people of Chota, Esmeraldas, the Cayapas River and to all Afro-Ecuadorians who welcomed me into their communities and homes, and provided invaluable information. Finally, a special thanks goes out to my dissertation committee, Dr. Guy Martin, Dr. Harry Vanden and Dr. William Boone.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .......................................................... ii

LIST OF TABLES ............................................................... v

GLOSSARY ................................................................. vi

CHAPTER 1: RACE, CLASS AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN BLACK ECUADOR:
AFRO-ECUADORIANS AND THE STRUGGLE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS .... 1
Overview ................................................................. 1
Statement of the Problem ................................................. 10
Hypothesis ............................................................... 10
Methodology ............................................................ 11
Theoretical Framework ............................................... 13
Time-Frame .............................................................. 29
Statement of Significance .............................................. 29
Statement on the Structure of the Research Presentation ......... 30
Scholarly Research and Objectivity ................................... 32

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW: AFRO-LATIN AMERICA AND SOCIAL DISCRIMINATION RACE, ETHNICITY AND NATIONAL IDENTITY .... 33
Comparative Perspectives on Black Latin America ............... 33
The Evolution of Afro-Latin Scholarship: A Historical Perspective ........................................ 35
Racial Perspectives in Contemporary Latin America .......... 38
Race, Class and National Identity in the Afro-Ecuadorian Context ........................................ 53
The Afro-Ecuadorian Literary Tradition: A Brief Overview .... 63
Conclusion .............................................................. 65

CHAPTER 3: THE BLACK AMERICAS AND THE QUESTION OF SLAVERY .... 68
Theoretical Perspectives on Slavery in the Western Hemisphere as a Component of Human Rights Theory .......................... 69
Overview of the Comparative Slave Debate ......................... 74
The Transatlantic Slave Trade and Early Capitalism ........... 83
Brief History of Slavery in Black Latin America ................. 85
Slavery on the Northern Coast of Ecuador and the Chota Valley .... 89
Characteristics of the Slave System in Ecuador .................. 95
The Ecuadorian “Sierra” or Highlands: The Chota Valley and Slavery ........................................ 97
Organization of the Slave System ..................................... 101
Slave Uprisings In Ecuador ............................................ 102
Manumission and Abolition .......................................... 104
The Period of “Concertaje” or Sharecropping .................... 110
Conclusion .............................................................. 112
LIST OF TABLES

Map 1 ................................................................. 7
Map 2 ................................................................. 8
Table 1.1 ............................................................. 149
Table 1.2 ............................................................. 185
GLOSSARY

This glossary of basic definitions is provided to help the reader understand key concepts related to ethnicity, race, class and social systems in the black Latin American context.

AFRO/AFRICANO/AFRO-LATIN AMERICA - These terms are used to refer to the various black populations in Latin America. More specifically, the term Afro-Latin America includes all regions of Latin America where groups of people of known African Ancestry are found. African-American populations are found in Argentina, Belize, Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, The Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Puerto Rico, Suriname, Uruguay and Venezuela.

AFRO-LATIN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS - Refers to the various black power movements that are rapidly developing and expanding in Latin America. Black political movements are presently gaining momentum in Colombia, Brazil, Venezuela, Ecuador, Uruguay, Nicaragua and Peru. Some champion "blackness" and African heritage, reclaiming black history and insisting on respect for the black contribution to the national culture, while others are protesting in the streets to challenge century old forms of social discrimination.

BLANQUEAR/ BLANCO/BLANQUEAMIENTO - To be white or of European ancestry; the process of whitening. The Spanish colonial system ranked people by an intricate system of graduated differences in skin-color and other physical features. In cultural terms, this process refers to people who aspire to be white in Latin America. According to this line of thinking, "money whitens." In Latin America the key to social advancement is associated with whiteness, while darkness is associated with underdevelopment, poverty, and destitution.

BOZAL - Slaves transported to the Spanish Indies directly from Africa.

BOMBA - The musical expression of the Afro population of the Chota region of Ecuador. It represents the expression of the hardships of slavery and is the mixture of three distinct cultural influences (indigenous, African and European)
CAFÉ CON LECHE (COFFEE WITH MILK) - A term coined by the poet-politician André Eloy Blanco with which he likened the racial composition of Venezuela to "café con leche." Also, a term used to refer to racial mixing in Venezuela.

CANTON - Ecuador is divided into provinces, and each province is divided into small administrative units referred to as canton. Cantons are headed by a chief administrative officer.

CHOLA/A - An extremely pejorative term used to refer to people who are thought to be of mixed indigeneous "mestizo" heritage. In general it signifies low social class, poverty and lack of culture.

CHOTA (Chota Valley and Choteños) - Geographical reference to a region in the northern highland Andean region of Ecuador, located in the province of Imbabura. During the colonial epoch African slave labor was introduced into this region by the Jesuits of Spain. Consequently, the northern highlands of Ecuador is one of the few Andean regions with a significant African population. The other Andean regions would include parts of southern Colombia and Bolivia.

CIMARRON - Refers to the slaves in Latin America who escaped from the plantations and formed free and independent communities throughout Latin America.

CONCERTAJE - A system of harsh social exploitation that evolved in Ecuador in the post slavery period. The system of concertaje bound ex-slaves to the plantation through a form of debt peonage. The institution of concertaje is best described in the first book by the Afro-Ecuadorian writer Nelson E. Bass, "When the Guayacans Were in Bloom."

CUADRILLA - A slave unit in Ecuador containing between ten and twelve slaves.

ESMERALDAS (ESMERALDEÑOS) - The mostly black province of Ecuador located in the northwestern part of the country. The black population is estimated to be at least 70 per cent. Esmeraldas refers both to the province, which contains five cantons, and the capital city. The five cantons are Esmeraldas, San Lorenzo, Quinindé, Muisne, and Eloy Alfaro.

INDIGENA - Is a term referring to the original people of any continent and in this case Latin America. This term is preferred as opposed to the word Indian.

INDIO - A term used to define the indigenous people of Latin America. Depending on the context the connotation may be negative. Many people in Latin America associate this word with poverty, alcoholism, ignorance and a primitive society.
LADINO - Hispanicized African slaves introduced to Latin America who already spoke Spanish or Portuguese. Contrary to popular belief, the first blacks introduced as slaves in Spanish America came from the south of Spain, possibly Sevilla. Moreover, Ladinos came from Southern Europe (Spain and Portugal) and had some knowledge of Spanish or Portuguese culture.

MARIMBA - The musical expression of the Afro population of Esmeraldas, which even today incorporates tales dating back to slavery. The marimba is also a musical instrument that bears extraordinary resemblance to the "balafon" of West Africa.

MESTIZO/MESTIZAJE - Mestizo loosely defines a person who has indigenous and European heritage. Mestizaje is the racial ideology of Latin America that refers to racial and cultural mixing.

MORENO - A term used throughout Latin America to refer to people of African descent. The word "moreno" literally means tan, or brown, in Spanish. The development of the term suggests that it is sometimes used to politely replace the term "negro." Negro, depending on the context, may have negative connotations, therefore, the term "moreno" is used because it is perceived to be less pejorative.

MULATO - Used in Latin America to refer to a person of African and European ancestry. Socially mulattoes tend to be better treated, have special status and are not perceived as negatively by the dominant culture.

NÉGRITUDE - A concept that denotes the positive features of blackness among black people. Many Afro-Latin communities currently espouse this concept.

PALENQUE - Black runaway slave settlements that were controlled by the maroons.

PIEZAS DE MINA - A term referring to the slaves who worked in the mines.

PIEZAS DE ROSA - A term referring to the slaves who worked in agriculture.

RACIAL DEMOCRACY - Developed by the Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freye in the 1930's. The central tenet of racial democracy is a belief that in post slavery Latin America there was no race prejudice, discrimination or hatred. Racial democracy argues that, in contrast to the North American pattern of legislated apartheid, in much of Latin America there were never any specific laws or legislation passed to disempower the black masses. This view would later come under serious theoretical attack from various corners.

SIERRA - A term referring to any highland area of the Andes.
SUCRE - The monetary unit of Ecuador.

ZAMBO - A person of African and indigenous heritage. The province of Esmerladas became known as the “Republic of Zambos” during the colonial era due to the racial mixing between blacks and indigenous people.
DEDICATION

To María Carrión and Annie M. Stanley.
CHAPTER 1

RACE, CLASS AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN BLACK ECUADOR: AFRO-ECUADORIANS AND THE STRUGGLE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Overview

The Afro-Ecuadorian people have been involved in 500 years of struggle to reclaim their humanity, maintain their identity and recapture their historical personality. Like other black populations of Latin America, Afro-Ecuadorians have struggled to preserve their ethnic identity in the context of a white-"mestizo"1 hegemonic dominated society, to protect their forms of social organization, to fight for the right to make claims to lands which they have occupied, albeit problematically, for five centuries, and to maintain their dignity, integrity and sanity on a daily basis in an openly racist, chauvinist, class conscious society that devalues non-white people.

It is argued that in black Ecuador, historical and contemporary social forces, which include slavery, "concertaje"2 or sharecropping, "mestizaje," racial democracy3,

---

1Mestizo defines in general terms people who are of mixed European and Indian ancestry in Latin America. Mestizaje is the racial ideology referring to racial and cultural mixing.

2Concertaje was a system of harsh social exploitation that evolved in Ecuador in the post-slavery period. The system of concertaje bound the ex-slave to the plantation much in the same way that sharecropping did in the U.S. South. The institution of
dependency underdevelopment, and white supremacy, as elaborated in the Ecuadorian context, have severely limited the social mobility of Afro-Ecuadorians. The manifestation of this process includes social invisibility, acute socio-cultural marginalization and the dehumanization of the Afro-Ecuadorian masses. In order to properly situate the Afro-Ecuadorian situation, it will be necessary to analyze the social, political, cultural and economic forces that have shaped their present-day realities.

The marginalization of Afro-Ecuadorians and other Afro-Latin populations is the result of complex historical forces. For the most part, Afro-Latin communities are excluded from the national cultures, do not participate in the democratic process as equal partners, and are located at the bottom of the socio-economic system in their respective societies. Scholars and many black Latin Americans argue that Afro-Latins are an invisible minority that suffers from various forms of systematic racial discrimination that has its roots in the expansion of mercantile Europe in the fifteenth century.

Most Latin American and black North American studies programs at major universities generally ignore or have little to say about the political, economic and social reality of the millions of blacks who live in Central and South America. Compounding this concertaje is best described in the classic literary work by one of Ecuador’s premier black writers Nelson Estupiñán Bass, “When the Guayacanes Were in Bloom.”

3Racial Democracy as a concept was developed by the Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freye in the 1930’s. The central tenet of racial democracy is the belief that in post-slavery Latin America there was no racial prejudice, discrimination, or hatred. It argues that in contrast to the North American pattern of legislated apartheid, in Latin America there were never any specific laws or legislation designed to deprive the black masses of political and economic power. Moreover, it argues that class-related factors best explain the situation of Afro-Latins.
ignorance is the fact that Latin American/African American/Black Studies programs have absolved themselves of the Afro-Latin predicament. The cruel process of enslavement and the European transatlantic slave trade relocated millions of African people throughout the Western Hemisphere. The middle passage was only the beginning of the process of dispossession, persecution, torture, rape and genocide, all of which are recognized in modern language as human rights violations.

When academic programs and the popular media mention African-Americans, they are usually one-sidedly referring to the blacks of North America. However, Spanish, Portuguese and French speaking African-American populations are also found in Argentina, Belize, Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Dominican Republic, Haiti, French Guyana, Guadeloupe, Guatemala, Honduras, Martinique, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay, and Venezuela. At present strong black movements exist in these countries with varying degrees of organization. They are fighting against police brutality, disappearances, extermination, coerced sterilization, poverty and other gross systematic abuses. These communities are fighting for legal recognition and basic socio-political rights. In general these various movements are striving for social-economic development, equality before the law, democratic reforms and human rights.

If the struggle of Africans in the Americas is for basic recognition of identity and existence, then the case of the African population in Ecuador perhaps best illustrates and mirrors some of the profound social contradictions facing other black populations in the

---

4For a comprehensive overview of these various populations see Rodolfo Monge Oviedo’s compiled statistical aggregates in The NACLA REPORT (February 1992): 19.
Americas. Ecuador is one of the least studied and analyzed of Latin American countries. Being one of the smaller republics, it has received little attention from the North American social science community. The scant scholarly material available is heavily focused on political matters concerning the role of the military, coups d'état, political instability, and the notion of "caudillos".  

History, Population and Demography of the Afro-Ecuadorian People

Since slavery and colonialism, and to the present, Afro-Ecuadorians have been located in four well defined geographical areas; the largest black population being located in the northern coastal province of Esmeraldas; the second largest is found in a region known as the Chota Valley; the third in the province of El Oro; and the fourth in Ecuador's two largest cities, Quito and Guayaquil, a result of recent large migrations from the country-side to urban areas.

Accurate and reliable statistical data on most black populations in Latin America is difficult to obtain. The undifferentiated use of terms like black, Afro-American, Creole, Mulatto, Garifana, Black-Indian, African Negro, African-East Indian, Bush Negro, Antillean

---

Negro, People of Color, and Persons of African descent have lead to serious conceptual problems in terms of defining black populations. The question of who is black is related to the larger question of how to determine what populations will be defined as black. Moreover, even when the blackness of a community or person is not in doubt, they are still not recognized in official census and population studies.

Like any subjective criteria, the classification may depend on the perceptions of the interviewee, the interviewer, or the person who designed the questionnaire. For example, in some countries mulattoes define themselves as white, while blacks may identify themselves as mulattoes. More often than not the word “mestizo” is taken to mean a mixture of white and Native blood, even when the person describing himself or herself as such has evident African features.

In this context, population size and demography of blackness is extremely difficult to calculate in Latin America. There are no census categories for blackness, therefore, most calculations rely on the works of independent researchers such as anthropologists, political scientists, development workers and, most importantly, the black Latin population itself. The Ecuadorian government, like those of most Latin American countries, does not organize its census along racial lines. The black population of the country is estimated to be between five to ten per cent, with some estimates as high as fifteen per

---

6Oviedo, p.19

7Ibid.
However, according to the various Ecuadorian population studies conducted largely by the government, there is no black population. Some scholars argue that this refusal to officially recognize “blackness” in its census contributes to the social invisibility and acute marginalization of the Afro-Ecuadorian masses.

In general, blacks are excluded from the national culture and their historical origins are usually glossed over except for a few ambiguous references to slavery. In their daily lives, Afro-Ecuadorians are faced with many institutional racial, gender and class barriers that severely limit their social mobility. They are effectively locked out of the labor market or forced to take the lowest, dirtiest jobs, denied access to competitive education, adequate health care and housing, and do not form part of civil society. Human rights violations against the black population of Ecuador are widespread. Afro-Ecuadorians are economically dispossessed and live on the margins of public life.

This research will analyze the socio-economic situation of Afro-Ecuadorians. One could argue that the social, political, economic, and cultural problematic of oppressed and exploited people in general, and Afro-Ecuadorians in particular, is best understood from a dynamic human rights perspective. In this dissertation it is argued that the struggle for

---


9See the United Nations Committee on Racial Discrimination, 42nd session, 11th and 12th periodic report, (summary record of the 971st meeting), cerd/c/sr971. March 16, 1993. The Committee was openly critical of the Republic of Ecuador’s refusal to provide statistics on the racial composition of the country.
Afro-Latin American populations: minimum and maximum estimates, early to mid-1990s, with percentages of total country populations, allowing for differences in classification and self-perception; high upper estimates usually include all or most people with some degree of African ethnicity.

---

10These numbers, provided by Minority Rights Group, are based on estimates by R. M. Oviedo, "Are We Or Aren’t We?" NACLA Report on the Americas; "The Black Americas 1492-1992," vol. 25, no. 4, 1992, p. 19.
Map 2

11Ibid.
Statement of the Problem

Central/Primary Question:

What role have Afro-Ecuadorians played (and what role do they currently play) in the social, political, economic and cultural development of Ecuador?

Subsidiary Questions:

a. How and to what extent have Afro-Ecuadorians been integrated and assimilated into, or marginalized and excluded from, Ecuadorian politics, economy and society?

b. Does race analysis in the context of political economy help explain and clarify the relationship of Afro-Ecuadorians to the national, political, economic and cultural systems?

c. What have been the primary social forces determining the status, station and position of blacks in contemporary Ecuador?

Hypothesis

If the low social, economic, political, and cultural status and general lack of power of Afro-Ecuadorians in the country’s political economy is primarily a function of a deliberately racist policy of racial exclusion on the part of the Ecuadorian government, then such a policy would have to be eliminated if Afro-Ecuadorians are to achieve a modicum of social, political, economic and cultural development.
It will be argued that the Republic of Ecuador is violating its own constitution and penal code in its treatment of the Afro-Ecuadorian population. Moreover, race analysis in the context of political economy clarifies and helps to explain the relationship of Afro-Ecuadorians with their political, economic and cultural system. The low social position of Afro-Ecuadorians in the political economy and their general lack of power is largely a function of race and racism. This dissertation will show that race as a concept, in the Afro-Ecuadorian context, must be understood as a primary, and not a secondary factor in determining the place of blacks in the Ecuadorian social system.

Methodology

This study will develop a method for the analysis of the Afro-Latin populations in Hispanic South America. A comparative analytical methodology will be designed and then employed that will address the African Latin American social experience. At present there are few, if any, comparative methodological approaches for the study of the black experience in the Spanish-speaking Americas, as will be later demonstrated in the review of literature. The African influence on Latin America is beyond dispute and is well chronicled. However, the experience of the black populations varies from region to region and can be radically different. Comparative methods of analysis will sharpen our understanding of the various experiences of the African-Latin populations in the Americas.

Our methodology will be to apply the political economy of race to the Afro-Latin experience. Moreover, this methodology will include minority rights theory to complement
The political economy framework. The synthesis of political economy, race analysis and minority rights theory is what makes this methodology unique, important and somewhat different from traditional theoretical approaches.

The main objectives of this research will be to explain the low status of Afro-Ecuadorians from a political economy perspective; to analyze the concept of race and Minority Rights as an aspect of human rights; and to focus the debate on the Republic of Ecuador's human rights policies regarding its black population. In order to establish the minority rights context, this dissertation will succinctly overview and analyze the following:

a. A Provisional Theory of Minority Rights.


c. The Covenant on Civil and Political Rights with special emphasis on Articles 1 and 27.

d. The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

e. The Optional Protocol to the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

f. The International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights.

It will be clearly demonstrated that:

a. Given the fact that the Republic of Ecuador has signed, ratified and acceded to the above mentioned declarations, it is now necessary for the Ecuadorian
government to officially recognize the legal and political existence of its black minority population.

b. Article 27 of the Covenant on Political and Civil Rights is the most universally accepted principle of collective rights for minorities in international human rights. Its legal principle upholds the necessity for multi-national states, like Ecuador, to legally recognize the existence of national minorities within their borders and to accept the right of these national minorities to affirmative action or other "special measures."

c. The moral credibility of the Republic of Ecuador's human rights policy regarding its Afro-population will be called into question if the government does not comply with or enforce the above mentioned human rights instruments.

After establishing the context, this research will call attention to those aspects of Ecuador's human rights policy that may be in direct violation of international human rights law, as defined by the above mentioned instruments and minority rights theory.

Theoretical Framework The Search for a Paradigm: Afro-Latin Political Economy and Race Analysis, and Minority Rights Theory

The value of political economy and race analysis to social scientists is that they serve to clarify, explain and analyze specific social relations, in particular, civil, political, social, economic, and cultural forms of interaction and organization. Political economy refers
Article 27 of the Covenant on Political and Civil Rights is the most universally accepted principle of collective rights for minorities in international human rights. Its legal principle upholds the necessity for multi-national states, like Ecuador, to legally recognize the existence of national minorities within their borders and to accept the right of these national minorities to affirmative action or other "special measures."

c. The moral credibility of the Republic of Ecuador's human rights policy regarding its Afro-population will be called into question if the government does not comply with or enforce the above mentioned human rights instruments.

After establishing the context, this research will call attention to those aspects of Ecuador's human rights policy that may be in direct violation of international human rights law, as defined by the above mentioned instruments and minority rights theory.

Theoretical Framework

The value of political economy and race analysis to social scientists is that they serve to clarify, explain and analyze specific social relations, in particular, civil, political, social, economic, and cultural forms of interaction and organization. Political economy refers to the study of economic and political forces, behavior and institutions. The central purpose of Afro-Latin political economy is to focus attention on the role of Afro-Hispanics (Afro-Ecuadorians) in the process of production, distribution, exchange, control, and consumption
Latin America. Using Fontaine's framework, this study will focus on the relations of Afro-Ecuadorians to modes of production (slavery, capitalism, socialism), economic institutions (the plantations-"haciendas," transnational corporations), economic development models or lack thereof, transnational relations, political systems, institutions, behavior, group and class relations (including class struggle), social mobility, and political mobilization. In short, political economy helps us fine-tune the social context and situates the study in a concrete framework. Minority rights theory and race analysis clarify and comment meaningfully on the role of ethnic minorities in a particular society. Moreover, they will sharpen our insight into the following questions:

a. How do race and racism determine, shape and influence the position of blacks in the various historical modes of production and in the contemporary political economy of Ecuador?

b. How much do we know about race, racism and racial patterns and the situation of Afro-Ecuadorians and other Afro Latin societies?

c. How effectively does the literature, specifically the theoretical models on racial patterns and relations, deal with the Afro-Ecuadorian situation?

d. What are the various conceptual frameworks available to properly analyze the situation of Afro-Ecuadorians?

e. What are the policy options/strategies available to ameliorate the low social, economic, and cultural status of Afro-Ecuadorians?

15Fontaine, "Research in Political Economy" p.115.
Provisional Theory of Minority Rights: Comparative Analysis

Jay Sigler's provisional theory of minority rights is one of the most innovative and creative conceptual frameworks in the area of minority rights and human rights theory.\textsuperscript{16} The importance and centrality of minority rights theory as a general aspect of human rights philosophy is increasingly gaining currency in the social sciences. Sigler's minority rights theory, while not perfect, does represent a significant contribution to current theoretical models.

Sigler sorts out the main features of minority rights in order to provide an awareness of collective or group rights; his theory re-examines and challenges standard thinking in order to incorporate the genuine needs and concerns of various groups; and he argues that the Western philosophical human rights emphasis on individual rights is not well suited to provide an understanding and a solution to "collective" or "group" problems. In other words, "the tendency of classical democracy to affirm the individual but to deny the group."\textsuperscript{17}

Therefore, the argument is simple: the traditional liberal view, an individual one, is not adequate as it relates to these societies. Vernon Van Dyke, arguing in a similar tone,


\textsuperscript{17}J.A. LaPonce, \textit{The Protection of Minorities} (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1967), 43.
makes the same point. He asserts that it is not enough to think in terms of a two-level relationship, with the individual at one level and the state at another; nor is it enough if the nation is added. Considering the heterogeneity of humankind and the population of virtually every existing state, it is necessary to think of ethnic communities and certain other kinds of groups and to include them among the kinds of right and duty bearing units whose inter-relationships are to be explored.¹⁸

In Sigler's view some states refuse to acknowledge the presence of minorities or ethnic groups as a way to deny the claim of a group. They may statistically under represent the numbers, downplay the presence and the historical contributions of a particular group, or employ other means. In Latin America all of these methods are used. The question of the minority status, what constitutes a minority, and various other technical questions are not universally agreed upon. Scholars, human rights activists and governments do not always agree on what constitutes a minority.

The United Nations' definition of minority groups has varied from time to time. At times race, ethnicity, or nationality have been de-emphasized and sometimes removed from this list as a category. I would argue that this was more a political strategy of the various states to conceptually muddle the definition, thus undermining minority rights theory, and even the legitimacy of minority rights movements. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted in 1948, "race, color, sex, language,

religion, and national or social origin were regarded as impermissible ground for unfavorable treatment."^{19}

Francis Capotorti, a Special Rapporteur of the United Nations Sub-Commission on the Prevention and Protection of Minorities, offered this definition.

"... a group numerically inferior to the rest of population of a state, in a non-dominant position, whose members - being nationals of the state- possess ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population and show, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity, directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion or language."^{20}

In Sigler's framework he defines a minority in strikingly similar terms. A group can be regarded as any category of people who can be identified by a sizeable segment of the population as objects for prejudice or discrimination or who, for reasons of deprivation, require positive assistance of the state. A persistent non-dominant position of a group in political, social, and cultural matters is the common feature of the minority. This framework includes the various groups whose condition derives from race, religion, language and ethnicity.^{21}

---

^{19}Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted December 10, 1948, art. 2. GA Re 217A, UN Doc. A/810 at 71 (1948).


^{21}Sigler, p.5.
In order to determine the "non-dominant" status of a group and apply this framework, it is argued that an understanding of political economy helps to clarify the role, position, standing and status of minorities in these societies. An analysis of the group's structural positions in the political economy will help us to comprehend their subordinate status, the level of their subjugation, the role of cultural domination, and the lack of political power, privilege and prestige, these being the chief attributes of minority groups. As one commentator on minority rights theory pointed out, "the crucial aspect of a minority group is not that it has fewer members proportionately than other groups in a system, but that it is inferior or is thought to be inferior by other groups, and often by its own members, in a hierarchical system." Therefore, based on this framework, the whites of Zimbabwe, South Africa and Jamaica would not be oppressed minority groups. Moreover, minority groups at times control and dominate majorities and are not always discriminated against. The non-dominant status and inferior social standing of the group in a social system are the defining characteristics of a minority group.

These various definitions are consistent with the current thinking and represent a progressive orientation. After establishing the basis for defining what might constitute a minority situation, it is now necessary to discuss what rights these groups may be entitled to, if any, by the international community. This analytical model is concerned with minority rights as an aspect of group rights. In order to avoid confusion, this model will use the Sigler

---

definition of a minority as outlined in his theory of minority rights. In this research design, a minority is defined as follows:

A minority is defined as a group which, because of its physical or cultural characteristics, is singled out from others for differentiated and unequal treatment, and the existence of a minority implies the existence of a corresponding dominant group with higher social status and greater privilege.

Therefore, minority groups are usually the victims of discrimination - individual and institutional. Their members are denied access to jobs, education, housing and other social goods because of their minority affiliation. It may also be the case that more than one minority group may live in the same country. Hierarchies may develop among the various minority groups and the majorities may play minorities off each other to enhance majority domination. For example, in Latin America the imperialistic policy of divide and rule was used by the Spaniards and successor governments to undermine Indian/African American coalitions. The indigenous and black populations, from the beginning of the conquest, have been pitted against each other. This technique has insured that these communities would remain divided even up until the present.

The Spaniards employed the following techniques:

a. During the Spanish conquest, blacks were used to help conquer and then subdue indigenous civilizations.
b. The Spaniards, after nearly exploiting indigenous labor to extinction, imported African slaves.

c. The Spanish Crown passed laws that attempted to limit contact and exacerbate tension between the two exploited groups.

During the post-colonial period (after the Spaniards were expelled) the republican governments tended to at least address the indigenous question. The indigenous communities became positive targets of state attention (I am not suggesting that their socio-economic status has improved). The black population usually received no such attention, thus causing friction.

Race as a Group Concept in the Minority Rights Framework

Sigler's provisional theory of minority rights, while significantly contributing to our understanding of minority rights, lacks a sufficiently developed race analysis. In order to be applied to the minority black situation in Ecuador, Sigler's theoretical model must recognize that the race dynamics in Ecuador and Latin America has its own autonomous logic, penetrating the fabric of social life and the cultural system on every level. The race component will assist in the development of a more adequate understanding of how race and class dynamics affect black Latin America.
The explanatory power of his analytical model is reduced due to its lack of a racial analysis component. This analytical model, while on the one hand stretching the traditional conceptual parameters by rejecting the Western and individualistic notion of rights, at the same time embraces a Eurocentric bias tied to the Western philosophical tradition by suggesting that race does not determine the structural positions of blacks in Latin American societies.

Sigler makes the following point:

"Racial mixture is so prevalent in Latin America that race is less salient and racial identity less significant. Yet class and race are factors in Latin American life. In some nations such as Ecuador, the white minority dominates the nonwhite population. But it is by and large class and not race that determines the social position and conveys political power in Ecuador. In most nations [of Latin America] racial lines are too blurred and class distinctions too rigid to rely on race as a powerful concept." 23

His views on race in the context of Latin America are significantly at odds with current thinking on the topic. This component of Sigler's analytic model is problematic and must be addressed. In the context of racial relations regarding the black population of Ecuador, race must not be viewed as an epiphenomenon, or as the manifestation of some other, supposedly more fundamental, social process or relationship. Race, for the most part, determines the social positions, power and privilege, or the lack thereof, in the Ecuadorian case. Therefore, by including a racial analysis component to the theory, this will assist in the development of a more adequate understanding of how race, gender and class affect black

23Sigler, p. 6
Latin America. Sigler's theory of minority rights plus a race analytical framework equals a comprehensive, complete and dynamic analytical model.

Latin American Theoretical Perspectives on Race: The Search for a Paradigm

Most of the analytical frameworks on race focus on the situations of African people or other racial/ethnic minorities in advanced industrialized countries. These theories tend to focus on Afro-North Americans; and the blacks or immigrant groups of Europe. Moreover, Latin Americanists lack sufficiently developed analytical and conceptual frameworks on how race and racism affect the Afro-Latin population.

Therefore, the study of race as it relates to the various black populations in the Latin American context is difficult due to the lack of analytical models and the following: first, the ideology of racial democracy, which is a theoretical approach that argues that race is secondary to class. Second, due to the low number of blacks in certain Latin American countries (Bolivia, Uruguay, Chile, Argentina, Paraguay) the study of race is somewhat more problematic.

The racial context for Afro-Latin America is radically and fundamentally different from the race problematic of North America. Most Latin American countries in the

24One example is Michael Banton's, Race Relations (London: Tavistock, 1967). This is an excellent attempt to theorize on racial and ethnic relations in the advanced industrialized setting. He analyzes race relations from a global and historical perspective.
post slavery period did not enact nor enunciate an articulated set of laws designed specifically to deprive Afro-Latins of political, economic, and social power. Nevertheless, Afro-Latins and the indigenous populations were still institutionally without access to positions of power and prestige. The institutional dynamics of racism operate in Latin America in a manner that is less visible, less obvious and more subterranean, thus perhaps explaining why the notion of racial democracy was championed for so long.

In Ecuador and throughout Latin America, there is a long-held view that racial discrimination does not exist. The "myth of racial democracy" is the officially expressed view of many Latin American social thinkers of the twentieth century. The central tenet of racial democracy is that prejudice and discrimination in the post-slavery period in Latin America do not exist. Advocates of this school of thinking emphasize class dynamics rather than race.

Litanies about racial democracy can be heard throughout Latin America. The key, racial democrats argue, is that in contrast to the North American pattern of categorizing people as either black or white, in much of Latin America people fall somewhere between these two extremes, that is along a broad color spectrum. Implicit in this view of racial democracy is the often expressed assertion of a social movement devoid of racial discrimination and racial obstacles to social mobility; a situation where miscegenation has

---

few or no restrictions and has emerged or at least blurred the physical difference in their society.26

In the small multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, pluralistic country of Ecuador, where blacks constitute at least between five to ten per cent of the population, it is common to hear people from all racial and class backgrounds say "how can there be racism here, we are mixed," or "we are all the same because we all have indigenous blood."

Supporters and advocates of this view argue that due to the influence/imposition of the Ibero-cultural tradition, their societies are a mix of Indians, blacks and Spanish people, and they believe their societies to be truly devoid of real racial tensions, pressures and conflicts. According to this line of thinking, the presence of so much mixed ancestry promotes racial harmony and understanding, thus reducing if not negating racial tensions.

