

Race and Ethnicity in Latin America

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A Guide to CRC Resources

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Latin America is a land of great diversity, full of contradictions, yet full of promise. Its diversity is reflected not only in its landscape and its political, economic and social institutions, but also in its people. Latin America can be considered a genuine melting pot. The "melting" process began with the explorations of Columbus in 1492. Both race and ethnicity were extremely important to the structure and stratification of Iberian society, and when Columbus landed upon the shores of San Salvador he encountered a race of people never before seen by Europeans. This encounter forced the colonizers to readjust their perceptions of race and ethnicity. These new perceptions were modified even further as immigration from around the world continued to change Latin American society. Prior to World War II, Latin America received more immigrants to its territories than any other world region.

Race and ethnicity

Technically, race is an anthropological term for the categorization of human beings according to genetically transmitted characteristics such as skull shape, skin color, etc. Ethnicity, on the other hand, is a social grouping within a given cultural system that shares a common bond of religion, language, heritage or physical characteristics. The two are seldom completely separate. The development of humanity has necessarily meant the interaction and intermingling of different races and ethnicities. Race Relations, as a field of study, looks at the interaction among these different groups.

In Latin America, race is rarely treated as a purely anthropological category, but rather takes into consideration larger sociological issues such as socio-economic class, immigration status, and folklore. Race has also been a central part of Latin American literature's quest for national identity, pride and definition. For these reasons, it is important to investigate the idea of race in Latin America.

Surprisingly, the exploration of race relations is still considered taboo by many in Latin America. Miscegenation, or racial intermixing, is one of the foundations on which Latin America was built. Latin American reality encouraged if not demanded both miscegenation and mestizaje, a mixing of cultural customs and values, among Africans, Europeans and the indigenous populations.¹ However, because most Latin Americans are still uncomfortable about discussing race directly, it is important to look at the subtext of other discussions for clues to attitudes and beliefs about race.

There are many different theoretical and thematic approaches to Latin American race relations. This essay will not discuss them exhaustively, but it suggests several important ways of incorporating films and other audio visual materials about this topic into humanities and social science classes. The materials, most of which are available from the lending library of the Latin American Curriculum Resource Center (CRC) at Tulane University, are organized historically but take into account geographical, regional and national considerations.

¹Many social scientists make a distinction between miscegenation, the genetic combination of races, and mestizaje, the combining of racial, cultural, and social factors. Others use the term mestizaje for both phenomena.

The indigenous populations prior to 1492

In looking at race relations, it is important to avoid generalizations and stereotypes. Anthropologists have searched for years without success for an Amerindian prototype. The indigenous societies of America before 1492, whose populations are estimated at between 50,000,000 and 100,000,000, were extremely diverse. In Mexico and Guatemala alone, over 260 different indigenous languages are still spoken. This diversity should be emphasized. The nature of indigenous population prior to the Conquest is the subject of several documentaries in the Curriculum Resource Center's lending collection.

Sentinels of Silence (AP MEX 38 VIDEO) is an eighteen-minute documentary which explores several indigenous civilizations of Mesoamerica by examining the architecture they left behind. The film, winner of an Academy Award for best documentary short, is superb for both high school and college. It takes the viewer from Palenque in Guatemala to the stone quarries of the valley of Oaxaca. While the narration is very basic, the aerial photography is outstanding.

Mexico Before Cortez (AP MEX 39 VIDEO) underscores the fact that Native Americans created complex societies before the Europeans arrived. This fourteen-minute documentary, designed for the high school level, looks primarily at the historical development of the Aztecs. It serves as an excellent illustrative text on the corruption and internal ethnic strife among the indigenous groups which contributed to their defeat by the Europeans.

The Incas Remembered (INC 12 VIDEO), is a very good one-hour documentary which investigates various facets of Inca culture before conquest. In addition, the narrators succeed at showing the continuation of the Inca legacy today, despite contact with Europeans and other ethnic and national groups. Special attention is also given to the role of women in the indigenous cultures of Peru. It is good for junior high school through college audiences.

Spain before the Contact

In addition to the indigenous populations, students should also be familiar with the two major cultures which would cross the Atlantic: the Iberian and the African.

The CRC owns two videos which serve as very good introductions to Spain before 1492. Christians, Jews and Moslems in Medieval Spain (H SPA 3 VIDEO) is a 52-minute film that looks at the different regional identities within Spain in the Middle Ages. The documentary stresses the tolerance among Jews, Moslems, and Christians prior to the fifteenth century. Each of these religions had a profound influence on culture, speech, and regional customs in Spain. This production, designed for high school or introductory college levels, is especially illustrative of the diverse nature of Spanish society.

