

Introduction

A Black Transcontinental Movement for the Future

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América, enquanto sistema etnogeográfico de referência, é uma criação nossa e de nossos antepassados no continente em que vivemos, inspirados em modelos africanos. Por conseguinte, o termo *amefricanas/amefricanos* designa toda uma descendência: não só a dos africanos trazidos pelo tráfico negreiro, como a daqueles que chegaram à AMÉRICA muito antes de Colombo. Ontem como hoje, *amefricanos* oriundos dos mais diferentes países tem desempenhado um papel crucial na elaboração dessa *Amefricanidade* que identifica, na Diáspora, uma experiência histórica comum que exige ser devidamente conhecida e cuidadosamente pesquisada.

—Lélia Gonzalez

In her groundbreaking essay, “A categoria político-cultural de amefricanidade,” Amefrican feminist scholar Lélia Gonzalez established the categories that today enable us to reimagine the Hispanophone and Lusophone contexts in what is known as Latin America. As Gonzalez poignantly argues in her writing, biological arguments have long underpinned the racism that resulted in the centuries of subordination experienced by both Black and Indigenous peoples. A philosopher of “hemispheric Blackness” before the term was even coined and began to circulate in academic circles, Gonzalez advocates for the dissolution of territorial, linguistic, and ideological limits in order to develop “novas perspectivas para um entendimento mais profundo dessa parte do mundo onde ela se manifesta: A AMÉRICA e como um todo, Sul, Central, Norte e Insular” (new perspectives for a deeper understanding of that part of the world where it manifests itself: AMERICA, as a whole, South, Central, North, and the Caribbean Basin). Starting with this geographic unit in mind,

it would be possible to perceive an entire historical process of Amefrican cultural dynamics conveyed in multiple forms of adaptation, resistance, reinterpretation, and creation of new forms (76). One hemisphere. One diaspora violently subjected and ardently defying. *América* was an ethnogeographic system of referentiality, and *Amefricanity* was the lived experience that connected Afrodescendant peoples in this hemisphere.

Amefricanity flourished and structured itself throughout the centuries of Black peoples' presence in this hemisphere, always against the grain of the hegemonic racism espoused throughout the Hispanophone and Lusophone contexts: "Já no caso das sociedades de origem latina, temos o racismo disfarçado ou, como eu o classifico, o *racismo por denegação*. Aqui prevalecem as 'teorias' de miscigenação, da assimilação e da 'democracia racial.' A chamada América Latina que, na verdade, é muito mais ameríndia e ameírica do que outra coisa, apresenta-se como o melhor exemplo de racismo por denegação" (Gonzalez 72) (In the case of societies of Latin origin, we have disguised racism or, as I term it, racism by denial. Here, the "theories" of miscegenation, assimilation, and "racial democracy" prevail. The so-called Latin America, which, in fact, is much more Amerindian and Amefrican than anything else, manifests itself as the best example of racism by denial). In Gonzalez's counterproposal to that violent negation, Blackness was coupled with hemisphere, and in that hemisphere there was likewise a subjugated living heritage. Racism by denial—Gonzalez assures readers in her section on racism, colonialism, imperialism, and its effects—resulted from the hegemonic insistence on maintaining the subjugation of both Amerindian and Amefrican peoples. The very specific inquiry into América and Amefricanity entailed, then, work that affirmed the longevity and vibrancy of Amefricanity as a hemispheric-based experience of historically consistent resistance against denigration and invisibility throughout more than five centuries. In América, Amefricanity manifests itself in organized actions that are at once distinct and parallel: the formation of quilombos and free societies, abolitionist movements from South to North, the civil rights era of the United States and the constitutional reform of Colombia, and more recently, digital and analog #BlackLivesMatter and #Lasvidasnegrasimportam movements. These actions have allowed Black peoples in this hemisphere to mark their unequivocal belonging and power.

Racism by denial—especially in mainland contexts—leads to hegemonic narratives about Black peoples that do not adequately encapsulate the varied experiences complicating neatly crafted ideas of Black lives, which only further reifies the legacy of colonialism, enslavement, and racial subjugation. This legacy has left Black communities in a perpetual state of precarity across South, Central, and North America, yet it also underscores a quincennial history of resistance across those same geographic zones. It is with the hemispheric

exigency for rights that center Black lives and recognition of the academy as a discourse-generating and discourse-diffusing entity that our volume emerges. This anthology injects into a primarily US-centric discussion the approaches that are being taken by Black communities in Latin America to effectuate a decolonial imaginary from South to North. Centering the legacy of Black peoples over this space, as well as the decolonial epistemics that Black, Indigenous, and Afro-Indigenous peoples have developed, we examine the agentially interconnected Lusophone and Hispanophone spaces of the hemisphere. This is the site, we affirm, from which theories of Amefricanity—as first developed by Gonzalez—are rapidly being issued to the rest of the hemisphere. For that reason, the contributions in this volume emphasize intellectual flow from the South to the North. In doing so, they entail the nuanced relationships of nation-specific loss, dismissal, and disparagement of Black lives while attending to the discourses of accountability, revitalization, and protections that frame the demands of Amefricans in this hemisphere.

