The Erasure of the Afro Element of Mestizaje in Modern Mexico:
The Coding of Visibly Black Mestizos According to a White Aesthetic In and Through the Discourse on Nation During the Cultural Phase of the Mexican Revolution, 1920-1968

Marco Polo Hernández Cuevas


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by
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B.A., Portland State University, 1989
M.A., Portland State University, 1997

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
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We accept this thesis as conforming to the required standard

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University of British Columbia
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To my great-grandmother Nicolasa
whose photograph may have illuminated
me sooner if someone had shown it to me
THE ERASURE OF THE AFRO ELEMENT OF MESTIZAJE IN MODERN MEXICO:
THE CODING OF VISIBLY BLACK MESTIZOS ACCORDING TO A WHITE AESTHETIC IN AND THROUGH THE DISCOURSE ON NATION DURING THE CULTURAL PHASE OF THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION, 1920-1968

by

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Abstract

“The Erasure of the Essential Afro Element of Mestizaje in Modern Mexico: The Coding of Visibly Black Mestizos According to a White Aesthetic In and Through the Discourse on Nation During the Cultural Phase of the Mexican Revolution, 1920-1968” examines how the Afro elements of Mexican mestizaje were erased from the ideal image of the Mexican mestizo and how the Afro ethnic contributions were plagiarized in modern Mexico. It explores part of the discourse on nation in the narrative produced by authors who subscribed to the belief that only white was beautiful, between 1920 and 1968, during a period herein identified as the “cultural phase of the Mexican Revolution.” It looks at the coding and distortion of the image of visibly black Mexicans in and through literature and film, and unveils how the Afro element “disappeared” from some of the most popular images, tastes in music, dance, song, food, and speech forms
viewed as cultural texts that, by way of official intervention, were made “badges” of Mexican national identity.

The premise of this study is that the *criollo* elite and their allies, through government, disenfranchised Mexicans as a whole by institutionalizing a magic mirror—materialized in the narrative of nation—where mestizos can “see” only a partial reflection of themselves. The black African characteristics of Mexican *mestizaje* were totally removed from the ideal image of “Mexican-ness”\(^1\) disseminated in and out of the country. During this period, and in the material selected for study, wherever Afro-Mexicans—visibly Afro or not—are mentioned, they appear as “mestizos” oblivious of their African heritage and willingly moving toward becoming white.

The analysis adopts as critical foundation two essays: “Black Phobia and the White Aesthetic in Spanish American Literature,” by Richard L. Jackson; and “Mass Visual Productions,” by James Snead. In “Black Phobia…” Jackson explains that, to define “superior and inferior as well as the concept of beauty” according to how white a person is perceived to be, is a “tradition dramatized in Hispanic Literature from Lope de Rueda’s *Eufemia* (1576) to the present” (467). For Snead, “the coding of blacks in film, as in the wider society, involves a history of images and signs associating black skin color with servile behavior and marginal status” (142).

\(^1\)Anita González-El Hilalí uses this term to designate what is Mexican. Hereby, the term is adopted (González-El 125).
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Preface

Chapter One of this work by Marco Polo Hernández Cuevas was published in essence with the permission of the Supervisory Committee in the *Publication of the Afro Latin American Association (PALARA)* from the University of Missouri in Columbia, Missouri under the title: “The ‘Afro-Mexican’ and the Revolution: Making Afro-Mexicans Invisible Through the Ideology of *Mestizaje* in *La raza cósmica.*” *PALARA* 4 (2000): 59-83. Also, with the permission of the Committee Chapter Four, “*Angelitos negros*: a Film from the ‘Golden Epoch’ of Mexican Cinema: The Coding of Visibly Black Mexicans In and Through a Far-Reaching Medium” appeared in *PALARA* 5 (2001): 49-62.
Acknowledgments

One day in the early eighties I ran by pure chance into a book that caught my attention while I was searching the library shelves at Portland State University. It was a book with a gray vinyl cover stamped with black letters that read: *The Black Image in Latin American Literature* by Richard L. Jackson. The title itself had a life-changing message for me. I took the book home and read it. There were many things that were totally beyond me, but those that were within my reach impressed me for their simplicity in conveying one of the greatest truths humanity is yet to pay full attention to, namely that while racism is outdated, it is still being taught and practiced unchecked in the least expected places by the least expected people, at times unknowingly.

