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Las Vidas Negras: Examining Identity Among Afro-Latinos in the US in the twilight of Black Lives Matter

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*Las Vidas Negras: Examining Identity Among Afro-Latinos in the US in the Twilight of Black
Lives Matter*

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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Dedication

I would especially like to dedicate this work to the memory of Dr. Omotayo Jolaosho, known as Tayo, who was our friend and colleague. Tayo's contribution to this work as a mentor and committee member was spiritual and inspirational and even though they are no longer with us in this world, I know that their spirit watches over the work I've done here and the work I will do later. We miss you, Tayo. Thank you for being with us, always.

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Abstract

This work seeks to name how the Black Lives Matter movement, and related movements for Black liberation and justice, has had an effect on the self-perception and identities of US-based Afrolatinos. Using survey and interview data, Victor Garcia teases out issues of ethnoracial dissonance, social identity, and the ways that Afrolatinos have used the context of Black Lives Matter to make sense of the antiblackness they have faced. This is a significant investigation because it speaks to the potential for a richer tradition of pan-Africanism taking root in Latin America and among Latin Americans of African descent.

Introduction

‘Black Lives Matter’ has been an adage and movement that I have grown up watching develop and take form. I was around 16 years old when the Trayvon Martin shooting took place, and 17 when George Zimmerman was found not guilty of the death. On an individual level, I believe witnessing this directly affected the trajectory of my life. I, a Black Puerto Rican, saw myself in the victims of police brutality, and this sentiment increased for me as the years progressed and the movement took shape. It should be noted, of course, that Zimmerman is not now, nor was he at the time, an officer of any police agency. His murder of Trayvon Martin was not supported by a badge, but by a system that, above all, seeks to control Black people. In this sense, “police brutality” is actually a misnomer for what Black Lives Matter is addressing. More accurately, that movement and others like it are addressing the over-policing of Black people, both by official state actors as well as by private citizens acting in alignment with the state. Zimmerman’s case is far from the only time when a non-state actor has killed a Black person and been acquitted in a court of law. The deeply embedded history of lynching has evolved in such a way that instead of Sunday picnics to enjoy the view of a Black body strung to a tree, white (and other non-Black) people need only a recording of their crimes against Black people to set an example of how to keep us in control. The point of the police is social control to maintain the dominance of capital in white, Western hands. Therefore any action done by private citizens to promote this end will not likely be regarded as a crime.

In the summer of 2020, the Black Lives Matter movement seems to have taken a transnational approach, with Black people around the world moving to make their voices and struggles heard. Not least among these have been Black people from Latin America. I have chosen to focus my research on the reactions to Black Lives Matter among Black Latin Americans, Afrolatinos, who live in the United States. I am interested in understanding Afrolatino identity formation and how the Black Lives Matter movement shapes this process. This topic is important because it will address the transnational nature of Black Lives Matter as a movement and also highlight specific issues that affect Black Latin American populations living in the United States. (van Veen and Anderson, 2018; Hordge-Freeman and Loback, 2020; Nolasco, 2020). There are a number of problems associated with this topic, such as identity and self-identity, conflicting racial schemas, and a general lack or misunderstanding of specific language related to these issues. The literature has begun to focus in this direction, but the topic is still relatively new and takes from two relatively new concepts or occurrences. Additionally, there's an issue in terms of the specific language of Latino, Afrolatino, and Afrodescendant that speak to a more general Latin American issue stemming from mestizaje and racial nation making (Gabot 2013, 1347-1348). There needs to be a scholarly investigation into this because the existing scholarship on the topic is lacking in scope and tends to generalize issues of Latino communities, although some literature does exist that specifically addresses issues within Afrolatino communities. This study actively works to challenge the notion Latino communities are homogenous or that they always understand identity in same or similar ways (Hordge-Freeman 2020; Nolasco 2020). This study will also contribute to a wider understanding of Black life in the US among migrant groups, who are often missed when issues of immigration or over-policing are discussed. Scholarly research about Black Latin

Americans has generally been conducted within Latin America, with some exceptions including the works of Busey and Cruz (2015), Hordge-Freeman and Veras (2020), and Vargas and Kuhl (2008). Adding to the literature from the perspective of Black Latin Americans in a US context will help to better explore racial paradigms both in the US and in Latin America. Additionally, while some literature has been written on Black Latin Americans and Black Lives Matter, this paper seeks to put into context the direct impact the Black Lives Matter movement has had on the identities of Afrolatino people, analyzed from the perspective of an Afrolatinx researcher.

My decision to do this project was based on many factors of my own life. I am a Caribbean person of primarily African and Indigenous Central American descent, with origins in Puerto Rico, as well as Panamá (but of Jamaican and Trinidadian migrants to Panamá at the turn of the last century), the Caribbean coast of Colombia, and Guatemala. I was born in Austin, Texas and grew up in Florida, but I was immersed in my maternal culture, in Puerto Rican identity and West Indian-Panamanian heritage. It was made clear to me that I was racialized as Black, that my features favored African ancestors above all else in a number of ways. I made note early on that within my mother's paternal family, which is mixed race and has members that can be placed on a spectrum from Black to white, that my line was on the Black side of the spectrum. This was in part because of clear class distinctions between the Black and white members of the family, and also because of the sort of relationships formed with Black and white cousins. I can say honestly that I know many of my Black extended family members very intimately and that very few of my white or lighter skinned family members have made a particular effort to connect with me.

On my mother's maternal side, most of the extended family members that we have been in contact with are visibly Black or Black presenting biracial, with a few exceptions. My maternal grandmother is biracial, her father was a white man of Spanish heritage and her mother was a Black woman from a family that had been in Gurabo, Puerto Rico as far back as anyone remembers. My grandmother was the darkest of the four siblings, and was referred to as "*La Negrita*" (the little Black girl) in her childhood. In conversations with her, she has recalled memories of her own grandmother, Mama Chacha, and some of her habits —such as chewing tobacco right off the plant or in the careful way that she moved around— made her feel like Mama Chacha had been enslaved before, though this was never confirmed. My grandmother also told me that her father's family had been estranged from her immediate family for years, and that more than likely it was because her mother was Black and they had no interest in having Black people in their family.

These stories and experiences helped to shape my identity and self-image, and have served as a catalyst for this investigation, and in that sense I am inspired by Elizabeth Hordge-Freeman's concept of "bringing [one's] whole self into the research" (Hordge-Freeman 2018). My personal experiences, feelings, and emotions guided me through this entire process and I was able to identify myself as not only an instrument in the research, but the primary tool through which my research was filtered. Knowing that this topic is in many ways emotionally charged and deeply personal allowed me to form questions that I think spoke directly to the people I was investigating. It was clear to me that I may not be the only one who has heard similar stories or faced similar struggles with identity, and this prompted me to begin this project

and investigate how much other Latin American Afrodescended people living in the US could relate or what differences exist between myself and my participants.

Theoretical Framework

The major theory that guides this work is social identity theory, as presented by Hordge-Freeman and Versa (2020). In their study of Afro-Latinx people, Hordge-Freeman and Versa employ social identity theory, which they derive from Tajfel (1981), stating that one's identity is derived from "evaluating one's in-group favorably". In other words, social identity is formed through identifying positive characteristics about one's own group and associating those traits with one's self. In the context of Afro-Latinx people, Hordge-Freeman and Veras find that members of this community often see themselves as belonging to both in-group and out-group, because their identities as Latinx people are in contrast with the presumed ideas of what Latinx people look like. Hordge-Freeman and Versa also discuss the concept of ethnoracial dissonance, which refers to the a dysphoric response to contradicting ethnoracial schemas and experiences. For example, Afrolatinos may identify only as generically Latino and not identify as Black, yet at the same time recognize and deal with experiencing antiblackness as a result of visible African heritage. Others may identify as both Black and Latina/o/x without having either identity affirmed by others. Such experiences create a discrepancy between material lived experience and self-identification which causes dissonance and distress. This concept will be important in regards to understanding the process of identity formation among Afro-Latino people. It will also allow me to potentially understand how involvement in and influence from the Black Lives Matter movement impacts that identity forming process or even corresponds to the ethnoracial dissonance.

Literature Review

Investigating Afrolatino people in the United States in the time of Black Lives Matter rests on the answers to a few preliminary questions. Among them are: what is Latin America? Who are Afrolatinos? What are the ideological frameworks that shape Latino identity? What has been written on Black people in Latin America and on Black Latin Americans in the United States? What is the Black Lives Matter movement and how does it speak to Afro-Latino identity? In this section, I discuss the existing literature on these topics and tease out the questions left behind, the questions this study seeks to answer. In researching these topics I find that there is limited research done in reference to Black Latino involvement and impact within the Black Lives Matter movement and a lapse in dialogue about the shared antiblackness in both Latin America and Anglo-Saxon America, both of which I seek to address in this research. In all, the literature on this topic exists but is rather limited both in scope and variety.

