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that you have an innate understanding of them, too. They will speak to you in a certain unguarded way. The idea that any person can be truly "color-blind" is a fallacy. As long as the human eye can detect differences in skin tone, eye shape, hair texture, these differences will play a role in how we interact with one another. Because of my ambiguous appearance, I have experienced from people the kind of familiarity they would normally reserve for one of their "own."

The unfortunate consequence of this ambiguity is the misunderstanding I frequently encounter from those who haven't gotten the full story. The Mexican immigration official who looks disgusted when I can't understand Spanish, as I surely should. The kindly Vietnamese waiter who helps me "remember" how to pronounce the names of dishes. This puts me in the slightly ridiculous position of being apologetic for not being what people expect me to be, however unreasonable.

When I think back to the man in the elevator, I feel disappointed, too. The way he said "I thought you were one of us" made me feel as if we might have bonded but now couldn't, as if I'd been refused entry into a club because I didn't have the right password. My immediate reaction was that I was missing out on something. But I see the artificiality of this classification mentality. If the opportunity for bonding existed before he knew my ethnic makeup, wasn't it still there after he found out? After all, I was still the same person.

When my parents were married, my grandfather was against the union. His objection was that the children of mixed marriages had no foothold in any one community but instead were doomed to a lifetime of identity crises and disorientation.

If my grandfather were still alive, I'd tell him that the crisis comes not from within, but from without.

I know who I am. It's everyone else that's having trouble.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Does an ambiguous appearance lead to stereotypic assumptions?
2. If you don't identify with the questioner, what are the likely consequences?

READING 24

Ethnic Identity and Racial Formations

RACE AND RACISM AMERICAN-STYLE AND *a lo Latino*

Marta Cruz-Janzen

I am a Latinegra. Racism has been with me all my life. Born and raised a U.S. citizen in the U.S. Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, I completed most of my schooling on the island. In high school I moved back and forth between the island and the mainland. On the island, I became aware of Latina/o racism at an early age. On the mainland, U.S. racism was added to my consciousness and understanding. Today my life is affected not only by U.S. racism but also by Latina/o racism and the intersection of the two. Latina/o and U.S. racial ideologies seem to represent fundamentally divergent systems of social order. U.S. racism enforces the black-versus-white dichotomy; Latina/o racism appeases it. U.S. racism is sharp and clear; Latina/o racism is stratified and nebulous. The intersection of these doctrines unleashes a dilemma for Latinas/os in the United States: What to do with a racial heritage shrouded in secrecy? What to do with a long history of blurred racial lines and deeply hidden family secrets in a world controlled by a rigid color line? I am rejected by both U.S. and Latina/o forms of racism. Latinas/os in Latin America accept me marginally; Latinas/os in the United States openly spurn me. The repudiation by Latinas/os has intensified over the years, and I know why. Through me Latinas/os see the blackness in themselves; I am a living re-

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minder of the ancestors they thought they had left behind. Oppressors rely on their victims' shame and silence. Breaking the shackles of oppression requires telling what is really happening and addressing all the sources of racism. With this chapter I break my own psychological shackles of oppression. I explore the forces impacting racism in Latinas/os today, among them: (1) racism in Latin America, especially Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Cuba, (2) Spanish racism before colonization, (3) U.S. racism, and (4) the intersection of U.S. and Latina/o racial doctrines.

Mucho que poco, todos tenemos la mancha de platano (Much or little, we all have the plantain stain). Latina/o cultures are rich in oral traditions. Popular expressions bear witness to a long and complex history. Oral histories tell more and are often closer to the truth than what is written in books or discussed in polite society. This popular adage states what is known but not acknowledged in most Latina/o cultures—that everyone has some non-European blood. A green vegetable resembling a banana, the plantain is white inside but, when touched, quickly produces a stain that darkens to black and sets permanently. *La mancha de platano*—black and Indian heritage—may or may not be apparent but is present in all Latinas/os and cannot be washed away. When I was growing up, my father's [black] family called me *trigueña* (wheat-colored), whereas the favorite term of my mother's [white] family was *morena* (black), considered a step down. Sometimes, they both called me *negra*, or some variation of the term. When my black grandma called me *negrita* (little black) it was usually with pride and accompanied by a loving hug. When my white grandma called me *negra*, it signaled anger and impending punishment. Outside of the family the labels varied, but when *negra* was used it was as a derisive reminder of my race and lower status. In the latter instances, *negra* tended to be followed by *sucia* (immoral, but literally "dirty") or *parejera* (arrogant). *Parejero/a* is not used for whites, only for blacks and Indians. It denotes people who do not accept *su lugar* (their place) beneath whites and do not remain quiet like children or humbly obey (Zenon Cruz, 1975). An equivalent term, used in Mexico and many other parts of Latin America, is *igualada/o*. Both terms signify a false sense of equality and belonging among superiors.