Dr. Jackson’s work allowed me to think about myself in a different way. It enabled me to realize that the Afro hair I combed so carefully in Mexico City while I was a teen-ager made me a “*chino*” (in Argentina, Peru, and Mexico) or “*cuculuste*” (the Aztec word for curly hair). Therefore, and for his further guidance and support in the making of this work I will always be indebted to Dr. Jackson. Also, I would like to take the opportunity to thank Dr. Gloria Nne Onyeoziri, Dr. Antonio Urrello, Dr. Robert Miller, Dr. Earl Rees, and Dr. Kofi Agorsah for their invaluable guidance, help, and support throughout this study. Finally, I want to thank my family for their patience with me throughout the course of this work.
Introduction

For Edward Said, nations are narrations and the power of narrating and blocking the formation and emergence of other narratives “is very important for culture and imperialism, and it constitutes one of the most important connections among them” (Introduction, xiii).

According to Jose Piedra, Nebrija argued in 1492 “that language becomes the source of power when it provides an official ‘home’ for the memory of all who contribute to the empire, and grammarians act as the official guardians of such a home” (306).

Mestizos, or people of mixed blood constitute the largest percentage of the total population in Mexico.\(^2\) It is generally reported that mestizos represent anywhere from 55 to 85 percent of Mexican people. The common belief, even at present, is that this group or “minority” is the result of the exclusive mix of Amerindians and Spaniards. This partial truth was disseminated in Mexico, and outside the country, during a period herein identified as “the cultural phase of the Mexican Revolution (1920-1968).”

Today’s Mexican mestizos, known throughout the colonial period (1521-1821) as *mezclas* or *castas*, began to be born shortly after the Spanish invasion in 1521. Yet to be acknowledged is the fact that these *mezclas* were the daughters and sons of an array of mixes that occurred among the vanquished Amerindians, the enslaved black Africans, the invading Spaniards, and other people, such as Asians.

\(^2\) According to the official 2000 preliminary report from the XII census in Mexico the general population is 97,361,711 (INEGI).
The origin of the semantic problem may be explained further by the fact that during the colonial period the classification “mestizo” referred only to the offspring of Spaniard and Amerindian. However, it must be stressed that this was merely one classification among over a dozen and a half “racial” classifications of which the majority, at times obviously and at times imperceptibly, contained the black African element.

In 1946, Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán added another dimension to the problem when he “rediscovered” a visibly black population in Mexico’s south Pacific Coast. He classified mestizos as Indo-mestizos, Euro-mestizos and Afro-mestizos based on appearance. As a result, the term “Afro-Mexican” seems to have become a synonym for the visibly black portion of Mexican mestizos in a growing body of academic work. The problem with this perception is that it creates an artificial division of Mexican mestizos based only on the way people look. For instance, the black or Afro root of Mexican *mestizaje* has been referred to as the “Third Root.” This, in the case of visibly black Mexicans, would appear erroneous. In some instances it seems more appropriate to call the Afro element the first root, in others the second, or the third, or fourth. It should be clear, particularly in the light of new readings of history, that a considerable part of Mexican mestizos, even many whose appearance would have us believing otherwise, carry a black African element in their genetic make-up.

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3 In *Historia General de México: versión 2000* it is mentioned that to understand the confusion in terms, one must take into consideration the tendency to hide the origins of mixed blood since it was considered infamous (320, 321).
The majority of Mexican mestizos are the daughters and sons of the hundreds of thousands of black African slaves\textsuperscript{4} that began arriving in Mexico shortly after Hernán Cortés. On the one hand, this understanding is crucial to dispel the myth that Mexican mestizos are the offspring exclusively of Amerindians and Spaniards. On the other hand, it is important as it helps clarify that when visibly black Mexicans are referred to, it is not a reference to a separate group: it is a reference to a portion of Mexican Afro-mestizos that due to their looks alone were singled out by the racist criollo thought that controlled the discourse on nation during the cultural phase of the Revolution.