This study is, first, informed by the idea of Latin America, not as a naturally formed geographical landmass, but as a political invention. Before any analysis about Latin America can really begin, it must first be understood what exactly Latin America is. Michel Gobat in his work *The Invention of Latin America*, stresses that the very idea of a “Latin America” comprising the former colonies of Romance-speaking European countries in South and Central America comes out of a number of European race-based nation-making theories (Gobat 2013, 1348). What is striking about Gabot’s analysis is that even among European-descended elites in the region, the idea of belonging to a “Latin” race has not always been a facet of self-identification, but in fact something that only came about in the early 1840s (Gobat 2013, 1350). Originally imagined to explain differences in culture between North American Euro-descendants and those in the

Southern Hemisphere in response to US expansionism, by the 1850s, the idea of a Latin race was associated with whiteness, as opposed to Africans and indigenous people, and aimed at linking the American continents with their imagined European counterparts (Gobat 2013, 1351-2). What I find most interesting in this work, in reference to this study, is that the original catalyst for a description of a “Latin race”, and therefore a “Latin America”, came in response to charges by Europeans and Anglo-Americans that the Central and South Americans were largely descended from miscegenation with Africans and Indigenous peoples. The white or white-adjacent elite of the different nation-states in “Latin America” combatted these allegations of miscegenation or racial inferiority with appeals to proximity to Latin Europe, going so far as to call non-whites in their countries “barbarians” (Gobat 2013, 1351). It serves to explore ways in which this tendency to view “Latinity” (as Gobat describes membership to the “Latin” race), or *latinidad*, in proximity to whiteness, as opposed to as an inherently mixed-race or multicultural experience. In other words, *latinidad* incorporates an inherent antiblackness and afrophobia as a conceptual, nation building project.

While the Black and Indigenous experiences within Latin America have both been racialized, it is vital for the purposes of this study to assess the different positions that Africans and Indigenous peoples held within Spanish colonial society, and the ways that these positionalities reflect through to the modern nation-states. Although the dominant narrative in Latin American studies has historically been centered on the *mestizo* (mixed-race) experience, I have come to recognize that the categorization of peoples into *mestizo* categories itself reflects the respective imagined positions of Africans, Indigenous peoples, and Europeans in the Spanish colonial system. Wade (2010), outlines that, by the 18th century, there was a clear delineation

between the position of Indigenous peoples (people to be protected) and that of Africans (people to be controlled)(26). These relationships seem to have been maintained even through the end of the 20th century, with Indigenous peoples movements throughout Latin America culminating in legal protections for various Indigenous groups (Hooker 2005, 285). While these treaties have been threatened under contemporary neoliberal coups and governments (such as Guaidó in Venezuela, Bolsonaro in Brazil, or Añez in Bolivia), such treaties have never existed for Black Latin Americans. There has been a long term paternalism for both communities on the part of Europeans and Eurodescendants, but an overall pretense of acceptance of the Indigenous peoples as a point of historical pride and national myth-making that has not been afforded to the African descendants of the region (Hooker 2005, 301)(Wade 2010, 31-33). Hooker notes that this trend throughout Latin America lacks exploration, but concludes that investigations into race in Latin American communities centering the Black experience are useful in further understanding the structures of racism that exist therein (2005, 309-310).

The *Mestizaje*, literally “miscegenation”, has historically been seen as a major explaining factor in Latin American racial identification and categorization. The dominant and prevailing narrative about Latin America is that most people are mixed-race, and as a result, issues of racism are not as prevalent as they are in the Northern Continent. The idea of ‘racial democracy’ (as this concept has been described in Brazil) has been recently challenged, and new investigations into the concept show that, far from equalizing, the narrative of *Mestizaje* was used throughout Latin America to silence Black and Indigenous peoples in favor of a white or “mestizo” experience. Even though the *Mestizaje* narrative proclaims a racial inclusivity, it serves to investigate the ways in which inclusivity was conditional upon acceptance of the

colonial order in terms of culture (for both the Africans and Indigenous peoples) and in terms of submission and control (specifically for the Africans) (Wade 2010, 33).

Mestizaje is often romantically presumed to be a universalizing experience within Latin America, one that tells the complex racial history of the region, and one that can be a means of “preserving” culture. Meredith E. Abarca (2015) speaks to this idea in terms of food, describing how Afrolatino and Caribbean foodways express cultural blending as a means of what she calls “cultural hegemonic resistance” through which African heritage can be preserved where visibly African people may not necessarily be present (103). However, Telles and Paschel’s research into four of the six countries in Latin America with the highest number of Afrodescendants shows that the conceptualization of *Mestizaje* and race varies widely between different countries for a number of historical reasons and that the named preservation of African heritage is not always part of the discourse (2015, 898). In investigating the self-identification of the darkest peoples in Panamá, Colombia, Brazil, and the Dominican Republic, the pair find that the variable of national origin can affect fluidity of self identification (Telles and Paschel 2015, 894). They challenge the narrative that “money whitens” and in fact find that the biggest determinant of racial self-identification in all four countries is phenotype rather than wealth (Telles and Paschel 2015, 898). Moreover, they note that “Beyond some similarities in racial mixture (*mestizaje*) narratives, the four countries we compare here seem to have developed racial schemas that map onto distinct kinds of *mestizaje* projects, unique histories of state intervention, and different degrees of mobilization by ethnoracial social movements” (Telles and Paschel 2015, 898), while also noting the transnational experience of Blackness.

In recent years, and as late as 2021, the question of navigating Latinidad through Blackness has become increasingly important for researchers. V.J. Nolasco of the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, explores how Blackness being positioned “outside of *Latinidad*” contributes to a meaning making that causes some Afro-Latinos to “discovering a new way of doing race that allowed them to embrace their identity and assert their belonging to the Latino community” (2020, 31). Nolasco’s ultimate assessment is that the way that Latinos are studied should be changed to be more inclusive to Afro-descendant experiences, thereby making the Latino experience more inclusive (2020, 32). In conjunction with this analysis, Hordge-Freeman and Veras have begun to investigate the “ethnoracial dissonance” of Black Latin Americans that comes as a result of “racial and ethnic policing, identity affirmation and contestation, and racial discovery” in both the family and in education (Hordge-Freeman and Veras 2019, 13). It seems that the 2020s are posed now to further investigate and problematize the relationship between Blackness and Latinidad, and even question whether or not these two concepts can be reconciled.

The last decade has been a tremendous time for movements for Black life and Black liberation within the Western Hemisphere. Most prominent and well known is the US-based Black Lives Matter movement, which became solidified following the acquittal of George Zimmerman, the murderer of Trayvon Martin. However, it should be noted that this momentum itself is not limited to the United States, as “the issue of whether ‘Black lives matter’ is not endemic to the United States” (Bowen and Legros et al 2017, 26). In reality the Black Lives Matter movement has not only been adopted within Latin America, but there are other movements that have come in direct response to Latin American antiblackness and structural racism. A number of scholars have made note of the deep links between Latin American and

North American anti-racist activism, and in the 2017 publication *A Hemispheric Approach to Contemporary Black Activism*, Bowen and Legros, along with four activists from various national origins, make the point that Black activism throughout the Americas exists in a continuum in both time (ie. from slavery to today) and geography, which is to say that as long as there have been Africans and Afrodescendants in the Americas, the movements for their liberation have been transnational. They exemplify this point by showing how the Black Lives Matter movement and other US based movements have recently connected with Black activist organizations in Latin America. For example, in her contribution to this literature, Tianna Paschel talks about how “a Massachusetts chapter of BLM, along with the Afro-Colombian Solidarity Network, initiated a fundraising campaign to support Black women in the northern Cauca region of Colombia” (Bowen and Legros et al 2017, 28) and makes note of the fact that this is far from the first time that transnational networking between Black peoples in North and South America have been formed, that in fact these activists were drawing on networks formed in the 20th century (28). However, she states that despite these links, that “the African diaspora outside of the US has remained somewhat peripheral”, and that it is important to note that there are local movements in Colombia (and presumably other places in Latin America) that are running parallel to, but independently from Black Lives Matter and other US-based movements. Paschel asks us to investigate a number of questions and draws a very firm conclusion:

“How have Black people in Latin America articulated their own versions of a politics against their dehumanization, not only recently but for centuries? When we define the Black Lives Matter movement beyond a hashtag and a specific organizational configuration, we find that Afro-Latin Americans, just like African Americans in the

U.S., have long articulated demands to be recognized as fully human.” (Bowen and Legros et al 2017,29)

Similarly, in the same publication, Juliet Hooker explores the ways in which Black American activists can take inspiration from Black Latin American activists in her aptly named essay “What Black Lives Matter can Learn from Black Movements in Latin America”. Her major point is that “It would be a mistake, however, to frame a discussion of contemporary transnational Black politics in terms of how Black movements outside the United States are adopting the banner of BLM,” because these movements throughout the Western Hemisphere “originate from within their own communities and respond to local concerns.”(Bowen and Legros et al 2017, 34). Hooker challenges those of us living in the US to abandon reductive or essentializing thinking and embrace the idea that Latin American Black people are already keenly aware of their positionality and history in many ways, and that there are contemporary movements in Latin America that predate the Black Lives Matter movement (Bowen and Legros et al 2017, 35). In truth, all of the contributions to that work point to the idea that within Latin America, Black people not only actively identify as Black, but also that there are active movements with the purpose of liberation for their communities that come from addressing specific historical and material struggles, independent from but in alignment with Black movements in North America, Africa, and other parts of the African diaspora.

Through this literature, I am identifying alternate views of Blackness among Latin Americans to problematize the idea of racial paradise within Latin America and Latin American cultures and expose that Black people have been ostracized by the wider (and whiter) framework of Latinidad, and that speaks to how liberation movements within Latin America must begin to

understand themselves. The distinction between Africans and Europeans in Latin America was foundational to its development and the palenques and quilombos of those who practiced Marronage in the early colonial periods are the evidence. This study argues that in times of crisis for Black people, there are certain Latin Americans who are mobilized to make sense of their identities and they are those who are of visible African descent. I believe that the literature will benefit from investigation into the lives of Black Latin Americans living in the United States, under a racial system that perhaps necessitates reevaluation of one's identity. What this particular project will also add to the literature is an analysis of the impact of Black Lives Matter and the wider movement for Black liberation that has taken hold within the United States. Identity becomes particularly important when it is under threat, and the Black Latin American community has been under that threat since the invention of *latinidad* and the incessant encroaching of antiblackness against our African heritage. Additionally, Black Latin Americans themselves are under threat in the United States, as overpolicing seldom differentiates between groups of Black people. In essence, the context of Black liberation is a vital part of studying Latin Americans of African descent, and in this case, US based movements and their effects on Latin American Black people's self perception.