Gonzalez's concept of Amefricanity is what many scholars today call "hemispheric Blackness." This distinct perspective is the product of a growing number of inquiries into the colonial and postcolonial history of Black peoples in the Americas, from Canada to Argentina. In Latin America, this scholarly work has led a critical assessment of the colonial period and coloniality in texts such as *África en América Latina*, *Afrodescendencia en el Ecuador*, *Rutas de la esclavitud en África y América Latina*, *Afroamérica: la ruta del esclavo*, and *La influencia de la cultura africana en el Perú colonial*. Several notable titles have likewise appeared in the United States, though they have circulated in primarily Anglophone contexts: *Black Social Movements in Latin America*, *Afro-Latin@s in Movement*, *Theorizing Race in the Americas*, *Comparative Racial Politics in Latin America*, and *Queering Black Atlantic Religions*. In effect, the present historical moment is allowing scholars of Afrodescendance to produce timely discussions about Blackness as a driver of history and of knowledge production across this hemisphere. As Howard Winant observes in his preface to Kwame Dixon and John Burdick's landmark *Comparative Perspectives on Afro-Latin America*, the core energy of Black movements in Central and South America is popular and grassroots, both personal and collective, and "these efforts make use of a wide variety of cultural forms, most notably music (as has been true historically as well), but also a vast range of other expressions: it's going on, friends, in all the arts, scholarly work, mass media, and cultural politics. Black movement organizations are active everywhere in Latin America and the Caribbean, linked not only to these culturally-oriented activities, but actively challenging the racial state and white supremacy at all levels, from the local to the national to the diasporic" (xv). In dialogue with the outstanding scholarship that is already available, we bring to the conversation an anthology focused on distinct sites across

América that capture the demands of Black communities from South to North, voiced with the resounding affirmation across the hemisphere that the time to grant them is *now*. The volume accounts for a more concentrated focus on Mesoamerica and the Southern Cone than has been previously examined to highlight an Amefrican bond on the mainland. It also brings together a wider range of methodologies—from literature to visual anthropology; from museum studies to Twitter feeds; from legal anthropology to cultural entrepreneurship. While broad in its academic scope, this volume in no way claims to make a complete examination of América but rather provides a poignant snapshot of the various ways Black defiance emerges.

National Plots and Amefrican Counterpoints

Put succinctly, the contributions in this volume highlight sovereignty of body and mind as well as the self-determination of Afrodescendant communities. In doing so, the work we describe in the next section eschews debates about authentic Blackness and unidimensional understandings of Black experience. The multiple expressions of Black, Afro, Afrodescendant, and Afro-Indigenous thought and praxis highlight the exponentially increasing sites and points of departure from whence the reclaiming of Black mind and body are articulated. Instead of dichotomies or valuations of authenticity, these pieces highlight Black communities and their demands for accountability across the Afro-Americas.

The region has a long history of human rights violations against Amefricans, acts that have been intimately related to the way that Afrodescendants have been represented from the colonial period to the present. Hegemonic national narratives have largely posited the threat of Black others to those who are more readily accepted as citizens. The widely circulated stories from South to North—from the fiction read in schools to news columns read online—depict Amefricans and Amefricanity as a hazardous threat to national unity and progress. The consequences of such plots are considerable, since making sense of narratives implies much more than understanding characters on a page; the process itself is about leading readers to understand something “deep” about themselves (Bloom). Stories can thus assure readers that they belong, determine their likeness to protagonists and antagonists, and justify the triumphs and fears of their entire communities. Narratives, then, are in many ways a means of representing innocence and guilt and of assigning those same values to constituencies in a population. The more “legitimate” (based on racial, classed, gendered, linguistic, and special subjectivity) the source or author of the narrative is, the more credible a narrative about the humanity—or, as is often the case, the lack thereof—of a Black subject. Readers assign authority to narratives to tell them about themselves, to discover the “truth” about themselves. These narratives are designed to maintain

a hierarchy that actively oppresses and negates Black experience to disastrous consequence.

