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# HUELLAS

## SPANISH JOURNAL ON SLAVERY, COLONIALISM, RESISTANCES AND LEGACIES

## PRESENTACIÓN



## EN EL FOCO

### El fantasma del colonialismo y sus voces



## TRAZAS



## NUEVAS LETRAS



**Edita:**

**Grupo de estudios visuales sobre memoria de la esclavitud, el colonialismo y sus legados (GEVMECYL)**

**Universidad de Valencia. Valencia**

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Marx y Engels arrancaron aquel breve texto que conmovió el mundo, El Manifiesto Comunista, con la evocación de un fantasma que recorría Europa. Hoy otro fantasma recorre no ya Europa sino el mundo entero. Es notable cómo, también en este caso, lo reprimido retorna: no deja de ser significativo que tantas décadas después de la abolición de la esclavitud y de las emancipaciones coloniales, se dé un urgente análisis crítico en numerosas disciplinas que se ocupan de estos dos hechos históricos cruciales, de cómo configuraron nuestro mundo, de la variedad de resistencias que suscitaron, y de sus legados en el presente. Quizá en nuestro ámbito -amparada por la Universidad de Valencia, si bien con voluntad de trascender sus límites- la revista que inauguramos, Huellas: Spanish Journal on Slavery, Colonialism, Resistances and Legacies, sea también un síntoma de ese fantasma que recorre como culpa nuestra conciencia histórica pública. Por ello, este primer número está dedicado a explorar diversas perspectivas y acercamientos que confluyen en ese malestar moral y político, sí bien es cierto que con cierta primacía de los análisis literarios. Sea como fuere, la óptica de la revista tiene voluntad multidisciplinar y pretende en los números sucesivos que este inaugura contribuir a una cartografía teórica y crítica que coadyuve a trazar nuevas rutas en el estudio de la esclavitud, el colonialismo, las resistencias que suscitaron y los legados de todo ello, que configuran el mundo que habitamos. La Historia, la Antropología, la Filología, la Sociología y la Teoría Política, sin olvidar la Filosofía, habida cuenta de las distintas ramas y especificaciones que hoy las vertebran, constituirán nuestra caja de herramientas. Desde esta perspectiva, en la medida de sus posibilidades, esta revista también tiene la voluntad de convocar una variada pertenencia internacional y académica de sus colaboradores que esperamos ir ampliando.

TRAZAS

HUELLAS
SPANISH JOURNAL ON SLAVERY, COLONIALISM, RESISTANCES AND LEGACIES

# Afro-Latin Americans Living in Spain and Social Death: Moving from the Empirical to the Ontological

**Ethan Johnson, Joy González-Güeto y Vanessa Cadena.** DOI: 10.7203/huellas.1.27209

This paper has three main objectives. First, we establish that although Spain has attempted to distance itself from its role in the Sub-Saharan African slave trade and the significance blackness plays within its borders, there exists a significant population of people of African descent from Latin America living in Spain. Here we ask, why are they coming to Spain and from which countries are they primarily from? Second, we claim Black people are living what Saidiya Hartmann refers to as the afterlife of slavery in Latin America. Our objective here is to understand what it means to move from the place your ancestors were deracinated from Africa and then not return, but go to the place/country that is largely responsible for establishing this colonial legacy. We believe that is a weight that deserves consideration. Third, we examine the meaning of blackness in Spain today through historical and ethnographic analysis. Spain, not unlike many western European countries, has attempted to erase the socio-historical significance of Black Africans in its cultural and economic development, while simultaneously maintaining anti-blackness (Ortega 2019; Barranco 2011; Aixelá-Cabré 2020). A significant proportion of the relatively large groups of Latin Americans and Caribbeans that fled to Spain since the mid 1990s are of African descent, that is they are Afro-Latin Americans. Our argument here is that Afro-Latin Americans are also living the afterlife of slavery in Spain. Here we ask, what is the anti-blackness Afro-Latin Americans experience/face in Spain and how do they navigate it? We are concerned with the claims of some scholars and activists living in Spain who suggest that Black Studies in the US is imperial epistemologically in parts of Europe. In other words, they claim U.S. scholarship by Black people obfuscates important differences that occur in Spain.

Through investigation of the aforementioned foci, this project hopes to broaden theories of race/racism in Spain that have largely not considered anti-blackness as a concept and by extension the experiences of people of African descent from Latin America in Spain. Spain is deeply connected to the African Diaspora in Latin America and the Caribbean as it transported and enslaved millions of African people in its efforts to colonize much of the Americas. The colonial structures that Spain imposed on much of Latin America continue into the present and as a result of powerful socio-economic processes, the descendants of those enslaved people have fled to Spain in the hope to improve their life chances (García y Walsh 2002; Walsh 2004).

Much of the data we provide in this essay is based on qualitative research the authors conducted in Spain, that is, semi-structured interviews of twenty-five Afro-Latin American people who have lived and studied in Spain. The selection of the interviewed people was carried out through the snowball technique. These

interviews, conducted from November of 2021 to April of 2023, asked the interviewees to express their ideas, feelings and experiences about anti-blackness in multiple areas of their lives, such as, work, schooling, intimate relationships, policing, leisure life and housing. The interviews were recorded and transcribed by the authors. The profiles of those interviewed are not only diverse in terms of sexual orientation, gender identity, and origins associated with nation-states, but they also represent a multiplicity of work experiences to which Afro-Latinx people in Spain dedicate themselves. To support our findings we also rely on reports, news articles, and analysis of popular culture (newspapers, magazines, social media).

