

Anti-Blackness and Colorism in México

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Overview

- Brief history of the enslavement in México
- The Historical and Cultural Erasure of Ethnic and Racial Difference
- Colorblindness & Colorism
- Prejudice



Enslavement in México

In 1493, Pope Alexander VI, mandated that the indigenous people be converted to Catholicism and prohibited their enslavement. However, those who did not accept Christianity or reverted to their old religion, should be punished and could be enslaved (*Tribes - Native Voices*, n.d.-a)

One of the first people to challenge the illegal enslavement of “indios” was Father Bartolome de las Casas. Ironically, his proposed solution to enslavement of indigenous people was to import black slaves from Africa (Lencheck, 2022).

Of the 10 to 16 million Africans who survived the voyage to the New World, over one-third landed in Brazil and between 60 and 70 percent ended up in Brazil or the sugar colonies of the Caribbean. Only 6 percent arrived in what is now the United States. Yet by 1860, approximately two thirds of all New World slaves lived in the American South (The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, 2023).

A large groups of enslaved people escaped to geographically secluded regions to form maroon communities. For example, In 1618, Gaspar Yanga achieved an agreement with the colonial government for self-rule of his maroon settlement (*Enslaved: Peoples of the Historical Slave Trade*, n.d.)

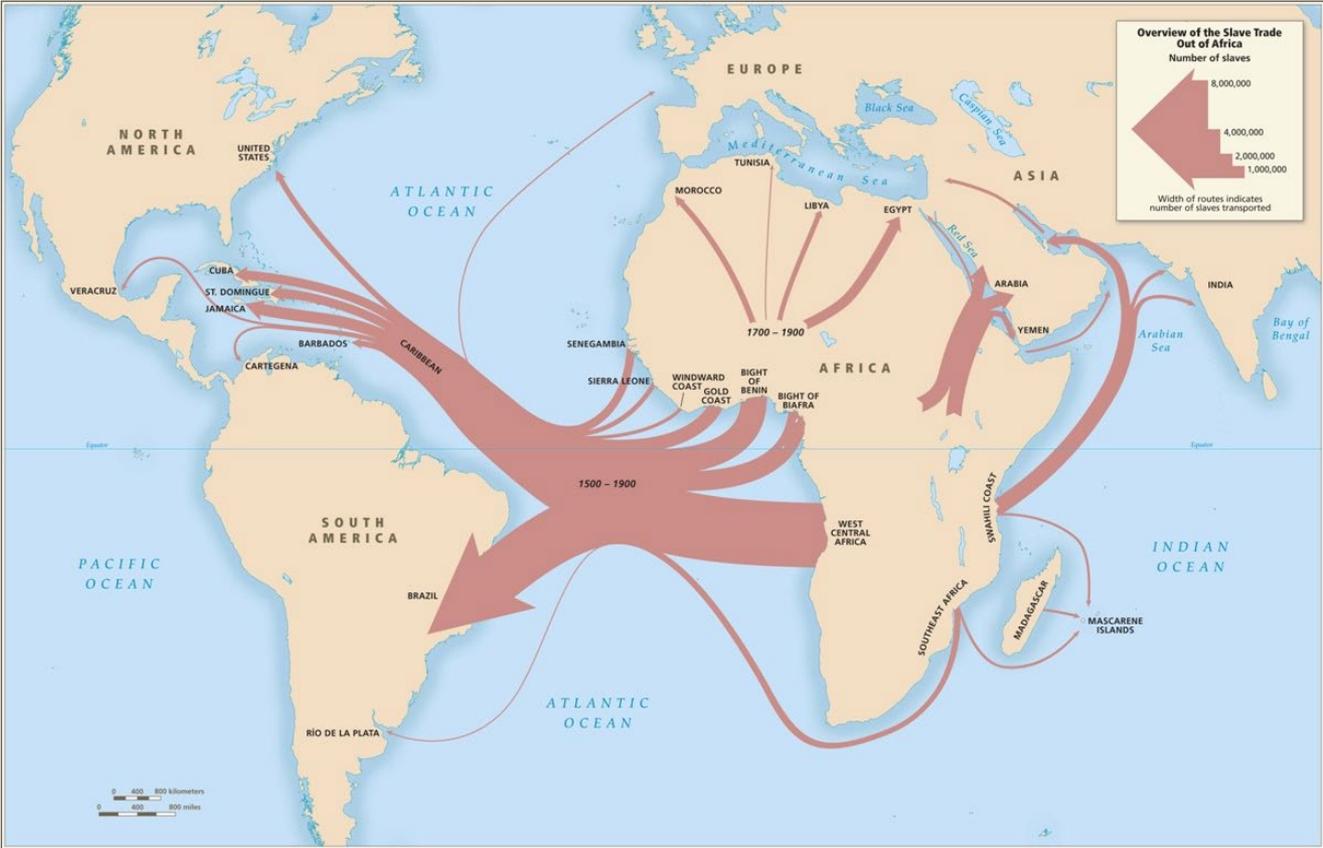
In 1829, Slavery was abolished in the Mexican Constitution as part of ideology in the Mexican Independence by president Vicente Guerrero. Slavery did survive in the part of Mexico that is now Texas. Indeed, Mexican efforts to free slaves played an important role in the formation of the Republic of Texas (Lencheck, 2022).