América is not a monolithic entity, and while many studies have focused on Blackness on the Caribbean islands, there are many fewer with a focus on the mainland. Hence, while the plots, heroes, and antiheroes might be the same, the settings of the national stories vary greatly. This is important to note, since Amefricans have long been defined by indicators of progress related to a white colonial past, which, as Anibal Quijano states, leads countries in the region to imagine themselves “de una manera parcial y distorcionada” (226) (in a partial and distortional way; author translation). Within these distortions caused by distinct colonial legacies, the place of Blackness varies across countries. Black experience in Cuba is not equivalent to Black experience in Mexico, nor is Black experience in Argentina the same as Black experience in Colombia, nor is the Garifuna experience in Honduras the same as the Afro-Indigenous experience in Brazil. Though the countries listed were all important to the Spanish empire, the relationships between Black, Indigenous, and white peoples in its Viceroyalties were distinct enough that each republic’s nation-building process situated its “others” differently as it put forth the standards for its march to “progress.” This volume contributes to a process of decolonization across multiple fronts that intimately chips away at the hegemonic powers in each site under discussion.

As Michelle Wright argues in her luminary text, *Physics of Blackness*, ideas of progress demarcate Black peoples in this hemisphere, whether the narrative involves the Black subject overcoming obstacles or being deficient in progress, even when the narrative attributes lack of progress to the continual oppression of white cultural hegemony (8). These ideologies fail to encompass the polyvocal self-understanding of the Black selves, including the imprint of place on Black subjectivities. Therefore, this volume places the construction of the self by Amefricans at the center. Amefricanity itself moves against white and mestizo paradigms to decolonize their own narratives, at times doing so by bringing into play the non-Western epistemologies of Indigenous others from the same nation-space. Discourses emerge from a variety of platforms to highlight the ways that Amefricans are forging new ways of representing Blackness against specific national contexts: Black and Dominican, Black and Mexican, Black and Argentinian, Black and Costa Rican, Black and Indigenous Honduran, Black and Indigenous Colombian. As Cristian Alejandro Báez Lazcano writes after reflecting on the movement in his country, “We entered as Blacks, left as Afrodescendants . . . and Afro-Chileans Appeared on the Scene” (34). Challenging problematic representations of identity and thought enables a reimagining of the ways Black subjects belong to these national projects . . . on their terms.

Americanity and Hemispheric Blackness

The discussion of human rights in the Hispanophone and Lusophone contexts of this hemisphere can be traced back to the dictatorships in the Southern Cone in the 1970s, followed by the Central American revolutions in the 1980s and the rise of plurinational movements in the Andes in the 1990s. Generations of marginalized peoples became attuned to the power of international organizations and discourses that could counter the deaths and disappearances of “others” in this hemisphere. Most recently, Black peoples are employing such discourses and thus challenging the practices that have permitted the disenfranchisement of Afrodescendants from the nations they inhabit. Thus, the interconnected and transnational movement of Black communities has accomplished in the twenty-first century what Jamaican Marcus Garvey’s Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) did in the nineteenth century: shed light on the fight led by Black folks who advocate for the rights of Black folks. From South to North, governmental policies have become a battleground in which Black struggles are fought and the demarcations of white/mestizo dominance are drawn. Legal systems have long been platforms designed with the overall intention of wielding power over “others,” who are categorically outside of the hegemonic order. The human rights arena is thus one in which the recognition of Blackness as an integral and historically relevant feature of América finds resonance. Plenty of barriers have been erected in América to prevent Black citizens from exercising their rights—from not incorporating entire communities into the national fold to the pervasiveness of stereotypes that thwart the upward mobility of Afrodescendants. This volume thus engages the discourse of human rights currently deployed in América, particularly its aim to establish Black participation in the creation of national futures.

Our work here stems from a consciousness that dictatorships and political unrest had an impact on Afrodescendant communities in the latter half of the twentieth century. The regimes of, for example, Pinochet in Chile, Videla in Argentina, Trujillo in Dominican Republic, Somoza in Nicaragua, and Noriega in Panama led to the emergence of civil disobedience and mass movements calling for truth commissions, peace accords, transnational justice efforts, and legislation protecting minority rights. These efforts attempted to address the needs of the most vulnerable and served to shed light on the needs and political power of Black communities in their respective countries and in the hemisphere at large. By employing the discourse of human rights in the second half of the twentieth century, Black communities in Hispanophone and Lusophone contexts asserted their long-standing presence through their direct engagement with local, national, and international political spheres.