The PBS series Columbus and the Age of Discovery is a very thorough exploration of the first contacts between Americans and Europeans. Part two of this series, An Idea Takes Shape (H LA 29 VIDEO Part B), looks closely at fifteenth century Spanish society, specifically addressing the influence of social ideals on scientific

exploration. The film attempts to recreate the society from which Columbus emerged and speculates on the explorer's motivations. Special attention is given to the booming shipbuilding and navigation industries on the peninsula which made Columbus' journey possible. Both films provide an excellent background on medieval Spain, enabling students to understand the world from which the explorers and conquistadors of Latin America came.

Race Relations and the Contact

The Contact of Europeans with native Americans created a new social system which began to emerge in the sixteenth century. This new system was stratified by both race and class, and hierarchically structured so that Europeans remained dominant. Because of differences in the process of colonization, intermixing of races played a far more important role in Spanish and Portuguese colonial society than in the English colonies of North America. While the English and Dutch "pilgrims" emigrated to the colonies with the intention of settling there permanently and creating a new society based on puritan religious beliefs, the Spanish and Portuguese saw the Americas mainly as a source of wealth. Most of the Latin American colonizers left Iberia with the intention of "making their fortune" and returning to Europe. For this reason, they did not generally take their families with them. Due to the absence of European women, indigenous woman often served as concubines, mistresses and, in some cases, wives. The production of mestizo children helped to construct a society

of castes which perpetuated prejudice and stymied political mobilization of the lower classes.

Some of the earliest social and moral conflicts between indigenous Americans and Europeans are addressed in The Mission (FF PAR 1). This Hollywood-made film, starring Robert de Niro, traces the history of the Guaraní in Paraguay. The film treats the struggle between the Portuguese and the Spanish over land and Indians. What is especially outstanding about the film is the true-to-life representation of the debate over the "rationality" of the Native Americans. This philosophical debate, which was central to the colonization process, determined whether the European powers could justify their control over the Native Americans. Thinkers like the Dominican friar Bartolomé de las Casas championed the rights of the natives while others like Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda said that they were beasts that needed to be subdued. The Mission includes an excellent scene involving a Guaraní choirboy which reproduces the debate as to whether the Indian was human or animal. This section alone can be used to illustrate the rationality debate.

The documentary Civil or Savage (H LA 21 VIDEO) treats this debate more extensively. In addition to discussing the ideas of the Europeans towards the natives, the documentary discusses the religious beliefs of the natives, which reflected their intimate relationship to the earth. This documentary is especially good for both high school and college because it avoids stereotyping either the Spanish or the indigenous populations. While many modern discussions of the rationality debate reinforce the "Black Legend," a stereotype of the Spanish as especially brutal, evil conquerors

whose only goal was to slaughter innocent Americans and steal their gold, this video does a good job of placing the debate in its historical, philosophical, and religious context. The only drawback of the film is that its slide-on-video format may be slightly dry for younger students. High school teachers should allow a little extra time to preview the film and create a viewer's guide to help their students follow the discussion.

The Impact of the Encounter

The Columbian Exchange (H LA 29 VIDEO-F) is part six of the Columbus and the Age of Discovery series. It deals specifically with the contact of different cultures and the influences they had on one another. The segment begins with a rodeo in North Dakota, emphasizing that the horse was one of many non-native plant and animal species which were transplanted to the Americas along with the human migrants. Likewise, Europe and Africa imported many American products. One major import from Peru, for example, was the potato, which became a main staple of Ireland and other parts of Northern Europe. Ironically, it was the failure of this imported crop which led to the Potato Famine of the mid-nineteenth century and its resultant new wave of European immigrants to the Americas. Sugar cane, yuca, peppers, corn, pumpkins, and many spices also went back and forth between America, Africa, Europe and the Far East. The documentary examines the ways in which this complex exchange affected all the cultures involved in it.

End of a Culture (H LA 3 VIDEO), from the Spain and the New World series, is another short documentary which examines the effects of the encounter of the Native Americans with the Spaniards. Unfortunately, this British production is quite biased, describing the Spaniards as unscrupulous, adventurous men who only wanted to pillage, rape and kill, and presenting the Indians as noble but childlike people who were helpless to resist the European onslaught. This film surely falls within the tradition of the Black Legend. Nonetheless, it is a good springboard for debate about the encounter. It will be important for teachers to provide students with background information on the rivalry between the British and the Spanish in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The video is recommended for college or very advanced high school students who are sufficiently informed and sophisticated to identify the ethnocentric premises on which the film is based.

The African Diaspora and Slavery

The unwilling African immigrants represent the third major ethnic contribution to the creation of Latin America. The enslavement of Africans by Europeans, which began in the 1440s and lasted in Cuba and Brazil until the late nineteenth century, must be looked at in all its intricacies. Without diminishing the cruelty and oppression of slave owners and the horrible conditions of the slaves who were considered property, slavery should not be looked at as a static system of victimization, but rather a dynamic situation in which individuals did what was necessary in order to survive.

