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## Latinos and Afro-Latino Legacy in the United States: History, Culture, and Issues of Identity

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**GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER BANQUET LECTURE; ORIGINALLY  
DELIVERED AT THE 59<sup>TH</sup> PROFESSIONAL AGRICULTURAL WORKERS  
CONFERENCE. REVISED AUGUST 2015\***

**LATINOS AND AFRO-LATINO LEGACY IN THE UNITED STATES: HISTORY,  
CULTURE, AND ISSUES OF IDENTITY**

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**Introduction**

Since my first visit to the campus in 1992, I have looked forward to this event. Tuskegee University is a world famous campus with many firsts in science and higher education. And it gives me great pleasure to speak about Latinos and Afro-Latinos.

My presentation has three objectives: first, to address the historical origins, and challenges facing U.S. Latinos; second, to expand on the national interest in U.S. Latinos and the surfacing issues of our relations with African-Americans, and, third, to advocate coalition building and suggest ways of working together.

I wish to begin by citing a few caveats from Earl Shorris, author of *Latinos: A Biography of the People*, (New York: W.W. Norton Co., 1992):

First, according to Shorris: “Any history of Latinos stumbles at the start, for there is no single line to trace back to its ultimate origin.” This statement reminds us that the historic origins of Hispanics and Latinos have many roots and branches. As such, the issue of our identity depends a lot on where our story begins and our knowledge of history.

Second, Shorris stated: “Latino history has become a confused and painful algebra of race, culture, and conquest, it has less to do with evidence than with politics, for whoever owns the beginning has dignity, whoever owns the beginning owns the world.” Shorris reminds us that speeches like mine are assertions of pride and essentially political, i.e., presented with a desire to persuade and convince of a particular viewpoint or position about Latinos and Hispanics. He is correct about “dignity” and it is clearly my intent to show the historic “firsts” of U.S. Latinos.

I should add that the Center I head is currently aimed at enhancing Latino heritage within the Smithsonian’s exhibitions and collections of its 16 museums and galleries of history, art, science, air and space and the National Zoo and research centers. In fact, I am on a mission to address a scathing report entitled: “Willful Neglect: The Smithsonian Institution and U.S. Latinos” (Smithsonian, 1994).

The report concluded: “[the] Institution almost entirely excludes and ignores the Latino population in the United States. This lack of inclusion is glaringly obvious in the lack of a museum facility focusing on Latino or Latin American art, culture or history; the near-absence of

permanent Latino exhibitions or programming; the very small number of Latino staff, and the minimal number of curatorial or managerial positions; and the almost total lack of Latino representation in the governance structure. It is difficult for the Task Force to understand how such a consistent pattern of Latino exclusion from the work of the Smithsonian could have occurred without willful neglect.”

I mention “willful neglect” to assert my belief that politics and dignity play a big role in my work and comments, “... for whoever owns the beginning [of history] has dignity, whoever owns the beginning owns the world.”

But, quoting from another caveat from Shorris:

Third, “according to the rules of conquest, the blood of the conquered dominates, but the rules are not profound, they are written on the skin.” Shorris reminds us that every version of history has its adherents. Every history that is taught evokes the bias of the dominant group. He also intimates that white Americans have their version of history. Likewise, black Americans have their own version of history. That is the result of a race conscious society. But a question also raised is: “If people are brown, “multi-racial” - what part of their racial make-up dominates their history?” Do Latinos relate their identity to race and racial treatment? Are brown people more white oriented than black? What’s “written on the skin,” of Latinos? If, for example, a Latino appears to be European, what history will they choose? Will the history be of the “dignified” or the “conquered?”

### **Latinos and Hispanics: Who we are and our Heritage?**

For several decades, Latinos have been identified as “brown” people, referring to a mixture of colors. For many Latinos, color and race, Black, White, Yellow or Red, do not apply to them. Being a “brown” Latino usually means being “*mestizo*,” i.e., a person of mixed blood. In fact, the Census of 2000 showed that most Latinos accept the category for multi-racial background, over single race choices. But the margin of choice is small. The Census of 2000 was the first attempt to understand the multi-racial cross section of the United States and Latinos proved that being multi-cultural and ethnic is important to them.

It may interest you to know that my birth certificate from San Bernardino County, California, shows that my race is “Mexican.” My mother’s birth certificate, born in the same house in 1913, shows that she is racially Mexican. Yes, California’s records show that Mexican people were a racial group well into the 1940s. So where do people like myself fit into the question of race and color? What is our identity?

Given my birthplace and situation, I identify as “Chicano,” i.e., a Mexican American with an attitude. Like Ruben Salazar, Los Angeles Times reporter, now deceased, I have long felt that I am “a Mexican American with a non-Anglo image of myself.” Like others of my generation from California, I have a cultural identity that is forged in large part by discrimination against Mexicans, the Anglo-dominance of local business and public positions, and the history of being born in a “Mexican town” of California.

Historian David J. Weber described being brown or *mestizo* this way:

*Despite the enduring myth that ‘Spaniards’ settled the borderlands [the southwest], it is quite clear that the majority of the pioneers were Mexicans of mixed blood. In New Spain [including California and Texas], the three races of mankind, Caucasian, Mongol, and Negro, blended to form an infinite variety of blood strains, and this blending continued as Mexicans settled among aborigines in the Southwest. Thus, ‘Mestizaje’ or racial mixture, was so common that today the vast majority of all Mexicans are of mixed blood.*

Latino heritage is complex and yet challenged by individual circumstance like mine. We live in a society that promotes racial categorization. Because there is no physiological litmus test to define Latinos in racial terms, Latinos have opportunities to assert unique identities, such as Chicano, Tejano [Mexican-American of Texas], Hispano [Hispanic of New Mexico], Boricua [Puerto Rican of Borinquen – “land of the brave lord”], Nuyurican [Puerto Rican in New York], Dominicano, etc. And that is what is happening across the United States. In fact, it is now apparent that new Latino identities are sprouting wherever new concentrations of Latinos of different nationalities and cultures are growing.

Not long ago, for example, the Taino Inter-Tribal Council of New Jersey was organized to give Puerto Ricans an opportunity to be identified as Taino Indian (Nataio or Guatiao). Their application calls for pictures and information to be judged accordingly. Interestingly, the native Taino (Nataio) tends to be relatively light skinned with high cheekbones, and the darker person tends to be identified as Taino - Guatiao, or “adoptive brother.” The latter are considered Taino with an African legacy.