In “Performance, Affect, and Anti-Black Violence,” Christen Smith provides a transnational perspective of #BlackLivesMatter as she compares the deaths of Cláudia Silva Ferreira in Brazil and Freddie Gray in the United States while in police custody: “[Their deaths] are trans-temporal, trans-spatial repetitions—performances, so to speak—that replay scenes, plots and storylines of anti-Black violence that occur and reoccur across time and space.”¹ Smith, who herself began the #citeblackwomen movement, draws attention to stories and their authorship, which are beginning to be told and retold *by* Black peoples themselves to counter those narratives that have long been constructed *about* them.² Narratives by and about Black subjects have been repeated since the era of enslavement in Brazil and across the Americas, where Black peoples have been deemed “particularly impervious to pain and suffering, careless and carefree, and exempt from empathy, solidarity, or basic humanity” (Taylor 4). It is in this context that Black political movements across Améfrica have consistently engaged with Cameroonian philosopher Achille Mbembe’s theory of necropolitics, or the way social and political power dictates who lives and dies.³

Hashtag movements today cross analog and digital platforms, making the powerful argument that throughout Améfrica’s history, the lives of Amefricans have been imperiled and that it is time for official policy to change (Taylor). In her notable study *Becoming Black Political Subjects*, Tianna Paschel observes that by questioning the legitimacy of legal systems that marginalize Black “others,” the discourse of human rights adopted by many Black social movements has sought to validate communities that have historically been deemed intrusive and encroaching across national contexts. In an entirely different context, Francia Márquez, one of the leaders of the Colombian organization Process of Black Communities, states in a powerful reference to George Floyd’s murder: “Racism keeps holding its foot to our necks.” To this statement—which appears in a video that was posted on Twitter—she adds: “It’s time to take off the knee we have on our neck, because they keep suffocating us. It’s time to raise our voices in this path to life, solidarity, and the collective construction of our communities” (Proceso de Comunidades Negras [video]; Bitterly [translation]). In yet another context, the Juliana Deguis Pierre case in the Dominican Republic highlights the ways in which legal systems are used to continuously “disappear” Black citizens under disingenuous legal terms, which serves to maintain power structures that actively destroy Black lives. Although Deguis Pierre was able to avoid deportation to Haiti, her case was the impetus for the Dominican Republic Supreme Constitutional Court’s 2013 decision to strip the citizenship of nearly a million Haitian-Dominicans of their citizenship and legal status.⁴ These examples illustrate the repeated instances in which Afrodescendants in Améfrica are pushed aside, removed, and negated by the institutions that operate in contemporary nation-states.

While they are not examined in the chapters that comprise this volume, they share with the subject matter of this anthology what has been clear to American peoples across this hemisphere: racism begets state complicity. As several of the contributions illustrate, nation-states from South to North have “disappeared” their Black citizens for centuries. These disappearances range from not counting Black and Afrodescendant peoples in official censuses to not collecting data on the higher incidence of displacement, poverty, unemployment, and other indicators of precarity principally experienced by Black communities. The invocation of an internationally recognized and validated discourse of human rights brings to center the need for government accountability for Black citizens of Latin American nations.

(Re)Telling (New) Stories

It is not just the destruction of Black lives but also the systematic destruction and erasure of Black thought since the advent of transatlantic enslavement that has caused new research on América to emerge. Shipment across the Middle Passage caused the dehumanization of millions of Africans across the Atlantic world and, with it, the loss of languages and cultures with traditions as old as Africa itself. Once in the Americas, the power structures actively sought the direct extermination of African culture through the exploitation of Black bodies. Amefricans continue to engage in actions that repair the tragedy that underscores their ancestors’ arrival in América—a task that is bearing fruit exponentially in the twenty-first century. In doing so, Black communities forge new paths of understanding linked to central experience of reclaiming body *and* mind. Senegalese philosopher Souleymane Diagne informs this important point of the volume as we consider the various ways in which Amefrican peoples have long expressed themselves outside of the written word by using art, jewelry, and other material artifacts as a way of talking about the self, informing a people, and expressing a culture that moves away from white Western and predominantly European standards of expression. Seeing the ways Black selves are articulated leads scholars outside of the linear ways of knowing predicated by hegemonic approaches to the field of philosophy. Such linear structures of hegemonic approaches to the discipline limit the inherent plurality of Black subjects. By centering the act of reclaiming body and mind, we frame the interconnected transcontinental movement taking place in América as a reassembling of what was lost in the past as a means of the possibility of new (future) expressions of the self. These new expressions are less wedded to Western singularity and recognize not only intersectionality but also autonomy in self-definition.

Scholarship released in English over the last two decades, such as *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean*; *The Afro-Latin@ Reader*; *Black in Latin America*; *Afro-Latin America*; *The Politics of Blackness*; and *Frontiers*

of *Citizenship*, among many others, has examined the historical exclusion of Black peoples and the contemporary forces that have led to greater visibility of Black peoples in the Americas. The same can be said of scholarly works in Spanish; to wit, *Historias de exclusión*, *Aportes del pueblo afrodescendiente*, *Negros de la patria*, and *Mujeres africanas y afrodescendientes*, among others. Nonetheless, the inclusion/exclusion approach adopted by the aforementioned works, while productive, is not entirely effective in explicating the rise of human rights discourses by Black communities in Hispanophone and Lusophone contexts. Instead of seeing the various contributions in this volume as Afrodescendants “talking back” to hegemonic approaches to philosophy—a premise that centers whiteness—the various chapters herewith show a writing across Black thought for a result that is distinct from that which we have seen in decades and centuries past. In this regard our volume fits particularly well with new work establishing dialogues on Black and Indigenous agency in the region, whether that be the grassroots collaborations between Maya and Garifuna peoples in Belize responding to land predation or the scholarly work developed in volumes such as *Black and Indigenous Resistance in the Americas*.