Our research, as it focuses on people of African descent from Latin America living in Spain, intentionally centers the voices, research and experiences of Black people. Indeed, the research group is made up of an Afro-Colombian lesbian woman, an Afro-Colombian Indigenous heterosexual woman and a Black heterosexual man from the United States. We are people who have lived many of the experiences our participants have lived. Throughout the research project we have developed our analysis through a constant back and forth discussion with the interview data and our lived experiences. In a similar vein, while not all the supporting research we cite in this paper comes from scholars of African descent, we do intentionally center their perspectives and analysis in this paper.

## Latin Americans Living in Spain

In the 1990s powerful forms of socio-economic inequality and political crisis existed in much of Latin America and the Caribbean combined with the economic boom in Western Europe to simultaneously push and pull people primarily from Ecuador, Colombia and parts of the Spanish speaking Caribbean to Spain (Vicente 2010; Martín Díaz, et. al. 2012; Martínez 2013). Each of these countries and regions have significant African descendant populations. Spain facilitated migration of people from these countries through bi-national immigration policies to attract these Spanish-speaking people who desired greater socio-economic opportunity and political stability for themselves and often their children (Vicente 2010). Latin Americans could for example gain citizenship within two years, where for other groups not part of the European Union it was a 10-year process. As a result Spain received more immigrants from Latin America between 2002 and 2005 than any other region (Martín Díaz , et. al. 2012; Vicente 2010).

As of 2010, approximately one third of the foreign born population living in Spain was from Latin America, reaching approximately two million people (Gonzales Enriquez 2014; Vicente 2010). The countries with the largest proportions of this population were from the Andean Region, namely Ecuador and Colombia (Vicente 2010). Ecuador's African descendant population is estimated to be between 10 and 20 percent while Colombia's reaches close to one third (Walsh 2011). The African descendant populations of Cuba and the Dominican Republic are even higher. It is very difficult, however, to estimate how many Afro-Latin Americans are living in Spain. In its national census Spain does not ask about racial background although estimates put this number at about one million people of African descent living in Spain (Cea D'ancona y Vallés Martínez 2021), which is not disaggregated to include Afro-Latin Americans. We claim that through our personal experience, living and working in Spain, and the data presented above that Afro-Latin Americans represent a significant proportion of the foreign born and naturalized population, including their children, living in Spain.

Furthermore, many Afro-Latin American people may deny and/or diminish that they are of African descent. In much of Latin America, anti-blackness can

and often does push people to claim intermediary categories rather than acknowledge their experiences have been powerfully shaped by being identified as a person of African descent (Johnson 2023). In addition, Spain itself has denied the existence of racism and of people of African descent as significant factors shaping social life through its policies and practices of the erasure of historical memory of enslavement and the policy of not collecting data on race. In Spain, lighter skin individuals like in Latin America are often not considered black in one moment but their blackness can be referred to in the next. However, Afro-Latin Americans comprise a significant part of the Spanish population that have come to Spain since the mid 1990s.

Spain is an important place to study the experiences of Afro-Latin Americans. Spain was deeply involved in the slave trade of Africans to the New World and through its colonial efforts in the region benefitted immensely from the enslavement of Africans. Recently, many of the descendants of these previously enslaved people have fled to Spain to improve their and their loved one's life chances. What is it like for them to live in the country that is largely responsible for them being in the region referred to as Latin America? Moreover, Spain is largely responsible for establishing the colonial legacy that pushes people of African descent in Latin America to seek refuge in other countries. We find it beyond ironic that this place of refuge is the land of their former slave masters.

## De donde vienen… Theorizing Anti-blackness in Latin America

What is anti-blackness? As Christina Sharpe (2016) demonstrates, people of African descent throughout the world are the antithesis of what is thought of as humanity. The assertion of anti-blackness, which is the scholarly focus of Afro Pessimism, is that Black people live in a structurally antagonistic relation to what is referred to as the human. Human capacity is reserved for those who have coherent claims to it. Struggles over gender, land, and/or labor cannot be realms in which the struggle of Black people take place because these are reserved for humanity.

Through the middle passage and chattel slavery in the New World, Africans were made into commodities, fungible objects or things, with no legacy and no gender; stripped from history and land, the criteria for one to claim humanity (Wilderson 2010). "Social death", as developed by Orlando Patterson (1982), is the state of the slave. He revealed in his examination of over sixty slave societies across time and space that there are three defining aspects of the slave's non-life in comparative terms. They are: exposure to gratuitous violence, genealogical isolation/natal alienation and a general treatment of dishonor. Gratuitous violence signifies that at any time the slave can be killed, mutilated, raped and/or psychically abused for no other reason than being a slave. Natal alienation means that the children of enslaved people and their ancestors are not recognized as such. In other words there is no acknowledged filial relationship. They are alone, outside of time and space. Only humans have children and parents. These describe the general dishonor of the enslaved person. As Patterson pointed out, it is more than difficult to shake one's being marked as such. He was concerned with the shortsightedness of an economic and legalistic definition of slavery, which often reduced the slave to the exploited laborer.