It has always intrigued me that my father's birth certificate defines him as *mestizo*. The explanation for this was that because his parents, both black, were educated and middle-class they were *mejorando la raza* (improving the race). They had moved out of Barrio San Antón, the black quarters of the coastal town of Ponce, and lived in a predominantly white neighborhood. They maintained an impeccable home with a beautiful front garden and, aware of their neighbors' scrutiny, never ventured out unless well groomed. When I visited, though, I recall always playing alone, never having friends in the neighborhood. A white girl next door and I sometimes played together through the iron fence but never at each other's home. As I played in the front yard I saw children from across the street watching but knew that we could not get together. My black grandparents had five children. While concerned for all of them, they worried most about their two daughters; one attended the university, became a teacher, and taught in a remote rural school, while the other was considered fortunate for marrying a white man. San Antón was known as an *arrabal*, an impoverished slum beyond the city limits. Grandma was admired and respected there and often took me with her while distributing food and clothes. The differences in living conditions between my grandparents' neighborhood and San Antón were staggering: streets were narrow and unpaved, buildings were in disrepair and lacked indoor plumbing, most houses were makeshifts built of discarded wood and cardboard with zinc roofs. Distinctively, most residents were dark-skinned *puros prietos* (pure blacks).

My two sets of grandparents lived in what appeared to be two separate worlds. I do not recall a single time when they or their families visited each other. My siblings and I were shuttled between them on weekends and holidays. On one side we were

mejorando la raza, on the other *una pena* (disgrace, sorrow, shame). On one side we were *trigueños finos* (wheat-colored and refined), on the other *morenos y prietos* (black and dark). My paternal black grandma reminded me to pinch my nose between my fingers each day to sharpen its roundness; my maternal white grandma wanted my *greñas* and *ceretas* (curly, wild hair) restrained at all times. Uninhibitedly, my mother's family voiced concerns for me and my siblings as black persons, and especially for me and my sisters as Latinegras in a white, male-dominated Latina/o society. Whereas my father "elevated" his family and himself by marrying a white, my mother was openly chastised for marrying *ese negro feo* (that ugly black), lowering herself and her entire family. Repeatedly, she was told, *Cada oveja con su pareja* (Each sheep with its pair), a reminder that interracial marriages were frowned upon even by the Catholic Church, which preached that we were all *ovejas de Dios* (God's sheep). . . .

RACISM IN MEXICO, PUERTO RICO, AND CUBA

Aqui, el que no tiene dinga tiene mandinga. El que no tiene congo tiene carabali. Y pa' los que no saben na', ¿y tu abuela a'onde esta? (Here, those who don't have Dinga have Mandinga. Those who don't have Congo have Carabali. And for those who don't know anything, where's your grandma?). Carabalis, Congos, and Mandingas were African nations; Dingas and Ingas were Indians. This aphorism makes clear the preponderance of interracial bloodlines within the Latino world. At the same time, *Hoy dia los negros quieren ser blancos y los mulatos caballeros* (Nowadays blacks want to be whites and mulattoes knights) reveals the rancor of white Latinas/os over the social advances of Latinas/os of color.

Mexicans have a long history of interracial unions between Africans, Indians, and Spaniards. The contributions of Africans have influenced every aspect of Mexican culture, history, and life. Esteban el Negro explored northern Mexico; the hit song "La Bamba" comes from the Bamba or Mbamba people of Veracruz, and the national *corrido* song style is partially African in origin; the muralist and painter Diego Rivera was of African descent. The African presence is apparent, but it is denied in Mexico and by Mexicans in the United States. In spite of their impressive contributions, Afro-Mexicans remain a marginalized group, not yet even recognized as full citizens (Muhammad, 1995). Mexican historians and academicians endorse the claim that the "discovery" of Mexico represented an encounter of two worlds, the Indian and the Spanish, with little if any mention of the Africans brought there (Muhammad, 1995). By the middle of the eighteenth century, Mexico's second-largest population group was largely of African extraction. In 1810 blacks represented 10.2 percent of the Mexican population (Muhammad, 1995). It is estimated that about two hundred thousand Spaniards and two hundred and fifty thousand Africans had migrated to Mexico up to 1810 (Forbes, 1992), and the African population was largely assimilated by the rapidly emerging interracial population. Although Mexico identifies itself as a nation of mestizos, the term "mestizo" is normally not used for identifiable Afro-Mexicans, who are instead referred to as *morenos*. The 1921 census was the last in which racial categories were used in Mexico. Today it is estimated that mestizos make up approximately 85–90 percent of the Mexican population and indigenous persons only 8–10 percent (Fernandez, 1992). There are no current data, demographic or otherwise, for Afro-Mexicans, but Miriam Jiménez Romón of New York's Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture estimates that 75 percent of the population of Mexico has some African admixture (Muhammad, 1995). Mexicans will boast about their Spanish relatives and may even admit to Indian ones but will rarely admit to a black forebear. Whereas indigenous groups have gained national and international visibility and support, Afro-Mexicans remain suppressed and unheard. Contemporary social research in Mexico tends to exclude Afro-Mexican communities, and no major study on Mexican race relations has ever been done (Muhammad, 1995). Within the past decade