Hemispheric Blackness tells that complex story in three developments of freedom and enfranchisement. With one’s body a central factor in human experience, we begin with “Part I: Epistemic Foundations” in order to assess the corpus as a locale of critical inquiry. The chapters in this section are devoted to the aesthetic and political possibilities of body reclamation across Améfrica. In “Part II: Black and Indigenous Nexuses,” the volume examines engagements with the Indigenous theoretical frameworks that bolster Black thought and practices in this century. Finally, “Part III: National Landscapes” examines the impact of Black mobilization on the grand narratives told within national contexts. The adjustments to long-standing paradigms are, we argue, fruits of the transcontinental movement that we have captured in the preceding discussions: the hemispheric reclaiming of the body and mind and the mass mobilization of Black communities on the basis of their Indigeneity to the region. As will be clear to readers, the contributions that comprise this volume do not conform to disciplinary boundaries. Instead, they put forth a transdisciplinary discussion about the Americas through a hemispheric Black lens—or, as Gonzalez identified it, Améfrica.

Epistemic Foundations

The contributions in this section examine the Black body as a powerful producer and inducer of knowledge, providing a tangible centering of Black bodies in hegemonic spaces. Rather than succumbing to the prevailing idea that Black bodies are “imprinted with inferiority” following deconstruction of the premise by Alexander Weheliye in *Habes Viscus*, these chapters demonstrate how Amefricans contest racialized forms of oppression and celebrate

Blackness. In both material and spiritual ways, the Black body is used to resist, remake, and rethink its place in hegemonic spaces, making them active actors in a system that has historically constructed them as vessels to be dominated. Ranging in time and location, these chapters show the dynamic nature of bodily resistance in Améfrica in order to complicate how we frame the resistance enacted by Black subjects.

In “*Poner el cuerpo: A History of Black Activism in Argentina*,” Prisca Gayles reminds readers that there is likely no city-space in Latin America where Black folks’ presence is more contested than Buenos Aires, Argentina, which was long known as the “Paris of South America.” During the twentieth century, the city and, by extension, the country were known as exemplars of a “successful” *blanqueamiento* campaign throughout Latin America. Despite the drastic diminution of Argentina’s Black population during this time, Afro-Argentines constantly struggled to claim their space amid a society that sought to erase them. Drawing on twenty-two months of ethnographic and archival research, the chapter examines the decision of Black activists today to *poner el cuerpo* (put one’s whole being in action) as an analytical lens through which to examine the contemporary reclamation of Black rights in highly visible political spaces in the city. This radical act of taking up space in visible locations marked as “white” has been central to a demand for human rights that has led the current movement to claim its success.

Elis Meza’s “Spirituality and Black Memory in *Reminiscências dos tambores do corpo*” begins with the observation that there were a significant number of enslaved people of African descent in southern Brazil in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. However, this region has been discursively constituted as one of Brazil’s “white” areas. The current cultural spaces of the city of Pelotas reproduce narratives that extol the stories of the elites of the past who lived in the so-called Charque Period. This chapter examines a performance by the Afro Daniel Amaro Dance Company, *Reminiscências dos tambores do corpo* (*Reminiscences of the Drums of the Body*), that redefines the space of the Baroness Museum, the former residence of a family of ranchers. The performance tells a story of enslavement through a chronicle of the cultural richness of African ancestors and Black heritage across various historical moments in Brazil. It is a sensory narrative of embodied rights, as the work conveys the freedom of expression that African ancestors were denied and that their descendants have claimed for themselves.

In “Echoed Silence: Self-Articulation in *Autobiografía de un esclavo*,” Héctor Nicolás Ramos Flores examines the complicated nature of representing the self in the face of epistemological standards that set out to negate Black lives. Juan Francisco Manzano’s *Autobiografía* has long received academic attention for being the only enslaved person’s narrative in the Spanish-speaking world. Rather than presenting Manzano’s text as solely a historical document, the

chapter examines Manzano's uses of rhetorical techniques—including omissions—to assert his presence. This manifestation of body and voice exposes a multifaceted Black subject that is hyperaware of his surroundings and himself. Manzano thus shifts from enslaved body to writer. Ramos Flores shows the more nuanced way Manzano comes into presence, underscoring the Black writer and his technique—articulations that have received less attention in academic circles, which more often celebrate the dualistic triumphant or defeatist narratives used to frame Black subjects.

