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A Pedagogy of Marronage: Afrocolombians and Ethno-education

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Abstract

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This paper investigates the potential of education. Through a historical and theoretical critique of Colombian ethno-education, I examine the disparity between education that serves the state as an anti-Black institution and the ways Afrocolombians themselves have practiced education as a form of political resistance and liberation. Ethno-education, meaning formal education that acknowledges and incorporates the beliefs, traditions, and knowledge of ethnic minorities, was created and institutionalized as part of a series of multicultural legislative reforms passed in Colombia in the 1990s. These reforms aimed to expand Colombian politics, identity, and society to include all ethnic minorities within the country, effectively putting an end to discrimination and racism. However, I argue that because ethno-education's ultimate goal is reaffirming nationalism, it will inevitably recreate the problems it seeks to address. Instead, only an education without ties to the state can challenge anti-Blackness. As such, I outline how Black radical thought and Afrocolombian history contribute to a pedagogy of marronage. This pedagogy, which has existed within Afrocolombian groups for far longer than any multicultural reform, was created despite anti-Black oppression and as such it acts as a guide to refusing the world. A pedagogy of marronage does not aim to acclimate or appeal to oppressive structures of the state, humanity, or the world. Rather, it puts each of us in the most genuine and relentless service of one another. Though I use Colombia as an example, this pedagogy has existed and can exist wherever there is a commitment to Blackness. By following a pedagogy of marronage into the otherwise, we can begin to conceptualize new and numerous subjectivities.

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Oddly enough, I have the world to thank for this thesis. It was countless interactions with people, positive and negative, permanent and fleeting, that led to this pursuit of trying to understand the depth of violence in the world and the importance of anti-Blackness in its maintenance.

That said, I could not have done this without the help of my thesis advisor, Dr. Tom Rogers, as well as my committee members and various teachers at Emory. These include Dr. Aisha Finch, Dr. Johnathan Coulis, Dr. Ravá Chapman, Professor Andrew Kaplan, and several more. I also want to thank the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship, Dr. Dianne Stewart and Dr. Elaine Penagos for their mentorship and support. Lastly, I want to thank my partner and my family, for helping and believing in me even when I had no idea what I was talking about.

 May we all continue our practices of education and change.

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## Introduction

Education is a human right.[1] But, not all peoples are equally treated as humans. Often, the notion of humanity is only invoked in the presence of inequality and dehumanization. To say that education is a human right is therefore instructive to understanding who is considered human and what that means.

This thesis outlines a historical and theoretical critique of Colombia's approach to Afrocolombian ethno-education. Formally implemented in 1991, state-sanctioned ethno-education aimed to bring ethnic minorities and their educational practices into the classroom. Purportedly, this model would put the characteristics and aspirations of ethnic groups into a collaborative dialogue with Western institutions, *"respond[iendo] a las características, necesidades y aspiraciones de los grupos étnicos, desarrollando la identidad cultural, la interculturalidad y el multilinguismo"* [responding to the characteristics, needs and aspirations of ethnic groups, developing cultural identity, interculturality and multilingualism].[2] However, as it stands, formalized ethno-education is unable to create the education and progress it professes because it lacks a critical and committed approach to confronting systemic racism. Instead, its commitment is tethered to multicultural nationalism, recognizing diversity for the purpose of incorporating it into a larger national power structure. This structure, the Colombian state, is inherently

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[1] According to the United Nations Universal Declaration for Human Rights: "Everyone has the right to education," and "Education shall he directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace." Universal Declaration of Human Rights. UN General Assembly , 1948, https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/043/88/PDF/NR004388.pdf?OpenElement, art. 26.

[2] "Etnoeducación una política para la diversidad." *Altablero*, vol. 51, Aug. 2009, https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1621/article-87223.html.

oppressive towards Afrocolombians because it is built on and maintained through their dehumanization. As a result, mere inclusion in formal education will not address the inequality experienced by ethnic/cultural groups, especially Afrocolombians. It is impossible to create a truly intercultural educational dialogue without a radical reconsideration of history, identity, and education, which the state is incapable of. For the state to engage in a genuine critique and campaign against racism, it would have to dismantle itself.

While formal education is geared towards maintaining existing power structures, Afrocolombians have continuously used education in the service of radical sociopolitical resistance. Whereas ethno-education is a tool of reform, Afrocolombians' acts of epistemic insubordination can be understood through a *pedagogy of marronage*. The value of interrogating this difference is that it challenges the function and potential of education. In a process of reform, Afrocolombians are appealing to an oppressive power to give them access to something that should be a human right. They are therefore asking the state to recognize their humanity and affirm it through the rights and protections given to citizens. But given the contested nature of their citizenship and the various ways they continue to be abandoned by the state, the extent to which Afrocolombians are treated as humans must be brought into question.

The dynamic between oppressor and oppressed, human and dehumanized, finds its most extreme expression in anti-Blackness. As Black people are considered the antithesis of humanity, the expression of violence towards Black people is most normalized and most extreme (in the spectrum of social and political others). A pedagogy of marronage centers this truth, and rather than appealing for humanization or recognition, it withdraws. A pedagogy of marronage negates the "givenness" of humanity,

of a nation, and of the world itself. Instead, it seeks liberation in the otherwise, that space of possibility outside the bounds of modern political grammar. As a practice, it centers the unthought, opening up unknowable potential for new and numerous subjectivities.[3]

No liberation can be found in reform. There may be momentary relief, but the very ontology of the world propels it towards the consistent reaffirmation of anti-Blackness. To withdraw from this abuse, one must enter a radical questioning of the self and the world. It is for this reason that a *pedagogy* is needed. It pushes this questioning into a form of education that relentlessly deconstructs ideology in order to best instruct, create, and share in liberation.

We begin with Colombia as an example because the nation was a pioneer in ethno-educational legislation and has one of the largest populations of Afro-descendants in the Americas.[4] However, this critique is both built with and in service of a transnational approach to understanding the connection between education and anti-Blackness. It begins at the level of the nation because the nation is a central unit in modern power dynamics. However, a pedagogy of marronage recognizes no borders. It can exist wherever anti-Blackness is present.

This thesis is organized into two chapters. The first is an overview of Colombian history as it relates to Afrocolombians and education, situating Colombia's multicultural shift and subsequent ethno-educational legislation in this greater context. I argue that

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[3] For more on the "unthought" see Saidiya V. Hartman and Frank B. Wilderson, III, "The Position of the Unthought."

[4] With these two facts in mind, it's also important to note the extent to which Afrocolombians are invisibilized in Colombian educational discussions, unless said discussion specifically pertains to multiculturalism. I found out about Colombia's ethno-education initiatives as an accident when looking into schools on the Pacific coast. To my mind, this speaks to the sincerity of intercultural education reforms and their socio-political success. That said, I leave further conversation to Chapter 1.

Afrocolombians have continuously engaged in creating informal educational spaces in which their needs and knowledge are expressed as political resistance. I also point to the successes and unfulfilled promises of formal ethno-education. The second chapter is theory based, where I engage with Black radical thought to connect the history of ethno-education to a conversation on epistemology, anti-Blackness, and dehumanization. In it, I delve briefly into Black feminism to show that a pedagogy of marronage is not only a process of abandoning the world but should act as a practice of radical and reflexive care.

Within Latin American educational scholarship, there is a lack of writing at the intersection of race of and identity especially when it pertains to Blackness. Colombia's multicultural legislation was meant to apply to all the ethnic minorities within its borders, but much of the scholarship on their ethno-educational initiatives focuses on Indigenous peoples. Afrocolombian ethno-education took longer to be legally recognized and implemented,[5] speaking to the difference in how Colombian multiculturalism prioritizes Indigeneity over Blackness, inevitably prolonging racial discrimination against both.

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[5] Despite Indigenous and Black peoples mobilizing for educational reform around the same time (1970s), there is a nearly twenty-year difference in the implementation of legislation and initiatives between the two groups. I have quoted the following article from the Ministry of Education that shows a higher priority afforded to Indigenous people's inclusion. It reads, *"Los procesos de formulación de altableropolíticas educativas dirigidas a los pueblos indígenas se iniciaron a finales de la década del 70 [...], con los cuales se reestructuró el Sistema Educativo y el Ministerio de Educación Nacional. Dentro de los cambios que se introdujeron, se establecieron: la participación, la cooperación, la investigación, el uso de lenguas nativas, la gratuidad, la financiación descentralizada, la elección especial para etnoeducadores y los calendarios flexibles. Para la población afrocolombiana, a partir de los años 90, se reconoció el derecho de estas comunidades a tener una educación propia con participación en la construcción curricular"* [The processes of formulating educational policies directed at indigenous peoples began at the end of the 1970s [...] with which the Educational System and the Ministry of National Education were restructured. Within the changes that were introduced, the following were established: participation, cooperation, research, the use of native languages, gratuity, decentralized financing, the special election for ethno-educators and flexible calendars. For the Afro-Colombian population, starting in the 1990s, the right of these communities to have their own education with participation in curricular construction was recognized]. This excerpt is the introductory paragraph of the article, which gives no further explanation of how Afrocolombian ethno-education specifically resulted in the restructure of the Ministry of Education. "Enseñar y aprender de la diversidad y en la diversidad." *Altablero*, vol. 51, Aug. 2001, https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1621/article-208081.html.

With this in mind, I attempt to generate discussion with regard to what I feel are anti-Black premises within formal education, Colombian identity, nationalism, and Latinidad.

Latin American educational discourse has historically struggled to maintain a substantive racial critique, often because it has overemphasized the measurable and empirical.[6] While these can lead to discussions on certain aspects about the quality and equity of education, overreliance on the measurable and empirical cannot understand the violence and inequality of day-to-day experiences with formal education. This evaluation maintains fidelity to Eurocentric ideals, which leaves Afro-descendants unthought of in greater conversations about the responsibilities and possibilities of education. Moreover, it occludes comparisons between racial disparities in North America vs the South, Central, and Caribbean, invisibilizing Afrolatinos not only within their countries but more broadly within global power dynamics.

The remainder of this introduction will function as a historical literature review on discourse surrounding Latin American education since the early twentieth century. The sources have been compiled based on accessibility, audience, and time period. All attempt to speak on the current state or history of Latin American education at the time of their publication, and their approaches each speak to the tensions referenced above. Discussions on education are shaped based on the conceptions of its function. However, regardless of the perceived function or time period, there is an overall lack of attention to how education is affected by and affects Black people, much less a conversation on how to create an education that serves them.

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[6] This pertains to measurable aspects of education, such as number of teachers and test scores, and empirical logic, such as focusing on the official legislation of a given governing structure or official historical records.

This review will be structured as follows. I begin by looking at sources that prioritize the function of education for the sake of power. These focus on education in service of economic development, nation-building, and globalization. I continue with a look at liberatory and multicultural educational discussions. They employ education in the service of knowledge in attempt to name and attend to social inequality. However, throughout both categories, Afro-descendants are largely unheard of. Even in multi/intercultural writing, which becomes more prevalent after the 1960s, Afro-descendants are often passed over or sparingly mentioned. The educational discussions reviewed here validate the difficulty of developing a racial critique on a national/transnational scale because of the way they ignore or prioritize aspects of knowledge, culture, and history that are most productive for the perceived function of education, consistently putting Afro-descendant at a disadvantage. As such, these historic trends in Latin American educational narratives normalize their internalized/inherent anti-Blackness by reinforcing the silencing of Afro-descendants.

**Education for Power**

The works presented in this section examine education from a broad perspective, that is, they speak about education with regards to the infrastructure they hope to maintain. In this sense, while these pieces attempt to look at the institution of education from an unbiased position—at economic, national, or global levels that would indicate a larger scope—they actually limit the possibilities of education based on the function they wish to maintain and normalize. Educational discussion with this purpose, while helpful in understanding the real-world capacities to create education, loses sight of the potential of education. This is education for power.

We begin with *Education in Latin America*. Published in 1934, it was written by two PhD's: Henry Lester Smith and Harold Littell, both of whom worked at the School of Education in Indiana University. It's important to note their roles as U.S. pedagogues because of the nature in which they speak of Latin America. In many ways, Smith and Littell praise the educational systems they are presenting. They give a wide overview consisting of separate chapters for 22 countries, including Haiti. For their sources, they name "authoritative historical and geographical sources," "reports and other publications issued by the various ministries of education," and "United States government reports, various magazines and newspapers."[7] This range, while impressive in some ways, leads to a question about audience. Smith and Littell are decidedly writing for a Global North perspective, which manifests in romanticizing some characteristics and while degrading others. They aim to write for an "interdependent world", but their work is pushed by the belief that better Latin American education results in better countries and better markets. Their interdependence is built on what they perceive Latin America can create for them and their tone reflects a paternalism that U.S. scholars have historically employed when speaking of Latin America.[8]

Like many of the works presented in this review, the authors share the opinion that to understand education, one must have an "intimate understanding of the backgrounds

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[7] Smith, Henry Lester, and Harold Littell. *Education in Latin America*. American Book Company, 1934, viii.

[8] To further illustrate, they give this message at the end of their preface, "If the authors have brought into focus the part which Latin America is playing in this great educational world of ours; if they have conveyed the feeling that the contribution which these countries are now making shows promise of being multiplied many-fold in the years to come, then their efforts have not been in vain." Smith and Littell, *Education in Latin America, 3*.

which have shaped its destiny."[9] In their analysis they highlight geographic, racial, historic, and social factors. Diving into their racial analysis, the writers express a belief that because of the high class civilizations of Indigenous peoples found by the Spanish, they were more readily able to mix races, unlike their British/Northern counterparts.[10] Though they repeatedly express that the Spanish colonies did not progress at the same rate as the British colonies, they were instead able to create a new race of humans "having inherited the better qualities of both races." Not only does their work reflect a different understanding of the workings of race in Latin America, as I'll expand momentarily, it reflects a larger theme of consistently reaffirming the ways the U.S. and the Global North are superior. When speaking of geography and race in Colombia, they contrast "the great Andean land," which was inhabited predominantly by White Spaniards, creoles, and mestizos, to the "selvas [...] inhabited by savages" and the "Negro blood" of the coast.[11] In this statement it is revealed that they do recognize the Whiteness of the inheritor they praised, but still consider them separate from White North Americans, or Spaniards. Further their language negates and degrades darker-skinned mixed people and completely dehumanizes Black and Native people. Besides these underlying themes, they do also give a summary of the educational structure of each country, educational retention

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[9] Smith and Littell. *Education in Latin America*, 3.

[10] Instead, the British/Northern colonies supposedly encountered "illiterate savages" and conditions "amenable to proper living," making settlement and expansion easier. In other words, they tied their ability to colonize to the inferiority of the native people. Whereas they explain that the Spanish, who found races similar to them in intellect and civilization, were not able to progress as quickly but do show great promise. Smith and Littell. *Education in Latin America*, 2.

[11] This is also the only mention of Black people in Colombia and they account the high population to immigration from the West Indies. While this may be partially true, it also obscures the number of Afrodescendents present as a consequence of Colombian slavery. Smith and Littell. *Education in Latin America*, 198.

and capability, notable organizations and universities, and general subjects that are taught at different levels. Regardless, the education they write about and who it is ultimately meant for is a White audience, Latin American and not.[12]

Several years later, in 1963, Charles C. Haunch would provide a report for the U.S. Department of Health, Education, & Welfare titled, *The Current Situation in Latin American Education*. This publication, while not an academic book, provides insight into the ideas and realities surrounding Latin America and its education at the time. Its sources include, "official government reports, professional writings of educators, and the works of Latin American specialists" as well as reports from various Ministries of Education and first hand observations.[13] Unlike Smith and Littell, Hauch does not write with the same kind of paternalist valuation and therefore does provide a better and more complete overview of Latin American education—though his scope is not as wide. First and foremost, Hauch establishes that Latin American education is still highly influenced by colonialism, one that prioritizes and maintains the elite. He states, "educational methods still appear to be geared to the social-intellectual objectives of an earlier day, and not to providing a means for every individual to achieve his potential in society regardless of his social status." [14] He claims that this is because of an unwillingness on the part of various governments to allocate sufficient funds to education, leading to frequent turnover and instability in Ministries of Education, lack of teacher training and supplies,

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[12] Particular attention was paid to this first source as it contains the most explicit comments on race and Afro-descendants until the rise of multiculturalism, and highlights undertones found in later works for this section.

[13] Hauch, Charles. *The Current Situation in Latin American Education*. US Department of Health, Education, & Welfare; Office of Education, 1963, 1.

[14] Hauch, *The Current Situation*, 23.

and high illiteracy rates, among others. This is especially important to Hauch, because of the urban-rural divide.[15]

Hauch is concerned with the influx of unskilled workers from rural areas crowding the outskirts of cities. He states, "this situation intensifies the need for teaching basic labor skills and for creating a place in society for these individuals who potentially form a politically volatile group," raising a question about whether his audience and superiors might share his anxieties, and why.[16] Nowhere does Hauch speak about ways to implement changes or assist Latin American countries.[17] Instead, his concerns point to a link with Smith and Littell. Without formal education, rural groups are neglected and struggle to find a productive place in national life. The rural groups he referenced were specifically Indigenous peoples, pointing to a perceived danger from those whose education does not integrate into capable citizens. As such Hauch prioritizes progress achieved by using education as a tool for Eurocentric and neoliberal ideas of life and development. Overall, Hauch aims to give a more empirical account of Latin American educational systems, which he does, but his writing also reflects a growing tension between the desire for a people's education and education that constitutes progress according to a global scale.