However, this mosaic of Latino identities can cause confusion by the plethora of terms used to describe this population. A lot of our identity is subjective decision making. As indicated in the rest of my presentation, the range of terminology arises from the very social, economic, and political heterogeneity of the Latino population. Consequently, it is very difficult to define a Latino or Hispanic in specific terms as some type of homogeneous group. Yet, that is what most non-Hispanics expect of our population.

### **Hispanic or Latino?**

The relatively recent terms “Hispanic” and “Latino” emerged from the Civil Rights movements of blacks during the 1950s. Chicanos and other minority groups benefited from the black crusades for justice, education and equal rights in many ways. During the sixties and seventies, with the efforts of Cesar Chavez and several Latino activist organizations, the nation moved ahead to address Latino issues. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget crafted a common identifier under the rubric “Hispanic” to measure and implement programs. However, as I will intimate later on, Latinos who felt that the Spanish past was either too horrendous or too Spanish oriented, rejected “Hispanic” and took the identifier “Latino” for themselves. Many non-Hispanics did not appreciate nor understand this issue. The expectation was for common use of and support for the term “Hispanic.”

Still, as we enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century the use of either “Hispanic” or “Latino” is with us and probably more controversial than before. There are significant differences in the meaning of each,

although some people tend to use “Hispanic” and “Latino” interchangeably, especially when working with non-Hispanic people.

A course on introductory Latino studies would teach you that the word Latino comes from Rome and derives from the Romance language of Latin. Since we have a region called Latin America, then, it is argued, people of Latin America are Latinos. Latino refers to people with mixed national, ethnic, racial and linguistic backgrounds from Latin America. It can include Portuguese-speaking Brazilians and Indians of Latin America who speak Spanish as a second language. As an aside, in 1493, Pope Alejandro VI issued a proclamation called the Tratado de Tordesillas, which literally drew an “imagined” line from the North Pole to the South Pole that gave Portugal land to the east and Spain, land to the west. That line coincidentally gave Portugal the current region of Brazil in Latin America.

Introductory Latino studies would also teach that “Hispanic” derives from the word “Hispania” or Spain and, therefore, only Spanish descendants are “Hispanic.” In essence, a Hispanic is someone whose culture or origin is Spanish, encompassing native Spanish-speakers and Spanish-surnamed people. This definition excludes Brazilians, English and French-speaking nations of Latin America. The federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB) now uses Hispanic or Latino interchangeably. Either term is defined as “a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race.” This categorization leaves out Portuguese descendants, for example. In data collection and public records, federal agencies are required to use a minimum of two ethnicities: “Hispanic or Latino” and “Not Hispanic or Latino.”

Obviously this dichotomy does not address the multiple issues of distinct Latino groups, including: Tainos, Chicanos, Tejanos, Hispanos, Boricuanos, Cuban-Americans, Dominicanos, Salvadoreños, etc. And on top of the current debate, the United States has many recent Latino immigrants of direct Indian descent coming from Mexico, Peru, Guatemala, Bolivia, Ecuador whose first language is native like Nahuatl (Mixteco), Mayan (various dialects), Quechuan (various dialects), etc.

I welcome them as “Indigenous, transnational Latinos.” They add a rich heritage to our Latino culture and identity. It is probably more correct to consider these people as American Indian within the United States because of their own desire to preserve their histories and traditions that are pre-Columbian. But Indians or “native Americans” from Latin America are also Latino and some may prefer to identify by this term than their Indian heritage.

So what is a Hispanic or Latino? The question has no easy answer. Webster's College dictionary defines a “Hispanic-American” as: “a U.S. citizen or resident of Spanish or Latin American descent.” And a “Latino” is someone from Latin America. Personally, I don't argue with this simple definition when developing programs at the Smithsonian Institution. I focus on moving forward with programs and exhibitions on Latinos, especially with regard to presenting the contributions of Latinos to U.S. music, arts, culture, history and scientific discovery. But I acknowledge that the use of “Hispanic” or “Latino” alone, without qualification, tends to obscure huge differences among Latinos, Hispanics and their personal identities.

Nonetheless, I believe that a brief review of our history can help to sort out the reasons why “Hispanic” and “Latino” are different and significant today. In the long-run, it is important for the Smithsonian Center for Latino Initiatives to know and encompass its base of constituents for public programs. Therefore, I venture forth with some added information on our Latino/Hispanic legacy.

### **The Foundations of Hispanic and Latino Heritage – Diasporas!**

First, there is a common denominator for both Latinos and Hispanics, now couched in terms of Diasporas. That is, the knowledge that Latinos and Hispanics have a unique foundation within the United States dating back to medieval Spain and 1492, when Christopher Columbus landed in the Caribbean region, U.S. Virgin Islands and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. Second, both Latinos and Hispanics proudly note the first settlement by Ponce de Leon who also landed on the southern peninsula he named “La Florida” in 1513, establishing the first European claim to U.S. mainland. These points of time give Hispanics and Latinos a common sense of identity and dignity that is irrefutable. Being first among immigrants in the United States establishes a clear benchmark in American history that should not be ignored in American texts, schools and national programs.

The exact landing site of de Leon is not known but it may have been near St. Augustine, Florida. It is the place where Ponce de Leon thought he would find the “Fountain of Youth.” St. Augustine was settled on September 11, 1565 by the Spanish colonizers under Menendez de Aviles, making it the oldest community of European settlement in the United States, many decades before Jamestown, Virginia. St. Augustine is also the first place for American laws of governance and the place of the first birth to immigrants recorded in United States history.

There are many other historic firsts for Hispanics. Several more Spanish expeditions traversed what is now the American “Sunbelt” from Florida to New Mexico and California, before the thirteen English colonies were established. They wrote the first adventure books, drafted the first maps, and recorded the fascinating ethnographies of American Indians. Spaniards were first in 24 of the states of America before other Europeans, including: Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, Arizona, Nevada, California, Oregon, Washington, Alaska (after the Russians) and Hawaii.

From this perspective, the national heritage of both Hispanics and Latinos is centuries old within the United States, a source of pride and dignity. What's more, the Spanish flag flew within the mainland from 1513 to 1821, a period of over 300 years. Add the time that Mexico ruled in the Southwest, 1821 to 1848, and we can see that the Spanish and Mexican hold on U.S. land spanned 335 years.

Both Latinos and Hispanics would not ignore the fact that the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (signed February 2, 1848) ended the U.S. war against Mexico and resulted in the growth of the United States by one-third, including California, Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, Nevada, and parts of Texas, Colorado, Oklahoma, Kansas. In a war of two years, the United States in pursuit of Manifest Destiny, conquered half of Mexico's territory, established the current border with Mexico, all for \$15 million. Regrettably, many textbooks of our schools do not teach this history.