In Pierre Michel Fontaine's important edited work, Race, Class and Power in Brazil, Carlos Hasenbalg points out that the study of modern day race relations (in Brazil and in my view the rest of Latin America) can be broken down into three stages or schools of thought.27 These stages are divided as follows:


Stage one began in the 1930's when the Gilberto Freye, a Brazilian social scientist, first developed the concept of racial democracy, and he rejected the blatantly racist interpretations of other prominent Brazilian sociologists. Stage two began with the American social scientist Donald Pierson and others studying the Brazilian Northwest during the 1940's and 50's. They argued that whatever prejudice could be found in Brazil was due to class-related factors such as occupation and wealth. He concluded that these factors were more important than race in the determination of social rank and class interaction.

The third stage of this school of thought is sometimes referred to the Sao Paulo School of thought. It emerged in Sao Paulo in the 1950's and 60's and focused on the south of Brazil. Leading thinkers include Florestan Fernandez, Roger Bastide, Marvin Harris and Thales de Azevedo, who were all UNESCO researchers. The implicit corollary of this idea is the absence of racial prejudice and discrimination, and consequently the supposed existence of equal economic opportunities for blacks and whites.

It was not until the 1950's, when UNESCO sponsored a series of studies to review the racial situation in Bahia and Sao Paulo, that the traditional view of racial democracy came under serious theoretical attack. Fernandez and others argued that racial discrimination and racism were an aspect of industrial and capitalist Brazil, but believed it to be an

---

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.
aberration, an archaic survival from the pre-capitalist and pre-industrialist past. His work perhaps represents the most comprehensive sociology of race relations in Brazil. The strength of his work lies in his understanding of the role that race plays in Brazil's development not only in the past and present, but also in the future.

This school of thinking set the new terms of the debate, constituting a new racial revisionism. The Sao Paulo School, while full of fresh insights into Brazilian race dynamics, had some significant limitations, mainly the tendency to reduce race to class, thus depriving race dynamics of its own autonomous significance. Also, Fernandez understood race as a problem whose solution is integration. In short, despite their success at exposing racial inequality in Brazil and thus destroying the racial democracy myth, the revisionists encountered difficulties when they tried to explain the transformation in racial dynamics after slavery, and the persistence of racial inequality in a developing capitalist society. Moreover, their tendency to see the persistence of racial inequality as a manifestation of supposedly more fundamental class antagonism (reductionism) resulted in an inability to see race as a theoretically flexible, as opposed to an a priori, category. When writing about the racial

---

30 Ibid.


32 Ibid., 179.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.
dynamics in Latin America, the revisionists tend to ignore the changing socio-historical meaning of race in Latin America.

Racial Formation Theory and Latin America

It is my view that Racial Formation theory as outlined by Michael Omi and Howard Winant is one of the best conceptual frameworks to understand and analyze racial politics in Latin America. The racial formation analytical framework was developed based on the study of race in the United States, however, Howard Winant later applied it to the Afro-Brazilian situation.

This research will use the racial formation analytic framework to interpret the racial context of the Afro-Ecuadorian situation. Ecuador is not Brazil; however, there are many commonalities between Brazil and other Latin American societies regarding the position of their black population and the role of race.

In my view, racial formation theory is one of the most current and innovative frameworks available to deal with the racial complexities of modern-day Latin America. First outlined based on the race context in the United States and as a response to reductionism (the

view that reduces race to adjunct class categories), this theory understands race as a phenomenon whose meaning is contested throughout social life.\textsuperscript{36}

According to this view, race is both a constituent of the individual psyche and the relationships among individuals, and an irreducible component of collective identities and social structures.\textsuperscript{37} Once it is determined that race is not a "natural" attribute but a socially and historically constructed one, it becomes possible to analyze the processes by which racial meaning is decided, and racial identities assigned, in a given society. These processes are inherently discursive. Moreover, they are variable, conflictual and contested at every level of society. The political character of racial formation stems from elites, popular movements, state agencies, religions and intellectual types of "racial projects."

The concept of racial project is a key element of racial formation theory. Racial project, as an expression of the multiple components of civil society, interprets and reinterprets the meaning of race. Racial project is simultaneously an explanation of racial dynamics and an effort to reorganize the social structure along popular lines.\textsuperscript{38} Winant and Omi argue that race must be given a parallel position with class in explaining past and current social tendencies. Underlying their analysis is an important claim about the

\textsuperscript{36}Ibid., 7.

\textsuperscript{37}Ibid., ix.

\textsuperscript{38}Howard Winant, Rethinking Race in Brazil, p.185.
relationship among economic, political and cultural spheres of these societies. Politics and culture play a significant role in the creation, re-creation and destabilization of hegemonic relations.\textsuperscript{39}

In this study, the social context of the Minority Rights analytical model will incorporate race formation theory, thus providing a more complete and comprehensive understanding. Minority rights theory is mainly interested in identifying minority groups, commenting on their social status, and articulating mechanisms so that these groups may seek redress. Racial formation theory attempts to strip away the superficial veneer from contemporary racial perspectives in Afro-Latin America.

Racial formation theory, if properly situated, will comment meaningfully on the changing character of race in Ecuador and Latin America. According to Winant, the race formation perspective responds both to ongoing racial inequalities and to the persistence of racial differences, as well as to new opportunities available for democratic societies.

\textbf{Time-Frame}

This researcher spent one year in Ecuador from June 1993 to June 1994 conducting field research on Afro-Ecuadorian politics, social movements, and human rights. This study is a contemporary analysis of the current Afro-Ecuadorian socio-political…

\textsuperscript{39}Omi and Winant, p. ix.
situation. While historical events are very much a part this dissertation, I am mainly concerned with the current period which I loosely define as the twentieth century (1900 to 1995). Therefore, my analysis, observations, commentaries and conclusions are directed towards a more current understanding of Afro-Ecuadorians.

Statement of Significance

The historical presence of the Spanish/Portuguese-speaking people of African descent in the Americas is heavily focused on Afro-Brazilians and usually analyzed from an anthropological perspective. This study is necessary because of the paucity of scholarly analysis available concerning the Afro-Latin social problematic from a political science comparative perspective. Afro-Latin populations are largely ignored by Latin American Studies programs, African-American Studies, Political Science researchers, and developmental studies. The writer understands that a study of this nature is necessary due to the following: the lack of scholarly literature concerning the Afro-Latin social experience from a political science perspective; the lack of analytical, conceptual, theoretical, and comparative methods that directly address the various experiences of Afro-Latin people; and the fact that structural changes in the international political economy and how these changes impact and influence Afro-Latin populations have yet to be adequately addressed. Therefore, there is a need for more scholarly studies focusing on race, racism, ethnicity, "mestizaje" and the formation of black consciousness, Afro-Latin social movements, Afro-Latin political economy (with particular emphasis on colonialism and imperialism) and gender models on Afro-Latin women. In short, the failure to develop adequate theoretical models has limited
our understanding of the various experiences of African people in the black Spanish/Portuguese-speaking Americas.

Statement on the Structure of the Research Presentation

This dissertation will contain six chapters and a conclusion. The first chapter provides background information on the subject area, along with the statement of the problem, hypothesis, methodology, theoretical framework, and statement of significance.

Chapter two will be a review of the literature. This section will discuss the evolution of the scholarship as it relates to race in the context of Afro-Latin America and comment on the evolution of Afro-Latin Studies. The various views on race, class, "mestizaje" and national identity in the Latin America context will be discussed.

Chapter three is a comparative analysis of slavery in black Latin America. This section will overview the African slave-trade to the Americas and the institution of slavery as elaborated in Latin America. Moreover, it will include a discussion on slavery in Esmeraldas, the Chota Valley, the process of manumission, and the post slavery period in Ecuador.

Chapter four will provide a concise and current understanding of social movements, black consciousness, the role of "mestizaje" and negritude, and how they impact the present day realities of the Afro-Latin people of Ecuador.
Chapter five will be an overview of the major social forces defining the Afro-Ecuadorian reality. Along with a brief analysis of the historical and geographical perspectives of Ecuador's black communities, this chapter will focus on the political economy of Esmeraldas and Chota. Moreover, this section seeks to shed light on the role of race and the social position of Afro-Ecuadorians in the economy.

Chapter six will discuss the human rights and the present socio-political situation of Afro-Ecuadorians; it will overview the Ecuadorian Constitution, analyze the republic's official human rights policy and discuss the Afro-Ecuadorian problematic from a minority rights perspective; it will close with basic policy suggestion for the Ecuadorian government. Chapter seven will conclude the dissertation.

Scholarly Research and Objectivity

Like any researcher, this scholar comes from a particular community. As an African-American male from North America, I have tried to keep a certain distance between myself and the subject matter. Some argue that being an African-American is a plus when conducting research on black identity issues in Latin America, while others could argue that it is not. Whatever the case, I have made an effort to be objective and non-biased. However, I am an “engagé” (involved) writer. As an African-American, I do bring concrete cultural, social, political, historical, regional, and ideological points of view to the subject matter. Therefore, my distanciation from or with the subject must be understood in this context.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW: AFRO-LATIN AMERICA AND SOCIAL DISCRIMINATION
RACE, ETHNICITY AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

This literature review outlines the various comparative approaches used in analyzing race in the Afro-Latin context. The objective is first to argue that more comparative studies are needed in the area of Afro-Latin Studies pertaining to race, social class, social movements, gender models and political economy; and second, to discuss the literature as it relates to social discrimination against the various African populations in Latin America.

Comparative Perspectives on Black Latin America

Until quite recently there was no comprehensive and cohesive volume that analyzed from a comparative perspective the black dimension of Latin America. Although somewhat dated, Leslie B. Rout's comparative study, The African Experience in Spanish America¹ is still one of the most comprehensive and detailed works on the African presence in Latin America. Along with an excellent introduction on comparative slave history, Rout

provides a country by country breakdown of the social status and history of various Afro-Latin populations throughout Latin America.

Africans in the Americas: A History of the Black Diaspora[^2] is one of the new works in the area of comparative Afro-American studies. This study offers a comparative and comprehensive survey of Africans in the Diaspora focusing on the Americas (North, Central and South). It contextualizes the social experience of African people in the Western Hemisphere. This work is strongly recommended to those wanting a broad comparative understanding of the African experience in the Western hemisphere. However, one serious shortcoming of this comparative survey is that the section on "Africans in the Americas Since Abolition," which discusses race and politics in Latin America, lacks a clear-cut analytical model, it glosses over race, class, and ethnicity, and it provides no contemporary discussion on black consciousness movements in Latin America.

Except for the above, there exist few comparative studies on the Afro-Latin experience written from a political science perspective. As it relates to this research, the difficulty is compounded by the fact that few studies of race and Afro-Ecuadorians have been undertaken. The bulk of the literature on race studies focuses heavily on Afro-Brazilians. Many of the early studies focused on the racial dynamics of Brazil; however, recently, there is a growing body of new literature on countries such as Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela, Argentina, Nicaragua, and Mexico.

This literature review will analyze the following:

a. How has race structured the social position of blacks in the political economy of Afro-Latin America?

b. How effectively does the literature explain and analyze the social situation of Afro-Latins in general and Afro-Ecuadorians in particular as it pertains to race, class and national identity?

The Evolution of Afro-Latin Scholarship: A Historical Perspective

It is generally acknowledged that anthropologists and historians have shown a considerable interest in the study of Afro-Latin America. The American anthropologist Melville Herskovits devoted a great deal of time to the study of the black experience in Africa, Latin America and the West Indies. In the context of the evolution of the scholarship on Afro-Latins, Herskovits is considered one of the early pioneers. In his important article "The Negro In The New World," Herskovits outlines in 1930 some of the key conceptual and methodological concerns that are still very much alive today. Herskovits' influence on contemporary anthropology is well documented. Although his mechanical search for


\[4\] See Roger Bastide's commentary on the influence of Herskovits in "The Present Status of Afro-American Research in Latin America," Daedalus 103, no. 2

35
African survival has been rightly criticized, he did at least understand that the term "Afro-American" went well beyond the narrow geographical confines of North America.

The work of Roger Bastide has made a significant contribution to Afro-Latin scholarship. He argues for a comprehensive multi-disciplinary approach to Black Latin Studies. He was critical of how outsiders had interpreted "black" culture and argued that the study of black Latin America had to be understood in terms of the dialectical transformation of economic and social infrastructure. Bastide provides a chronological review of the evolution of Black Latin Studies.

In the 1960's, it was the work of the Swedish historian Magnus Morner that significantly shaped and influenced contemporary thinking on the subject of race in Latin America. His seminal article entitled "The History of Race Relations in Latin America: Some Comments on the State of Research" is still a classic overview piece on the history of race relations in Latin America and ought to be read by all serious scholars interested in

(Spring 1974). According to Bastide, Herskovits broke in a definitive way with old interpretations. He explored and opened new roads by detaching research from old bases which had left him free to innovate. He suggested to Brazilian social scientists some completely neglected fields of analysis which should be approached, like the social organization and economic infrastructure of Afro-Brazilian cults. In short, he gave new life to Afro-Brazilian research.


understanding the evolution of the scholarship as it relates to race. His other works, including Race Mixture in Latin America and Race and Class in Latin America, have also made a real and lasting contribution to our understanding of race and class in the Latin American context.

Race and Class in Latin America uses a interdisciplinary approach to discuss race and class in the Latin American context, especially Mexico and Brazil. Leading scholars such as Gonzalo Aguirre Beltran, Carlos Rama, Charles Anderson, Octavio Ianni and Florestan Fernandez discuss how social, political, and economic forces have influenced the race and racial relationships in post-independence Latin America. Part one reviews the abolition of slavery and the post slavery period in Latin America. The emphasis is on Mexico, Brazil, and Uruguay. Carlos Rama’s essay on the “Passing of Afro-Uruguayans From Caste Society,” is one of the best essays in this edited volume. Part two discusses immigration, stratification, and race relations in twentieth century Peru, the Dominican Republic and Sao Paulo. There is also a discussion of the “Tannenbaum thesis,” which argues that race relations inside and outside of slavery were consistently milder in the Spanish-speaking areas of Latin America colonized by the Iberians than in those governed by the British. The last section discusses change in Indo-America during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Manning Nash examines the Amer-Indian problems in Mexico, Guatemala and Peru.

In general his works are concerned with the history of race relations and he discusses three specific aspects of the popular history of Latin America; namely the historical

---

8 Race Mixture In The History of Latin American (Boston, MA: Little Brown, 1967).
demography with regard to ethnic groups in Latin America; the influence of "mestizaje" in the legislation and social stratification of colonial Spanish America; and the evolution of Negro slavery and the process of abolition. His works constitute a critical review and analysis in the field of ethnicity, demography, "mestizaje," and slavery and its abolition. Morner was mainly interested with works written from a historical approach. Though somewhat dated, these works are still some of the leading pieces of scholarship on the question of race in Latin America.

Racial Perspectives in Contemporary Latin America

According to Peter Wade, Blackness and Race Mixture: The Dynamics of Racial Identity in Colombia, to talk about "blacks," "Indians," and "race" in Latin America, or indeed anywhere else, is problematic. Wade believes that "races" are social constructions and categorical identifications based on discourse about physical appearances or ancestry. Wade's study is an important and significant work in the area of race, ethnicity, social identity, and anthropology. Therefore, a detailed analysis of his work is warranted in this section.

His study is limited to three regions in Colombia with distinct ethno-historical experiences. Each region provides a different cultural perspective and offers a unique

example of interaction between people of African ancestry and the dominant society.\textsuperscript{10} Antioquia, a northwestern province whose capital is Medellín, is where a myth of racial purity is perpetuated and where the existence of an African heritage is denied. In contrast, the Atlantic Coast is a region characterized by miscegenation, and there the correlation between race and class is blurred.\textsuperscript{11} The Choco region differs because people of clear African descent form as much as 80 to 90 per cent of the population. Wade demonstrates how the importance of the Afro-Colombian population is reflected in attitudes towards people of African descent.\textsuperscript{12}

Wade's central concern is with "blackness" and how it forms part of the racial order of contemporary Colombia. His aim is to "examine the coexistence and co-dependence of blackness and nonblackness, of discrimination and race mixture in these regional contexts."\textsuperscript{13} He convincingly argues that the blacks of the Choco region of Colombia, and more generally in Latin America, have participated in two overall processes. They have culturally adapted to values, norms, and basic orientation processes, the tone of which have been set by the dominant majority and directed essentially by the elite, whether in the colonial or republican stage of government.


\textsuperscript{11}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{12}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., 4.
At the same time, blacks have congregated together, partly through choice and partly through the actions of the non-black world, and in these situations they have maintained cultural forms that are closely identified as black culture, whether or not this has some traceable African derivation. In the broader sense, Wade is concerned with the way in which race in Latin America has been presented academically, especially in relation to black populations. He argues that the ambiguity and relativity of racial discrimination have been widely noted, and this is frequently connected to the comparative insignificance of race in the region, in contrast with the attitude in the United States. Wade acknowledges that there are real differences. He then makes the following observation:

In Colombia, racial identification is not always so ambiguous. There are regions of Colombia where the population is clearly of African ancestry, thus there is no reason for ambiguity. He asserts that the equation of ambiguity with insignificance is itself questionable. The assumption that only when racial identifications are clear-cut and allied to explicit and systematic discrimination can race be socially significant tends to ignore the real importance of racial identification in Latin America.

Wade examines the coexisting and interdependent dynamics of "mestizaje" and discrimination in a variety of contexts, at different levels of resolution and in distinct realms of social action. Wade asserts that the idea of racial democracy is still alive and pervasive in

\[14\text{Ibid.}, 6.\]

\[15\text{Ibid.}, 7.\]

\[16\text{Ibid.}\]
Colombia, and despite refutation of this myth from the academic and popular circles alike, some people of all colors and classes can be heard to avow the insignificance of race as an issue, especially where blacks are concerned.\textsuperscript{17}

"This interweaving takes place within a project managed mainly by the elites, of nationhood and national identity which holds up the image of Colombia as an essentially 'mestizo' or mixed nation. Blacks and Indians can, therefore, be both excluded as non-mestizos and included as potential recruits to mixedness."\textsuperscript{18} A racial order as such is not only found in Colombia, but in other regions of Latin America, such as Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela. While clearly focused on Colombia, Wade believes this situation applies throughout Latin America.

In a section entitled "The Study of Indians and Blacks in the Racial Order," Wade advances one possible explanation why Afro-Latins in general have not received the rigorous scholarly treatment afforded to many of the indigenous communities. He understands blacks and Indians to be at the bottom of the "social triangle." Wade believes that Afro-Colombians, and by extension other Afro-Latin communities, have not been regarded as "legitimate objects of state concern."\textsuperscript{19}

"From the beginning of the conquest, Indians in the New World took on in the minds of the Europeans an aspect very distinct from blacks and Africans. Perhaps the clearest

\textsuperscript{17}Ibid., 3.

\textsuperscript{18}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{19}Ibid., 29.
indication of this was the different legal and moral status accorded to Indian and black slavery. Laws did not of course dictate social reality, but the fact that the Indians and blacks had very different legal positions is indicative of their position in the racial order.\textsuperscript{20}

Wade informs the reader why Afro-Latins, who in some countries represent at least 30 to 40 per cent of the population, have been ignored and marginalized as it relates to their place and status in Latin American societies. Wade makes the following observations:

a. There emerged a body of legislation designed to protect the Indians, albeit in a paternalistic fashion.

b. Black slavery was never questioned, except by a few minority voices within the Catholic order, as a legitimate status. In short, the idea of black slavery was more easily accepted.

c. From the beginning of the colonial period, Indians as a category had a very different position from that of blacks. They (the Indians) remained members of distinguishable communities and cultures (blacks also did this to a varying degree), but the Indians later gained some legal recognition, thus becoming positive targets of both state policy and intellectual discourse.

In short, the indigenous populations of Latin America have in different ways been a category of special interest for the intellectual and the state. However, their material well being has not improved. Conversely, Afro-Latins have been of less interest to the state and

\textsuperscript{20}Ibid., 19.
the intellectual elite. Wade argues that only recently have Afro-Latins been gaining the
attention of the state and academics.

One perfect example is Fidel Castro's recognition of Cuba as an Afro-Cuban state. In a much
overlooked speech delivered in Havana on April 19, 1976, Fidel Castro made history by declaring Cuba to be an Afro-Latin republic, and claimed that he was Afro-Cuban. This largely symbolic pronouncement is important because in most Latin countries the presence of African people is downplayed or ignored by governments.

The Sandinista government's recognition of its Afro-Nicaraguan population and Nicaragua's Autonomy Law of the 1980's is another rare example of a Latin American state addressing the problems of its black population. The Autonomy law officially recognized and bestowed a legal personality on the Afro-Nicaraguan people.

Most recently, the National Congress of Colombia, the main law-making body of the nation, enacted landmark legislation in 1991 known as the Négritude Law or Law Number 70. It is widely believed that this black rights law is the most far-reaching of its kind in Latin America. In theory, it insures the preservation of Afro-Colombian traditions; and it facilitates the social, political, economic, cultural and religious development of Afro-Colombians. Moreover, it acknowledges their historical contributions to the development of Colombia and recognizes their legal personality.

Concretely, this law allows for extending land titles to select historical black communities, promoting black education, punishing racial discrimination, and it sets up a presidential advisory board for black affairs. More importantly, the law requires that two
seats in the National Congress be reserved exclusively for the black population, the only arrangement of this type in Latin America.

In the context of black rights in Latin America, these pronouncements and laws suggest that the problems of Afro-Latins are unique and specific and must be addressed with carefully crafted formulas. These historically overlooked social inequalities are gaining the attention of U.S. African-American intellectuals, politicians and developmental agencies. In short, Wade's study is a major contribution to our understanding of race in contemporary Latin America. Wade reveals the complex nature of social relations in a society divided by ethnic identity. His study clarifies our comprehension of racial dynamics in a modern Latin American setting.

Wintrop R. Wright's, Café Con Leche (Coffee with Milk): Race, Class, and National Image in Venezuela, is a statement on racial relations in Latin America. "Café con leche" (coffee with milk) is the term used by some Venezuelans to refer to their society. According to Wright, who is an historian, this term was used by the poet-politician André Eloy Blanco in 1944 when he likened the racial composition of Venezuela to "café con leche," or coffee with milk. Embedded in this expression is the assumption that miscegenation has lead to racial democracy. Wright argues that although black Venezuelans do not suffer from overt discrimination, social and political mobility depends on "whitening" and the denial of black heritage. In this contemporary work on the elitist attitudes toward race in modern Venezuela, Wright systematically undermines this view of racial democracy. He provides a detailed analysis of the Venezuelan elite's social stance towards race in the twentieth century. He argues that since the 1890's, the nation's elite had advocated a policy
of whitening its population (it should be noted that Venezuela is a nation where at least 70 per cent of the population acknowledges having a black heritage or black ancestors).²¹ Wright claims that it was done in the following manner:

a. The elite openly encouraged the immigration of white Europeans, while they excluded nonwhites.

b. The elite called for miscegenation, along with cultural assimilation, as a means of further reducing the pure black racial minority.

"In theory, then, Venezuelans had achieved a society free of racial tensions. At least they thought they had, and claimed as much. But, in fact, they accomplished this at the expense of blacks, whom they overlooked as a major class (social group). This seeming paradox should come as no surprise to anyone familiar with race relations in modern-day Latin America, as well as to the blacks of the region."²²

The notions that social mobility has been traditionally more fluid in Venezuela than elsewhere in Latin America, and that class and racial animosity is not ingrained, are half-truths which, according to Wright, have distorted the thinking of Venezuelans in general and scholars in particular.²³ Wright asserts that open hatred toward blacks has largely been absent and that racists among the nation's elite have turned their creative energies to extolling

---


²² Ibid., 2.

the virtues of whitening rather than to making racist comments.\textsuperscript{24} Venezuelan-style racism has traditionally accepted "pardos" (people of African-European mixed ancestry) and certain successful blacks as equal to whites as long as they met certain social and economic preconditions.

Wright points out that after the period of slavery in Venezuela blacks simply disappeared from the official records of modern Venezuela. Blacks were overlooked by historians, and when they were mentioned it was only as slaves, or as participants in the wars of independence, or as secondary subjects to the formation of colonial society.\textsuperscript{25} Blacks were not mentioned in government documents, court records and national histories. Moreover, the cultural contributions of Afro-Venezuelans went unnoticed, especially in the history texts used in the nation's schools.\textsuperscript{26} He demonstrates that the attitude of the elite (the ruling class or a faction thereof) since the late 19th century has held strong anti-black prejudices similar to those of their colonial ancestors, who understood the black presence in the Americas to be the result of the triangular slave trade.\textsuperscript{27}

In this slave mode of production, blacks did the work that whites found to be beneath them. Their skin color, as well as other physical characteristics, further identified blacks as a separate group. Therefore, as a consequence, race, physical characteristics and their slave status kept a majority of blacks at the bottom of the social and economic pyramid.

\textsuperscript{24}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{25}Wright, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{26}Ibid., 5.

\textsuperscript{27}Ibid.
throughout the colonial period and well into the independence period. Moreover, in the post slavery period, Afro-Venezuelans continued to live in the shadow of their slave background, and Wright believes that these patterns are continuing well into the present century. Wright further contends that even today, most Venezuelans continue to deny that there is a racial problem.

In the view of most white Latin Americans, the "race problem" is in the United States. Venezuelans, like Ecuadorians, Colombians and other groups from Latin America, tend to conceptualize race based on their minimal understanding of race relations in the United States. Put slightly differently, race relations, as expressed in the U.S., are more confrontational, and openly antagonistic, and the apparent contradictions are more visible. In contrast, race relations in Latin America (at least on the surface) are more subtle and subterranean, and less visible and confrontational than in the U.S. Therefore, when Latin American republics and their citizenry argue that there is no racism in their countries, what they are actually saying is that they don't practice U.S.-style racism.

Wright provides the following insightful clue into the racial dynamics in Venezuela, and in my view the rest of Latin America:

"In their own minds, the Venezuelans substituted economic discrimination for racial discrimination. Rather than attribute their anti-black feelings to racial attitudes or racism, Venezuelans argued that they did not like blacks because they lived in poverty. Moreover, they argued circuitously that they disliked blacks only because they were poor; the majority of blacks, however, were poor because they were black."\(^{29}\)

\(^{28}\)Ibid.

\(^{29}\)Ibid.
Wright's work is strongly recommended to all students of Afro-Latin American studies and to anyone who would like to acquire an understanding of race dynamics in Latin America. However, this work has two basic shortcomings: the study lacks a theoretical model pertaining to race analysis, and it does not explain how race positions blacks in the Venezuelan economy. Wright overviews and traces racial patterns well, but he does not formulate a specific statement on how race operates in Venezuela, how race positions blacks in the Venezuelan economy and how blacks are marginalized as an outcome of race. From a historical perspective, Wright's study is illuminating; however, it includes little information on the struggle of Afro-Venezuelans to define themselves in terms of ethnicity, group and national identity.

Patrick J. Carroll's, **Blacks in Colonial Veracruz: Race, Ethnicity and Regional Development**, makes a solid contribution to the rapidly growing field of Afro-Latin studies. Carroll's monograph examines three related themes on the historical situations of the often-overlooked blacks of Mexico. The first involves Africans and their descendants, both slave and free, and examines Afro-Mexicans in general and Afro-Veracruzans in particular. A second focus deals with regional development in the setting of central Veracruz, a coastal region that has a historical black community, between 1570 and 1830. Lastly, his work discusses the forces that shaped the lives of Afro-Veracruzans.30

30 Patrick J. Carroll, **Blacks in Colonial Veracruz: Race, Ethnicity and Regional Development** (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1991), xi.
Carroll believes that the blacks of Veracruz represent a largely forgotten population that has received less attention than other groups who contributed the emergence of colonial New Spain (this term used to refer to emerging colonial Mexico). There exists a rich collection of material on Afro-Mexicans. Gonzalo Aguirre Beltran, who has published extensively on blacks in Mexico, is the most respected and prolific scholar on the Afro-Mexican experience. Colin Palmer and Gerald Cardosa have also produced fine works.

Carroll argues that contrary to popular belief, the blacks of Veracruz were not confined to the coastal region of Mexico. Blacks inhabited every part of the colony and played a critical role in the economic take-off of the colony between 1550 and 1630. Carroll's research points out that despite restrictive legislation, Afro-Veracruzans were the most socially outgoing of any of the racial groups. As a result, they contributed more to the racial and ethnic integration of Veracruz than one would have expected given their slave status.

---


33Carroll, p.xi.
status. According to Carroll, like many other Afro-Latin populations, Afro-Veracruzans joined and fought in the military in significant numbers. They maintained a high profile in the ranks of Veracruz's revolutionary armed forces, and had a marked presence in politics during the first federal period (1824-1830).

This book's strengths lie in the author's use of parish registers, notarial archives and plantation inventories to reconstruct the economic and social lives of blacks in this region. Particularly interesting is his discussion of the social integration of blacks, which is based on analysis of marriage patterns and racial attitudes. Carroll relates spatial variations in their degree of integration to the chronological differences in the importance of slavery. He contrasts Jalapa, where a decreasing reliance on the slave labor from the 17th century facilitated miscegenation, with Cordova, where a late dependence on slavery meant that social change was associated with slave revolts and fugitivism. In Carroll's analysis, the greater discrimination suffered by blacks in the latter region provoked responses which were to bring them to the forefront of revolutionary change in the independence period.

Carroll's theoretical focus is undermined by his attempt to refute world system theory. He asserts that during one period (1631 to 1720) the region loosened its ties to the world economy, thus enabling it to experience incipient capitalist development. World

34Ibid.


36Ibid., 192.

37Ibid.
system theory sees an increasing incorporation of peripheral regions into the capitalist economy. Implicit in this view is that these economies began to disengage themselves from the economies of Spain. This particular discussion, although minor, tends to blur his larger point of the social and political development taking place in the region.

In short, Carroll provides a rare socio-economic historical perspective on the role that Afro-Veracruzans played in the economic and social development of the colonial economy. He provides a clear analysis that explains how social factors contributed to the discrimination of blacks in Veracruz. This scholarly work on the historical contributions of Afro-Mexicans is highly recommended.

George Andrews' Blacks and Whites in Sao Paulo 1888-1988, is an excellent work on the Afro-Brazilian problematic. Andrews has consistently published high level scholarly material on Afro-Latin history. In the Afro-Latin scholarly community, he is better known for his historical work on the blacks of Argentina. 38


In *Blacks and Whites*, the author explores in depth the evolution of black-white patterns in Sao Paulo. He traces the post-abolition incorporation of blacks into the labor market, first in agriculture and later in industry, and is able to document evolving patterns of racial discrimination thoroughly and convincingly. His research into the employment records of two major firms of early twentieth century Sao Paulo (a textile industry and a trolley utility) allows him to analyze developing patterns of racism in depth.

As noted earlier, the concept of racial democracy has been thoroughly refuted, and Andrews continues to empirically undermine the foundation of this view by demonstrating that blacks were "handicapped" in comparison to their white (often European immigrant) counterparts in the Brazilian labor market. In Andrews' view, this handicap was particularly damaging in the all-important industrial labor markets.

Andrews forcefully argues that the prevalence of racial inequality in post-abolition Brazil was the result of the elite strategies of whitening and "Europeanizing" the country (through a pro-European immigration policy launched towards the end of the 19th century and continued throughout most of the 20th century), of dividing actual and potential working class opposition along racial lines, and of preserving privileges and status through traditional racist cultural and political practices.

Andrews links the history of race relations and racial inequality to larger patterns of economic, social and political development. He pays close attention to the role of race in

---


40 Ibid.
economic competition and class struggle. He also provides a discussion of how the state regulates politics and how developments in the political sphere determined the course of black-white relations, and were themselves determined, at least in part, by those social relations.  

Andrews’ analysis of racial discrimination in Brazil is insightful, comprehensive and illuminating. One basic shortcoming is that he provides no analysis on the complexities and the contradictions of race in Brazil. However, rarely does an academic work emerge that makes such a significant contribution to the growing body of literature on Afro-Latin studies as has George Andrews’ most recent work. This work advances our understanding of race dynamics in Brazil and makes a solid contribution to the literature.