This work analyzes the coding and distortion of the image of visibly black Mexicans in and through literature, film, and their omission in popular culture images that, by way of official intervention, were made badges, cards, stamps, or impressions of national identity. It explores how the Afro elements of Mexican mestizaje were erased from the collective memory and the Afro ethnic contributions plagiarized in modern Mexico. This study examines part of the discourse on nation expressed in various cultural texts produced by authors who subscribed to the belief that only white was beautiful, between 1920 and 1968.

The premise of this study is that the criollo elite and their allies, through government, disenfranchised Mexicans as a whole by institutionalizing a magic mirror—materialized in the narrative of nation—where mestizos can “see” only a partial reflection of themselves. The black African characteristics of Mexican

\textsuperscript{4} It should be mentioned that many Spaniards carried black genes as documented in Chapter Two; and that some blacks landed with the Spaniards before the onset of the Transatlantic Slave Trade as well.
mestizaje were totally removed from the ideal image of Mexican-ness disseminated in and out of the country. During this period, and in the material selected for study, wherever Afro-Mexicans—visibly Afro or not—are mentioned, they appear as “mestizos” oblivious of their African heritage and willingly moving toward becoming white.


In “Black Phobia…” Jackson points out that defining “superior and inferior as well as the concept of beauty,” according to how white a person is perceived to be is a “tradition dramatized in Hispanic literature from Lope de Rueda’s Eufemia (1576) to the present” (467). Under the white aesthetic explained by Jackson, morality, civility, gallantry, bravery, prowess, industriousness, restraint, sincerity, intellectuality, good-heartedness, and love-for-life among other virtues are measured according to how white a person appears to be; in short, virtuosity is defined by whiteness.

For Snead, “the coding of blacks in film, as in the wider society, involves a history of images and signs associating black skin color with servile behavior and marginal status.” Snead points out, “while these depictions may have reflected prior economic oppression of blacks, they also tend to perpetuate it.” He clarifies saying that, “through the exact repetition which is film’s main virtue, these associations became part of film’s typological vocabulary…” (142). James
Snead’s perspective on “coding” adds another dimension to Jackson’s readings under the “white aesthetic.”

The coding identified by Snead uses three particular tactics, among others, to forge and perpetuate black stereotypes: “mythification,” “marking,” and “omission” (143). The tactic of mythifying whites as “powerful” and “civilized” ensures that blacks appear as meek and uncivilized. Marking, as applying paint to make blackness stand out, is done to highlight the color line. The omission of prominent black figures reproduces and perpetuates the myth that blacks are subservient. For Snead “codes are not singular portrayals of one thing or another, but larger, complex relationships” (142).

The following cultural texts will be the focus of this work: the book-length essay *La raza cósmica: misión de la raza iberoamericana* (*The Cosmic Race: Mission of the Iberian-American Race*)⁵ (1925) by José Vasconcelos; a sample of ideal Mexican mestizo images that, once detached from their Afro component, were implanted in the collective memory and psyche through various means of mass persuasion; the picaresque novel *La vida inútil de Pito Pérez* (*The Futile Life of Pito Perez*)⁶ (1938) by José Rubén Romero; the film *Angelitos Negros* (*Little Black Angels*) (1948) by Joselito Rodríguez; and the postmodern novel *La muerte de Artemio Cruz* (*The Death of Artemio Cruz*) (1962) by Carlos Fuentes.

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⁵ All translations from English to Spanish/Spanish-English in this work are mine unless otherwise specified.

⁶ This title was translated by William O. Cord. See bibliography for full citation.
The texts mentioned above are examined to disclose how visibly black Mexicans are coded in accordance with a white aesthetic.\(^7\) The corpus studied is confined to the cultural phase of the Mexican Revolution, 1920 to 1968. However, this study refers to other historical periods as deemed necessary to provide support and a context to analyze the contents of the works from a perspective herein called the Afro-Hispanic American approach, a critical view that reads texts concerning the black experience from a black perspective.