The next work, titled *Education and Society in Latin America* was written by Orlando Albornoz in 1993. Albornoz is Latin American and writes as if speaking also to a Latin American audience, but he wrote this book after living in Europe for a year which

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[15] Smith and Littell also noted this problem and it persist still today.

[16] Hauch, *The Current Situation*, 8.

[17] Though, I admit would also have something to say if he did want to *assist* Latin American countries.

he claims gave him, "a useful perspective which can only come with such a geographical and, why not, sentimental separation."[18] Albornoz demonstrates a care for Latin America unlike Hauch and Smith and Littell, but it still comes from a place of wanting Latin America to take a grander stance in global politics and economics. His focus is on development, specifically scientific and technological innovation. He explains that the decade of the 1980s was a period of preparation for "modernization and growth," where political democracies have a chance at creating better educational structures but will lack the funds to do so. As such, he points to a relationship between economic development and education. I quote him here at length,

> It is necessary to go beyond training, to achieve the level at which the institutions of higher learning can become cognitive complexes, by concentrating their efforts and leading the way into scientific and technological innovation, *able to influence the production of goods and services, both for the national and the international market. That is the only way for Latin America to become competitive.* Economic growth in the next century will depend upon the ability of nations to trade in semiconductors, supercomputers, industrial robots and biotechnology, among others, as well as to be able to tackle the problems of the environment, pollution, transit, social security and efficient management of the growing area of services.[19]

It's clear that Albornoz is writing according to his beliefs about what will be best for the future of Latin American societies. He wants Latin America to become competitive and modern; to be able to produce the same kinds of values and progress as the Global North. However, his writing reveals a distrust in Latin America to produce these kinds of social goods and systems on its own. Perhaps that is true, but he believes that by leaning further into the world structures that created this imbalance, Latin America will eventually catch up and have a firmer and more established role in modernity. This perspective is common, but it doesn't consider the ways modernity and neoliberal development have hurt large

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[18] Albornoz, Orlando. *Education and Society in Latin America*. Macmillan Press, 1993, vi.

[19] Emphasis added. Albornoz, *Education and Society,* 4.

sectors of the Latin American population for centuries. Even with the best intentions, this leaves Black and Indigenous peoples especially at a disadvantage.[20] Albornoz uses much of his argument to express the ways education can lead to production, though he does mention that popular and democratic solutions are crucial in this process. In many ways Albornoz's book is exactly what one might expect from a more recent discussion on the potential of education as an institution, however, his writing leaves a gap between his dreams and those who aren't supported by them.

The last book in this section, and the most recent, is concerned with expanding education, but not explicitly for the purpose of national/global progress. True to its title, *Latin American Education: Comparative Perspectives*, this collection of works is meant to represent a wide breadth of the current research and conversation regarding Latin American education at the time of publication, 1997. It encompasses theoretical and pragmatic analysis and "draws from political sociology of education, theories of the state, and deconstructionist theories, with a focus on changes in state formation and its implications for the constitution of the pedagogical subject in public schools."[21] The concerns within this book reflect a tension shown in the prior sources, as popular education and institutional education were shaped by and against each other. This, as the editors Carlos Alberto Torres and Adriana Puiggros, explain, is an *organic crisis*. The crisis comes about through a shift away from the "typical logic of modernity […] influenced by functionalist thought […] evolutionism and positivism" that raised previous

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[20] It is interesting to note that Albornoz uses the language of "pure ethnic origin" to describe Indigenous and, presumably, Afro-descended people. A definite step forward from Smith and Littell, though still invisiblizing in nature.

[21] Torres, Carlos Alberto, and Adriana Puiggros, eds. *Latin American Education: Comparative Perspectives*. Routledge, 1997, 2.

generations. Education, they write, has long been about the transmission of legal and cultural capital—i.e., the creation of citizens—but with the growing acknowledgement of diverse experiences and origins, the role of education has to expand. Here it is important to note that the editors seem to look down on younger students, claiming that "most of them are apolitical in their attitudes-a feature highly contrasting with the situation of Latin American youth in the sixties and seventies-but they reject the ideological and cultural essentialism, logocentrism, and authoritarianism of the older generation."[22] Hauch had also made a comment about younger generations strikingly similar to this one, believing that they were not concerned enough with their education and so they did not fully understand their own political participation and beliefs. In both cases, it stems from a stubborn resistance to seeing how education can lead to growth in different directions. This piece, progressive as it is, still encounters some of the pitfalls of older conversations, namely ignoring the power of people to take something like globalization, critique it, and begin creating solutions from within. This is the crisis they're naming. It is not that education means less to younger generations, but that they want more. Perhaps, they want more than what is offered by the structures and beliefs of the authors in this section.[23]

All of these sources express a future for education rising from the unequal, settler-colonial, and capitalist roots of Latin America. Over the years they seem to acknowledge

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[22] Torres and Puiggros, *Latin American Education*, 15-6.

[23] On a final note, the editors do agree that "retaining old [educational] discourses without deconstructing them prevents social transformation," but perhaps they do not yet see transformation beyond what they understand. Furthermore, it's important to notice that as we move into the present, the audience of the sources becomes more and more ambivalent. However, it is clear that they are never speaking directly to or for Black and indigenous people. This normalizes the exclusion and invisibility of different positionalities. Torres and Puiggros, *Latin American Education*, 17.

more and more of the problems and tensions of the past. But they also hold steadily to the idea that continuing to progress in this direction, without a deconstruction of what that implies, is the answer. If anything, the authors in this section pay very little to no attention to educational alternatives and belittle student and adult educational movements. They all attempt to speak of education from a positivist perspective, examining infrastructure, financing, and policy, with some leaning more towards humanism than others. However, their distance from people, the same distance that brought about Torres and Puiggros organic crisis, demonstrates that this kind of educational conversation can no longer claim to reflect the range of thought and action surrounding Latin America. In this sense, these books, which are titled most broadly and authoritatively for the most "universal" audiences, feel the capacity to do so because they encompass an education produced for the world, rather than seeing a world capable of producing numerous educations.

## Education for Knowledge

The writers in this section have taken the leap in discussing the nature of education beyond its capacity to train people and normalize existing power structures. Starting during the 60s, they reflect global changes in conversation regarding popular movements and social inequality. After the 80s especially began waves of political and social acknowledgement around the multicultural nature of Latin American countries. Several slowly implemented policies to incorporate diverse narratives into their definitions of democracy and citizenship. Also at this time was the emergence of the New Social Movements. All these contributed to the works presented here. The education they each speak of is not made (solely) from or for power. It is education that begins to challenge the very notion of power itself. This is education for knowledge.

We must begin with one of the most famous Latin American writings on education, Paulo Freire's 1968, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. In this work, Freire writes about a kind of education completely beyond the understandings of the works presented in the previous section. Freire's education is subversive. It is anarchic. The previous authors wrote about education as something passed down and consumed, they spoke of power, but nothing of the power of the receptor to see, critique, and transform their world. Freire came from and inspired a lineage of thought that questioned the dichotomy between teacher and student, subject and object. His thinking involves deconstructing hierarchy and emphasizing conscientization, a praxis for social change where the individual becomes aware of themselves in relation to their political and social conditions. This strategy, as other scholars have noted, has the potential to become decolonial. Freire reclaimed education as something specifically non-institutionalized. Instead, he spoke of the ontological vocation of each subject to transform their situation. As I pointed out in the previous section, multiple authors raised questions around the potential and educational capacity of younger people. In response, I want to raise Freire's words, "the young perceive that their right to say their own word has been stolen from them, and that few things are more important than the struggle to win it back. And they also realize that the educational system today–from kindergarten to university–is their enemy."[24] The kind of education Freire espouses, though it has its limits and critiques, is *pure*.[25] At least,

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[24] Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. 30th anniversary ed. New York: Continuum, 2000, 34.

[25] Pure in the sense that it holds fidelity not to institutions and structures, but to the people, the oppressed, and all who are in the process of becoming subjects. This education is in the service of a fuller experience of being. I address Freire further in Chapter 2. While a pedagogy of marronage does aim to harness education for a fuller experience of being and transformation, I push back somewhat on Freire's work. A pedagogy of marronage is not only a fidelity to the people, but to Blackness itself.

in intention. Freire is not writing or appealing to those in power. He instead bypasses them to speak directly to the oppressed and those seeking to operate alongside them. This way of perceiving education is radical and to many, it is threatening.[26]

Following these lines of thinking, *Educación e Interculturalidad en los Andes y la Amazona* was published in 1997 as an anthology of works presented at a seminar held in Cusco, Peru in 1995. In it, the authors each write from the acknowledgment that the world is highly stratified by violence and power imbalances. They problematize interculturality, democracy, and citizenship, outlining paths to implement change in national educational systems. Their audience are all "those who are involved in educational planning and policy, teacher training, and classroom teaching; but also society as a whole, since what is at stake in this area is the democratic construction of a new type of relationship between people and populations that make up our Latin American countries."[27] In past discourse and policy, Latin American countries used education as a tool for development at the cost of knowledge, equity, and relevant material. Instead, these authors hope for a world where development becomes a tool for education. To do this requires a social transformation that they name interculturality, where all members of society gain equal access and rights to affect positive change. As part of their project, they especially highlight the historic efforts and lessons to be taken from Indigenous peoples and their continuous challenges to institutional education.[28] However, while this book is in many ways a stellar

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[26] While I respect and greatly enjoy Freire's writing, I engage his work and the ways it does/does not fit into a pedagogy of marronage in Chapter 2.

[27] Translation is my own. Alegre, Juan Godenzzi, ed. *Educación e Interculturalidad En Los Andes y La Amazona*. Centro de Estudios Regionales Andinos "Bartolome de Las Casas," 1997, 9.

[28] This was also written at a time when Indigenous efforts towards educational and multicultural reform of Latin America were becoming increasingly successful. Alegre, *Educación e Interculturalidad,* 16.

contribution to educational literature, they hardly speak of Afro-descendants and have no chapters dedicated to them unlike the several allocated to Indigenous pedagogies.

In the following decade, in 2010, *A New Social Contract in a Latin American Education Context*, was written by Dalino Streck. This book is especially important as it expands on the issue of globalization referenced earlier. Streck defines globalization as "when rules of accountability or responsibility no longer apply. The globalizing phenomenon means moving on oblivious to what is left behind."[29] In the previous section, each author was writing for a growingly interdependent world, pushing forward and ignoring questions of whose needs were unanswered or disregarded in the process. A casualty of globalization is that progress comes at the cost of ceaselessly invisibilizing groups of people deemed unproductive citizens or unimportant to national development. Instead, Streck re-emphasizes accountability and sees education as a way to implement it. He writes, "this book is about social justice and the role of education within the social processes of change."[30] He begins this endeavor through a critique of globalization, then delves into pedagogies of resilience in popular education, and later on he includes theory, highlighting and comparing Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Paulo Freire. His focus on Rousseau is especially interesting as it highlights how the Enlightenment affected ideas of citizenship, education, and political consciousness in the early stages of Latin America. His inclusion of Freire makes an even richer contribution as it shows a historic and philosophic progression, including theology and ontology into the analysis. In this unique and insightful work, citizenship, what it means and who is included, is a constant site of

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[29] Streck, Danilo R. *A New Social Contract in a Latin American Education Context*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2010.

[30] Streck, *A New Social Contract,* 1.

inquiry. Briefly, he points to the tension between race and ethnicity, since the former is "often subsumed within the broader (and blander) notion of ethnicity, coming to be, in some circles, a politically incorrect concept, unfortunately leading to an occultation of discrimination."[31] Unfortunately, he misses the opportunity to further this or critique multicultural/ethnicity-based pedagogies. But he still makes a unique and valuable addition to the literature and this review by incorporating theory and philosophy into the educational discussion.

The final book of this section, *Formando en Educación Intercultural: Retos y desafíos del siglo XXI,* was published in 2016 and came out of a conference held in 2013 by the same name. This conference was attended by several researchers from across Latin America and hoped to create a space where reflections, critiques, and proposals could be discussed with respect to the growing accomplishments and setbacks of multicultural education. This is indicative of a reflexive analysis, which is a salient departure from the writers of the previous section who largely did not center the problems of their approaches to institutionalized education. The practice of reflexive questioning and theorizing of education is a major and crucial component of addressing and incorporating previously excluded peoples and epistemologies. The contributors each recognize that even in a multicultural framework, there is still an asymmetrical relationship between different states and ethnic/racial groups being included into national education and policy. Especially, they note, for those of African descent. They hope to continue to create spaces where conversations of this nature are exchanged, not only for academics, but for all. That said, of the 40 plus chapters contained in the publication, only one talks about Afro-

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[31] Streck, *A New Social Contract,* 21.

descendants, titled "Black Towns and Intercultural Education in Oaxaca."[32] This conference, like the one that inspired *Educación e Interculturalidad en los Andes y la Amazona*, is reflective of larger efforts of Latin American educators and researchers to understand and take charge in shaping multicultural education.

All the sources within this section recognize the roots of Latin American education, but they demand more. They each demonstrate a faith in education not only to contribute to the world, but to change it. There are fewer claims to universality or objectivity, more studies on specific groups and events, and attempts to chart forgotten and neglected instances of educational resilience. By addressing policy makers but also teachers and non-educators as well, these sources maintain the tension between understanding education as an informal social process and an institutionalized formal structure. In a world full of educational possibilities, their work shows a hope to find something in between.

## Conclusion

In this literature review I have examined the changing narratives in Latin American educational discourse over time. Seeing the importance of education for personal and global transformation, it is a key factor in understanding the various colonial, capitalist, and racist structures that constitute the world. Moreover, this endeavor points towards ways to shape education for the betterment of each as individuals and as part of a collective.

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[32] The chapters each contribute to a set of six major themes highlighted in the conference, Higher Education and Native Peoples, Migration and Education, Curriculum and Teacher Training, Politics, Citizenship and Education, Education, Identity, Gender and Youth, and Bilingual Intercultural Pedagogies.Translations are my own. de la Cruz, Virginia Reyes, Arturo Ruiz Lopez, and Eduardo Bautista Martinez, eds. *Formando En Educación Intercultural: Retos y Desafíos Del Siglo XXI*. Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca Instituto de Investigaciones Sociológicas, 2016, 15.

Demonstrating how education for power does not solve global issues but exacerbates them, I began by looking at literature that focused on education as a way to promote and develop globalization in favor of the Global North. I followed up by looking at scholars' efforts to focus on education that transformed Latin American societies and the people in them, leading to the rise of multicultural and intercultural education. In the subsequent chapters, I center, reflect on, and critique writing specifically regarding the educational efforts and experiences of Afrocolombians and Afro-descendants. I connect this writing with Black radical thought and Black feminism to engage a reflexive and thorough analysis of ethno-education and a pedagogy of marronage.

Education, institutionalized and social, formal and informal, is one of the most powerful forms of shaping the world. Traditionally, to educate is "to train" or to teach according to some specific standard or goal. Expanding this, education trains people not only in given subjects or fields, but in how they understand the world. Education passes down beliefs and traditions. It asserts what information is necessary and which is supplemental. It shapes what kind of role it wants people to take in their lives and, when used or endorsed by a nation, their countries. As a political tool, formal education can normalize a cultural or national identity. It is *meant* to impart a model of citizenship. We can thus begin to generate some connections: state-sanctioned education is a means for raising citizens. Citizens are the people that occupy a given country. But, if a country prevents a group of people from obtaining an education, or if this group is invisibilized within education, then they are not meant to be nor represent citizens. If a group of people occupy a country, but are barred from education, erased from representation, and hardly citizens, what is causing the discrepancy? As a governing power, it is no mistake when

educational or political institutions omit *people*. It is a choice, one that reflects that country's history, ideologies, and future.

Education is a human right. But, it does not have to be used in the service of humanity. It is leagues more profound than what humanity can encompass.

Chapter 1.
## Colombian Ethno-education and a History of Anti-Blackness

For 170 years Colombia was a country of a single religion, language, and national culture. Originally, this homogenization was a point of strength in the face of a Spanish Empire that looked down on the peoples of *las Indias* and refused to recognize their sovereignty.[33] At the time, Simon Bolivar, the *Libertador*, saw the creation of *la Gran Colombia* as a way to form *"de muchos pueblos una familia"* [a family out of many states] that would never submit to monarchy or empire again.[34] The young nation sought unity and promised its citizens liberty and equality. In 1821, Gran Colombia's first and only consitution was issued. There the General Congress of Cúcuta would establish trends in identity and education that continue to shape Colombia even today. They decided that education would act in the service of the nation, to normalize, among other things, the uniformity of religion, culture, and sentiment. This education was the right of all the country's citizens, *"todos los hombres libres nacidos en el territorio de Colombia y los hijos de estos"* [all the free men born in the territory of Colombia and their sons].[35] What this small remark tells, or precisely what it doesn't say, is that Black peoples within the nation were not considered citizens, much less were they seen as Colombians. In subsequent constitutions, Afro-descendants went virtually unaddressed. At the birth of what would become today's Republic of Colombia, the Black person entered not as a

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[33]*Las Indias* was once a term used to refer to the Americas.

[34] "Simon Bolivar presidente de Colombia. Proclama." In *Constitucion de La República de Colombia*. Rosario de Cúcuta: Bruno Espinosa, Impresor del Gob. Gral, 1821. https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/ll/llscd/78341644/78341644.pdf.