African slaves did not simply endure; they created their own social structure and culture which continues to be a major influence in modern Latin America.

The slaves who were held on plantations had various responsibilities depending on their relationship to the master. While the great majority worked in the fields, others were chosen as house servants and many women were taken as concubines. In addition, some slaves were able to join cofradías (trade guilds), produce their own products for sale, and eventually buy their freedom. This was more common in urban areas than on plantations, but the relative isolation of the plantations made it possible for slaves to flee to freedom.

Many of those who rebelled or fled from the plantations created their own self-sufficient societies, known as quilombos in Portuguese America and palenques in Spanish America.

Ganga Zumba (FF BRA 31 VIDEO), a striking Brazilian film, is the story of Zumbi, the renowned chief of the Republic of Palmares. Palmares was originally a quilombo which later developed into an intricate self-governing republic, based on African religion and customs. Quilombo (FF BRA 45 VIDEO) is another well-done Brazilian film that looks at the life of Brazilian slaves in the Northeast. The film vividly presents the various incentives that the slaves had for fleeing, and it has an outstanding soundtrack with music by Chico Buarque. Chico Rei (FF BRA 19 VIDEO) deals with another way that slaves obtained their freedom in Brazil: manumission. The protagonist of this film is an African king who is captured in Africa and sold into

slavery in Minas Gerais. Chico Rei, a hard worker, discovers gold and is able to buy his freedom. All three of the above films are in Portuguese without subtitles.

In many cases, the unique cultural characteristics of the quilombo or palenque survive to some extent in modern communities. The documentary Palenque: Un canto (AFLA 1 VIDEO) traces the history of a small Colombian town named San Basilio which was founded by escaped slaves, and examines how that heritage affects the lives of the town's contemporary residents.

In addition to the Brazilian films, two Cuban films give insight into race relations in Cuba before abolition. El Otro Francisco (FF CUB 18) is a revised cinema version of the nineteenth-century novel by Francisco Anselmo Suárez Romero. The film analyses that novel to reveal its racist assumptions and retells the brutal life of the slave, Francisco, who is forcibly separated from the woman he loves. The film depicts the brutality of slavery, and the precarious situation of slaves in general. At the same time, there is a clear distinction between the house servants and the slaves of the plantation. Francisco's lover, Dorotea, is a house servant who gives in to the advances of the plantation owner's son in order to save Francisco's life. The film, appropriate for college students, vividly portrays the sexual, emotional and physical abuse of women slaves.

La Ultima Cena (FF CUB 3) is an excellent film that elaborates on the capricious relationship between the master and the slaves. A pious and supposedly well-meaning slave owner has decided to treat his slaves better by instructing them on the values of Christianity and by inviting them to participate in the feast of the celebration

of passover, or the last supper. However, the owner fails to see the contradiction between his religious philosophy and slave ownership. In addition, his foremen continue to treat the slaves as beasts of burden. The end result is explosive as the slaves rebel, burning the plantation and attempting to escape. This film is good for the college level, but high school teachers should preview as it is fairly violent and may be too allegorical for some high school students.

Burn (FF US 3 VIDEO) tells the story of a mythical island in the Caribbean called Quemada, which means "burned" in both Spanish and Portuguese. Made in the 1960s but with very restricted distribution due to its political implications, the film stars Marlon Brando as the amoral English mercenary William Walker (this does not appear to be a reference to the North American slavery advocate who invaded Central America in the mid-19th century). Walker is sent by the British government to assist the island in obtaining its independence from Portugal. Independence for the island will benefit Great Britain economically through trade. To carry out his plan, Walker enlists the help of José Dolores, a rebellious slave, who eventually declares himself President of the republic.

Based loosely on the history of Haiti and the rise of Toussaint L'Ouverture in the late eighteenth century, the film points out the difficulty of independence and freedom for an unskilled slave population in an increasingly expanding global economic and political culture. This film can also be used to illustrate the ex-slaves' continual search for dignity in a world dominated by Western values. Because of graphic violence and

a confusing blend of history and fiction, this film is better for college than for high school students.

Cimarrones (H LA 19 VIDEO), a classic film directed by Carlos Ferrand, also treats the themes of slavery and rebellion. Its docudrama style looks at slavery in an understudied region of Latin America, Peru. This production looks at why the slaves rebelled and how they organized into self-sufficient communities away from the Spanish-ruled cities. Several scenes also give some insight into the relationship between Africans and Native Americans under Spanish rule. Cimarrones begins with a brief history of the slave trade. Its documentary-like style guides the viewer on a historical journey through colonial Lima before the abolition of slavery. It does include some violence; high school teachers should preview.