The section comes to a close with “Manuel Zapata Olivella’s Fourth Congress of Black Culture in the Americas,” in which Silvia Valero focuses on the last Congress of Black Culture hosted in the Americas. The First Congress is generally regarded as the beginning of what would become the Black movement in Colombia, while subsequent Congresses have been hailed as momentous for launching intellectual and political agendas for the region. The Fourth Congress, the organization of which began in the 1980s by Colombian intellectual Manuel Zapata Olivella, drew support from Black academics as well as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) before coming to fruition. Working with previously unstudied documents, Valero highlights Olivella’s contribution to Black Latin American thought. She finds that while the First Congress illustrates his convening power, the last Congress showcases his ability to maneuver through different dialogues with the firm objective of creating a space of intellectual exchange between Black thinkers of the region.

Black and Indigenous Nexuses

This section contemplates América from the lens of polyvocality, with a special attention to the way that discourses of Indigeneity have informed and reframed Black experience in the region. The contributions underscore the need for Blackness to be examined outside of the hegemonic academic lenses and thus engage with a wide range of methodologies, including rhetorical, litigative, archaeological, and religious theoretical frameworks. These pieces, like those that preceded them, highlight the presence of Black subjects in public spaces while also pointing to Amefrican engagement with other ways of knowing that have been developed and put into action throughout América.

In “We Dance with Existence: Black/Afro-Indigenous Placemaking in Mexico,” Ashley Ngozi Agbasoga begins by discussing photographs taken by a group of Black women in response to a prompt asking them about their Blackness. The chapter then moves into a discussion of the 2015 Mexican census, which marked the first time that Mexico counted its Black population since its independence, and the Mexican Senate’s unanimous vote in 2019 to recognize Afro-Mexicans in its constitution. Returning to the photographs taken by residents of the Costa Chica, the chapter asks: How do oral histories

from the Costa Chica challenge hegemonic narratives of the Mexican nation and shape autonomous geographies in Black/Afro-Indigenous communities? How do these placemaking practices collapse the (re)produced bifurcation of Blackness and Indigeneity? Lastly, will Black/Afro-Indigenous placemaking shift with the newer “official” recognition by the Mexican state through its census and constitution? Following the lead of scholars on Black and Indigenous placemaking, this chapter illuminates the [embodied] possibilities of autonomy through Black/Afro-Indigenous ontologies in Mexico and beyond.

In “*Triunfo de la Cruz v. Honduras: Garifuna Land under International Law*,” Jennifer Carolina Gómez Menjívar works with the linguistic and cultural threads of evidence presented by the plaintiffs in a case decided by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR). Armed with international agreements, including the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (ILO Convention 169) and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as well as a meticulously researched legal brief containing oral, print, and digital evidence, the community faced the Honduran government, and the international court ruled in their favor in 2015. As Gómez Menjívar explains, the landmark case highlights the connections between the cultural genocide and the territorial dispossession of Black Indigenous peoples while manifesting continuity between settler colonialism and modern nation-states’ practices of accumulation by dispossession. The process of challenging Honduras in an international arena bolstered the demand for reparations and assertion of Garifuna cultural survivance. In fighting for their land rights, the Garifuna community of Triunfo de la Cruz joins other Indigenous peoples of the Americas in the fight to protect ancestral territories and to ensure their survival as a people with a spiritual (and tangible) home.

Robin García closes the section with “Museo de Quíbor: Decolonial History by/for Afro and Indigenous Venezuelans,” which explores a Venezuelan cultural project that puts the remains of “others” at the center in order to recuperate the history of Black and Indigenous resistance and heritage. Lara was a stomping ground for African and Indigenous resistance to Spanish colonialism and a mainstay for the guerilla movements against the dictatorships of the 1960s and 1970s. The fieldwork undertaken in this chapter sheds light on how anticolonial history is being produced at the Museo de Quíbor. The excavation and recuperation of the remains of Lara’s Afrodescendant and Indigenous residents forces a reckoning with the colonial past and the Afro-Indigenous history of an important town in Venezuelan history. The chapter argues that community museum projects like that of the Museo de Quíbor can become meaning-making systems that serve Black movements, thus leading to changes in policies at the national levels and in the education realm.