[35] *Constitución de La República de Colombia*. Rosario de Cúcuta: Bruno Espinosa, Impresor del Gob. Gral, 1821. https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/ll/llscd/78341644/78341644.pdf, 2-3.

citizen or even a human, but as property. When they ceased to be property, they did not regain the positions that had until then been negated. The state chose to act as if they ceased to exist.

Slavery would remain in effect in Colombia until 1852, after which successive constitutions lost the language of "free men" but continued to push for a singular national culture. Throughout the 19th Century, similar to their Northern counterparts, Colombian politicians struggled with what freedom meant in a country with slaves. Some fought for freedom on principle, others fought for freedom and protection of property.[36] Regardless, it remains that Afro-descendants were not recognized as citizens because they were hardly recognized as humans. Their inclusion in the country was fundamentally connected to what their labor and lives could *provide*. Over a century later, amidst global waves of multicultural and popular movements, Colombia was slowly reoriented from its commitment to homogenous unity and began a campaign for multiculturism. The country sought to recognize and incorporate all the cultures and ethnic groups that until that point had gone unaddressed. In this sense, the state found a way to make Afro-descendants productive again. Their inclusion could now provide the country with the means to strengthen nationalism, government power, and international standing.

On July 4th, 1991, a new constitution went into effect. Given that the preceding constitution had stood since 1886, this development was a sign that the country was moving into a new age. It was an especially crucial time because in the eyes of Colombian citizens and foreign observers, the state was failing. After decades of narcotrafficking,

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[36] Lohse, Russell. "Reconciling Freedom with the Rights of Property: Slave Emancipation in Colombia, 1821-1852, with Special Reference to La Plata." The Journal of Negro History 86, no. 3 (July 2001): 203–227. http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/10.2307/1562445, 204.

armed conflict, foreign intervention, and government corruption had taken their toll, the state needed to reestablish its power and importance amongst its people and other nations.[37] For this reason, the 1991 constitution paid special attention to the rights and protections of citizens. It would be in this document that the country first officially recognized and promised to protect the multicultural and multiethnic diversity of the nation.[38] In it, Article 68 declared, *"Las integrantes de los grupos étnicos tendrán derecho a una formación que respete y desarrolle su identidad cultural"* [The members of the ethnic groups shall have the right to an education that respects and develops their cultural identity].[39] This development would lead to the recognition and institutionalization of what would be named ethno-education within the country.

The education that the founders of la Gran Colombia sought is undoubtedly different from what education looks like today, but it remains a major driving force in the development of national identity and culture. Schooling, both formal and informal, shapes how a person perceives the society around them and the role they can play in it. Children especially are socialized through the beliefs and ideologies that are communicated in their education, what it chooses to include, and certainly that which it

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[37] This was especially important because of the assassination of New Liberal presidential candidate Luis Carlos Galán in 1989. He was killed after he publicly opposed drug cartels and their involvement in politics (referencing Pablo Escobar who had tried to join the New Liberalism movement). Three months after, Galan's political successor and soon to be president, Cesar Gaviria, had an assassination attempt on his life. A bomb had been planted on a commercial plane and all 107 people aboard were killed. This event was one of several that contributed to public frustration and even hopelessness with the state. Noticiascaracol.com. "Hace 25 años fue atentado contra avión de Avianca, ordenado por Pablo Escobar." *Noticias Caracol.* Last modified November 27, 2014. https://noticias.caracoltv.com/colombia/hace-25-anos-fue-atentado-contra-avion-de-avianca-ordenado-por-pablo-escobar.

[38] Article 7 of the 1991 Constitution reads, *"El Estado reconoce y protege la diversidad étnica y cultural de la Nación colombiana"* [The State recognizes and protects the ethnic and cultural diversity of the Colombian nation].

[39] Article 68, 1991 Constitution

excludes. Colombia is a country whose education, like its history, is deeply steeped in settler-colonialism and capitalism, making racism it's bedrock. By changing legislation to incorporate Afrocolombian history and traditions in education, the country showed a commitment to reshaping its national identity. However, the change they seek will be stunted if not approached from a genuine pedagogical standpoint. As it is, ethno-education is a largely unrealized promise.

This chapter aims to take a general look at Colombian history as it relates to Afrocolombians and education. It overviews education created by and within Afrocolombian organizations, movements, and communities into ethno-educational legislation and state-sanctioned initiatives. It argues that it is impossible to create a multicultural/intercultural education without a radical reconsideration of history and identity, which the country has yet to do. Without such a reconsideration, ethno-education will always be supplementary to formal education. Regardless of intent or promise, it will only be able to provide a surface level understanding or engagement with the peoples it aims to include. By focusing on the histories leading up to state-sanctioned ethno-education, I demonstrate the depth of anti-Blackness in Colombian identity and formal education. My intention, with this chapter and the next, is to show that this depth makes it impossible for the state to create a restorative and equitable education for and of Afrocolombians. Instead, only education created in spite of/in response to oppression, education that is not held back by the idea of a nation or by trying to adapt to modern power structures, can address the violence that is constantly enacted against Black peoples.

While the government only recently began efforts to create ethno-education, Afrocolombians have continuously engaged in creating educational spaces where their

needs and knowledge are expressed as practices of community care, self-determination, and political resistance. The ethno-education of the state doesn't encompass such practices. Instead, I demonstrate how it only seeks to reify national unity at the expense of Afrocolombians.[40] This chapter is broadly organized as follows: I begin with a brief introduction of state-sanctioned ethno-education and multicultural/inclusive legislation; I follow with the racist history of the country and how Afrocolombians have created educational spaces as forms of resistance; and I finish by exploring further how ethno-education has taken shape, including its successes and unfulfilled promises. According to the law, Colombia cannot be a racist country and has to protect each of its peoples and cultures equally. However, the reality of centuries of anti-Blackness tells an entirely different story.

## A Multicultural State: the 1991 Constitution and Ethno-Education

The 1991 constitution aimed to put Colombia at the forefront of progressive politics in Latin America. It succeeded, and the country became a pioneer in its proposal to include Afro-descendent studies into their schooling system.[41] Along with its promises to

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[40] It's important to note that I choose to use the language of Afrocolombians rather than Black Colombians/people. While I see many similarities in the terms, I want to honor the language that I have seen Afrocolombian scholars use. While there has been collaboration between Afrocolombians and Black figures/organizations based on shared identity, because of the legacy of being stripped of African identities and imposing Blackness there is stigma around using the name. There are, of course, people who choose to reclaim the term. But, for this chapter I use Afrocolombians to refer to those who identify as such and experience the effects of racism. Further, I use Afrocolombian rather than Afro-Colombian because I do not see having African heritage as being separate from being Colombian, rather it is a matter of highlighting an oppressed identity. I delve more into the links between Afrocolombian and Black in the following chapter.

[41] Castillo, Sandra Soler. "Discourse and Racism in Colombia: Five Centuries of Invisibility and Exclusion." In *Racism and Discourse in Latin America*, edited by Teun A. van Dijk, Elisa Barquin, and Alexandra Hibbett. Perspectives on a Multiracial America Series. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2009, 167; Guzmán, Elizabeth Castillo, and José Antonio Caicedo Ortiz. "Educación y afrodescendencia en Colombia. Trazos de una causa histórica." *Revista nuestrAmérica* 3, no. 6 (2015): 115–30. https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=551956252009, 126.

diversify education, the constitution also committed to things such as equalizing access to schooling, addressing and rectifying prejudice, and eradicating illiteracy. Overall, the objective of education in this new age would be to teach the Colombian *"el respeto a los derechos humanos, la paz y la democracia [...] para el mejoramiento cultural, científico, tecnológico y para la protección del ambiente"* [the respect for human rights, peace and democracy [...] for cultural, scientific, technological improvement and for the protection of the environment].[42] While these provisions serve and uplift Colombians, they also fulfill the state's need to improve its educational standing in the world.[43] Their major goal was to make Colombia "the most educated country in Latin America [by] 2025."[44] Maintaining that goal would require attending to the needs of the country's ethnic minorities.

At the time of the constitution's drafting, the government elected an assembly meant to represent the different actors of Colombian society. However, no Afrocolombians were involved in the process, and no direct mention of "Afrocolombians" is made in the constitution. [45] This was due in part to ongoing debates around whether

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[42] Though, to be clear, the only substantial difference between this age and the last is that the latter outwardly claims to respect the rights of all peoples within the country.

[43] Articles 41, 67-69, 1991 Constitution.

[44] "In 2025 Colombia will have a system of high quality education for all. Education will generate equal opportunities and economic development, enabling the social transformation of the country, greater equity and the consolidation of peace. In this process -in which Education will be the main national priority- parents, children and youth, teachers, government, and civil society will participate." Ministerio de Educación Nacional. "Strategic Framework," https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/portal/secciones/English-version/The-Ministry/356367:Strategic-Framework.

[45] Pirsoul, Nicolas. "Assessing Law 70: A Fanonian Critique of Ethnic Recognition in the Republic of Colombia." Journal of Pan African Studies 10, no. 9 (October 1, 2017): 64–82. https://go.gale.com/ps/i.do?p=LitRC&sw=w&issn=08886601&v=2.1&it=r&id=GALE%7CA517879855&sid=googleScholar&linkaccess=abs, 69.

Afro-descendance constituted an ethnicity.[46] As such, the extent to which Afrocolombians were represented in or recognized by Article 68, which states that all *ethnic groups* have a right to an education that respects and develops their identity, is uncertain.[47] The only mention of Black people is found in Article 55, which states that within two years the government would establish a law outlining rights and protections for Black communities. Scholars have argued that this recognition is largely due to the efforts of Indigenous leaders within the constituent assembly who ensured Afrocolombians would be taken into account in some capacity.[48] Two years after the constitution, Law 70 was passed and became known as *la Ley de Negritudes* [the Law of the Blacks].

The main purpose of Law 70 is to establish collective land rights and rights to political representation for Black communities.[49] However, it also makes various references to education. These include, "the right to an education in accordance with [a Black community's] needs and their ethnic and cultural aspirations," the right to an education without "intimidation, segregation, discrimination, or racism," an education

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[46] I delve into the significance of Afro-descendance as an ethnicity in the following chapter. Castillo, "Discourse and Racism in Colombia," 138.

[47] Article 68, 1991 Constitution

[48] Cunin, Elisabeth. *Identidades a Flor de Piel: Lo "Negro" Entre Apariencias y Pertenencias: Categorías Raciales y Mestizaje En Cartagena (Colombia)*. Bogotá, Colombia: Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia: Instituto Francés de Estudios Andinos: Observatorio del Caribe Colombiano, 2003. Cited in Pirsoul, "Assessing Law 70," 69.

[49] The significance of addressing Black *communities* is that it excludes Afrocolombians who don't constitute the given definition of such a community. This is another topic I leave to the next chapter, but for now it serves to explain that the purpose of Law 70 "is to recognize the right of the Black Communities that have been living on barren lands in rural areas along the rivers of the Pacific Basin," and while the Pacific may have the highest numbers of Afrocolombians, there are many within the Caribbean coast as well as throughout the country. The definition and scope of Law 70 essentially emphasizes that Afrocolombians are communities which are off in the periphery of the nation. Lozano Jackson, Norma, and Peter Jackson, trans. "English Translation: Law 70 of Colombia (1993): In Recognition of the Right of Black Colombians to Collectively Own and Occupy Their Ancestral Lands." WOLA: Advocacy for Human Rights in the Americas, https://www.wola.org/analysis/law-70-protecting-afro-colombian-rights-english-translation/

which promotes, "Black Communities' own cultural practices and contributions to history and culture," and that "will assist them in participating fully and equally in the activities of their local and national communities."[50] These are outlined as the requirements of ethno-education. While the law is in many ways progressive, scholars have problematized this approach. Anthropologist Peter Wade has pointed out that the law "implies an image of black identity that contrasts to the one entailed by the ideology of *cimarronismo* [marronage], and which is analogous to the image of the indigenous identity." This is especially done by tying Afrocolombian communities to "inhabited countryside context[s]" that expect them to teach and "take charge of the protection of the environment, as is expected of the indigenous people." Wade holds that the constitution and Law 70 try to "assimilate two different cultures into one and thus establis[ing] a binary opposition between mestizos and 'others.'"[51] It also places the burden of teaching Afrocolombian culture and history on Afrocolombians themselves. This choice, though not inherently negative, serves to take responsibility away from the State, while giving them indirect control over Afrocolombian educators and educational institutions who still need to appeal to the Ministry of Education.

The institutionalization of ethno-education occurred because of the efforts of Afrocolombians and their "ideological contributions" to Colombian educational discourse since the 1970s.[52] In fact, Colombia's status as "pioneer" in the inclusion of Afro-

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[50] WOLA, "Law 70, (English Translation)."

[51] He also states that "the concept of a multiethnic and multicultural country developed in the 1991 Constitution is only an illusion." Wade, Peter. "Identidad y Etnicidad." In *Pacifico, ¿Desarollo o Diversidad?*, edited by A. Escobar and A. Pedrosa, 283–98. Bogota: Gente Nueva, 1996. Quoted in Castillo, "Discourse and Racism in Colombia,"139.

[52] It's notable that despite inspiration for ethno-education being found in both Indigenous and Palenquera groups, Indigenous people's rights to ethno-education were recognized several years before Afrocolombians. This disparity points to a trend where both disposed groups are essentially pitted against

descendants in education is a direct result of the mobilization of Black and Afrocolombian educators and leaders. However, while their work began in the 1970s, they didn't benefit from Colombia's trailblazing until two decades later.[53] Moreover, the inspiration for what would become ethno-education was taken from community-based educational initiatives that were found in Indigenous and Palenquera groups.[54] Therefore, the origin of ethno-education was necessarily a product of government neglect.

To acknowledge this neglect and institutionalize ethno-education would ideally support education in collective territories while also expanding awareness and concern for Afrocolombians within the general school system. But, the lag between Afrocolombian mobilization, state-sanctioned promises, and actual implementation is demonstrative of a continuing decision to leave Afrocolombians for last. Further, after this lag, when ethno-education was being created it was conceived in order to place Afrocolombian cultures and knowledge in *a horizontal dialogue with Western educational institutions.* This came from concerns about the potential to "overvalue" Afrocolombian education which would go against the educational process ethno-education seeks to create. More specifically, Mary Lucía Hurtado Martínez, an Afrocolombian writer and pedagogue, explains that among the risks of ethno-education, *"que han sido señalados por diversos actores, incluso por sectores críticos dentro de las mismas comunidades [es] la posibilidad y riesgo de invertir el etnocentrismo que se pretende superar, mediante la*

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each other for recognition, and because it is Indigenous leaders themselves that help push for Afrocolombian recognition, it is the state that is choosing to prioritize and acknowledge one group over the other. Guzmán and Ortiz. "Educación y afrodescendencia en Colombia," 126.

[53] As mentioned in the introduction, ethno-education was established for Indigenous peoples nearly two decades before Afrocolombians received the same recognition. Altablero, "Enseñar y aprender de la diversidad y en la diversidad."

[54] Guzmán and Ortiz. "Educación y afrodescendencia en Colombia," 123.

*negación de otras culturas y de la cultura universal, lo que conllevaría a un aislamiento o a la sobrevaloración de la cultura propia"* [that have been pointed out by various actors, even by critical sectors within the communities themselves. [is] the possibility and risk of inverting the ethnocentrism that is intended to be overcome, through the denial of other cultures and of universal culture, which would lead to isolation or overestimation of one's own culture].[55] However, to assume that a horizontal relationship is possible negates the very foundations of racism that the country is built upon. It would take a completely different country before the ability to overvalue Afrocolombian culture was even feasible.

In that same vein, nearly 20 years after the inception of state-sanctioned ethno-education, *Altablero*, a newspaper for the Ministry of Education, published an article titled *"Dilemas sobre la enseñanza de la historia"* [Dilemmas about teaching history]. It states that educators have the enormous and *"riesgosa"* [risky] job of rewriting national history to include Afrocolombian narratives since they *"develen los recuerdos que en la institución educativa se vuelven difíciles de promover e incluso de activar"* [unveil memories that become difficult to promote and even activate in an educational institution].[56] This speaks to the continuing struggle for educational institutions to grapple with the commitment to question and reshape ideas of Colombian history.[57]

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[55] Martínez, Mary Lucía Hurtado. "La construcción de un proyecto etnoeducativo de comunidades negras en el pacífico colombiano." In *Comunicación - Educación: Coordenadas, abordajes y travesías*, edited by Carlos Eduardo Valderrama H. Siglo del Hombre Editores, 2000. https://doi.org/10.4000/books.sdh.176.

[56] Maria Isabel Mena Garcia. "Dilemas sobre la enseñanza de la historia." *Altablero*, 2009. https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1621/article-208594.html.

[57] It also places this task in the hands of individual educators whose prejudices may interfere in the process. As I'll speak about later, this is further complicated by school texts that maintain racist or at

There is no potential overvaluing of Afrocolombian culture. This tension comes from a fear to create space for Afrocolombians, their communities, traditions, and knowledge, that until now existed as a silenced presence. At every turn where ethno-education is concerned, fear and tension will follow.