Many Chicanos likewise argue that historically they are not immigrants, they did not enter the United States, the United States took their land.

In return, the United States was to respect Mexican land rights, Spanish language and the citizenship of Mexicans who stayed on the U.S. side of the border. Very few of the American promises were upheld and soon the Mexicans in the United States faced loss of land, harassment, discrimination, unequal treatment in schooling and employment. Texas Rangers often acted against Mexicans, leaving a long list of inhumane and uncivil conditions. Since 1848, the border with Mexico has been an impoverished and contentious area, covering nearly 2,000 miles. Today, most Latinos and Hispanics who know the history of the U.S. and Mexico border, have a different point of view from non-Hispanics about immigration, policing, security, bilingual education. They tend to see eye to eye on ways to address these issues. In a sense, Latinos and Hispanics have common social agendas.

In addition, many Latinos and Hispanics have common concerns about the Caribbean region, an area dominated by the United States since its war with Spain, which ended in 1898. The United States claimed Cuba, Puerto Rico and other Spanish territory and obligated itself to protect the region. Now, Puerto Rico is a territory of the United States and, since 1917, people born in Puerto Rico have U.S. citizenship but no representation in Congress. There is also the use of Vieques for U.S. bombing that is very contentious politically. Latinos and Hispanics have strong feelings about being Americans but also have issues with the way that Latinos of the region have been treated.

Continuing with the refrain that “whoever owns the beginning owns the world,” it is important to realize that Latinos and Hispanics are very patriotic Americans and proudly identify with stories of Latino patriotism. Forty Medals of Honor for extraordinary heroism in combat, Spain’s military support for the American revolutionaries, and America’s first four star Admiral and Civil War hero, David G. Farragut, and other stories abound. For example, in the late-1700s, in the face of British and Russian designs on the Pacific coast of North America, the Spanish Crown under General Jose de Galvez, minister of the Indies, utilized three institutions to carry out the occupation of California: mission, presidio (fortress), and pueblo, or civil town. As a result of these reinforcements, the National Society, Sons of the American Revolution (SAR), considers the descendants of these places as qualified for the SAR, just as descendants of Spanish soldiers on the Southern coast or descendants of other soldiers in the former English colonies on the East Coast.

The Hispanic heritage in United States is worthy of recognition and celebration and a source of dignity for Latinos and Hispanics. At least I should mention, the U.S. cowboy tradition was first introduced by Spanish and Mexican *vaqueros* (“cowboys”), dating back to the time they introduced horses and cattle to the Americas.

### **Why Hispanics and Latinos Differ in Terms of Their Identity**

Despite what I noted above with regard to the mestizo concept and the studies of diasporas, Latinos and Hispanics tend to differ in their identity for political and personal reasons, mostly with regard to the amount of attention given to their Spanish roots.



I believe that the different feelings of the so-called “man on the street” can be mostly related to how much they know about the earliest Spanish exploitations into the Americas. For those who consider themselves Hispanics, the past history of nearly four centuries ago does not factor into their reasons for saying they are Hispanic. What tends to be their rationale for being Hispanic is the fact that Spanish is their first language and their names are Spanish-origin.

For those who prefer to be called Latinos, the historic past is a big concern and the Spanish acts of the past cannot be ignored. Specifically, what Latinos tend to note is that Hispanics raided Indian communities, took Indians for slaves or forced them to work as guides and laborers, and destroyed villages and places when they found resistance? Many Latinos also assert that they are more Latin American than, with new customs and traditions, than Spanish, despite a Spanish surname.

How deep is the rancor of Latinos towards the name Hispanic? It is estimated that an average of a million Indians perished annually for most of the sixteenth century, in what has been called the greatest genocide in human history. The findings of slavery, death and destruction by Hispanics against Indians have divided Latinos into those who cherish their Spanish heritage as thicker than blood and those who believe that their Spanish blood is tainted with disgrace and brutality. Moreover, the new demographics of Latin America show a continent of many other national and ethnic groups, including Japanese, Italian, Russian, German, etc. Thus, Latin Americans are more likely to be identified as Latinos.

### **Afro-Hispanics and/or Afro-Latinos**

More recently, research has opened-up a new line of enquiry into the African backgrounds of Hispanics and Latinos. This interest is due in part to the greater number of Spanish chronicles and documents that have been “discovered” and translated into English. We know much more today about the Spanish explorers who migrated five hundred years ago to the Americas. Also, the recent “Latinization” of American communities, and the further immigration of Latinos from all parts of Latin America have generated diasporas studies with new insights into Latino culture and heritage.

Recent studies of Latino migrations and contemporary Latino culture have revealed that black Latinos face prejudice and discrimination within U.S. Latino communities and that racism prevails in Latin America. These are not the first studies to show this. Arturo Schomburg (born in Puerto Rico in 1874 to a black mother and German father), founded the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York in 1891, dedicated to the study of race in Latin America. The Center is in the City library.

It is apparent that “dark-skinned” Latinos face class differentiation as mentioned earlier on *Tainos*. I believe that the class differentiation is mostly derived from an ages old system of castes or *castas* developed in Spain in the late 15th century. Moreover, the racism within Latino communities has something to do with the fact that some Spanish descendents are naturally dark-skinned and there are Latinos who are more direct descendents from Africa. It is not a question of a drop of blood making a person either Black or White, for Latinos, shades of color are the basis of discrimination. I would like to offer some comparisons of what I refer to as Afro-Hispanics and Afro-Latinos.

## **Afro-Hispanic Heritage**

For people who prefer to be known as Hispanics, they themselves carry African blood derived centuries ago from the Moors. A Muslim army from Africa invaded Spain across the Strait of Gibraltar in 711. By 719 Muslim power was supreme and the Spanish peninsula was held as a dependency of the province of North Africa, a division of the caliphate of Damascus. The caliphate eventually split into a number of independent and mutually hostile Moorish kingdoms. Subsequent Muslim sects from Africa invaded Spain in 1086 (Almoravids) and in 1145 (Almorhads).

Eventually Christian kings expelled most of the Moors following a great battle fought on the plains of Toledo in 1212. However, the African Moors were not completely vanquished until 1492, when the new Catholic rulers, Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand, proclaimed *Limpieza de Sangre*, purity of blood, as the new way of Spain. This is a phrase used in documents of the Spanish inquisition indicating that a person and his ancestry were not to be contaminated with a heretic religion nor the blood of Moors, Jews, or Negroes. On the contrary, one who converted to “Old Christian,” could obtain advancement in royal service, entrance to certain schools, positions in the clergy and support for explorations.