Miscegenation and Mestizaje

The nineteenth century saw the decline of slavery at a time when most of the Latin American societies were becoming increasingly more mestizo. Miscegenation, one of the pillars on which Latin American society was constructed, did not mean equal social union of different races. Both the mestizo (the offspring of indigenous and European parents) as well as the mulatto (the offspring of African and European parents) were, by and large, considered inferior to the European. Several films look at miscegenation in various countries in Latin America.

Brazil, Cuba, and Mexico have produced the most films which treat the subject of miscegenation. The most poignant of the Cuban films is Cecilia (FF CUB 7 VIDEO),

directed by Humberto Solás. Based on the nineteenth century novel Cecilia Valdés by Cirilo Villaverde, it is recommended for adult audiences. The film is a poignant example of the problems of miscegenation in a society dominated by European values. Cecilia represents the third generation Cuban family that is slowly becoming more white. Her grandmother, a Cuban slave, bears a child for her master. This mulatta daughter is also doomed to the same fate. Cecilia Valdés, the product of that relationship, becomes the mistress of a white man who in reality is her half-brother. Miscegenation, although promoted as a characteristic that enabled racial intermingling in Latin America, created a social hierarchy based largely on skin color. Cecilia chronicles the tragic search for social mobility of a people with roots in black Africa.

Although studies of miscegenation tend to focus almost exclusively on racial intermixing of the Europeans with other groups, miscegenation also occurred between other ethnic groups in Latin America. Cuba, for example has a sizeable Afro-Chinese population. In colonial Mexico, the Spanish felt so threatened by inter-marriage between Indians and Africans that they made it illegal. Documentation on miscegenation among other ethnic groups is scarce. Nonetheless, several films and audiovisuals provide opportunities for discussion and exploration.

Miscegenation between Africans and Indians is hinted at Macunaíma (FF BRA 13 VIDEO), an abstract film about modern politics and internal migration in Brazil. A family of black Tapanumas Indians in the interior of Brazil, facing an almost unbearable economic situation, decides to move to Sao Paulo. The film addresses the regionalism and attitudes of the new immigrants to Sao Paulo. Yet, the subtext of the

film provides insight into racial attitudes in Brazil. One particular scene underscores Brazil's desire to become white. It is based on a very popular fable of the creation of the Brazilian people. En route to Sao Paulo, the Indians come across a magical fountain. Macunaíma is the first to arrive. Diving in, he become white. The second brother, having entered when the water has turned slightly brown, comes out mulatto. The third only manages to turn the soles of his feet and the palms of his hands white. Macunaíma shows, in a satirical manner, the desire of the Brazilian to become white, but is not as critical as one would expect. The film could be used for comparative courses in both the humanities and the social sciences. However, its use of graphic cannibalism as a political symbol and a few comical sex scenes make it necessary to preview before classroom use even at the college level, and it is probably inappropriate for all but the most mature high school students.

Miscegenation was a part of a larger mixing of cultural influences which occurred in many sectors, including artistic expression. Several musical selections provide students from all levels with first-hand knowledge of the contribution of different ethnicities to national music. Argentina: Indians of the Gran Chaco (MU ARG 3 RECORD) is a wonderful selection of music from the native tribes of the Chaco. Themes of the songs range from male-female relationships to the role of the shaman within the Mataco and Charote populations. Peru: Music From the Land of Macchu Picchu (MU PER 3 RECORD) captures the ancient sounds of the Inca. Mestizaje is apparent, however, in the combination of instruments used. The charango is a

primary example. During the sixteenth century, the mandolin was brought to America. After a series of structural changes it became the charango, a truly mestizo creation.

Two documentaries which focus on Latin American music also provide students with a very good background of the contribution of different ethnicities to the sounds we call Latin. Routes of Rhythm (MU CARIB 7) focuses on the contribution of Latin American music to North American culture. With Harry Belafonte as commentator, it chronicles the development of such popular sounds as the mambo and the salsa. Caribbean Dance and Music (MU CARIB 1 VIDEO) is also particularly good. This film looks closely at the creation of musical rhythms from Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica and Grenada while tracing the contribution of the Europeans, the Africans and the Native Americans.

Another field where much mestizaje occurred was religion. Even though Catholicism was the official creed of most Latin American countries, both Africans and Native Americans had their own religious philosophies which survive even today. A Samba da Criacao do Mundo (FF BRA 35 VIDEO), O Pagador de Promesas (FF BRA 37 VIDEO), and Bahia: Africa in the Americas (R BRA 4 VIDEO) all deal with syncretism in Brazil.

A Samba da Criacao do Mundo is a samba story of the creation of the world based on Yoruba legends and myths. Highly original, the film is enhanced by a series of parades, dances and tunes done by carnival blocos, including Beija Flor. Pagador de Promesas is both comical and tragic. It is a story of a Bahian who makes a promise to Yemanjá, an orixá (deity) in the Candomblé religion. Like many African-

influenced religions, Candomblé is highly syncretic. One manifestation of this religious mixing is a tendency to match orixás with Catholic saints believed to have similar characteristics. A correlation of this type exists between Yemanjá and Santa Barbara. In a sense, the film is about the struggle between the two religions and the inability of true believer to clearly separate the two.