It is not for the sake of Afrocolombians that the provisions in the 1991 constitution and Law 70 were passed. The project of ethno-education is not a benevolent reorientation of education in order to rectify centuries of systemic abuse, but a chance for the state to express its power and importance in the creation of "unity" and "equality." It's because of this loose commitment that the neglect which ethno-education is intended to rectify is being recreated in the process.

## Grappling with History: Racism and Education

When an education system chooses to exclude cultures, peoples, and narratives so extensively that identity and culture are shaped around invisibility, any inclusion, no matter how gradual, will feel sudden and create tension. Getting people to recognize something they were raised to ignore takes away the beauty of ignorance. Much of Colombian beauty is unfortunately founded on such ignorance, or at least, on the normalization of violence and invisibility that allows Colombian identity to supersede the histories of displacement faced by Black and Indigenous peoples.[58] The extent of Afrocolombian erasure has forced them into a position of the "unthought" and the elements that they've contributed to Colombian culture are taken for granted. As such, to

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least passive language regarding the histories of oppression, resistance, and contributions of Afrocolombians.

[58] To say nothing of other minority groups that came up against this normalization over time.

begin understanding the root of this erasure and "rewrite" history, we must first visit the work of Manuel Zapata Olivella, one of the most well-known and respected representatives of Afrocolombians.

The mestizo writer, as he has been called, Zapata Olivella writes in order to reclaim mestizaje through centering Black histories and experiences. In his book, *El Árbol Brujo De La Libertad,* he writes a "mythical history" of Colombia from the perspective of Afro-descendents. While Zapata Olivella's work lacks positivistic sources, he explains that his method, which he calls a pedagogy of decolonization and conscientization, departs from *"la pretendida objetividad de los documentos, escritos a lo largo de la conquista, colonización e independencia"* [the alleged objectivity of the documents, written throughout the conquest, colonization and independence]. Instead, by focusing on oral history, stories, and legends, he attempts to give voice to those who were unable to leave a written record of their suffering.[59]

Zapata Olivella begins his history in Africa, in the Sacred City of Ife-Ile right as the *"cazadores de hombres"* [human hunters] started their rampage. He explains that they did not beg or cry for miracles or mercy but for strength in *"El País de la Muerte"* [The Country of Death].[60] He begins with many references to African cosmologies, highlighting the lives and belief systems that existed before enslavement. He even highlights stories of Orisha protecting and following enslaved Africans across the middle passage. His writing addresses the tensions of inclusion by pointing out the barbarities of the supposedly

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[59] There is an interesting similarity here between Zapata Olivella's approach and Sadiya Hartman's method of critical fabulation. Olivella, Manuel Zapata. *El Árbol Brujo De La Libertad: Africa En Colombia, Origenes - Transculturacion - Presencia: Ensayo Histórico Mitico*. Universidad del Pacifico, 2002, 87.

[60] Referring to the Americas broadly. Zapata Olivella, El *Arbol Brujo De La Libertad,* 70.

civilized human hunters/slave owners while also attempting to humanize the recipients of their violence. Further, he stresses the extent to which slavery did not simply happen to African peoples, but was a constant battle where human blood was spilled over three and a half centuries.[61] For Zapata Olivella, to fulfill the "tarea primordial" [principal task] of rectifying the erasure of Afrocolombians, *"todos los ciudadanos colombianos deben ser reeducados en el conocimiento de su verdadera conformación multiétnica"* [all Colombian citizens must be re-educated in the knowledge of their true multi-ethnic makeup].[62]

This re-education must come in the form of genuine care and curiosity at understanding Colombia's silenced history. It must be willing to name the perpetrators of violence and their various acts, otherwise including Afrocolombian history in educational institutions will be seen as difficult, subversive, or risky rather than necessary. To Zapata Olivella, the fight that African people endured over multiple centuries of slavery has to be recognized as "*el capítulo más importante de la Historia Universal por la dignidad humana"* [the most important chapter of Universal History for human dignity].[63] This kind of narrative is terribly lacking in the broad literature of Latin American history, and what Olivella points out is how any kind of history claiming to be "universal" cannot overlook the massive ways transatlantic slavery shaped the world.

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[61] For example, he calls "slave coasts" battle fronts, "donde por siglos sus defensores ensangrentaron las aguas de rosy mares. Los nombres de esas «casas de los muertos» encubren las historias milenarias de culturas vivas y florecientes en el momento en que se enfrentaron a las huestes invasoras de los llamados «cruzados» de la cristianidad" [ where for centuries their defenders bloodied the waters of rivers and seas. The names of these "houses of the dead" cover up the millennial stories of cultures alive and flourishing at the moment when they faced the invading hosts of the so-called "crusaders" of Christianity]. Olivella, *El Árbol Brujo De La Libertad,* 69.

[62] Olivella, *El Árbol Brujo De La Libertad,* 80.

[63] Olivella, El *Árbol Brujo De La Libertad,* 68.

Once in the Americas, enslaved peoples were prohibited from obtaining any kind of education. A Spanish royal decree was issued in 1789 addressing the issue of education for African and Afro-descendant peoples that read, *"la primera y principal ocupación de los Esclavos debe ser la Agricultura y demás labores del campo, y no los oficios de la vida sedentaria"* [the first and principal occupation of the Slaves must be Agriculture and other farm work, not the trades of sedentary life]. The only educational instruction permitted was for indoctrination into the Catholic faith.[64] This education was used against Afro-descendants, criminalizing them and their religions. It dehumanized them with little hope for reconciliation except through submitting to Christianity. Outside of their duties to God, enslaved people were forced to yield to slave masters who did not allow the pursuit of any kind of education that would not contribute to their value as property. Through their education, the enslaved person was solidified in their new social caste while their masters were elevated and given the power of gods.

The dehumanized status of Afro-descendants was maintained through education even as the population of mixed-race people grew. New rules were established to maintain degrees of separation between *"negros y pardos primerizos"* [Black and first-degree mulattos], who were forbidden from getting an education, and Whiter "degrees" of people. Those considered third and fourth-degree would be allowed in classrooms lead by *"personas blancas, [para] que imprima[n] sentimiento de respeto e inclinación a los blancos con [quien] deben igualarse algun dia"* [White people, so they can imbue a feeling of respect and inclination toward White people with whom they should someday

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[64] Aragón, Daniel Garcés. "Importancia de la etnoeducación afrodiaspórica en Colombia para la transformación cultural e identitaria." In *Historias de vida de maestras africanas y afrodescendientes: reflexiones y contextos*, 2020. Accessed October 25, 2022. https://librosaccesoabierto.uptc.edu.co/index.php/editorial-uptc/catalog/view/143/174/3208, 232.

become equal].[65] With these accounts it is clear that when Afro-descendants could gain access to education, it was only meant to reform them for the convenience of their oppressors. Education was a tool for the progressive alienation of Afro-descendants from their heritage and history, while simultaneously separating and invisibilizing them to non-Black Colombians.

In this impossible environment, Afro-descendants could not depend on the state to meet their needs, educational or otherwise. Instead, Afro-descendants created their own networks of care and education through community-based political resistance. Of particular importance are those networks that decided to withdraw from the state into autonomous and semi-autonomous maroon communities. Maroons engaged in alternative ways of living that allowed Afro-descendants to overcome the alienation and invisibility imposed on them. Jorge Enrique García Rincón, an Afrocolombian professor of pedagogy and Afro-diasporic studies, explains that marronage was a practice of *"la voluntad de ser afrodiaspórica"* [will to be afro-diasporic]. Concerned with the epistemic restitution of the Afro-descendent, marronage and the will to be afro-diasporic were—and continue to be—practices of reclaiming Blackness in a society that attempts at every opportunity to reassert the importance of being White.[66] Marronage was a relentless and

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[65] In this quote I changed "quieren" for "quien" as I think it may have been a typo. The translation is not mine. Mosquera, Néstor Emilio Perea. *Diez tesis afrocolombianas e indígenas*. Medellín: Ed. Uryco, 2003. Cited in Castillo, "Discourse and Racism in Colombia," 142-3.

[66] For better context, the full quote reads as follows, *"en la sociedad en la que se vive todos quieren ser blancos [...] es bueno detenerse, para enseñarle al negro a que aprenda a ser negro (1980: 55). Esto indica que uno de los pilares del pensamiento educativo afrocolombiano se asocia indefectiblemente con la urgencia de trabajar pedagógicamente la identidad"* [in the society in which we live, everyone wants to be white, [...] it is good to stop, to teach the black to learn to be black (1980: 55). This indicates that one of the pillars of Afro-Colombian educational thought is inevitably associated with the urgency of working on identity pedagogically.] García-Rincón, Jorge Enrique. "Educación y Resistencia: La Creación de Un Campo Epistémico Por La Intelectualidad Afrocolombiana." Revista CS (January 31, 2020): 17–45. https://www.icesi.edu.co/revistas/index.php/revista_cs/article/view/3843, 28.

radical response to the dehumanization of Black people because anything less would mean servitude or death. Rather than assimilating to an oppressive culture, maroon communities centered the beliefs, knowledge, and practices of the various Afro-descended identities within their groups. Their praxis and education revolved around the assertion that Afro-descendants were deserving of freedom, autonomy, and life itself. Moreover, it was a declaration that Afro-descendants could and did exist outside of the (direct) control of the state to shape their own communities and futures.[67] Before it was even named as such, maroon communities were engaged in creating ethno-education.[68]

Through marronage, education and praxis went hand-in-hand. Future Afrocolombian activists and organizations would be influenced by the educational nature of resistance and follow the legacy of marronage. Daniel Aragón, another Afrocolombian professor whose work is highly involved with ethno-education and Afro-descendant communities, has emphasized the importance of marronage and its connection to negritude as a pedagogical center. He writes, *"los fundamentos de la etnoeducación afrocolombiana están ubicados en las profundas raíces del cimarronismo histórico, su trayectoria y visión política concomitante con la visión filosófica, literaria, política e ideológica de la negritud"* [the foundations of Afrocolombian ethno-education are located in the deep roots of historical maroonism, its trajectory and concomitant political vision

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[67] Despite rejecting cultural assimilation, maroon communities were known to form relationships with nearby indigenous communities. As such, it can be argued that the ethno-education they practiced was already multicultural. Aragón, "Importancia de la etnoeducación afrodiaspórica en Colombia," 236.

[68] In her chapter Castillo mentions that often stories of maroon communities are left out of school curriculums, "if the Afrocolombian communities disappear from the history of the country, all references to racial and discriminatory practices in Colombian society also disappear." Castillo, "Discourse and Racism in Colombia," 147.

with the philosophical, literary, political and ideological vision of Negritude]. [69] Though it did not always occur at the level of social withdrawal, marronage took the form of political, philosophical, and historical insubordination. Following a pedagogy of marronage was a way for Afrocolombians to create better lives for themselves within and in spite of the state. In some cases, Afrocolombian scholars saw the need *to "arrochelarse, es decir, alejarse"* [marronage, that is, withdraw] from Western educational institutions in order to *"construir las bases del pensamiento educativo afrocolombiano"* [build the foundations of Afrocolombian educational thought].[70] The connection between Black/Afro-descended education, negritude, and marronage all point to a pedagogy that had to maintain some seperation from oppressive structures in order to discover liberatory ways of thinking, educating, and being. Before confronting systems that sought to suppress and dehumanize Black/Afro-descendent people, there needed to be a pedagogical center that existed outside of antagonism.

Afrocolombians across the country have continuously created social groups and mutual aid organizations where they could disseminate and "articulate their own visions of race, nation, and culture."[71] In 1975 a *Congreso Nacional de Negros* [National Congress of Black Peoples] was held in Bogota, which lead to the organization of various Afrocentric groups, including the well-known Soweto study group.[72] Two years later, the

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[69] Aragón, "Importancia de la etnoeducación afrodiaspórica en Colombia," 234.

[70] García-Rincón, "Educación y Resistencia," 22.

[71] Paschel, "Rethinking Black Mobilization in Latin America."

[72] These included, ""Poblaciones Negras", "Negritudes", "Cultura Negra", "Panteras Negras", "la olla y los Musulmanes Negros en Buenaventura", [and] "Cimarrón en Popayán."" Pinzón, "Las Minorías Étnicas Colombianas." Pinzón, Omar Antonio Herrán. "Las Minorias Étnicas Colombianas En La

first Congress of Black Culture of the Americas was held in Cali under the paradigm of Pan-Africanism. In it, Manuel Zapata Olivella gave an opening speech where he expressed *"en nuestras escuelas y colegios no se enseña la historia del África; la participación creadora del negro en la vida política, económica, cultural, religiosa y artística se soslaya, minimizándola"* [in our schools and colleges we do not teach the history of Africa; the creative participation of blacks in political, economic, cultural, religious and artistic life is avoided, minimizing it]. This event, which was attended by prominent Black figures from across the Americas, Europe, and Africa, focused on the role of education in promulgating prejudice and discrimination, both because of its influence in the societal treatment of Black people as well as its psychological power in shaping their opinions about themselves and each other. Afterwards, the questioning of national historical narratives and the demand for a review of school textbooks became a crucial objective within several Afro-descendent groups.[73] It was also after these events that various community-centered ethno-educational initiatives would begin *with "una clara intención de apostarle a la construcción de propuestas de educación alternativas y contextualizadas en las realidades locales"* [a clear intention of betting on the construction of alternative education proposals contextualized in local realities].[74] Based on these and subsequent Afrocentric events, organizations, and movements, it can be said that their forms of ethno-education were focused on and developed through

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Constitución Política De 1991." *Prolegómenos. Derechos y Valores* XII, no. 24 (2009): 189–212. https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=87617269013, 192.

[73] Guzmán and Ortiz. "Educación y afrodescendencia en Colombia," 118.

[74] The authors give examples of "San Basilio de Palenque, Veredas Unidas (Norte del Cauca), Luís Carlos Valencia (Villa PazValle), La playa (Francisco Pizarro-Nariño)" that started in the 1980s. Though these were not called ethno-education, they would later become models for its institutionalization. Guzmán and Ortiz. "Educación y afrodescendencia en Colombia," 122.

community building, not only within Colombia but also transnationally and across time.[75]

The Soweto study group exemplifies these kinds of values. As an organization inspired by maroons they have been leaders in pushing for Afrocolombian educational initiatives. In 1976, Juan de Dios Mosquera Mosquera founded the group which was both militant and educational in nature. There students expanded their political education through the works of thinkers such as Malcolm X, Franz Fanon, Amilcar Cabral, and Martin Luther King, and sought to raise their and other Afrocolombians racial consciousness.[76] By 1982 the Soweto study group became the *Movimiento Nacional Cimarrón* (MNC) [National Maroon Movement], also known as the *Movimiento Nacional por los Derechos Humanos de la Población Negra* [National Movement for the Human Rights of the Black Population]. In 1988 they called for the creation of ethno-education initiatives in Afrocolombian communities and educational institutions across the country.[77] Three years after, in 1991, the MNC began their own initiatives, along with "publish[ing] reports on the social well-being of Black communities, […] and creat[ing] the Justice Centre against Racism."[78] Organizations like the MNC center Afrocolombians

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[75] Though I have not focused on it here, I want to call attention to the Afrocolombian women, and Afrodescendant women more generally, who form an integral part of these organizations and communities but are often unrecognized in historical accounts. They are central to the success and longevity of these initiatives and though little is known about their direct contributions, I hope to highlight some Afrocolombian women educational leaders working on ethno-educational projects in future work.

[76] Paschel, Tianna S. "Rethinking Black Mobilization in Latin America." In *Afro-Latin American Studies*, edited by Alejandro de la Fuente and George Reid Andrews, 222–263. 1st ed. Cambridge University Press, 2018. Accessed October 27, 2022. https://www.cambridge.org/core/product/identifier/9781316822883%23CN-bp-7/type/book_part.

[77] Guzmán and Ortiz. "Educación y afrodescendencia en Colombia," 120.

[78] Among their commitments is the reclamation for *"la igualdad de oportunidades de educación científica y humanística con base en la historia y la realidad étnico"* [the equality of opportunities for scientific and humanistic education based on history and ethnic reality] .Perea, Fabio Teolindo. "El

and their needs, following the legacy of marronage by using education as a tool for resistance to push against and shape state institutions. [79]

Before it was named as such in legislation, ethno-education was already practiced among Afrocolombian movements, organizations, and communities. A major center for the creation of community-based ethno-education—and an inspiration for later state initiatives—is the Pacific coast. Today, the region has some of the least infrastructure in the country with one of the largest Afro-descendant populations.[80] The history of the coast, tied directly to slavery and marronage, has been one of living in and despite state neglect and oppression. Community-based education in the region reflects this and is focused on teaching in ways that are relevant to local realities and beliefs. Mary Lucía Hurtado Martínez explains that normative education in Afro-descendant Pacific communities has been disruptive to community knowledge, customs, and efforts. Local initiatives are built around the absence of infrastructure and support. When state institutions are then introduced and imposed, they take time, authority, and importance away from traditional educators such as elders and religious leaders. Communities must

movimiento cimarrón y las comunidades negras del Pacífico." Colombia: Pablo Leyva. Tomo II. En: http://www.lablaa.org. Cited in Pinzón, "Las Minorias Étnicas Colombianas," 192; Pirsoul, "Assessing Law 70," 74.