Jews who converted to Catholicism, were called *conversos* and sometimes marranos (Spanish for swine). They had opportunities to escape the persecution by going to America. It is now believed that some of the Jews who converted, eventually settled in New Mexico. Today, some “Hispanos” in New Mexico believe they are Sephardim (Spanish Jews and their descendents).

For Muslims or Moors who converted during the inquisition to Christianity, called *moriscos*, there were opportunities for them to join Spanish explorations and seek refuge abroad. Some Hispanics with last names ending in “Z” believe they are descended from the Moors, such as Alvarez, Perez or Velasquez, etc. The names are relatively easy to trace to Hispanic origins, however, it is not always easy to trace a direct blood lineage to some of these family names because of past efforts to hide identity.

With the advent of Christopher Columbus and co-mingling with American Indians, Spanish society also established a system *castas*, closed classes in which Hispanics were born as:

Espanol: Spanish, born in Spain.

Peninsulares: Born in Spain and living in the colonies.

Criollo/Creole: Born of Spanish parents within the Spanish colonies.

Indio/a: Indian

Mestizo: Spanish/Indian

Mulato: Spanish Negro

Zambo: Indian/Negro, etc.

One of the first things to notice in the Spanish registries of settlers (usually in the parishes) is the fact that they are shown by their caste or “look.” For example, in the Los Angeles register for September 4, 1781, you will find families like that of Lara, wherein Jose Fernando is listed as Espanol, age 50, and his wife, Maria Antonia, is listed as India, age 23. Their children are listed as *Mestizo*. Historically, Hispanics, are very conscious of skin color because the lighter they are

the more likely they “look” Spanish. Obviously, the Spanish look has afforded more privileges in the system of *castas*.

Nonetheless, for most of the seven centuries prior to Spain's arrival in the New World, Muslim Africans and Moors lived-in and ruled Spain, and undoubtedly transmitted their bloodlines into the Spanish *conquistadors* and their American descendents. In which case we know of a few examples.

We know of Pedro Alonzo Nino, considered the great African navigator who piloted one of Christopher Columbus' ships. For another, there is Juan Garrido, known as *el conquistador negro*, the Black Conquerer. Juan Garrido traveled from Africa to Spain around 1500 where he converted to Christianity and enlisted in the service of Spain. Garrido wrote in his memoirs that he fought beside Ponce de Leon in Puerto Rico and later took part in the conquest of Mexico. Garrido served Spain for more than 30 years. In 1538, he received an estate in Mexico as his reward. Some historical accounts assert that Juan Garrido was also the first one to plant and harvest wheat on the American continent.

In 1542 a book was published in Spain, written by Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca. Entitled “*Naufragios*” or shipwrecked, de Vaca wrote of his exploit with explorer Panfilo de Narvaez, the shipwreck he was on, and the next 8 years of capture and wandering from Florida through Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. Accompanying him and two others was a black Moroccan-born slave by the name of Esteban or Estebanico. From 1528 to 1536 the four survived out of a three-hundred man expedition and made it back to Mexico. Estebanico turned into a sorcero (a medicine man) for survival. He treated Indians and others he met and had a reputation that helped in most places. He was killed ultimately at the hands of Indians in Arizona. But the amazing thing about the ordeal of de Vaca and Estebanico is that they covered over 6,000 miles of unknown territory, stirred the imagination of other explorers and lived to tell about the great expanse of the south. Cabeza de Vaca's book is now available in English and is exciting to read.

Also, what we have in “*Naufragios*” is America's first adventure book, with detailed descriptions of Indian groups, land areas and stories of Estebanico, i.e., America's first African-Hispanic, muslim explorer in the New World.

Other Spanish records account for many more Afro-Hispanics, descendents from Spain. For example, the Hernando de Soto expedition into Alabama included a black man called Robles, one of the first European settlers in that area. The expeditions of Bonilla de Leyva-Antonio Gutierrez and Juan de Onate, late 16<sup>th</sup> century, had black members. The stories and chronicles of many Spanish adventurers have yet to be published. We may find many more examples of Afro-Hispanics who entered the Americas from Spain.

### **Afro-Latinos and Heritage in America**

For Latinos whose origins are from the Caribbean region, there is relatively more African and Spanish heritage in their genes than Amerindian blood. That is because the Spanish settlements of the 16th century introduced deadly European diseases, such as smallpox. In Mexico, the Indians gave the deadly sickness a *Nahuatl* referent: *cocoliztli*. The Arawakan groups living in the Greater Antilles were the *Taino* and Siboney. According to the records of Friar Bartolome de

las Casas, an estimated fifty thousand Taino called the Caribbean home in 1492. But within a few decades they either died or were assimilated out of existence as culturally distinct Indians. The Caribs also lost ground because of disease and conquest, leaving relatively few traits of their Amerindian heritage within the Caribbean region.

In 1505, the king of Spain sent 17 Africans to work in the copper mines of *Hispaniola*, known today as Haiti and the Dominican Republic. In succeeding years he sent more to the island. In the years to come, this trickle of enslaved Africans across the Atlantic swelled into a flood of millions. Their journey started the largest forced migration of human beings in world history. It is estimated that as many as fifteen million Africans were transported to the New World between the 16th and 19th centuries. Most of the African slaves brought to the Spanish colonies came from Nigeria, the Gold Coast, and the Congo basin. The Spanish Crown had sent the Africans to replace American Indians who were dying by the thousands. Through settlement, interbreeding and intermarriage, the Latinos of the region became relatively more mixed blood of Africa, Spain and other Europeans. In the Caribbean, we hear the word *mulatto* more than the term *mestizo*, to refer to dark-skinned Latinos.

In 1521, in less than three years, Hernan Cortes conquered the Aztecs and Mexico. From Mexico City the Spaniards and imported slaves would spread northward into the southwestern part of the United States. They interbred and intermarried with local Indians who were not driven to complete assimilation and are still present in Mexico and the southwest. Combined, the Spaniards and Indians influenced the racial and ethnic make-up of Mexicans, hence the predominance “*mestizos*” today. Likewise, Francisco Pizarro reached Peru in 1532 and shortly thereafter conquered the Incas. The resulting racial-ethnic make-up of most Latinos of the Andies is also largely *mestizo*. Throughout the twentieth century Latin America became home to immigrants from all over the world. They have intermarried and changed the face of Latinos in many ways.