Race, Class and National Identity in the Afro-Ecuadorean Context

The Afro-Ecuadorean social problematic has not received sufficient attention. The question of race, class, gender and national identity of Afro-Ecuadoreans, and how this population relates to the larger society, is an area ripe for serious scholarly investigation. The few works that exist are largely anthropological or literary studies/analyses; in fact, Afro-Ecuadorean literature and textual analysis of the various Afro-Ecuadorean authors is a rapidly expanding field of inquiry. However, the historical and contemporary writing on Ecuador tends to ignore blacks and most of the anthropological literature is focused on the various indigenous cultures/populations.

41 Andrews, Blacks and Whites of Sao Paulo, 29.
Afro-Ecuadorians constitute at least five to 10 per cent of the total population of Ecuador; however, as a social group, their historical contributions, their group identity and their ethnic specificity have been largely ignored, downplayed and suppressed. Economically, Afro-Ecuadorians are disproportionately located at the bottom end of the social scale and have no political power on the national level, are excluded from the national picture, are negatively portrayed in Ecuadorian culture and suffer from centuries of institutional neglect and mistreatment.

Race in Ecuador is a powerful concept. Social prestige, power, status and economic life chances are all based on racial identification. Moreover, the notion of racial democracy is alive and well in Ecuador. It is argued that Afro-Ecuadorians are an ethnic minority as defined by the United Nations Declaration on Minorities. They live in a "mestizo" dominated culture that predicates the value of whiteness and the degradation of blackness.

According to Carmen Klinger, an Afro-Ecuadorian woman and leader of one of Ecuador's numerous black grass-roots movements, the blacks of Ecuador suffer on a daily basis the humiliation of racist insults and constant harassment from police, they lack effective political representation, and she contends that blacks are always portrayed negatively in the print and electronic media and are denied the basic rights that "mestizos" and whites enjoy. Before commenting on these dynamics, I will briefly review the literature pertaining to Afro-Ecuadorians by Ecuadorian and non-Ecuadorian scholars.

For the most part, Ecuadorian historians do not mention blacks in their studies. One exception is the Ecuadorian historian Oscar Reyes' Breve Historia de Ecuador (Brief
History of Ecuador)\textsuperscript{42}, a leading scholar of Ecuadorian history. However, even he only dedicates a couple pages to the discussion of Afro-Ecuadorians. Reyes discusses the process of manumission (the freeing of slaves), the debate leading to the decision to free black Ecuadorians and the popular discontent this caused among the slave-holding elements. Reyes overviews the critical role blacks played in the liberation of Gran Colombia\textsuperscript{43} from Spain. He also recounts the role that black Ecuadorians played in the war to separate Ecuador from Colombia.

\textbf{El Negro en la Historia: Raíces Africanas en la Nacionalidad Ecuatoriana} (Blacks in History, African Roots in the Ecuadorian Nationality), published by the Afro-Ecuadorian Cultural Center, is one of the few contemporary works that deals with the presence of blacks in Esmeraldas and the Chota Valley. It consists of a group of scholarly papers presented at the Third Congressional Conference of Genealogy and Social History of Esmeraldas (November 20-22, 1992).

These essays examine historical themes that are normally overlooked by mainstream Ecuadorian history books. One particular essay worth mentioning is by Rosaura de Polit. Her essay examines the slave system during the epoch of General Flores (the first president of Ecuador, who owned many slaves). Another interesting essay written by Salomon Chala discusses life in the Chota valley in the early 1900's (1913-20). The basic

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{42}Oscar Reyes, \textit{Breve historia General del Ecuador} (A General History of Ecuador) volume 2, (Quito, Ecuador: Casa de La Cultura, 4th edition, 1971).
  \item \textsuperscript{43}“Gran Colombia” is a geographical reference to pre-independence Ecuador, Colombia and Venezuela, which were then one country administered by the Spanish Crown.
\end{itemize}
purpose of these essays is to recognize the presence of blacks in Ecuador and to emphasize the fact that Afro-Ecuadorians have a history that is part of the Ecuadorian national reality.

It is generally recognized that in the area of anthropology, the American anthropologist Norman Whitten, Jr., is one of the leading scholars on the Afro-Ecuadorian experience. Whitten has conducted extensive ethnological research in Ecuador and has written a series of books, articles, monographs and ethnographic accounts on race, political economy and ethnic relations in the coastal and jungle lowland regions of Ecuador. In this review of Whitten’s work I will confine my analysis to his Cultural Transformation and Ethnicity in Modern Ecuador, and more generally, his contribution to the study of Afro-Ecuadorian political economy. Although an anthropologist, Whitten has advanced the study


of Afro-Latin political economy by examining the Afro-Ecuadorian problematic from a political economy approach.

Whitten examines the interface between the international and national political/economic systems and the black community and power structures in Northwest Ecuador and Southeast Colombia. Specifically, he shows how the international demand for the agricultural and mineral products of the province of Esmeraldas brought an influx of non-black Ecuadorians, Colombians, Europeans, and U.S. citizens. As a result, the local social systems, i.e., the political economy of the region of Esmeraldas, which he had earlier diagnosed as "successfully adapting to the new and expanding social, economic and political order", is now being disrupted, producing economic growth, but also racial conflict and black disenfranchisement.

Whitten's Cultural Transformation and Ethnicity in Modern Ecuador is an excellent collection of anthropological/socio-political works by twenty-six well-known and respected Ecuadorianists. Research for the study was sponsored by the Quito-based "Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia," which also coordinated the field research. These essays address a wide range of current theoretical issues related to the retention of ethnic identity in a rapidly modernizing society, including ethnicity, nationalism, economics, ecology and adaptation.

---

45Fontaine, p. 115.

46Ibid.

Whitten provides a detailed and thoughtful introduction with excellent background material on the geographic, historic and ethnic diversity of Ecuador, as well as the distinctive flavors of the Ecuadorian countryside. The introduction prepares the reader for the ensuing discussion on the "facets, dimensions and dynamics of ethnicity, cultural continuity and change as they emerge within the boundaries of a third world nation undergoing processes of radical transformation."48

Of the twenty-six works contained in this volume, I am only concerned with those addressing the Afro-Ecuadorian problematic. I will concentrate on four select essays: Whitten's brief introduction, Ronald Stutzman's "El Mestizaje: An All Inclusive Ideology of Exclusion," Grace Shubert's piece "To Be Black is Offensive: Racist Attitudes in San Lorenzo," and to be included in the section on "Afro-Ecuadorian Literature" will be Constance García-Barrios's analysis of "Blacks in Ecuadorian Literature."

Whitten's introduction provides a clear-cut, theoretically straightforward description of race, class, ethnicity and cultural resistance, and how they function in the context of the Ecuadorian political economy. He makes the following observation:

"In reaction to nationalist penetration of their ecosystem, denigrations of their cosmological principals, and insults to their knowledge, indigenous, 'mixed' and Afro-American people of contemporary Ecuador may express resistance to ecosystem and social alteration. People may do this directly, through organized or spontaneous protest, or indirectly, through ceremonial enactment and symbolism."49

(Summer 1988): 244.

48 Cultural Trans., p. 22.

49 Whitten, p. 15.
On the question of "mestizaje" (the ideology of racial intermingling) and the structure of the cultural process, Whitten states:

"The process of cultural transformation within Ecuador contains many remarkable continuities. The designation of white in terms of a national standard is inextricably linked with power, high status, wealth, national culture, civilization, Christianity, urbanity and development; its opposites are indio (Indian) and black. The false resolution of the opposites is found in the doctrine of 'mestizaje,' the ideology of racial mixture implying 'blanqueamiento' or whitening."50

Whitten argues that the Afro-Ecuadorians of the coast and other "non-national" people, like the various groupings of indigenous populations, have been excluded from effective labor market participation, nationalization efforts and the popular image of Ecuador. Whitten believes Ecuador, like many other Latin American countries, often officially proclaims an "ideology of ethnic homogenization."51 The product of homogenization is sometimes called "el hombre ecuatoriano" or the "Ecuadorian man." This, according to Whitten, is a promise of exclusion, as the average "Ecuadorian man" who may have a strong indigenous or African heritage is contradicted by a focus on "white supremacy."

"The practical process of excluding those considered to be nonmixed is carried out by the very person who espouses an ideology of inclusion based on racial mixture and mestizaje, and the resulting contradiction is obvious to the ethnically identifiable blacks as well as to the indigenous."52

50Ibid., 11.
51Ibid.
52Ibid.
Ronald Stutzman’s essay on "El Mestizaje: An All-Inclusive Ideology of Exclusion" outlines key theoretical issues on ethnicity, racial stratification and identity. Stutzman begins with major statements about the process of ethnicity in the Ecuadorian context. It is important to mention that Stutzman is one of the few anthropologists who has written on the "Afro-Choteños" of the Chota Valley (the Chota Valley is in the Ecuadorian highlands and is one the few areas of the Andes with an Afro-Latin population).53

Although carefully focused on Ibarra, Imbabura, and the hinterland, Stutzman essays contains a holistic, critical perspective on the dynamics of ethnicity and nationalism as contrastive cultural systems; "ethnicity is an idiom of disengagement from the struggle over the control of state apparatus."54

The central purpose of Stuzman's essay is to investigate ethnographically the problem of what it means to exchange ethnic identity for membership in the nation-state, and to inquire into the more general relationships of ethnogenesis, ethnotransformation and national integration.55 Stutzman's view regarding ethnicity can be summarized as follows: ethnicity and nationality tend to be mutually exclusive; "mestizaje" is a clever smokescreen for exclusion; African and indigenous people must "trade in" their ethnic identity for membership in the nation-state; ethnicity is interpreted as counter-cultural by the


54Whitten, Cultural Transformation, p. 20.

55Ibid., 24.
dominantly-led "mestizo" culture; and cultural diversity is interpreted by the dominant culture as a burden of the past and an impediment to the future.

Stutzman offers an ethnographic account of the major mystic and symbolic components of Ecuadorian national culture, gleaned from statements by national leaders, from materials used in Ecuadorian primary schools and from literacy campaigns.\(^{56}\) In short, Stutzman's views are a major statement on race, ethnicity, national culture, "mestizaje," and most importantly, the Afro-"Chotefios" of the Ecuadorian highlands.

Grace Shubert's essay "To Be Black is Offensive: Racist Attitudes in San Lorenzo" (San Lorenzo is a small black town on the northern coast of Ecuador) is an ethno-scientific analysis of racial identity. Shubert is mostly known for her writings on the Afro-Ecuadorian culture of San Lorenzo.\(^{57}\) She sets out to discuss one small facet of those complexities as reflected in the labeling and the usage of racial categories in a changing political economy. In addition, she analyzes the boundaries of categories (race, gender, class, geography) and correlates them with changes in the socio-economic system (population increase and the local political economy of San Lorenzo). Her two major groups chosen for the study are the whites from the "sierra" (highlands) and the blacks from the coast.

She reviews the ways in which change has affected people into contrastive systems, i.e., the emergence of white dominance in the political economy, and the expression

\(^{56}\)Ibid., 47.

of this dominance in racist terms.\textsuperscript{58} According to Shubert, the first real racial contact, mixture and tension in this small black town emerged between 1952 and 1957 during the construction of the Ibarra-San Lorenzo railroad (Ibarra is located in the "sierra" and the plan was to link the "sierra" with the coast by rail). Before the era of the railroad, the town was all black except for a few foreigners.

With the building of the railroad and the wharf at its terminal, sustained contact with the Ecuadorian highlanders was established. White and "mestizo" highlanders working for the "Junta Autónoma" (the autonomy commission) agency were put in charge of large tracts of land in this black town.\textsuperscript{59} This became the foundation for resentment and conflict with the blacks of San Lorenzo. After the completion of the railroad, more "outsiders" flocked to this region. This included white and "mestizo" highlanders, various groups of indigenous, and a host of migrants from Colombia. Many of the whites and "mestizos" from the highlands worked for the railroad, established businesses and even married into successful light and dark families, thereby gaining knowledge of the local ropes.\textsuperscript{60}

Shubert outlines with painstaking clarity how the process of "blanquemiento" or "whitening" progressively unfolded in this small black Ecuadorian town. Basic to this process was a sequence of developments in the political economy leading to the dominance

\textsuperscript{58}Shubert in Whitten's Cultural Transformation, p. 564.

\textsuperscript{59}Shubert in Whitten's Transformation, p. 565.

\textsuperscript{60}Ibid., 566.
by whites and "mestizos" from the "sierra" and the enforcement of their ethnic, cultural and social presumptions.\textsuperscript{61}

She concludes that the whites and "mestizos" from the "sierra" were able to establish their economic hegemony over this town. As a consequence of this economic dominance, the people from the "sierra" were able to dictate the cultural norms. She also concludes that this served as a springboard for the imposition of their racist presumptions.\textsuperscript{62}

In short, now more than ever, whites and "mestizos" from the highlands exert a dominance over what was once a black town. The net result is the continued marginalization of the Afro population of this region.

The Afro-Ecuadorian Literary Tradition: A Brief Overview

The Afro-Latin literary tradition is a brilliantly rich and powerful component of the black presence in the Spanish-speaking Americas.\textsuperscript{63} Space limitations do not allow an exhaustive treatment of the subject. I am only interested in underscoring the importance of

\textsuperscript{61}Ibid., 579.

\textsuperscript{62}Ibid., 579.

the social context of Afro-Ecuadorian literature. Literature, as an expression of popular culture, is one method to understand the context of a particular group's social situation. Black writers of the Afro-Ecuadorian social experience have written about race, racism and class prejudice. Afro-Ecuadorian writers like Nelson Estupiñán Bass, Adalberto Ortiz and Antonio Preciado, all novelists and poets from Esmeraldas, are eloquent exponents of the Afro-Ecuadorian literary tradition.64

Barrio-García examines the concepts expressed through Ecuadorian literature of black people, and the quality of blackness. The key thematic concerns are daily life and culture (which are different from the mainstream national Ecuadorian culture in the various classes, and the indigenous cultures of the "sierra, "oriente" and coast), racial mixture and racial identity, cultural conflict, and commercial exploitation.66 Her largely descriptive article presents the history of blacks in Ecuador and their portrayal by both blacks and "mestizos" in Ecuadorian literature.67 I found her brief discussion of the "Grupode Guayaquil" (The Group from Guayaquil) particularly interesting. This group of young, progressive and socially conscious Ecuadorians wrote a series of critical short stories between 1928 and 1932. Some have interpreted these writings as "protest novels."

---

64Ibid.

65The Ecuadorian Oriente is a vast region to the east of the country, comprised mostly of thick rainforest, which borders with Colombia to the north and Peru to the east and to the south. It is home to many of Ecuador's indigenous peoples, including the Huarani, and its vast resources of petroleum have been a source of land-rights conflicts between the indigenous and the Ecuadorian government.

66Constance Barrio in Whitten's Cultural Transformation, p. 572.

67Schmit, Latin American Research Review, p. 244.
the social orientation of the "Grupo de Guayaquil" made an impression on younger writers such as Ortiz and Bass, who in the 1930's began writing about their surroundings. So influenced by this group, Bass and Ortiz launched a movement that produced a wealth of literature.68

In short, Barrio-García, like Shubert, concludes that prejudice against black people as reflected in Ecuadorian literature is prevalent in daily relations in Esmeraldas, and predicts increasing marginalization of the black population as this region modernizes.

Conclusion

For the most part the literature as discussed in this dissertation does not effectively address the role that race plays in structuring blacks in the political economy (the obvious exceptions being Fontaine, Wade, Shubert, Stutzman and Whitten); lacks well-developed comparative and analytical models that sufficiently address race, black identity, and social movements in the context Afro-Latin America; and does not deal with the complexity of racial oppression, subjugation and stratification. Moreover, studies in the area of comparative race are desperately needed in the context of black Latin America.

68For one of the most comprehensive analysis of the works of Nelson Estupiñán Bass and Adalberto Ortiz see Michael Lee Walkers's "The Black Social Identity in Selected Novels of Nelson Estupiñán Bass and Adalberto Ortiz." Ph.D. Diss., University of California at Riverside, 1977. Also, see the works of Henry J. Richards, in particular his translation of Nelson Estupiñán Bass' "When the Guayacans were in Bloom." See his closing remarks in "When the Guayacans were in Bloom" on the implications of the Carlos Concha movement.
As noted earlier, anthropological studies have provided the bulk of the cutting-edge literature pertaining to Afro-Latin reality. Peter Wade’s study is one such example. His is one of the most complete and thoroughly researched works on any Afro-Latin population. Moreover, he has given us critical insights and analysis into one of the largest Spanish-speaking black populations in the world. His study has made a significant contribution to the study of race, “mestizaje,” and black identity.

Disciplines like Sociology, Black Studies, History, Anthropology and Political Science are starting to make real contributions to the literature. As a sociological work, Howard Winant’s Racial Formation Theory (outlined in chapter 1) significantly reinterprets the dynamics of racial oppression in the Afro-Latin context. Scholars such as Afro-American Studies professor Michel Fontaine and anthropologists Norman Whitten and Grace Shubert have not only framed the questions in terms of political economy, but have significantly clarified our understanding of the role of race from a political economy context.

Several historians have made significant contributions to the literature. George Andrews’ study of the blacks of Argentina and his more recent study of social movements provide a framework for understanding the evolution of black social movements in Latin America. Winthrop Wright’s analysis of the Venezuelans’ elitist attitude towards blacks is also a powerful statement on how Latin Americans have attempted to whiten their societies.

There is a general lack of literature on Afro-Latins from a political science perspective. This dissertation is an attempt to fill the void and contribute to a better understanding of the Afro-Latin predicament by combining political economy and theories of race, class and gender. The objective is to provide a comprehensive model which will help
to analyze black social movements, national identity, consciousness and the social oppression of Afro-Latin populations.

In short, this brief review of the literature has summarized, outlined and discussed the key debates and arguments concerning the black presence in the Spanish and Portuguese-speaking Americas. My objective was to highlight from a comparative perspective the relevant literature pertaining to discrimination against the various African populations in Latin America, and to relate these studies to an understanding of Afro-Ecuadorians.
CHAPTER 3

THE BLACK AMERICAS AND THE QUESTION OF SLAVERY

"Solo cuando comprendamos lo que es la lucha de la mujer, la lucha de los indígenas, la lucha de los negros, la lucha de los pobres, entonces nuestros pueblos podrán construir nuevas historias nacionales."¹

Rigoberta Menchu

"Only when we understand the struggle of women, the struggle of the indigenous, the struggle of the blacks, the struggle of the poor, will our people be able to construct new national histories."

Rigoberta Menchu

"Slavery was not born of racism but racism was the consequence of slavery"²

Eric Williams

¹Rigoberta Menchu, El Comercio, December 1, 1993

Theoretical Perspectives on Slavery in the Western Hemisphere

as a Component of Human Rights Theory

This chapter overviews the comparative slave system debate, the origins of the slave trade in Spanish America, the institution of slavery in Latin America in general and in Ecuador in particular, and the process of manumission in black Latin America. It is argued that slavery was the beginning of the collective human degradation of African people in the Western Hemisphere and that the slave mode of production must be contextualized properly before analyzing the contemporary situations of Afro-American people in the Western Hemisphere. It is not possible to understand the structural situation of Afro-American people in the world economy without first analyzing the role of slavery. The question of slavery in the Americas (North, Central, and South America and the Caribbean), in the view of this writer, is philosophically critical and fundamental to an attempt to develop a "theory of minority rights" as it relates to African people in the Western Hemisphere in general and Afro-Hispanics in particular.

My geographical definition of Latin America and the Americas is as follows: it includes Central and South America and parts of the Caribbean that encompasses 8 million square miles (21 million square kilometers) of land and contains 19 percent of the world's population, with roughly 350 million people. It comprises 18 Spanish-speaking American

---

3The relationship between slavery, democracy and human rights, has been masterfully analyzed by the Afro-American thinker, activist, and intellectual W.E.B. Du Bois. Du Bois has greatly influenced my thinking on various topics, however, his particular work pertaining to minority rights and human rights have significantly shaped my views on this subject.
countries along with Brazil, Suriname, Guyana, and French Guiana. This research will be concentrating on the Spanish-speaking countries of South America, with a particular emphasis on the Andean country of Ecuador. Unless otherwise specified, when employing the term "the Americas," I am referring specifically to the Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America.

The historical dimensions of the transatlantic slave trade in the context of European colonial expansion and the historical complexities as they relate to an understanding of the contemporary social situation of Afro-Latin populations are still philosophically unresolved. The horrors of the transatlantic route to the Americas and the brutalization of black slaves on the plantations or "haciendas" of Latin America are well-documented in the literature. This dissertation will attempt to establish an epistemological connection between the question of slavery in the Western Hemisphere and the contemporary social situation of African people in the Americas. This relationship is critical in order to formulate a comprehensive and systematic human rights interpretation of the reality of African people in the Americas.

It is argued that the transatlantic slave trade, the institution of slavery and the introduction of African people into the Western Hemisphere as slaves was perhaps one of greatest sins of Western Europe, and no doubt one of the gravest human rights violations committed collectively against African people in the past five centuries. Moreover, in this

---


5Hacienda is the Spanish term defining a plantation.
research, it is argued that the transatlantic slave trade, the institution of slavery and the introduction of blacks into the Western Hemisphere as slaves are important conceptual themes in the elaboration of an analysis and critique of the contemporary social situation of the political, economic, social and cultural reality of the African people of the Americas.  

One of the few scholars to establish a link between the historical aspects of the transatlantic slave trade and the institution of slavery, and the contemporary human rights predicament of African people in the diaspora, is the prominent African-American scholar Y.N. Kly. In his book, *International Law and the Black Minority in the U.S.*, Kly makes a clear conceptual link between slavery and modern-day human rights theory, in particular the notion of minority rights as they relate to collective rights. Kly makes the following observation:

"This period [slavery] of no official recognition of any of the human rights for its chief minority (Black Americans) has no doubt left an indelible mark on the American mentality and on the United States view of collective rights. As enslaved Africans, they existed exclusively to serve the economic interest of the Anglo-American majority. It is also significant that, although the enslaved Africans played a major role in the development [economic, social and cultural] of the U.S., officially the U.S. had separated its national identity from that of Africans, who were officially not citizens nor were they human beings. The effects of this early separation may explain the contradictions seen in the writing of many scholars today who, when speaking of the American history and traditions of human rights, find no problem in ignoring the historical treatment of her minorities."  

---


8 Ibid., 57.
It is this gap between the historical treatment of Afro-American populations in the Western hemisphere and the "history and tradition of human rights" that is philosophically critical and analytically necessary for this study. Kly's historical analysis of the denial of basic collective, human rights to U.S. blacks during the struggle for independence from England can also be applied to the period of Latin American struggle for independence from Spain.

Like North America, Latin American republics on the verge of independence refused to grant and recognize the civil and political rights of its black and indigenous populations. The Creole elite, a white exploitative minority in Latin America, feared the oppressed blacks, indigenous, and lower-class "mestizos," and as a rule sought to keep their intervention in the struggle to a minimum. For example, when the ruling elites of Latin America wrote and designed their first post-independence constitutions, they included many non-democratic features which effectively denied civil and political rights to blacks, Indians, "mestizos" and women. In 1811, a Venezuelan Congress proclaimed the country's independence and framed a republican constitution that retained black slavery, made Catholicism the state religion, and limited the rights of full citizenship to property owners.

One important historically overlooked fact about Latin America's war of independence is that the armies of Simón Bolívar and General San Martín had many blacks and mulattoes. Bolívar used the promise of freedom to blacks and mulattoes in exchange for

---

their participation in the war against Spain. Bolívar, celebrated as the "Great Liberator" of South America, had conceived of the notion of drafting slaves into the armed forces. Despite strong objections by the mine-owners (the minocracy of Colombia), Bolívar succeeded in accomplishing his objective. Such a move by Bolívar did not make him an abolitionist. According to the historian Vincent Bakpetu Thompson, Bolívar's move was purely one of expediency because he actually feared that if many blacks survived the war, they could constitute a destabilizing force in the body politic in the post-independence period. Despite Bolívar's promise that blacks would be freed after the war, slavery in Latin America continued for decades after independence was achieved. Moreover, the contributions that black slavery made to the industrial development of Latin America and the role blacks played in the independence movements went unrecognized.

In the post-colonial period in Latin America, blacks seem to disappear from civil society. For example, they were rarely mentioned except for vague references to slavery; moreover, their accomplishments and achievements during this period went largely unrecognized. One could argue that this process contributed to the present-day social invisibility of Afro Latin populations.

The context of this historical discussion is important to show the reader that the historical treatment of Afro-Latin populations as a minority group, and their contemporary human rights problematic, are inextricably linked.

\[10\] Ibid., 162.

In short, the following historical occurrences contributed to the modern day problematic of Afro-Latins: the transition from mercantilism to the early foundations of capitalism in Western Europe in the fifteenth century; the transatlantic slave trade, with all of the associated horrors, brutalities and dehumanization; the introduction of the institution of slavery in the Americas as a qualitatively different mode of production (in relation to pre-colonial Africa and Slavery in Europe), and slavery's role in the development of industrial capitalism.

**Overview of the Comparative Slave Debate**

This section discusses and analyzes key theoretical debates concerning the development of slavery in the Western Hemisphere and more particularly in Latin America. It overviews Eric Williams' dissertation regarding the rise and fall of slavery, and outlines the comparative debate concerning Iberian and Anglo-Saxon slavery. The comparative debate is important because advocates of the Iberian School of thinking argue that slavery in Spanish America was somewhat less brutal than in English-speaking America. Moreover, in order to comprehensively understand the racial situation of blacks in Latin America, the Iberian school of thought may provide some insights into why the concept of racial democracy is so widely accepted.

Although Africans and their descendants have been at the center of the Atlantic world's modern history, only since World War II have studies on slavery and the slave trade played a prominent role in the historiography of the former slave-holding and slave-trading nations and colonies. This trend has coincided with the global process of political
decolonization and the parallel academic concern with exploring the causes and the consequences of the social and economic disequilibrium so evident in the post-World War II period.¹²

Among the most influential pioneering studies published as World War II was ending was Eric Williams's seminal work *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944), which outlined the principal themes that have dominated scholarly writing on slavery and abolition, and indeed Caribbean history, in one form or another (this classic work concentrates on the English-speaking Caribbean islands and their economic relationship to Great Britain).¹³

Williams has been harshly criticized for his dogmatic economic determinism, especially for his insistence that the development of the virulent racism central to Western culture followed, rather than preceded, the growth of the African slave trade. In Williams's view, slavery was strictly an economic response by the various colonial powers in the Americas to the labor shortages and available African supplies. Williams further argues that theories of racial inferiority emerged subsequently to rationalize philosophically the growth of an institution that was inherently an economic reaction to new world labor conditions and European demand for tropical staples.¹⁴

---


¹⁴Ibid.
One of the main purposes of *Capitalism and Slavery* was to place African slavery and the slave trade at the virtual center of modern European economic history. According to Williams, the English industrial revolution was closely connected to the dramatic rise in world trade and the process of capital accumulation was made possible by the West Indian and slave and sugar economy.\(^{15}\)

Perhaps no aspect of William's work has been more vociferously debated than his contention that abolition, the banning of the slave trade and final emancipation were linked exclusively to the collapsing economic viability of slavery and the rise of industrial capitalism in Great Britain.\(^{16}\) Williams understood the abolition of the slave trade to be a consequence of the declining need for slave labor and the rise of new forms of social relationships.

The comparative debate concerning Iberian and Anglo-Saxon slavery was initiated at the beginning of the twentieth century with the publication in 1910 of Sir Harry Johnston's *The Negro and the New World*. In his ground-breaking book, Johnston argued that slavery in Spanish America was, in some ways, less inhumane, than slavery in the English-speaking Americas.

Along with Sir Harry Johnston, other scholars such as Frank Tannenbaum, Stanley Elkins, Herbert Klein and, more recently, Alan Watson, have taken the affirmative on this position, while scholars such as David B. Davidson, Marvin Harris and Gwendolyn

\(^{15}\)Ibid.

\(^{16}\)Bergad p. 3.
Hall have argued against this particular view. To illustrate, scholars such as Tannenbaum and Elkins emphasize the difference between Iberian and Anglo Saxon slave systems, feudal and capitalist influences, and such institutional forces as those of the church and the state, whereas scholars like Marvin Harris and David B. Davis place emphasis on the similarities among all modern slave systems and the role of economic and material interest.

Leslie B. Rout Jr, in his pioneering historical study *The African Presence in Latin America*, asserts that what has never been established is whether a comparative analysis of slave systems can be made. Rout raises a key conceptual problem pertaining to comparative slave system analysis: is it possible to measure the relative humanity or inhumanity of Spanish slavery versus North American slavery through the use of theoretical constructs?

---


Frank Tannenbaum's *Slave and Citizen* is considered a classic in the field of comparative slavery.\(^{20}\) In *Slave and Citizen: The Negro in the Americas*, he was preoccupied with the ethical and moral aspects of slavery: "Slavery was not merely a legal relation: it was also a moral one."\(^{21}\)

Tannenbaum held up the moral value placed on the individual as the chief legacy of the Western European world, and saw nothing improbable in trying to resolve the contradiction of New World slavery within this larger philosophical premise. He even developed a hypothesis of freedom from slavery based on the recognition of the moral value of the individual: "Wherever the law accepted the doctrine of the moral personality of the slave and made possible the gradual achievement of freedom implicit in such a doctrine, the slave system was abolished peacefully. Where the slave was denied recognition as a moral person and was therefore considered incapable of freedom, the abolition of slavery was accomplished by force --- that is, revolution."\(^{22}\)

Two generations of intensive scholarship have revealed the flaws in Tannenbaum's theory, but his pioneering work of comparative slave systems continues to stimulate new works, such as Alan Watson's, *Slave Laws in The Americas*.\(^{23}\) Watson

---


\(^{21}\)Ibid., 8.

\(^{22}\)Ibid.

eschews moral philosophy for legal history. He argues that a discussion of slave laws will not in itself uncover the dynamics of slavery (major premise of Tannenbaum).

Spain's slave laws had been shaped by a European and Mediterranean tradition that reached back to Roman law as set out in the Justinian Code, and they were subsequently given Spanish legitimacy in a set of laws known as "Las Siete Partidas." Castillian law, with its antecedents in Roman Law, was transplanted to Spain's New World as part of the conquest.24 As Watson comments, there were laws regulating slavery "before there were slaves to be regulated."25 These laws were not framed for the New World, but once transplanted across the Atlantic, they lived on and dictated the legal bounds of Spanish colonial slavery. Both Watson and Tannenbaum agree that the heritage of Roman law facilitated manumission in the Spanish colonies, but Watson underlines the fact that this tradition of Spanish slave law did not prevent Spanish American slavery from developing into a racist institution.26

According to Tannenbaum, the Negro slave, brought into the Iberian peninsula as early as 1442, fitted into a society where slavery was still in existence. As a result of the many centuries of warfare with the Moors, if not for other reasons, Spanish society accepted slavery as normal, while it had long died out in Western Europe. Tannenbaum emphasizes that there was a slave law, an elaborated code, embodied as part of the "Siete Partidas" going

---


25Watson, p. 147.

26Murray, p. 155.
back to "Alfonso the Wise" (1252-84), which endowed the slave with a legal personality, with duties and rights. The slave was known to the law as a human being. Watson and Tannenbaum are both interested in the dynamics of slave laws and how they determined the racist nature of slavery. The question is, was the nature of Spanish slavery less racist than slavery in the British West Indies and North America due to the Roman influence? Watson concludes the following:

"English America was a very racist society, and this is very much reflected in the law. And the law of slavery in English America was largely made without a preceding model. In contrast, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, and French America all had slavery based on racism but had a law of slavery that was not so overtly racist as that of English America." Watson, p. 127.

In Slavery in Human Progress, David Brion Davis, another well-known scholar of comparative slave systems, cautiously warns against putting too much emphasis on the strict interpretation of slave laws. He asserts that slavery in the New World "was the result not of concerted planning, racial destiny or imminent historical design, but of innumerable local and pragmatic choices made in four continents." Davis, Slavery and Human Progress (New York, NY: Oxford University Press 1986), 52.