Finally, Bahia: Africa in the Americas is a National Geographic special which explores the various religious sects in Brazil from umbanda in Rio to spiritualism in the Northeast. It is extremely well done; its lucid descriptions and explanations of religious beliefs and practices are very well targeted to an audience whose religious experience is with traditional "western" Christianity. It is appropriate for high school or college, although one scene of spiritualist surgery near the end is not for the squeamish. Teachers may wish to edit this portion.

The Healer (R PER 1 VIDEO) deals with religious cultures in Peru. It is an award-winning production which looks at the relationship between a Catholic missionary and an Aymara Indian healer. It becomes obvious in this short documentary that Catholicism and the native folk religion are not mutually exclusive.

Although the majority of the literature focuses appropriately on the three major racial components of Latin America, other ethnic groups have also made contributions to Latin American culture which should be investigated, particularly Jews and Asians. Two appropriate films are The Yiddische Gauchos, about Eastern European Jewish immigrants to Argentina, and Gaijin, about the immigration of Japanese agricultural workers to Brazil in the nineteenth century. The CRC does not own these films, but

both are available for rental (the first from Filmmaker's Library and the second from New Yorker Films).

Race and National Identity

It is important to reiterate that any discussion of race in Latin America should be accompanied by both a historical and political background of the countries being studied. Contemporary race relations in cinema take into account international trends. Filmmakers and directors have attempted to describe Latin America as distinct and often in opposition to North America or Europe. Brazilian filmmakers, for example, have long promoted a mulatto identity. Many nationalist-minded script writers and directors treat race and nation as synonyms.

Race and national identity are inevitably interrelated. Many Latin Americans project positive national images in contrast to the "other," European or North American society. This discourse relies on the rhetoric of mestizaje and employs mestizo images.

María Candelaria (FF MEX 12 VIDEO) would be a good choice as a text for reflection on Mexican national identity. Background should be given on important Mexican writers on national identity. José Vasconcelos' book The Cosmic Race (Paris: Agencia Mundial de Librería) best elucidates the role of mestizaje in Mexican national culture. As a historical text, María Candelaria is a superb example of Mexican cinema in the 1940s. The historical context must also be kept in mind when searching for clues to how Mexicans perceive themselves. Made in 1942 on the heels

of the nationalist program of Lázaro Cárdenas, María Candelaria can be considered symbolic of Mexico itself. On one level, it accurately reconstructs the complex social relations between mestizos and the indigenous populations, vividly illustrating the syncretism of native Mexicans and European Catholic values and customs. On the other hand, it is important to look at the choices that director Emilio Fernández uses to mount his story. The film begins with a montage of stills of pre-columbian artifacts and statues, which are later superimposed on the face of the beautiful Mexican actress Dolores del Río, who plays the role of María Candelaria. The story is narrated by a painter who states that María Candelaria is a pure blooded Mexican Indian woman. Unfortunately, the very European-looking Dolores del Río is not a good choice aesthetically for this role, if it is truly a pure blooded Mexican woman that the director wanted to portray.

While cinema in the 1940s in both Latin America and the United States frequently used white actors to play minority roles, this practice is especially contradictory in a country such as Mexico that praised its wonderful indigenous heritage as the base of its mestizo culture. Dolores del Río represented an aesthetic ideal which Mexicans wished that their Indians possessed. Although Mexico has often expressed great pride in its ancient Indian past, discrimination and prejudice against the pure blooded Indian is still prevalent. Students should discuss this apparent disparity between myth and reality.

The use of national myth in the promotion of a positive national identity is clearly seen in the Argentine film Don Segundo Sombra (FF ARG 8 VIDEO). Based

on the novel by Ricardo Güiraldes, the film explores Argentina's national symbol, the gaucho, who is presented in a highly idealistic manner. The history of the gaucho should be reviewed prior to viewing the film, perhaps using the classic gaucho text, Martín Fierro by José Hernández.

The gaucho has long been used in Argentina to represent the national identity. The gaucho's independence and freedom have attained mythological proportions and captivated the Argentine imagination. Even long after the gaucho had virtually disappeared, Argentines like Güiraldes and Jorge Luis Borges looked to his romanticized lifestyle with nostalgia.

In Cuba, De Cierta Manera (FF CUB 16 VIDEO) is perhaps one of the few films that looks directly at the question of national identity from a cultural, political and social perspective. Directed by the late Sara Gómez in the midst of the consolidation of the Cuban Revolution this docudrama looks at some of the obstacles to Cuban national consolidation. One of the principle ethnic enclaves looked at is the Abakua society, a society of men based on misogynist rituals, which was regarded by the director as anti-social, and therefore contrary to the aims of the revolution.