[79] That said, it is important to point out the ways education and marronage can be limiting even a within liberatory praxis. Afrocolombian women who are central actors in the creation and longevity of organizations and movements like MNC often go unrecognized. Although these are meant to be spaces of political resistance, inequality is recreated when the contributions of Afrocolombian women are undervalued.
This is especially true given the prominence of Afrocolombian women teachers in basic education along the Pacific coast. This comes from my own observations based on research about Afrocolombian teachers at various schools along the Pacific coast. Of the schools that had websites or registries of their faculty, Afrocolombian women were more often *docentes* [teachers] and men were more likely *rectores* [principals] or *administradores* [administrators]. Moreover, the majority of the Afrocolombian scholars with PhDs whose work I was able to find/read were also men.

[80] Afrocolombians are estimated to make up 90% of the Pacific coasts' population. Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, "Colombia: Situation of Afro-Colombians."

then balance a relevant and affirming education with a standard curriculum that, up until 1991, had no obligations or concern for Afrocolombians. After 1991, institutionalized ethno-education had the *potential* to address this tension.[81] Hurtado Martínez, when writing in the late 1990s, supported the idea that ethno-education could exist in a horizontal dialogue with Western educational institutions. But the potential of this project was and is limited by the desire of the state and its institutions to address the racism and violence of normative education.[82] Moreover, a horizontal dialogue would require acknowledging the vast history of Afrocolombian resistance through education and implementing that pedagogy into the curricula inside of these communities and more broadly.

Through the 1991 consitution and subsequent legislation, ethno-education as part of the state's inclusion strategy feeds into Colombia's goals of national and global progress. However, the formal ethno-education of the state reflects a process of reform where the nation is the center of importance. Conversely, the political and educational resistance of Afrocolombians that inspired "ethno-education," acted as a pedagogy of marronage. When ethno-education is experienced as a process of reform, the language of inclusion hides the violent historic exclusion of Afro-descendants from education and citizenship. This suppression is so effective that fears and concerns about ethno-

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[81] I use her work for insight on community-based ethno-education in the Pacific, but am less inclined to agree with her hope. As I explore in the following section and chapter, the application of institutionalized education has not lived up to its promises and will never create the horizontal and equal dialogue Hurtado Martínez expresses. Hurtado Martínez, Mary Lucía. "La Construcción de Un Proyecto Etnoeducativo de Comunidades Negras En El Pacífico Colombiano." In *Comunicación - Educación: Coordenadas, Abordajes y Travesías*. Bogota: Siglo del Hombre Editores, Universidad Central - DIUC, 2000.

[82] Hurtado Martínez, "La Construcción de Un Proyecto Etnoeducativo de Comunidades Negras En El Pacífico Colombiano"

education, like that of *Altablero*, treat it as a kind of infiltration. Instead, it should be read as a symptom of a much larger problem. Ethno-education never has been and should never be treated as an option or an inclusion. It emerged in Afrocolombian circles as a direct response to epistemic oppression. Like marronage, ethno-education was shaped against a structure that treats it as an intruder. Meanwhile, it points to existence beyond the role of resistance itself. It is not an intrusion but a glimpse into a larger whole.

**Possibilities and Limits of Formal Ethno-education**

The ethno-education of the state is a process of reform. In it, there will be no equal or horizontal dialogue because its aim is to standardize ethno-education around an institution that always already dictates what is important and what is superfluous. That said, formal ethno-education has led to some progress, including an increased awareness of race and inequality. In 1995, resulting from the promises within Law 70, the *Comisión Pedagógica de Comunidades Negras* (CPCN) [Pedagogical Commission for Black Communities] was created to advise the Ministry of Education on the process of shaping ethno-educational initiatives. The CPCN led to Decree 1122 of 1998, that required a Chair of Afrocolombian Studies (CEA) in both public and private educational institutions which has broadly increased the visibility of Afrocolombian cultures and history. It is also recognized that since 1991 there has been more conversation regarding Afrocolombian educational rights between academic circles and grassroots organizations/educators in and outside of major cities. This was seen through a Pedagogical Congress for Black Communities organized by teachers in 1992, leading to conversations about ethno-education that prioritized the perspectives of Black communities and progressed debates

on the implications and needs from Article 55 of the 1991 constitution.[83] These debates would lead to provisions for the regulation of school texts by an "'editor for ethnic and gender equity' who would be in charge of avoiding any negative racial or gender connotations in school texts."[84] The first ever charge of its kind within the country and potentially with Latin America as a whole.

However, though there has been some progress from the institutionalization of ethno-education, there is still much left unclear. In an undated report from the organizing body of the CEA they express that ethno-educational studies have progressively gained more importance within national pedagogical conversations because the number of teachers and researchers involved in them have grown, but which conversations or what numbers of teachers are left unanswered.[85] According to another article from *Altablero,* newspaper of the Ministry of Education, published in 2009*, "entre 2005 y 2006 tuvo lugar el primer concurso especial para docentes que atienden poblaciones afrodescendientes"* [between 2005 and 2006, the first special competition for teachers serving Afrocolombian populations took place], but there is no mention of what happened at this special competition, who organized it, or what came of it. There is no other reference to it within the Ministry of Education's website and there were no links or

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[83] Guzmán and Ortiz. "Educación y afrodescendencia en Colombia," 124-125.

[84] Castillo, "Discourse and Racism in Colombia," 145.

[85] "Cátedra Estudios Afrocolombianos." Ministerio de Educación Nacional, N.d. https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1759/articles-339975_recurso_2.pdf.

references provided in the article.[86]  Further, there are no updates on the website about the progress of ethno-educational initiatives beyond 2014.[87]

Beyond precarious progress, scholars have found that racism persists within educational institutions and especially in school textbooks despite the claims of ethno-education. There have been considerable barriers to the implementation of CEAs in educational institutions and curricula. Instead, some scholars express that CEAs are marginalized in relation to neoliberal educational practices that hold higher importance.[88] Others point out that educational policies for Afrocolombians are not given the same attention as those for Indigenous peoples, since "the government closed the Office of Afro-Colombian Ethno-Education, though the office for indigenous people remains active." Research has been conducted to analyze the continuation of racism within school texts that suggesting a prevalence of narratives similar to those expressed during the colonial era. Firstly, it is more common to hear expressions of discrimination than racism along with a consistent use of passive language that obscures the places and subjects who enforced said *discrimination*. When listed, discrimination is referenced as something that occurs outside of the Colombian context, deferring to the United States or South Africa.[89] Experiences and histories of racism are limited to facts and figures, while considerably more attention is given to a positive representation of Spaniards. In one text, "it is indicated that they "even" had the generosity to marry their slaves," and in others

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[86]  The article also has no author listed. "Enseñar y aprender de la diversidad y en la diversidad," *Altablero*, 2009. https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1621/article-208081.html.

[87] At least, none that I found or that were clearly marked as such as of January 2023.

[88]  Guzmán and Ortiz. "Educación y afrodescendencia en Colombia," 126.

[89] Castillo, "Discourse and Racism in Colombia," 146 & 147.

they are described as "cordial" and "friendly" in references to exchanges with native peoples.[90] These analyses are limited to textual evidence and do not even begin to examine the way a prejudiced teacher would handle texts such as these. Though there may be formal protections and rights to non-discriminatory education, the reality is far from the promises of official legislation.

The prevalence of these "tendencies" demonstrates a hesitation and sometimes blatant disregard for a reconsideration of education and identity that respects Afrocolombian history and culture. While talking about a dealienating pedagogy, Zapata Olivella expresses the need to maintain a clear understanding of the inequalities of history. If history and memory are not given importance within educational institutions, they are forgotten in the place of some idealistic notion of equal and horizontal dialogue. Zapata Olivella states, *"cuando se olvida esta memoria y se pretende iniciar el presente abriendo nuevas rutas que no sean la continuación del pasado, indudablemente deben repetirse las experiencias de nuestros Ancestros"* [when this memory is forgotten and it is intended to start the present by opening new routes that are not in continuation of the past, undoubtedly the experiences of our Ancestors must be repeated].[91] Otherwise stated, in order to change the future, there must be a willingness to confront and learn from the horrors and errors of the past.

**Conclusion**

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[90] Soler, Sandra. "Racismo y Discurso En Los Textos Escolares. Representación de La Diversidad Étnica y Racial En Los Textos de Ciencias Sociales En Colombia." In *Nina S. de Friedemann. Cronista de Disidencias y Resistencias*, 233–66. Centro de Estudios Sociales (CES) Facultad de Ciencias Humanas, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2009. Cited in Castillo, "Discourse and Racism in Colombia", 140, 150-1.

[91] Zapata Olivella, *El Arbol Brujo De La Libertad,* 20.

Today, Colombia has one of the highest Afro-descendant populations in the Americas. Estimated to make up 26% of the population, Afrocolombians are more likely to be impoverished, displaced, experience violence or harassment from law enforcement, and be forcibly recruited into paramilitary or narcotrafficking groups. The majority of Afrocolombians are located along the Pacific and Caribbean coasts, where they have been the targets of countless illegal land grabs, extraction, and war, all of which make access to services like healthcare and education considerably slim. Afrocolombians who migrate to major cities tend to do so because of the continued difficulties of living in these historically neglected regions.[92] In the cities, they are more likely to reside on the outskirts or lower-income areas, have a harder time finding employment, and due to relationships between authorities and criminal groups, crimes towards Afrocolombians are likely underreported.[93] These are all the symptoms of centuries worth of oppression, exclusion, and erasure that continue to affect Afrocolombian realities.

Afrocolombians are still not seeing the benefits promised by the constitution. Despite their massive efforts towards mobilization and political recognition, they are not being protected or uplifted by the educational institutions they sought to work with and change. The lack of updates on ethno-educational initiatives is especially telling of the lack of care and commitment to the projects on the part of the Ministry of Education. There have even been Afrocolombian educational leaders that have spoken out against the Ministry of Education for their insufficient support. In 2014 teacher Ursula Lozano

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[92] "Cátedra Estudios Afrocolombianos." Ministerio de Educación Nacional, N.d. https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1759/articles-339975_recurso_2.pdf.

[93] "Colombia: Situation of Afro-Colombians." *Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada: Responses to Information Requests*. Last modified August 2021. Accessed March 5, 2023. https://irb.gc.ca:443/en/country-information/rir/Pages/index.aspx?doc=458399&pls=1.

stated, *"Si ustedes van a trabajar este proceso, atendiendo las iniciativas que hay en las comunidades desde lo etno educativo, el primer paso es con el MEN que no tiene fortalece alguna en el grupo étnico. Si este proyecto se va a atender a través del grupo étnico actual del MEN, el proyecto va a fallar. El equipo no está apoyando realmente a los Afros. No hay continuidad en el trabajo que hace el equipo étnico en este momento"* [If you are going to work on this process, attending to the initiatives that exist in the communities from the ethno-educational point of view, the first step is with the MEN, which does not have any commitment to the ethnic group. If this project is going to be addressed through the current MEN ethnic group, the project is going to fail. The team isn't really rooting for the Afros. There is no continuity in the work that the ethnic team does at the moment].[94] Instead of a commitment to creating an equal and multicultural/multiethnic state, some see Colombia's 1991 Constitution and subsequent legislation as an attempt to save face in the international sphere while co-opting the efforts that Afrocolombians have been making for the past several centuries through indirect control.[95] By co-opting Afrocolombian, and indigenous organizations', efforts, "the government can weaken, if not neutralize, claims for political autonomy" and make their members "loyal, law-abiding citizens rather than dangerous revolutionaries."[96] Several times Afrocolombian figures and organizations have cited the radical politics of people such as Franz Fanon and Amilcar Cabral whose ideas do not leave recourse for an

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[94] "Anexo 1. Ayuda de Memoria de Reunión Con Representantes Afrodescendientes. Febrero 26 de 2014: Viceministerio de Educación Preescolar, Básica y Media Equipo de Fortalecimiento de La Educación Media y Tránsito a La Educación Terciaria ." Ministerio de Educacion Nacional; Centro Administrativo Nacional, February 26, 2014. https://mineducacion.gov.co/1621/articles-235111_archivo_pdf_Anexo1.pdf.

[95] Pirsoul, "Assessing Law 70," 78.

[96] Pirsoul, "Assessing Law 70," 68.

inherently oppressive state. Their need for decolonization is beyond the possibilities and desires of governing powers. Any attempt to work within the neocolonial state will eventually mean loosening and giving up expectations. In this way, institutionalized ethno-education will never be able to reach its supposed objectives.

Chapter 2.
## A Pedagogy of Marronage: Withdrawing into Liberation

With the provisions for ethno-education in Law 70 and subsequent legislation, the Colombian government affirmed the importance of education in shaping identity and social consciousness. Its efforts, however, lack a substantial commitment to critically evaluating the depth of anti-Blackness in their curricula and history. Without this realization, multicultural education remains a white lie blanketing mountains of inequality. The creation of an Afrocolombian Studies Chair and other ethno-educational initiatives are valuable preliminary steps, but their implementation reflects a disconnect between those who write policy and those who live it. The Ministry of Education's mission involves not only shifting national identity, but effecting change in state and private institutions that have been shaped through centuries of settler-colonial and racist ideals. It is not enough for education to highlight diversity; especially when that diversity is the direct result of slavery and settler-colonialism. Such superficial integration often leads to the prioritization of "benevolent" White/non-Black actors while unconscious racism emerges in the form of fetishization and stereotypes. Instead, a sincere attempt at multicultural education would have the responsibility to shine a deprecatory light on the harm caused actively or indirectly by current and past institutions, leaders, and ideologies. This genuine commitment to change requires an epistemic insubordination that not only shifts identity but consumes it and creates something new.[97] It's an im/possible task; a relentless pedagogy is needed.

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[97] Jorge Enrique García-Rincón defines epistemic insubordination as "la rebeldía contra el canon académico occidental, pero, también, el desarrollo de la capacidad de confrontarlo, en el entendido de su pertenencia a la estructura de poder colonial. En la medida en que el pensamiento insumiso desobedece las reglas de lo académicamente establecido, no solo se ubica en el límite de esa forma de conocimiento, sino que además va configurando una postura crítica situada, constructora de conocimientos nuevos y distintos" [the rebellion against the western academic canon, but also the development of the ability to

To begin, a critique of racism in Colombia must be approached through an Afro-diasporic lens because such a framing reveals the paradigm of anti-Blackness experienced across the diaspora. Doing so requires confronting the preconceived notion that racial dynamics are specific to individual nations. Throughout Colombia's history, Afrocolombians have been invisibilized and abandoned. Left to carry the burden of sustaining, protecting, and educating their communities, Afrocolombian organizations, communities, and identity were shaped by state neglect and absence. Afrocolombians created their own mutual aid groups and activist organizations, published books and reports, and connected with global networks to hold and attend conferences on the Black condition. Without being able to rely on the nation, Afrocolombians and Afrocolombian movements were always in conversation with the greater diaspora by virtue of their shared dispossession. A paradigm older than Colombia itself, the dispossession of Afrocolombians extends beyond borders and therefore must be addressed from the perspective of Western anti-Blackness. A critique of racism within Colombia needs to be analyzed as part of a system where violence towards Black people is always in action. Though educational policies take effect at national levels, their influence is transnational and rooted in shared histories of racial domination. Other educational scholars have argued that "research has privileged the nation-centered ethos of racial isolation, thus,

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confront it, in the understanding of its belonging to the colonial power structure. To the extent that insubmissive thought disobeys the rules of what is academically established, it is not only located at the limit of that form of knowledge, but also it is configuring a situated critical position, constructor of new and different knowledge]. García-Rincón, Jorge Enrique. "Educación y Resistencia: La Creación de Un Campo Epistémico Por La Intelectualidad Afrocolombiana." Revista CS (January 31, 2020): 17–45. https://www.icesi.edu.co/revistas/index.php/revista_cs/article/view/3843, 30-31.

avoiding a 'transnational critique of anti-Black racism.'"[98] The nation, the mechanism that was once thought to be the gateway to freedom for Latin American colonies, replicates White supremacy. It denies the shared experiences of racial others in favor of an exploitative national identity derived from European ideals. This "privilege of insularity, […] has negated and misrepresented Black peoples' history and the multitude of their historical contributions across the globe."[99] Though the critique begins with Colombia's ethno-educational policies, they are part of a larger onto-epistemology that perpetuates racism.

The nation begins as the unit of analysis within this chapter only because of its prominence in global power structures. At a foundational level, the state is, has been, and will continue being nourished by the exploited life, death, and violence experienced by Black and Indigenous people. Their bodies, turned into "raw material" for the "instruments of production, labor, and capital itself," are consumed, making the oppression of Black and Indigenous people literally and figuratively constitutive to the power, ideologies, and metaphysics of the modern world.[100] It can therefore be said that anti-Blackness is intrinsic to modernity, the nation-state, and the notion of power itself. As a country whose very name references settler-colonialism–*living in the way of*

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[98] Rivera-Rideau, Petra R., Jennifer A. Jones, and Tianna S. Paschel, eds. *Afro-Latin@s in Movement: Critical Approaches to Blackness and Transnationalism in the Americas*. Afro-Latin@ Diasporas. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, quoted in

Silva, Carolyn. "'Africa Has a History': An Afro-Diasporic Examination of Black Education in Colombia and Brazil." Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies 17, no. 3 (July 3, 2022): 296–319. Accessed February 26, 2023. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17442222.2021.1974588, 299.

[99] Silva, "'Africa Has a History," 296.

[100] da Silva, Denise Ferreira. "Reading the Dead: A Black Feminist Poethical Reading of Global Capital." *In Otherwise Worlds: Against Settler Colonialism and Anti-Blackness*. Duke University Press, 2020. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/j.ctv11sn1vd, 43.