Saidiya Hartman (1997) is to whom the articulation of the concept 'the afterlife of slavery' is attributed. Hartman and others have fully demonstrated that the legacy of slavery remains even though official enslavement has ended. People of African descent across the globe continue to experience gratuitous violence. Filial relationships continue to not be recognized by civil society, rendering them genealogical isolates with no land or history. Black people's screams and demands for justice do not find grounding, which demonstrates a general condition of dishonor. Some people may claim, 'but undocumented

immigrants have their children taken from them. Isn't this an example of gratuitous violence'. But the violence they experience is contingent on the transgression of a norm (i.e., the border within a specific time), however absurd it may be. The crime they have committed may be spurious to some and valid to others, however, either argument exists within time and space. What is the crime Black people have committed that grants coherency to this violence? Why have their/our children been taken from them/us? Their/our supposed crimes cannot be mapped temporally or spatially. Black people across the globe have had their children taken from them, and thus their ancestry, since the African slave trade began in Africa, the Americas and Europe up to the present moment. This is not analogous to the non-Black immigrant experience nor is elucidating this an attempt to be located as the most oppressed group, that is, some form of oppression Olympics. It is a fact.

There have been moments when the structural antagonism underlying the relationship between Black people and humanity reaches such a level beyond which it cannot be contained. These moments are shot through with Black rebellion. The early nineteenth century was such a moment, attested to by the many slave revolts and uprisings that occurred across the Americas and the Caribbean, north and south. Similarly, the 1960s and 70s saw Black people in the USA challenge their non-beingness in the face of civil society to a degree which had not occurred since the slave revolts. The Black Panthers and the Black Liberation Army, along with other lesser-known groups, revolted against the state in unprecedented ways, at times attacking and even killing police (Wilderson 2010; 2020). As Spillers (2011), Wilderson (2010; 2020) and Sexton (2008) each point out, it is during both of these moments when the United States discovered a wedge it could thrust into this place of antagonism in order to undermine Black consciousness and rebellion. During the early 19th Century, it was the mulatta/o figure; the late twentieth century saw the rise of multiculturalism and multiracialism.

The discourse of multiracialism and that of mestizaje have mutually distinguishing aspects, but various scholars have equated the two (Warren and Windance Twine 1997; Jasmine Mitchell 2020; Vargas Costa 2018). Multiracialism comes primarily out of the United States and has developed largely through the efforts of White, middle-class women, who have had children with Black men, to "liberate" their children's identity from the oppressive grip of the one-drop rule, which they claim is racist (Ibrahim 2012). The discourse of multi-racialism is also relatively recent, coming into being in the late twentieth century. Mestizaje was created out of the particular histories of colonialism in Latin America and the Caribbean and defines how the majority of people in the region, and the nations themselves, imagine national identity (Warren and Windance-Twine 1997; Jasmine Mitchell 2020).

Recently, claims of increased levels of recorded miscegenation in the United States between White people and other racial groups have been noted as an indication that the United States is moving towards a 'mulatto nation', where race becomes less important and less burdensome (Sexton 2008). Much like in Latin America, the logic is that if more of us are intermixing across the racial divide, it must be an indication that racism is disappearing. The logic is spurious at best, but many are taken by the suggestion. Evidence for this shift of acknowledgement and increasing acceptance of racial mixture can be found in mainstream media, in the development of multiracial studies across college campuses, and in the growth of self-identifying multiracial groups and identities seen in the last 30 years (Sexton 2008). In Spain, this can be seen through popular culture in the increased levels of light skinned people of African descent in commercials and advertisements. It is rare to see a dark skinned Black person in these images. However, as has been noted, where is the Black in this racially

mixed utopia? The Black person in much of multiracialism is absent, s/he literally disappears.

Spillers (2011) interrogates multiracialism's recent ascension. She asks, what is all the discussion over something that has been happening in the United States and, by extension, in Latin America and Spain since their inception? Pointing out that racial mixture through racial terror has been one of the disavowed centerpieces to Sub-Saharan African slavery and that most Black Americans are racially mixed. This is true too, regarding the Afro-Latin Americans coming to Spain. Many of them are descendants of children and parents who were raped during the era of official slavery. She also asks more than ironically, what cure is this multiracial identity supposed to provide for this injured multiracial person who has not been able to express who they truly are? Her answer is that much like the wedge the mulatta/o of the early 19th Century drives within blackness, the multiracial person of the late 20th and early 21st Century does the work of stifling the potential of blackness "to assume the comprehensive antagonism of its structural position" (Wilderson 2010: 301). In other words, multiracialism/*mestizaje* are inventions of white supremacy to undermine the potential for blackness to take on and uninhibitedly recognize the position of social death and to act accordingly. This analysis of racial mixture gets us back to what *mestizaje* and multiracialism have in common; they both simultaneously energize anti-blackness and fracture resistance to anti-blackness.

Mestizaje diminishes resistance to anti-blackness because it pushes many people of African descent in Latin America to move away from, negate and/or deny their blackness (Da Costa 2016; Arboleda 2017; Mitchell 2020). This phenomenon is important because in it we see how mestizaje provides an escape route from blackness. Through racial mixture one can become something else, that something else is the mulatto/a figure; the wedge that "annihilates blackness' possibility to assume the comprehensive antagonism of its structural position". The shadow cast by mestizaje over the centuries in Latin America is evident in the ever-present degraded position that Black people and people of African descent inhabit in the region (Vargas Costa 2018; 2017; Jaime Alves 2018). The census results (Telles and Lim 1998; Hooker 2008; Johnson 2014; Paschel 2018) continue to show that decade after decade, people of African descent often identify themselves in some form of racial mixture, such as pardo/a, canela/o (cinnamon), trigo/a (wheat) and/or mulatta/o.