Portrayal the afro-mestizo president Vicente Guerrero over time



Overview of the Slave Trade out of Africa





San Juan de Ulua Fortress in Veracruz, Mexico.





Elmina, Ghana





American Slavery in Comparative Perspective by the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History

Slavery in the United States was especially distinctive in the ability of the slave population to increase its numbers by natural reproduction. In the Caribbean, Dutch Guiana, and Brazil, the slave death rate was so high and the birth rate so low that slaves could not sustain their population without imports from Africa.

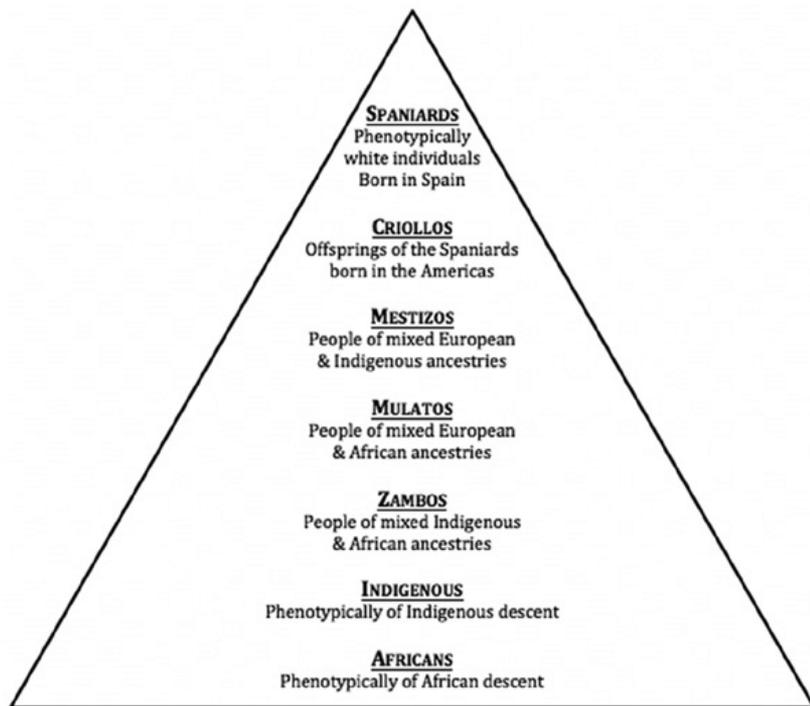
But wherever sugar dominated, enslaved populations tended to increase only from the importations of Africans. In addition, work in the sugar fields, where men tended to outnumber women, was severely taxing and general health was worse than in other slave work.

Another important difference between Latin America and the United States involved conceptions of race. In Spanish and Portuguese America, an intricate system of racial classification emerged. Compared with the British and French, the Spanish and Portuguese were much more tolerant of racial mixing and recognized a wide range of racial gradations. The American South, in contrast, adopted a two-category system of race in which any person with a black mother was automatically considered to be black.

In the United States, any degree of African ancestry makes a person black, while in [parts of] Latin America and the Caribbean any degree of non-African ancestry means that a person is not black.

Caste

Casta which means "lineage" in Spanish and Portuguese and has historically been used as a racial and social identifier.



The Historical and Cultural Erasure of Ethnic and Racial Difference

The creation of a national Mexican identity, especially after the Mexican Revolution, emphasized Indigenous and European heritage, excluding African history and contributions from Mexico's national consciousness. It wasn't until 1992, the Mexican government officially recognized African culture as being one of the three major influences on the culture of Mexico, the others being Spanish and Indigenous. In 2020, Afro-Mexicans are counted for the first time in the census.