---

27 Ibid.

28 Murray, p. 155.

29 Watson, p. 127.


31 Ibid., 52.
The central question is: how much can be deduced from a strict interpretation of slavery's legal history? Watson admits that "law is a distorting mirror" for anyone who wants to get a clear picture of the internal dynamics of slavery.\textsuperscript{32}

We must consider three additional factors: firstly, "cédulas" (royal decrees) enunciated in Spain by the Spanish Crown to establish slave codes would not always be enforced in the colonies; secondly, the Viceroyalties or New World Kingdoms had their own "cédulas" that in some instances were harsher than those emanating from Madrid and were often enforced; and thirdly, the Spanish Crown often issued many "cédulas" that were vague and/or contradictory.

However, Watson does find a significant contrast in certain areas between English slave laws and slave laws in the Spanish and Dutch colonies rooted in Roman Law. English slave law forbade the owners to teach the slaves to read and write, compelled slave owners to fix penalties for runaway slaves who were recaptured, and erected obstacles to manumission. Spanish and Dutch slave laws also contained these restrictions, but Roman slave-law tradition also incorporated the formal possibility of manumission.\textsuperscript{33}

What is crystal-clear is that with the colonization of the Americas and the introduction of black slaves from Africa, we witness the beginning of a modern-day slave system that was qualitatively different from the classic slave systems of Europe and pre-\textsuperscript{32}Murray, p. 7. \textsuperscript{33}Ibid.
colonial Africa. Its distinctive characteristics, when compared to the traditional slave systems of Europe and pre-colonial African slavery are the following:

a. With the introduction of black slaves from Africa into the New World, the concepts of blackness and slavery became inextricably linked and organically synonymous. From the fifteenth century until present, slavery, blackness and oppression were conceptually connected.34

b. Slavery in the Americas assumed a new and paradoxical justification: to buy, sell and trade human beings in the name of Christianity and evangelization. This new rationalization drastically changed the medieval slave code, which had been written for Christians to enslave Christians; now, with the blacks from Africa, they could justify their enslavement in the name of converting "heathens" or "savages" to "Christians."35

c. The number of black slaves in the Americas increased dramatically. The Europeans geometrically multiplied the numbers of slaves brought to the Americas and developed a new mode of production.36

d. The traditional system of slavery in Europe, heretofore, functioned as a traditional mode of production, whereas black slavery in the Americas provided


35Ibid., 68.

36Ibid., 68.
the necessary capital accumulation for the development of a new mode of production, i.e. capitalism.37

It is the last point, the role that African slavery played in Western capitalist development, that will be discussed briefly. For this purpose, I will analyze the relationship between the slave trade, slave economies and the process of capital accumulation.

**The Transatlantic Slave Trade and Early Capitalism**

The connection between capitalism and slavery has been taken up by many scholars, however, this dissertation will examine the views of the following: W.E.B. DuBois, Octavio Ianni, Walter Rodney, Sidney Mintz and, more recently, Patrick Manning. DuBois understood the development of the African slave trade through chartered and incorporated companies as the beginning of modern international capitalism and imperialism, stating: "the international relations built up through the slave trade and based on the great crops of tobacco, cotton, sugar and rice re-oriented the modern world."38

Ianni explores the paradox of the Europeans' simultaneous implantation of free labor in Europe and forced labor in the Americas. According to this scholar, the key to the paradox is the process of primitive accumulation. Ianni offers an analysis of the evolution of the relations between forced labor and the mode of production. This is, in fact, a reformulation, in more orthodox Marxist terms, of the Williams argument. Slavery and other

37Ibid., 69.

forms of forced labor were imposed by European mercantilism on the so-called New World as a means to exploit the resources. Thus, the slave became the foundation of the free laborer. Eventually, the apparent paradox of forced labor and free labor became a structural contradiction. Rodney's work discusses the negative effects that the transatlantic slave trade had on Africa and analyzes how Europe benefitted from the slave trade. He argues that African slaves were the basis for the development of early capitalism.

Sindney Mintz argues that the introduction of slavery into the Western hemisphere was possibly the greatest acculturation event in human history, and he also believes that most scholars still do not acknowledge how the slaves contributed to the growth of industrial capitalism. Mintz quotes Edgar Thompson, who wrote "The Plantation" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation from the University of Chicago). Thompson argues that Western industrial slavery, slavery within capitalism, was basically a pioneer institution.

More recently, Patrick Manning's Slavery and African Life: Occidental, Oriental, and African Slave Trade, emphasizes the connection between capitalism and slavery in the Atlantic World as a part of a process "to integrate slavery in the Western World." Manning suggests a possible reformulation of Eric Williams' thesis (dramatic rise in world trade and the process of capital accumulation made possible by the West Indian slave and sugar

---

39 Fontaine, p. 117.


economies) that rests on the productivity of the slave and the contribution of slavery to the economic development of New World societies. He urges the application of this "expanded and reformulated Williams thesis" not just to the Atlantic World, but also to African and Oriental areas, wherever slave systems dominated.42

Manning's effort to restate and reformulate Eric Williams' thesis in a more contemporary way is his attempt to enhance the reader's conceptual understanding of "the Atlantic heritage of slavery."43 This undertaking encompasses a more realistic estimate of how much slaves contributed to the societies of the Americas and Europe and provides greater knowledge of the real cost of slavery to African societies.44 Manning also confirms how Westerners continue to live with several heritages of slavery, including one of the most pernicious legacies, racism. Manning makes the point that "slavery was the sacrifice of Africans for the transformation of the wider world, and slavery was a tragedy for the people of Africa."45

Brief History of Slavery in Black Latin America

The first black slaves introduced into the New World were obtained from the markets of Latin Europe.46 In 1502, Nicolas Ovando, the first royal governor of the island

42Murray, p. 158.

43Ibid.

44Ibid., 23.


46Thompson, 81, 82.
of Hispaniola, petitioned Queen Isabella of Spain to send "ladinos" to the New World. Again in 1505, based on the request of Ovando, an additional seventeen blacks were sent to the island of Hispaniola. Based on the dictates of the royal crown, these slaves were to be used as agricultural workers. It appears that King Ferdinand's decision to send more slaves to the New World was influenced by his awareness that the Indians were not adjusting to the Spanish labor demands. Thus it was these series of events that began the substantial transfer of Africans across the ocean to the New World. Later, roughly in 1517, this transfer was made directly from Africa.

A majority of the millions of Africans sold into Spanish America over the course of some four centuries came from the West Coast of Africa between the Ivory Coast and South Africa, a stretch of territory exceeding three thousand miles. According to Leslie Rout, Jr. a few tentative hypotheses may be drawn from the available data concerning the African slaves sent to Spanish Indies.

---

47Hispaniola was the Caribbean island first settled by the Spanish; today it is shared by the Dominican Republic and Haiti.

48Ladinos is a term that defined Africans from Spain who were Christianized, spoke Spanish and had some knowledge of Spanish culture.


50Ibid., 29.

51Thompson, p. 82.


53Rout, p. 32.
and Mozambique were brought to the Spanish Indies; blacks from upper and lower Guinea Coast eventually became the most prevalent in the Caribbean, Central America, and Northern South America; and in the Rio de la Plata region (Argentina and Uruguay) Angolan and Congolese elements were probably more numerous.

Most scholars of the transatlantic slave trade establish the dates between 1518 and 1873 as roughly the beginning and the end of the modern-day slave trade. European slave traders, along with their willing African cohorts, facilitated the largest coerced migration in history, the international trade in human beings, which carried nearly ten million Africans to the Greater Americas.54 As previously stated, the first group of slaves probably arrived in 1502 to the island of Hispaniola, and the last shipment of slaves to the Americas, according to Manuel Moreno, was sent to the Southern Coast of Cuba in April of 1873 and transferred immediately to the sugar plantations of Juragua near the city of Cienfuegos.55

Historians estimate that at least ten million more Africans died along the way, in the slave raids or wars in the interior of Africa, on the long march to the Atlantic Coast, or during the infamous transoceanic voyages euphemistically known as the middle passage.56 For the Europeans involved in the slave trade, it is estimated that their profits were as high as three hundred per cent, thus making the slave trade the most profitable business in the world at this time. It is further argued that these profits were reinvested in Europe thus


56Burdick, p. 56.
financing the industrial revolution.\textsuperscript{57} Over the course of four centuries, some five million survivors of the middle passage ended up on the sugar plantations of the Caribbean, about half of whom went to the three most important islands: Hispaniola, Jamaica, and Cuba.\textsuperscript{58} Another three and a half million found themselves on the sugar plantations, silver mines, and coffee groves of Brazil.

Two hundred thousand slaves were shipped to work in Mexico's coastal sugar industry, as well as in the mines of Zacatecas and Durango. Nearly one hundred thousand slaves were sent to Peruvian sugar cane and wheat fields, and wine and fruit orchards. Colombia received another two hundred thousand slaves to pan for gold in Antioquia, Choco and Popayán, and to toil the sugar plantations in the Cauca Valley. Venezuela received another one hundred thousand slaves to sweat in the lowland cacao and sugar plantations,


in the mines, on the docks, and as pearl divers off the coast. Over one hundred thousand slaves were sent to the pampas of Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay to rustle cattle, work in the wheat fields and vineyards, and serve as dock workers, porters, domestics and artisans in the cities. In Ecuador, one hundred thousand slaves were shipped to work the sugar plantations of the Chota Valley, the gold mines of Loja, and the "haciendas" of Esmeraldas.59

Slavery on the Northern Coast of Ecuador and the Chota Valley

The history of Afro-Ecuadorians has yet to be written in a clear, comprehensive and systematic fashion. The few works that exist are sketchy, fragmented and incomplete. There exists little documentation on the arrival of Africans to Ecuador, and the few historians who have attempted this monumental task have had to rely largely on the oral tradition. Moreover, slavery, as a component of the general history of Ecuador, has not received rigorous academic attention from the social science community. Slavery in Ecuador, as a particular unit of focus, is usually treated as a peripheric topic. Most discussion of slavery

59 For one of the best discussions on the dispersion of Africans in the Spanish Indies see Leslie B. Rout, Jr The African Presence in Spanish America: 1502 to the Present (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 64.
in Ecuador is included only as a minor concern in the general works on the history of Ecuador.60

According to popular history, the black people of Ecuador inhabited the highlands of Ecuador as early as 1534. It is written that two of the two hundred and five original founders of the city of Quito were black.61 There are several unconfirmed theories about the arrival of blacks to Ecuador. One theory asserts that rebel slaves from the Caribbean escaped from bondage and despite tremendous odds made their way to Ecuador. Another theory asserts that the Spanish “Conquistador,” Francisco Pizarro, brought slaves with him from Spain when he disembarked on the coast of Colombia.62

The view that seems to have the most merit and is perhaps the most widely accepted theory on the arrival of Afro-Ecuadorians is the legend of the wrecked slave ship. The wrecked slave ship is firmly established in the popular history of Afro-Ecuadorians and few people, if any, challenge the authenticity of this popular legend.63 According to Miguel Cabello Balboa, a Spanish priest who traveled to the province of Esmeraldas in the sixteenth century:

60 For a general discussion of slavery in the context of Ecuadorian history consult the following works: Julio Estupiñán Tello, El Negro en Esmeraldas: Apuntes para su Estudio (Quito: Casa de La Cultura Ecuatoriana, 3rd edition, 1967). This semi-history of Afro-Emeraldefios (blacks of Esmeraldas) is essentially a general reiteration of dates and events. Also see Oscar Reyes, Breve Historia General del Ecuador, two volume set (4th edition, Quito, 1950). This is a general history of the Republic of Ecuador. Another solid historical work pertaining to Ecuadorian history is Gonzalez Suarez’s Historia General de la República del Ecuador (Quito, Ecuador: Casa de la Cultura, 1970).


63 Barrio García, p. 535.
century, as well as historians of the Afro-Ecuadorian social experience, the first group of Africans to arrive on the coast of Esmeraldas were being transported to Peru by the Spaniards when the ship capsized. Subsequently, the 23 black survivors, 17 men and 6 women, escaped and established themselves on the coast of Esmeraldas.\textsuperscript{64}

The account evolves as follows:

"In the Lord's year of 1553, around the month of October, a ship set sail from the port of Panama transporting merchandise and slaves ... After the 1553 ship wreck, the small group of black survivors determined that in order to survive and subsist in Esmeraldas they would have to acquire a substantial quantity of land. They also realized quickly that the native people not only controlled the land, but also knew the geography of the rivers and above all else were familiar with the routine of their most common enemy, the white man."\textsuperscript{65}

"The blacks, together and armed, as best as they could, with the weapons they took from the ship, went deep inland ... their hunger made them forget danger, and they arrived at the village in that area called Pidi. The barbarians from there, scared to see such a large group of new people, fled in such a hurry as was possible and abandoned their ranches including the women and children, and the blacks took possession of everything, especially the food, which was their main interest ... the blacks defended themselves against the Indians and the Indians saw that against the blacks they could not win anything. The Indians decided to make peace with the blacks and a black named Anton was named as the leader."\textsuperscript{66}

These escaped blacks, known in the Spanish-speaking Americas as "cimarrones,"\textsuperscript{67} decided to attack the indigenous communities of Pidi and Campaces, and eventually took control of

\textsuperscript{64}Jbid.

\textsuperscript{65}Juan Garcia, Cimarronaje en el Pacífico Sur: el Caso de Esmeraldas (Quito, Ecuador: Abya Yala, 1989), 229.

\textsuperscript{66}Balboa, p. 15.

\textsuperscript{67}Cimarrón is a term defining runaway slaves in Latin America who escaped from the plantations and formed free and independent black communities throughout Latin America.
the entire district, thus, creating one of the first "palenques" of Ecuador. The black Spanish "cimarrón" communities, known as "palenques," lived independently of Spanish control. The term "palenque" refers to independent, relatively powerful, free black communities in Spanish America. A "palenque" was usually small, well-protected and fortified to shield the black population from attack by slavers. They barricaded themselves within inaccessible regions surrounded by thick swamps and vegetation. In order to avoid being captured they moved inland, and provided havens for future slaves, especially "bozales."

Most of the literature on free black communities or "palenques" never mentions the fact that large sections of the province of Esmeraldas remained a "palenque" for four centuries, from the middle of the sixteenth century to the end of the nineteenth century. Most of the scholarly treatment of "palenques" in the Americas normally mentions the more famous free black communities of Cuba, or Jamaica, while neglecting perhaps one of the first free black communities, or "palenques," of South America.

This famous black dominion was known from as far away as the Caribbean port city of Cartagena de Indias in Colombia, one of the principal slave markets of the Americas.

---

68Palenque refers to the free communities formed by black runaway slaves ("cimarrones") throughout Latin America.

69Rafael Savoia, El Negro en la Historia (Quito, Ecuador: Centro Cultural Afro-Ecuatoriano, 1990), 195.

70Thompson, p. 275.

71Bozales were slaves transported directly from Africa, in contrast to "ladinos," who were black slaves from Spain who had been culturally "hispanicized."
Many slaves from Colombia escaped south and attempted to make their way to this "land of freedom." According to Nelson Estupiñán Bass, many of the Afro-Esmeraldeños\textsuperscript{72} today may be descendants of these Colombian "cimarrones."

The black survivors of the wrecked slave ship created one of the most powerful "palenques" in the Americas. The black influence in this district was so strong that the region became known as "La Tierra de la Libertad" (the land of freedom).\textsuperscript{73} The domain of the free blacks in Esmeraldas was such that "they could agitate the entire province and persuade the indigenous people to take up arms and repel all those who tried to conquer their land."\textsuperscript{74} When the Spaniards realized that Esmeraldas was the safest and quickest route to Panama, they tried to wrestle control of this territory from the "cimarrones." Altogether, the "conquistadores" mounted more than fifty armed incursions against the free black settlement of Esmeraldas, all of which failed.\textsuperscript{75}

"The fame of the rich emeralds and the gold in this province of Esmeraldas, as well as the passage to Panama, were the main reasons why many tried to conquer and populate it. Captain Rojas, with sufficient men, left the city of San Francisco de Quito and made his way to this Province by way of Otavalo ... he found such harshness in the land and ferocity in the people that he took the wise decision of returning without accomplishing his mission."\textsuperscript{76}

\textsuperscript{72}Afro-Esmeraldeño is a term that defines the black population of the mostly black province of Esmeraldas in Northwestern Ecuador. Currently the term is used by Afro-Ecuadorian intellectuals, activists, historians and individuals with a heightened consciousness.

\textsuperscript{73}Savioa, p. 195.

\textsuperscript{74}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{75}Savoia, 196.

\textsuperscript{76}Balboa, p. 20.
At the end of the sixteenth century, Esmeraldas became known as the "Republic of the Zambos." The "Land of Freedom" was not subjugated to a central authority until the end of the nineteenth century. Towards the close of the sixteenth century, a group of blacks from Esmeraldas walked to Quito to negotiate with the emissaries of the Spanish Crown, and declared themselves subjects of Spain. A painting of these "Afro-Esmeraldeños," dressed in the regal clothing of the era, now hangs in the "Museo de America" in Madrid.

Starting in the seventeenth century, blacks were imported to Ecuador to work in the gold mines of Zarума and Portobello, Ecuador's principal mines located in the southernmost province of El Oro. They were brought to replace the thousands of indigenous workers that had either died from the harsh conditions of labor or who migrated to other parts of the country. In addition, black slaves were also forced to work in the gold mines of Northern Esmeraldas, located along the Cachavi River between the coastal towns of Limones and San Lorenzo. These mines were the property of the first president of Ecuador, Juan José Flores. Flores, the architect of Ecuadorian independence, was also one of the major slave owners of the country.

In an effort to solve the labor problem towards the end of the sixteenth century, plantation and mine owners began petitioning the Spanish Crown to request that more

---

77 Zambo is a term used to define a person of mixed African-indigenous ancestry, a result of the alliance formed between black and indigenous communities in Ecuador.

African slaves be introduced into Ecuador. After reviewing several proposals, the Spanish Crown accepted the mine owners' petition to send slaves to Ecuador. In this period, the gold and silver mines of Zaruma were paralyzed because of the lack of labor: because mining was such hard and excruciating work, and offered little reward, it was impossible for the mine-owners to find workers to sell their labor at any price.

**Characteristics of the Slave System in Ecuador**

In 1592, Judge Francisco de Auncibay, of Quito, wrote a code of conduct called "El Código de las Minas" (the Mine Code) to be applied to the African slaves who were to labor in the mines of Zaruma. Its content clearly demonstrates how the Spaniards attempted to control the Africans.

"The black miner must consecrate himself exclusively to his work and under laws that the mine-owner is also held to. The African workers, as well as the owners, must live for the progress of the mines ... Every hamlet shall have 200 houses, its inhabitants can only marry women of their hamlet ... the master of the mines cannot in any instance take a black slave to his house for domestic work ... they [the slaves] must not learn to read, write, ride horses, or use a weapon, because they lose respect and become dangerous."

Federico Gonzalez Suárez, in *The General History of Ecuador*, says the following concerning black slavery in Ecuador: "African people came to Ecuador, like the other

---


80 Savoia, *El Negro en La Historia*, 120.

81 Ibid., 124.
Africans of Latin America, as forced laborers, and were introduced through a system of buying and selling which allowed individuals to purchase slaves like cargo.\textsuperscript{82}

According to Julio Estupiñán Tello, Simón Bolívar ordered a census of slaves in Ecuador in 1825. This census revealed that there were only 6,804 slaves in the entire country of Ecuador. However, these numbers seem extremely low given the fact that over 100,000 slaves were allegedly brought into Ecuador starting in the sixteenth century. In the opinion of Nelson Estupiñán Bass, the census was extremely inaccurate and heavily undermined the real numbers of slaves. Moreover, Bolívar's census did not count "cimarrones" or free blacks. A more reasonable estimate, according to Estupiñán Bass, would be between 50,000 and 70,000 slaves. Of the allegedly 6,804 slaves in Ecuador, seventy-five per cent lived in the coastal provinces of Guayas, Manabí, and Esmeraldas. It is not known how many blacks actually populated these provinces, nor are there any reliable estimations on the number of free blacks versus the slave population.\textsuperscript{83}

What we then know about slavery on the Northern Coast of Ecuador and Esmeraldas during this time is the following: slavery was mainly practiced in the provinces of Manabí and Guayas, and to some extent in Esmeraldas.\textsuperscript{84} Esmeraldas historically and contemporarily has been the focus of attention as it relates to Afro-Ecuadorians and, as described by Leslie B. Rout, it is the province of "Black Power." Much of the


\textsuperscript{83}Tello, p.57.

\textsuperscript{84}Ibid.
anthropological studies and literary analysis of the Afro-Ecuadorian literary tradition is focused on “Afro-Esmeraldeños.”

The Ecuadorian “Sierra” or Highlands: The Chota Valley and Slavery

The Ecuadorian “sierra” is extremely complex and varied in both its ecological and human aspects. The northernmost provinces of Carchi and Imbabura are particularly so because of an unusual topography that permits cultivation at temperate elevations between 2,500 and 3,000 meters, and at a subtropical elevation between 1,000 and 2,500 meters.85 A few kilometers north of the city of Ibarra, capital of the province of Imbabura, the Andes drop sharply to form the valley of Chota, a small, rich agricultural region whose soil is fertilized by the Chota river. In contrast to the aridness of the surrounding bleak plains of the Andes, the valley enjoys its own micro-climate, ideal for farming sugar cane, which in the colonial days became its main crop.

The origin of the black population of Chota, like the “Afro-Esmeraldeño” population, is surrounded by some uncertainty. Some investigators have suggested that “Afro-Choteños”86 are the descendants of the freed or escaped slaves from the coastal province of Esmeraldas, but it appears that most blacks in the provinces of Imbabura and

---


86 Afro-Choteños are the black residents of the Chota Valley. The have the unique distinction of being one of the few black populations in Latin America that are located in the Andes. Moreover, culturally, they differ widely from the black population of the coastal province of Esmeraldas, having their own unique music, dance and oral tradition.
Carchi, particularly those of the Chota valley, are the descendants of the slaves held by the Jesuits on their highland plantations. According to the oral tradition of the “Afro-Choteños,” the first black residents were from an unspecified land.87

The Jesuits from Spain established themselves in Latin America in the middle of the sixteenth century, and arrived in Quito in 1575. In 1606, they founded the city of Ibarra, located in the province of Imbabura north of Quito, as an exclusively Spanish community. The austere whitewashed colonial houses of Ibarra stand today as testimony of the Jesuits’ wealth and influence in the region. By the 1630’s they had firmly established their hegemony in Imbabura and had started to develop agriculture in the nearby valley of Chota. It is well-established that the Jesuits had black slaves on their “haciendas” near Pimampiro as early as 1630. At this time, slave labor was introduced into the Chota Valley to replace an indigenous population decimated apparently by tropical disease and harsh labor conditions. The importation of black slaves to the northern highlands of Ecuador explains why it is one of the few Andean regions that includes a significant black population.

According to Ronald Stutzman, a leading cultural anthropologist on the black "Choteño" population, the number of slaves had increased to 122 by 1659. The “hacienda” of Pimampiro was divided in two departments, Cunchi and Carmen, and there were thirty-one men, thirty-two women, and fifty-nine children.88 During this period until about the end


of the 1760's, the Jesuits had created one of the most powerful economic institutions in all of Ecuador. They owned ten plantations and roughly two thousand slaves. The Jesuits were eventually forced out of Ecuador, as well as the rest of Latin America, resulting in the sale of their haciendas to private individuals. Along with the haciendas, the slaves were also sold to the new owners.

The scant information on the dynamics of slavery in the Chota Valley suggests that the slaves were subjected to tremendous hardships. In 1806, a slave overseer named Juan José Marques from the Jerusalén plantation, owned by Bernardo Cavezar, presented a formal complaint to the authorities about the abuses that were perpetuated on the slaves of this particular plantation.

"Daily, they experience nothing but whippings, beatings and harshness... some on a daily basis, such as José María Talaban, who in less than a month suffered three-hundred blows, leaving him practically without buttocks... If a pregnant woman craves cane liquor, she will still be exposed to the harshness of this punishment as happened to Maria Petrona and as a result she bore the creature [gave birth] before nature had intended."

The blacks of Chota suffered much during the time of slavery and out of this suffering emerged a uniquely Choteñian culture. We can affirm that the culture of the Valley of Chota is a hybrid of Indian-Hispanic-Afro-Ecuadorian influences which were able to survive within the historical processes and through changes in the modes of production.89 The blacks of the Chota Valley paid a heavy price during slavery in colonial times and in the early stages of the Republic. They assimilated their suffering under the "whip of the

European master." From this suffering emerged a musical expression known as the "bomba," which is unique to the black people of Chota. It represents the expression of the hardships of slavery and is the mixture of the three distinct cultural influences mentioned above.90

The "bomba" fuses the multidimensional pain of suffering with the chorus of slavery's whips, punishments and tortures, the choruses sung during the work day on the work gang and mines, and the choruses sung at night, brightened by the rhythms of their ethnicity, as a memory of their land, their customs and their traditions.91 Moreover, the blacks of Chota assimilated their social oppression into their popular history using the oral tradition as a mechanism for the transmission from one generation to the next. In fact, the "Afro-Choteños" created a subculture within the national culture of Ecuador. Remarkably, this unique cultural tradition is very much alive and well today.

At present, the Chota Valley consists of some ten to fifteen villages whose population is estimated to be between fifteen to twenty thousand people. Economically speaking, this is a marginalized population and all of the arable land is controlled by a few large landowners. Chapter Four will provide a more comprehensive analysis of the contemporary socio-economic status of "Afro-Choteños."

Organization of the Slave System

90Ibid., 40.

91Ibid., 41.
Like most slave systems in Latin America, slavery in Ecuador was organized to maximize the distribution of work inside this type of mode of production. The "cuadrilla," or slave work unit, was composed of ten to twelve slaves. There were in general two types of division of labor: those who worked in the mines, or "piezas de minas," and the ones who cultivated the agriculture, known as "piezas de rosa." The "capitán" was the slave who was in charge of the various "cuadrillas" and who had the total trust and confidence of the "hacienda" owner. The "capitán" would receive many "fringe" benefits for his "loyalty." He would oversee the daily work and supervise the labor process. Also, he would be responsible for maintaining "discipline" and adjudicating "justice." In addition, the "capitán" would distribute the food, and it was his job to collect the gold and give it to the administrators. This demonstrates that from very early on in Ecuador's colonial history, we find organizational and exploitative conditions based on the political economy of the plantation of tropical products and the exploitation of precious minerals.

---

Slave Uprisings In Ecuador

---

92Coba, p.34.

93Ibid., 35.

94Literatura Popular Afro-Ecuatoriana, p.34
There is very little scholarly material available on slave revolts in Ecuador. Most of the scholarly works concentrate on Cuba, Colombia and Peru.\(^{95}\) Throughout history, slaves have constituted the most oppressed but not generally the most revolutionary of social classes, according to Eugene D. Genovese,\(^{96}\) one of the leading scholars of comparative slave history. In Genovese's view, the black slaves of the Western hemisphere rose up in revolt often and in great numbers and with a large measure of success. The slaves of the Old South rose up much less frequently, in fewer numbers and less successfully than those of the Caribbean region and South America.\(^{97}\) The particular reasons and nuances to these argument are extremely complex, involving intricate socio-economic and cultural factors of the times, and are not within the purview of this investigation.\(^{98}\)


\(^{97}\)Ibid., xxviii

\(^{98}\)Ibid.
As early as 1522, slaves in Hispaniola rose in what was probably the first black slave revolt in the New World. Black slaves in Mexico mounted significant revolts in 1526, 1570, 1608 and 1670. In 1537, the [Mexican] regime smashed an elaborate slave plot to kill whites, impose a regime on whites and "mestizos," and recreate a traditional African society. In Colombia the slaves destroyed the Caribbean town of Santa Marta in 1530, and after it was rebuilt, inflicted much damage again in 1550. The rebel "bozales" (African-born slaves) in the Colombian interior mining district rose in 1548, killed twenty whites and took two hundred and fifty Indian hostages during their retreat to maroon bases.

Leslie Rout, in his analysis of the Spanish American slave revolts, notes that rebel slave leaders were often mulattoes, and plausibly suggests the importance of roots in the colonial experience to the formation of effective black military leadership. In any case, the rebel slave periodically plagued the colonial regime throughout its history and remained a constant source of friction for the colonial authorities. From the available data on Ecuador we know that in July of 1789, Ambrosio Mondongo, a black slave that labored in an "hacienda" in Salinas (which is located in the Chota Valley), led an uprising on two plantations, "San José" and "Puchimbuela," which were the property of Carlos Araujo. Seven slaves managed to escape, and Mondongo's example shook the entire valley of Chota. This led to an uprising on the "hacienda" of "La Concepción," owned by Don Juan Chiriboga.

99 Eugene Genovesse, From Rebellion to Revolution, p. 38
100 Ibid., 40
101 Ibid., 39
Roughly sixty blacks escaped into the mountains, killing cattle for their food and threatening all those who tried to subjugate them, including a priest.\textsuperscript{102}

A second uprising in "La Concepción" was not as successful as the first. The lieutenant "Corregidor" of Ibarra brought twenty-five armed men to the "hacienda" and, with the help of shotguns, managed to gain control of the slaves. None were killed, however, the slave owner sold all of the "rebels" separately so that they would not lead another revolt.\textsuperscript{103}

Other less successful uprisings followed on the "haciendas" of "Cuajara," and "San Buenaventura" and "San Antonio," which also belonged to Chiriboga. Slaves led revolts armed with weapons, guns, knives, sticks and stones. Many stables, homes and other valuable property were destroyed in these revolts.

According to popular history, it is alleged that many of the "cimarrones" that fled from the brutal conditions of the "haciendas" and mines made their way to Esmeraldas. There is no documentation on this aspect of Afro-Ecuadorian slave history, and this account has been preserved in the oral history of Afro-Ecuadorians.

\textbf{Manumission and Abolition}

According to the historian Vincent Bakpetu Thompson, there were no anti-slavery movements in South America, except Brazil, similar to the ones that existed in the United States, Britain and France. Anti-slavery stirrings and efforts to achieve emancipation were

\textsuperscript{102}Savoia, p.60.

\textsuperscript{103}Ibid., 61.
noted from about the second decade of the nineteenth century, although the one notable feature in the endeavor to abolish slavery and the slave trade was the persistence of the slave revolts, which were earlier in time than the abolitionist stirrings and were persistent until the final demise of slavery in South America.104

The reasons why slavery was abolished in the Western hemisphere between the 1830's and 1880's are enormously complex, involving the interplay of transnational political, ideological and economic forces. Eric Williams understood that the banning of the slave trade and final emancipation were linked almost exclusively to the collapsing economic viability of slavery and the rise of industrial capitalism.105 According to the supporters of this thesis, the sugar economy of the New World faced a crisis in overproduction starting in the late eighteenth century. With all of the colonies producing and competing at full speed, the price of sugar began to fall steadily, and it became more expensive to feed and maintain a year-round slave labor force than to hire (and fire) free workers who had to sustain themselves.106

Another school of thought argues that slavery became incompatible with the new technologies, such as the steam-driven press, which required greater skills than ever.


Considering:

That the few slaves that still exist in this land of the free are a contradiction to the Republican institutions that we have established and adopted since 1820: an attack on religion, on morality and on civilization, and a defamation of the Republic and a reproach to the legislators and governors.

Decree:

Article 1.- While the Government procures the necessary funds to grant freedom to the slaves, from the moment of the publication of this decree, the taxes obtained from the free sale of gunpowder shall be utilized for the exclusive purpose of [compensation money].

Article 2.- No quantity [of these funds], however small, shall be used for other objectives, and the employee who does this shall suffer the penalty of destitution and shall be obliged to return the funds of manumission he extracted.