*Columbus*–Colombia cannot be analyzed alone to reach an anti-racist praxis. Certainly, cutting off the analysis at the borders of a country with one of the largest Black populations in the Americas would be a disservice. However, the country's approach to ethno-education avoids such a transnational lens, making it more likely to disregard or minimize its own role in perpetuating anti-Blackness. Colombia won't be able to uphold the promises of equality made to its Black citizens because its very foundation perpetuates racism. It is for this reason that this chapter seeks a transnational pedagogy of marronage drawing from Black voices across the Americas.

Until now this paper has employed a broad definition of education, encompassing forms of learning and knowledge sharing that occur in and outside of formal institutions. But a distinction must be made. Education exists in numerous manifestations, but its substance is dependent on some pre-established epistemology. As a result, educational institutions and research are often ill-equipped to recognize and critique anti-Black ideologies because they prioritize modern narratives.[101] Pedagogies, however, are entirely concerned with the deconstruction of ideology in order to best instruct, share, and create. In this exploration, pedagogies become highly comparable to social movements and can therefore be taken as tools in the service of liberation. In both, members are tasked with understanding their worlds and positionalities in order to transform them through self-reflection, accountability, unlearning, and imagination. Moreover, they are both collective processes. They each rely on the input and guidance of their members with the potential to protect and highlight even the most vulnerable; those whose experience is directly informed by and poised to confront established, invisibilizing, narratives. Each

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[101] Silva, "Africa Has a History," 297.

contributes to a program for epistemic insubordination. But a social movement without an underlying pedagogy risks being co-opted and distorted until it becomes unrecognizable from its original objective. A pedagogy, on the other hand, is an "essential methodology" that produces a constant state of theorizing, learning, and growth, with the most promising push towards liberation.[102]

A pedagogy of marronage does not aim to transform the world. [103] It seeks liberation in the otherwise, withdrawing from oppressive structures towards a practice of boundless potential. [104] It guides one into what Alexis Pauline Gumbs has phrased as "the blackness of what we cannot know from here."[105] When followed to its extreme and most promising, this pedagogy is a threat. A commitment to blackness, to the unthought, to otherwise, is the true commitment to change. Liberatory movements are always at risk of

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[102] Walsh, Catherine E., and Constanza del Pilar Cuevas Marín, eds. *Pedagogías Decoloniales: Prácticas Insurgentes de Resistir, (Re)Existir y (Re)Vivir*. 1era. edición. Serie Pensamiento decolonial. Quito, Ecuador: Abya Yala, 2013, 29.

[103] It is valuable to visit Tyrone Palmer's explanation, "As will become clear, I take "the World" here to mean not a given material reality or a thing-in-itself but a conception meant to contain the totality of all things "in relation"—what Heidegger terms the "domain of all domains"—one that, I argue, is constituted through and held together by an anti-Black imperative [....] The World thus marks an ensemble of processes that necessitates the violent abjection and domination of Blackness for its articulation as a coherent, ordered whole." Palmer, Tyrone S. "Otherwise than Blackness." Qui Parle 29, no. 2 (December 1, 2020): 247–283. https://read.dukeupress.edu/qui-parle/article/29/2/247/168239/Otherwise-than-BlacknessFeeling-World-Sublimation, 273.

[104] I understand the notion of the otherwise through Black radical thought, where it is seen not only as a different epistemology, but as a space of being outside of worlding, temporality, and Western metaphysics. The otherwise pushes knowledge and understanding to its limit, making it a zone of ultimate possibility. In his book, *The Lonely Letters*, Ashon Crawley likens the otherwise to a zone of marronage. He writes, "Marronage, in a word, is a *withdrawal into the external world* that attempts a similar kind of refused absorption by operating at [....] an otherwise spacetime density and field and zone." Crawley's link between otherwise and marronage is one that I wholeheartedly support, however, his optimism has been contested by other scholars like Tyrone Palmer. While I do not take the otherwise to be a place that is necessarily free from violence, I do see it as "a secret place of open space" that may point to subjectivities and existence beyond Western anti-Blackness. Crawley, Ashon T. *The Lonely Letters*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2020, 121-122.

[105] Gumbs, Alexis Pauline. *M Archive: After the End of the World*. Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2018, xi.

being subsumed into what is controllable and beneficial by trying to reform the world. Instead, a truly radical pedagogy of marronage will be asked at every turn to be reasonable and remain unrelenting. It knows liberation cannot be found within the world, but beyond and in spite of it. It knows, *there is more*. With this knowledge we've identified our main objective, "the only thing in the world worth beginning: // The End of the world of course."[106]

**"The World Does Not Spare Me"[107]**

Since at least 1886, all people born within the borders of Colombia have been considered citizens and therefore protected under the law. One hundred years later, the state was rebranded as pluri-ethnic and multicultural, affirming the inclusion and importance of ethnic groups. Two years passed, and the state passed Law 70 of Colombia: In Recognition of the Right of Black Colombians to Collectively Own and Occupy their Ancestral Lands, more commonly known as the *Ley de Negritudes* [Law of the Blacks].[108]

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[106] Césaire, Aimé. Notebook of a Return to the Native Land. Edited by Annette Smith. Translated by Clayton Eshleman. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2001. As cited in Palmer, "Otherwise than Blackness," 252.

[107] A dive into the work of Aimé Césaire is unfortunately beyond the scope of this project. However, he is cited by several Black theorists and scholars whose work informs my writing. In this instance, Fanon uses a poem from Césaire to demonstrate a tension between two colonized subjects, a Rebel and his Mother. Rebel follows a violent praxis. Violent not only in a physical sense, but violent as in unrelenting. He knows that the World does not spare him and it will not spare his children. Unlike his mother who claims "the human race," he claims "the fallen race." He does not believe in this World, he believes in the violence that he endures on his own body and in connection to other tortured men, "in whom [he is] also murdered and humiliated." I chose this quote as it demonstrates the tension that comes with forfeiting the World in search of another. Césaire, Aimé. "And the Dogs Were Silent." In *Lyric and Dramatic Poetry--1946-82*, translated by Clayton Eshleman and Annette Smith. Charlottesville : The University Press of Virginia, 1990. As cited in Fanon, Franz. "On Violence." In *The Wretched of the Earth*, translated by Richard Philcox. New York: Grove Press, 2004, 45.

[108] Lozano Jackson, Norma, and Peter Jackson, trans. "English Translation: Law 70 of Colombia (1993):  In Recognition of the Right of Black Colombians to Collectively Own and Occupy Their Ancestral Lands." WOLA: Advocacy for Human Rights in the Americas, n.d. https://www.wola.org/analysis/law-70-protecting-afro-colombian-rights-english-translation/.

Listed among its guiding principles are the ability of Afrocolombians to participate in accordance with the law, without hindering their autonomy, "recognition and protection of ethnic and cultural diversity," "respect for the integrity and dignity of the Black Communities' cultural life, " and the protection of nature.[109] This recognition, while an important cultural and historic achievement, is emblematic of the Afrocolombians' position in their country, unthought or left for last.

Less than four decades had passed since the abolition of slavery when the 1886 Constitution was enacted. Afrocolombians were hardly in the minds of lawmakers when they idyllically described citizenship and identity. A century later, Afrocolombians were again absent from the rooms and minds of the newly multiculturalism-oriented constituent assembly.[110] Finally, Law 70 was specifically addressed to Afrocolombians, but only towards the end of land recognition. They were addressed to the extent that they made up an ancestrally and territorially based community with a distinct role in environmental protection and traditional land practices. Withholding the principles of respect, recognition, and autonomy to such communities fragments Afrocolombians as a racial/ethnic group and how they are represented within legislation. Not to mention, it endorses an association with Afrocolombians being remote or out of the way.[111] Any Afrocolombians who don't meet these conditions essentially go unaddressed.[112] For the

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[109] "Law 70 of Colombia," art. 3.

[110] Except for the indigenous leaders that ensured some Afrocolombian concerns and issues were raised during drafting. Wade, Peter. "Defining Blackness in Colombia." Journal de la société des américanistes 95, no. 1 (July 23, 2009): 165–184. http://journals.openedition.org/jsa/10783.

[111] "Law 70 of Colombia," art. 1.

[112] Displaced Afrocolombians are especially vulnerable. There is evidence to suggest that paramilitary and criminal groups purposefully look to these populations to recruit. Not to mention, Afrocolombians on the coasts, communities which may fall under the stipulation outlined in Law 70, are also huge targets for paramilitary, guerilla, and narco trafficking violence and displacement. "Colombia:

communities they do affect, the law outlines various processes required to attain and maintain land recognition which scholars have regarded as forms of indirect control.[113] These include for example the formation of a community council ordered and supervised via National Government ruling, which also serves to reorient liberal and leftist activists to more reform-based political action.[114] Whether the government genuinely aimed to include and protect Afrocolombians, their "progress" cannot overshadow their failure to uphold the promise once made in 1886. These rights and protections have already been owed to all Afrocolombians for at least a hundred years.

The same instance in which the state first affirmed the inclusion of Afrocolombian communities and their cultural identities, was also one of the first official acknowledgments of racism.[115] The State promised to sanction and prevent "all acts of intimidation, segregation, discrimination or racism against Black communities," extending protection to social spaces, the educational system, public administration, and more. [116] This promise was achieved through the efforts of Afrocolombians activists who knew how to maneuver their demands in order to provoke the attention of the state. Before they were able to achieve legal recognition for the existence and prevalence of racial discrimination, activists had to frame their demands in terms of *cultural difference.*

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Situation of Afro-Colombians." *Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada: Responses to Information Requests*. Last modified August 2021. https://irb.gc.ca:443/en/country-information/rir/Pages/index.aspx?doc=458399&pls=1.

[113] Arocha, James. "Inclusion of Afro-Colombians: Unreachable National Goal?" *Latin American Perspectives* 25, no. 3 (1998): 70–89; Pirsoul, Nicolas. "Assessing Law 70: A Fanonian Critique of Ethnic Recognition in the Republic of Colombia." *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies* 10, no. 9 (October 2017): 64–81.

[114] Pirsoul, "Assessing Law 70," 64.

[115] Pirsoul, "Assessing Law 70," 71.

[116] "Law 70 of Colombia," art. 33.

Many Colombians saw the country as firmly mixed race and were hardly inclined to listen to issues involving race. Race-based arguments were seen as divisive, anti-nationalist, and even racist themselves. But, Colombians were considerably more open to hearing declarations based on ethnicity.[117] For that reason, the concept of Afro-descendance as a culturally different ethnicity emerged around the 1990s when "Afrocolombians became aware of the state's willingness to abandon discourses of mestizaje and the 'customary laws and practices' [citation omitted] of *blanqueamiento* in favor of multiculturalism," which resulted also in a shift "from mass protests to strategic intervention in 'centralized political processes.'"[118] Afrocolombian activists made a choice to shift the language of their demands in order to achieve progress at the government level. Their efforts established a legal precedent for sanctions against anti-Black racism and discrimination. It was because they leveraged the state's affinity towards mestizaje that they managed to circumvent political and legal disregard around racism.

Denise Ferreira da Silva describes a comparable situation wherein the argument of cultural difference was used in a study on Indigenous people's protests for land sovereignty in Mexico.[119] The study assumed that the protests were a result of cultural

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[117] Wade, "Defining Blackness in Colombia," 171 as cited in Silva, Carolyn. "'Africa Has a History': An Afro-Diasporic Examination of Black Education in Colombia and Brazil." *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies* 17, no. 3 (July 3, 2022): 296–319. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17442222.2021.1974588, 305.

[118] Restrepo, Eduardo. "Ethnicization of Blackness in Colombia: Toward de-Racializing Theoretical and Political Imagination." Cultural Studies 18, no. 5 (September 2004): 698–753. http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/095023804200026040; Hernández, Tanya Katerí. "Latin American Racial Equality Law as Criminal Law." Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies 14, no. 3 (September 2, 2019): 348–358. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17442222.2019.166197; Paschel, Tianna S. *Becoming Black Political Subjects: Movements and Ethno-Racial Rights in Colombia and Brazil.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018, 111. Respectively cited in Silva, "Africa Has a History," 305.

[119] It was a "commissioned study on Indigenous protests against the mining industry in Mexico" that was presented at the 12th Session of UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, titled "Future Work of the Permanent Forum, Including Matters of the Economic and Social Council and Emerging Issues."

difference and fixated on that difference as an impediment to political progress. It was precisely because of that *difference* that finding "common interest" to change public policy would be "a great challenge." A belittling response, the study not only shields powerful institutions from recognizing their wrongdoing, historically or otherwise, it also blames the Indigenous people for not being able to find "common interest" in protests against land expropriation. For the purpose of this paper, it serves as a lens through which to understand the significance and limits of Afrocolombians decision to make Blackness an ethnicity and deserves being quoted at length.[120] Da Silva states,

> Inclusion strategies, based on recognition, such as diversity and multiculturalist programs [...] deploy the notion of cultural difference and the sociological analytics of exclusion, which does no more than to recount the many ways in which states fail to fulfill their task of promoting social equality [....] Put differently, the human rights framework, national constitutions, and social scientific tools available to support demands for the realization of these rights rehearse the same liberal grammar. In them, items of the arsenal of raciality, such as the notion of cultural difference, operate as always, as tools of political-symbolic violence, by occluding of the juridic-economic relevance of Indigenous and other anticolonial and anticapitalist protests by transforming them into actualizations of fixed ("traditional") beliefs of the past, instead of reading them as expressions of an Indigenous "radical resurgent present," to borrow Leanne Simpson's phrase.[121]

Here, da Silva is emphasizing a problem found in numerous Latin American countries, where rights and recognition under the law are gatekept from peoples who don't support ideals of modernity associated with settler colonialism and neoliberalism. Whenever these groups, typically Afro-descended and/or Indigenous, achieve some level of recognition, their demands or actions are translated into neoliberal ideologies that

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Da Silva explains that this study, though it had the potential to support legal battles for Indigenous land sovereignty, undermines and undervalues the political significance of Indigenous people's protests. da Silva, "Reading the Dead," 38.

[120] da Silva, "Reading the Dead," 38.

[121] da Silva, "Reading the Dead," 40.

minimize in favor of emphasizing state power. Inclusion strategies use cultural difference as a way to backhandedly recognize and stall progress on social issues. Such an approach assumes a two-way conversation where the inclusion of the culturally different is ultimately dependent on their being able to find common ground with a normalized, often incredibly violent, structure. If the cultural differences are too great, meaning of course that the state deems the protests/demands superfluous, there can be no public policy and the state has completed its due diligence. Or, it can pick and choose what progress is safest for its agenda and force its power in the service of that scope. Such a process is negligent and built on a false sense of fairness that enables political-symbolic violence by invisibilizing the extent to which equality is impossible. It is not a two-way conversation. There is no common ground. Between a cultural/ethnic group that has been barred from legal representation and the government that continues to impede their self-determination, there can be no equality or common ground. *The common ground is soaking in blood.* It's ahistorical and callous to ignore the countless sacrifices that a "culturally different" group has had to endure before they can even reach the negotiating table.

Neither the Afrocolombian or Indigenous people's political actions are representative of a conversation between equals.[122] Rather, they both evoke a lineage of

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[122] With respect to ethno-education, Afrocolombian activists have had to push and provoke the state consistently to create limited progress on their demands. Twenty-one years after the passing of Law 70, in 2014, during a meeting between Colombia's Vice Minister of Education (for Preliminary, Primary, and Middle School) and Afrocolombian educational leaders, Angela Lozano (Psychopedagogue at Universidad de Choco) raised a question, "Ethno-educational projects are not based on the logic of modernization, they are not based on neoliberal logic. We do not aim for standardization. How open is the Ministry to generating ruptures, to really decentralize knowledge, to rescue local traditions?" To which the corresponding proposal was, "Modernization implies change and transformation [....] The project is not enough to influence macro politics but it does seek to influence social mobilization and the social imaginaries that exist regarding secondary education." While a "positive response," the proposal does not answer Dr. Lozano's question and misunderstands her argument. They limit the scope of their possibility to what is convenient rather than genuinely considering her point. I'll refrain from putting the original

relentless challenges and demands for sovereignty before authorities that decide the definition of common ground at their convenience. In such situations, no negotiation will lead to change that fundamentally challenges the authority and instead progress is claimed through reform, prolonging harm at the hands of the state and nation that come out reaffirmed. The existence of "cultural difference" and resulting conversations about inclusion need to be seen as failures to create the supposedly equal and democratic societies of the modern world. Though the passing of Law 70 is certainly a form of progress, that progress results only from its previous absence, which has already multiplied harm far more times than a promise for *inclusion* can absolve. Focusing on progress and reform obscures how such "failures" and "absences" are essential to settler-colonial and capitalist societies who feed off of the expropriation of their abuses.

Da Silva states that in the early 20th century, cultural difference became another "arsenal of raciality" because it created new language to "delimit the reach of the ethical notion of humanity."[123] Similar to the position of the subaltern or the racialized other, cultural difference is a tool for the reinforcement of degrees of humanity. The definitions and privileges of Man, human, and humanity, designed by the Enlightened European that imposed itself on the colonies, were never meant to be in the reach of the subaltern or

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quotes in Spanish here for the sake of space, but these are my translations. "Anexo 1. Ayuda de Memoria de Reunión Con Representantes Afrodescendientes. Febrero 26 de 2014: Viceministerio de Educación Preescolar, Básica y Media Equipo de Fortalecimiento de La Educación Media y Tránsito a La Educación Terciaria." Ministerio de Educación Nacional; Centro Administrativo Nacional, February 26, 2014. https://mineducacion.gov.co/1621/articles-235111_archivo_pdf_Anexo1.pdf.