Research Questions

The major questions that guide my research come first out of what Vargas describes as “a dearth of information about the invisible population of Afro-descendants in the Americas” (2016, 338). Truly, what seems to be missing in much of the literature on Afro-Latin Americans is their racialized experiences within the United States. Therefore, my first question is “how do US conceptualizations of race contribute to invisibility for Black Latin Americans and what are the

implications of this invisibility?” Black Latin Americans in the United States are situated in a place of racial invisibility (García-Louis 2019) and that must have some effect on how they understand themselves within the racial framework of the United States, therefore my second question is “how do Black Latin Americans see themselves along lines of a US racial schema, and how much is that influenced by racial schemas in Latin America?” A third question relates to the effect of the Black Lives Matter moment on Black Latin American identity: How and to what extent has the Black Lives Matter movement opened the door to exploring Black identity among Latin Americans who live in the United States? What are the implications of a transnational understanding of Black Lives Matter? Finally, I would like to know, what is the role that Mestizaje plays in all of this? How does the prevalence of racial mixing within Latin America come into play when Latin Americans in the United States are perceived as Black? I believe that these guiding questions will lead to interesting perspectives on the internal and external pressure that Black Latin Americans regularly handle in a United States context.

Investigating the People Themselves: Methodology

In order to answer these stirring questions, a survey and subsequent interviews were conducted. In so doing, I was able to capture a cross section of the influence of Latin American racial frameworks on US Latino populations, the impact of invisibility among US Afro-Latinos, and also the extent to which the Black Lives Matter movement has inspired a reclamation of Black identity among US Afro-Latinos. The major finding is a sense of shared experience among Afro-Latino people, which is to say that despite clear distinctions between different participants, Afro-Latinos living in the United States tend to have many similarities in terms of identity and experience. Among these similarities are discourses on racial mixing within the family, the feeling of isolation from other Black communities and overcoming it, and empowerment in struggle and resistance. There also exists a dialogue about the validity and utility of the Latino label. Each of the people that I interviewed was asked about what *Latinidad* meant to them, and this question elicited a number of contrasting and nuanced responses from which the Latino identity could be problematized or redeemed.

The initial stage of this investigation was a survey conducted through social media. Social media is increasingly being used as a methodological tool in ethnographic research, as was seen in Postill and Pink's *Social Media Ethnography: The Digital Researcher in a Messy Web* (2012). Here, the duo speak about their use of social media in the investigation of social movements and activism and the implications of the use of social media as a research tool. Their ultimate conclusion is that "understanding the work of the social media ethnographer as mobile

is important for gaining a sense of the shifting intensities of the social media landscape as it emerges online, but also as it is interwoven with offline activities” (Postill and Pink 2012, 12), which is to say that online and offline work needs to be explored, that the researcher has to bring both things together. In this case, I used a survey form through the Google Drive application and transmitted it through Instagram. The survey entitled *Latino Survey for Black Lives*, was targeted towards anyone over the age of 18, of any race, who identified as Latino, and who lived in the United States, with the purpose of investigating their opinions and responses to the Black Lives Matter movement. I received 28 responses from people who ranged from 20 years old to over 65 years old, with various backgrounds and perspectives. Of those 28, about 82% of them were born in the United States, with two participants born in Venezuela. There were 10 respondents who indicated that they were born in Puerto Rico; it should be noted that due to Puerto Rico’s political status as a colonial territory of the United States, and the subsequent discourse over the legitimacy of that status, it is likely that some of those 10 responded that they were born in the United States, while others responded that they were not, although this cannot be seen in the survey. The majority of the survey respondents resided in Florida, with others living in Texas, New York City, Wisconsin, and one who had recently moved from New York City to San Juan, Puerto Rico. About 57% of the respondents had lived in the United States for their entire lives, while another 10% had lived in the United States for over 10 years. The remainder had lived in the United States between 1 and 10 years, with about 7% responding between 1 and 5.

The survey sample was also diverse in terms of their countries of origin. The majority of the participants were of Puerto Rican descent, with others of Dominican, Cuban, Mexican, Guatemalan, Venezuelan, and Colombian descent. A few of the Puerto Rican descent people

were of mixed heritage, some of them of American descent, a few of Dominican descent, and one of Eritrean descent. One participant reported being of Jamaican descent, which is interesting because Jamaica is often not included in Latin America, despite having initially been colonized by Spain alongside the islands of Cuba, Boriken (Puerto Rico), and Ayiti (Hispaniola; Haiti and the Dominican Republic). Moreover, it may have come in reference to the fact that there exist deep links between Afro-Jamaican people and Latin America due to immigration. It has been found that “the overwhelming majority that left Jamaica for Latin America realized that the fire of oppression was just as rife abroad as it was in Jamaica” (Barima, 58) It is in that spirit, in experiencing antiblackness in Latin America that certain Jamaican civil leaders, such as Rastafari founder Leonard Howell, came to understand the global nature of antiblackness (Barima 59).

The largest component of this survey responded as being of mixed racial background, about 43% (12 people), with the next largest component being Black, at about 39% (11 people). 28% (8 people) identified as white, 7% (2 people) as Indigenous/Native American. One person responded that their race was “*Cafe con leche*” (“coffee with milk”, a euphemistic phrase indicating someone of African or mixed African descent with rather light brown skin). Another indicated that they were “Puerto Rican/Black”, which may point to the perception that Puerto Rican is a racial category.

In terms of the perceptions regarding Black Lives Matter, there were a variety of responses, ranging from trepidation about the movement to full support of the movement with appropriate criticism of the leadership. All participants had knowledge about the movement, and there were various specific feelings expressed about the movement and associated organization.

Through this investigation, and in addition to the survey, I was able to conduct interviews with five individuals from various Latin American heritages, age groups, and socioeconomic backgrounds. I chose to conduct interviews because I wanted to have a deeper connection with my participants and hear them speak their minds on their own words. This process succeeded in bringing out these connections and I felt I was able to really see the depth to which these folks had put thought into their beliefs and ideas about their experiences with anti-Blackness. Each of these people had unique perspectives, and yet there were certain things that each of them said that were in line with the others. The interviews were extremely insightful and spoke to the diverse yet unifying experiences that Afro-Latin Americans face when living in the United States. They were conducted in a variety of ways, mainly over phone calls, but I also interviewed one participant who was local in person, which presented an opportunity to see reactions to questions in real time. The interviews lasted about an hour and a half on average. With the permission of my participants, I was able to record the audio of the interviews, which I was then able to transcribe for further analysis. Through all of these interviews, the questions that I had initially wanted to answer came alive and became transformed into new questions and new ideas for further investigation.

Conversations on Latinidad: Questions, Responses, Thoughts and Analyses

The major substance of my investigation was found in deep conversation with members of the US Afrolatino community about their own experiences with and ideas about antiblackness within the larger Latino community. In many ways, these dialogues helped me to find exactly where I, the researcher, am situated as an Afro-Puerto Rican who was born and raised in the American South. I was able to connect with all of my participants, and I often found myself discovering additional questions through the insights of the participants. Each one of them brought a unique and colorful perspective and a range of experiences that pointed to a number of trends that should be investigated more, for a longer time and at a wider range. In this section, I use pseudonyms for each participant to protect their privacy.

Clara—“Latinidad is a united front”

The first interview I conducted was a phone interview with a very well educated spiritual worker of Afro-Cuban descent in her 30s. Getting started on the call was a bit awkward; the recording app that I was initially using was a bit difficult to navigate and we had to initiate the call a few times before we could actually get started. Once we got started, however, the conversation was delightful, informative, and warm. She and I had previously connected on social media and had some correspondence, and she indicated that this was what had prompted her to participate. She was very open about her experiences growing up in rural Florida, the awakening she had through her religion, and how her religion connects her both to African and Cuban identity and how these experiences affected her identity growing up. Her way of speaking

was extremely clear and vibrant, and it was obvious that she had given a lot of thought to many of the ideas that I presented long before this conversation. This clarity of speech and thought spoke both to her education -- she has a Master's in Communications-- and to her knowledge of self and community.

We began by speaking about her identity, her heritage, and the early life experiences that shaped her understanding of race and ethnicity, which she indicated started at a very young age. She was born in Miami, Florida to Afro-Cuban parents who had moved to the United States in the 1960s. She moved to a rural part of Florida when she was a child, and she indicated that this is where her understanding of identity really started to take form. The transition from a culturally diverse urban area to a much more rural county in Florida brought this participant to face the idea of having to choose an identity -- between 'Black' and 'Hispanic'-- as presented to her by other Black people. She remarked, "When I was a teenager, growing up in a rural area, I had to confront having to choose my identity...by Black Americans, not by white, but Black Americans" which she stated caused her to have issues with her identity into her twenties. The ostracization from non-Latin Black people in her community seemed particularly hurtful because she saw herself reflected in their faces but rejected despite that because of the culture she happens to be from. She had not seen a difference between herself and Black Americans but that idea was imposed on her.

We moved on to more conceptual conversation, beginning with a discourse on the meaning of Blackness. She stated that Blackness is "as diverse as the continent of Africa", that the idea of being Black is a multifaceted and expansive concept that does not look any one particular way but a multitude of ways, both physically and culturally. For this participant,

Blackness is the diverse expression of African heritage that is manifested throughout the diaspora in various ways and what links Black people together is the direct connection to Africa, which itself is an expansive and heterogenous continent of many cultures. This idea has developed despite the ostracization that she experienced in her childhood and perhaps began developing in direct response to it.