Jose Vasconcelos, secretary of education in 1920 conception of the *cosmic race* was not one that admitted racial diversity or acceptance of difference. Instead, it was the idealized, romanticized promise of a future of racial homogeneity in the country, where black and indigenous phenotypes would yield to other "more beautiful" physical traits. This identity implies mestizaje, non-racism, and non-blackness.

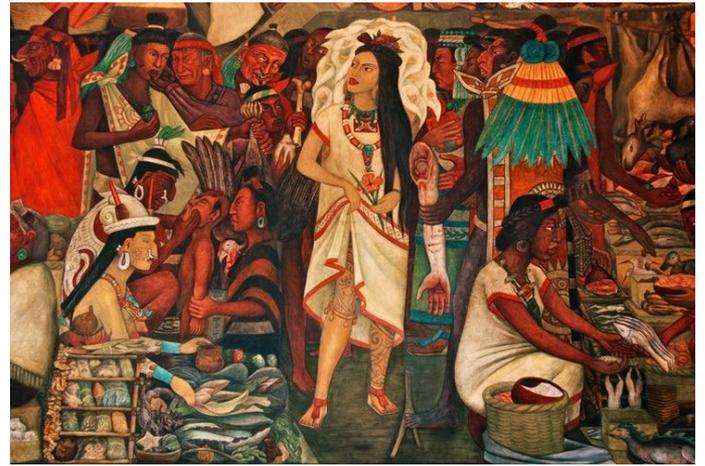
Mexicans are aware of the historical plight of the region's indigenous peoples, this awareness is always relegated to the distant past and invisibilized by the mestizaje myth.

In the United States, any degree of African ancestry makes a person black, while in [parts of] Latin America and the Caribbean any degree of non-African ancestry means that a person is not black.

The *Epopeya del Pueblo Mexicano* by Diego Rivera



Mexican Muralism: David Alfaro Siqueiros, Diego Rivera, and José Clemente Orozco



Chicano Movement: Beyond Aztlan

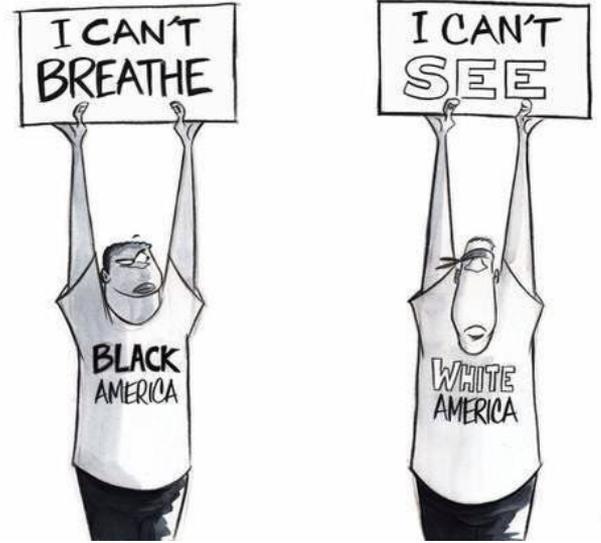
La raza cósmica has been used by Chicano and Mexican-American movements since the 1970s, which assert the *reconquista* ('reconquest') of the American Southwest, based on their Mexican ancestry (Vasconcelos, 1997). It also negates blackness and conflates indigeneity.



Colorblindness

Colorblindness is the racial ideology that posits the best way to end discrimination is by treating individuals as equally as possible, without regard to race, culture, or ethnicity.

- In the US, colorblindness show as “I do not see color, everyone is human”
- In Latinoamerica, colorblindness shows are “I cannot be racist because I have no race, I am mestizo.”





Colorism

Colorism is the inter- and intra-racial and inter and intra-ethnic discrimination based on skin color stratification (Bonilla-Silva, 2009; Hunter, 2005), it is argued to be a relation to skin tone rather than racial or ethnic identity (Hunter, 2007). However, this form of skin tone discrimination against dark-skin, but not light-skin people constitutes a form of race-based discrimination (Banks, 2000).