Chapter One, “Biological *Mestizaje*: The Afro-Mexican and the Revolution: Making Afro-Mexicans Invisible Through the Ideology of *Mestizaje* in *La raza cósmica*” reveals the racist agenda forming the core of José Vasconcelos’ “cosmic race” ideology. It exposes how as soon as Vasconcelos was named Minister of Education in 1921 his perspective, that promoted whitening for all, began to be disseminated via major channels of mass persuasion such as public education, newspapers, radio, mural paintings, cinema, impressions of popular nationalism, and literature, among other media. This chapter uncovers how the African elements of Mexican *mestizaje* were systematically excluded by integration. It exposes how at the time, under a perspective marked by black phobia and white aesthetics, it was argued that all non-whites were on their way to becoming some new shade of “white” due to natural selection and love.

The second Chapter, “The Forgotten Black African Root of Mexico’s Cultural *Mestizaje*: Rereading Some of the Most Popular Impressions of

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\(^7\) Juan Piedra traces through language the introduction and development of the white aesthetic in Latin America.
Mexican National Identity," examines the recasting process undergone by some of the most popular images and cultural expressions of national identity. It uncovers how, through this officially supported procedure, the black root, intrinsic to the development of said images and cultural expressions, was removed or diluted to disappearance. This chapter focuses on the manner in which these images and expressions, once “cleansed” from any reference to their blackness, were widely publicized after 1920 and thereafter became some of the most telling impressions of national identity.

“La vida inútil de Pito Pérez: Tracking the Afro Contribution to the Mexican Picaresque Sense of Humor," Chapter Three, analyzes the Mexican landmark picaresque novel La vida inútil de Pito Pérez. It establishes a link between the first profane dances and songs of indisputable black roots and the popular Mexican satire, with La vida inútil and the sense of humor represented therein. It shows how the main character, Pito Pérez, essentially echoes Manuel Payno’s characterization of the mezclas. These mezclas, which roamed the countryside and cities in very large numbers, were also known as “léperos,” “pelados”, or “picaros,” among other names. The chapter highlights the connection between picaros, the Mexican sense of humor, and the mezclas.

Chapter Four, “Angelitos negros, a Film from the Golden Epoch of Mexican Cinema: The Coding of Visibly Black Mexicans in and Through a Far-reaching Medium," discloses how international black stereotypes are used to code black Mexicans in and through film. It documents that cinematography was utilized along with literature and other channels of mass persuasion as part of a nationalist campaign to defame blacks while promoting whitening. This chapter exposes the racist discourse that went above and beyond cultural and linguistic barriers. It establishes a link between Hollywood’s views and official Mexican views guided by black phobia and the white aesthetic in or around 1949, a time
when *Angelitos* and other Mexican films such as *La negra Angustias* were made in Mexico.

The notion that the novel, *La muerte de Artemio Cruz* is a “new” way of telling the same stereotypical stories about blacks and their descendants is presented in Chapter Five, “*La muerte de Artemio Cruz, a Post-Modern Nation Building Narrative: The Continued Cleansing of the Afro Component of Mexican Mestizaje*.” This part shows how through new structural technology the reader is penetrated to the unconscious where, through the reinforcement of preexisting symbols the author forges his negative images of blacks and their sons and daughters.

The objective of this study is to shed light on the manner in which the black African characteristics and the Afro legacy are narrated to disappearance or insignificance while coded under a white supremacy perspective in the following manners: by distorting or deliberately ignoring their beauty, their inner-strength and their world-views; and by misappropriating the Afro cultural contribution to Mexican *mestizaje*, a legacy imbedded in popular expressions such as dance, song, food and language.

In the works analyzed, black images are systematically portrayed within a process of assimilation through characteristics such as “green eyes” or other white features. For black characters to be rebellious or to show intelligence, they have to be diluted, deliberately ignoring that blacks from the beginning of slavery began to revolt and that if they survived visibly until the present in Mexico, as well as in other parts of the “New World,” it was not due to miscegenation with whites.
but in spite of it and due to their own intelligence and inner strength. Even where an author appears to recognize the Afro elements of a character, the analysis finds a narrative that distorts the image of Mexicans of African descent by bleaching them out and thereby, as Jackson has found in other works, denies the African characteristics of their physical features and thus their black identity (The Black 2).