Thus, Afro-Latinos can be distinguished from Afro-Hispanics in that the former are mixtures of African slaves, American Indians and other immigrants and not necessarily direct descendents of Spain. Afro-Latinos exhibit variations in cultural traditions and heritage, depending on their country of origin. The Latinos of the Caribbean and the mainland of Mexico, for example, have different linguistic forms, patterns of speech, and vocabularies. In essence, Afro-Latinos have similar racial compositions and cultures as opposed to Afro-Hispanics. Some religious practices, music and artistic forms originate in Africa. An example is the influence of Santeria and *orishas* (African gods), that came from Yoruba speakers of present-day Nigeria and Benin to Cuba. The Yoruba speakers adapted their culture to meet social pressures. Orishas are said to govern different aspects of human life and the natural world. The migrations from Europe and Asia to the Americas have clearly influenced Latino identities and multi-racial characteristics.

Some Afro-Latinos derived from African-Americans who escaped the English and sought refuge in the territory of Spain. Recall that Spain was dominant in the United States for nearly 300 years, until the 19th century. Near St. Augustine, Spanish Florida, there was a sight called Mossy, Mosa, and Moosa. Beginning in 1688, Negro slaves who escaped from the English colonies, came to this Spanish territory, were not returned to their English masters. Beginning on October 29, 1733, the Spanish crown decreed that slaves fleeing the English settlement for

Florida and desiring to embrace Roman Catholicism would be free. Slaves in Carolina and Georgia reportedly fled in increasing numbers to become residents of Mose and a fortification was erected there in 1739.

Since the mid-1800s, other Afro-Latinos have descended from American slaves who escaped to Mexico and Latin America. One group of *cimarrones* (as they were called) escaped to Veracruz, Mexico. They became so powerful that the city council granted them freedman's status and the right to organize their own city, which they did. This community known as San Lorenzo de los Negros is situated in the state of Veracruz. Today *cimarrones* could be part of the "Chicano" population of the southwest.

Another group of Latinos descended from shipwrecked African slaves, survivors who settled along the Caribbean coast and intermarried with the indigenous Caribbeans. European colonists called them Black Caribs. Today they are called *Garifuna*. More than 100,000 Garifuna have migrated to the United States. Many reside in Nicaragua and Honduras. They are unique in defining themselves by language and culture, a mixture of Arawak language with their African language of different nations.

Thus, African American heritage within this nation is also a part of Hispanic and Latino heritage and vice-versa. Historian Quintard Taylor suggests that U.S. Afro-Hispanic and Afro-Latinos are under-estimated in American history and culture. Research in the 1940s by the late Gonzalo Aguirre Beltran of the Universidad Autonoma de Veracruz, Mexico, suggested that there were more Africans in Mexico than Europeans during the colonial era cited by Roberto Rodriguez). Although that research has not been confirmed, I believe on the basis of demographic information that we will have more Afro-Latinos within the United States than African Americans, within a generation. When that happens, our Hispanic heritage will be enriched that much more. For the time being, however, the Afro-Hispanic and Afro-Latino will have an opportunity to negotiate their positions with the African American community.

In a historic sense, I argue that a large proportion of Hispanics have genetic heritage from Moors and African heritage from former slaves. In times of racial discord between Latinos, Hispanics and African Americans, this historical confluence of cultures should serve as a reminder that both communities share common ancestors and cultures. In sum, "according to the rules of conquest, the blood of the conquered dominates, but the rules are not profound, they are written on the skin" (Shorris).

### **Challenges and Conditions of Contemporary Latinos and African-Americans**

To a considerable degree, the challenges and conditions facing Latinos, Afro-Latinos and African-Americans tend to overlap. A list of endemic conditions can be long and pervasive, emphasizing the importance of working together as partners in the changes occurring in America. Let me address three broad areas where collaborations can help.

#### **First, Demographic Growth and Immigrant Communities**

There were 54 million Hispanics in the United States in 2013, comprising 17.1% of the total U.S. population. In 1980, with a population of 14.8 million, Hispanics made up just 6.5% of the total U.S. population. Of the 54 million, including nearly 19 million of U.S. Hispanics were foreign

born. In 2013, the Black population alone, not Hispanic, was about 39 million, including 1.8 million who were African immigrants (Stepler and Brown, 2015).

Of late, the African immigrant population has been a new consideration, up from 881,000 in 2000 and a substantial increase from 1970, when the U.S. was home to only 80,000 foreign-born Africans (Anderson, 2015). When compared with other major groups who arrived in the U.S. more recently, Africans had the fastest growth rate from 2000 to 2013, increasing by 41% during that period. (Africans are also a rapidly growing segment of the black immigrant population in the U.S., increasing by 137% from 2000 to 2013 (Anderson, 2015). These numbers suggest that U.S. Latinos as well as African Americans are becoming more diverse, enhanced by new immigrants with diverse agendas for assimilation (Anderson, 2015), and along with a diversity of new immigrant groups, comes a more complex situation for Hispanics and Black Americans, *per se*.

### **Second, Concentration in Barrios and Neighborhoods**

Of America's 54 million Hispanics, most live in five states: California (27.3 million), Texas (18.8 million), Florida (8.6 million), New York (6.7 million) and Illinois (3.9 million). Moreover, Latinos reside in major metropolitan areas such as New York, Los Angeles, Miami, Chicago, San Diego, Houston, Fresno, and Dallas-Fort Worth. But the residential pattern shows that the Hispanic population is somewhat less concentrated in "barrios" compared to the residential concentration of African-Americans within "black neighborhoods."

In 2000, some 48% of the black population lived in tracts with a majority black population. On the other hand, some 43% of the Latino population lived in neighborhoods where they constituted more than half of the population. Rather than clustering in ethnic enclaves, Census data suggest that more and more Latinos live scattered through neighborhoods where they are a small share of the population (Suro and Tafoyo, 2004, p. 1)

These comparisons have not been studied or understood as to their significance for economic or social programs. But studies of Socio-Economic Status (SES) indicate that concentration and residential segregation of minorities correlates with lower educational attainment, poverty, and poor health. It is important to understand that continually skewed distributions breed conditions that ultimately affect our entire society (American Psychological Association, 2015).

### **Third, Education and Socio-Economic Patterns**

African Americans and Latinos are more likely to attend high-poverty schools than Asian Americans and Caucasians. And along with schools of considerable poverty come high drop-out rates and other socioeconomic realities that may deprive students of valuable resources, rigorous curriculums and teachers who may expect less of them academically than they expect of similarly situated Caucasian students (American Psychological Association, 2015).

### **Building Common Pursuits and Interests**

Despite the fact that Hispanics and/or Latinos share many historical connections with African Americans, Latinos are currently increasing in numbers and rising in dominance that juxtaposes them as competitors with African Americans. At least that is a growing point of contention.