If as Sharpe, Wilderson and Sexton claim and demonstrate, anti-blackness is global, then Black people in Latin America exist as Black people in the United States do. The late scholar, Mark Sawyer, who focused much of his research on anti-blackness in Cuba posited that if anything, a theory should be something that travels. By that he meant it should be applicable in other regions. He was referring to W.E.B Dubois' concept of double consciousness. He demonstrated how double consciousness functions in Latin America among Black communities, while acknowledging Latin American anti-blackness had its particularities. His reasons for doing this were to refute claims by white scholars that Black American scholars were colonizing epistemologically Latin American understanding of race and racism. What we are attempting to do here is to address the scholarship that claims a similar dynamic, but in Spain, where it claims that U.S. scholars on blackness have carried undo weight in analysis of the Black experience in Spain. Specifically, we claim there are benefits to situating the Black experience in Spain within the concept of social death. We argue that without acknowledging this there can be no proper understanding of their experiences.

## Black Social Death in Spain

While notions of Blackness in Spain began to develop during the Moors control of the Iberian Peninsula (Rodríguez-García 2022; Marín Guzmán 2003), we are going to begin our analysis of blackness in Spain from the fifteenth century. Researchers have shown that significant populations of Sub-Saharan Africans lived primarily as enslaved people throughout Spain from the fifteenth century and well into the nineteenth century (Lowe 2012; Barranco 2011). In fact, probably the largest populations of Africans in Europe lived in Spain during the Renaissance and early modern eras (Rodríguez García et. 2021; Barranco 2011; Lowe 2012). The Sub-Saharan African presence in Spain during this time was largely associated with enslavement and existed all over the peninsula although more in the south then in the north. Additionally, the enslavement of African peoples was not limited to only the rich and was often distributed across social classes, which suggests that anti-blackness was not only an elite affair but one that was relatively ubiquitous through Spanish society. To provide an example of the numbers of Africans in Spain, it is suggested that enslaved Africans made up possibly more than half of the population of Sevilla in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (Lowe 2012). Significantly, while the abolition of African Enslavement was debated in the mid-nineteenth century it was never abolished in Spain (Herzog 2012; Parrilla Ortíz 2001).

Moving to the representation of blackness and Black people in Spain, the enslavement of African peoples has been made invisible through the efforts of historians, writers and artists of the renaissance, early modern era and into the present to locate blackness outside of the national imaginary and place it in the colonies of the new world (Ortega 2021; Lowe 2012; Barranco 2011). For example, some artists of the period painted Sub Saharan Black people as white. Spain historically has never wanted to be associated with its closeness to Africa and its peoples and has consistently attempted to represent itself as a white/European nation. While the practices and processes of purity of blood or limpieza de sangre took on much greater significance in the Spanish colonies than Spain, the Spanish nevertheless did maintain a fairly strict separation and marginalization of Sub-Saharan Africans in society even if they had managed to escape enslavement (Barranco 2011).

There are examples of well-known Black Africans in Spain during the renaissance, however their experiences were much more the exception than the rule (Lowe 2012, Ortega 2019, Barranco 2011). In other words, blackness and slavery remained tightly bound up through the 19th century when for various reasons the practice of enslavement seemed to die out, while at the same time elites made efforts to make invisible the fact of blackness and its significance in the Iberian Peninsula. By erasing blackness Spain can now claim there was no history of racism within its borders and attempt to make invisible the role and importance Sub Saharan Africans played in shaping the political, economic and cultural landscape of the nation.

There is ample evidence of anti-blackness in Spain within most institutions and daily life. For example, of the 1328 hate crimes reported in Spain in 2015 most were motivated by race and Black people are disproportionately represented as victims of these crimes (Rosati 2017). A recent study of over 1500 people of African descent in Spain demonstrates that in every mainstream institution Black people in Spain experience anti-blackness (D'ancona y Martinez 2021). Furthermore, examination of the representation of people of African descent in mainstream media demonstrates anti-blackness (Borst et. al. 2019; Retis 2016). One of the clearest examples is the "El Negro de Whatsapp" meme, which through bait and switch tricks the viewer into coming face to face with a Black man with a huge penis. This meme is among the most popular

memes ever in Spain and has generated a market of paraphernalia throughout the country (Matamoros-Fernandez 2020, Wall-Johnson 2021).