Colorism for Latinos and African Americans has its roots in European colonialism and slavery in the Americas. Latinos are a particularly interesting case to study because social scientists typically treat 'Latino' or 'Hispanic' as a separate category from race. Consequently there are Latinos who identify as white, black, Indigenous and others. There are strong variations by national group as to which of those options Latinos choose (Mexicans are most likely to choose 'other race' and Cubans are most likely to choose 'white', for example; Rodriguez, 2000).

It is common within Latin America and the Caribbean to rank order the prestige of the countries based on the color spectrum in which country is racially identified. In this way, "nationality is a proxy for race" that embodies White Supremacy (Wilkerson, 2020, p.16)

In Latin America, a more complex consciousness of color sees black or white, but also recognizes many shades in between. "Latinos expression of color bias are intimately connected with assessments of phenotype, hair texture, size and shape of noses and lips, and socioeconomic class standing. Latino race labeling this factors in considerations of bodily features other than color that are considered to be racial signifiers of denigrated african ancestry" (Wilkerson, 2020, p.16 p.81).



Mestizaje Ideology as Color-Blind Racism

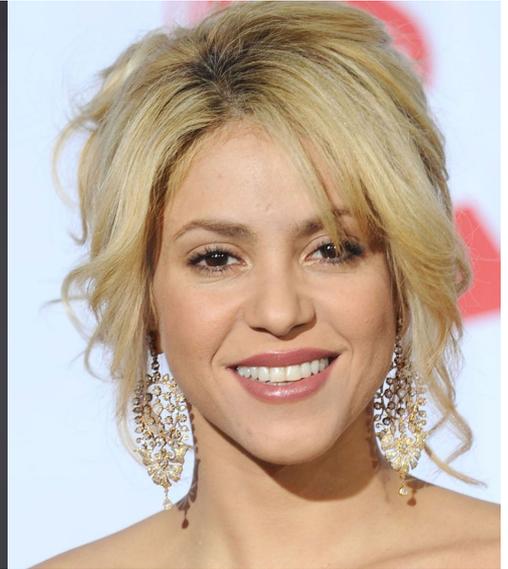
Many scholars who write about Mexican mestizaje omit references to Afro-Mexicans, Mexico's African roots, and contemporary anti-black sentiments in the Mexican and Mexican American communities.

This uncritical and ahistorical invocation of mestizaje has serious implications for race relations in the United States given the growing presence and political power of Mexican Americans because substituting mestizaje for racial binarism when discussing race in the United States reinforces rather than diminishes notions of white racial superiority and dominance.

Mestizaje is a hegemonic political ideology, a promise of equality and a racialized and racist experience that normalized privilege and exclusion (Moreno Figueroa, 2010). This is possible due to the belief that in countries where mestizaje is prevalent, there is no race. It has also been known to be a “whitening policy”, where a complete assimilation would be achieved by mixing the races (Soler Castillo & Pardo Abril, 2009).

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Colorism in the Media



Colorism in the Media

Singer, Amara La Negra, accused of blackface



 **Somebody Grandma**
@_BRAT_ · Follow

Amara La Negra looks like she's wearing black face.
6:10 PM · Jan 3, 2018

2 ❤️ Reply Copy link

[Read 3 replies](#)

 **Uwani**
@TheUwaniAliyu · Follow

Honestly this season is correcting my ignorance. After seeing pictures of Amara La Negra I thought it was a black face situation, didn't know Latina's like her existed. We learn every day #LHHMIA
9:31 AM · Jan 4, 2018

5 ❤️ Reply Copy link

[Read 5 replies](#)

 **DeVon**
@NeesieDeVon · Follow

It's sad that Amara La Negra has to prove her blackness because people believe she's too pretty to be a real dark skin person. That's what it boils down too. I can't believe they think she's in black face.
#LHHMia
7:06 PM · Jan 4, 2018

6 ❤️ Reply Copy link

[Read 1 reply](#)

 **boot.**
@perccluator · Follow

So first there's no such thing as AfroLatinx and now she's in blackface? Amara La Negra's role on *Ihh Miami* is so important I can't wait for her to shine a light on the intense racism in the Latinx community no one ever wants to address
11:24 PM · Jan 4, 2018

17 ❤️ Reply Copy link

[Read more on X](#)

 **Rocky**
@iamrockytee · Follow

Let's get down to it:

People are saying Amara La Negra is in Blackface because y'all can't FATHOM the beauty and versatility of the Black woman. Y'all always gotta attribute a black woman's beauty to us being mixed or some shit. That's a problem.
7:55 PM · Jan 4, 2018

25 ❤️ Reply Copy link

[Read 3 replies](#)

Colorism in the Media



 **Andalalucha**
@Andalalucha · Follow

Apparently, Yalitza Aparicio is both pretty and famous enough to be on the cover of one of Mexico's most well read fashion magazines, @holamexico, but she's still too brown for their taste so they mega photoshopped her.