In a similar discourse, she said that Latinidad in her perception is about a united front to understand the diversity of Latin America while also respecting and honoring the people as all being Latino. This answer seemed to suggest that Latinidad is not something intrinsic, like Blackness, but more about a commitment to honoring diversity under a united framework. For this participant, Latino identity is about transnational unity within the region, and unity of diverse populations within each country of the region. However, she identified a multitude of issues of racism and antiblackness within Latino cultures. She feels that white supremacy in Latin America and Latino communities is “the same thing” as that of Anglo-American communities, and that the ideas of white supremacy expand past just one region in the Western Hemisphere.

In particular, she spoke to the Afrophobia (that is, the fear and hatred of all things related to Africa and Africans) endemic to Latino cultures. As a practitioner of African religion, she expressed that her traditions are demonized. She spoke to the difference between treatment of African and Indigenous populations in colonial Latin America and how this is reflected in standards today, where indigeneity is partly accepted while Africanness is rejected. She also touched on the *levantar la raza* concept, which is the idea that one could elevate the race of the family by mixing with European descended people and lightening the skin. She expressed that

this idea is not pervasive in her family but that she has seen it discussed in her community. One thing that I noticed was that the discourse on “passing” in both Latin America and Anglo America she found to be remarkably similar and even stated that one is racialized not only by how one looks but also by where one is, and that passing as white is a verb rather than an adjective.

Finally, we discussed her perceptions about police brutality, Black Lives Matter and the recent uprisings that manifested in the summer of 2020. She stated that she has personally begun to make herself numb to the Black trauma that is perpetuated in the US. She describes herself as a supporter of the frontlines, but not on the frontlines herself, because the energy of the movements, while necessary, bears too hard on her soul. One thing that she speaks to is that her spirituality taps her into an empathetic mode that causes her psychological and emotional distress which also is present when she watches films that portray Black trauma. She also discusses the issues of misogynoir and how gender plays a role in the wider discussion of Black liberation. Black women and non-men are made secondary within the discourse despite having faced the brunt of racialized violence even within Black communities. She feels that stories like Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple* speaks heavily to the idea that Black liberation must center on gender liberation. We spoke on the idea of “Black and Brown solidarity” and she expressed major discomfort with it, describing it as a “paper bag test”. She felt that the idea of “brown” representing Latino erases Black Latinos, and also overlooks the fact that brown, non-Black Latinos often fail to acknowledge Black Latinos, especially among the older generations of Latin American people. She feels this is a generational issue primarily.

Overall, this interview was enlightening. This participant believes firmly in unity among African descendants and also in overcoming the “colonial brainwashing” that we in both Latin and Anglo America are exposed to, and it revitalized the necessity of this conversation. It was very affirming to hear from someone who had experienced similar things as I had in terms of misidentification, in terms of identity, and in terms of finding myself in the confusion. I felt connected to this participant in terms of her connection to both her own Caribbean, Latin American heritage in addition to her American upbringing. I found myself excited to discover more about what other people of similar backgrounds had to say about this.

Amparo—“It’s about culture and lifestyle”

The second interview was conducted in person with Amparo, a local student in her late 20s who is of Puerto Rican and African American descent. I had met this person years ago in a class and we had bonded over our shared heritage and experiences, so I was very happy to have her participate in this project. The interview was rather brief, the shortest one that I did, but also was full of great information. The ability to meet in person gave a more direct view of how she (and I myself) had to navigate as Black people in the world. Getting started on this interview presented a few challenges; it began to rain so we had to switch our venue. We went to a park in Downtown Tampa and had trouble finding the right place to settle, in part because we did not want to disturb anyone else there; there were families with their dogs and children playing, but I did notice that we were being looked at a few times as we tried to set up in a few different spots. Eventually, we found a bench near the river and began the interview.

Initially, she stated that she came “from all over”, but we focused particularly on her Puerto Rican heritage. Her experience was very nuanced; she was born in New York, and shortly moved

to Puerto Rico and lived there until she was 10 years old, when she moved to the States. This participant identified similarly to the previous, as an American of Puerto Rican and African American descent, whose cultural identity was centered on Puerto Rico. Pretty early into the interview, she mentioned that it was difficult to connect her Blackness to her Puerto Rican identity because of antiblackness within the Puerto Rican (and Latin American in general) community. In fact, this interview quickly went into her experiences with antiblackness, which she first experienced from her own family.

She talked about the fact that even before she was born, her grandmother told her mother that by having a baby with someone darker than her, this participant's mother was “*dañando la raza*”, ruining the race of the family. This clearly indicates that some of the standards of race that exist in Latin America are imposed on Afrolatino children even before birth, which is to say that in life, these standards are consistent. She also spoke about the antiblackness she experienced in Puerto Rico. There, she was criticized by other people of (sometimes partial) African descent for having features that more visibly identified her as Black, including her hair texture and facial features. After moving back to the States at around 10, she felt that she had adopted an Americanized lifestyle, wanting to assimilate to fit in, but in recent years, she stated that she’s traveled to Puerto Rico and reconnected with the cultural identity there. One thing she mentioned was that while antiblackness is prevalent in Puerto Rico, it manifests itself in different ways that she feels would have influenced her to identify differently than she does having grown up in the United States. Additionally, she feels that had she grown up in Puerto Rico, her blackness itself would have been more influenced directly by Afro-Puerto Rican culture than Black American culture. She stated: “I think on the island I would have categorized myself differently because I

probably would have gotten in contact more with those roots like getting older as compared to, um, trying to classify myself as an American growing up and uh trying to fit in with a group that wasn't necessarily like intended for me."

The major discourse in this section was that race is seen "differently" in Puerto Rico and that very highly affects how people identify, which she has felt the effects of by living in both places. According to this participant, while in Puerto Rico, people can be hostile towards people of African descent, it is likely that those people of African descent will still be seen as Puerto Rican as long as they are assimilated into the culture, whereas in the United States, Black people are almost always othered in a distinct way. This is, of course, not to suggest that social segregation is not common in Puerto Rico or among Puerto Ricans, as there are whole towns in Puerto Rico that are nearly exclusively Black or white, but that the nation-building mythology in Puerto Rico, at least according to this participant, allows for Black people to be tentatively accepted while also made to feel lesser.

We moved on to the meaning-making section of the interview. When asked about what blackness means to her, the participant stated that, initially, blackness was deeply connected to her physical attributes (brown skin, hair texture, facial features, etc), whereas now blackness is a fuller experience; beyond just *being* physically Black, there is an expression and struggle that comes along with that idea. Blackness for this participant is connected to the idea of self-definition and challenging stereotypes and being boxed in. There are social, cultural, and economic considerations that go along with being Black and this is part of how this participant's identity is understood. In reference to Latinidad, this participant made it clear that she does identify as Latina, and specifically as Afrolatina, but that this label has more to do with culture

and lifestyle. This label is socially constructed and speaks to the kind of food or music one might listen to more so than it does to race and what one should look like. At the same time, this participant said that this identity at times feels oppressive; there are certain social structures within this community that also boxes her in. In both cases, it seems that the participant has a very constructivist understanding of her race and ethnicity. She wears both labels together, and proudly indicates *Afrolatina* as her identity, but uses it in such a way to challenge the preconceived ideas of what both Black and Latina mean in the world.

Speaking on the inherent antiblackness and racism within Latinidad in general and in her own culture in particular, she found that many non-Black Latinos, especially those who are not from the Caribbean, often fail to recognize the presence of Black people within their countries and Latin America in general. One example she gave was that she has also been “mistaken” for Dominican by other non-Black Latino people. This speaks to the fact that Latinidad is constructed in such a way that Black people are excluded, have to choose between their Blackness or their Latinidad, or are assumed to exclusively be found in countries that are predominantly Black and not in the majority of Latin America. There is an idea that this participant pushes against, which is that *Afrolatinidad* is something novel. She makes it clear that one major challenge is having to educate people on the long history of African presence in Latin America. She feels that there is a lack of Afrolatino people pushing against casual antiblackness that creates a further challenge for self-aware Black Latinos.

I inquired about her experiences with non-Black Puerto Ricans, whether she has had any negative experiences, and she further spoke on her family’s own antiblackness. Many people in her family do not present as Black people despite African heritage, and as a result, she has been

ostracized even within her own family. Colorism seems to be a huge issue within Latino families. The predominant idea is that white and lighter skinned people are more desirable, and that features that are associated with Native American peoples are accepted in darker skinned individuals, whereas specific facial and physical features associated with African people are disparaged and relegated to the bottom, and she experienced this directly from family members. Within Puerto Rico, she states that there is a tentative acceptance of Black people that exists in contradiction to the very deeply held antiblack, Afrophobic beliefs that exist within the culture. She speaks to the fact that the African influence in Puerto Rico is extremely visible and evident, but the African-ness of this influence is erased. Many people in Puerto Rico seem to not realize that so much of the culture is itself African-based, from food and dance to religion.

Moving on to the movement for Black lives and liberation, she felt that it is important for Black people from all over the diaspora to recognize the oppression that they face, despite the fact that there are organizational issues. She feels that the movements should expand and focus on the African diaspora in general. She feels herself represented in this struggle, but feels that many Latinos would fail to see themselves in the movement because of the internalized antiblackness among these people. She does feel that the ethnic differences between Black Americans and Black Latinos may cause tensions within this struggle, and that this kind of disunity between different Black ethnic groups creates internal prejudice and further reify racist ideologies. She feels that there is a particular distaste other people in the African diaspora have against African Americans, which she indicates is a major problem for liberation. Finally, in terms of the discourse on “Black and Brown solidarity”, she felt that she would love to see such solidarity exist, but that the experiences of “brown” people are not the same as Black people’s

experiences. She feels it is something that is being built rather than something that exists. More importantly, she sees a lot of issues with the terminology itself is confusing both because “brown” can indicate many communities and all of those communities also have Black people within them.