Another prominent example in the late 20th century was the murder by one policeman and three other individuals of an African descendant woman from the Dominican Republic named Lucrecia Perez in 1992. While they killed her they shouted "Black piece of shit". David Marriott writes about Black people being seen as fecal matter in the eyes of non-Black people (2000). This expression of what blackness means is important though hard to swallow, but does nevertheless reveal how non-Black people imagine and fantasize about blackness. Marriott goes on to explain that these fantasies of non-Black people can take objective value. The murder of Lucrecia is an example of that. Their fantasy was enacted. Her murder has been mythologized as the first hate crime of Spain. What is particularly revealing is an online response posted to an article that discussed her murder 20 years later. The responder wrote:

> That of 1992 was a murder, that's for sure. But let's not exaggerate. I recommend to the editor to take a tour of the district of Tetuan-Alvarado-Strait in Madrid where the Dominicans live and see the plan of life of these people. This girl, Lucretia's daughter, comes to Spain to have her son... for free education and health, and numerous subsidies. Like so many others, and without contributing anything at all (2012 online response to article)

Without any hesitation the author of this response maintains that Lucrecia's Black daughter is little more than a parasite on Spanish society. The person acknowledges the murder and then implies that Dominicans who are mostly of African descent have no business in Spain. The author of the online response is just (a good person in their own eyes), they acknowledge Lucretia's murder, and is anti-Black. For them there is no contradiction between being just and anti-Black simultaneously. They can and do exist together. It is also important to point out Spain is responsible for the anti-blackness and colonial legacy left in the Dominican Republic that has caused Lucrecia and her daughter to flee. The conditions are so bad in the Dominican Republic that Lucrecia's daughter is willing to risk her child's life in the country that murdered her mother.

Furthermore, it is not uncommon for police to stop people in the street and ask for identification papers for no other reason than their blackness. Finally, as the online responder above reveals, the ways Black people are talked to and about are telling. For example, virtually every Black person you talk to has heard one or more of the following comments: "Go back to your country", "I don't rent apartments to people like you", "If you shower, do you lose your color?" "Is that your mom or your nanny?", "Come with me, I'll give you ten bucks", "You can't come in", "Your cousins are monkeys". Much like in Latin America, racism is very pronounced in everyday experience as the above examples demonstrate.

Returning to the idea of social-death, we hold that the preceding examples, historical and contemporary, show that Afro-Latin Americans are living social death in Spain. They experience gratuitous violence. The children who have fled to Spain for a better life, like the efforts of Black enslaved people throughout at least the last five centuries further attests to how family relationships are broken again and again as a result of the original crime of the Black African slave trade. These combined with the ways Black people are spoken to and about demonstrate that Black people do not have honor in Spain and experience a violence that has no contingency. It is gratuitous.

How are Afro-Latin Americans living in Spain making sense of and navigating this context of coming from one anti-Black world to another that has some qualitative differences? Comparatively, in Spain there is less poverty, less police violence and a relatively well developed and maintained infrastructure of mainstream institutions such as transportation, schooling and health. We

differentiate between the ontological and the empirical. The ontological world is understood as a structure. Black people are socially dead in the world. The empirical is how it is experienced by sentient beings. Afro-Latin Americans living in Spain experience the structure of anti-blackness within their families, school, work, on the bus, at nightclubs and in intimate relationships, that is, virtually everywhere where they go.

We highlight the experiences of family because of their general length and deep connections between and among those that comprise it. Saidiya Hartman, in her book *Lose Your Mother* (2008), discusses the relationship that love and slavery had in Africa. Slavery existed in Sub Saharan Africa first, with the Muslim invasions, and then within and among Sub Saharan Africans. She ruminated on how love functioned as a force binder to hold the slave within its new 'family'. As everything had been taken from the slave, their family, their name, their origins and violence was gratuitously experienced in these communities by the slave, the slave often only had love left to keep them there. As in the Americas and the Caribbean, slave holders and their slaves often developed kin/love relationships that contributed to their acceptance and maintenance of their condition. Often the slave holder was the father of his children.

The point is that love/kin relationships often play a role in maintaining the status of the slave, although it may seem impossible or contradictory. In Spain and Latin America, and this occurs quite often, Afro-Latin American women/men have children with men/women who do not identify as Black. The offspring of these relationships often endure throughout much of their early life the anti-blackness of the non-Black identifying partner and sometimes the Black partner. Here, Rafael, an Afro-Brazilian, explained what it was like in his family growing up in Brazil:

> Si, por supuesto, principalmente con la familia de mi padre, tengo unas tías que son bien racistas, de adolescente decían que yo iba a ser ladrón o narcotraficante por mi color de piel, siendo que he sacado las mejores notas del instituto, y mis amigos hasta el día de hoy (los que siguen vivos) son psicólogos, médicos, bailarines, artistas muy buenos, y es lo que hay; la discriminación racial familiar en Brasil y aquí es insufrible. Mi primer contacto con el racismo, fue dentro de mi propia familia.[1]

He characterized his experiences in the family as insufferable and the first place he learned about anti-blackness. Portugal planted this seed of anti-blackness to which Marco refers to above. We suggest he lived social death within his family, a kind of violence tempered with love. For no other reason than his status as a Black person he was deemed to be a criminal by his aunts. He lived this experience within love/kin relations, where these same people who denigrated him also very likely had affection for him and him for them. Choice here is irrelevant. There was nowhere for Marco to flee and few who could or would console his pain. As he said, it was insufferable. Like the slave raised within an explicit anti-Black world, Marco was raised in a family that was already always structured as anti-Black. This was not an uncommon experience for many of the people we interviewed.