anthropologists and others have visited Afro-Mexican communities and reported their deplorable living conditions and rampant illiteracy, their inadequate schools and medical facilities, and their lack of electricity, potable water, plumbing, sewerage, drainage, and paved streets. Visiting Mexico in 1988, I searched for and found Afro-Mexicans living in a clearly segregated shanty town outside of Guadalajara. The squalor of their homes and community was appalling. They openly talked about blatant racism and their financial and legal inability to migrate to the United States. These Afro-Mexicans have been ignored and neglected by government agencies; they receive little or no assistance (Muhammad, 1995).

Puerto Rico, after four centuries of Spanish colonial rule, had developed into a multiracial society. French people and multiracial Creoles went to Puerto Rico after the U.S. Louisiana Purchase from France and migrated from Haiti when the slaves revolted (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1976). Labor shortages throughout the island in the 1840s brought Chinese, Italians, Corsicans, Lebanese, Germans, Scots, Irish, and many others. As the twentieth century approached, the racial composition of Puerto Rico covered the spectrum from whites to blacks with a large in-between interracial group known as *trigueños* (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1976). Racially speaking, most Puerto Ricans are of interracial black, Taino, and white origin. It is believed that racial mixing has touched at least 70 percent of Puerto Rico's population. With U.S. invasion of the island and installation of military rule in 1898, citizenship in 1917, and the establishment of the Commonwealth in 1952, U.S. whites became first-class citizens. Elite Puerto Rican whites were quick to ingratiate themselves with the new upper class by impressing them with their whiteness (Toplin, 1976). The advent of U.S. racism brought the exclusion of social whites who declared themselves white in official U.S. demographic surveys. Whereas the 1846 census reported 51.24 percent of the Puerto Rican population as African or Negro, in 1959 the count dropped to only 23 percent (Toplin, 1976). Members of Congress were not discreet in expressing their low opinion of Puerto Ricans and wondering how there could be so many whites in a "black man's country." Several were openly angered by the degree of racial mixture, stating that the "horror" of racial mixing had gone too far and prevented them from establishing clear racial categorization. They concluded that it was the "duty" of the United States to impose a strict color code on Puerto Rican society in order to ensure propagation of the white race, that is, the newly established elite (Toplin, 1976).

Racial prejudice increased with U.S. occupation of the island (Toplin, 1976; Zenon Cruz, 1974) and became prevalent in public places during the 1950s and 1960s. It persists in social clubs, public and private universities, businesses, banks, tourist facilities, public and private schools, and housing today. Although the local government stopped using racial classifications in 1950, the legal and penal systems, which remain predominantly white, continue to use them against black and dark-skinned poor urban youth (Santiago-Valles, 1995). Little if anything is done to correct the open racism, and many areas remain "hermetically closed" to the darker-skinned Puerto Rican (Toplin, 1976). The Puerto Rican elite, comprised mostly of the descendants of Spaniards with increasing numbers of U.S. whites and European immigrants, treat darker Puerto Ricans with visible contempt. Few Puerto Ricans of African descent explicitly identify as such because of a long history of discrimination and a present fear of police brutality and persecution (Santiago-Valles, 1995). Elite Puerto Ricans still claim that the Spanish white race prevailed in the island, making it the "whitest of all the Antilles," and seek closer ties with Spain (Santiago-Valles, 1995). The 1992 Columbus Quincentennial was celebrated with much emphasis on the Spanish roots of the island. Subsequent annual "Nuestra Hispanidad" (Our Hispanicism) celebrations have focused on Spain and white Puerto Ricans. There is a dearth of information about black and dark-skinned Puerto Ricans but a strong association between black and poor. Black and dark-skinned Puerto Ricans live disproportionately in slums under extremely deprived conditions. U.S. citizenship granted all Puerto Ricans, including those of black heritage, an open door to the continental United States. The enormous loss of jobs be-

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tween 1940 and 1970 created a massive exodus of Puerto Ricans to the U.S. mainland (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1976). This immense socioeconomic dislocation brought increased visibility to the predominantly black and interracial Puerto Ricans on the mainland.