We ended the interview at around a half hour, as her dog started to complain, but in that short amount of time a great deal of information was shared. This participant had a significantly nuanced and multifaceted understanding of the topic. Her own experiences seem to inform how she understands the concepts behind blackness and latinidad and how she navigates the space between those labels. Amparo’s perspective gives excellent insight into the processes of Americanization and re-acculturation for Afrolatinos, as she has had to experience the enforced dichotomy of Blackness and Latinidad. She is someone who challenges boundaries imposed upon both Black women and Latinas, and works towards a world that has liberated all oppressed peoples. I believe this interview opened a few doors in terms of how further conversations should be navigated and I thoroughly appreciated and enjoyed investigating this topic with someone who has strong opinions on the topic. Concluding this interview left me with the drive to further the investigation. I hoped to see what kinds of ideas would be manifested next, if the other participants would share Amparo’s understanding of her identity and, if not, where they would diverge

William –“I actively refuse, I will not comply”

My third interview was very interesting, informative, and is where things began to get shaken up in terms of construction of identity. I had a phone call with this participant which I was able to record more easily than my previous phone interview. This participant had very

recently relocated to Puerto Rico from New York City, as a form of protest against the US occupation of the island nation and as such he stated that he was “becoming a different person as the days go by” and in getting to know that new person, he was coming to new understandings of his identity and how living in the United States had affected that. He identified himself as a community organizer, which is how he had described himself before moving to Puerto Rico, as well as an artist and an historian and genealogist by passion. All of these identities combined to inform his decision to “rematriate”, to return to his motherland after spending the beginning of his life in the United States. The fact that he had recently relocated allowed for an interesting insight on the tangible differences between life as a Black person in a Puerto Rican context and in the context of living in the United States, something that I had not initially anticipated being able to see in this study but that I appreciated fully. Similar to the first participant, I had previously interacted with this participant on social media, in particular about our shared Afro-Puerto Rican heritage and I was excited that he had done the survey and volunteered to interview. His perspectives were refreshing and his way of speaking and clear passion for the topic inspired the longest of the interviews taken.

William was born and raised in New York City to a Puerto Rican mother and an Afro-Dominican father, and identifies primarily with his Puerto Rican heritage and culture. When I asked about the extent to which he felt the US influenced his national identity, he quickly responded “I do not identify as American at all”, which was a major shift from the previous interviews. Most of my participants up to this point had indicated that they felt they had been “Americanized” and could identify themselves as American in addition to Black and Latino. This participant said “I am Puerto Rican before anything” in terms of national identity and “actively

refuse[s]” to identify as American. He believes that this identity was imposed on Puerto Ricans and is a facet of the colonization of that country. Throughout the entire interview, this Puerto Rican identity was proudly, unapologetically proclaimed, and it brought a great deal of brightness to the conversation. In fact, this interview was one of the most comfortable and naturally flowing conversations I had in this investigation. With reference to his blackness, he felt that “this is where things get a bit complex” because while he identifies as Afro-Puerto Rican, it’s actually the Dominican side of his family that his blackness comes from. His Puerto Rican family has African heritage, but many of them are mixed race and somewhat racially ambiguous whereas his father is apparently presumed to be African American more often than not, and socially registers as such more so than Afrolatino. It was because of this that he could not see a major difference between Afro-Latino people and African Americans until much later in life.

Something that was refreshing about this interview was that this participant seemed to answer questions I had not yet had a chance to ask. For example, I had not yet asked about what “Latino” meant, and before I knew it we were problematizing the label and how it gets applied to different people based on phenotype. For this participant, Blackness and Latinidad are both extremely fungible concepts. He would often refer to famous African American people as a reference point for the features and complexions some of his Puerto Rican family members had and I believe this was done as a way to break down the border between Black Americans and Black Latin Americans and complicate the narrative a bit more.

One major theme in this interview was the topic of mixed race people within families and what role the racial mixing plays. In his family, he stated that there are some lines that have

assimilated into white American culture and as such have very light skinned, fair haired children, whereas other lines are “brown” and connected to Puerto Rican culture. When we discussed the meaning of Blackness, he stated that there are two factors that tie into it: genealogical blackness from ancestors and then direct blackness from at least one parent, and so it’s possible that someone might have “very little European genetic contribution” but still present with some European features and identify as Black because of how connected they are to Black cultures. I could understand a bit clearly what he meant by the complexity of blackness when he spoke to this idea. The mixed backgrounds of Afrolatinos create a very nuanced and diverse conversation around Latin American blackness. This participant’s background as a genealogist helped to discuss the ways in which race can be constructed in Latin American conceptions of identity.

We moved on to discuss what “Latino” means and this was a space in which the two of us both found ourselves agreeing with how we conceive of Latino identity. For him, the major part of this is that “Latino” can and should mean anyone who comes from a Latin-based language speaking within the Americas. One thing that he found interesting is that Italian Americans, for example, are not included in the category of “Latino”, despite the fact that they are direct descendants of the original Latin people. He spoke to the idea that “Latinidad is a farce”, which is to say that it is applied incorrectly. That which comes directly from Africa and Indigenous communities is ascribed to “Latino cultures” in Latin America, but that which comes directly from Latin Europe often gets detached from “Latinidad”. This participant was adamant about the true origins of the people who are considered Latinos in the United States, which is more often than not of African or Indigenous origin in reality. It was refreshing to find that this participant had a full criticism of the Latino label and could analyze how the language that we use in Puerto

Rico is influenced by African language. Latinidad is, for this participant, a continuation of colonization and something to be challenged. In discussing the issues within Latinidad regarding race, he mentioned that he felt the first thing is breaking down the idea that all Latinos are the same, both in terms of different nationalities and also within specific cultures. In the Puerto Rican case, he felt deconstructing the *tres razas* theory, that Puerto Ricans all come from a mixture of Spaniards, Tainos, and Africans (in that order) was of the utmost importance because it obfuscates the reality that a “white creole elite” rules the island nation at the disadvantage of the African descendants living there, who come from that land. He referred to the violence of that ideology as “crabs in a bucket” and that it was a major aspect of the continued oppression in Puerto Rico.

The deconstruction of Latinidad was a very nuanced and riveting discussion. This participant had the most to say about that specific identity and the challenges that come with it. We moved on from there to discuss the Black Lives Matter Movement and general Black liberation movements, which led to another nuanced discussion. One thing made very clear was that while these movements are vital, there are some areas where US-centric lenses are used. He stated that some of the major issues are assumptions about what Blackness looks like or how it operates within a Latin American context. In particular, he felt that sometimes people assume that race relations in places like Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic are relatively peaceful and unproblematic as compared to the United States, when in fact in each of those countries, the internal contradictions of racism and antiblackness are very much intact. In reference to the concept of “Black and Brown Solidarity”, he felt similar to the previous participants. He does not ascribe to the belief that all Latinos are “brown” and he also feels that

the concept is a misnomer because nonblack Latinos consistently do not accept Black Latinos in their communities. Above all, he felt that it is extremely important not only to include Black Latinos in the US and Black Latin Americans in general in discussions of Black liberation and justice, but also to not impose US conceptions of antiblackness onto Latin Americans, because the conditions in each context are diverse and unique. This take on the Black Lives Matter movement was both consistent with what other participants said and also augmented by this participant's wealth of knowledge.

In fact, I believe that this participant's knowledge about not only the specific topic but also the fields of genealogy, history, geography, religion, language, and popular culture all contributed to an extremely multifaceted and deep conversation about the identities that come out of a very diverse African diaspora and the underlying logics that inform those identities. He is someone whose commitment to his own identity and his own nation has led him to consider these things from the perspectives of others, both those who are related to his culture and those that are far removed. I was genuinely inspired by this participant in the way that he spoke with certainty and clarity in his beliefs, and I feel that his contribution to this project is significant and will help shape further study into this topic. Most of all, I found that this interview shaped my subsequent ideas about how participants engaged with the questions I asked and the ideas that I presented.

Zee – “Blackness is about community”

My fourth interview was a phone interview with Zee, a young person in their mid 20s of Afro-Dominican descent. This participant is a friend of mine who had initially indicated interest in my project when I first introduced it to them and followed up with that interest by taking the

survey and volunteering for the interview. I found this interview to be informative and helpful, especially for understanding the extent to which growing up in the United States can affect the identities and experiences of Afrolatino people in families with lighter skinned individuals. This participant's perspectives were refreshing and unique from the other interviewees; they are the youngest person that I interviewed, being just a few months younger than myself, and I felt that there were many things I related to when it came to discussing life experiences and identity.