5:37 PM · Feb 21, 2019

384 ❤️ Reply Copy link

Read 20 replies

 **Maximiliano Granjeno**
@MaximilianoGR_

En respuesta a @melodramamx @nataliamzt

Cuando la chacha se prueba la ropa de la jefa

0:04 - 16 nov. 2018

1 Retweet 7 Me gusta

10 💬 1 🔄 7 ❤️

 **@__escupirX11**

En respuesta a @melodramamx

La prieta aunque Vista de seda.. Prieta queda.. Siento herir la susceptibilidad pero es la DVD

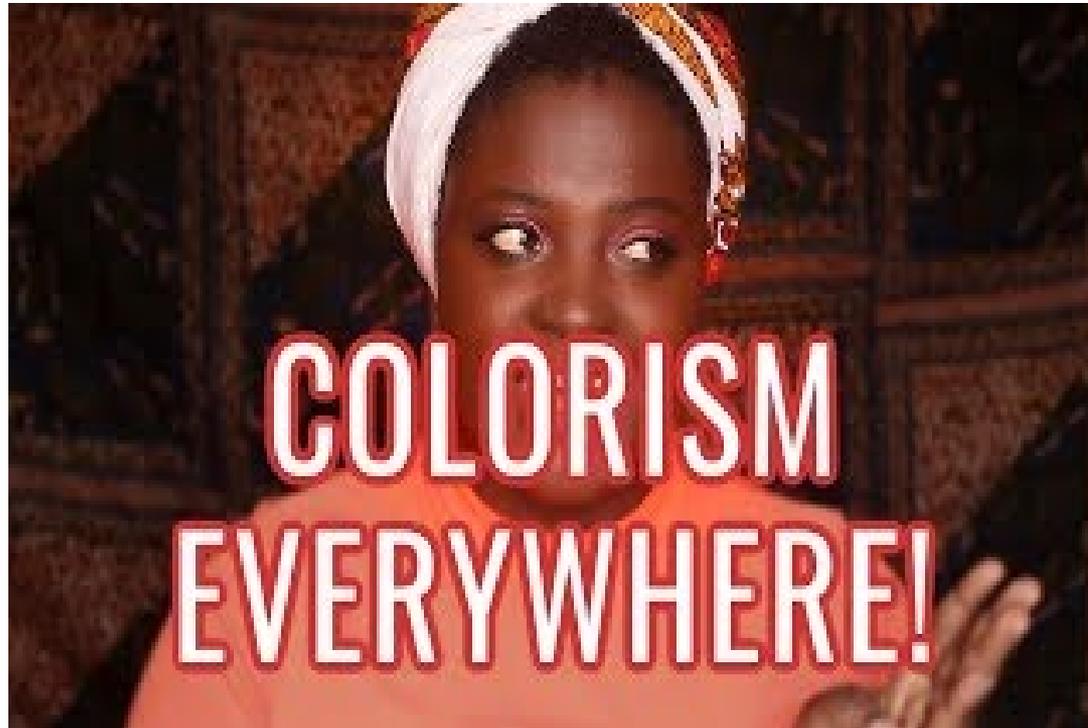
16:36 - 15 nov. 2018

3 Retweets 72 Me gusta

53 💬 3 🔄 72 ❤️

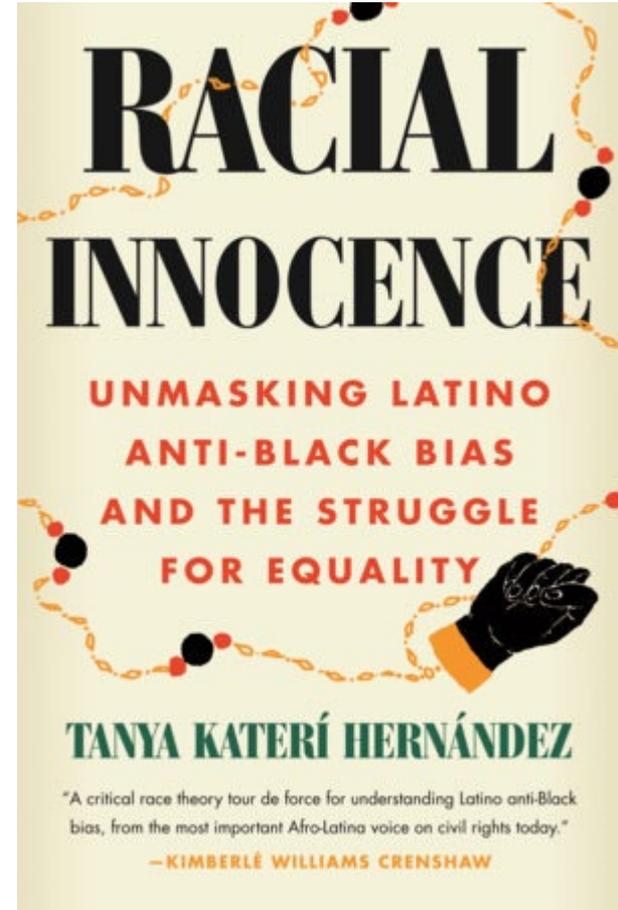


Colorism in Ghana by Nana Ashanti



Can Latinos be Racist?

Tanya Katerí Hernández in *Racial Innocence* demonstrate that it's possible for a historically marginalized group to experience discrimination and also be discriminatory.