Work was also riddled with examples of anti-blackness and revealing of a life of social death. Every individual we interviewed provided examples of anti-

[1] "Yes, of course, mainly with my father's family, I have some aunts who are very racist, when I was a teenager they said that I was going to be a thief or a drug dealer because of my skin color, since I got the best grades in high school, and my friends to this day (those who are still alive) are very good psychologists, doctors, dancers, artists, and that's what it is; family racial discrimination in Brazil and here it is unbearable. My first contact with racism was within my own family". Our translation.

blackness in the workplace. We cite below one example of a person who converted his anti-Black treatment into a problem to be overcome and demonstrate his worthiness. Andreas is a chef in a high-end restaurant in Madrid. He was trained in France and came back to Spain and was hired as a lead chef. He explained how initially one of the male assistant cooks would not work with him as his assistant because he was Black. He stated: "Uno de ellos se creía el jefe máximo y lo dijo bien claro que un negro no le iba mandar a él"[2]. Later Andreas proved he did deserve to be respected through gaining his bosses attention by saving him thousands of dollars in orders, he explained: "entonces este chaval se dio cuenta realmente de que la cualificación que tenía llegaba hasta un punto y está muy bien, pero la cualificación que tengo yo tiene dos puntos más. Entonces ya no es para que me critiques a mí porque sea negro".[3]

Andreas did what no one else had to at his work. He had to prove he was good enough to be a lead chef because he was Black. He did not refer to this as an example of racism or discrimination. For him it was just an obstacle to get around. Impressively, throughout his life he provided a wealth of anti-black experiences and suggested that some of his family members had not learned to integrate as well as he had with white people. Possibly, anti-blackness had become so normal that he no longer named it. It was simply a structure of life. Here my objective is not to criticize him but to reveal how some individuals find ways to move through the anti-Black world. He chose to prove he was good enough and not wallow, if you will, in what he had little control over. We would suggest that this added tax he has on his body and mind, however, does impact him negatively even though within the moment he refers to he at some level was triumphant.

Tina, a Black trans woman from Venezuela, stated the following regarding her work experience:

> He hecho de todo. Desde cocinar, cuidar perros, cuidar viejos, trabajo sexual, dar clases… Como de todo tipo de trabajos, pero no con contratos. También trabajos artísticos, académicos, pero todo muy inestable, que no tiene acceso a la estructura, que es una estructura que pueda sostener.[4]

Contrary to Andreas, she is very clear that it is a combination of her blackness and queerness that structures her outside of civil society. We would suggest that multiple aspects of her identity may have provided her with some insights that have sharpened her analysis. While she does not use the word social death to explain her condition, she does show she lives outside of civil society and like Victor they both have to work more than hard to survive.

As with work, the overwhelming majority of the interviewees provided evidence of educational experiences in Spain that were anti-Black. The curriculum did little to nothing to address the historical record and contemporary experiences of Black people in Spain. Often teachers of social science continue to present the idea that Columbus discovered America. Overall, Afro-Latin American students experience disdain, disgust and disrespect within the school system. These experiences lessened to some degree upon entering the university, however, within higher education we can accurately state there is an epistemic vacuum of the significance of blackness. Olga, an Afro-Colombian woman, commented about her educational experiences in Spain:

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[2] "One of them believed he was the top boss and made it very clear that a black man was not going to tell him what to do". Our translation.

[3] "So this kid really realized that the qualifications he had went up to one point and that's great, but my qualifications have two more points. So it's not for you to criticize me because I'm black". Our translation.

4 "I have done everything. From cooking, taking care of dogs, taking care of old people, sex work, teaching… I take all kinds of jobs, but not with contracts. Also artistic, academic works, but all very unstable, which do not have access to the structure, which is a structure that could sustain it." Our translation.

> Del primer año que llego al colegio, en el que me preguntan, por ejemplo, en qué trabajaba mi madre. Yo decía que era limpiadora y me miraban con cara de asco o así. Al siguiente año me decían que mi madre le estaba robando el trabajo a sus padres, pues fue como con mucho que muy drástico, y luego también la primera barrera que noté fue la del lenguaje, porque el acento y las palabras no eran las mismas. Entonces sí que veía que no que no podíamos ser amigos que no había interés de parte de los chicos en conocer ni mi cultura ni mi acento ni nada, y fue el primer cambio que yo tuve que hacer al llegar, cambiar el acento, y para poder conseguir amigos porque si no, no me hubiese adaptado.[5]

Olga discusses the degradation and isolation she experienced as a young student in high school when she first arrived in Spain when she was young. There was little she could do to offset her blackness, but she could change the way she spoke. Otherwise, as she explained, she would have been largely isolated. The way she puts it is that she had little choice. The comments about her mother taking Spanish people's jobs are akin to "go back to your country". They did not say "go back to our previous colony where we committed genocide", which would have at least acknowledged the world as it is. As with during official slavery, Olga has no recognized claim to justice. She is always a criminal. Her only possibility lies in adaptation. Learn the language.

Olga was also willing to speak with us about her intimate relationships in Spain with white men. She explained that none of the relationships lasted and it was usually because her partner at the time would not recognize her claims of anti-blackness and suggest she was over sensitive and/or the parents discouraged the relationship. She also explained that the parents of her boyfriend would claim she wanted their money or to rob them. In addition, Olga also felt exoticized within these relationships, a sentiment experienced by most of the interviewees, regardless of their gender or sexuality. The trope of Black hyper-sexuality was ever present in relationships with non-Black people. When we asked if while in high school she had intimate relationships with any of her classmates and if race had shaped those relationships, she commented:

> Pues no he tenido relaciones con personas en clase pero sí que me han llegado a gustar personas y había una barrera muy grande y eso era imposible. No te veían como una persona atractiva e incluso un,... le dije a un chico que me gustaba y me dijo que él a mí no me gustaba pero en una ocasión me hizo un comentario respecto a mis labios y a las felaciones.[6]

As a result, various participants discussed feeling as if they were being used in relationships and that they lacked a sense of authenticity. Again, in intimate relationships as with various aspects of our interviewees life experiences she was always already located as a criminal and a thing to be utilized for whatever pleasure imaginable outside of civil society. Although not physically violent, her and others intimate relationships were psychologically violent. As a result of her multiple and overlapping experiences of anti-blackness, Olga had resolved that she would never bring a child into this world.