La Gran Fiesta (FF PUE 1 VIDEO) deals explicitly with the question of national identity along cultural and political lines in Cuba's neighbor, Puerto Rico. The time is 1942. The fiesta centers around the expropriation of the most prestigious club in Puerto Rico, the Casino de Puerto Rico. National sentiments arise in elite sectors showing a complete disdain for the United States, as hispanic nationalists define their culture as anti-Anglo. At the same time, however, these same nationalists show a

clear aversion for the other sectors of Puerto Rican society, which carries both class and racial implications.

Directed by Marcos Zurinaga, this film should be viewed after students are familiarized with several books which have attempted to define Puerto Rican identity. Two of the best are Insularismo Tomo I by Pedreira (San Juan: Alfa & Omega, 1985) and El Pais de Cuatro Pisos by José Luís Gonzales (Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 1980).

The Cuban film Lucía (FF CUB 4) could be a superb example of the development of a national identity. Using the Cuban woman as a symbol of the nation, the film chronicles the life of three Cuban women at important stages in the development of the island. In a sense it is three films in one, divided into time frames circa 1895, circa 1933 and circa 1960, after the success of the Revolution. The cinematographic discourse used to construct such films raise several interesting questions. The teacher could ask students to comment on how people of different national origin, ethnicities or races are depicted in each segment and whether it was stereotypical or not. In addition, students should consider how this depiction reflected a common way of seeing social relations at the time.

The first segment reveals some very interesting stereotypes of blacks and of the Spanish from the Cuban creole perspective. The second segment hints at prejudices and views against the mulatto. One particular scene reveals that a Cuban gentleman has been cheating on his wife with a mulatta. The wife describes the other woman as

"one of those that can pass, but her hair doesn't pass." Common expressions such as this indicate a great deal about attitudes toward race.

In looking at films concerning race and national identity, students should be able to discuss the films' agendas and the directors' perspectives, and to compare these films to U.S. cinema. This is particularly true in the case of the Cuban films mentioned. The rhetoric of revolution in Latin America has often included a platform which aims to eradicate social ills including racial and ethnic discrimination, and students can speculate on the degree to which revolutionary Cuba has achieved this goal. It might be interesting to discuss the role of film in U.S. national identity and race relations as well.

Contemporary Ethnic Struggles and Racial Consciousness Movements

Despite the often elitist perceptions of race and ethnicity mentioned above, many civil rights and social justice movements have surfaced in Latin America, as documented in film and documentaries. In many countries the indigenous populations are the poorest, most disadvantaged and exploited. But this has not lead to passivity. On the contrary, many popular indigenous movements have blossomed over the past twenty years. Several documentaries have captured these movements that promote self-empowerment.

When the Mountains Tremble (HC GUA 2 VIDEO) is a well done documentary that is sure to move any student. It is graphic in its depiction of the violence and human suffering which has occurred as a result of the war waged against Guatemalan

peasants by the state, which has U.S. military backing. There are several interviews with the Nobel Prize-winning human rights activist Rigoberta Menchú. Central to the documentary are the class and race distinctions between ladinos (Europeans or europeanized Indians) and the indigenous. These two groups are wary of each other and have little ground for trust. Coupled with the film, students should read Menchú's published book, I, Rigoberta Menchú (Verso, 1984 or Cambridge U.P., 1990: in Spanish the title is Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú, Mexico: Siglo Veintiuno, 1985). The book goes into more detail about indigenous attitudes and perception of the ladinos. However, even in the film, students quite clearly see the attitude of the ladino-controlled state towards the Indians, who are sometimes marked as subversives. This film is appropriate for college and mature high school students, but unfortunately the CRC's copy is of poor visual quality, making the subtitles difficult to read.

While state-directed violence against native populations is not as prevalent or systematic in other nations as in Guatemala, the indigenous populations have been neglected or abused by the state in various ways in virtually every American nation. It is important to understand the perspectives and visions of those groups which have been marginalized. Mensajes Indígenas (IND LA 1) is a series of clips of representatives of indigenous groups from North, South, and Central America who talk about philosophical ideas and their opinion of Europeanized society in general. Several groups talk about the importance of the earth to Native American ways of life, and almost all make a plea for the preservation of the natural habitat. This video is in

various different indigenous languages with Spanish subtitles, making it accessible only to those who read Spanish well.

Another related area of study is the racism and discrimination related to aesthetic values. Prejudice against those of darker skin color or with more indigenous or African traits are intimately related to the historical development of Latin American nations. Although few films deal specifically with this issue, it is possible to glean a great deal of information by carefully analyzing the subtext of other films and posing questions which will reveal how film reflects contemporary values and practices. Why are certain actors chosen to play certain roles and how is ethnicity involved?