The Cuban population has historically been African and Spanish (Fernandez, 1992). Almost all Cuban-born Latinas/os came to the United States as refugees from the Revolution of 1959 and the Mariel boatlift in 1980. Although the vast majority of Cubans today are black, most Cuban-Americans are white (McGarrity and Cardenas, 1995). Revolution refugees were mostly educated middle- and upper-class white Cubans with backgrounds in the professions, businesses, and government who soon became integrated into the U.S. middle class. The "less congenial" Marielos were mainly uneducated and poor lower-class black Cubans (Rivera, 1991). The long-standing racism of white Cubans against black Cubans is well known. In Cuba, blacks were excluded from certain schools, especially private Catholic schools, public beaches, hotels, restaurants, and parks. They could not rent homes in some areas (McGarrity and Cardenas, 1995). Before the Marielos, Cubans were welcomed in the United States and given preferential treatment with much transitional support. These elite Cubans were "proudly and adamantly white," uncontaminated, as they emphasized (McGarrity and Cardenas, 1995). Social and elite white Cuban Americans did not welcome the visibility brought on by the Marielos, the black compatriots they thought they had left behind in Cuba (Rivera, 1991). White Cubans are the most successful of the three major U.S. Latina/o groups; Mexicans follow, and Puerto Ricans, with more apparent African bloodlines, are the least (Forbes, 1992). . . .

THE INTERSECTION OF LATINA/O AND U.S. RACISM

Individuals in the United States may believe that times have changed—that conditions for Latinegros have improved. After all, many U.S. educational institutions advocate multicultural education, the affirmation of diversity, and the teaching of tolerance. The sad reality is that racism continues to be part of everyday life among Latinas/os in the United States and is today confounded by U.S. racism. Latina/o racial antagonism has been transported to U.S. soil. Elite white Latinas/os, seeking acceptance by U.S. whites, quickly disown compatriots of known African lineage even when they appear white and are socially accepted as white in their home countries. In the United States these social white Latinas/os become *negros mal agradecidos* (ungrateful), *changos* (insolent), and *alzaos* (uppity) for wanting the privileges that elite white Latinas/os take for granted. Essentially, social white Latinas/os seek a closeness to elite white Latinas/os that remains simply unacceptable within the U.S. racial and social structure. In this struggle for acceptance, many social white Latinas/os fear focusing attention on themselves and their African legacy. When I moved to the mainland United States, I was told by some Latinas/os that since I would be perceived and treated as black I should identify with African Americans. Others advised me to accentuate my Latina attributes and deemphasize the black ones. Gone were most of the polite, if superficial, niceties—it no longer surprises me when I encounter Latinas/os whom I know in public places and they pretend not to see me. When U.S. Latinas/os emphasize their Hispanicism, they also tend to make sure that I understand my lack of it and the social abyss that separates us. Just three years ago, a "Hispanic" educator in Colorado told me that I was not one of them: "Hispanics are from Spain. You are not Hispanic. Everyone knows you are black." At a Latina/o educators' meeting where I raised concerns about the educational needs of African American students I was addressed scornfully: "You ought to know; you are black like 'them.'" A Latino friend explained, "Some Hispanics here don't want you to be one of them because you represent everything they don't want to be. 'How dare this black woman speak Spanish and claim to be one of us?' They see you as black, and they don't want to be black." In 1993 a "Hispanic" reader from New Mexico wrote to *Hispanic* magazine, in response to its earlier coverage of Latino

major-league baseball players, including black Latinos: "I would appreciate knowing how the writer arrived at the classification of apparent Blacks as Hispanics. Does the fact that men come from Spanish-speaking countries such as Puerto Rico or Cuba automatically give them the Hispanic title designation? History shows that Africans were transported to the Americas as slaves and took the names of their slave masters."...