[123] da Silva, "Reading the Dead," 40; da Silva, Denise Ferreira. "On Difference without Separability." *Catalogue of the 32a São Paulo Art Biennial,'Incerteza viva'(Living Uncertainty)* (2016), 57.

racial other.[124] Today's "culturally different" peoples are the descendants of those against which the human was defined.

Negotiations involving the inclusion of the subaltern/racialized other/Black and Indigenous people are essentially negotiations on the recognition of humanity. They are debates on who is considered and what it means to be human itself. These conversations typically ask very little of the state. Besides the funding of some multiculturalist projects, programs, and possibly legislative changes, the state is virtually unmoved. The subaltern negotiators, however, fight for nothing less than the right to self-determination which even the granting of humanity cannot give them.[125] The recognition of their humanity comes about as inclusion strategies integrate "culturally different" traditions, beliefs, and customs into general, unthreatening, knowledge and identity. But the inclusion of some aspects of the "culturally different" cannot alone save them from harm or grant them political power. The assumption of difference as the problem supposes that the solution requires the correction of some unfortunate past misunderstanding or unfamiliarity. As the subaltern becomes more familiar and integrated the problem should fade away. But the problem is not solely in the past, nor is it the result of a misunderstanding. Even if the humanity of the subaltern is recognized, they are only raised to another degree. Ironically, the acceptance of subaltern's humanity further enshrines them in their difference.

In his chapter, "An Unthinkable History: The Haitian Revolution as a Non-Event," Michel-Rolph Trouillot gives an example of the *Amis de Nois*, an abolitionist society who's

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[124] For clarity, I will be using the term European to refer to the various countries that colonized what is today Central and South America, contributing to and following the ideologies of modernity.

[125] Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. "An Unthinkable History: The Haitian Revolution as a Non-Event." In *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 2015, 81.

"philosophical point of departure was, of course, the full equality of humankind." These men worked to expand the definition of humanity by "participat[ing] in drafting the Declaration of Rights of Man. *But* here again were degrees of humanity."[126] Though the "friends" argued for the humanity of Black peoples, that humanity was still inherently different than the one they assigned themselves.[127] Trouillot gives an instructive example, one of these abolitionists, "on December 11. 1791, […] denounced the danger of suggesting political rights for black slaves. [He said,] "To give political rights to men who do not know their duties would be perhaps like placing a sword in the hands of a madman.""[128] In this instance, *it is those who are supposedly in support of the humanity of enslaved Afro-descendants that most enforce degrees of humanity*. The Black subject will never be regarded as human in the way a White man is or sees himself. Human or not, the Black person is seen and treated as Black first. Fundamentally, their ontological position is unchanged. Black people are still subject to the countless consequences of the "difference" inflicted onto them via settler-colonialism and capitalism. Even when awareness begins to shift in one country, that country is ultimately part of a structure that continues to profit off the exploitation of racialized others. The well-being of the culturally different/subaltern/racialized other is always dependent on the profitability of recognizing their humanity and will always be vulnerable to the capricious desires of global capital.

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[126] Emphasis mine.

[127] While a direct engagement with the psychopolitical dimension of anti-Blackness is outside of the scope of this paper, I consider this an unconscious but highly racialized difference.

[128] Trouillot, "An Unthinkable History," 86-87.

Afrocolombian activists made a choice to lean into the language of ethnicity and cultural difference in order to create some degree of tangible change within the country. Their state-friendly approach acts as a means to an end for aiding the everyday lives of Afrocolombians, but it does not have the transformative power to be the end itself. While cultural difference is a neoliberal strategy used to derail political protests, activists took advantage of it to create momentum. The recognition of Afrocolombians as citizens through their status as an ethnic minority is what led to the official adoption of sanctions against racial discrimination. However, this shift also undermines the more complex implications of race. In an article titled, "'Africa has a history': an Afro-diasporic examination of Black education in Colombia and Brazil," Carolyn Silva argues that the ethnicization of Blackness in Colombia "cemented [it] as a racial category." This is because it "implied a particular articulation of memories and identities" that made Afrocolombian history and identity "inseparable from [their] African origins." However, Silva doesn't quite explain how or what particularities made ethnicity a substitute for understanding race. Furthermore, the ethnicization of Blackness is not the point at which "Blackness gained a historical past." [129] Afro-descendent people each knew their personal histories and lived experiences before their "ethnicization." There may be a shift in awareness, but that doesn't equate to the cementation of Blackness as a racial category

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[129] Silvia's article seems to fall into a similar pitfall as other writing on Colombian ethno-education where the criticism with which pre-ethno-education is examined falls away to the overreliance on promises from the government and Ministry of Education. The works of Mary Lucía Hurtado Martínez, who I reference in chapter one, and Jorge Enrique García Rincón also do this.

Silvia's article uses an Afro-diapsoric approach and was very helpful to me in structuring my argument for a similar methodology. But to my mind, an afro-diasporic approach should have made her more cautious against linking ethnicization to an understanding of race, much less of Blackness. That said, I do agree with her on the ways the ethnicization of Blackness in Colombia contributed to a transnational trend where "at a macro level, policies began to reflect multiculturalism and diversity as Colombia attempted to achieve international legitimacy and exercise control over Afro-Colombian social movements." Silva, "Africa Has a History," 307.

nor to what extent that race is being considered when Afrocolombian as an *ethnicity* is being constantly reaffirmed.

Law 70, *the Law of the Blacks,* was fixed to the end of a wagon concerned primarily with rights and protections based on ethnic differences. The way Law 70 describes Black communities reads like a hand-me-down from legislation on Indigenous land recognition. It also describes them as Black, not Afrocolombian, illustrating a disconnect between activists and policymakers since the term Afrocolombian could imply an ethnic minority in a way Black does not. Black is a race. But, Afrocolombian activists chose to make themselves legible to the state through the language of ethnicity precisely because when race is involved they are invisibilized. African and Afro-descendant peoples have been on what is today Colombian land for at least as long as any European. But, unlike the Europeans, who came to the Americas in a vicious pursuit of wealth and status, Africans were hunted, turned into property, and put in service of European arrogance. What this describes isn't the origin of cultural difference but the birth of systemic racism affecting every corner of time and space resulting from European settler-colonialism.  The extensive dimensions of anti-Blackness are hardly addressed through the language of cultural difference or ethnicity. But this purposeful limitation is preferred to race precisely because the settler-colonial state cannot engage in a genuine discussion on the demolition of anti-Blackness without risking dismantling itself in the process. The language of cultural difference reaffirms the state and the possibility for degrees of humanity. Black is its limit.

Manuel Zapata Olivella writes that African enslavement began through "*cacería humana" [human hunting]*, eliciting the importance of language in deciding who and

what it means to be human.[130] Olivella implies that the African was or should have been considered human at the time of their capture, making their enslaver inhumane. Instead, however, the African was dehumanized, deported from their homeland, and forced to endure a wretched passage. In this passage, the captured saw everything known and familiar vanish. Kinship networks, spiritual practices, languages, and more were disrupted through dispossession with no intention of rehabilitation. The slave ship became a womb where Black was created and Blackness expelled.[131] Their dehumanization was denigrating, quite literally, enslavement blackened the African until they were no longer recognized as human and made utterly vulnerable in the face of inhuman atrocities. The imposed category and language of Black superseded even the most basic rights afforded to the human race.[132] The implication being that the human was redefined against Blackness, which became every-thing outside of humanity. As such, language is one "colonial mode of representation" that functions to constantly "[re]assert itself as a rational and natural expression of existing socio-economic [and socio-political] relations."[133] Franz Fanon explains the way "language [is] essential for providing us with

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[130] Olivella, Manuel Zapata. *El Arbol Brujo De La Libertad: Africa En Colombia, Origenes - Transculturacion - Presencia: Ensayo Historico Mitico*. Universidad del Pacifico, 2002, 28.

[131] Glissant, Édouard. "The Open Boat." In *Poetics of Relation*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997, 6.

[132] In this instance, I choose to lean into the work of Black radical thinkers such as Édouard Glissant, Franz Fanon, M Jaqui Alexander, and J Kameron Carter. While I recognize that historians such as James Sweet maintain that anti-Black racism existed prior to European colonialism, I do not think that takes away from the violence of the middle passage and its continuing influence on modernity, capitalism, and settler-colonialism. Further, I would rather lean towards Black theorists than remain stuck in empiricism. Sweet was involved in a situation late last year in which he offended several Black colleagues because of his critiques against presentism. I do not aim to get into his politics, but I also do not worry myself with following in his footsteps.

[133] Keeling, Kara. "'In the Interval': Frantz Fanon and the 'Problems' of Visual Representation." *Qui Parle* 13, no. 2 (2003): 91–117. https://www.jstor.org/stable/20686152, 102.

one element in understanding the black man's dimension of being-for-others."[134] Ontologically, Black was created to be consumed by settler-colonialism and capitalism. Hundreds of years later, there has been significant reform and progress beyond the conditions of European colonial rule, but its language still normalizes coloniality and prolongs harm. Afrocolombians had to use the language of cultural difference to be recognized as citizens because the country is not yet ready to confront its racist past. The country does not have a model for *Black* citizenship because for so long it barely recognized the Afro-descendant as human. Instead, activists went with a different strategy. They had to find a way to compel the state to acknowledge their humanity.[135]

In order to get the rights and protections owed to them as citizens and as human beings, Afrocolombians had to cooperate with a structure that for centuries dispossessed and actively harmed them. Afrocolombians did not suddenly become less Black by using the language of ethnicity or culture over race. They took on a more restricted and therefore more legible rhetoric to fit the current desires of the state. Similar to the way Afrocolombians were willing to switch their language to assert their demands, the state did the same. The abandonment of mestizaje and *blanqueamiento* occurred as the state recognized that multiculturalism reasserts the importance of nationalism within new

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[134] Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Translated by Richard Philcox. 1st ed., new Ed. New York : [Berkeley, Calif.]: Grove Press ; Distributed by Publishers Group West, 2008, 1.

[135] To be sure, this line of thinking on the ontological imposition of Blackness does not forfeit the way Black people consistently find ways to exist within and beyond socio-political structures. Rather, it aims to stress and identify humanity/Man as the aggressor. Fanon explains that it is because "the white man discriminates against me; turns me into a colonized subject; robs me of any value or originality; tells me I am a parasite in the world" that he must find a way to make himself "white," to "force the white man to acknowledge my humanity," speaking to the impossibility of reconciliation or reparation from the abuses of humanity/Man. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 78.

"inclusive" discourses. However, while Afrocolombians changed their language for the sake of their humanity, the state did so for its power.

The concept of mestizaje evolved along with the European colonies that eventually became today's Latin American nation-states. It is integral to their history. Originally the miscegenation characteristic of Spanish American colonies was thought to produce "inferior races" that threatened progress and degraded European's White bloodlines. For long after the independence of these countries, mestizaje was seen as a major factor in Latin American political and economic underdevelopment, influenced by social Darwinism, eugenics, positivism, and philosophical liberalism.[136] Conversations surrounding mestizaje were marked by a "vacillation between two pseudo-polarities," those who saw mestizaje as the production of inferior races, and others who saw it as a way to uplift the lower races.[137] Regardless of the scope of their benevolence, both maintained that being closer to Whiteness was morally, physically, and intellectually superior, while also emphasizing the continued importance of settler-colonialism.

For the growing nation-states, mestizaje eventually became the key to nationalism. Through mestizaje, races unified under a shared cultural identity to the extent that a society could become "colorblind," a "racial democracy," or a *raza* itself. The importance of mestizaje for anti-colonial struggles, was the idea that national sovereignty and a strong national identity would "free" the young countries, otherwise stated, it came from "a

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[136] Martinez-Echazabal, Lourdes. "Mestizaje and the Discourse of National/Cultural Identity in Latin America, 1845-1959." Latin American Perspectives 25, no. 3 (1998), https://www.jstor.org/stable/2634165, 24.

[137] This is obviously a very broad characterization of a set of discussions on mestizaje and racial discourse. Further exploration, however, is outside of the scope of this paper. For now, it serves to explain how mestizaje is ultimately committed to the project of white supremacy and settler colonialism. Martinez-Echazabal, "Mestizaje and the Discourse of National/Cultural Identity," 30.

universalist, neoliberal confusion to arrive, sometimes laboriously, at a demand for nationhood."[138] Mestizaje was used as a tool to rally highly unequal and heterogeneous populations into believing in the future of a nation that would inevitably be built with European specifications. The history of mestizaje, put very broadly, is largely in service of "colonial modes of representation" that again normalized violence towards darker-skinned Black and Indigenous peoples in the service of White ideas of progress. Mestizaje in its origin and operation, is racism for the sake of nation.

There are, of course, those who have argued for the reclamation of mestizaje. In the multitude of Colombian negritude movements, the thought of Manuel Zapata Olivella and his siblings, Delia and Juan, was of negritude through *radical* mestizaje. They emphasized the way African and Indigenous peoples and cultures influenced European ideals and highlighted the resistance movements of racialized others. For them, embracing mestizaje was the only way to understand [Latin] America in all its coloniality, "to understand ourselves as part of a whole, in between the correlation of forces in which discrimination is cemented."[139] By coming to know these power relations as the basis for historical and social injustice towards racialized others, radical mestizaje holds the potential to reorient social and perhaps political dynamics to mitigate harm.  Manuel

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[138] Fanon, Franz. "The Trials and Tribulations of National Consciousness." In *The Wretched of the Earth*, translated by Richard Philcox. New York: Grove Press, 2004. 97.
M Jaqui Alexander calls these nations neo-colonial state formations, "those that emerged from the colonial "order" as the forfeiters to nationalist claims to sovereignty and autonomy," that I argue resulted from the neo-liberal confusion to see freedom as attained through nationhood. Ultimately, this supports the "production of hegemony" espoused during the colonial era. Alexander, M. Jacqui. *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred*. Perverse modernities. Durham, North Caroliina: Duke University Press, 2005, 19.

[139] This quote is taken from an interview that Carlos Valderrama had with Alfredo Vanin talking about the Zapata Olivella's radical mestizaje. Interview done in Bogota, Colombia in 2015. Valderrama, Carlos. "The Negritude Movements in Colombia." University of Massachusetts Amherst, 2018. https://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations_2/1408, 169.

Zapata Olivella practices this reorientation through his work where he is championed by many as a major mestizo figure.[140] He firmly believes that Black liberation can be reached through the reorientation of mestizaje. In his writings on pedagogy, Zapata Olivella emphasizes that decolonization requires raising awareness within the Afro-descendant of themselves as Black through and beyond anti-Blackness, examining the way Black is defined by racism alongside all the ways it defies it. Reorienting mestizaje towards negritude would put non-Black mestizos in the service of this project as well. That said, while the Zapata Olivella's idea of radical mestizaje is highly promising, it also runs the risk of essentializing diversity at the expense of the particular experiences of race and anti-Black racism. In the language of cultural difference, multiculturalism, and mestizaje, Black as a race lacks representation as soon as it stops functioning as a tool of production or commodification. Jorge Enrique García-Rincón, an Afrocolombian scholar that follows the lineage of Zapata Olivella's work, has pointed to the importance of educational resistance through the respect and valuing of diversity. But, he did so by naming Black communities *"reservorio de solidaridad humana"* [reservoirs of human solidarity].[141] Though the underlying thought is geared towards liberatory praxis, it falls dangerously close to normalizing the dynamics that have put Black people in the position to be a

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[140] From the About the Author section of his book [translated]: "If we had to define Maestro Zapata Olivella, we would say that he is the novelist of mestizo culture, the public man, the citizen, the writer who has exalted the tri-ethnic reality of Colombia and America more brilliantly than any other. Olivella, Manuel Zapata. *El Arbol Brujo De La Libertad: Africa En Colombia, Origenes - Transculturacion - Presencia: Ensayo Historico Mitico*. Universidad del Pacifico, 2002.

[141] For context, the full quote reads, "the inclusion of epistemic diversity in the school, with which racism and the politics of exclusion will be confronted, must be accompanied by an ethic that values and respects the knowledge of each people or culture. As a reservoir of human solidarity, black communities have historically won ground on these issues" [*la inclusión de la diversidad epistémica en la escuela, con la que se enfrentará el racismo y la política de la exclusión, debe acompañarse de una ética que valore y respete los saberes de cada pueblo o cultura. Como reservorio de solidaridad humana, en estos asuntos las comunidades negras tienen un terreno histórico ganado*]. García-Rincón, "Educación y Resistencia," 24.

"reservoir" in the service of humanity. In doing so, he risks reclaiming an oppressive position for the benefit of those that enshrined it. Again it positions Black people within a dynamic of "being-for-others." This kind of thinking is highly reformist and in line with deradicalization tactics, making it subject to commodification at every interaction with the state.