Initially, we had a bit of trouble getting the recording started, and had a bit of an issue with connection, but after handling the connectivity issue, we began the interview. They were born in New York and identified themselves as Dominican-American, from a fully Dominican family. One thing that they mentioned early on, after being asked about the influence that growing up in the United States has had was that, until very recently, they identified more with American mainstream culture rather than with Dominican identity. However they stated that they felt tired of assimilating and adjusting the way they identified to be more palatable for such people as employers, and wanted to embrace their Dominican identity, to be true to their heritage and to themselves. In terms of racial identification, they stated that they identify as Black racially, but that this identity was something that had to be embraced because they had had various terms ascribed to them as races, such as "Hispanic" or "Latinx", by family and others. They stated that there was a confusion that they had to deal with growing up because members of her family, including her mother, who were visibly Black, would specifically deny that they were Black in favor of these more generalized and 'palatable' identities and that the topic of race was considered impolite. As a result, despite having a clear identity as a Black person, the ideology in the home and in other social settings made them feel othered and a lack of confidence in their

identity. In contrast to other participants, this participant's national identity as a Dominican-American feels disconnected from their Blackness, which is to say that to be Dominican to this participant did not necessarily indicate that they could or should be considered Black and this is directly as a result of the family's refusal of Black identification. It was made clear early on that this participant had experienced a great deal of resistance against making a connection to their Blackness from their family, which informed the rest of the interview. I believe that this mindset from the participant's family speaks to a much wider spread issue within both Dominican culture and the wider Latino community at large.

We discussed a bit more how their family structure influenced racial identification growing up. They stated that their father's family, while being of African descent, generally has pale skin and enforced a belief that because of this, they could not be considered Black at all. This ideology was also adopted by their mother, who is significantly darker in color and phenotypically presents as someone of Black African descent and she enforced this belief in her children. It is a significant revelation that at times, Black people themselves are the ones who police identity in antiblack ways. Something that Zee noted was that they are the darkest of their cousins and that this was the source of a great deal of ridicule and criticism from the lighter skinned members of their family. Zee shared a bit about the antiblackness they experienced, in particular from their paternal grandmother, explaining "I mean in terms of the kids I am the darkest skinned, so I was really the other. All the family friends, they all loved me, and they would compliment me and tell me I was beautiful. But everyone in the family made sure that I hated my frizzy hair, hated my dark skin, that I did not like myself for being the darkest one. My grandma for example, any time we had, like, a Black friend or a Black significant other, she

would get real nervous and start saying really awful things. My grandma on my dad's side of the family, even if we wore the color black she would get nervous.”

In fact, later on in the interview, Zee revealed that they do not speak Spanish and that this is largely because they learned early on that adults in the family would use Spanish language to speak negatively about their features that are associated with blackness (such as skin color, hair texture, facial features, etc). I realized that something that growing up in the United States might do to a person of Afro-Latin American descent is create an environment where one might dissociate from Latinidad in terms of language and culture to avoid additional antiblackness from Spanish speaking communities. This revelation was significant for me because it spoke to the ways in which Latinidad persecutes Black people and reinforces the narrative of “choice”, that Black Latinos have to choose an identity.

We also spoke more specifically on other ways that the participant had been affected in terms of identity by living in the United States. Zee felt that living in the United States has had an influence on every part of their life, from food and music as well as language and culture. They did feel that there were places in which they felt connected to Dominican culture, especially in areas that are highly populated or frequented by Dominicans in the parts of Florida in which the participant has lived, but that most often they were exposed to American culture. They grew up in a predominantly white part of Florida and felt that this may have influenced their self perception and some of their interests, but recalled times in which they were in the company of other Black children and remembered feeling an unspoken connection to them that was reciprocated in that white community.

In the theoretical part of the interview, the participant offered an interesting meaning for blackness; blackness to this person, beyond African heritage and phenotypic identification, is about community. They stated that they felt blackness means supporting other Black people and being caring towards the community. To uplift people in their struggle, providing space for expression, providing safety for vulnerable communities, these things defined blackness, and this was in part because of their own background in material struggle and facing housing insecurity. This perspective was a break from the other answers I had received to this question. I felt that while most people's answers were centered on individual, personal experience, that this participant connected blackness primarily in community support among people of African descent. Black people for this participant have a tendency to be communal and honor fellowship and this perspective offered an insight into the cultural meaning of blackness.

On another note, Latinidad for Zee is something primarily about pride. They referred to their family's own pride not only about culture, but also in a general sense of pride in accomplishments and in their positions. I asked whether there were any spaces in which they had felt excluded from other Latinos, and they felt that they had not been excluded, but that their blackness itself was not always accepted. We spoke to how Latinos in the US tended to interact with Black people in general, and they felt that they had really encountered the most racism and antiblackness from within their family, but that other families and people within the Latino communities that they have been around have generally not expressed a lot of hostility towards Black people in their presence. With that said, the hostility that their family had expressed towards them was extreme and contributed to a great deal of confusion and self-consciousness. What came out of understanding the dynamic of this family was the realization that sometimes, if

one can get away with distancing themselves from a Black identification, they may be adamant about that and criticize any and all attempts to bridge that gap, and this is made clear in the case of many Latinos within the United States. The disconnect between the African heritage of many Dominicans and Dominican culture was made evident by this participant in that they did not know that many aspects of the culture are directly descended from West African cultures, and this seems to be something that is not made clear to many Afrodescendants from Latin America.

We finally spoke to the concepts of police brutality and the Black lives matter movement. In reference to the concept of Black and Brown Solidarity, they had heard this term and did not necessarily see a problem with it. However, Zee identified that while they have seen solidarity among Black people and non-Black Latinos personally, this solidarity is not very widespread and is inconsistent. They mentioned that they had experienced police harassment and negligence and attributed at least in part due to their race and their presumed gender and that the police had specifically acted in dehumanizing ways towards them even though it did not escalate in that case. They mentioned that there are disparities between policing in white and Black communities in Florida and had found that in communities that have more older people present tended to have very relaxed policing, whereas in communities with more diversity and youth there tended to be more policing, and in these more heavily policed areas, they felt they had witnessed callousness and dehumanization from police especially towards Black people. This discussion on policing helped solidify that, in many ways, Afro-Latinos are at the same risk of police misconduct as African Americans, because we are identified as Black first.

Zee's responses were unique and addressed some different issues than the previous participants. Their identity had been very clearly influenced both by proximity to non-Latino

people and American culture as well as by their family's resistance to identifying as Black and the antiblackness that their family specifically imposed upon them. I found that much of what this participant experienced in terms of antiblackness did come from the family, and as a result, this participant expressed having struggled with their identity and finding themselves in appreciation of their blackness. However, it was clear that they are today very proud of their heritage and embracing an identity that they have worked towards creating for themselves. To struggle with antiblackness from family members is assuredly hurtful, and it dawned on me that this experience may be much more common than it was within this study. I thoroughly appreciated this participant's perspectives and the things I was taught in this discussion.

Caridad –“Light-skinned privilege should be recognized”

My final interview was particularly special. This participant is my godmother and my mother's cousin, Caridad, and this connection made this part of the investigation very exciting, and also put much of my own identity into perspective. In other words, investigating someone from my own family allowed me to understand that even within the same family, Black Latinos could have vastly different experiences and outcomes. In this interview, the major takeaway was the influence that Black American culture and identity in particular can have on the identities of Afro-Latinos, and how identity can be a bit pliant and multifaceted. I learned much about my godmother in this interview, but I also learned about myself and my own family, which provided an additional value to this project.

Caridad gave me the most thorough introduction, stating “I am a middle aged woman, I present very much as Black, Afro descended. My parents are um, my mother is Puerto Rican and my father is Panamanian of West Indian heritage from Jamaica and Barbados. I was born in

Panamá but I grew up in the United States from the age of 4, my parents moved when I was 4 so I've had all my education in the United States first in Silver Springs, Maryland and then as an adult I lived in New York City and I've been living in New York City for about thirty years now". Having spent a career in childhood art education and community activism, Caridad is very well educated and speaks with great clarity and focus, making sure to communicate her perspectives with precision. I asked how she identifies nationally, and we had this exchange:

- V: How do you identify yourself in terms of nationality? And that can be, like me for example, I say I'm Puerto Rican but when I get into it I'm like "oh I'm Panamanian, Guatemalan, " you know, so. Like if someone asked you, hey where are you from? How would you respond?
- C: yeah I do the whole spiel, I'm like. If someone is present with me, like if we were in the same place, I would say "oh I'm Puerto Rican and Panamanian but I grew up in the United States".
- V: okay, so then
- C: cause this is assuming that they can see me that they can already see I'm a Black person. That doesn't have to be stated.
- V: you don't have to say that, it's more a matter of "where you come from?"
- C: which, and I'm sure we'll get into it, but people don't often ask me that. They don't think I'm anything other than African American.
- V: that's interesting. For myself, and I'm significantly lighter than you, but people will ask me where I'm from a lot, which it kind of seems to me they're asking to kind of make sense of why I look the way I do

- C: right, I don't get those kind of questions. In some cases, it's almost like I have to out myself as Latina.

This was somewhat different from other participants, who often are asked where they are from, whereas this participant felt that she has to often "out" herself as Latina. She also spoke to her American identity, stating that she was born with American citizenship, and feels connected to the United States, but that it is not normally the first thing she will identify as.

She made it clear that there is no mistaking her racial identity, that she is physically Black and registers that way in every context that she participates in. In terms of the connection between her racial identity and her national identity, the participant stated that she thinks of them separately. In more depth about her identity as someone who grew up in the United States, this participant made reference to the fact that she was considered the "American cousin" among her cousins who grew up in Puerto Rico. As a result of growing up in Maryland, she found herself connecting to African-American culture and, in many ways, she understood her blackness through a lens of African-American culture. This was in part because she was not surrounded by many Afro-Latino people; she stated that the only Latino people in proximity to her were people of non-African origin. She connected more to African-American and Afro-Caribbean people than she did to the few Latino people that lived near her. This was something that I had seen in other interviews, that Afro-Latinos in certain communities in the United States assimilate to Black American culture out of survival, and I felt that this participant's experience, as someone who is a bit older than the rest of the participants, really reflected a deep nuance in identity that had been considered before this interview. She did mention that the assimilation is imperfect, that she can sometimes be identified by African-Americans as 'other', whereas sometimes people will

not recognize that she is not African-American. For example, she spoke to an experience where someone talking to her spoke poorly about Puerto Ricans without realizing that the participant is herself Puerto Rican. Additionally, despite assimilating to many parts of African-American culture, there are also places and moments where she will feel that her identity is made invisible among other Black American people, especially in terms to cultural references that may not be known by Afro-Latinos that are assumed to be universal to all Black people.