This same ideology, based on the white aesthetic, was instrumental in plagiarizing the Afro legacy to Mexican-ness where it ascribed Spanish and Amerindian origins alone to various cultural expressions that became some of the most recognized badges of Mexican national identity, and for which the Afro element was and is essential. This analysis reads the works studied as part of the relationship between the ideology of mestizaje and the erasure of the Afro component of Mexican mestizaje.
Chapter One

Biological *Mestizaje*:
The Afro-Mexican and the Revolution: Making Afro-Mexicans Invisible Through the Ideology of *Mestizaje*\(^8\) in *La raza cósmica*

The African presence in Mexico as a whole has historically been minimized, if not ignored or even denied.

Francis D. Althoff Jr.

[O]ne of the most interesting cases of the Negro in Latin America is the Negro that no longer exists.

Richard Pattee\(^9\)

Homogenization as a civilizing act finds its greatest expression in José Vasconcelos’ racism.

Miguel Alberto Bartolomé

José Vasconcelos (1882-1959),\(^{10}\) was the minister of education in

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\(^8\) In the *Pequeño Larousse* dictionary of the Spanish language *mestizaje* is defined as the action and effects of adulterating or crossing races; it also defines a group of *mestizos* as those born to parents of different races. And “mestizo” is a synonym of bastard or hybrid. This is noted since from its inception the term is charged with negative connotations as do all terms that imply “impurity” of a sort or compare *Homo sapiens* to other animal species or plants. Mestizos are pure *Homo sapiens*. They certainly are not plants or any other type of animal species. Therefore terms like “mulatto” or “hybrid” which have been used for naming the offspring of animals, or plants or other species would have also a derogatory effect.

Another point to be stressed is that in *Black Writers in Latin America*, Jackson cites two types of *mestizaje*: positive and negative, “the first means a blending of cultures in which there is equal respect for [all cultures]. The second means that a minority culture is absorbed as an inferior culture” (14). The negative type guides Vasconcelos’ idea of *mestizaje*.

\(^9\) As quoted by Richard L. Jackson (*The Black* 3).

\(^{10}\) Patrick J Carroll refers to him as “one of the earliest architects of the modern social order...” (Carroll 403).
Mexico from 1921 to 1924 at the onset of the cultural phase of the Mexican Revolution. His ideology on *mestizaje* has been studied from a historical perspective by Alan Knight in an essay titled “Racism, Revolution, and *Indigenismo*: Mexico, 1910-1940” (71-113). Knight identifies him as one in a string of eugenicists found all throughout Latin America and Europe at the end of the 19th century through the beginning of the 20th century when the newly independent Latin American states were trying to become nations. Knight believes that Vasconcelos’ racism is “reverse discrimination” and, like Carlos Monsiváis, claims that Vasconcelos “shifted” to the “right” later on in life. The premise of this chapter is that Vasconcelos personified the right in the Mexico of his days. His views, which from the onset affected almost every dark Mexican—over 80% of the total population—were *criollo* views, a type of racism proudly

11 For a full account on eugenics in Mexico and other Latin American countries see Nancy Leys Stepan’s “The Hour of Eugenics:” *Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991.

12 After a brilliant presentation of the political events that served to shape the modern nation Knight concludes that Mexican intellectuals of the time were all practicing “reverse discrimination” whether by oppressing or by so called defending the vanquished. What he fails to see is that, on one hand those in power to enact the racist project of nation, oppressors and self-appointed defenders, were generally the sons of Europeans born in America, the *criollos*; on the other hand what he sees as “reverse discrimination” is applied in such a manner that could neutralize any further debate regarding racism and therefore racist practices and attitudes could not be debated leaving racism unchecked. It must be made clear that reverse discrimination would be possible presumably, if, and when, a group of the formerly called “inferior races” ascend to sovereign power and then justify the abuse to death of children, women and men, who share the same territory and time, on the basis of an idea of “otherness” such as that of “white supremacy.”