The positing of one group against another group compels me to look not so much at their overlapping histories as to their common prospects and pursuits. I see the demographics, for example, being emphasized in terms of Latinos outnumbering African Americans and jostling for power. The news seems to convey Latino-Black tensions with alarm and concern. Some Latinos are now asserting that racism in Hispanic society runs deep, they look for support from African Americans, while some Latinos say they are white and not black or Indian. The black-white dichotomy is being incorporated within Hispanic society in swift and subtle ways, almost as if embarrassed to identify by other bloods or *mestizaje*.

I agree with Christopher Rodriguez's assertion that "The Black/White legacy in America further complicates the Latino's position in the United States because we are caught between the titan debate of the race question" (Latino Manifesto, p.132). Both Blacks and Latinos have more serious questions to cope with than fabricated issues of competition. For me, race-based confrontations by their very nature have an exclusionary effect and tend to result in a zero-sum game.

What is happening to the cultural, historical richness of both communities of Latinos and African Americans? Will competition create an obsession among some Latinos to be perceived as white or for others to see themselves as "the other?" I am also concerned by the news that reports the demographic shift in society as a gain for Hispanics and a loss for African Americans? See what appears to be happening nationally, for example, in the article in the Appendix.

Also notice the particular tone of the following headline, repeated frequently throughout the United States during the government elections of November 2001:

**[Lee] Brown is the only black mayor in Houston's history, and [Orlando] Sanchez, if he wins, would make Houston the biggest city in the nation to elect a Latino mayor.**  
[Dec. 2, 2001, page A2, the Washington Post]

We were witness to similar headlines from the race for Mayor of Los Angeles in the fall of 2001, when the black vote was blamed for the Anglo win over the Chicano candidate for mayor. In addition, some cynical American pundits continue to pit African American against Latinos over issues of immigration, police profiling, bilingual language, welfare reform, and affirmative action. Looking at the demographics and the articles of competition, lead to self-fulfilling prophecies of a nation divided by race and class differences.

I believe that the public needs to de-emphasize Blacks and Hispanics as if both were monolithic groups of people pitted against each other. The Afro-Hispanic, Afro-Latino legacies should provide effective cultural links of unity. Competitive sparring serves few Americans who are poor, disenfranchised, segregated and politically *marginalized*.

Still, recent and increasing divisions have thus far prevented African Americans and Latinos from being able to build strong communities, more employment, more voter participation and leadership roles in government and higher education.

## **Steps for Working Together**

What to do? To begin with I have posited a number of propositions regarding our common links and interests. I have argued for the increase and diffusion of knowledge on both our histories and culture. Now I say that we can do much together by working together on the bigger issues. And we can begin by developing new attitudes and actions towards each other.

Here I simply list some beginning points for discussion and community relations:

- **Acknowledge our pasts and celebrate our rich heritages.**

Friction between immigrant Latinos and Caribbean peoples and African Americans has become a growing phenomenon. Avoid the assimilation model that suggests that white and English only is good and dark with an accent is bad. Color and accent do not define American-ness. Cooperation and supporting communities build this nation. Integrate and accept differences in people's identities. Celebrate heritage as the enrichment of community and not the strengthening of one people over another.

- **Educate our friends and demand an education that is culturally and historically rich and broadened.**

Few college curriculums test for cultural competency. Few teachers have solid curriculums in cultural history, arts, humanities and related topics. If we produce graduates from colleges, doctors, nurses, attorneys, political leaders without requiring cultural competency, then we fail them, their professional practices and their role as citizens.

- **Build coalitions.**

We need to support meetings and forums to dialog and discuss issues that concern our respective communities. We must continue to convene sessions that are inclusive and open for different viewpoints. The outcome may be new forms of organization, political support and community building. The energy that divides can be converted into a powerful alliance of mutual support.

- **Increase economic opportunities for one another.**

The number of minority owned businesses is increasing. We have opportunities to enhance employment of diverse groups of people. The notion of another minority business should not be interpreted as another place that will hire minorities of the same group. Part of the reason for business success is tied to an understanding of consumers and the opportunities they offer for reaching a global market.

- **Denounce the issues of 'divide and conquer.'**

Both African Americans and Latinos have been the victims of racism and oppression in this country. We cannot afford to be pitted one against another. We should consistently strive to work together and to avoid challenging each other for a fixed piece of the economic pie.

- **Stick up for each other.**

When "the other" is denigrated or put down or falsely identified as a problem, ask openly: What's wrong with this picture? Our silence in the face of oppression and denigration perpetuates the problem. We should also confront the situation with more knowledge and understanding of our common interests, not with rancor.



- **Enlist support of the general public, the news media and leadership.**

As we work toward unity, also work to extend commitment and understanding. Work for the betterment of all America. Living in this great country carries with it the responsibility to care for and protect the nation. Incorporate the media and leadership to work for the same common cause of American unity.

In closing, I thank you for patience during my presentation. I touched much ground, several centuries of history and closed by relating demographic facts to actual, contemporary news. I probably said too much. But if I have accomplished anything, I hope it is evident that I believe in working together through education and the increase and diffusion of knowledge about Latinos and Hispanics.

Thank you.

### **Acknowledgements**

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### **Recommended Reading**

*African Roots/American Cultures: Africa and the Creation of the Americas* by Sheila S. Walker, Spelman College, (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 2001). [See documentary: "Scattered Africa: Faces and Voices of the African Diaspora"]

*Black and Brown in America: The Case for Cooperation* by Bill Piatt (New York University Press, 1997).

*Black Indians: A Hidden Heritage* by William Loren Katz (New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 1986)

*Black Latino Connections: Premier Historical Edition* by The Black Chamber of Orange County in association with Somos Primos and the Hispanic Chamber of Orange County (Santa Ana, CA, June 2000). Telephone: (800) 494-4772.

"Black Pioneers: The Spanish-Speaking Afroamericans of the Southwest" by Jack D. Forbes, in *Historical Themes and Identity: Mestizaje and Labels* by Antoinette Sedillo Lopez (Editor) (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc. 1995).

*Brown: The Last Discovery of America*, by Rodríguez, Richard. (New York: Penguin Putnam, 2002).

“Choosing an Identity: Defining our Spirit” by Roberto Rodriguez, *El Aviso* The National Association of Latino Arts & Culture, Spring 2002, Vol.4 (1): pp. 4&5.

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*Disease, Depopulation and Culture Change in Northwestern New Spain, 1518-1764* by Daniel T. Reff (University of Utah Press, 1991) 330 pp. Has detailed information from Cabeza de Vaca's book “Naufragios.”