In terms of the theoretical perspectives on blackness and Latinidad, Caridad offered interesting ideas. In reference to blackness, she identified that being Black first means being descended from Africans, but also that there is a cultural element that is evident in food, ways of knowing, dance, and community structures, among other things, and additionally shared experience of racism in the context of the Americas. This was, perhaps, the most nuanced and specific definition of blackness that was mentioned in this study. To be Black for this participant has a wide range, but also has some shared commonalities across the African diaspora in the Americas. No one group does not have to struggle and experience through racism and the outcomes of chattel slavery, and this is something that has not been healed in Latin America any more than it has been in North America. On the other hand, to be Latino is a simple matter of geography. She did not ascribe a specific moral or cultural meaning to the Latino identity, but very much centered it on having some kind of roots in the geographic region known as Latin America. By defining it through geography allows people to understand that Latin Americans come from a variety of different cultures and therefore prevents essentializing “Latinidad”.

I had asked about what issues existed in the Latino community as it relates to race and racism, and she had this to say:

- C: Well, racism is an issue, but also colorism is an issue. And I'm wondering if this thing about other Latinos not seeing me as Latina has to do with me not presenting with straight hair, or make up, or conforming to a European standard of beauty. So colorism is still prevalent. I know in the past they used to have instructions about "improving the race" I don't know if families are still saying that but I think it comes out in different ways. I think acknowledging the presence of the, I think, overall cultural contribution of African and African descended people. And I think I'm some countries that happens more than in others. I'm thinking of the difference between Brazil and Argentina. It's two countries right next to each other, but Brazil embraces that African side at least from what I hear. Whereas Argentina really denies that there was and probably continues to be, although to a lesser extent, an African community in that country,

During this part of the interview Caridad stopped me at one point, before I was moving to my next question which was about how skin color might affect relationships, and she asked "Can I say something else?" Of course I let her, and she said very clearly that we need "for white Latinos to acknowledge white privilege." That white Latinos often fail to recognize themselves as white is something that creates major amounts of confusion and misdirection for Black Latinos, and further causes non-Latinos to stereotype Latinos as a general 'brown', mixed race community.

I asked about her own personal experience with racism from non-Black and lighter skinned Latinos, and she felt she was always uplifted in her race by her mother, that her blackness was championed by her family. However, she mentioned that her father is "a little bit

colorstruck”, as in he finds lighter skinned women to be more attractive. Her mother herself was a light skinned woman, and she has noticed that his preference tends to be towards lighter skinned women. Additionally, she has seen that, despite being very dark skinned, her father often avoids getting too much sun. With that said, he still is someone who professes pride in his blackness and has worked to ensure that his children are proud of their blackness. Knowing that she is the darkest skinned person in her generation within the family, I asked if she had ever experienced any kind of discrimination from her cousins based on skin color. She remarked that they never did make her feel bad about her skin color, but they did often make her feel othered because she did not speak Spanish as well as they did and was more Americanized. I recognized that perhaps it was because their grandmother, my own great grandmother, was a dark skinned Black woman, and while she did not know the extent to which that may have influenced the positive treatment she received as a dark skinned Black child among her light skinned and mixed race cousins. She did note, however, that while her own family and the immediate family that she grew up with all identify as Black, it is most likely that the extended family identifies as mixed race and Latino, with the exception of a few cousins who are darker skinned.

We moved on to the Black Lives Matter movement, and she expressed that she supports the message and felt there is a space for Afro-Latinos in that movement, because Black people from any country are faced with similar if not the same kind of violence. We discussed “Black and Brown Solidarity” and she felt solidarity was important, but found that the phrase is misguided because it fails to make nuance between who is Black, who is brown, and how those groups actually interact with each other. There is a division inherently made in that terminology that fails to actually embody the solidarity that is supposedly being sought. She mentioned that

there needs to be a Black Lives Matter movement in Latin America, that there needs to be a focus on how Black people in Latin America are working to create movements of liberation within their own contexts, and that these movements are already on the ground in much the same way that they are in North America even though it is not necessarily seen clearly in North America.

This interview was extremely eye opening, in part because Caridad is very well versed in the topic, but also because of my relation to the participant. I learned a bit about my family in general, that my mother's generation was very inclusive and accepting of the darkest members of their generation and that at least one of those members felt that the family had insulated and nurtured a pride in blackness. At the same time, I found that certain members of my own family also have internalized colorist tendencies. Zooming out from my own family, this participant spoke to the ways in which Afro-Latinos, and perhaps other Black migrants, often assimilate to American Blackness and that the culture that Black people most often are able to assimilate to when they move to the United States is Black American culture, in part because of the connections that Black people of the African diaspora share. I found that I agreed most with the definitions of Blackness and Latinidad that his participant presented, and I believe that she managed to put into words many things that I had been struggling with conceptually. Concluding this interview felt like I had answered the questions that I had initially posed and presented me with a great deal of content to analyze. I was able to find commonalities and disparities between this and the previous participants and that was one of the biggest goals I had for this project.

Analysis and Conclusions

The interview conduction part of the process for this project is the most revealing and informative section. There were many diverse answers, but many commonalities which speak to the larger point of the project, which is that Black Latinos have a set of distinct life experiences that have become much more pressing in the recent age of Black liberation movements throughout the Western Hemisphere. Among these were family relations, constructed identity, and a sense of political responsibility. There were also forms of discrimination and micro aggression that each of these participants faced that were similar. Altogether, I believe that these interviews provided valuable information and a sample of experiences that suggest the need for a much wider investigation into Black identity among Latinos and challenges that the framework of Latinidad presents in terms of that identity.

Commonalities

One of the major common themes that was present in three of the five interviews was being mistaken for other nationalities, especially African American and Afro-Dominican. The idea that Black people are not Latin American, or if they are that they must be from the Dominican Republic, was pervasive and spoke to the fact that Latinidad is gatekept from Black people and primarily benefits white and light skinned Mestizo people. Moreover, the attitude received as a result of these mistaken identities was typically described as negative. To be Black made some of my participants feel othered in the presence of non-Latin Black people and nonblack Latin people, that they have very little in common with these groups and exist as outsiders. My fifth participant, Caridad, remarked that very often, she is spoken to in English by

other Latin American people, even when she has made it clear that she speaks Spanish and is of Puerto Rican and Panamanian descent. Another participant, William, posed interesting questions about the fungibility of the Latino identity, particularly about migration patterns within Latin America and the Caribbean and how that affects identity in the United States (eg. the Latino identities Panamanian-Americans who are of West Indian descent because of migration from the West Indies into Panamá). In fact, the conversations generated from the questions I asked produced more questions about how flexible and ambiguous the Latino category in the US can be, especially for Latinos of African descent. I found that this was consistent with Gobat's discourse on the development of the concept of a Latin race, which pointed to ambiguity and a fungibility that ultimately arrives from Eurocentrism (2013, 1347).

Another commonality was made in regards to language and culture. All of the people who I interviewed had spent at least the majority of their lives in the United States. However, many of them shared that they felt more culturally connected to their specific Latin American national heritage while others expressed feeling more connected to African American culture and identity. Some of this was made clear in the kind of vernacular and verbal mannerisms that were used (eg. the natural use, or lack thereof, of African American English phrases and terms throughout the interview), and other parts of this divergence of identity are made clear in the answers given by participants in terms of how living in the US has affected their identities. A few participants explained that the consistent rejection of their blackness by non-Black Latino people led them to identify more with non-Latino Black people in terms of friendships and camaraderie, through embracing African American culture and community. This subset of participants had clear criticisms of the superimposition of Latino identity onto Black populations.

Some of them explicitly stated that they felt disconnected from non-Black Latinos and that they increasingly felt that the underlying framework of Latinidad had a fundamental issue with racism that was both implicit and explicit in different ways.

Divergences

Conversely, there were people within the interview group who felt that they could identify as Latino in the same way that non-Black people did. For this set, there was a geographic concern more than a racial or ethnic concern when it came to the Latino identity; to be Latino in this context meant simply having connections to any culture below the southern border of the United States. This idea is consistent with some of the early and contemporary theorists who formulate Latinidad and coincides with what might be called the modern mainstream discourse on Latinidad and Latin American identity, especially Gobat's understanding of the national projects in Latin America. However, the concerns of those who recognized a distinction between white and mestizo Latinidad and Afrolatinidad, whose life experiences in the United States have been inextricably linked to antiblackness on the part of both non-Black Americans as well as on that of the wider Latino community, are extremely important and evidently overlooked within the mainstream narrative.