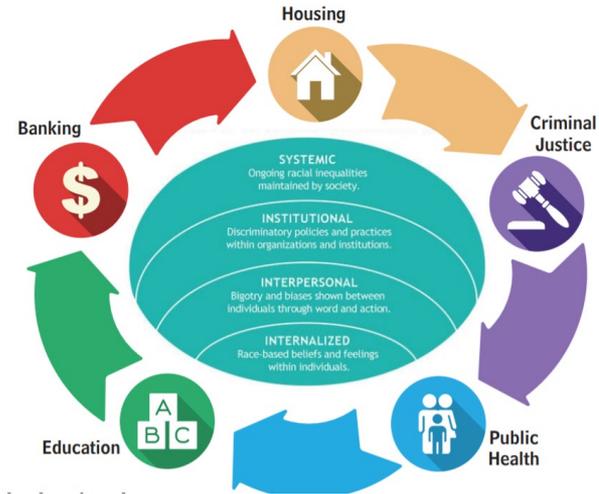


Prejudice

- **Prejudice** is having an unjustified negative attitude toward an individual based on the individual's membership in a group, including groups based on ethnicity, gender, age, religion, or gender identity.

Prejudice

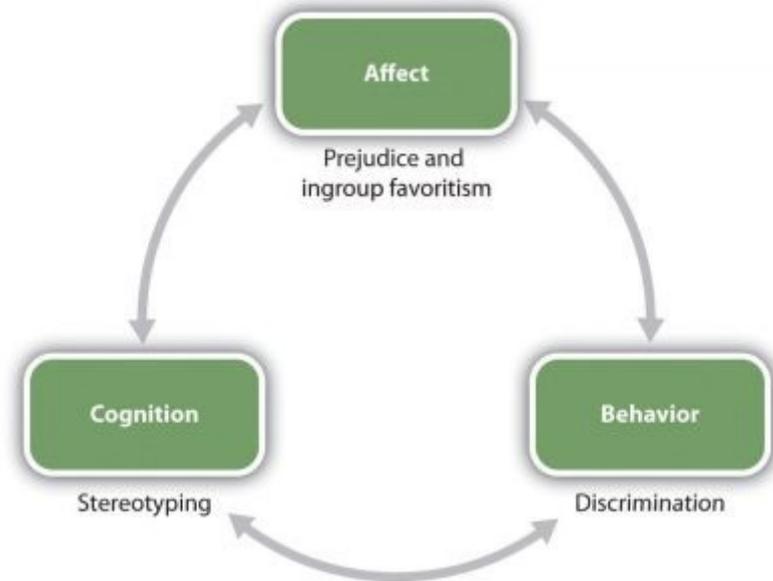
Systemic racism refers to systems, structures and social procedures that disadvantage a racial group and privilege another.





Components of Prejudice

- **Stereotype (beliefs):** A generalized belief about a group, applied to every member of a group.
- **Prejudice (emotions):** An unjustified (usually negative) attitude toward a group (and its members).
- **Discrimination (behavior):** Unjustified behavior selectively applied to members of a group.