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[5] "From the first year that I arrived at school they asked me, for example, what did my mother do for work? I said that she was a cleaner and they looked at me with a disgusted face or something. The following year they told me that my mother was stealing their parents' job, well it was very drastic, and then the first barrier I noticed was the language, because the accent and the words were not the same. So I did see that we couldn't be friends, that there was no interest on the part of the girls and boys in learning about my culture or my accent or anything, and it was the first thing that I had to do when I arrived, that it was to change the accent in order to be able to make friends because otherwise I would not have adapted." Our translation.

[6] "Well, I haven't had relationships with people in class, but I have come to like people and there was a very big barrier and that was impossible. They didn't see you as an attractive person and even,... I told a guy that I liked him and he told me that he didn't like me but on one occasion he made a comment about my lips and fellatio" Our translation.

Lastly, we think it is important to provide some degree of our participants' understanding and experiences with the police. We would highlight that Afro-Latin American men were stopped, interrogated and searched more than Afro-Latin American women. Every one of the male participants had multiple and sometimes violent interactions with the police. This is not to suggest that Black women had better experiences, only to report on what our data revealed to us. For example, Tony, an Afro-Latin American man from the Dominican Republic, when we asked him if he had experienced discrimination in institutions, he made the following statement:

> En todas. Sobre todo con la policía en la calle. No hay lugar donde no haya una mirada, un comentario, un gesto. Tenemos una comunicación corporal y no sé, eso también habla. Que yo esté a tu lado y tú te apartes o te agarres el bolso.[7]

We did not ask specifically about the police, but he emphasized their role and impact as primary, regarding his experiences of discrimination. He then went on to explain how he was policed by the general public virtually everywhere he went. Through sight, sound and movement, he was aware of how his body was hiper-serveiled. He felt he was always under suspicion. What his understanding provides is that for Black people in general and Afro-Latin Americans specifically, living in Spain was being in a police state. Not only were the official uniform wearing people paid to protect society watching, controlling and limiting Afro-Latin American people's movement, but also the general public. Spain, like much of the world, is an historical extension of the slave plantation, where blackness was never not under some form of control, susceptible to violence with no contingency. Within the family, work, schooling, intimate relationships and virtually everywhere else, Afro-Latin Americans were living the afterlife of slavery.

## Conclusion

As Zakiyah Iman Jackson in her recent book *Becoming Human* (2020) points out, there are Black scholars across time and space, such as Franz Fanon, Christina Sharpe, Aime Cesaire, Sadiya Hartmann, Frank Wilderson, Sylvia Wynter and Achille Mbembe who advocate for analysis and understanding of anti-blackness beyond that of recognition and inclusion, which would lie within what is referred to as empirical understandings of the world. Empirical analysis tends to advocate for changes in policy that would increase and or bring about racial equality. We have stated that part of our effort in this paper is to respond to scholars and activists who claim that a type of imperial epistemology of scholarship on blackness coming out of the United States has dominated and/or has carried undue weight of understanding of blackness in Spain. Locating Black people as socially dead, that is an ontological analysis, is less concerned with changes in policy, such as greater recognition of Black people in school textbooks and increased access to universities. Its emphasis is on sitting with our condition, because so much scholarship is advocating for inclusion and recognition, which would appear to not take history into consideration. Acknowledging social death would move us past advocating for recognition and inclusion. A social death analysis is also not saying these efforts of inclusion and recognition are not valid.

We do not refute that as a lived experience there are particular differences between being a Black person in Spain, Latin America or the United States. In

[7] "In all. Especially with the police on the street. There is no place where there is not a look, a comment, a gesture. We have bodily communication and I don't know, that also speaks. I may be by your side and you move away or grab your bag". Our translation.

Spain one is less likely to be shot and incarcerated by the police than in Latin America and the United States. In Latin America, specifically Brazil, the weight of police violence on the Black community is beyond that of the United States. Also, in much of the region, poverty and lack of access to mainstream institutions are endemic to a greater degree than in the United States and Spain for Black communities. The United States locks up Black people more than any other country in the world. These examples only get at the surface of other important qualitative differences Black people in each of these regions experience. Our effort in this paper is to align ourselves with the scholars Zakiyyah Iman Jackson cited above, who are more focused on the structure of anti-blackness than advocating for inclusion and recognition within a specific country or region, not that these are unimportant endeavors.