The notion of aesthetic bias is a tricky one, since we all find people and things aesthetically pleasing for profoundly personal reasons. Yet in the case of the Third World, and Latin America in particular, which has been dominated by European cultural values, there has been a clear bias towards the "blond and blue eyed," despite the fact that less than 5% of the population fits this description. Miss Universe in Peru (DEV PER 2 VIDEO) provides a justified criticism of these values on several fronts. First, the film criticizes the promotion of such an elitist event in such a poor country. Second, students are able to see the stark contrast between the perfectly manicured "Miss Universe dolls" compared to the average woman in Peru. Women of obvious indigenous traits are noticeably absent from such pageants.

Twentieth century cultural rejuvenation and racial and ethnic pride represents another dimension of the quest for civil rights. The cassette tape

Nicolás Guillén (LM CUB CASS) is a recorded interview with the renowned Cuban poet who was named "Cuba's National Poet" by Fidel Castro. Guillén was instrumental in the promotion of the "negrismo" philosophy which declared the equal contribution of Africans and Spaniards to Cuban culture. In his own words, Guillén said that Cuba was mulatto - but it was important to emphasize the forgotten African experience to national culture. More advanced students may want to approach Guillén more critically, analyzing to what extent his poetry contributed to a folkloric representation of Africans or to what extent it affected social relations.

Indigenismo was a similar ideology that promoted and glorified the Indian contribution to national culture. Indigenismo and nationalism are intimately related in some countries, and often times praise mestizo culture which had its roots in Indian culture. Masses and Murals (AM NIC 1 VIDEO) is a relatively good documentary which looks at the commitment of the Sandinistas to forging a community in which national values are of the utmost importance. Nicaraguan murals and billboards reflect the mestizo nature of Nicaraguan society. Unfortunately, the photography is often poor, and the pace may be too slow for high school students.

Mexican Murals: Revolution on the Walls (AM MEX 17 VIDEO), on the other hand, is a superbly photographed documentary of the Mexican mural movement which developed between 1921 and 1974. Narrated by John Baldwin, this documentary discusses the history of the muralist movement as well as the artistic techniques of three of Mexico's most revered muralists: Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco and David Alfaro Siqueiros. Baldwin emphasizes the revolutionary nature of the muralists

and their indigenista tendencies. Diego Rivera, in particular, promoted socially significant art in which native Mexicans took center stage. This production is appropriate for both high school and college. The only flaws are the background music by the Spaniard Rodrigo, which clashes with the nationalistic, patriotic theme that the documentary is trying to project, and Baldwin's often misleading comments on Mexican history and economics.

Eréndira (FF MEX 4 VIDEO) is a part of a growing surrealist cinema genre from Latin America. The basic plot is the story of a young woman forced into prostitution by her evil grandmother, but the texts and visual images are saturated with symbolism which can serve as a point of reference for discussion. For example, Eréndira herself can be considered a symbol of Latin America. She is mestiza and she is a prostitute. Identical characterizations of Latin America can be found in Pablo Neruda's Canto General (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991) and Eduardo Galeano's The Open Veins of Latin America (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973). Students can be presented with this background and be asked to reflect on Eréndira as a symbol of Latin America from a socioeconomic point of view in a capitalist world economy. "What does it say about the economic development?" "How are social relations presented among different ethnic groups?" may be two pertinent questions. Due to relatively graphic sex scenes, this film is recommended for mature students only. (Eréndira is based on a character from the novels of Gabriel García Márquez.)

Santa Marta: Two Weeks in the Slums (DEV BRA 5 VIDEO) is a documentary look at a favela (slum) in Rio de Janeiro. Residents speak about issues including

community morale, police harassment and discrimination. The race-class complex in Brazil is clearly seen in all of its contradictions. The issue of community development versus national development poses a good question for debate. Although the interviewees are not exactly optimistic, they are extremely proud of their favela, despite the problems. Part of their pride comes from an acceptance of their position in society which some see as reflective of a general Brazilian attitude. Favela dwellers talk candidly about racism. One black woman remarks that she hates white people, but that she also hates very dark people. Glancing at the reaction of the other people in the room, she clarifies by saying that she wasn't talking about them. Still another interviewee stresses that it is a lot better in the favela for blacks than down in the city. (Most favelas are up along the mountain-side in Rio). One is left with the feeling that favela dwellers are discriminated against primarily because of their class status, but that class and race in Brazil are intimately related. Ask students to pay attention to who lives in the favela, keeping in mind that their perceptions of ethnicity may differ significantly from those of the average Brazilian.