Article 3.- Every time two hundred pesos of this money is collected, the oldest slave shall be granted his freedom.

Article 4.- In each capital of a province, there shall be a junta [committee] denominated PROTECTOR OF THE FREEDOM OF SLAVES and composed of the Governor of the province and City Council Members and of four citizens with known philanthropic sentiments.

This decree produced confusion among the popular sectors and the slaves, and discontentment among "hacienda" owners and slave owners. After signing the decree, Urvina was heavily attacked by the slave-owning bourgeoisie, who were afraid that their fields would empty overnight. To address the issue squarely and defuse the tensions, Urvina

---

111Ibid., 105.
112Ibid., 106.
113Ibid., 107.
114Ibid., 107.
delivered a speech on the subject of manumission on July 17, 1852. In the speech he stated that "the barbaric institution of slavery is incompatible with the human sentiments of this century and the liberal proclamation of the 1845 revolution" (he is referring to Ecuador's breakaway from Colombia).

Some consider José María Urvina to have been the pioneer of the abolition of slavery in Ecuador. During his four years as president of Ecuador, he set aside roughly four hundred thousand pesos to be used as compensation money. According to the historian Julio Estupiñán Tello, the government set the date of 1854 as the time for all slaves to be freed. A tax was placed on gunpowder to compensate the slave holders. This decree sought to free all slaves by 1854, however, only 35 per cent of the slaves had been freed by that date.

The process of manumission was practically paralyzed during the years that Ecuador fought to separate from Greater Colombia and to establish itself as an independent republic, a struggle which ended in success in 1852. Despite the fact that Urvina's decree explicitly forbade the misuse of manumission funds, much of that money was utilized to finance military expenses during the war of independence from Colombia. In the evolving

---

115 Coba., 56.
116 Colección Pendoneros, p. 57
117 Julio E. Tello, 63.
118 Ibid.
political climate in regards to slavery in Ecuador, manumission was painfully slow also due to the influence of large landowners and the clergy.

When Gabriel García Moreno, a pro-slavery dictator, came to power in 1860, he revoked the tax on gunpowder, and manumission came to a halt. Moreno was known as a conservative and religious fanatic, and one of his principal objectives was to intergrate the interests of the highland landowners, the agro-exporters and the coastal merchants and financiers. In these years, the coastal bourgeoisie was the most dynamic sector of the Ecuadorian economy, and the one that maintained commercial relationships with foreign capital. This period, known as absolutism, was characterized by significant uprisings by the country's most oppressed sectors, mainly the indigenous people. Moreno was in power until 1875.  

Along with these obstacles, Ecuadorian slave codes also made it difficult for slaves to obtain their freedom. Each slave had to ask for his or her freedom, and was required to submit several written testimonies from people approved by the "authorities" attesting to the slave's good behavior. The manumission decree of 1851 established that the older slaves would be freed first and the younger slaves last. This strategy obviously favored the slave-owner. The older slaves were no longer productive or less productive, while the younger slaves were more productive, thus being more valuable. The older slaves were a drain on the "haciendas," and this method provided the slave-owners with the opportunity

119Juan Pablo Muñoz and Hernan Reyes: Ecuador Guía Intencionada (Argamo, Italy: Asociación para el Estudio y el Desarrollo de la Comunidad, 1990), 47.

120Ibid., 70.
to rid themselves of unproductive labor and receive economic compensation for freeing these now-useless slaves. Most of these older slaves had nowhere to go in their old age, and many were reluctant to leave. In contrast, the younger slaves obviously wanted their freedom immediately and unconditionally.

The Period of “Concertaje” or Sharecropping

In the post-slavery period in Ecuador, a new mechanism of exploitation evolved called "concertaje" or sharecropping. This period in Ecuadorian history has not received the scholarly attention that it deserves, and the facts are scant, scarce and fragmented. Even the dates of the period of concertaje are difficult to establish. Most historians establish the period of "concertaje" between the 1860's and the 1890's. However, in one interview with Nelson Estupiñán Bass, the renowned Afro-Ecuadorian writer and historian adamantly insisted that some forms of "concertaje" were still being practiced in Ecuador up until the early 1950's.

The post-slavery period in Latin America roughly corresponds to the same era as the post-bellum period in the U.S. As in the U.S., a system of indebted servitude or debt peonage evolved in Latin America after slavery was abolished. "Concertaje," or debt

---

121Concertaje is a Spanish term defining a system of harsh social exploitation similar to sharecropping in the U.S. that evolved in Ecuador in the post-slavery period. The system of concertaje bound ex-slaves, now known as “conciertos,” to the plantations through large debts that were transferred from one generation to the next. Thus, plantation owners were guaranteed free labor without the necessity of buying slaves. The institution of concertaje in Ecuador is best described in the first novel by Afro-Ecuadorian writer Nelson Estupiñán Bass, When the Guayacans were in Bloom. (Quito, Ecuador: Casa de la Cultura: 1954).
peonage/sharcropping, essentially tied the servant to the master in a form of perpetual bondage. Within the system of "concertaje," an indebted servant was known as a "concierto." Although overlooked and ignored in the social science context, "concertaje" has received more attention in the literary context.

The institution of "concertaje" is best described in the first novel by the famous Afro-Ecuadorian writer Nelson Estupiñán Bass, "When the Guayacans Were in Bloom." In this classic novel about the system of "concertaje," a debt is passed from parent to child and the family remains in debt for several generations.

"They were conciertos from childhood. They were like a piece of furniture in Doña Jacinta's hacienda. They grew up bound to the hacienda paying the debts of their dead parents."123

In the final assessment, when the slaves were freed in Ecuador, the plantation owner found a way to retain the labor of the ex-slaves by maneuvering them into a situation of "concertaje" or indebted servitude. The plantation owner, as well as benefiting from "concertaje," in some cases received compensation from the government for "freeing" his slaves. After extensive consultation with Estupiñán Bass, it is my view that this type of servitude lasted at least until the mid 1950's. It is estimated that during one period of the 1950's, at least forty per cent of the black families of Chota were tied to these social arrangements. Between the 1950's and the 1960's the landowners began to rid themselves of


123Constance Barrio, p.542.
these workers in order to modernize their "haciendas" and transform them into large-scale cattle/agricultural industries.

Conclusion

The primary objective of this chapter was to discuss the comparative slave debate and the historical origins of slavery in Spanish-speaking South America. It was argued that the transatlantic slave trade and the institution of slavery are central to a comprehensive understanding of the social predicament of Afro-American people in this hemisphere. Moreover, a discussion of why the Spaniards decided to use African labor in the Americas was provided to show that the institution of slavery was integral to the development of early capitalism. Only after the Spaniards had experimented with an indigenous slave labor force did they decide to introduce African labor into the Americas. Contrary to popular perceptions, slavery in Spanish America was extremely brutal and dehumanizing. After the demise of slavery, new forms of social oppression emerged that exploited the various black populations. In Ecuador, this system was known as "concertaje." The system of "concertaje" or sharecropping bound the ex-slave to the plantation through a form of debt peonage that essentially forced them to work their whole lives to meet unpayable "debts." This system persisted in Ecuador until the 1950's.

It is contended that slavery, "concertaje," and the system of racial subjugation that was born out of them, have forced Afro-Ecuadorians to occupy the lowest positions in the contemporary social system of Ecuador. Few Latin American governments, if any, included in their post-slavery constitutions laws specifically designed to limit the social mobility of
their black populations; thus, legal discrimination, as sanctioned through laws and other formal mechanisms, did not develop per se in post-slavery Latin America. Nevertheless, racial discrimination was prevalent in every sphere of society. Afro-Ecuadorians and other Afro-Latin Americans emerged from slavery into a society where segregation was not legislated but was practiced under a more subtle, sophisticated and pernicious form of social discrimination. Latin Americans functioned under the illusion that they were all one people, racially mixed, and thus racially united. However, in the post slavery period, Latin American Republics, while espousing a very powerful philosophy of racial democracy, simultaneously instituted a system that excluded their African populations from the national culture, politics, economy, and civil society. Many Afro-Latin populations, despite the inferior standing, succumbed to this line of thinking. One could argue that this is a form of invisible apartheid, and that the institutional seeds of racial democracy were planted during this period.
CHAPTER 4

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS, NÉGRITUDE AND THE ROLE OF "MESTIZAJE" IN BLACK ECUADOR

"Mestizaje" and White Supremacy in Contemporary Ecuador

In order to properly situate the Afro-Ecuadorian problematic in a minority rights context, it will be necessary to review the social, political, cultural and economic forces that have impacted the Afro-Ecuadorian social identity. The key aspects to be analyzed are social movements, black consciousness, "mestizaje" and Négritude. These factors provide precious insights into the development of the Afro-Ecuadorian social identity.

The DuBoisian notion of "dual consciousness" states that African-Americans had two, often contradictory social identities: their "American" identity and their "African" identity. These identities were at odds with each other in the sense that being American equaled being white according to the dominant Anglo-Saxon precepts. Afro-Ecuadorians

\[1\]Négritude is a broad term describing various Afro-centric cultural and social movements. It is a concept that denotes the positive features of blackness among black people. It was coined in the 1930's by the poet and intellectual Aimé Césaire from Martinique, and was later employed in cultural movements in Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America. In Ecuador, the Négritude movement has no clear-cut dates, and it has recently been gaining strength among Afro-Ecuadorian writers and intellectuals.
experience a similar dichotomy in the Latin American context: they live in a world that considers whiteness to be good, imitable and desirable, and blackness to be inherently unacceptable and undesirable. The social and cultural ethos of Ecuadorian society is determined by the dominant "mestizo" sector, which defines itself as culturally white.

Blacks in Ecuador and throughout Latin America have had to wage a constant battle against what Richard Jackson calls ethnic lynching. Ethnic lynching is the process of restoring whiteness by bleaching out black people as a means of solving social and racial problems, a solution that rests on the biological superiority of the white race. Therefore, ethnic lynching, with its implied acceptance of white superiority, suggests that aesthetic prejudice lies at the heart of the crisis of the black identity in Latin America. This aesthetic prejudice and the premium it places on whiteness is partly responsible for the fact that African features decrease chances for racial acceptance and ascent in Latin America.

According to Norman Whitten, Jr., in Ecuador the designation of "white" in terms of national standards is inextricably linked with power, wealth, high status, national culture, civilization, Christianity, urbanity and development; its opposites are "Indian" and "black." The false resolution of the opposites is found in the doctrine of "mestizaje," the ideology of racial mixing implying "whitening." The various components of civil society transmit the

---


3Ibid.

4Ibid., 5.

idea of whiteness as a national standard, and of blackness as a negative characteristic, thus reinforcing the notion of white supremacy.

In contemporary Ecuador, the media plays an important role in the articulation of these values. On Ecuadorian television, there are no black newscasters, reporters, presenters and other personalities. It is rare for an Afro-Ecuadorian to make an appearance on television. When images of blacks are shown, the individuals are musicians, soccer players or suspected criminals. The same can be said for the print media, where blacks are also only reported on when they have allegedly committed a crime or performed an athletic feat. An article about an alleged criminal will only single out his race if he is black and blacks and other suspected criminals are referred to as "anti-socials."

Moreover, even "mestizos" are not fully represented in the electronic media: most Ecuadorian television personalities have strong European features and are light-skinned. Ecuadorian advertisers aggressively seek out blonde, blue-eyed foreigners to appear in their commercials. Four of my close friends that fit these characteristics were featured in prominent advertisements while they were teaching English in Quito.

The concept of blackness in Ecuador, as stated earlier, has been loaded with negative connotations. The Ecuadorian social scientist Alfredo Espinosa Tamayo presents a turn-of-the-century perception of the Afro-Ecuadorian population, citing the bad influence of this element in the national mixture, especially their "mental inferior qualities" and stating that they belong to a "servile race created in slavery...and the least capable of incorporating itself to civilization. The image that has been mostly projected of Afro-Ecuadorians by non-
black Ecuadorians varies from the stereotype - childlike and playful - to the most negative - deviant and mentally incompetent.

The dehumanization of Afro-Ecuadorians is also widespread in the area of linguistics. For example, blacks are often referred to as "negritos" and "negritas" or "morenitos" and "morenitas." The use of the diminutive in referring to people of any age is only done in the case of black people. There is no equivalent diminutive for "mestizo," "indio" (Indian) and "blanco" (white). The social implication is that blacks are smaller, or less important. In the structural sense, it denotes powerlessness, social invisibility and insignificance. It is a term used by a person who perceives to have power over another.

The term "moreno," or "brown," is socially acceptable with non-black Ecuadorians and with black communities that have not achieved consciousness. Historically, the term "black" has been loaded with such negative connotations that the term "moreno" has been chosen as a replacement. In the case of the black community, referring to themselves as "morenos" allows them to escape a perceived negative identity. At the same time, however, they are negating their blackness. It is the equivalent of African-Americans in the U.S. choosing to call themselves the "browns."

According to Antonio Preciado, the renowned Afro-Ecuadorian poet and director of the Cultural Office at the Central Bank of Ecuador, Afro-Ecuadorians have internalized these cultural codes and, in an effort to be accepted by the larger society, they undergo a process he calls "spiritual whitening."

Spiritual whitening is attempted in a variety of forms.

---

The route that has been followed for centuries is miscegenation, which often assuressone of more social respect while maximizing cultural loss. Preciado notes that many blacks "try to improve the race by having a mulatto child. The black parent thus feels like he or she has climbed the social ladder, and is ensuring a better future for the offspring."7

Other attempts at whitening include processing, or straightening the hair, abandoning black cultural traditions such as the unique Afro-Esmeraldan musical expression known as the "marimba," and the negation of heritage and identity. Many Afro-Ecuadorian activists also complain that black professionals and intellectuals have chosen to ignore their roots and their communities, and that they prefer to live in a white world. In other words, blackness is viewed as a cultural obstacle.

Black Social Movements and Consciousness in Ecuador

"It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness." Karl Marx.

According to Marx, human consciousness is conditioned by the dialectical interplay between the subject or the individual in society and the object or the material world in which one lives. Thus, history is a process of creation, satisfaction and recreation of human needs. In Marx's view, the totality of relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. In the Afro-Ecuadorian context the fundamental questions are:

7Ibid.
What circumstances allow for the continued cultural and social domination of Afro-Ecuadorians as a group?

What has prevented, and continues to prevent, Afro-Ecuadorians from effectively challenging the forces of cultural and social domination?

José Arce Libio, advisor at the “Instituto Nacional de Patrimonio Cultural” (The Ecuadorian National Institute of Culture), states that "Afro-Ecuadorians are living a national drama. Our identity is not recognized, and this impedes the formation of a consciousness. This is a problem for Ecuadorians in general, and black Ecuadorians in particular." Arce is unequivocal in his critique of black consciousness in Ecuador, and of consciousness' vital role in the Afro-Ecuadorian struggle for equality and recognition. He states that "the Afro-Ecuadorian does not recognize himself/herself, and so does not develop a philosophy to vindicate his/her culture and identity. He shall not become someone until he recognizes his identity and acts accordingly."

These statements reflect the present dynamics of Afro-Ecuadorian social consciousness. It is largely argued by Afro-Ecuadorians that due to complex historical and social factors, they, like other African populations in the Western Hemisphere, lack a defined social consciousness and a positive group identity. Black intellectuals generally identify two types of consciousness existent in the Afro-Ecuadorian community: assimilated and manifested consciousness.

Assimilated consciousness exists in individuals of an oppressed group that have low-level consciousness of their identity and their situation, but they never manifest it as such. These individuals are aware that they are black and that racism exists, and they have
developed coping mechanisms that allow them to survive in a racist society. However, they do not act on this condition because they have not yet come to a conscious realization. They prefer to ignore outwardly that anything is wrong. This form of consciousness is prevalent among Afro-Ecuadorians, according to the black Ecuadorian intellectuals interviewed for this dissertation.

Manifested consciousness is the awareness of one's objective social conditions, of the forces shaping this reality, and of the options available to address these circumstances. Most Afro-Ecuadorian intellectuals, leaders and activists note with a degree of sadness that this last expression of consciousness is largely absent from the black masses of Ecuador.

Despite the fact that Ecuador is a very small country, and that the two historical black populations are concentrated in two distinct areas, Afro-Ecuadorians have thus far failed to organize around their common interests. Like any social movement, there are sharp tactical and ideological differences. However, these only partly explain their inability to organize. It is mainly the low levels of consciousness and the notion of racial democracy that have impeded the development of a mass-based, grass-roots, politically energized black movement in Ecuador. There are over fifty black organizations throughout the country, most of them centered around cultural activities. Until recently, black leaders have been unable to successfully create an umbrella organization on a national level. This deficiency largely explains their lack of political power, and their inability to create social and political structures for the protection of their rights.
Michael Hanchard poses a similar question in his study of Afro-Brazilian social movements. The central question for his study is why no Afro-Brazilian social movements developed in the post-War period. Hanchard adopts a Gramscian framework, which is favored on the basis of its ability to emphasize and grasp the cultural dimensions of racial politics. The lack of social movements among Afro-Brazilians is due to the "racial hegemony" embodied in the ideology of Brazilian racial democracy that began to take root in the early part of the nineteenth century. According to Hanchard, racial hegemony, by "promoting discrimination and by denying its existence," effectively neutralized racial identification among Afro-Brazilians, thus undermining social cohesion, group solidarity and mass mobilization.

Hanchard demonstrates how the notion of racial democracy impeded recognition of racially specific problems, which in turn undermined group solidarity around race and race-based mobilization of national scope. Regrettably, in Ecuador racial democracy has had the same affect on the development of race based mobilization.

---


10Ibid.

11Hanchard, p.6.

12Ibid.
The Role of Afro-Ecuadorians in the Carlos Concha Liberal Insurrection

One of the key questions this writer asked over and over to various Afro-Ecuadorians pertained to black social movements of the twentieth century in Ecuador. Put more concretely, were there any major social movements in the twentieth century lead by Afro-Ecuadorians? Many would smile and say that in Ecuador "we have not had the types of social movements similar to the Civil Rights Movement in the United States."

Most referred to the Carlos Concha insurrection (1912-1916) and the black literary movement known as Négritude (technically there are no clear-cut dates for Négritude in Latin America) as the only social movements in Ecuador having an Afro-Ecuadorian presence and influence. In order to understand the state of disarray of Afro-Ecuadorian social movements, and the low levels of consciousness within Ecuador's black communities, it is essential to examine the role that blacks played in the liberal insurrection lead by Carlos Concha at the beginning of the twentieth century. Many Afro-Ecuadorian writers and activists point to the outcome of this revolt as the beginning of the end of Afro-Ecuadorian mass-based, popular social movements.

This revolt was led by Carlos Concha, a member of the radical faction of the liberal party, and it is generally remembered as one of the bloodiest civil wars in the nation's history. The Concha insurrection still remains deeply embedded in the psyche of modern day Ecuador. Regrettably, the Concha insurrection has not been studied in great detail. The importance of this movement and its relevance to this study lies in the fact that the bulk of Concha's army were "Afro-Esmeraldeños." The reasons, motivations and speculations as to why so many blacks fought in a war that would not yield them any net advantages is still a
subject of hot debate. One plausible explanation that perhaps reconciles the various reasons why blacks participated in such large numbers in this liberal revolt may be rooted in the Liberal Party's ideology of the time. The liberal ideology in many ways had a truly progressive character, thus perhaps resonating in the consciousness of the marginalized masses. A comprehensive understanding of the social program of the Liberal Party requires a basic understanding of the liberal revolution of 1895, and of the two constitutions that came into effect during the party's thirty-year domination. The first constitution was enacted in 1897, and the second in 1906.\textsuperscript{13} The liberal period ran roughly from 1895 to 1925. Heretofore, the country was controlled by conservatives from the "sierra" under the rule of President García Moreno.

In 1895, the liberals from the coast seized power. As soon as General Eloy Alfaro, one of the leaders in the revolution, became president, he began to implement various reforms, the most controversial being the separation of Church and State. The liberal constitution of 1897 established equality under the law, freedom of thought, the abolition of the death penalty for political crimes, and an unqualified guarantee of personal safety. The remaining innovations in the document had to do with the religious question. For example, the constitution eliminated clerical participation in the Council of State and established religious freedoms.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{13} Osvaldo Hurtado. Political Power in Ecuador Translated by Nick D. Mills, Jr. (Boulder, CO: 1977), 115.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
The religious reforms were modest, while the civil and political reforms were somewhat more progressive and theoretically more far reaching. The separation of Church and State weakened the position and power of the Catholic Church, which until this point had significant influence in state affairs, and this angered key elements within the Church.

It was the constitution of 1906 that clearly defined and enunciated the principles of the Liberal Party. These civil liberties were the most advanced in terms of the number and the degree of protection of basic guarantees. The new document eliminated the classical declaration concerning Catholicism as the State religion, guaranteed free public education, declared the separation of Church and State, and forbade the election of clerics to the legislature.\textsuperscript{15}

This constitution went so far as to contain a provision that held the State responsible for the "protection of the indigenous race" and later would abolish laws that required Indians to pay special taxes.\textsuperscript{16} No mention was made of the blacks, who were at this point held hostage to the system of "concertaje," or sharecropping. However, in 1896, Eloy Alfaro delivered a blistering speech on the injustices of "concertaje" and indirectly referred to the Afro-Ecuadorian situation.

Therefore, it is conceivable that the Liberal Party's political program struck a cord in the minds and hearts of the black people of Esmeraldas. In the abstract, they were able to identify with the progressive human rights ideas contained in these constitutions, such as the

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
abolition of the death penalty, which was principally applied to blacks and Indians. This explains in part why they were inclined to support a liberal insurrection.

What must be carefully noted is the discrepancy between the constitutional theory and practice. Although human rights and other civil liberties were enshrined in the two documents, for the most part, the same rights and freedoms were ignored, contradicted or never implemented. Thus, while on one level it is easy to see why blacks and other marginalized elements might find solace in these constitutional pronouncements and want to protect them, available evidence suggests that these were empty promises, lending credence and validity to the school of thought arguing that the blacks were manipulated and used to fight the "white man's war," the Concha insurrection.

Agustín Cueva, a progressive Ecuadorian political theorist and social scientist, and arguably one of Ecuador's most important thinkers of this century, believes the liberal revolution to have been "historically important." He asserts that the liberal revolution shook the ideological superstructure of Ecuador. Cueva convincingly argues that the liberal revolution "democratized the culture" and "institutionalized the principles of liberalism." He also carefully points out that these new principles were not applied with rigor, nor did they benefit the poorest sectors of the population; however, the revolution did signify progress in relation to the preceding era.

---

18 Ibid.
The various accounts of the events that preceded the Carlos Concha insurrection are undocumented, fragmented and incomplete. Most Ecuadorian history books do not even mention this armed struggle, let alone its root causes. Interviews with Nelson Estupiñán Bass, Juan García and José Arce provided the bulk of the following information.

In general, most accounts point to the brutal assassination of Alfaro in 1912, soon after he left power, as the spark for the Carlos Concha revolt. Some argue that the mob assassination of Alfaro was caused by a church-led anti-Alfaro campaign that polarized public opinion in Quito against him. Furious at Alfaro’s attempts to undermine the power of the Catholic church, the clergy manipulated the masses into rebelling against the former president. After Leonidas Plaza rose to power in 1912 (he was a member of the same party but from the conservative faction), Alfaro and some of his followers were arrested in Guayaquil, and transported to the main prison in Quito, the "Penal García Moreno." According to popular history, Quito was already polarized when Alfaro arrived as a prisoner. Soon after his incarceration, an angry Quito mob broke into the prison, killed Alfaro and his lieutenants and dragged their bodies through the streets to "El Ejido" park, where they burned the corpses.

It is in this context that the Carlos Concha revolt exploded. Both Concha and Alfaro were "costeños" (coastal peoples) who were extremely popular in Esmeraldas, and Alfaro’s headquarters were located in Esmeraldas. His liberal revolution was championed by the black "conciertos" (sharecroppers) on the coast, who were promised eventual freedom from "concertaje" in exchange for their participation. Carlos Concha, a charismatic man who
fought alongside Alfaro in the liberal revolution, launched an armed campaign in 1912 to avenge the murder of Alfaro against the central government of Quito headed by Plaza.

The Liberal party of this period was composed mostly of members of the agro-industrial exporting bourgeoisie from the coast. Their commercial interests were closely linked to the exportation of cocoa, whose high world market prices were benefitting the Ecuadorian economy. Eloy Alfaro, and later Carlos Concha, emerged as leaders of the radical faction of this group. When Concha took up arms, he sought and received widespread support from the blacks and mulattoes of the coast. Hundreds of blacks fought and died in this four-year insurrection. It is generally agreed upon that this insurrection was particularly brutal and bloody; in fact, it is estimated that the government spent roughly forty per cent of its annual budget to quell the rebellion. It also sent hundreds if not thousands of troops from the "sierra" (highlands) to fight in the thick, swampy jungles of Esmeraldas, and a large number of them died at the hands of Carlos Concha's troops. The "Esmeraldeños" were familiar with the difficulties of the terrain, and in many cases had a solid logistical advantage over the troops from the "sierra." Concha's troops fought exceptionally well, holding the government in check for almost four years.

Several Afro-Ecuadorian intellectuals note that the central government was never able to defeat Concha militarily. Instead, Concha was promised certain concessions, including the building of roads and other infrastructure in Esmeraldas, in exchange for laying down his arms. Concha surrendered in 1916 and a general amnesty was declared. He was immediately arrested and sent to prison, where he died, and his main collaborators, many of whom were black, were beheaded. The black masses that had participated in the revolt
eventually returned to their communities and to the same form of legalized servitude that they had fought to abolish. The brutalities of this conflict are still etched in the national consciousness of Ecuadorians. There are numerous accounts of Concha's troops pillaging towns and villages and raping and murdering the population and in general, it is agreed that Concha's troops were undisciplined and ruthless.

Many historians and intellectuals familiar with the Concha insurrection, including those interviewed for this dissertation, believe that the central government withheld money and other developmental aid from the province of Esmeraldas for years after the war as a form of punishment, and that the province did not recover economically until the 1940's. Some Afro-Ecuadorians believe that this bloody civil war further sharpened regional animosities between Esmeraldas and Quito, and contributed to the current icy relations between these two regions. Estupiñán Bass further contends that the Concha revolution established a climate of fear and hatred towards the black population of Esmeraldas that is felt even today.

One school of thought argues that the social movement of Carlos Concha was a genuine social protest movement, and that Afro-Emeraldenos' participation was a function of their social oppression; that is to say that as a group, they understood their interests and the forces impacting their interests, and believed that this social movement would address their concerns. Another interpretation suggests that the Concha revolution was not a genuine popular movement. Some argue that blacks were used as "cannon fodder," were manipulated and had no real objective understanding of the internal dynamics of this movement. Supporters of this last viewpoint to the historical black participation in armed social
movements in Latin America such as the wars of independence from Spain and the movement to separate Ecuador from Greater Colombia. In these wars, blacks were often times manipulated and used to fight wars in which they gained very little, if anything at all.

The Concha war had the following effects on the psyche of the black Ecuadorian masses: the black protest movement, which was in its genesis, was effectively destroyed; black leadership was thoroughly discredited by the central government and those leaders who were not executed or imprisoned were marginalized, and their reputations stained; the blacks of Esmeraldas were stigmatized, feared and hated because many white and "mestizo" soldiers died at the hands of black soldiers, and this fear and hatred has been woven into the popular culture of Ecuador; and lastly, the Concha revolt, its implications and the role of Afro-Ecuadorians have been officially erased from contemporary Ecuadorian history.

According to Libio Arce, this was the beginning of the end of Afro-Ecuadorian protest movements of the twentieth century. Arce asserts that since the Concha movement, there has not been such an obvious and vigorous participation by black Ecuadorians in protest movements. In Arce’s words, “not only did the government literally behead the black protest participants after the war, but it also metaphorically beheaded the black social movement.”

**Négritude and Afro-Ecuadorian Literature**

The Afro-Ecuadorian literary tradition is rich, brilliant and powerful. In many ways, it reflects the often contradictory tendencies of the black experience and social
consciousness in Ecuador. One of the most interesting, innovative and cutting-edge aspects of Afro-Latin studies is the excellent and first-rate scholarship available on black Latin American literature.\(^9\) In much of Latin America, black writers act as de facto historians, transmitting oral accounts of black history and tradition into literary works. In the case of Ecuador, certain key events in Afro-Ecuadorian history do not form part of the national history, and are outlined exclusively in the novels, essays and poems of black authors. For instance, the Carlos Concha revolt described in the previous section has not been included in Ecuadorian history books, and the most complete and accurate account is found in writer Nelson Estupiñán Bass' novel "When the Guayacans were in Bloom."\(^{20}\)

Estupinan Bass’s classic literary work deals with two under-explored themes of Afro-Ecuadorian history. First, it describes the institution of “concertaje” and the plight of


an Afro-Esmeraldan family. In “When the Guayacans were in Bloom” a debt is passed from parent to child. The children grew up bound to the hacienda paying the debts of their dead parents. Second, Estupinan Bass’s novel takes place against the backdrop of the Carlos Concha revolt. He fuses historical facts with a very creative imagination to criticize this insurrection and the tone of the novel strongly suggest that blacks were used and manipulated.

Black writers of Latin America, contrary to popular belief, have been the most eloquent articulators of Négritude. They affirm their acceptance of Négritude not only through expressions of black pride and the rejection of white racism, but also through calls for liberation, racial solidarity and identification with black people around the world. Richard Jackson argues that despite racist obstacles created by the process of "mestizaje," Négritude developed as an expression of blackness but within the context of the mixed compositions of Latin American nations. Jackson believes the notion of Négritude, as reflected in the Latin American context, is the quest for an anti-racist, possibly universal culture in which the black man will establish solidarity with all of mankind.21

In Latin America, Afro-Latin writers reject and condemn white racism and its by-products, while simultaneously reaffirming the black past and asserting the black present. Négritude, as a manifestation of consciousness, does not prevent a broader view of man, or of man's inhumanity to man, from becoming a literary concern.22 According to literary critic

21Richard Jackson. The Black Image in Latin America p. 91

22Ibid.
Leopoldo Zea, Négritude is an ideological concept that has its origin in a situation that is common to black people of Africa and Afro-Americans. Within the context of colonialism and dependency, Zea analyzes both Négritude and "indigenismo" (the analogous movement among the indigenous populations) as ideological concepts common to African and Indian people in their adverse relationships with Europeans.23

Therefore, white racism is a determining factor in their oppression and subsequent reaffirmation of positive cultural values. Négritude consists of the reaffirmation of black culture and a rejection of white values that are often synonymous with discrimination, economic exploitation and racial superiority.24 Afro-Ecuadorian writers such as Estupiñán Bass, Ortiz and Preciado have been eloquent spokes-people of the Afro-Hispanic Négritude tendency. Ortiz defines six major tendencies of Afro-Hispanic Négritude; these elements are folklore, literature, music, plastic arts, religion and world view. These elements, plus Bantu philosophy, compose a great deal of the cultural expressions in black Latin America.25

Ortiz then places Négritude squarely within the Afro-Hispanic literary framework when he states "Négritude for us [black Latin] Americans cannot be a return to Africa, nor an exaggerated apology for Africa, but rather a process of ethnic and cultural miscegenation in this continent, which can be appreciated now not only in the somatic manifestation of miscegenation, but also in literature, popular music, and beliefs and superstitions." Ortiz's

23Lewis, p.8.
24Lewis, p.3.
25Ibid.
views on Négritude are practical given the circumstances and the present status of blacks throughout the Americas and Ecuador.26

From the literary point of view, marriage, family, religion, folklore, language, food, funeral rituals, dance, music, oral traditions, myths and armed resistance are the stuff [components] creative writers draw upon constantly. For black writers in Uruguay, Peru, Ecuador and Colombia, these themes provide the impetus for their conceptualization of Négritude, which occurs on many different levels.27 In the Afro-Latin literary context, these are the essential cultural expressions that underlie the contemporary search for identity and represent the core of Négritude among black people in the Americas.