Race vs Ethnicity

Race refers to dividing people into groups, often based on physical characteristics.

Ethnicity refers to the cultural expression and identification of people of different geographic regions, including their customs, history, language, and religion.

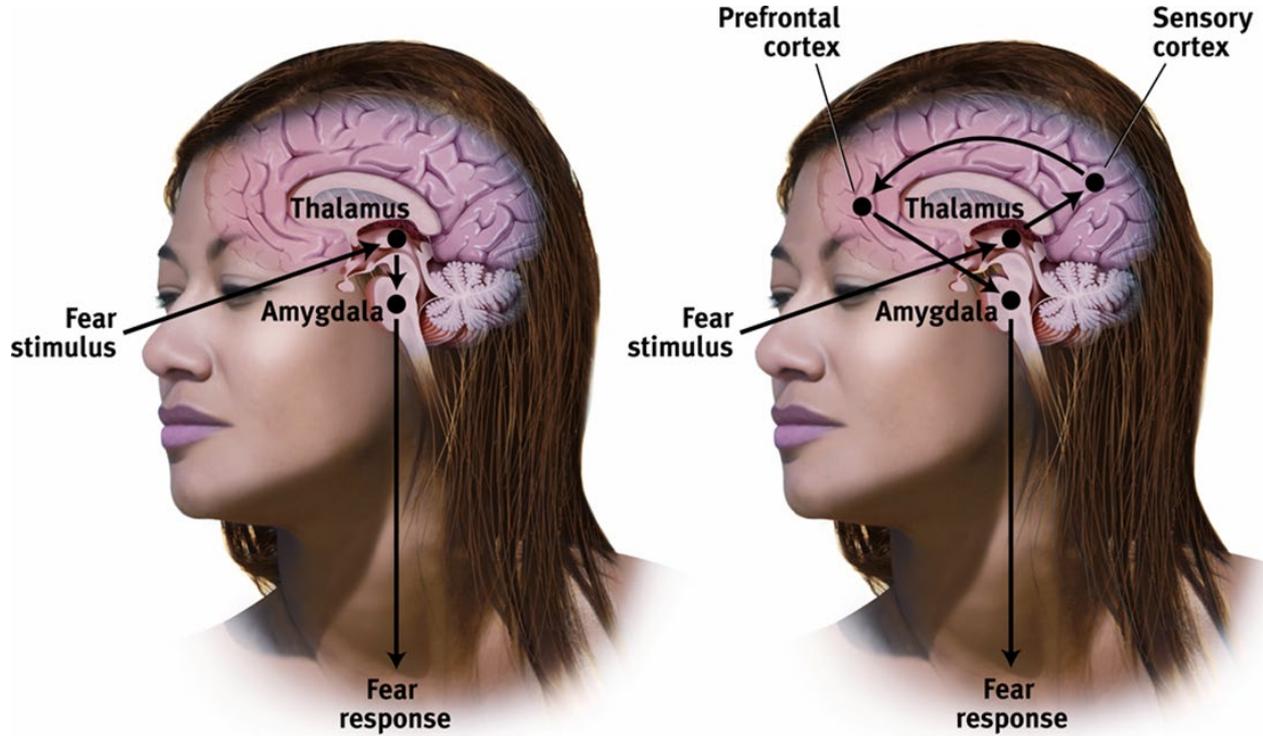
Racism is discrimination and prejudice against people based on their race or ethnicity.

Prejudice

Social psychologists examine prejudicial attitudes on two levels—explicit or overt racism, and implicit or covert racism.

- **Explicit racism** is a person's conscious and openly shared racist attitudes, which might be measured using a questionnaire.
- **Implicit racism** refers to racial attitudes that exist on a deeper, hidden level.

Implicit vs. Explicit Processing



(a) The speedy low road

(b) The thinking high road

Prejudice plus Power

Prejudice plus power is a stipulative definition of racism used in the United States, often by anti-racist activists. According to this definition, two elements are required in order for racism to exist: racial prejudice, and social power to codify and enforce this prejudice into an entire society. Adherents write that while all people can be racially prejudiced, minorities are powerless and therefore only white people have the power to be racist.

According to this definition, non-white cannot be prejudicial, and assumes that non-whites lack power. Therefore, Latinos bias against African Americans is not like the “real racism.”

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