In “Devotion, Resilience, and the Tale of a Slave Saint in a Venezuelan Oil Town,” Oleski Miranda Navarro explores the impact of the oil boom in

Cabimas, a Black town in Venezuela. The chapter explains that the economic upturn coincided with the rise of one of the largest celebrations for a Catholic Saint—Black San Benito de Palermo. The San Benito celebration takes place during the last week of December and extends through the first week of January. During the celebration, the streets of Cabimas are overtaken by hundreds of thousands of revelers dancing in unison to African drums called *chimbánqueles*. Through these festivities a significant trait of the Cabimas collective identity is revealed: clamor adopted as a feeling of resistance to the adverse conditions of the environment and contradictory feelings of pride and suffering brought about by the extraction of the mineral that lies in the subsoil of the city. From the second half of the twentieth century, local identity in Cabimas has been defined by the color black. This chapter examines how faith invested in Catholicism's first Black saint by the residents of Cabimas, Venezuela's oil capitol, has constructed a "Black" symbolism where oil is an element of both pride and destruction while also giving way to the exaltation of Blackness through expressions of devotion toward the Black saint.

National Landscapes

The contributions in this section engage with the revision of official narratives and the (re)inscription of Black peoples as the fruit of the transcontinental interconnected movement led by and for Black peoples in América. They thus engage with questions relating to citizens, the nation-state, and the foundational narratives of the nations that they critically assess. The chapters do not simply push against hegemonic understandings of belonging but rather contest them. They respond to questions of belonging that move away from the zero-sum assertion of inclusion and toward the affirmation of a future that has already arrived.

The section begins with Karma F. Frierson's chapter, "Enumerating Blackness: The Shifting Politics of Recognition in Mexico." With its 2015 midterm census, the Mexican state took its first step toward formally recognizing its Afrodescendant population as a distinct group within the nation. This historic development, which came after decades of political organization and activism by and on behalf of groups of self-recognizing Afro-Mexicans, aimed to constitute a national-level group from an ethno-racial logic informed by the lived reality and political goals salient to Mexico's Costa Chica. The census, while a strategic tool to raise the profile of a marginalized community, gives preference to enumerative practices that not only count Afro-Mexicans but also formalize who counts as Afro-Mexican. Based on ethnographic research conducted in 2015 on the cusp of this national-level policy shift, this chapter explores how national narratives of formal recognition run counter to locally informed negotiations with Blackness in the Gulf Coast port city of Veracruz, Mexico. By highlighting how individuals grapple with whether the region's

Blackness qualifies them as Afro-Mexican, this chapter offers an alternative perspective on the literature on policies of recognition in Latin America.

In “A Motherless World: Temporality, Motherhood, and Afro-Caribbean Writing,” Alexandra Algaze González examines the umbilical connection between caregiving and decolonization in three novels by Jamaica Kincaid: *Lucy*, *The Autobiography of My Mother*, and *See Now Then*. Eschewing the binary understanding of motherhood as an unfulfilling or gratifying experience, Algaze González examines each novel’s narrative arc to uncover how tenderness tied to affect is posited as a source of knowledge and reparation for the cycles of dispossession caused by enslavement and colonization. Working with a literary production timeline that begins in 1990 and ends in 2013, she demonstrates that in this body of writing, the right to be caring, the right to not become a usurper, and the right to not participate in patriarchal forms of affective(less)—careless—neoliberalism are crucial for asserting female personhood. In Kincaid’s writing, the Caribbean emerges from the violence of colonialism and oblivion as a Commonwealth acquisition, crystallizing as a gendered site of cultural renewal where affect too-long denied can be retrieved and retooled.

In “Black Rights and Entrepreneurship: New Brazilian Political Subjectivities,” Gleicy Maily da Silva addresses the relationship between entrepreneurship and political commitment at the Feira Preta (Black Fair), which is organized annually by the city of São Paulo with the intention of promoting cultural and commercial activities for its Black community. The city’s focus on economic and civic engagement has been stimulated by a set of political-economic transformations in the last twenty years; namely, by the convergence of solidarity networks constituted by professionals engaged in cultural groups or who identified as entrepreneurs. The chapter examines the extent to which the Black Fair has contributed to the constitution of new forms of political recognition and cultural exchange by creating a space that openly promotes the emergence of new Brazilian economic and political subjectivities. It is particularly vested in the different economic logics in action that have brought together the demands for and the agency driving the formation of new political subjects in Brazil today.

In “Garifunizando Afrolatinidad: Blackness, Indigeneity, and Latinidad,” Paul Joseph López Oro explains that Central Americans of African descent are in the margins on the histories of transmigrations and political movements in the isthmus and their diasporas. The absence of Black Central Americans in Latinx Studies and Central American Studies is an epistemological violence inherited from Latin American *mestizaje*. The insurgence of Afro-Latinx Studies is an intellectual and political response to the erasure and negation of Blackness in the field of Latinx Studies. In this chapter, he calls for a refashioning of the term *Afrolatinidad* that dismantles the dangerous

allure of mapping Blackness into exclusionary geographies of Spanish-speaking Americas (i.e., “you must be Dominican, because you don’t look Guatemalan”). Drawing on oral history interviews, visual cultures, and social media, he demonstrates how transgenerational Garifuna New Yorkers’ histories and politics of self-making, beginning in the late 1950s to the present, perform their multiple subjectivities as Black, Indigenous, and Latinx.