Conclusion

Throughout Latin America black social movements are organizing, mobilizing and gaining strength in a number of countries, including Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, Uruguay, Nicaragua and Brazil. Many of these movements focus on black consciousness, black identity and Négritude and are critically challenging the racist underpinnings of the “mestizaje” philosophy. George Andrews argues that situating black movements in a century-long time-frame makes it possible to see them not as isolated episodes, but as

26Ibid., 84.

27Lewis, p.4
chapters in the long-term ongoing history of black protest and struggle. In the context of black Ecuador, social movements have been sporadic, intermittent and short-lived in the twentieth century. The Concha movement was the only large-scale mass based movement of this century where blacks were the bulk of the participants. Most recently, there is compelling evidence to suggest that there is a protest movement simmering. Recently, the Ecuadorian government established a commission for black affairs to study black problems, and in the 1994 parliamentary and municipal elections, black candidates on the local level from the black province of Esmeraldas made impressive gains in the electoral arena. In the northern section of Esmeraldas, black peasants are well-organized: they are challenging the wood companies and are demanding property titles from the government to lands they have occupied for generations.

In terms of the general unity among the various blacks groups, there is reason to believe that the blacks of Chota and Esmeraldas have entered into discussions on how to unite around their common agenda. According to Renan Tadeo, a researcher and activist from the Afro-Ecuadorian Cultural Center, relations between the blacks of Chota and Esmeraldas have significantly improved. In part, geographical distance, regional differences, historical factors and general misperceptions have sharply divided these two black populations. Each group has been suspicious and distrustful of the other, and this has served to keep them divided.

One of the more promising recent developments is the formation of the "Asociación de Negros del Ecuador - ASONE" (the Association of Black Ecuadorians). This association is composed of blacks from Quito, Guayaquil, Chota, Esmeraldas and Loja. One of its main themes is to "rescue the national dignity" of Ecuador by eliminating racism. This is a black nationalist movement in the sense that it promotes blackness and a positive black identity, and it challenges the Eurocentric and racist assumptions of "mestizaje." Its aim is to develop mechanisms that will facilitate the inclusion of Afro-Ecuadorians in the modern economy. Most importantly, black movements like ASONE are defining from their cultural-historical-philosophical perspective what blackness means in the context of "mestizo" Ecuador.

At present it is difficult to determine what impact ASONE will have on Ecuadorian national politics, however, a few observations are offered. ASONE is heavily involved in environmental issues. The ecological devastation (to be discussed in more detail in chapter 5) caused by the wood, shrimp and oil industry is cause for alarm. Moreover, in Esmeraldas, the systematic deforestation of the rain forest is well underway. Also, the mangrove swamps, the most productive region of economic exploitation for subsistence and market economies for black people, are being destroyed by the shrimp farmers. According to Norman Whitten, this form of ecological racism in Ecuador provides economic benefits for non-black people at the expense of Afro-Ecuadorians. In Whitten's view, the majority of
blacks have been coded in economic schemes as living on uninhabited lands, resulting in them being taken-over by outsiders.\textsuperscript{29}

ASONE in the past has planned marches to call attention to these problems, however none have taken place. The central government has promised immediate and repressive military action if a march occurs. The line in the sand has been drawn and the Ecuadorian military is daring this black nationalist movement to cross it. This march and other forms of social protest are clearly on the rise and the consequences are not clear. A successful march or demonstration with no military repression would certainly be a symbolic victory for ASONE. The problem is that the Ecuadorian military has a long history of violently repressing popular movements, therefore, it is realistic to conclude that they will follow through on their promise.

\textsuperscript{29}Norman Whitten, Jr. (ed) \textit{Afro-Latins Americans Today: No Longer Invisible}. (London: Minority Rights Group, 1995) 309.
CHAPTER 5

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF BLACK ECUADOR: RACE, CLASS,
GENDER AND POWER IN ESMERALDAS AND CHOTA

Overview

Like other Afro-Hispanics of Latin America, Afro-Ecuadorians have struggled to preserve their ethnic identity in the context of a white- "mestizo" hegemonic dominated society; to protect their forms of social organization; to fight for the right to make historical claims to lands which they have occupied, albeit problematically, for five centuries; and to maintain their dignity, integrity and sanity on a daily basis in an openly racist/chauvinist/class-discriminating society that devalues non-white people.

This section will discuss how race, racism, and racial patterns determine, shape, and influence the structural positions of blacks in the mode of production, or more specifically, in the contemporary political economy of Ecuador. The prevailing view in Ecuador is that race does not play a key role in structuring blacks in the economy, a point of view that will be challenged in this chapter.

Howard Winant argues that as a consequence of the centuries of inscription in the social order, racial dynamics inevitably acquire their own dynamics penetrating the fabric
of social life and the cultural system at every level.¹ Winant’s racial formation theoretical framework contends that in Latin America (Winant’s views are focused on the Afro-Brazilian racial situation), since the abolition of slavery, the meaning of race has been significantly transformed and it has been extensively modernized and reinterpreted.² Black Brazilians, like black Ecuadorians, are still overwhelmingly concentrated at the very bottom of the economic system one hundred years after the formal abolition of slavery. In this context, race and the dynamics of racial oppression must be understood as a central factor in the structuring of groups in the political economy.

Geographical and Historical Perspectives on the Black Communities of Ecuador

The Republic of Ecuador has two identifiable historical Afro-Hispanic populations located in two very different regions of the country. These groups have been separated by historical events, geographical factors and cultural differences. Ecuador’s largest, most visible, and perhaps most analyzed group of blacks are found in the province of Esmeraldas, on the northwestern edge of the country. As a largely black province, Esmeraldas’ unique feature, which separates its history from that of Chota, is that until the

²Ibid.
nineteenth century it was known as "the land of freedom" because much of the area remained free of slavery and was isolated from the Spaniards.

The second group of black Ecuadorians is located in Chota, a valley tucked in the Ecuadorian highlands. The blacks of the Chota Valley have the unique distinction of being one of the few Afro-Hispanic populations to have a historical presence in the Andes, as most of the Afro-Hispanic populations of Central and South America have historically inhabited coastal areas. In addition, there are growing black communities located in the country's largest cities (Guayaquil, Quito, Ibarra, Riobamba, Cuenca), a result of recent large-scale migration by peasants from the impoverished countryside to the slums of cities in search of employment opportunities. Most of the black city-dwellers trace their roots to either Esmeraldas or the Chota Valley.

The blacks of Esmeraldas have traditionally been the population to capture the imagination of anthropologists, historians, literary scholars and more recently, political scientists. On the other hand, the blacks of Chota have not received as much widespread social attention. This dissertation will focus on these two black communities which, despite their historical differences, today encounter many of the same social, political and cultural problems. Most of the available raw data pertains to Esmeraldas. It is very difficult to locate reliable data on the blacks of Chota; however, several interviews with "Choteño" community leaders yielded critical information on the socio-economic status of Chota’s mainly black population.

Location and History of the Afro-Esmeraldan Population

139
The province of Esmeraldas (it should be noted that Esmeraldas is the name both of the province and of its capital city) is situated in the extreme northwestern part of the Republic of Ecuador. To the north is the Republic of Colombia, to the southeast are located the provinces of Manabí, Imbabura, Pinchincha and Carchi, and to the west lies the Pacific Ocean. Esmeraldas measures exactly 15,239.1 square kilometers. According to the 1990 census, the population of the province was 306,628.

The Afro-Hispanic population of the Northern coast extends north from the small fishing village of Muisne, located in the southernmost point of the province of Esmeraldas, reaching up to the San Juan River, on the northernmost point of Western Ecuador. This area is part of a region called the Pacific Lowlands, which encompasses the Pacific coastal sections of Northern Ecuador and Southern Colombia. Roughly 400,000 to 500,000 people occupy this region, making it one of the most densely populated lowland rainforest tropics of the Americas. A large part of the population of the Pacific lowlands is of African heritage. It is divided into five "cantones" (a rough translation in English would be "county").

According to the written accounts of Cabello de Balboa, a Spanish priest who traveled to Esmeraldas in the 1500's, as well as the legend which endures in the oral history expressed in popular literature, the first blacks to arrive in Esmeraldas escaped from a Spanish slave ship that capsized off the coast of Esmeraldas while on its way to Peru. The

---

3 Tenencia de la Tierra en la Provincia de Esmeraldas p. 15.


140
blacks, led by a "ladino" (a black slave from Spain), liberated themselves, forged from the stormy sea, encountered indigenous elements, created a new life, vigorously protected their freedom, formed the "Zambo Republic" and eventually walked to Quito to negotiate with the Spanish crown on their own terms. The Afro-Hispianics of this region have a special and unique history in the context of Ecuador and black Latin America. It is believed that most of the blacks of present-day Esmeraldas are descendants of runaway slaves, known as "cimarrones," who formed independent and free communities called "palenques." The "cimarrones" established their "palenques" in areas that were inaccessible to the Spanish, and barricaded themselves in hard-to-reach areas such as swamps, thick vegetation and walled mountains.

These free independent black "palenques" forged autonomous societies and protected their dignity and liberty. They rejected outside and foreign domination. Though often overlooked historically, it is possible that the "cimarrones" of Esmeraldas may have established one of the first truly free and independent communities in the black Spanish-speaking Americas. Today, many of their descendants are proud of this fact. This general pride of having been a historically free community is one of the principal, defining characteristics of Afro-Esmeraldans in the context of black Latin America, and it is one of the principal factors that separate black Esmeraldans from "Choteños."


Juan García, an Afro-Ecuadorian intellectual who has studied the "cimarrón" history in detail, argues that the "cimarrón" movement was not spontaneous and chaotic, as is sometimes suggested by revisionist historians. The "cimarrones" were tactical, strategic and ideological in their thinking. Moreover, the "cimarrones" of Ecuador trained and had sophisticated forms of military and other styles of organization. They had a special and close relationship with the pirates of the region, and would often negotiate and ally themselves with them, to the immense worry of the Spanish Crown.

Esmeraldas was known as the "Land of Freedom," and it was so powerful that the free blacks held off more than fifty incursions until its black leaders finally decided to walk to Quito from Esmeraldas to make peace with the Spanish Crown on their own terms. These historical antecedents, placed within this particular framework, clearly demonstrate that Esmeraldas has a special and symbolic importance for the blacks of Ecuador and, more generally, of Latin America.

**The Growth and Development of the Political Economy of Esmeraldas in the Twentieth Century**

The writing of this particular section was made extremely difficult due to the lack of information on the province of Esmeraldas, as the central government of Ecuador has little

---

7Personal interview with Juan García in Esmeraldas on April 7, 1994.

8Ibid.
statistical information pertaining to this province. The data used for this section is based on
reports, interviews, and sight visits made largely possible by the “Fondo Ecuatoriano
Populorum Progresso,” a non-governmental developmental agency located in the province
of Esmeraldas; and Dogenes Cuero Caicero, an economist specializing in Esmeraldan
political and economic affairs.

This section will, in part, focus on the relations of Afro-Ecuadorians to modes of
productions (slavery, capitalism, and socialism); on how economic institutions (plantations
or “haciendas,” transnational corporations) affect and structure blacks in the political
economy; on how political systems, institutions, and class relations impact the life chances
of black Ecuadorians; and on the role that race plays in the social mobility and political
mobilization of the Afro-Ecuadorian population.

A first glance at the capital city of Esmeraldas would lead a visitor to conclude
that the province lacks natural resources, technology and economic potential. Even in the
context of Latin American poverty, Esmeraldas stands out as one of the most glaring cases
of extreme poverty. Sewage runs freely through the streets, attracting vultures and vermin;
trash is strewn in every corner, and most streets are either buried in mud after a recent
rainstorm, or thick with dust. Even the wealthier neighborhoods lack basic services such as
clean drinking water, sewage systems and trash collection. These conditions are exacerbated
in many of Esmeraldas black communities. For example, in the community of "El Pompon,"
most of the residents live in tiny shacks built along the Esmeraldas river. This neighborhood
has no real infrastructure such as electricity, plumbing and water, schools or health care
facilities. Many residents use the contaminated water in the river to wash clothes, bathe and cook.

However, the province of Esmeraldas is endowed with an abundance of natural resources, which in the past century have been successfully exploited by multinational corporations and Ecuadorians from other parts of the country. These resources include precious woods, extensive banana plantations, a variety of seafood including lobster, shrimp and sea bass, and beautiful palm-fringed beaches. Esmeraldas is the classical case of third-world economic underdevelopment. While outsiders have accumulated wealth from the exploitation of the province's resources, its population continues to be marginalized and lives in abject, biting poverty. Essentially, the population of Esmeraldas has been shut out of economic participation in the industries that have sprouted across the province, and has not benefited from these opportunities.

The province has been largely neglected by Ecuador's central government in the area of social spending, resulting in a deficiency in infrastructure such as health care, education, roads and communications. Esmeraldas suffers from one of the nation's highest rates of unemployment and underemployment, infant mortality, illiteracy, teenage pregnancy and other structural problems.

There are five key areas of economic activity that have contributed to the development of the political economy of Esmeraldas in the twentieth century. This slow and gradual evolution has effectively brought Esmeraldas into the nexus of the world economy.

The growth of the economy has centered around the following enterprises:

a. The wood industry spanning from the 1890's to the present;
b. the banana boom of the 1950's and 60's;

c. the construction of the country's largest oil refinery in the city of Esmeraldas in the 1970's;

d. the recent development of the fish and shrimp industry (starting in the 1970's);

e. the tourist boom starting in the late 70's and early 80's.

During the colonial period, the region of Esmeraldas was not sufficiently attractive to the Spaniards, except for the small deposits of gold, and was not considered economically important. The population in the province maintained a self-sufficient economy based on the collection of uncultivated products such as “yuca” (cassava), plantain, corn, and fish. It is the growth and development in the Esmeraldan economy in the twentieth century that has increased its value and status as a province.

The Wood Industry

The first exportation of products from this region started roughly in the 1850's, initiating the relationship between Esmeraldas and the world economy. The main products are tobacco, wood, leather and rubber. During the republican period (post-colonial rule), the government of Ecuador gave the British-owned firm, The Ecuador Land Company, extensive land in the area of Atacames, located north of the city of Esmeraldas, as payment for the interest generated by the foreign debt. Between 1894 and 1903, more concessions

---

9Tenencia de la Tierra, p.15.

were made to the Ecuadorian Land Company. It was during this period that the wood companies started to lay their infrastructural foundations. Eventually the wood industry developed into a major industry in this region.

It is estimated that the province of Esmeraldas has some of the most diverse and precious wood in the world. Much of the commercial activity focuses on the exploitation of the various hard and soft wood located in the lush rain forest. The key areas of exploitation are near Borbon and San Lorenzo, two overwhelming black communities located in northern Esmeraldas.

The wood companies benefited tremendously during World War II because of the high demand for rubber. Starting in the 1930's and during World War II, the wood industry began to increase its exports dramatically. The main products were "balsa" (a product from a tropical tree in this area) and "caucho" (a rubber-based plant), generating well-needed foreign exchange for Ecuador. At this juncture, the economy of Esmeraldas became more structurally tied to the world economy. The commercial activity of Borbón and San Lorenzo now revolves around the wood industry. Most of the work available to the local population is temporary and seasonal. The workers who constitute the bulk of the labor force are adult male peasants who work to supplement their incomes, ex-peasants recently driven from their lands and part-time seasonal workers who depend on the industry as their main source of income.11

11 Ibid.
Apart from the work being dangerous and strenuous, many day laborers are payed very low wages, which are rarely enough to support a family, and often go long periods of time without finding work. Furthermore, many complain that the wood companies will promise one wage, but after the wood is cut pay a much lower amount. The average annual family income in the region is 300,000 sucres, or 150 dollars. The workers find themselves with no alternatives but to accept these conditions, as they have no unions nor legal recourse to defend their rights.\textsuperscript{12}

The Fondo Ecuatoriano Populorum Progresso (FEPP) holds that the rainforests of Esmeraldas are being depleted at a record pace. A bus ride from the capital city to the jungle town of Borbón provides a first-hand view of the deforestation of the province, as thousands of acres of flattened land form most of the countryside. Moreover, the predominantly black populations of the exploited rainforests of Esmeraldas are also in danger of losing their lands to the government, and, by extension, to the wood companies. This population, although historically present in the regions of Borbón, the Cayapas River and the Santiago River, for the most part possesses no land titles, and as the wood companies advance into the forests, many peasant organizations are worried that they will displace the "campesinos" from the lands that they have occupied for centuries.\textsuperscript{13}

The Banana Boom (1948-1960)

\textsuperscript{12}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{13}FEPP (Fondo Ecuatoriano Populorum Progresso). Interview.
President Galo Plaza (1948-52), a modernizing liberal, analyzed Ecuador's economic situation in terms of increased production and economic diversification. His objective was to strengthen the external sector in order to generate the capital resources necessary to reactivate the economy and spark an ongoing development process. With the "technical advice" of the American multinational corporation United Fruit Company, which operated on the coast and which considered an expansion of banana production feasible, the Plaza administration launched an ambitious program designed to stimulate the development of a national banana industry.

Thus, starting in the 1950's, the region of Esmeraldas experienced a banana boom. The principal centers of production were respectively Borbón, Muisne and Quinindé. During this period, North American capital was more prevalent in the Esmeraldan economy and this region became more effectively interwoven with the world economy. The consolidation of a large agro-bananaindustry had a negative impact on the region in the following ways: first, it displaced many small-scale producers and peasants; secondly, it discouraged the planting of other crops in favor of growing bananas, thus producing an mono-crop economy; and lastly, many unskilled workers migrated to this region from other parts of the country to work on the various plantations. The population of the province of Esmeraldas increased from 50,412 in 1950 to 124,881 in 1962. The banana boom subsided during the early years of the 1960's, leaving masses of peasants out of work.


15 Hurtado, p. 169
Table 1.1
Demographics of the Province of Esmeraldas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population Growth¹⁶</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950: 50,412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962: 124,881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974: 203,151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982: 249,008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990: 307,190</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From 1950 to 1962, the population of the province doubled.

The Oil Refinery

In the 1970's the largest oil refinery of Ecuador was constructed in the city of Esmeraldas. This facility is located off the banks of the Balboa River, a few kilometers off the banks of the Esmeraldas River; it processes 90 millions barrels of oil each day and employs 363 workers. It is able to refine seven basic products from crude oil: gasoline, gas, diesel fuel, oil fuel, asphalt, kerosene and jet fuel.¹⁷ During the construction of this refinery,

¹⁶Instituto Nacional de Estadistica y Censo, p. 3.

¹⁷Personal interview with Dogenes Cuero Caicero on April 15, 1994 in Esmeraldas, Ecuador.
the government promised that it would create many jobs. These promises attracted thousands of workers to Esmeraldas. Again, Esmeraldas experienced a huge influx of largely unskilled workers, this time from the countryside to the capital city. In the space of eight years (from 1974 to 1982), the population of the city of Esmeraldas increased by one third, from 60,364 to 90,558.\textsuperscript{18}

However, most of the refinery jobs require highly advanced technical skills. As a result, Petroecuador, the government-owned oil company, decided to import the majority of the technicians and engineers that were to work in the refinery, and constructed a work-camp separate from the population of Esmeraldas to house the employees. This situation exists even today. A company aircraft flies the oil workers in and out of the city, and they are also given priority on most domestic flights to and from Esmeraldas. In addition, these workers enjoy a lifestyle well above the national and regional average. Petroecuador provides clean, drinkable water, plumbing and other sanitary services not available to the general population of Esmeraldas.

The presence of the huge refinery has had the following negative affects: First, it created the expectation of work, provoking mass migration to the city of Esmeraldas. Scores of unskilled workers flocked to Esmeraldas with the hope of obtaining a job at the refinery. Few if any of these migrants found work, and they settled in abandoned plots in the city and formed communities known as “invasiones” or “invasions.” Second, the rapid migration increased unemployment and underemployment and many of these migrants took

\textsuperscript{18}Ibid.
refuge in communities where basic social services were either non-existent or barely adequate. Third, the environmental effects of the refinery have been devastating. Petroecuador dumps most of its waste in the Esmeraldas river, which flows through some of the poorest and most marginalized communities in the city. These communities use the river water for drinking, cooking and washing, and suffer from intestinal, respiratory and dermatological diseases caused by the contamination. The waste also reaches the shores of the Atlantic Ocean and pollutes the nearby beaches. Fourth, Esmeraldas experienced a dramatic increase in population without a corresponding expansion of the infrastructure. Basic services in areas such as education, health and sanitation were severely strained. Poverty, delinquency and vagrancy sharply increased.

The Shrimp and Fish Industry

Due to its location on the Pacific Ocean, Esmeraldas has access to an abundant supply of various types of seafood such as shrimp, lobsters, and a variety of fish. During the last twenty years, the coast of Esmeraldas has seen the development of a very lucrative fish/shrimp industry which has stimulated tremendous economic activity. The main buyer of Ecuadorian shrimp is the United States; in 1992, Ecuador exported roughly 71 per cent of its shrimp to the U.S.19 The large-scale fisheries dominate and control most of the economic activity of this industry. The small-scale fishing by the local people is for day-to-

day survival and they are not in competition with the larger industry in the strict economic sense.

However, the population of this area is extremely dependent on subsistence activities related to fishing. This includes the exploitation of shore fishing, deep sea fishing, and the gathering of crabs, conch and lobsters, some of which are sold to the local institutions (hotels, restaurants). The larger fisheries are depleting the oceans at record pace, thus potentially undermining the local population by depriving them of food and income sources. Although the shrimp industry has created work, at the same time it has altered and destroyed important parts of the eco-system. The coast is presently dotted with large shrimp farms that have caused the deforestation of large mangroves, which are critical to the breeding of many species of fish that sustain the local population. The southern region of the province has suffered more severely from the effects of the shrimp industry.

Tourism

In the last five years, Esmeraldas has become extremely popular with tourists. In the larger context, Ecuador is experiencing an increase in tourism, and hundreds of thousands of tourists flock there each year. Ecuador is endowed with some of the most diverse species of plants and marine life in the world. It has lush tropical rain forests, the famous Galapagos Islands, huge snow-capped volcanoes dotting the landscape, picturesque communities in the mountain-range of the Andes, and beautiful beaches punctuating its coastline. Transportation inside the country is very inexpensive and tourists can avail themselves to the many possibilities. The beaches of Esmeraldas are now one of the main tourist attractions. For
twenty dollars or less, it is possible to rent a hotel room on the beach, enjoy a seafood dinner, sip some of the best rum in the world and listen to some of the best “salsa,” “merengue,” and “marimba” (the music of “Afro-Esmeraldeños”) in all of Latin America.

The increase in tourism has brought much-needed money to this area, and the local people are able to directly benefit from a small part of this boom. Local restaurants, hotels, small mom and pop grocery stores, liquor stores, bars, taxi drivers, local tour guides, all benefit from the trickle down effects of the tourist boom. The negative unintended consequences from tourism are a dramatic increase in prostitution, sexually transmitted diseases, drug trafficking, and petty thievery.

“Afro-Choteños,” La Gente Olvidada/The Forgotten People

Cultural and Historical Perspectives on “Afro-Choteños”

Many commentators on black history in Latin America emphasize the process of social integration in their various works and tend to see blacks as becoming part of the total Latin American historical and social experience. In present-day Latin America, there exist regions where there are strong African influences in terms of community organizations, social customs and manners, including traditional celebrations of birth, marriage, death, folklore and the oral tradition. The valley of Chota, home to several thousands descendants of ex-slaves, is an area of Latin America where one still finds strong signs of African influences.

Moreover, it is important to note culturally that the black people of Ecuador's highlands are especially interesting because their historical experience and cultural adaptations differ from the blacks of Esmeraldas.\(^1\) Ronald Stutzman, one of the few anthropologists to write on Afro-Choteños, points out along with other prominent anthropologists that the large African population of Esmeraldas is historically and culturally more linked to the African population of southern Colombia than to the blacks of the Chota Valley (the province of Esmeraldas and the southern part of Colombia are connected).

In the northern highlands of Ecuador, black "Choteños" live in a semi-arid, subtropical, inter-mountain zone.\(^2\) The Chota Valley consists of some ten to fifteen small villages whose total population does not exceed fifteen to twenty-thousand people.\(^3\) These black settlements are located on an area near the agricultural estates where their ancestors were originally brought to work as slaves. During the colonial period, the Jesuits imported African slaves to work in the sugar plantations as "laborers" after the indigenous labor supply was exhausted. When slavery was formally abolished in Ecuador in 1851, the "Choteños" continued working on the large estates, forming the backbone of the region. These ex-slaves were immediately incorporated into new forms of legal servitude. Starting in the middle of

---


\(^{3}\) Ibid.
the 1850's and continuing well into the twentieth century, a system of debt peonage known in Ecuador as "concertaje" evolved.

This was the new name for slavery. This "new" form of legal servitude would continue in the highlands until the 1950's, and this legally sanctioned form of labor was used to bind mainly Indians and blacks to the "haciendas." In the post slavery period black ex-slaves became "conciertos," or sharecroppers, inextricably bound to debt services. Frederick Hassaurek, the American Minister to Ecuador from 1861 to 1866 and militant abolitionist, visited the Chota Valley and provided the following detailed commentary:

"The Indians have entirely disappeared from the valley. The Negroes, who have taken their places, are concertados, like the Indian farm laborers. They are slaves in fact, although not slaves in name. Their services are secured by a purchase of debt which they owe. As long as they remain in debt, which thanks to the skillful management of their masters, almost always lasts until they discharge the great debt of their nature, they must either work or go to prison. Like Indians, they are ignorant of their rights. They are hardly ever able to pay their debt, which on the contrary, continually increases, as their wages are insufficient to satisfy their wants. When slavery was abolished in Ecuador, the owners of the Negroes in the sugar districts immediately employed them to work for wages, and managing to get them into debt, secured their services as debtors. Thus, it may be said that they profited, instead of losing, with the abolition of slavery. They pocketed the compensation money which the law provided for slave owners, and at the same time retained the slaves. It is true that blacks do not work so much now as when they were bondsmen, nor can their master beat them so unmercifully as they did before; but, on the other hand, it must be considered that it is much cheaper now to purchase a Negro than it was before. Now by paying a debt of fifty or seventy dollars which the poor fellow owes somebody, his services may be secured, while formerly it took, perhaps, ten times that amount to purchase a slave."24

Political Economy of the Chota Valley

Due to the isolated location of the Chota Valley, few are able to know and understand the harsh reality of the black people of the region. For the most part, Ecuadorians are ignorant concerning the presence and situation of "Afro-Choteños." Most Ecuadorians use the blacks of Esmeraldas as their cultural frame of reference when speaking about black life in Ecuador, although in reality the people of Chota have little contact with non-highlanders and foreign visitors. They suffer from what may be called quadruple marginalization:

The first and most obvious form is the issue of race; second is class-based social discrimination; a third factor is the lack of natural resources and outside investment, which does not allow the population of Chota to find suitable employment, thus forcing many to flee to the cities in search of employment; and the fourth factor is the gender question and the treatment of black women from the Chota Valley. These factors contribute significantly to the overall social, political and economic marginalization of the "Afro-Choteño" masses.

The Chota Valley continues to be an agricultural region, producing sugar cane, tropical fruits and vegetables. The social and economic relations established during slavery and "concertaje," as outlined in the preceding section, have survived into the contemporary period with some modifications. From a political economy perspective, the blacks of the Chota Valley are effectively marginalized. For the most part, "Afro-Choteños" are still locked into twentieth century feudal relations with the plantation owners characterized by seasonal work, low pay, long hours and lack of viable employment alternatives.

"Afro-Choteños" do not own or control any economic institutions. The gradations of social power and prestige are crystal clear in this region of Ecuador. Most of the arable
land in this region is owned by a few whites and "mestizos," while a few blacks own tiny plots of valueless land. Blacks and poor Indians constitute the bulk of the labor force. Afro-Chotefnos do not control nor have access to key financial institutions in the highlands and black peasants trying to seek out loans for their modest farms often fail to obtain the necessary funds, thus reinforcing structural relationships of white-"mestizo" dominance over the blacks of this region.

According to Stutzman, the blacks of this region are overwhelmingly poor and control few assets other than their capacity to labor. Employment includes hoe labor for day wages (cultivating the soil to cut, uproot, plant or clear irrigation ditches). Cutting cane is another form of labor available, though much less sought after by black workers because it pays less.

The relationship between the white landowning class and the dispossessed black poor majority has been characterized by Stutzman as "paternalistic social relations" rooted in racist "ethnocentrism." He sees this as the assumption by white and "mestizo" Ecuadorians and their cultural codes (and more generally, white Westerners and their cultural codes) and the concomitant denial of the human dignity and worth to non-white people and their cultural codes. In terms of the political economy, Stutzman argues that the control of resources on which life depends is still a major feature conditioning the lives of the Indian and black people in the northern highlands. Their back-breaking labor produces much of the wealth,

---

25Ibid.

26Ibid., 101
food, clothing and other services of the dominant group while they themselves receive little in terms of compensation. As Stutzman points out, the life of "Afro-Choteños" in Chota must be understood within the context of historically evolving efforts of the dominant landowning class to recruit and bind landless labor.\(^{27}\)

Recently, "Afro-Choteños" have started to set up small cooperatives which allow them to grow certain crops and produce hand-crafted items. These cooperatives are an attempt by "Choteños" to maximize their economic capital and reduce their dependence on the traditional forms of labor which, for the most part, have kept them in a form of twentieth century slavery. In addition, many of the women make a modest living selling tropical fruits grown in the valley. They sell these products on the side of the Pan-American Highway, or travel to nearby markets and set up small fruit stands. It is common to see black women from Chota selling their goods at Otavalo's famous Indian market on Saturdays.

The long-term economic prospects for this region are severely limited because of the lack of capital investment. The Chota Valley, known mostly for its agriculture, is endowed with little of the natural resources which are so bountiful in other areas of Ecuador. The political economy of the highlands is characterized by economic stagnation or decline, leaving the bulk of the poor majority without any real or potential long-term economic possibilities. Moreover, the area is largely ignored by the government and there are few national or international development organizations and non-profit organizations operating in the Chota Valley. For these reasons, the blacks of the Chota Valley have two options:

\(^{27}\)Ibid., 123

158
migrate to the larger cities (usually Quito, Ibarra or Guayaquil) or remain in Chota. Neither of these options addresses the structural question of sustainable forms of economic development.

According to Stutzman, perhaps one of the most dehumanizing aspects for the blacks of Chota is the practice of child slave labor. It is common for well-to-do-whites to seek out poor "negritas/negritos" (small black children) to work in their homes. The recruitment of child slave labor may range from quasi-legal adoption to kidnaping. A wealthy white will tour Chota, select the child of his/her liking and offer the parents money and the child clothing, a new home and an education in exchange for the child's labor. These arrangements may be oral, written or otherwise. If an arrangement is reached, these children will spend the better part of their early childhood and some of their adulthood hostage to these feudal social arrangements. It is difficult to know the frequency of these exchanges and why some families participate and others do not. However, abject poverty and the inability of some families to properly care for their children may explain in part this deeply disturbing phenomenon.

Those who flee to the city in hopes of improving their socio-economic life are often met with the brutal and bitter disappointment of more unemployment. The "lucky" may be able to find jobs, but the hours are long and hard and the pay extremely low. The average salary for a domestic with years of experience in Quito is 100,000 "sucre" per month, or fifty dollars (the sucre is the monetary unit of Ecuador and 500 sucre equaled 1 U.S. dollar at the time that this dissertation was researched). Most of the women who leave Chota find
themselves working as domestic servants, cleaning women, washerwomen, cooks and caretakers of children.

One additional factor to consider is that race is crucial as a factor in the labor process in Ecuador. For example, the average "mestizo" woman might command a wage of 100,000 sucres a month, while a black woman from Chota might be forced to work for twenty-five to fifty per cent less. Blacks are often forced to work for less pay in the major cities. In the large cities, most of the men work as day laborers, parking lot attendants, security guards and conductors. Like the women, they work often long hours with low pay. In the "sierra," most Ecuadorian people consciously associate dirty, menial and dehumanizing labor with the indigenous people and now, to a large extent, with black people. While teaching a seminar on human rights at the University of San Francisco in Quito, one of my Ecuadorian "white" students told me that when she thinks of "blacks" or "los negros" she thinks of the office boy, the maid, and of thieves.