*Ethnic Identity: Formation and Transmission Among Hispanics and Other Minorities* by Martha E. Bernal, Ph.D., and George P. Knight, Ph.D., Editors (State University of New York Press, 1993).

“Foreigners in Their Native Land: Historical Roots of the Mexican Americans” in Juan Perea, *Los Ovidados: On the Making of Invisible People*, NYU Law Review, 965, n.p52 (1995).

*From Bomba to Hip-Hop: Puerto Rican Culture and Latino Identity* by Juan Flores (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

*From Indians to Chicanos: The Dynamics of Mexican-American Culture* by James Diego Vigil (Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc.1998)

*Herencia: The Anthology of Hispanic Literature of the United States* by Nicolas Kanellos (editor) (Oxford University Press, 2002). Includes translations from Spanish chronicles.

*Hispanic Presence In the United States* by Frank de Varona (Editor) (Miami: Mnemosyne Publishing Co., 1993).

*In Search of the Racial Frontier: African Americans in the American West 1528-1990* by Quintard Taylor (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1998)

*Latino Manifesto: A Critique of the Race Debate in the US Latino Community* by Christopher Rodriguez (edited by Bridget L. Fenner) (Maryland: Cimarron Publishing, 1996)

*Latinos: A Biography of the People* by Earl Shorris (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1992).

*Latinos & Blacks in the Cities: Policies for the 1990s* by Harriett D. Romo (Editor) (Austin: University of Texas, Lyndon Baines Johnson School of Public Affairs, 1990)

“Local/Diasporic Tainos and Cultural Politics” by Arlene Davila in *The Latino Review of Books*, Center for Latino, Latin American, and Caribbean Studies, (New York, University of Albany, SUNY), Winter 1998, Vol.III No.3. pp. 2-10.

*The Hispanic Presence in North America: From 1492 to Today* by Carlos Fernandez Shaw (New York: Facts on File, 1987).

*The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Christians, and Jews Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain* by Maria Rosa Menocal (Little Brown, 2001), 298 pp.

*Recovering History, Constructing Race: The Indian, Black, and White Roots of Mexican Americans* by Martha Menchaca, (Austin: The University of Texas, 2001).

*Ritmos de Identidad: Fernando Ortiz's Legacy and the Howard Family Collection of Percussion Instruments* by the Smithsonian Center for Latino Initiatives, Smithsonian Institution, (Washington DC, 2000).

*Strangers Among Us: Latino Lives in a Changing America* by Roberto Suro (New York: Vintage Books, 1998).

*Towards a New Chicana/o History* by Refugio I. Rochin and David N. Valdes (Editors), (Michigan State University Press, 2000), 307 pp.

## **Appendix**

### **An Example of News, The Charlotte Post November 2001**

#### **When Worlds Collide Blacks Have Reservations about Influx of Hispanic Immigrants by Artellia Burch**

Ask Walt Little about the recent Hispanic population explosion. He has plenty to say. Since information from Census 2000 revealed that Hispanics are on the threshold of becoming the biggest minority group, African Americans - barely the largest today - have been wondering what the numbers mean.

Little, a 40-year-old a computer engineer from Charlotte, isn't surprised that Hispanics are nearly even with blacks. "Hispanics come over here start businesses and multiply like rabbits," he said. "It's no surprise they outnumber us because they have a baby every year."

Hispanics make up 12.5 percent of the U.S. population or 35.3 million. African Americans make up 12.9 percent of the U.S. population or 36.4 million people in the country, which grew 16 percent from the last census.

North Carolina's Hispanic population is estimated at 417,172, which is about roughly a fourth of the state's black population of 1.7 million. Vivica Banks, 33, a financial analyst, says it's not surprising that Hispanics are moving into North Carolina.

“I’m always aware of the demographic changes going on America,” she said. “So to hear the current statistics doesn’t surprise me at all.”

“There’s a reason they outnumber us,” Little said. “The government tries to control our population by introducing birth control methods on our women. My niece that’s 21 years old was told that if she has another baby she would have to get her tubes tied. They love to try to cut us up. Why don’t the government go after them?”

For decades, social experts have warned that racial friction could eventually cripple America. Instead of discussing the state of black/white relations, African Americans are more concerned about the growth of the Hispanic community. Despite blacks’ historic victimization based on skin color, some aren’t willing to open up to Hispanics who they feel will siphon economic and political gains from African Americans. Computer technician Rob Johnson, 30, admits he is prejudiced when it comes to his view of Hispanics.

“I definitely think they are people to fear,” he said. “They travel in packs. They like to play stupid acting as if they don’t understand English when you know they do. A group of them will sit around and talk to each other in their language. They could be plotting to kill you and you would never know it.”

“And another thing. They are taking over. They’re taking all of our jobs. Slowly but surely. I just don’t care to be around them. They make my skin crawl. I keep my ideas to myself. This might sound bad, but I don’t go around making remarks about them to other people. So, only God can judge me.”

“Overall, we probably should be closer to them since we all are minorities,” Little said. “But, when they come over here they get more than we do. They don’t have to pay taxes. Plus, people are always trying to force us out of neighborhoods. But they’ll let five or six of them live in one apartment. My question to society is how do you fit five Hispanics in a one-bedroom apartment? If that fits you can put a camel through an eye of a needle.”

Johnson says that there’s one thing he has never understood about Hispanics’ ability to share living quarters. “How do they get away 10 of them living in one apartment?” he asked. “Now, let two of us live in an apartment, we’ll have a letter on our door threatening to throw us out.”

“They are the new niggers. When it comes to ghetto they are ghetto with a capital G.”

Ferguson says stereotyping Hispanics bothers her. “I think some people look at Latinos as the new *niggers*,” she said. “I say that because of the cruel things I have heard people say. I hear our people say some of the same thing other races have said about us.”

“Personally, I have been welcomed by Hispanics, I think because of my thirst for knowledge of their culture.” Prejudices aside, Little says blacks shouldn’t be afraid of Hispanics. “We shouldn’t fear them just because they outnumber us,” he said. Just because someone multiplies like a rabbit doesn’t mean you should fear them. They need to fear us.”

**Source:** <http://explorer.msn.com>

**February 1, 2003**  
**New Topic in Black Studies Debate: Latinos**  
**By Felicia R. Lee**

As hundreds of scholars get ready to gather in Harlem on Thursday night for a conference on the state of black studies, many find that suddenly their attention is turning to another topic: Hispanics.

Last week the Census Bureau announced that the Hispanic population had jumped to roughly 37 million. For the first time, Hispanics nosed past blacks (with 36.2 million) as the largest minority group in the United States.