A truly radical approach to mestizaje would force a continuous, meticulous, and unsettling reckoning with the racial undertones that guide Latin American societies. It would force the recognition of Indigenous peoples and giving land back. It would force the confrontation of Christianity and the Church's role in promoting genocide, racism, rape, and violence. It would raise questions about reparations, polarize familial dynamics and change political and legislative landscapes. It would completely expose the ever present dynamics of race. *It would cause chaos*. If radical mestizaje stops at the goal of uplifting and reorienting multiculturalism through greater emphasis on its racialized roots, it is still a tool for the state and still proliferates violence stemming from settler-colonialism and modernity. It is bound to hurt the most vulnerable; those blackened out of representation. Instead, the decolonial efforts of the radical mestizo would involve displacing the essentialism of their own "race" or nation in the service of total liberation. It would require going beyond the boundaries of our current political grammar, to use da Silva's phrasing.

Multiculturalism is mestizaje's baby. It emphasizes the mixture of races less, but continues to value plurality as part a homogenizing structure that is ultimately more important than its various parts. In this lasting colonial legacy, multiculturalism maintains hierarchy. Within mestizaje, Afrocolombians' race was ignored unless it contributed to the goal of hierarchy through appeasing White supremacy. Within

multiculturalism, Afrocolombians had to use the language of cultural difference, again appeasing White supremacy, only for the state to use them as a way to reaffirm "human solidarity" in order to displace inequality through nationhood. Rather than gaining or derailing recognition through cultural difference, there must be a shift towards questioning the creation of this difference itself. In doing so, we begin to approach the otherwise and ways of being that have been occluded by the abuses of the world. Any radical approach to race has to be willing to question the foundations of colonialism towards the goal of complete decolonization. This project cannot be "an event that happens in history; it is rather the shattering of that history and the opening to an otherwise that cannot be given in advance."[142] While a radical approach may learn from history, similar to nationhood, this scheme must also be willing to abandon it in the search for otherwise. Complete decolonization means ending the world as we know it, it requires finding the im/possible.

**"I Chose To Open My Child's Eyes To Another Sun"[143]**

The power of a pedagogy comes from its role in de/constructing ontology. Its teachings bleed into all aspects of life and affect the very foundations of how someone comes to know themselves in relation to the world. Teachings become ingrained through

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[142] Kawash, Samira. "Terrorists and Vampires: Fanon's Spectral Violence of Decolonization." In *Frantz Fanon: Critical Perspectives*. New York: Routledge, 1996. Cited in Keeling, Kara. "'In the Interval," 121.

[143] This quote comes again from Césaire's poetry. In the conversation with his Mother, Rebel advocates for a violent praxis because violence towards him and other Black people is always already in action. His Mother advocates against violence because she does not want to see her son hurt. But Rebel advocates for violence "from too much love." He knows that there is no way to save or spare his children within this world. Out of love, he chooses to open his child's eyes to a world where violence is not only accepted and endured but fought against.
    At this point, Rebel does not speak about what another world would look like, he knows only that he cannot accept this one. He knows there is more. He explains, the day he murdered his "master," is "the only baptism that today [he] remember[s]." Césaire as quoted in Fanon, On Violence, 45-46.

interactions with structures and ideologies that, when used in the service of settler-colonialism and capitalism, obscure any possibilities existing beyond or in spite of them. One such pillar is the institution of education. In Latin America, education suffers from "praxes of domination," otherwise stated as a "attempt to assimilate the poor of the global south or of first nations, by schooling them in the dominant westernized culture [....] the result of such praise is to impart a sense of failure [....] then inculcate feelings of guilt and shame for having failed to successfully assimilate to the dominant cultures of their exploiters."[144] As such, institutional education is a site of subjection that equates value to domination, constructing a world built on constant shame.[145] The praise that is given, literally and structurally, to Western ontology forces a constant reckoning between oneself and their ability or desire to contribute to the proliferation of a system. It could be said that modernity is fueled by instilling a sense of debt in the colonized/subaltern/racialized other through shame, creating a need to prove one's value by competing within and affirming existing structures. However, debt and shame only reinforce hierarchy, prolonging exploitation by trying to rectify an imaginary failure. This occurs again at the level of humanity. The language of humanity supposes a kind of relationality based on a common experience or position. But the promise of relationality has been broken and abused so often that it is stretched into a contest of who can make their humanity most recognizable, pushing people towards markers of value that

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[144] Dussel, Enrique, David I. Backer, and Cecilia Diego. *The Pedagogics of Liberation: A Latin American Philosophy of Education*. 1st ed. Santa Barbara: Punctum Books, 2019, 11.

[145] Perhaps, it is this shame that drove the newly independent Latin American countries to see their freedom in nationhood, by leaning into and attempting to compete with European empires.

ultimately harm them. To abandon this debt, to abandon the very need of hierarchy and progress itself, creates chaos; it pushes the World to its end.

Conceptualizing this end requires first an understanding of its construction. Here, Paulo Freire's banking model offers an explanation of the dynamics of educational subordination. He explains that this model operates on an essential difference between the teacher that imposes knowledge and the student who accepts it. Here, the pupil is a depository, unable to add anything to the knowledge of their teacher who, by virtue of authority, knows what information is valuable and which is not.[146] The student must then prove their intelligence according to the metrics of an authority that occludes their potential, thus limiting the possibilities for them both. In a similar vein, Freire is also deeply concerned with the goal of humanization, which mirrors the banking model of the teacher and the student at the level of ontology. The colonizer imposed their systems of knowledge onto the peoples they commodified, and while there is a great deal of exchange within these dynamics, they occur at the mercy of the oppressor who attempts at every turn to limit the potential of the oppressed. In this sense, the dehumanization of the oppressed also limits the potential of the oppressor. Certainly, there are differences in their positionalities and privileges, but the resulting dynamic instills the question of the degrees of humanity for the oppressor as well. So how might an oppressor prove their merit?

In both the oppressed and the oppressor, the fear of shame or failure contributes to a sense of debt that pushes each to adhere to the chase for their humanity. Nevertheless, the oppressor pays this debt at the expense of the oppressed, whereas the oppressed have

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[146]Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. 30th anniversary ed. New York: Continuum, 2000, 72.

to support their insufferable debt while also taking on the oppressors'. As such, when Freire expresses that "the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed: to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well," he points to something that is ontologically impossible.[147] While it's true that no liberative praxis could be achieved from the perspective of the oppressors alone, it cannot be the *task* of the oppressed to free their oppressors. The oppressed do not need to prove their humanity to the oppressor when it is the very notion of humanity that is violent itself. Rather than leading the oppressor to their liberation through humanization, the oppressed can only find this kind of solidarity through a complete disruption of hierarchy. A tabula rasa where the debt of humanity is no longer imposed and the role of oppressed and oppressor cease to exist. The dynamic of humanity, in which humanization is recognized only in relation to its absence, puts both oppressor and oppressed in the service of maintaining an ideal that is constantly out of reach. Rather than leading into this concept and the World that creates it, true liberation comes from the abandonment of humanization itself.

The dynamic between oppressor and oppressed, human and dehumanized, finds its most extreme expression in the antagonism from which anti-Blackness plays out. As the antithesis of humanity, the expression of violence towards Black people is most unrecognized and most extreme, displaying itself in every interaction with the world. Fanon likens this phenomenon to a psychic trauma. With each instance of racism, the positionality of Blackness is reaffirmed. Rather than being an individual event happening to an individual person, each instance forms part of a series of "multiple traumas,

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[147] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 44.

frequently analogous and repeated."[148] However, the original trauma is compounded and clouded by each new event, leading to the treatment of a symptom rather than the illness itself. This process leads only to the fortification of the oppressed and oppressors in their roles as the cycle repeats again and again. Instead, to address the trauma, its origin must be exposed and disrupted. A painful process, it begins through unlearning and self-reflection, but leads to imagination and accountability. One realizes that their sense of debt results always at the expense of themselves or others and they slowly lose faith in their role in the world. That said, this loss of debt opens people up to true exploration, solidarity, and possibility. Therefore, it is through "the very procedure that complicates thinking, that makes things difficult and uncomfortable […] we might even say *that which blackens things*, is also that which enables the potential for genuine care."[149] By leaning into the antagonism between the World and Blackness, the authority of the world is disrupted and a genuine effort towards reconciliation and solidarity may be reached. But, since it threatens the very notion of modernity, this kind of pedagogy must first exist as a liminal space. It must sit as the path leading from the settler-colonial and neoliberal structures of the World towards their complete termination. It sits at the foot of the original trauma to expose alternative ways of knowing and being, opening up boundless potential.

This process of de/construction occurs at the level of marronage, creating space for the unthought by withdrawal away from the world. Several Afrocolombian scholars

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[148] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 122.

[149] Emphasis added. Sexton, Jared, and Daniel Barber. "On Black Negativity, Or The Affirmation Of Nothing: Jared Sexton, Interviewed by Daniel Barber." *Society & Space*. https://www.societyandspace.org/articles/on-black-negativity-or-the-affirmation-of-nothing.

have pointed to the importance of marronage in the development of Black thought and liberation efforts. Jorge Enrique García-Rincón writes that the practice of marronage "was a way of questioning the legitimacy of the colonial social order and, in fact, highlighting other ways of living, organizing and existing."[150] Future Afrocolombian leaders, educators, and activists would follow a similar pedagogy and use retreat as a way to obstruct Western ideologies and focus on Afro-descendant educational development. Otherwise stated, they knew their dealienation had to occur *"por fuera de la casa del amo"* [outside of the master's house].[151] With that said, while they sought to reconnect with their African ancestry, they were forced to interact with the oppressive society surrounding them. This position threatens to enshrine Afrocolombians as social others, because the world demands that they fight for their humanization. Still, the process of de/construction can and has to begin from within the state. In each Afrocolombian ethno-educational project, there is an element of marronage. It is, however, limited by the state that seeks to contain it. From these educational practices needs to emerge a relentless commitment to being beyond control or containment, beyond the world itself.

Black feminist thought offers instruction in pursuit. Black women so often have to occupy a liminality that obstructs not only their humanity but their very existence. As

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[150] ""Arrochelarse" era una forma de cuestionar la legitimidad del ordenamiento social colonial y, de hecho, poner en evidencia otras formas de vivir, organizarse y existir." Herrera Angel, Martha. "El arrochelamiento: nominar para criminalizar." *El Taller de la Historia* 2, no. 2 (April 19, 2014): 11–46. https://revistas.unicartagena.edu.co/index.php/eltallerdelahistoria/article/view/653. Cited in García-Rincón, "Educación y Resistencia," 30.

[151] The full quote reads as "la construcción de un ideal educativo del que depende la creación de cultura propia, solo fue posible por fuera de la casa del amo" [the construction of an educational ideal on which the creation of one's own culture depends, was only possible outside the master's house.] García-Rincón, "Educación y Resistencia," 22.

such, a Black feminist pedagogy of marronage is concerned with radical care towards the end of the World. Throughout slavery, Black women were not only stripped of their personal and bodily autonomy, but forced to pass down their dispossession to their children who would be commodified and turned into capital. By virtue of their wombs, they became the invisibilized creators of the World, (re)producing the very thing humanity was defined against. As such, "black(female)ness" escapes representation within the world and even in the works of Black men, making Black women "invisible and unknowable." A Black woman's ontological position, "collaps[es] her specific "lived-experience" into that of the Black (man)"[152] becoming "a material passageway" through which the dynamic of humanity is (re)produced. However, such a position is also, "paradoxically [poised] to topple the logic of this scheme."[153] Black feminists, therefore, create space for the unthought by pushing against commodification and beyond the onto-epistemology of the world. Any pursuit of liberation must aim to center Black women and center dispossession as it is demarcates the creation and maintenance of anti-Blackness.

Da Silva expresses a similar pedagogy through what she names "a Black feminist poethical reading." This approach, apathetic to the politics of legibility or "subsuming […] to the idea(l)s of Reason," confronts the givenness of the world. Similar to the practice of marronage, it centers otherwise epistemologies, other ways of living and knowing, rather

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[152] Keeling, Kara. "In the Interval: Franz Fanon and the "Problems" of Visual Representation." In *The Witch's Flight*, 27–44. Duke University Press, 2007. http://read.dukeupress.edu/books/book/1221/chapter/159917/In-the-Interval, 96.

[153] Thinking alongside the work of Zakiyyah Iman Jackson, J Cameron Carter writes, "Thus, black(female)ness as material passageway both enables the worldmaking of imperial Western humanism and yet abides as an "absent presence" that operates as a non-representable trace at the scene of "the black female figure." Carter, J. Kameron. "Anarchē; or, The Matter of Charles Long and Black Feminism." American Religion 2, no. 2 (2020): 103–135. https://muse.jhu.edu/summary, 112.

than assimilating to an oppressive and limiting structure. It embodies the declaration that the subaltern/the racialized other/the ungendered other/the Black (woman) are deserving of more than what is possible within current political grammar. By approaching with the perspective that "the World [has] always already been otherwise than it's modern picturing," this confrontation is necessarily creative. [154] Therefore, a Black feminist poethical reading and a pedagogy of marronage each negate the normalization of the World and commit to questions surrounding what genuine care, solidarity, and collectivity might look like. Especially because a pedagogy of marronage is a process, this practice of questioning is continuous. It concerns itself with growth and change, accepting the possibility for new and numerous subjectivities. In it, each may find their own path away from the dehumanization of the world in the process of demystifying domination. As such, it can be said that a pedagogy of marronage does not have a definitive beginning or a specific end. Often, its potential is already present in liberatory movements, but rather than stagnate itself in reform, it pushes the concept of "liberation" to its most extreme, relentlessly making space for the unthought. A pedagogy of marronage withdraws from the oppression of the human, of the nation-state, of settler-colonialism and capitalism, towards a practice of boundless potentiality. It is the belief in another sun and a step towards "the blackness of what we cannot know from here."[155]

**Conclusion**

Colombia's approach to ethno-education will not bring about the change it purports. As it stands, it is a form of inclusion that focuses on understanding cultural

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[154] da Silva, "Reading the Dead," 48.

[155] Gumbs, *M Archive*, xi.

difference, rather than interrogating the creation of that difference itself. Though reform may lead to the rectification of some abuses, it will obscure several others.

Cultural difference minimizes subaltern social movements, making them safer for the state to acknowledge while undercutting their demands, histories, and significance. Afrocolombians chose to use this method for recognition because Colombian politics and society refuse to confront racial discrimination. Through the language of cultural difference, the country legally acknowledged Afrocolombians as citizens and created provisions for the protection of equality. However, this reform is only a surface-level approach to inclusion since the language of cultural difference also allows for the normalization and concealment of larger, more violent, and more ingrained problems. As a result, Afrocolombians are put in a position of constantly pursuing equality while their humanity is repeatedly disputed or abused .

Regardless of reform, the humanization of subaltern/racialized others will always be understood and marginalized with respect to euro-centric ideas of being. Kept from reaching equality, Afrocolombians are situated to continue appealing and reaffirming the power of the state amongst its citizens and at a transnational scale. However, while Afrocolombians have used cultural difference as a tool for reform, they have also been engaged in creating separate educational and political collectives and movements. By leaning into the antagonism between the world and Blackness, Black radical theorists have shown the importance of building subjectivities without recourse to or for humanity and the state. Through the withdrawal from "the masters house" and its various institutions, Black/Afro-descendant organizations, movements, and communities, have each practiced their own forms of marronage.

Though the potential for a pedagogy of marronage is always present, it will not be engaged without recognizing the extent of violence maintained and created by participating in the world. To this end, Black feminism informs this marronage since it aims to create radical forms of care at the nexus of the world and the otherwise.[156]

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[156] Future work on this will delve into a deeper analysis of negritude and Black feminism.

**Conclusion**

A pedagogy of marronage may at first feel like a loss. A loss in identity, in a path, *in faith itself*. Entering into the otherwise, into the "blackness of what we cannot know from here," requires reckoning with the fact that the world itself is built on dispossession. But this is hardly a loss. Rather, it is the creation of a deeper and more genuine recognition of existence beyond the oppressed and oppressor, human and dehumanized. It pushes us to see the potential of education not only to train, but to discover, question, and build. A pedagogy of marronage is not concerned with being in service of a structure. Instead, it engages us each in the greatest and most intense service of one another.

There is no definitive end or beginning to this program. This is a process that can be entered from any point where a fidelity to Blackness has taken root. Unfortunately, ethno-education cannot begin a pedagogy of marronage. The legislation of the Colombian state shows us how far we must still go in addressing racism within the country, within Latinidad, and within the world more broadly.

Colombia was founded and raised on the belief that some people could be born free because others were born captive. Its history of anti-Black racism is too similar to that of other American countries for us to not recognize that modernity itself is rooted in anti-Blackness. In it, rather than being valued through what someone can provide, people are judged as what they produce. Or, what they can force another to produce for them. There is no liberation from the recurring trauma of capitalism that induces production and dehumanization.

This is the failure of the mestizo. As perhaps the strongest and most ingrained myth of Latinidad, mestizaje serves as a constant reaffirmation of Whiteness in Latin America. While there certainly is more that defines Latinidad, it is sacrificed to the false

idols of mestizaje and patria. Derived from these idols, multicultural nationalism is dependent on a dual process of humanization and dehumanization, deciding who has access to life based on how they adhere to the ethnostate.

A pedagogy of marronage refutes the need for ethno-education. At some point, we must recognize that the addition of "ethno-" to education delimits its true potential. Similarly, humanity delimits being. To enter a pedagogy of marronage and begin a process of liberation, we must reject ethno-education and humanity both.

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