We have attempted to demonstrate that in Spain Black people are socially dead, that is, they live outside of civil society. There is no point of reference for the violence they experience and it is ubiquitous. Since the Sub-Saharan African slave trade, over 500 years, Black people's general condition living in Spain has not changed. Throughout this period, they have experienced gratuitous violence, are genealogical isolates and dishonored. These exist together. To do gratuitous violence, one must not see the sentient being as a person. The requirement of personhood is a filial relationship at the scale of the family to the state (Wilderson 2010). This was erased for all Black people across the globe through the coupling of slavery and blackness as a result of the Atlantic Sub-Saharan slave trade. When you are marked as such, anything imaginable and as yet imagined can be done to you. The potential and real violence that can be done to you as a result of one's lack of any historical or temporal coordinates, simultaneously reproduces the black person's commodification. Gratuitous violence combined with genealogical isolation structures one as not honorable or honored. This is social death. We are less interested in the differences of anti-blackness across countries and regions. We give greater weight to the ontological.

That being said, we acknowledge that in this paper we have contradicted ourselves by focusing on the particular experiences of Afro-Latin Americans living in Spain. We have highlighted that Afro-Latin Americans living in Spain have been forced from Africa to the Americas and the Caribbean and then to the place that originally sent them on this journey of terror. That is different from Equatorial Guineans coming to Spain in search of a better life. These people may claim they were never descendants of slaves and/or that their cultural integrity is intact to a degree that it is not for those taken to the Americas and Caribbean. There may also exist significant social class differences between Equatorial Guineans and Afro-Latin Americans. Too, the colonial structure of Africa may have hidden to a greater degree the role of anti-blackness in the everyday lives of people living there, because their masters appear to be Black. Does highlighting these differences bring us any closer to improving our condition? We think history tells us it does not.

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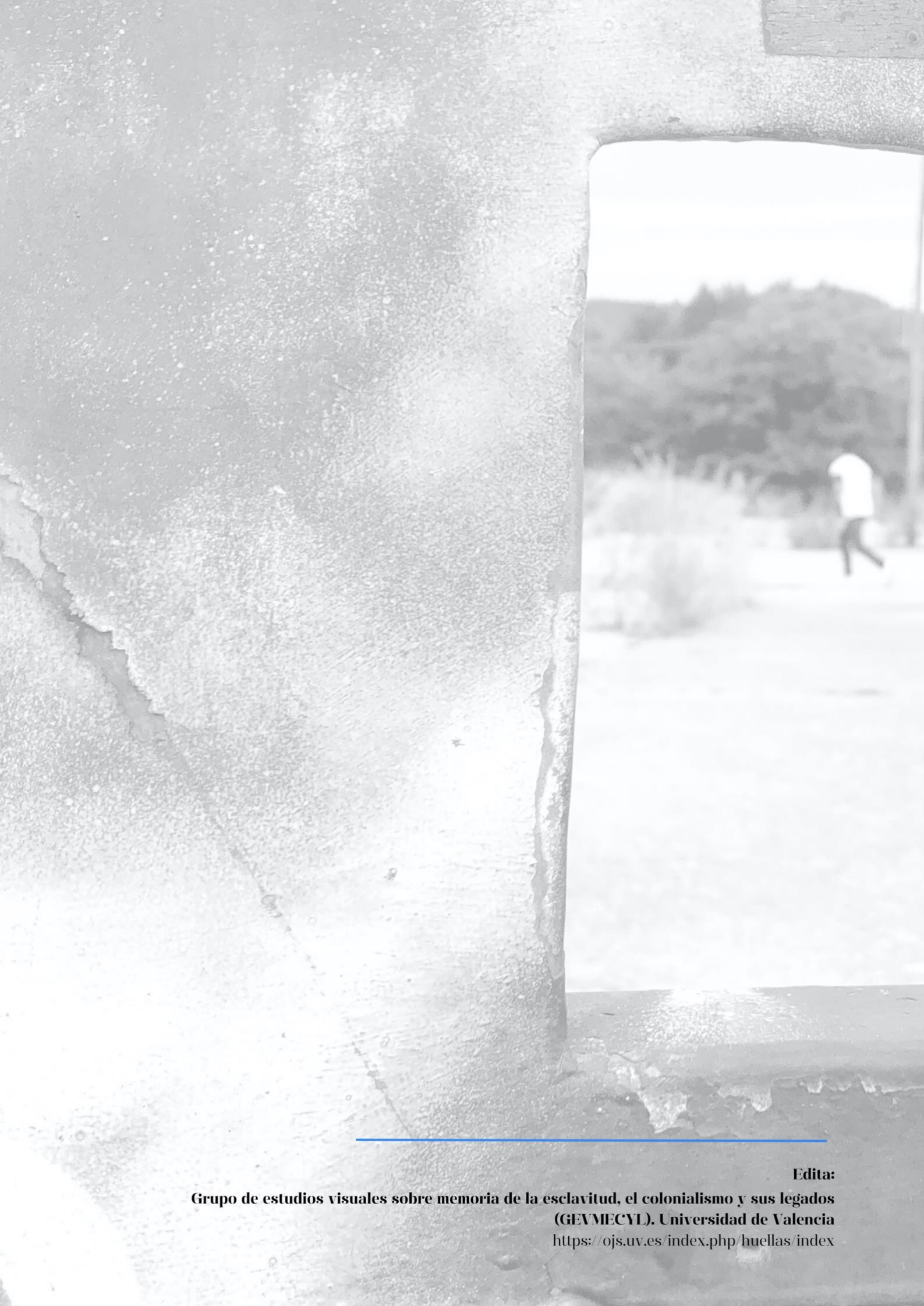

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