13 Carlos Monsiváis. “Notas sobre la cultura mexicana en el siglo XX.” (1428). Full citation in bibliography.
described as *la cultura criolla* (*criollo* culture) by Samuel Ramos in 1963 (91-109). Miguel Alberto Bartolomé in 1997 explained that “homogenization as a civilizing act finds its greatest expression in José Vasconcelos’ racism.” He states that for Vasconcelos “the mestizo would be the ‘cosmic race,’” a sort of synthesis of all known “races called to hold world supremacy in the future” and therefore the logically determined referent in the process of national construction (28: n. 7). The present chapter will concentrate on Vasconcelos’ essay, *La raza cósmica: misión de la raza iberoamericana*.

*La raza*, a book-length essay and travel memoirs, is a pillar in the foundation of modern Mexico’s national identity. Vasconcelos’ philosophy regarding “racial” and cultural mixing, manifested in *La raza*, had as the central goal the homogenization of all ethnicities in post-Revolution Mexico under the ideology of *mestizaje*. Miguel Alberto Bartolomé clarifies: “after the Revolution

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14 Echoing the words pronounced by Nelson Mandela in 1962 during his trial in Pretoria, South Africa it should be made clear that none of what is said here is based on personal considerations, but on important questions beyond the parameters of this work itself. It should also be mentioned that there will be references made to Euro-centric ideology and white people, and that terms such as “race,” “black,” “Amerindian,” and “minorities,” among other heavily charged abstractions or “untruths,” will be used and therefore from the outset it has to be reiterated that “I am not a racist and that I despise racism because I consider it a barbarous thing, whether it comes from a black man or a white man. However, the nature of this [work] forces the utilization of the terminology to be employed” (Mandela 19).

15 Alan Knight in “Racism, Revolution, and *Indigenismo*: Mexico 1910-1940” proposes that the commonly used category of “race” has been rightly questioned. However, he calls this category “a belief of great power” deserving “analysis irrespective of [its] untruth” (75). This work subscribes to this premise.

16 Populist movements were sweeping the whole continent. The states created during the colony were trying to become nations and the idea of “civilization,”
of 1910 when the repression of cultural plurality became more intense, despite
the rhetorical exegesis about the indigenous past, it was assumed that cultural
homogenization was a necessary condition for the configuration of a modern
nation" (27). To this explanation should be added that Vasconcelos’ plan to
Hispanicize Mexico, beyond its cultural aspects, included a racist\(^{17}\) agenda
whereby Afro-Mexicans\(^{18}\) were portrayed as inferior and caricatured. This
chapter analyzes, by going back in time with “new” critical tools, the ideology of
\textit{mestizaje} in \textit{La raza} and the white aesthetics upon which it is based. While
recognizing that the said ideology affected all “minorities” in Mexico, this chapter
concentrates on how Vasconcelos’ program affected children, women and men
of African descent however inter-mixed in various proportions with Amerindians
and Spaniards. It analyzes particularly the manner in which the discourse
contained in Vasconcelos’ program was used as a foundation of an ideology that,
from the onset of the cultural phase of the Mexican Revolution in 1920, made
Afro-Mexicans officially totally invisible at least until the mid 40s and that until

\[^{17}\] Patrick J. Carroll defines racism as “a delineation and discrimination mainly
based upon perceived physical characteristics, in particular the color of the
skin....” (403). This definition is adopted in this study.

\[^{18}\] The prefix “Afro” refers to persons of African descent who constructed New
World Afro-Mexican communities (Bennett i). The prefix is used today all over
the Americas to signify the presence of African heritages and identities. For
instance: Afro-Americans, Afro-Antilleans, Afro-Argentineans, Afro-Colombians,
Afro-Cubans, Afro-Dominicans, Afro-Peruvians, Afro-Uruguayans, and Afro-
Venezuelans, among others.
today has blurred their collective existence and cultural contributions to Mexican-
ness (125).

To carry out the task set forth, the Afro-Hispanic-American critical
approach followed in this study is first introduced. Second, a brief historical
account is given as background, starting with the African Diaspora and quickly
placing the reader at the time immediately after the armed phase of the Mexican
Revolution when Vasconcelos enters the picture. Thereafter, Vasconcelos’
beliefs are examined through the lens of Jackson’s “black phobia and white
aesthetics,” paying special attention to the first 40 pages of La raza where
Vasconcelos exposes his “doctrine for social and biological formation” (35).