The Path Forward

The contributions in this volume thus move beyond inclusion/exclusion dynamics to critically assess how Black collectives across the hemisphere have evoked their rightful claim to corporal and intellectual sovereignty, organized for rights and resources, and exhorted recognition from their respective nations. The chapters examine how the interventions Black communities have made in political realms are the result of site-specific conditions as well as a transnational ken of Blackness as a historically determined subjectivity. Blackness is thus conceived by the scholars included here as political agency, a manifestation of resistance that has the propensity to shift power structures through persistent and methodical actions. These matters allow us to frame Blackness as a position at once informed by local, national, and transnational policies as well as by directions determined from within site-specific Black communities and collectivities. This methodological approach to Amefricanity thus places the volume in a category distinct from those that have focused on the standard inclusion/exclusion narrative.

We boldly intend for this volume to be read differently from those that have circulated more broadly in academic circles in previous decades. Together with our contributors, we are committed to examining the way Amefrican communities use the land on which they live, the rule of law, and their bodies to assert their historical, ontological, and physical presence across América. The focus on places, policy, and acts of resistance highlights the simultaneously permanent and tenuous presence of Black peoples across this region, but it does so without subtracting from these populations the collective sense of agency and belonging they have repeatedly voiced. While many Amefricans reside in nations that have attempted to “disappear” them (countries outside of the Caribbean are particularly notorious for such actions), writers from these contexts seldom speak of themselves as “bodies,” as North American academics tend to use the term. Instead, Afrodescendant voices from the South speak of peoples and communities, of histories and trajectories, of movements and waves—all with the force of free Black peoples whose bodies and minds belong only to themselves. By privileging scholarship with a South to North focus, the volume we have compiled highlights articulations of Blackness in the less-often examined Hispanophone and Lusophone contexts. The scope of the material these contributions cover brings to the forefront the issues and

approaches to Blackness that have been born in the region itself, often free of jargon but never far from the practice of theory-making in their approach to the affirmation that Black lives matter and that América is a site of discourse production with Black experience at the center.

Notes

Translation of the epigraph: “*América*, as an ethnogeographic system of reference, is our creation and that of our ancestors’ on the continent in which we live, inspired by African models. Therefore, the term *Amefrican peoples* designates a whole descent: not only those of Africans brought by the slave trade but also those who arrived in AMERICA long before Columbus. Yesterday as today, Amefricans from the most differing countries have played a crucial role in the elaboration of that which *Amefricanity* identifies, in the Diaspora, a common historical experience that demands to be properly known and carefully researched” (Gonzalez). Since an English translation of Lélia Gonzalez’ article, “A categoria político-cultural de amefricanidade” is not yet available, all translations that appear here are those of Jennifer Carolina Gómez Menjívar. We hope that this volume will inspire other scholars to engage with Gonzalez’s theoretical work.

1. On March 16, 2014, Cláudia Silva Ferreira was on her way to purchase lunch meat and bread for her eight children when she was caught in a cross fire during a military police operation in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Her neighbors begged and screamed at officers to not shoot her, yet she was subsequently hit in the neck and back. The police finalized their operation and, rather than calling for an ambulance or carefully placing the wounded mother in the vehicle, stuffed her into the trunk of their vehicle. For more about this tragedy, see Martín (2014).

2. Smith’s study *Afro-Paradise*, Cidinha Silva’s short story collection *#ParemdenosMatar*, and Jaime Amparo Alves’s *The Anti-Black City* are just three of the most riveting analyses of Black lives lost to police violence, which continues to be legitimized at an institutional level on the basis of stories that describe Black lives in Brazil as dangerous and necessarily disposable.

3. As João H. Costa Vargas demonstrates in *Never Meant to Survive*, a comparative study of Black deaths in Brazil and the United States, Rio de Janeiro police “killed nine hundred people between January and August 2003, almost 75 percent of whom were in the favelas, predominantly Black communities. In a month, Rio police kill more than 2.5 times more people than the New York Police Department kills in an entire year” (17). The systematic destruction of Black lives by police and military forces has led to growing awareness about the impact of state-sanctioned violence against Black communities across the Americas, and involvement in the movement has crossed national and community boundaries. More research is needed on police violence against Amefricans in the hemisphere.

4. For more details about the citizenship policy established by the Dominican government, see Katz.

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