Race and Migration: Latin Americans in the United States

Ever since World War II, economic and political turmoil have led to a net flow of migrants out of Latin America, many to the U.S. Some demographers have estimated that by the year 2000, Hispanics will make up 11-12% of the total population of the United States. Divisions of race and ethnicity among these immigrants grow even

more complex as they enter U.S. society. Several documentaries and feature films deal with the plight of Latin American immigrants to the United States.

El Norte (FF US 2 VIDEO) is a sometimes depressing, but excellently- produced film that tells the story of the migration of indigenous Guatemalan campesinos to the United States. The story accurately follows the life and hardships of a Guatemalan sister and brother who are forced to leave their country for political reasons in the 1980s. They come to the United States in the hopes of a better life, but are faced with the harsh reality of fighting racism as well as class discrimination. The film vividly depicts the deplorable conditions of undocumented immigrants and the conflicts between them and some North Americans who feel threatened by their presence. At the same time, the film makes it quite clear that American companies as well as private households are willing to hire and sometimes exploit these undocumented workers because of the cheap labor.

Other American films such as Stand and Deliver (FF US 7 VIDEO) and La Bamba (FF US 5 VIDEO), which can easily be attained from any video store, treat the theme of Mexican immigrant families in the United States.

Maricela (HISP 58 VIDEO) is a good PBS "after-school special" which tells the moving story of teenage Maricela and her mother Eugenia who emigrate to the United States to escape the civil war in El Salvador. The leading role is played by Carlina Cruz, a brilliant young actress, who embodies the conflict of a young adolescent in exile. Maricela is torn between the desire to fit in and a longing for her homeland, which represents some mythical security. To fit in, Maricela must be accepted by her

American friends, many of whom have a lot of prejudice against Hispanics whom they lump together as "Mexicans." The film is especially good for junior high and high school audiences. Its message is tolerance and compassion. Maricela's North American friend is as much a protagonist as Maricela, for she is taken on a journey in which she enters into a new culture, which in turn enriches her own life.

Black Latinos: A Double Minority (HISP 2 CASS) also deals with the crisis of identity. It is an audio tape with recordings of candid interviews with people who consider themselves both black and latino. This tape underscores the fact that ethnicity is often not only determined by racial considerations, but also by national boundaries. Moreover, the United States' preoccupation with specific classification of racial and ethnic identity is foreign to Latin American societies. People of mixed ancestry are often times forced to decide among choices which may have no relevance in their native countries.

Reference Guides to Teaching Multi-Culturalism

Every society has its own classifications and social dynamics based on their national history, political and economic considerations. In order to understand Latin American race relations, it is important to understand the internal dynamics. Several supplementary materials can be used to teach multi-culturalism in the classroom. They may help students to recognize their own cultural perceptions as well as learn about those of others.

Teaching Cultures (EC 38 BK), written by H. Ned Seelye, is subtitled "Strategies for Intercultural Communication." While the book is directed at foreign language teachers, it also includes good information for social scientists, including a discussion of the definition of "culture." In addition to discussing the importance of culture, Seelye provides several concrete ways to determine whether students are learning not only to understand other cultures, but to sympathize with why different peoples perceive and interpret reality the way they do.

Good Neighbors (EC MEX I BK) deals specifically with cultural differences and similarities between North Americans and Mexicans. It is designed especially for the North American student to understand how to communicate better with Mexicans. The book discusses different aspects of both cultures, from sexuality to speech.

Multi-Racial Cross Talk (EC 21 VIDEO) is a British production which looks at difficulties in communication between two cultures, the British and the Indian. While the two groups speak the same language, each culture has different intonations, stresses and ways of framing questions and responses. Although Latin America is not directly featured, the film offers several interesting insights into cross-cultural communication in general. The film also promotes cross-cultural tolerance and understanding.

Finally, to accompany the films, teachers and advanced students can refer to several more technical publications. Richard Graham edited a well-done and easy-to-read book on race relations in Latin America entitled The Idea of Race in Latin America (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990). Abdias do Nascimento has written a

controversial book on miscegenation in Brazil in which he questions the perception of race relations in Latin America in general: Mixture or Massacre? (Buffalo: Afrodiaspora, 1979). Franz Fanon has written what is considered by many the classic text on race relations. Fanon, a psychoanalyst, looks at race relations from the perspective of the colonized mind. Because of the technical language, however, this text, Black Skin, White Masks (New York: Grove Press, 1967), is only suitable for advanced college classes.

In order to understand race relations in all dimensions, further research and investigations are needed. Film studies, a relatively new area of academia, affords students of all ages a new opportunity for investigation. Two invaluable resources which will help both teachers and students interested in Latin American film are E. Bradford Burns' Latin American Cinema (Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Center, 1975) and the compilation done by Leon G. Campbell and Carlos E. Cortés entitled Race and Ethnicity in the History of the Americas: A Filmic Approach (Riverside: University of California, 1979).