It is demonstrated that in spite of a supposed total biological and cultural
assimilation of Mexicans of African descent (Sepúlveda 101; Garrido 1, 60),19 in
today’s Mexico there are a number of Mexican communities, in more than one
state, where the Afro element of mestizaje is visible.20 It is also shown that, due
to the power of Vasconcelos’ illusion, the existence of Afro-Mexicans was not

19 Felipe Garrido coordinated the edition of two volumes under the title of
Lecciones de Historia de México, ‘History Lessons of Mexico.’ They are
particularly interesting because on the one hand they are free texts from the
ministry of education (SEP) utilized to teach what may be incomplete information
as far as Afro-Mexicans go. On the other hand, they are to be noted because
they are utilized as means for shaping the imaginary of Mexican grammar school
students today.

20 In support of this, see the three following doctoral dissertations: Francis Daniel
Althoff, Jr. “The Afro-Hispanic Speech of the Municipio of Cuajinicuilapa,
Guerrero.” U of Florida, 1998; Herman Lee Bennett. “Lovers, family and friends:
The formation of Afro-Mexico, 1580-1810.” Duke U, 1993; and Anita González-El
Hilali. “Performing Mestizaje: Official Culture and Identity in Veracruz, Mexico.” U
of Wisconsin, 1997. Also see, “The Black Mexico Home Page” by Bobby
Vaughn.
acknowledged until the mid forties when the ethnologist and historian Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán carried out the first fieldwork in some communities with an obvious Afro-Mexican presence in the state of Guerrero on the South Pacific coast of Mexico.

The present chapter deals with what has been called the “racial” aspects of mestizaje, an ideology that while frequently understood as a breakaway move from the Euro-centric worldview, in fact only perpetuated racism under a different guise.

As in the rest of the work, this chapter incorporates Richard L. Jackson’s perspective whereby he explains:

Following a tradition dramatized in Hispanic Literature from Lope de Rueda’s Eufemia (1576) to the present, the heritage of white racial consciousness, in Spanish America, as in Brazil and the non-Iberian countries, defines superior and inferior as well as the concept of beauty in terms of light and dark, that is, on the strength of the amount of whiteness one has. (“Black Phobia…” 467)

It is also argued that Jackson’s views on the ideology of mestizaje stand acceptable. For Jackson, Vasconcelos’ mestizaje type or negative mestizaje\(^{21}\) is “the process of restoring whiteness by bleaching out black people,” a method called “ethnic lynching” that “has long been accepted in Latin America as a means of solving social and racial problems.” A solution, as he points out, based

\(^{21}\) For Jackson positive mestizaje “means a blending of cultures in which there is equal respect for both. [Negative mestizaje] means that a minority culture is absorbed as an inferior culture” (Black 14).
on “the expectation that the biological superiority of the white race, augmented in number through European immigration, would impose itself on the non-white races” (*The Black* 3). Jackson also stresses: “the process of *mestizaje*, though of questionable value to the development of the black identity, is nevertheless, an indisputable fact of the black experience in Latin America” (*The Black* xv). Attention should be drawn to the fact that negative *mestizaje*, or whitening was uncovered by the Martinican psychiatrist, Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin White Masks* in 1952 and that since then has been exposed in Brazil by Abdias do Nascimento in, *O genocidio do negro brasileiro: proceso de un racismo mascarado* (*The Genocide of the Brazilian Black: The Process of a Masked Racism*) in 1978, and that the Costa Rican, Quince Duncan in his “Racismo: *apuntes para una teoría general del racismo*” (“Racism: Notes for a General Theory on Racism”) exposes it as “psicocidio racista” (racist psychocide). Duncan explains that by stigmatizing and diminishing everything related to black and indigenous populations, and by omitting their history and culture from the official history and culture “a process of ideological whitening is carried out by which the victim comes to feel disdain for herself and for everything that has to do with her and her race” (53).

Vera Kutzinski, in a reference by Edward J. Mullen, defines *mestizaje* as:

> a peculiar form of multiculturalism, one that has circulated in the Caribbean and in Hispanic America, most notoriously in Brazil, as a series of discursive formations tied to nationalist interests and