Although no official statistics exist, there is evidence to suggest that the blacks of this region are disproportionately incarcerated in the jails and prison of Ibarra (the capital of the province of Imbabura, where Chota is located). María Carrión, a human rights activist and journalist from Spain who was in Ecuador conducting research for an international development organization, visited the Ibarra jail, which houses both men and women in overcrowded conditions. She stated that she was shocked to see so many black prisoners from Chota in the jail, and estimated that they comprised at least sixty per cent of the total population. According to Ms. Carrión, many had been incarcerated for petty crimes and some
were serving time solely based on accusations. In addition, the women and men were housed together in one unit, and frequent sexual assaults often resulted in unwanted pregnancies.\textsuperscript{28}

In Ecuador it is common for people to be tossed in jail based on solely accusations without requiring evidence. The common scenario involves a dispute between the "patrón" or large landowner, and his worker. The "patrón" accuses the worker of stealing or damaging property. The police, without real evidence, and depending on the circumstances, may elect to incarcerate the worker. The worker may serve three or four years before even seeing a judge. Even if the "patrón" retracts the charges, it is possible that this individual may be in jail for years.

The Ecuadorian criminal justice system is extremely harsh on poor and black people, leading some to believe that Ecuador has criminalized poverty and race. It is estimated that the blacks of Chota constitute between five and ten percent of the general population of Imbabura, and despite the lack of official statistics, it is clear that their presence in the province's jails is disproportionately high. Furthermore, blacks are often targeted as drug dealers or consumers and tortured into signing confessions, which they are seldom allowed to read.

Compounding the social problems of "Afro-Choteños" is their failure to organize around their common interests. They have no political power, and at present there are no grass-roots movements in Chota. They do not control, influence or impact any of the major social institutions in the region. "Afro-Choteños" as a group have not maximized their

\textsuperscript{28}Interview with María Carrión on March 10, 1994 in Quito, Ecuador.

161
political, economic and cultural capital into a organized unit of expression. in addition, the
blacks of Chota do not have any solid organizational relations with the blacks of Esmeraldas
and vice-versa.

**Conclusion: Race and Marginalization of Afro-Ecuadorians**

The blacks of Chota must be considered one of the most marginalized groups in
contemporary Ecuadorian society. The vast majority are located in low-paying seasonal
agricultural jobs or in domestic occupational categories. They are disproportionately
concentrated in the jails and prisons of Ecuador. Moreover, educational chances are few and
the existing opportunities do not adequately prepare them for the realities of modern
Ecuador. Due to the lack of naturally endowed resources or other potential sources of
investment, this region has little chance of providing the inhabitants with economic
opportunities, forcing them to rely on the "hacienda" plantation system or migrate to the
cities.

The process of modernization in contemporary Ecuador has essentially regulated
the black population to the lowest sectors of the society, economy and politics. Despite real
growth in many areas of the economy, the black population remains marginalized and
available evidence suggests that its situation is not improving. In fact, in the post-slavery
period, blacks have not even made modest inroads into the middle class. Therefore, this
process of socio-economic exclusion must be understood in the context of how racism has
structured blacks in the society. The most compelling illustration is the case of the blacks in
Esmeraldas. For the most part, the economy of Esmeraldas in this century has expanded and
grown tremendously; and the shrimp, wood, oil, tourism, and banana industry have greatly contributed to the economy of Ecuador. These developments have brought outsiders to region who have made fortunes, while the black masses continue to live in harsh and biting poverty.

It is these economic activities, as outlined above, that have defined the development of the political economy of Esmeraldas in the twentieth century. The province of Esmeraldas is endowed with a plethora of natural resources, and throughout the twentieth century it has experienced growth and development in key sectors of its economy. However, despite the region’s economic vitality, it is still a largely underdeveloped province lacking even basic infrastructural necessities. Moreover, the large black population has not benefited from these economic transformations.

Therefore, a critical question is: if “Afro-Esmeraldefios” have not benefited from these economic developments, then what factors explain their current low position in the economy? The political economy of Esmeraldas responds to what Norman Whitten characterizes as boom and bust cycles. Now more than ever, it is tied to the international political economy, and the fluctuation of world prices and the demand for certain products affect the local economy of Esmeraldas. With these developments in the political economy, Whitten discovered a relation between economic growth, racial conflict, black marginalization and disenfranchisement. Despite the overall growth of the local economy, the Afro-Ecuadorian population has remained disproportionately at the bottom and has not benefitted from these developments.
Whitten shows how the international demand for agricultural and mineral products from the region brought an influx of nonblack Ecuadorians, Colombians, Europeans and North Americans, with the result that the local system -- which he had earlier diagnosed as successfully adapting to new and expanding economic, social and political orders -- was disrupted, producing economic growth but also racial tension, animosity, conflict and marginalization of the Afro people of Esmeraldas. For example, towns like Esmeraldas, San Lorenzo, Atacames, Muisne, Quinindé, and Borbón reflect a racially stratified social order that regulates Afro-Hispanics to the very bottom. The available evidence suggests that there is a definite white over black asymmetry. The blacks of this region have not been allowed to participate in the growth and development taking place in the economy.
CHAPTER 6

HUMAN RIGHTS AND MINORITY RIGHTS IN CONTEMPORARY ECUADOR

Overview

The Republic of Ecuador has issued volumes of statements, signed various treaties and spoken frequently about its "progressive" human rights policies and practices. It has also incorporated human rights protections into its constitution and penal code. This chapter will provide an overview of the Ecuadorian Constitution and Penal Code, and of pertinent human rights instruments signed and ratified by Ecuador, as they all relate to the Ecuadorian government's treatment of its black population.

It will be demonstrated that the Republic of Ecuador's actual human rights practices towards its black population are in direct violation of its own Constitution and legislation, and of the international human rights instruments it has signed, ratified and acceded to. It will also be argued that Ecuador's treatment of its black population is openly racist and that its human rights violations have a racially oriented bias. Moreover, this dissertation will contend that the social position of Afro-Ecuadorians in the political economy, and their general lack of power -- as outlined in Chapter 4 -- are largely a function of race and racism.
The Social Context of Human Rights in the Republic of Ecuador

Sandwiched between Peru and Colombia, two South American nations embattled by political violence, drug wars and guerrilla activity, Ecuador may seem like a relatively peaceful country on the surface. Indeed, the Ecuadorian government likes to refer to Ecuador as an "island of peace," an obvious attempt to set it apart from its neighbors. Few outsiders are aware that torture, disappearances, extrajudicial executions and other flagrant human rights violations are part of Ecuadorian everyday life. In general, Ecuadorian civilians -- regardless of their race or social status -- are fearful of the police and military, and often become victims of State-sponsored violence. A brutal and often undisciplined police uses excessive force and power over the population, making arbitrary arrests, extracting confessions through torture and coercing bribes from citizens fearful of arrest. Underpaid and undertrained military personnel have a reputation for beating and torturing their victims, sometimes to death.

Both the police and the military periodically hold "social cleansing" operations; dressed in riot gear, hundreds of officers charge into poor neighborhoods, breaking down doors and dragging suspected "criminals" (known in Ecuador as "anti-socials") out on the streets to be "brought to justice." Many of these operations end in the deaths of civilians. The reputation of these institutions was largely intact until 1988, when Ecuador's most celebrated human rights case made world headlines. The "Restrepo" case, which is still

---

1 Derechos del Pueblo, "De la Exclusión a la Eliminación Física" Published by the Comisión Ecuménica de Derechos Humanos, no. 77 (September 1993) 2-12.
unresolved, demonstrates how even Ecuador's wealthiest residents are not exempt from human rights abuses.

According to the case files at the "Comisión Ecuménica de Derechos Humanos" (CEDDHU), a progressive Ecuadorian human rights organization whose staff carried out an independent investigation, in the Spring of 1988, Santiago and Andrés Restrepo, two teenaged brothers from a middle-class Colombian family residing in Ecuador, were killed by the Ecuadorian police during interrogation. It is alleged that they were both arrested during a routine traffic control and taken to the headquarters of the "Servicio de Investigación Criminal - SIC," (Office of Criminal Investigation) a now-discredited police agency, where they were tortured in various ways, including the infamous "plastic bag" method, whereby a plastic bag is filled with tear-gas and put over the victim's head for minutes at a time.

According to the confession of one witness, the younger of the boys died of asphyxiation caused by the torture and aggravated by his asthma condition. A few days later, the Ministry of the Interior allegedly gave a direct order to "kill and dispose of" the older brother, who had witnessed his sibling's murder. After more than nine months of governmental cover-up, during which the Restrepo family was repeatedly misled by police and promised the return of the boys, a police officer who was witness to the extra-judicial executions gave a lengthy confession and exposed an elaborate operation that implicated the Commander of the Ecuadorian Police, as well as other high-ranking officials.²

To this date, the police officer who confessed has been the only person implicated in this crime and the only one to spend a significant amount of time behind bars. The police commander fled Ecuador soon after his arrest. The bodies of the Restrepo brothers, which are thought to be in a lake south of Quito along with many other bodies of torture victims, were never found, and their family continues to pursue the case. As a cosmetic concession, SIC was "disbanded" in 1991, and in its place, the "Oficina de Investigación de Delito" (OID), or the "Office of Investigation of Crime," replaced it. OID was composed of largely the same personnel as SIC, and not surprisingly, torture and maltreatment continued in much the same fashion.

On June 1, 1993, a delegation comprised of human rights activists, lawyers and the president of the Human Rights Commission of the National Congress, Diego Delgado, payed an unexpected visit to the Quito headquarters of OID. They found their way to the unit's infamous torture room, where they observed "a tank of water, a plastic bag impregnated with tear-gas, a wooden pole with metal nails and human hairs adhered to it, and two electric cables that had been described by torture victims as used to administer shocks." A few months later, OID again changed its name, and Ecuador's new Chief of Police promised to improve his department's human rights record. Thus far, little has changed in the way of human rights.

As discussed in Chapter 4, social protest movements in Ecuador are few and far between. For decades before the "Restrepo" case came to light, victims of human rights

\[3\text{Ibid., 3.}\]
abuses dared not speak against their oppressors, nor denounce crimes committed by the
State. Mothers refused to sign declarations against their children’s torturers, and victims
would not dream of taking their abusers to court.

The Restrepo family crystallized the human rights protest movement in Ecuador.
Although not a wealthy family, the Restrepos had resources not afforded other victims of
human rights abuses (poor “mestizos,” blacks and the indigenous), thus allowing them to
challenge the government. They spoke out, protested, demanded investigations, and refused
to back down under the constant threats of death. In the manner of the " Mothers of the Plaza
de Mayo" in Argentina, Pedro and Helena Restrepo, the boys’ parents, staged
demonstrations every Wednesday at the "Plaza de la Independencia," in the heart of Quito’s
old colonial center. Over the years these protests have been institutionalized: other victims’
families, students, human rights activists and other supporters demonstrate every Wednesday
in the “Plaza.”

Race as a Factor in Human Rights Violations

In Latin America, few social groups, if any, are exempt from potential human
rights abuses. Although not widespread, there are recorded human rights abuses, like the
Restrepos, against members of the social elite, who are also fearful of the police and military.
However, it is the poor, the indigenous, the black and other disadvantaged social groups who


4In the 1970s the mothers of disappeared students, activists, and labor leaders would
hold huge demonstrations every week in the “Plaza de Mayo” in Argentina to focus
attention on the human rights abuses.
suffer disproportionately from systematic abuses. Black people, who are located at the very bottom of the social scale and are members of an ethnic minority, suffer from a dual human rights oppression: race and class-based discrimination.

Chapter 5 establishes that Afro-Ecuadorians have historically occupied a low status in Ecuador's political economy; it further demonstrates that despite recent economic growth in many sectors of the economy, this population has continued to be marginalized due in large part to racial factors. In the valley of Chota, new forms of social and economic domination born out of slavery and "concertaje" or sharecropping continue to keep the black population locked into twentieth-century feudal-style relationships. In Esmeraldas, high levels of unemployment and the lack of investment in the black communities have created similar conditions of poverty and marginalization. Therefore, the relationship between race and acute socio-economic marginalization is crystal-clear.

Due to their low standing in the political economy, as well as strong misperceptions by the general population which continue to classify blacks as thieves, prostitutes, vagrants, antisocials and drug dealers, Afro-Ecuadorians are also targets of race-based human rights abuses. The manifestation of this process include the following: police brutality and harassment, high rates of incarceration, torture, racist hiring practices of exclusion and many other forms of institutional racism.

Therefore, race as a component of human rights analysis, as pertaining to the situation of black populations, must be critically reexamined in the context of Latin America. Most Latin American human rights organizations, however progressive, have still not come
to understand that race and racism are factors in the negative treatment of the African populations of Latin America.

The question is simple: do human rights violations have a significant racial overtone when blacks are the minority? Few progressive human rights organizations based in Latin America will deny that groups such as women, children, the indigenous, peasants and the poor are victims of very specific violations due to their standing as a social group. However, they have still not made the particular connection between "blackness" and human rights violations.

This reality is even more disturbing when governments such as that of Ecuador propagate the notion that systematic racial discrimination (racial democracy) against blacks does not exist and this belief is incorporated into the national consciousness, including that of the black population's. How is the State able to get away with making such untrue and ultimately undisputed statements? One reason is that progressive human rights organizations in Latin America have uncritically accepted the notion of racial democracy. The State thus plays the role of a magician, performing a slick disappearing act in which racism vanishes into the hat and the illusion of racial harmony is presented to the masses. This form of "State sorcery" confounds social consciousness, creates a false sense of complacency and prevents the development of strong black protest movements.

First, human rights organizations do not investigate, record nor denounce racially motivated human rights violations against black populations. For example, when an Afro-Ecuadorian man was lynched in 1993 by an angry mestizo mob while the police watched,
not one Ecuadorian human rights organization denounced the possible racial overtones of the crime.

Likewise, these organizations lack statistics on racially motivated human rights violations against blacks, such as the abnormally high number of blacks in the criminal justice system. For example, based on my numerous visits to jails in Quito, it was evident that blacks were grossly over-represented in the prison system, although they comprise less than five per cent of the general population of Quito. My numerous and lengthy visits to the offices of CEDHU and other human rights organizations did not unearth one sole statistic concerning the number of blacks in jail, nor did the organizations keep a file on human rights abuses affecting the black population, although CEDHU was much more conscious about race-based human rights violations committed against the indigenous population. However, Ramiro Rivadeneira, a staff lawyer for CEDHU who works on prisoners’ rights, estimated that at least one-third of the population of Quito’s “Carcel 2” (the main city jail) was of African descent.

Second, in this context, the Ecuadorian government is permitted to proclaim to its national population, and to the world community at large, that there is no systematic racial discrimination in this country, statements which for the most part are uncontested.

The Ecuadorian Constitution and Penal Code

Ecuadorian law has various provisions regarding the prohibition of racial discrimination while seeking to ensure that human rights and fundamental freedoms are protected in various spheres of Ecuadorian life. These principles are embodied in the
Ecuadorian Constitution and Penal Code -- a subsidiary set of rules which devotes an entire chapter to the treatment of offenses connected with racial discrimination.\(^5\) Space limitation does not allow an exhaustive analysis of the Ecuadorian Constitution and Penal Code, but their anti-racial discrimination components are examined in detail. Both the Ecuadorian Constitution and the Penal Code prohibit racial discrimination, and theoretically protect fundamental freedoms and human rights. Article 4 of the Ecuadorian Constitution states that:

"The Ecuadorian state condemns all forms of colonialism, neocolonialism and racial discrimination or segregation. It recognizes the right of people to free themselves from oppressive systems."\(^6\)

An unnumbered third article in the chapter in the penal code relating to offenses involving racial discrimination states:

"Any organization or propaganda or publicity which promote or incite racial discrimination are hereby declared illegal and therefore prohibited in the Republic. Consequently any person participating in such organization or activity shall be liable to imprisonment for not less than two months and no more than two years."\(^7\)

Despite these official pronouncements, the Republic of Ecuador continues to allow the practice of systematic and institutional discrimination against its black and


\(^7\)Dr. Alban Gomez, Ernesto. Ed. Régimen Penal Ecuatoriano, Código Penal, libro segundo, título segundo, Capítulo innumerado entre VIII y IX, "De los Delitos Relativos a la Discriminación Racial," (Quito, Ecuador: Ediciones Legales de Corporación MYL, 1989), 327.
The Afro-population of Ecuador lives on the margins of public life; has no economic and political power, which is reflected in their low position within the political economy; lacks representation on the local and national level; and is totally ignored in the Development Plans of the Ecuadorian State which shall be discussed later in the chapter.  

According to CEDHU, despite systematic and widespread violations of the rights of black people in Ecuador, not one such case has reached an Ecuadorian court. Many black children have been denied entrance to public schools and now roam the streets of Quito, Esmeraldas, and Guayaquil seeking handouts or shining shoes; black women are often harassed by the police and singled out as prostitutes; black men are often beaten and tortured while serving extraordinarily long sentences for petty crimes; and both black men and women are consistently denied employment and hold the lowest positions in the economy.

These systematic abuses have not been addressed by the Ecuadorian government. The few cases brought (involving poor mestizos) before a judge in the ordinary courts, or the largely symbolic Court of Constitutional Guarantees, which is supposed to defend the rights and freedoms enshrined in the Constitution, move inordinately slowly and many fall by the wayside without effective legal remedies. Individuals or groups alleging civil rights

---

8See Chapter Four and relevant subheadings for an analysis of how the blacks of Ecuador are situated in the political economy.

violations have extraordinarily difficult problems in pursuing civil rights claims in Ecuadorian courts.

While amply proclaiming that legalized and systematic discrimination does not exist, the Ecuadorian Constitution and legal system have failed to provide the following: effective enforcement mechanisms in the area of civil and political rights; adequate civil rights commissions, courts and other institutions to deal with civil and human rights cases; specific ways to measure how the courts have handled cases of alleged racial discrimination; procedures to determine how victims of racial discrimination are protected by the legal system; and lastly, a methodology to measure the racial dimensions of civil rights violations.

Furthermore, the guidelines as reflected in the case law, precedents and other domestic remedies are not well-established, and are unclear to even the best-trained Ecuadorian lawyers. Regrettably there are few lawyers trained in the area of civil rights law, and they largely confine their work to representing indigenous communities. As an ethnic group, the blacks of Ecuador, like the various indigenous populations, are victims of widespread, systematic human rights abuses. However, the indigenous populations, unlike the black populations, have high levels of organization, consciousness and ethnic solidarity that enable them to challenge discriminatory state policies, pressurize the state and extract tactical concessions, and focus international attention on their struggle.

Overview of the International Instruments that the Republic of Ecuador has Signed, Ratified, or Acceded To
The Constitution of Ecuador guarantees to all those subject to its jurisdiction the free and effective exercise and enjoyment of all the rights enunciated in declarations, covenants, agreements and other international instruments to which it is a party. This provision is at best far-reaching and at worst hypocritical. Legally speaking, it does however incorporate these instruments into Ecuadorian law and automatically gives them legal force within the nation.

There is clearly a tendency on the part of the Republic of Ecuador to guarantee everything and deliver nothing. For example, despite the various protections afforded in writing to the indigenous communities, they are still the victims of widespread, institutionally entrenched social discrimination. Historical indigenous homelands are being invaded, destroyed and taken over by U.S. owned oil companies. In 1991, Ecuador had the largest indigenous uprising in its history. Indians from six different provinces rioted, blocked roads, and occupied lands. During my stay in Ecuador between June of 1993 and June of 1994, there were several smaller-scale indigenous uprisings. These events aptly illustrate that racial tensions and conflicts are widespread and prevalent in Ecuador. Despite this, the Republic of Ecuador is still content to tell the world that no racial discrimination exists in the country.

Ecuador has, in various national and international forums, stated that its people and government categorically reject all forms of racial discrimination, and steadfastly

---

10 See Judith Kimerling's, Crudo Amazónico (Quito, Ecuador: Abaya Yala 1993).

support all initiatives aimed at eliminating discrimination in all of its forms. Ecuador's official human rights pronouncements and human rights policies appear at first glance somewhat progressive. Its government has signed, ratified, and acceded to many of the human rights instruments elaborated in the United Nations and in the Organization of American States.

In relation to the human rights treaties that are most relevant to this research, Ecuador has signed, ratified and acceded to the following instruments:

a. It acceded to The International Convention on All Forms of Racial Discrimination on September 22, 1966.\(^\text{12}\)

b. It ratified The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights on January 24, 1969.\(^\text{13}\)

c. It ratified the Additional Protocol to The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights on November 2, 1968, and in March of 1969 deposited its instruments of ratification in which it recognizes the competence of the human rights committee to receive and consider from individuals subject to its


\(^{13}\text{The United Nations Committee on The International Convention On The Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 41st session, 11th periodic report submitted by the Republic of Ecuador, page 9, October 16, 1991.}\)

\(^{14}\text{Ibid.}\)
jurisdiction who claim to have been victims of a violation of any of the rights set forth in the Covenant.\textsuperscript{15}

d. It ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights on March 6, 1969.\textsuperscript{16}

e. Regarding Ecuador's official position on The United Nations Declaration On The Rights of Persons Belonging to National, Ethnic, and Linguistical Minorities, Ambassador Fernandez de Córdoba said that the Ecuadorian government fully supports the Declaration.\textsuperscript{17} The Minority Rights Declaration does not have the force of law, therefore, it is less problematic for governments to support it.

Ecuador is required to submit periodic reports to the various U.N. human rights committees regarding its progress on complying with the human rights instruments it has signed, ratified or acceded to. It must provide detailed explanations to these U.N. committees and is usually questioned by members of the human rights committees on discrepancies, contradictions, inconsistencies and ambiguities that may be contained in their reports.

Since Ecuador has signed, ratified and acceded to the above mentioned instruments, it must report in detail, if not defend, its human rights practices. These reports

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{17}Personal Interview with Ambassador Marcelo Fernandez de Córdova Ministry of Foreign Relations (Quito, Ecuador: (October 26, 1993).
are public record. An analysis of the Ecuador's human rights record suggest that indigenous, blacks, women, peasants, and other groups are victims of widespread systematic human rights violations. This section will provide the reader with a glimpse of some of these findings.

Ecuador's eleventh and twelfth periodic reports to the U.N. Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination provide a clear and perfect example of the Republic's contradictory, racist and hypocritical human rights sophisms. Ecuador's previous reports to this committee argued that no systematic racial discrimination existed in Ecuador. Mr. Valencia Rodriguez, the Ecuadorian government's representative, argued that the inequalities which did exist were the result of social, economic and structural problems encountered by all developing countries.

The U.N. Committee On the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination cited several shortcomings in the Republic of Ecuador's eleventh and twelfth periodic reports. One of the Committee's most pointed criticisms of the Republic of Ecuador focused on its failure to provide "statistical information on the ethnic composition of the country."  

---


20Ibid.

21Ibid. p.5
Ecuador's refusal to elaborate its census along racial lines and provide this information implies that the country does not have black or Indian populations. This logic could then lead to the conclusion that racial discrimination does not exist. Ecuador's obstinate refusal to provide this vital information on the ethnic composition of the country to this U.N. Human Rights Committee clearly demonstrates a certain arrogance in the international arena, its contempt for black and indigenous culture and intimates its disrespect for the basic norms of international human rights. Consider for brief moment a representative from the United States telling a U.N. human rights committee that there were no blacks in Harlem. Such a ridiculous assertion would be immediately challenged both by U.S. citizens and by members of the committee.

This strategy calls into question Ecuador's commitment to democracy and human rights. It attempts to downplay the strong presence of its indigenous and black populations and make them invisible to the world community. It is possible that if a reliable census were taken, it would reveal an indigenous population of more than fifty per cent of the total population, a figure estimated by many anthropologists. The black population is already estimated to be at least five to 10 per cent of the population. These numbers could be potentially devastating to the small "mestizo-"white elite that now rules the country.

In the context of Latin America, one could refer to this phenomenon as "invisible apartheid." It is an crude attempt to make people culturally and socially invisible by defining

---

them out of existence, out of the national culture and out of the social consciousness of the dominant and non-dominant groups.

The Committee was also critical of the Ecuadorian State's lack of information concerning its black and indigenous communities. In both reports, Ecuador provided a great deal of information on constitutional guarantees and protections, and no information on the impact of socio-economic policies on the weaker sectors of the population, especially on the indigenous and black communities who live in rural areas. There was no statistical information concerning health, living conditions, and birth, death and life expectancy rates of these populations as compared with the population as a whole. Moreover, there were no concrete examples of how victims of racial discrimination were protected by the legal system. In short, the overall picture based on this report was one-dimensional, incomplete, sketchy and lacking in sufficient information on the dynamics of race and racism in Ecuador.


The aggregate population of the republic of Ecuador is estimated to be about 11,258,000, with an annual growth rate of 2.4 per cent. Ecuador, by its own admission, is a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society, and the various cultural identities theoretically contribute to the development of the national culture.

---

23 Ibid., 14.

24 Ibid.

A brief review of the National Development Plan of 1989-1992 provides a rare insight into how the Ecuadorian government perceives the black population. This plan is supposed to be binding on the public sector. National Development Plans are issued by the Ecuadorian government periodically and are a blueprint for the country's economic development plans, which are often in trouble due to budget constraints. The 1989-1992 National Development Plan of Ecuador contains a number of objectives and strategies aimed at "strengthening Ecuador's national identity and ensuring recognition of its multi-ethnic and multi-cultural character." Yet no mention was made of what was meant by "national identity" and "the recognition of multi-ethnic and multi-cultural character."

The National Development Plan has only one vague reference pertaining to the black population and does not contain any substantive provisions or strategies regarding how black culture will "strengthen Ecuador's national identity." Key questions remain unanswered regarding the role of black culture in contemporary Ecuador such as: how does Afro-Ecuadorian culture contribute to the achievement of a national identity and culture in contemporary Ecuador? What are the specific cultural tendencies of the Afro-Ecuadorian peoples as expressed in literature, music, art, etc., that may contribute to the national identity of Ecuador? What, if any, specific and concrete provisions of the National Development Plan address the material conditions which are necessary for the continued existence, development and growth of the Afro-Ecuadorian culture?

There is a plethora of questions regarding this National Development Plan (1989-1992) and how it fails to recognize the Afro-Ecuadorian cultural dynamic. The only mention of Afro-Ecuadorian culture calls for "the rehabilitation of black culture." The phrasing suggests that black culture in Ecuador is in need of attention. However, most of the plan is dedicated to the various indigenous cultures, and black culture is not factored into the national identity equation. The plan "guaranteed" to indigenous communities bilingual educational programs, land titles, literacy campaigns, and programs for the revival and strengthening of their culture. It offered nothing to the black communities. The truth of the matter is that Afro-Ecuadorians are not part of the official and mainstream "national identity" of Ecuador. Although the African population represents between five and ten per cent of the general population, its cultural identity as a component of Ecuadorian national identity is negated. Amilcar Cabral, the great African theoretician from Guinea-Bissau, has argued that the negation of the culture is tantamount to the negation of the people. Ecuador would seem to be case in point.

The Ecuadorian State is not concerned with the cultural contributions of its Afro population. African culture in Ecuador is treated with unmitigated contempt and with utter neglect, and is dismissed as a cultural impediment to the national Ecuadorian culture. Blackness as interpreted by the dominant white-"mestizo" elite is perceived as a largely negative cultural phenomenon. Ecuadorians are not openly hostile to black culture per se; however, their general understanding of black culture is heavily rooted in historically-evolved racist stereotypes. For the most part, Afro-Ecuadorians are perceived to be at the
bottom of the cultural ladder. This standing, arguably, is reinforced due to their low position in the political economy.

Black Ecuadorians are considered lazy, dangerous and naturally predisposed towards criminal behavior. Most non-black Ecuadorians think of blacks as being naturally inferior, the exception being in the area of athletics and music -- in Ecuadorian popular culture, blacks are portrayed as superb athletes and magnificent dancers. In Ecuador, blacks do not learn of their historical, intellectual and cultural contribution to the society; they do not usually determine how their ethnicity is presented to other groups and do not control any key institutions or resources. This process of cultural exclusion is premised on the axiom that African cultural expressions are inherently inferior, thus not worthy of national inclusion. The process of cultural exclusion based on this premise effectively de-humanizes the peoples of African descent -- the logic being no history thus no culture, no culture therefore no humanity.27

Afro-Ecuadorian Minority Rights and Human Rights

The black population of Ecuador is comparatively significant when understood in the context of the five Andean countries: Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia. Colombia has the largest Spanish-speaking black population in the world, which is comprised of roughly 20 to 25 per cent of the country's population. Venezuela has the second

27For the best statement on this phenomenon see the various writings of Amilcar Cabral, Unity and Struggle: The Speeches and Writing of Amilcar Cabral (New York, NY: Monthly Review, Press 1972) National Liberation and Culture is arguably his most advanced statement on the subject.
largest black population: at least 70 per cent of Venezuelans are acknowledged to have black ancestry, and the "pure" Afro-Venezuelan population is roughly 10 per cent. Ecuador is third, with a black population of five to 10 percent, followed by Peru, which has a small African population of about five per cent. Bolivia has probably the smallest black population of the Andean countries, estimated at less than five per cent.  

Table 1.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total (1992, in millions)</th>
<th>Black</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>34,520,000</td>
<td>6,999,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>21,177,000</td>
<td>5,195,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

28 There are no official statistics comparing the various black population of these Andean countries. What is clear is that Colombia clearly has the largest Spanish-speaking black population in the world. Venezuela has also a large black population, making it second, followed closely by Ecuador and Peru, and finally Bolivia.

29 Britannica Yearbook (London: 1995) and World Bank Atlas (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 1995) Consistent statistical aggregates are quite difficult to obtain on black populations in Latin America. The Britannica Yearbook gives estimates on the black populations in the region (the World Bank does not provide data on racial composition of these countries). Also, the estimates in this chart are based on the Yearbook and other additional sources such as Rodolfo Oviedo, Norman Whitten, Jr. and Nelson E. Bass.
For the most part, the literature on minority rights does not concern itself with the blacks of South America, but instead focuses on indigenous people. One notable exception is The Minority Rights Group Report, a London-based human rights research publication that focuses exclusively on minority issues, and that profiles the situation of Afro-Brazilians from a minority rights perspective. More recently, they have published a series of essays on the black population of Latin America called *No Longer Invisible - Afro-Latin Americans Today*, (Edited by the Minority Rights Group, 1995).

There are various conceptions on what constitutes a minority, and this dissertation employs Jay Sigler's framework. According to the Sigler model, a minority is a group of people who, "because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from others for differential and unequal treatment."\(^{30}\)

In addition, the denial of distinctive features of collective identity must be included in this definition. A United Nations subcommittee on minorities defines them as "those nondominant groups in a population which possess and wish to preserve stable ethnic, religious or linguistic traditions or characteristics different from the rest of society." Minorities are victims of discrimination and prejudice. Members of these groups are often denied access to jobs, education, housing and other social goods due to their minority

---

\(^{30}\)Sigler, p.6
affiliation. Moreover, minority group membership is rarely voluntary. Minority status is determined by descent or inheritance.\textsuperscript{31}

It therefore can be argued that based on this definition, the black population of Ecuador is an ethnic minority. As a black minority group, it is a victim of institutionally entrenched racial discrimination. Race and racism must be understood as determining the status, station, and place of blacks in the Ecuadorian social system.