To some, the figures promise to shake up a field that has always relied to some extent on a political and cultural landscape that cast racial problems in black and white.

‘African-Americans and the African-American leadership community are about to enter an identity crisis, the extent of which we’ve not begun to imagine,’ Henry Louis Gates Jr., chairman of the Afro-American Studies department at Harvard University said of the new census numbers.

“For 200 years, the terms ‘race’ or ‘minority’ connoted black-white race relations in America,” he said. “All of a sudden, these same terms connote black, white, Hispanic. Our privileged status is about to be disrupted in profound ways.”

Just how black studies will be affected, though, is debated by scholars. Even before the Census Bureau’s announcement, the field had already been wrestling with a series of challenges from concerns about waning support from university administrators to the very nature of the discipline itself. (Cornel West’s rancorous departure from Harvard to Princeton last year was caused in part by questions from Harvard’s president, Lawrence H. Summers, about whether his work on such things as a rap CD was scholarly enough).

“We’re in a new political age,” said Kim D. Butler, a professor of history in the Department of Africana Studies at Rutgers University. “A lot of the people who founded black studies programs are retired or have moved on. We do not have that political groundswell or demand to support the expansion of black studies. We’re out of style.”

The new census figures add to that problem, Professor Butler says. “Since the demographic shift, people are concerned with the Latino vote, the Latinos as a marketing bloc.”

Of course, the statistics can be misleading, as Professor Butler and Professor Gates are quick to point out. Latinos can be of any race or nationality. And the 2000 census for the first time allowed respondents to choose more than one race in identifying themselves, so that the number of Americans who declared themselves black “in combination with one or more other races” is now 37.7 million — slightly higher than the overall figure for Latinos. Nor do the numbers erase the African-Americans’ unique history of slavery and oppression.

“There is something deep and profound in the DNA of the country that is tied to the enslavement of Africans, the trauma of slavery and the legacy of disfranchisement,” said Noliwe Rooks, associate director of Princeton’s African-American studies program. Conversations about the legacy of slavery, she said, “don’t change because there are more Latinos in the country.” And, she added, the fights over the direction of the field are healthy.

Still, others argue, black studies – a broad rubric for roughly 400 programs, departments and institutions across a swath of disciplines, with about 140 offering bachelor’s degree – face a world different from the one that prompted its creation in the late 60s.

Black studies grew out of a civil rights movement that was united around clear goals like school desegregation and voting rights. Now, the field’s direction is complicated by deeper divisions within the black community, including class and ancestry.

Some scholars have already begun exploring this new reality by researching how black identity is affected by national origin, ethnicity and class. This new trend is known as “African diaspora” studies, and includes blacks who identify primarily as Hispanic or Caribbean.

Adrian Burgos Jr., for example, a 33-year-old historian, will present a paper at the conference on a Harlem baseball team called the “Cuban Stars” that played from 1923 to 1949. Its owner, Alex Pompey, was an Afro-Cuban who was born in Key West, Fla., and moved to New York.

“Harlem was this dynamic place where people throughout the Americas settled in the teens and 20s,” said Professor Burgos, who has appointments in both Latino studies and the African-American Studies and Research Program at the University of Illinois in Urbana/Champaign. “People saw blackness more broadly, aligning themselves with Ethiopia, the Caribbean, the West Indies.”

Professor Gates, who is himself in the early stages of filming a series on the black presence in Latin America, added, “The new attention being paid to diaspora studies is in large part a new way to bring Hispanic experiences into the African fold, a nod to the changing demographics.”

Some scholars think that the recognition of overlapping cultures will help diminish fights within the academy about whose programs are financed and about the race and ethnicity of the professors hired.

“My counterparts at the Chicano Studies Research Center and Asian-American Studies and the American Indian Studies Center all recognize our interrelated experiences in this country,” said Darnell M. Hunt, director of the Ralph J. Bunche Center for African-American Studies at the University of California in Los Angeles. “In terms of black studies, the new numbers are important for the discourses about race, the importance of groups as we try to form alliances and to see historical parallels.”

But others counter that it will only intensify the competition for funds and political influence. Frank L. Matthews, the publisher and editor in chief of the *Journal of Black Issues in Higher*

Education, argues that given limited resources and population shifts, college presidents are more reluctant to maintain black studies with the advent of Latino studies and other ethnic programs.

One scholar who isn't that concerned with the changing demography is the man who helped organize the forthcoming conference, Howard Dodson, the chief of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. The conference, which is free and open to the public, begins at the center on Thursday night and then moves to the Graduate Center of the City University of New York (The co-sponsors are CUNY's Institute for Research on the African Diaspora and Princeton's program in African American studies.)

"I don't see any reason why it should have any impact," Mr. Dodson declared. To him, a much more pressing problem is that unlike traditional disciplines, black studies programs often lack the power to hire faculty and grant tenure. Mr. Dodson has been talking with Princeton about creating some type of formal relationship between the Schomburg Center and the university. The university is also considering making the black studies program a department, Professor Rooks says.

If anything, Mr. Dodson argues, black studies are losing their focus. He questions the social utility of some of the new scholarship, which has broadened beyond the work of early scholars in correcting omissions of black contributions and shaping public policy, to explore topics like gay blacks and multiracial identity. "The early black political studies folks had a clear political agenda vis-à-vis their relationship to their universities and to use their knowledge to inform and advance black folks," Mr. Dodson said. "Now, that commitment and clear sense of direction seems to be missing."

Mr. Dodson conceived the idea for the black studies conference after years of working with scholars to establish standards for the discipline. When mostly young scholars responded to the call for research papers, Mr. Dodson said, he began to imagine the coming conference as a chance to get two generations of players in black studies into the same room to exchange ideas.

Professor Burgos, for one, argues that these questions about black identity and scholarship aren't so new, however. "This conference looks at where the field has gone and where it's returning to, because people like Carter G. Woodson and DuBois understood it was not just about African-Americans in urban centers," he said. "We don't need to think about Latinos replacing African-Americans but how alliances in the past were built. The future politics in the U.S. will be centered around questions of how Latinos fit in."

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**\*Note:** Although this presentation was made at the 59<sup>th</sup> Professional Agricultural Workers Conference (PAWC) in 2001 during the George Washington Carver Public Service Hall of Fame Banquet, and subsequently, published in the Proceedings of the 59<sup>th</sup> PAWC titled: "Land, Community and Culture: African American and Hispanic American/Latino Connection", it has been slightly updated and re-published, with permission, in the Professional Agricultural Workers Journal because of its classic nature and the rich knowledge on the subject it projects; Revised August 2015.