Las Vidas Negras Importan

In reference to the Black Lives Matter movement, all of the participants of the interview section and the overwhelming majority of the survey participants responded positively towards the necessity of a movement for Black liberation, albeit to various degrees. One tendency that was seen on more than one occasion was the criticism of the official Black Lives Matter organization and leadership on the basis of either corruption, capitalist influence, or American exceptionalism and lack of perspective on the rest of the African diaspora. This view was held in common with the belief that the movement itself, the many rebellions against state aggression towards Black people, are necessary and vital for an equitable future. One participant explicitly remarked that the movement had largely been “co-opted by white liberals” while another stated that the organization is “the largest capitalist organization”. It should be said that it was all criticism coming from the perspective that there should be a much stronger, more explicitly internationalist, and anti-imperialist movement with the stated aims of the Black Lives Matter organization. This sentiment was shared by Juliet Hooker in her essay “What Black Lives Matter Can Learn from Black Movements in Latin America”, which explicitly states that a shift in focus from local state violence to drawing connections to the forms of resistance to different aspects of the “racial politics of space”, such as gentrification, among Black people in Latin America (Bowen and Legros 2017, 35). Kleaver Cruz, founder of the New York City chapter of Black Lives Matter, also speaks to the fact that even within the United States, “it is imperative to me that Latinxs of African descent are not only included in this movement building, but also that our

stories are told as Black people who are not always acknowledged as such in the US” (Bowen and Legros 2017, 33). That is to say, one major critique of Black Lives Matter as a US based organization and movement that was shared between my participants and the literature at large is that Afrolatinos must have a specific role and voice within the movement and that Latin America is a strong source of guidance for resistance to structural, ecological, and interpersonal racism.

With regard to a specific question, there was a near unanimous objection or discomfort to the popular phrase “Black and Brown Solidarity”, which supposedly indicates that Latinos (who are represented by a generic ‘brown’) are in solidarity with African Americans (who are represented by ‘Black’) against police brutality and state violence. The consensus on this topic was that at best, this language is misguided and inadvertently undermines the identities of Black Latinos, who are directly affected by antiblack policing in the United States, and at worst purposely distances Latinos from Blackness and actually undermines solidarity between Black people of different national origins. I had included this question because I felt that the phrase was reductive and erased the histories of antiblackness against Black Latinos in the United States, and the participants, to various degrees, seemed to see --as I did-- that this phrase does not take into account the general lack of solidarity with Black Latinos that nonblack Latinos have, in their experiences.

Many of the participants of the interviews related stories of antiblackness and racial targeting within their families and communities. A commonly shared experience between many of my participants was being teased by family and friends for the shape of their noses, the color and shade of their skin, and their hair texture. Also common was a trepidation around, or even full rejection of, Black identity within the family. At least two of the people that were

interviewed spoke to the fact that members of their family who are visibly identifiable as Black have rejected that label and identify racially as “Hispanic/Latino”. One participant spoke to the fact that family members on one side of the family would be antagonistic towards Black people of other ethnicities, which seemed to be consistent with the idea that members of their own ethnicity could not be Black. The topic of natural hair texture came up more than once, wherein the participants related that hair relaxation or texturing was enforced or encouraged by older family members. The most alienating experience shared was that one participant, Zee, decided not to learn Spanish so as to avoid having to understand what was being said about their racialized features. Finally, a rather common trope was a discourse on racial mixing. Many of the people I interviewed came from families with mixed backgrounds, and within those people’s stories, a common idea of “elevating the race of the family” (ie. whitening the family) was prevalent. I have even witnessed this in my own life, with the suggestion that one should “add more cream to the coffee. Such ideas about increasing presumed desirability are made evident even in the aforementioned identification of one participant as *Cafe con leche*. One participant revealed that, since she was born to a lighter skinned Puerto Rican mother and a darker skinned Black American father, her maternal grandmother suggested that her mother “*dañó la raza*” (“ruined the race”) and as such, she was mistreated and misidentified for a large part of her life. This was very consistent with what I had found in the literature in regards to how racial mixing in Latin America, and how it was used as a tool to undermine Black identity, organizing, and liberation. In particular, the works of Wade (2010) and Telles and Paschel (2015) speak to constructions of racialization in Latin America as being structured to control certain populations,

to various degrees in different countries, but always as a means of maintaining white supremacy and the colonial racial order intact.

How then do these responses answer the questions posed? In terms of invisibility, it is evident that many of the participants in this study have at times felt invisible. Between having national origin incorrectly assumed, being spoken to in English by other Latinos in Latino contexts, and having Blackness and/or Latinidad consistently questioned, Afrolatinos are consistently overlooked. This is made clear by the repetitive “discoveries” by non-Afrolatinos that such a community exists, by the erasure of Afrolatino figures in history both within the mainstream Latino community and within Africana studies. In reference to how Latin American perceptions of race influence the racial identities of US based Afrolatinos, this study suggests that there are generational differences in terms of the extent to which Latin American perspectives influence US Afrolatino perspectives on race. In the first generation, among the generation of Black migrants from Latin America, the influence of Latin American racial politics is strong. Each of the participants in this study spoke to their parents’ or grandparents’ ideas about race and their tendency to identify with Latinidad as a race. In the subsequent generations, it seems that Afrolatinos born and raised or raised primarily in the United States are influenced by Latin American ideas about race insofar as they may have an understanding of racial dimensions in Latin America, but are also materially affected by American white supremacy and antiblackness in such a way that Blackness is centered. This was shown to be true for both younger and older people within the same migratory generation. Finally, the advent of the movement for Black lives seems to have marked a point at which US Afrolatinos are problematizing and questioning the very foundations of the Latino identity and embracing

internationalist and Pan-Africanist perspectives that center Blackness an African diaspora connections rather than focusing solely on the region of Latin America. It is not so much that Black Lives Matter itself is a movement that has awakened this sense of consciousness among African descended Latinos, but rather that in tandem with this specific movement, which Afrolatinos have participated in and been influenced by, new and renewed questions about African identity and heritage and Black liberation are being developed by US based Afrolatinos, questions that help to challenge the ethnoracial dissonance that some of their fellow Afrolatinos may be facing in this moment. This speaks to the international character of Black liberation, and what seems to be clear is that many Black Latinos who live in the US are now reflecting on ways in which their own countries are using the same or similar logics of racism and state violence to oppress the Black people living there. All of the people who participated in this study explicitly said that the movement or a movement like it is necessary, and the majority mentioned that the United States is not the only place where it is necessary, but that all of Latin America is due to grapple with these issues. It also speaks to the concept of social identity theory, that the changing view of Blackness among African descended Latinos as something positive is shifting the ways in which Afrolatinos in the United States are identifying themselves. What can be clearly surmised is that in witnessing Black resistance, Black people from Latin American heritage in the United States seem to have identified Black resistance as vital for their own nations within Latin America. This has huge implications for Pan-Africanist thought in Latin America and the wider fight against antiblackness and neo-colonial imperialism. Given that the United States, and truly much of the Western world, has been facing a contentious period of struggle that has had a marked effect on Black communities, one would not be incorrect to surmise that Afrolatinos will

have a much more recognized role in the global fight for Black liberation as they confront the contradictions within their own identities.

Limitations

There were a few limitations in this study. Among them were issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to adjust my study to accommodate for it, the use of English as the primary language of the study, and the limitation on ideological differences among participants. I found that all of my participants had had a specific interaction with Blackness and Latino identity prior to this study; it was not the first time that they had thought about these ideas and their desire to do this project was based on their own active, intentional identification as Black Latinos. There is, however, a subset of Afrolatinos who, while visibly Black, may not actively identify as such, and another subset that actively disidentifies as such. This study did not have this group represented, and there are a few ethical and logistical concerns with structuring a study to include them. However, I feel that gaining insight into this group, their interactions with Blackness and Latinidad as concepts, and their dissociation from Blackness will be important in the continued investigation on Afrolatinos in general, and of the effects of racial homogenization within Latin American ideology on Black Latinos in particular. Subsequent studies should aim to address a wider contingent of the Afrolatino community in the United States, with a specific focus on generational and class differences, as well as an intention on the inclusion of Latinos who are physically identified as Black but who do not personally identify as such. Much consideration has to be given on how class dynamics and aspirations, generational ideological differences, and other points of divergence among Afrolatinos affect the topics which I have investigated.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Survey Protocol

“Latino Survey for Black Lives”

- Age: (Multiple choice: 18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55+)
- Place of birth: (Short answer)
- Place of residence: (Short Answer)
- How long have you lived in the US: (Multiple Choice: 1-5 years, 5-10 years, more than 10 years, whole life)
- Where is your family from: (Short Answer)
- How do you identify racially? (Multiple responses, option to add an “Other” option.
- Have you heard of the Black Lives Matter movement? (Yes or No)
- What’s your opinion on that movement? (Open-Ended)
- Have you been affected by anti-black racism? (Open-ended)

[Space included to leave contact information for interviews.]

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Pre interview protocol: Informed consent explanation and authorization.

(I can start with an example, or passage of literature or something that presents the idea of black Latinos in the US and start there, working out what is important to the question.)

Questions are open ended and a guideline, new questions may arise:

- What is your national identity (have you define it for them, explain the question;)?
 - When you think of a place that you come from, where is it? There can be multiple places.
 - What country do you come from? Do you identify with that or the US
- What's your racial identity?
 - Is there any connection between that and your national identity?
- How do you think living in the United States might affect your identity?
- What does Blackness mean to you? Latino?
- What issues do you think exist in the Latino community regarding race?
- How do you think skin color affects relationships in Latino communities?
 - Ask for examples.
- What is your family's racial identity?
- Do you feel that members of your family have negative attitudes towards Black people?
Can you explain?
- How do people in your homeland feel about Blackness? Is there racism where you are from?

- Tell me about a time that you think someone from the same country as you expressed feelings of anti-black racism.
 - This is following up on the fifth question.
- What is the African influence in your homeland? Is there any that you know of?
- Talk to me about “Black and Brown solidarity”.
 - Does it exist?
- How have you felt in response to issues of police brutality and resistance to it? Have there been any moments where you’ve been negatively impacted?

Post Questions: Ask if they have any questions or need anything to be explained or if there was anything else to discuss.