One of the most insidious and pervasive forms of racism, one that appears to be escalating through globalized technology, is the promotion of images that exalt whiteness (Forbes, 1992). Historically, people of African background in Latin America have been stereotyped and vilified in popular culture in a number of ways. Media programs from Latin America and particularly Mexico are very popular among Latinas/os worldwide, especially in the United States, and are rapidly gaining other international audiences. *Telenovelas* (soap operas) and television programming are Mexico's largest export, sold throughout Latin America, the United States, and 125 other countries (Quinones, 1997). In these programs dark-skinned persons, particularly Latinegros, are presented as beggars, criminals, and servants. Latinegras are cooks, maids, nannies, and prostitutes. A term broadly used for dark-skinned Latinos in these programs is "Ladino," which also means a "liar" and a "thief." The upper class usually reflects the Nordic ideal, with light-colored eyes and hair and black and/ or Indian servants. Latinegros are also promoted as either athletes or singers but are mostly depicted in a distorted way and made the object of ridicule.

CONCLUSION

Clearly, Latinas/os present a dilemma for the United States—what to do with a rapidly increasing population of mixed racial ancestry that defies categorization, resists homogenization, and cannot be readily assimilated. Today some Latinas/os mock the term as "His Panic," to signify the perceived fear of the white male-dominated U.S. government of non-white Latina/o population growth. Through its racial policies and the "Hispanic" category the United States has chosen to advance Spanishness or put bluntly, whiteness, among Latinas/os (Forbes, 1992). It has established a system whereby Latinas/os are deluded into believing that they are all members of this new Hispanic group. While being reminded of my lack of "Hispanicness," I am reminded that politically my self-identification as a "Hispanic" is needed. What is concealed is that Latinas/os with uninterrupted descent from white Spaniards are glorified and established as the group's leaders. Most Latinas/os in the United States migrated in search of opportunities denied and/or made unavailable to them by the white elites of their homelands. They do not realize that the United States is re-creating this power structure among them. Perhaps "His Panic" is Latinas/os' own panic—their own, even greater dilemma. The U.S. color line makes no allowance for middle groups; it is designed to disperse the middle cloud in opposite directions. Individuals are either white or "something else" (Cruz-Janzen, 1997). That "something else" may be African American, Asian American, Native American, or Hispanic, but only white Europeans—more specifically, white Europeans with the exception of Spaniards—can be white. As Hispanics, Latinas/os are spuriously classified as Europeans and white Latinas/os are deluded into believing that they are accepted as White Europeans. Latinos fail to recognize that ultimately, U.S. rejection is directed at all of them. Although their predecessors were present in this hemisphere before the arrival of the Pilgrims, U.S. Latinas/os are relegated to foreign status, forever designated as immigrants from Spain, whereas other Europeans are integrated as "Americans." Latinas/os of color are rendered invisible as only white Latinas/os are recognized.

Issues of race and racism are not talked about openly in Latina/o cultures in the United States because many Latinas/os argue that they are discriminated against as an ethnic group and discussions of internal racism divide the group and prevent coalescence against White/European-American oppression. But Latinegras/os in the United States as elsewhere resent their oppression. They are aware

of the *tapujos*—the secrets, contradictions, and hypocrisy—among Latinas/os that provide fertile ground for U.S. racial policies. They express their anger and frustration over a situation that has been with them all their lives and is getting worse. Many realize that the stringent black-versus-white dichotomy is widening the racial divide that has existed among Latinas/os.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Does education whiten one's color?
2. Does having a higher income whiten?
3. Does racism operate on the same principles across cultures?

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READING 25

The Cost of Whiteness

Thandeka

Most white Americans believe they were born white. Yet their own stories of early racial experiences describe persons who were bred white. Which is it—nature or nurture? Neither. The social process that creates whites produces persons who must think of their whiteness as a biological fact.

The process begins with a rebuke. A parent or authority figure reprimands the child because it's not yet white. The language used by the adult is racial, but the content of the message pertains to the child's own feelings and what the child must do with feelings the adult doesn't like. Stifle them. Philosopher Martha Nussbaum, in her book *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education*, tells how she learned to do this as a child being taught to be white.

Nussbaum's reflections begin with a description of the incident that provoked her father's racial rebuke: "In Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, in the early 1960s, I encountered black people only as domestic servants. There was a black girl my age named Hattie, daughter of the live-in help of an especially wealthy neighbor. One day, when I was about ten, we had been playing in the street and I asked her to come in for some lemonade. My father, who grew up in Georgia, exploded, telling me that I must never invite a black person into the house again." Nussbaum's first lessons ended at school where the only African Americans present were "kitchen help." Here, she and her classmates learned how to "efface them from our minds when we studied." The target of Nussbaum's first lessons in whiteness was her own sentient awareness of the surrounding environment. She had to learn how

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