The blacks of Ecuador form part of a group that came to the country as slaves or as escaped slaves. As slaves, they were viewed only as chattel and were denied the most basic and fundamental human rights. Black slavery in Ecuador started roughly at the beginning of the seventeenth century and lasted officially until 1851. Starting in the seventeenth century, blacks were imported to Ecuador to work in the gold mines Zaruma and Portobello, Ecuador's principal mines located in the southernmost province of El Oro. Moreover, the Jesuits in 1606 and thereafter, imported black slaves to work on their "haciendas" in the valley of Chota. The historical records confirm that slavery in this region was excruciatingly cruel and brutal.

After slavery was legally outlawed (1851) the blacks of Ecuador were subjected to new forms of exploitation known as "concertaje." Their real standing in the society changed very little. They were forced to work to pay off debts that were inherently designed as being unpayable. Chapter 3 outlines in detail the role of slavery and its effects on the Afro-Ecuadorian community. In the contemporary or the post-slavery period, blacks continue

\textsuperscript{31}Ibid.
to be located at the very bottom of the Ecuadorian social system. They are frequently denied jobs and competitive education, and are effectively excluded from participation in most aspects of the national Ecuadorian culture. For example, most Ecuadorians have never seen or heard of the Marimba (the music and dance of the blacks of Esmeraldas) not the Bomba (the music of the people of Chota). Moreover, the government does not promote, recognize, or support these unique cultural expressions.

From a minority rights perspectives Afro-Ecuadorians are an ethnic minority living in a hostile, "mestizo" dominated, racist culture that effectively denies them civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. Afro-Ecuadorians are discriminated against heavily in the political economy of Ecuador, and occupy the lowest positions in the economy due to institutionalized racism. Race prejudice and discrimination in the Ecuadorian context are often very sophisticated. In the post-slavery period in Ecuador (1851 until present) there were none of the very strict forms of legalized segregation such as Jim Crow in the U.S. and apartheid in South Africa. As stated in the first chapter, the notion of racial democracy took root in most Latin American countries starting roughly in the middle of the twentieth century. There were no laws that prohibited blacks from attending schools, living in certain neighborhoods, being employed in certain industries or holding certain positions of power.

However, in spite of the lack of written laws or the formal trappings of apartheid, Ecuador developed into a deeply racist country with an invisible apartheid social system, where blacks remain locked out or at the very bottom of the economy.

Even in the overwhelmingly black province of Esmeraldas there has never been a black governor appointed (the President appoints governors to the provinces), or a black
mayor elected. However, recently, blacks have made small gains on the local level in Esmeraldas and they are slowing occupying positions in city government. According to Antonio Preciado, a prominent Afro-Ecuadorian poet and one of the leaders of the black Latin Négritude movement, racism and discrimination in Ecuador are "subterranean" and "ferocious." Constitutionally and theoretically, legalized discrimination does not exist, he says. However, he astutely points out that the common perception held by the general population and promoted by civil society that racism does not exist in Ecuador because it is not legislated is a "clear illusion" and therefore all the more dangerous.32

Preciado adds:

"This false sense of non-discrimination is illusory because Ecuador’s black population continues to live on the margins of public life and to be denied and deprived of basic human rights, and it is dangerous because these misperceptions do not allow Afro-Ecuadorians to generate an objective response to their oppression."33

Some Afro-Ecuadorian community leaders have gone so far as to speculate that had Ecuador imposed a system of strict legalized apartheid similar to that of the United States or South Africa, black Ecuadorians would have been better able to manifest a sharp social response to the dynamics of racism.34


33Ibid.

34In the course of various interviews with Afro-Ecuadorian leaders, this notion of legalized apartheid versus non-legalized apartheid in relation to Afro-Ecuadorians objectively responding to their social positions was frequently expressed.
The mechanisms of this oppressive but subtle social order are more difficult to grasp and understand. In the context of black Ecuador and Latin America, race and racism explain why the blacks of Ecuador and other Latin American countries have made few real social gains after five hundred years. Racism is part of the Ecuadorian national culture. As a minority group, the blacks of Ecuador have received negatively differential treatment, been excluded from participating in the social life of the country, and have been the objects of scorn by the dominant groups.

Brief Overview of Human Rights Cases:

As already noted, there exists no statistical information regarding how racial and ethnic groups are treated; however, it is more than fair to conclude that the black population suffers from various forms of highly discriminatory treatment based on their race. The following are three brief case-studies of gross human rights abuses perpetrated against Afro-Ecuadorians that were clearly motivated by racism.

From the beginning of my research at CEDHU, one police officer's name kept surfacing in various cases. The individual, officer Orense, was cited in dozens of claims by blacks who reported having been persecuted, arrested and tortured by him. He apparently terrorized the black community in the town of Santo Domingo de los Colorados. During various visits to the Quito men's jail, many Afro-Ecuadorian prisoners claimed in interviews to have been tortured by this individual, and they all stated that "this 'chapa' [cop] does not like blacks." The prisoners and human rights lawyers monitoring the cases agreed that
Orense targeted and terrorized blacks, and often extracted money from them in exchange for their freedom.

One of these victims, Francisco Delgado, was arrested by Orense and three other officers on charges of stealing cattle. Delgado was taken to an abandoned "hacienda," tortured until he lost consciousness and finally coerced into signing a confession. He, like many others, was accused of dealing drugs, and reported that cocaine was "planted" onto his person as evidence.

In Guayaquil, an Afro-Ecuadorian man named Vidal Hurtado Segura was found beaten and shot to death in the police morgue. His family reported that police officers harassed and persecuted him to the point where he had to go into hiding for fear of his life. According to his mother, two police officers burst into her home looking for Hurtado and stated that "this 'moreno' [black] better watch out because he is a dead man." He was finally found, beaten unconscious by ten policemen and taken away in a police vehicle, not to be seen alive again.

In the province of Esmeraldas, three black family members were killed by the police after a fight in which a "mestizo" off-duty policeman physically attacked the three men and they reportedly fatally injured him in self-defense. Soon after the fight, the three, Orestes Canola Valencia, Enrique Canola Valencia and Fredy Canola Gonzalez, were arrested and taken to the city of Esmeraldas in a police vehicle. On the way there, they were shot to death, and their bodies dumped in the Esmeraldas cemetery. Along with these cases, I came across many others in which black women and men were specifically targeted by
police and the military for human rights abuses which, in my view, had clear racial overtones.

Contemporary Perspectives on the Blacks of Ecuador

Before concluding, this chapter will provide a brief overview of the contemporary social situation of Afro-Ecuadorians throughout the country.

Employment

According to Dogenes Cuero Caicero and Carmen Klinger, blacks in Ecuador do not generally obtain lower to middle level jobs such as bank tellers, clerks, receptionists, taxi and bus drivers, nurses, secretaries and civil servants. After one year of living and traveling extensively in Ecuador, I saw very few blacks working in any of these positions. There are very few black doctors, lawyers, engineers, university professors and other professionals; in fact, according to Jose Arce, there is only one black doctor in the entire province of Pichincha, whose capital is Quito. Blacks are also shut out of the small business community, and own few "mom and pop" grocery stores, small restaurants or other small-scale enterprises.

Although blacks have played a historical role in the armed forces of Ecuador, only recently have they been accepted into the ranks of the military. They usually hold lower-level positions, and are denied promotions. There are also few black policemen in Ecuador. For the most part, blacks are relegated to the lowest-paying and most menial
sections of the official economy: domestics, day laborers in the plantations, miners, security guards, office boys, parking lot attendants, etc.

In addition, blacks are heavily represented in the informal, or underground, economy, working as shoe-shine boys, washerwomen, street vendors (reselling valueless items or food) and such. Blacks often find themselves in the degrading circumstance of having to beg for a meager day job in a plantation or on the street sharpening knives, collecting trash or running errands. Recently, black children have begun to overpopulate the streets of Quito, usually seeking handouts or serving as informal parking lot attendants, shoe-shine boys and car washers. Although no official statistics exist, some Afro-Ecuadorians informally estimate that the unemployment and underemployment of Afro-Ecuadorians is exceptionally high, in some regions amounting to more than 75 percent.

Civil Rights

In terms of civil rights, the situation of blacks in Ecuador is even more alarming. Blacks are the victims of police brutality, harassment and unwarranted arrests. Their levels of incarceration in Quito, Guayaquil, Esmeraldas and Ibarra are exceptionally high, and disproportional to their numbers in the general population. In various interviews conducted in Quito prisons, many black prisoners said that they had been tortured and beaten. Although not widely covered by the print and television media several informants or interviewees spoke about several lynching of black men by enraged mobs who accused them of stealing.
In one case, a young Afro-Ecuadorian was beaten and burned alive while the police watched.\textsuperscript{35}

There have been several ethnic clashes in Ecuador over the past decade. In 1991, in San Lorenzo, Esmeraldas Province, black townsmen and townswomen stormed the naval base to protest against the torture and killing of a black man from Borbon; black lives were lost. News about such clashes is quickly suppressed, and very little is forthcoming from the media.\textsuperscript{36}

Black men in Ecuador are generally feared and despised. Because of their exclusion from the labor market, they are often unable to support their families, and in many instances leave them in order to search for employment. This contributes to the breakdown of the black family structure, and the impoverishment of black families. Black men are also targeted by the police as criminal suspects, and brutalized or incarcerated without trial.\textsuperscript{37}

The brutalization of Afro-Ecuadorian women has many forms. Black women in Ecuador are automatically assumed to be maids, thieves, drug dealers and prostitutes, and they are often seen as objects of sexual desire by "mestizo" men. In 1989, a black woman known as "Yolanda" was lynched in Quito by a gang of upper-class white men, who tied her to the back of their jeep and dragged her through the streets of the city. They left her for dead.

\textsuperscript{35}CEDDHU, Quito, Ecuador. Human Rights Violations for the month of August, 1993.


\textsuperscript{37}Personal Interview with several families from the neighborhood of El Pampón, Esmeraldas, May 12, 1994.
in a puddle of blood, and a policeman who encountered her refused to help; she was
eventually taken to hospital by some friends, who had to beg the doctors to treat her. Yolanda
is now brain-damaged and paralyzed for life.38

Housing and Education

In the city of Quito it is difficult for blacks to secure housing even when they
have money. Faye Windal, a black female colleague of mine from the United Kingdom,
spent seven months looking for an apartment. She said that over the phone, the landlords
were friendly and cooperative; however, upon seeing her, they would become hostile and
immediately say that the apartment had already been rented. Furthermore, she said that
Ecuadorians often assumed that she was a domestic.39

Like Windal, I encountered some of the same problems upon my arrival in Quito,
Ecuador. As a Spanish-speaking black male, I was told to my face by a white-"mestizo"
woman that she did not rent to "black people" or to "los morenos." This apartment was
referred to me by the Ecuadorian Director of the U.S. Fulbright program. Upon learning of
my experience she immediately severed her relationship with this woman.40

---

Afro-Ecuadorian Cultural Center. This act of brutality was widely reported by the media.

39Interview with Faye Windal on January 25, 1994 in Quito, Ecuador.

40This incident occurred on June 20, 1993 in Quito, Ecuador.
Black neighborhoods in Quito have deteriorating schools that lack the basic materials and staff. In the black regions of rural Esmeraldas, schools often do not open for months due to the lack of teachers. The Ecuadorian government puts a low priority on the education of black children and in many instances, black children are mistreated and neglected in the schools: they are harassed, sent home, singled out as trouble makers and in some cases lose the school year due to this mistreatment.⁴¹

Political Representation

The most disturbing aspect of the social problematic of Afro-Ecuadorians is their lack of political power and representation. On the national level, they currently have no representatives in the National Congress, the Supreme Court and in the Cabinet of president Sixto Durán Ballés. Historically, there has only been one black elected member of Congress, Jaime Hurtado, a member of the Ecuadorian Socialist Party who believes that class analysis best explains the situation of blacks in Ecuador. On the regional level, there has never been a black governor nor black mayors at the writing of this dissertation. The black vote has traditionally been exploited by the various political parties of Ecuador. Political campaigns venture into the forgotten black neighborhoods at election time with empty promises, and they distribute free liquor and T-shirts in exchange for support.

According to the Afro-Ecuadorian poet and activist Antonio Preciado, "black people tend to vote for whoever gives them something, or whoever makes the best

promises." Thus, "blacks rarely vote in a block as a political force." In other words, blacks do not vote for issues, they vote for perceived material gains, and they rarely united around a particular political party.

The reason for this is that between election years, black neighborhoods are largely ignored by politicians, and receive little economic and social help. Preciado believes that "when elections are held, blacks grab what they can because that is the only time they stand to gain." However, promises made by candidates - such as to provide plumbing, clean water or health services to a particular community - never materialize. Moreover, Afro-Ecuadorians are not organized around their concrete interests, an issue that was discussed in the section on consciousness.

Enforcement Mechanisms

Despite the fact that racism has been outlawed in Ecuador's constitution, Afro-Ecuadorians lack basic legal mechanisms to address the violations described above. There are no legal organizations that specifically handle black civil and political rights affairs, and no lawyers trained in the area of black civil rights. There are no legal cases that have established precedents on issues pertaining to black civil rights. Black organizations in Ecuador are generally involved in cultural affairs, community development and agricultural-rural issues. Even Ecuador's most progressive human rights organization, CEDDHU, has not focused on the racial component of human rights abuses facing the black community.42

Although Ecuador has signed and ratified the most important U.N. treaties pertaining to civil, political, cultural and economic rights, the Foreign Ministry's Office of Human Rights has no information pertaining to the human rights situation of blacks in the country, and one official in the ministry went as far as to state that "there are a only a couple of blacks in Ecuador ... we the whites are the ones who suffer from discrimination by the "mestizo" majority. 43

The Future of Black Rights in Latin America: Overview of Options and Policy Recommendations

According to Jay Sigler, the degree of cooperation and/or animosity and tension between majorities and minorities is determined by the following factors. The most obvious is the relative size of the minority compared with the size of the majority (based on this assumption, the indigenous populations in comparison to the black populations should have a greater chance of influencing favorable state policy to their benefit). Other key factors in group relations include the degree of industrialization, the amount of resources available, and the proximity of states that support minority rights claims.

Along with this, one could add that a minority group’s level of organization, solidarity, and its ability to convince its own members of the need for tactical alliance around the general question of minority rights (this includes civil, political, voting, cultural and

43 Interview with Ambassador Luis Valencia Rodriguez on October 26, 1993 in Quito, Ecuador. Ambassador Rodriguez is the Ecuadorian representative to the United Nations Committee on Racial Discrimination. During our interview Ambassador Rodriguez claimed that there was no systematic or institutional racial discrimination against blacks and Indians. He stated that the racial discrimination was personal and individual.
economic issues). In other words, the struggle for minority rights is not necessarily narrowly defined around the question of minority rights, but around a socio-political agenda that is based on oppression due to identification in a group.

For example, minority rights issues are an aspect of human rights which include civil, political, cultural, religious, gender and class rights; the rights of children, the elderly, and so forth. A particular group may struggle for one or all of the above and not call their struggle a human rights or minority rights struggle. Therefore, any struggle premised on a claim of rights of an individual or group in the broad sense is a human rights struggle. Faced with powerful geo-political, attitudinal and historical forces, no set of institutional arrangements could provide an ideal means of resolving group differences.

Standard techniques, which could be considered by Ecuador as effective mechanisms to address the social, cultural and economic marginalization of its black population, include: Formal equality before the law (civil and political rights), whereby the legal system (mainly the courts) plays a role in applying the rights and in asserting the principle of non-discrimination. For example, African Americans in the U. S. have effectively used the judicial system to advance civil and political rights. The most obvious shortcoming of this feature is that these constitutional and /or legal mechanisms are disregarded or not implemented.

Ecuador, as noted earlier, has outlawed racial discrimination, racially motivated violence against individuals or groups, and condemns colonialism, neocolonialism, and racial segregation. None of these provisions are enforced, nor is there a framework for their enforcement. Other available measures include constitutional protection, i.e., entrenched or
unamenable safeguards. This rarely applied technique was used in the Southern Rhodesia Constitution to safeguard minority whites. In the United States and India, judicial action on the behalf of minorities have provided important institutional safeguards.

Federalism is another option available to nations with minority populations. Federalism is an arrangement in which power is genuinely held by the local (state) government in a way that limits central government power. This formula is particularly attractive for minorities who are concentrated in a particular region of the nations. In the case of the blacks of Esmeraldas (Emeraldas is the black province of Ecuador), an arrangement of this type is certainly an option that should be explored. Switzerland is an successful example of this idea.

Other options include autonomy arrangements, regionalism, and special voting arrangements. The Sandinista government of Nicaragua used an autonomy formula to deal with its black and indigenous population during the 1980's. Also, Spain has articulated a set of autonomy arrangements to deal with their various ethnic and cultural groups. Italy and Belgium each adopted a regional framework to deal with its minority situations and countries like Turkey, Fiji and New Zealand have at one time or another protected the rights of minorities with special voting arrangements. Most recently, Colombia has enacted a landmark law which deals specifically with black rights, and which is examined in detail in the following section.

Black Rights and the Case of Colombia: The Négritude Law
The recent changes in the Colombian Constitution, along with the new Négritude Law, suggest that the Republic of Colombia may be on the social cutting edge in the area of black rights. In 1991 Colombia recognized the existence of ethnic minorities and provided them with a list of rights. And in 1994, President Cesar Gaviria Trujillo signed one of the most comprehensive black rights law in Latin America.

Since July of 1991 Colombians have been living under a new Constitution adopted by the popularly convened and elected Constituent Assembly. The most important feature of this new Constitution is the recognition of the country’s ethnic minorities. One could argue that the new Constitution introduced radical changes into the political life of Colombia. The main objective was to promote participatory democracy, that is, the transfer of power to citizens to enable them to be directly and effectively involved in those decisions in which they have an interest. Although the Constitution is strongly oriented towards Colombia's 500,000 indigenous people, there are three special articles pertaining to Afro-Colombians, who constitute between 20 and 30 per cent of the Colombian population.

These three special articles authorize the enactment of legislation to assure the respect for the various rights of Afro-Colombians. The main beneficiaries are the natives of the English-speaking Caribbean islands of San Andres and Providencia, and the communities inhabiting the Pacific coast in Choco, the poorest department of Colombia. The English-speaking island territory of San Andres will become a “special” department, and its cultural identity, as an "institutional expression," will be safeguarded. Moreover, provisions to protect the island’s environment, without obstructing economic development, were also
included. In addition, the collective property and the unique cultural identity of the Afro population on the Pacific Coast were recognized.

The Négritude Law is being touted as one of the most important black rights laws in Latin America. According to Gustavo Makananky Cordova, an Afro-Colombian doctor from the Choco state, this law recognizes for the first time that there are blacks in Colombia. The people of the black state of Choco, known for its black consciousness movement, played a large role in pressuring the government to enact such a law.

Beginning with a handful of sit-ins at government offices in 1991, political, social, and black consciousness has grown radically among Colombian blacks, who represent the largest Spanish-speaking black population in the world. Some argue that the most important changes came last year, when pressure by black groups in the form of street protests, and even some guerilla action, helped to win passage of this black rights law.

The Négritude law calls for extending land titles to traditional black communities, a provision of great importance. In Colombia, as in Ecuador, many of the black populations have occupied lands for generations, however, few of these communities have in their possession the legal titles. Without legal titles these communities can be relocated or have their lands confiscated without compensation. Moreover, the law calls for punishing racial discrimination, promoting black education and setting up a presidential advisory board for black affairs. The most far reaching measure calls for two seats to be reserved in the National Assembly (the highest law-making body in the country) for black representatives, and the two representatives have already taken their seats.
One observation regarding the new Colombian Constitution and the Négritude Law: if one accepts Sigler's premise that the ability of the minority to extract concessions from the majority may be based on the majority/minority ratio, and if one also accepts the premise that strong organizational levels are essential to the empowerment of minorities, then the Afro-Colombian case is a good example of how minorities in Latin America may empower their communities. Afro-Colombians do form a large bulk of the Colombian population, and recent evidence strongly suggests that their level of organization, solidarity and consciousness has increased over the past few years. These two characteristics were key in their success in enacting the Négritude Law.

Specific Policy Suggestions to the Ecuadorian Government

At present many Afro-Ecuadorian leaders are examining Colombia's Négritude Law and are calling on the Ecuadorian government to enact similar legislation. As stated in Chapter five, the government recently set up a commission for black affairs in the National Congress to deal specifically with black problems. The various black movements in Ecuador are also discussing many critical issues that have been dormant for years. Therefore, the chances of Afro-Ecuadorians improving their status in society at time are better than they have been in a long time.

After studying and analyzing the Afro-Ecuadorian problematic, I offer the following suggestions to the Republic of Ecuador. These suggestions are aimed directly at eliminating the government's racist but unwritten policy of excluding Afro-Ecuadorians from the society, economy and politics.
i. Create a presidentially appointed commission to study the Afro-Ecuadorian predicament.

ii. Reserve at least two seats (or an amount that is proportional to the black population) in the National Congress for representatives of the black population (ideally, one each would come from Esmeraldas and one from Chota).

iii. Legalize and issue property titles to the historical black communities of Chota and select black communities in the area of the Cayapas River, the Santiago River and other similarly situated communities in rural Northern Esmeraldas.

iv. Include black communities in future population studies, and issue numerical estimates.

v. Recognize constitutionally the existence of blacks as ethnic minorities, and take the necessary steps to ensure their cultural, economic, political, and social development.

vi. Allocate adequate development aid to Esmeraldas, Chota and other regions where there are black communities. Specifically, these communities are in urgent need in the areas education, health care (with particular emphasis on children), and housing.

viii. Create an independent commission, with legal powers, to review cases pertaining to racial discrimination.

ix. In the upcoming national development plan, include a more detailed analysis of the social, economic, political, and cultural reality of Afro-Ecuadorians.
These steps would bring the Afro population into the mainstream and improve their socio-economic standing in the society, economy, and civil society.

**Conclusion**

The Ecuadorian government has a hypocritical and racist policy of denying the most basic and fundamental rights to its black citizens. It was shown that these unstated policies are in direct violation of its own constitution, legislation, and international human rights instruments it has signed, ratified, and acceded to. The obstinate refusal of the Ecuadorian government to provide reliable numbers on the racial and ethnic composition of the country to a United Nations human rights committee demonstrates their contempt and arrogance for international law, human rights and democracy. Moreover, the failure by many international human rights organizations to establish a link between race and human rights violations serves only to inflate the validity of racial democracy. The link between race and human rights is central to an understanding of how human rights violations are investigated and recorded. It was further argued that this link has to be made in order to fully understand the “racially oriented” nature of human rights violations as they pertain to the Afro-Ecuadorian masses. After establishing the human rights context, it was further argued that Afro-Ecuadorians are a minority groups as defined by the Sigler model and the United Nations Declaration on Ethnic and Racial Minorities. After discussing the future of black rights in Latin America, the case of Colombia was highlighted to illustrate the possibilities available to other similarly situated Afro-Latin populations.
CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSION

After more than five hundred years of being in Ecuador, the African population has not been able to make any significant social gains. The developments in the political economy of Ecuador since the abolition of slavery have brought little change for the black population. The abolition of slavery introduced new forms of legally-sanctioned indebted servitude that bound ex-slaves to the plantations. It was contended that slavery, "concertaje," dependency underdevelopment, "mestizaje" and a deliberate racist policy of socio-economic exclusion by the Ecuadorian government have forced Afro-Ecuadorians to occupy the lowest position in the economy, politics and society. Few Latin American governments, if any, included in their post-slavery constitutions laws designed specifically to limit the social mobility their black populations; thus legal discrimination as sanctioned through the law and other formal mechanisms, did not develop per se in the post slavery period. Nevertheless, social discrimination was prevalent in every sphere of civil society. Afro-Ecuadorians and other Afro-Latin Americans emerged from slavery into a society where racial segregation was not legislated but was practiced under a more subtle, sophisticated and pernicious form of social discrimination. Latin Americans functioned under the false illusion that they were all one people, racially mixed, and thus racially united. This phenomenon was referred to invisible as apartheid.
The process of modernization in contemporary Ecuador has essentially regulated the black population to the lowest sectors of society. Despite developments in many sectors of the economy (shrimp, wood, oil, tourism) the black population remains marginalized and all available evidence suggests that the situation is not improving. This process of socio-economic exclusion must be understood in the context of how racism has structured blacks in the economy. In the twentieth century, the process of modernization in contemporary Ecuador has brought new forms of socio-political domination for the Afro-Ecuadorian masses.

Unlike Chota, a region with very limited economic potential, the province of Esmeraldas has experienced boom and bust cycles of economic growth; however, both black populations remain marginalized. The logic of modernization essentially ensures that the Afro-Ecuadorian population will not be allowed to participate in these economic opportunities. According to Danny Boston, class inequality is the product of a history of racial inequality.¹ Using Boston's premise, it can be argued that first slavery and then "concertaje" in Ecuador relegated blacks disproportionately to the status of sharecroppers and landless peasants.

Boston argues that historically, racial subjugation has created a unique class stratification, reflecting the inferior economic position that blacks have been forced to

occupy. This inferior status is constantly regenerated not only by economic dynamics, but also by legal, cultural, political and social systems which support it. Therefore, in the case of Ecuador, even though there were no explicit laws catered to deprive blacks of economic power, racial inequality was institutionalized in the superstructure and the substructure, thus explaining why so many blacks in Ecuador and throughout Latin America occupy such low positions in the political economy.

It therefore may be concluded that racism in Ecuador has its own dynamic; race determines, locates, influences, and structures blacks in Ecuador at the very bottom of the socio-economic system. The prevailing point of view in Ecuador is that Afro-Ecuadorians occupy a low position in the social system due to their lack of initiative, because "they are lazy," or other blame-the-victim scenarios.

However untrue, these negative social perceptions are then replicated in civil society or, as Howard Winant argues, in racial projects. Concrete examples of racial projects in the Ecuadorian civil society are racial democracy and "mestizaje." As an expression of civil society, the Ecuadorian masses internalize and accept these views uncritically, thus developing highly negative and in some cases hostile attitudes towards the African population. This is somewhat analogous to what John Rex refers to as a situation in which such structured conditions interact with the actor's definition in such a way as to produce a racially structured social reality.² For example, most white-"mestizo" Ecuadorians actually

believe that Afro-Ecuadorians do not like to work, have no initiative and have inferior cultural characteristics, and that they are thus responsible for their low socio-economic status and lack of progress.

Over time, these perceptions become self-perpetuating and then form part of the national thought process. The argument is circuitous: "We don’t like blacks because they are poor. The reason why they are poor is because they are lazy and lack initiative." Regrettably, this reasoning over time hardens and is accepted as fact. This form of reasoning must be rejected and challenged.

With this process in place, the African population is further dehumanized by the media and popular culture. Blacks are portrayed as thieves, prostitutes and anti-socials, thus reinforcing if not reaffirming the negative perceptions in the minds of whites and "mestizos." Moreover, they are expected to work twice as hard for less money, and if they complain, regardless of the brutality of the labor, then they are called lazy and trouble-makers. Black women are doubly affected in that their "black erotic sexuality" is a highly sought-after by white and "mestizo" men.

This dehumanization is made possible because of the low position of blacks in the political economy, which is attributed to "ethnic characteristics." The failure to properly analyze race, racial patterns and key forces within the political economy largely explains why people in Latin America internalize race the way that they do. Moreover, the notion of racial democracy helps to perpetuate these institutional perceptions. Blacks in Ecuador and throughout Latin America have had to wage a constant battle what Richard Jackson refers to a ethnic lynching. Ethnic lynching is an attempt to restore whiteness by bleaching out
blackness as a means of solving racial problems, a solution that according to Jackson rest on the biological superiority of the white race. This aesthetic prejudice and the premium it places on whiteness is somewhat responsible for the fact that African features decrease chances for racial acceptance in Latin America.

The prevalence of racism is very strong in Ecuador. Racism prevents blacks from occupying lucrative positions in the political economy. The nature of the economy rewards whites and, to a certain extent, "mestizos." Meanwhile, Afro-Ecuadorians do not have access to the local financial institutions, to employment and educational opportunities, and to basic health facilities.

The findings in this research suggest that in present-day Ecuador, a small white elite continues to occupy the top of country's social hierarchy; whites and some "mestizos" tend to be concentrated in the more favorable economic, social, and political positions while blacks and Indians tend to be positioned in the lowest paid, dirtiest and most menial jobs. Structurally, the economy has relegated blacks to the least desired jobs. Racism as expressed in the Ecuadorian context largely explains this phenomenon.

The various segments of Ecuadorian society that assert that there is no correlation between race and socio-economic status are simply misleading and false. Ecuadorian society, like most Latin American societies, is profoundly racist, hypocritical and overly concerned about maintaining their "whiteness" and dehumanizing their African population based on social smokescreens like "mestizaje" and racial democracy. Moreover, the Ecuadorian government refuses to recognize its black population in its official population studies. This lack of recognition contributes to the acute socio-political marginalization of black
Ecuadorians. The Republic of Ecuador’s human rights policy is contradictory and at variance with its own domestic legislation, constitution, and international human rights treaties it has signed, ratified and acceded to. These contradictions call into question the government’s commitment to democracy as it pertains to the black population.

This dissertation has analyzed the social problematic of Afro-Ecuadorians. It argued that the Afro-Ecuadorian predicament is best understood in the context of political economy, and it utilized race analysis and the racial formation theory as developed in the Latin American context. After establishing the context based on political economy and race, the research used a minority rights approach to establish a link between race and human rights violations. It is hoped that with these approaches, new perspectives and methodologies were introduced to the study of Afro-Latin politics. In particular, the Afro-Ecuadorian problematic has not been sufficiently addressed by political scientists from a comparative perspective. This research attempted to establish a link between the legacy of slavery in Ecuador, the subsequent low status of Afro-Ecuadorians in the political economy, the pervasive racist policies of the Ecuadorian government and civil society, and the resulting human rights violations against people of African descent. Moreover, this dissertation has attempted to fill a void and contribute to a better understanding of the Afro-Ecuadorian predicament (and other Afro-Latins) by developing a methodology that fuses political economy, theories of race, class and gender, and by providing a comprehensive model to analyze black social movements, national identity, and black consciousness. The main objective was to explain the low position of Afro-Ecuadorians from a political economy perspective; to analyze the concept of race and minority rights (as defined by the United
Nations Declaration on Minority Rights) as an aspect of human rights; to focus the attention on the Republic of Ecuador’s human rights policy regarding its black population; and to demonstrate that human rights violations do have a racial component in black Latin America.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Published Sources

Books


Cabello de Balboa, Miguel. Verdadera Descripción y Relación Larga de la Provincia y la Tierra de Esmeraldas. Quito, Ecuador.: Casa de la Cultura, 1946.


**Articles**


Official Documents

Comisión Ecuménica de Derechos Humanos, "De la Exclusión Social a la Eliminación Física" Derechos del Pueblo no. 77 (September 1993): 1-12.


"Derechos Humanos" Edición Especial Agencia Latinoamericana de Información, no. 172 (June 2, 1993):1-16.


United Nations, Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Committee against Torture, 7th session, report submitted by the Republic of Ecuador as required by article 19 of the Convention, (CAT/C/SR.89), November 14, 1991.


Unpublished Sources

Interviews and Speeches

Arboleda, José Arce. "Race, Class and Social Movements in Black Ecuador." Interview by Author and María Carrión, October 4, 1993. Quito, Ecuador.


Caicero, Diogenes. "Economic Perspectives on Black Ecuador." Interview by Author, April 30, Quito, Ecuador.


García, Juan. "Historical Perspectives on the Cimarrón Movement" and "Social and Economic Perspectives on Black Ecuador" Interview by Author and María Carrión, April 7, 1994, Esmeraldas, Ecuador.

Jaciento, Fierro. "Black Social Movements in Ecuador." Interview by Author and María Carrión, April 7, 1994, Esmeraldas, Ecuador.

Klinger, Carmen. "Gender Perspectives and the Afro-Ecuadorian Social Movements." Interview by Author and María Carrión, September 3, 1993, Quito, Ecuador.


Peña, Diego Paredes. Discurso pronunciado por el Canciller del Ecuador ante el XLVIII Periodo Ordinario de Sesiones de la Asamblea de las Naciones Unidas.


Dissertations


