**Latinidad in Black Space:**

Black Mosaic Revisited

Ariana A. Curtis, PhD
Curator (Latino Studies)
Anacostia Community Museum
Washington, DC SE
Anacostia Community Museum

Museum History

- Opened in 1967 as a “store front” museum
- Located in the densely African-American section of SE DC
- East of the River and African-American focus
- Only “community” museum in the Smithsonian system
- Moved to a larger building in residential SE DC
Exhibit looked at the immigration of people of African descent from Central and South America and the Caribbean to the Washington metropolitan area. It examined how the perceptions and the realities of race, color, and ethnicity have shaped peoples.
19 years later...

- **MUSEUM:** Expanded museum mission
  - Leading to the creation of my job

- **DC METRO AREA:** Loss of African-American majority in D.C. proper

- **UNITED STATES:** Latinos as largest U.S. minority

**But also...**
Percentage Change in the Latino Population, 2000-2009

Arizona copycats considered or passed 2010 - 2012
Current challenge

- How do we thoughtfully and inclusively talk about and (visually) present the dynamic relationships between and among Blackness, *Latinidad*, Diaspora, race, identity, and belonging in the DC area and, more broadly, urban areas in the U.S.?

- And how do we teach/cultivate/encourage Diasporic relationships in predominately black spaces?
Diaspora and the Black Atlantic

- Transnational community and solidarity
  - Actively forged and transformed
  - Movement across national borders
- A problem of politics and identity
Black Mosaic: REVISITED

- **Black Atlantic as a Diasporic Place-Based Construct with Multiple Identities**
  - Blackness in Latin America, ex. Panama
  - Perceptions of U.S. pre-arrival
  - (Perceived) Black Rejection of Latinos/Latinidad
  - Nativism vs. Diasporic identification
Identity: Being and Becoming

“I am Costa Rican because I was born there. Costa Rican Latino influence has had very very little because my upbringing was always within this West Indian tradition. There was nobody in my background to give a Costa Rican point of view.... My mother cannot stand Costa Ricans...”

... Now I am discovering that other part of what is my culture by working in this office, by learning more Spanish, by trying to reacquaint myself with... all of that which I left behind when I came as a 12 year old child... So Latino is something that I guess I'm learning....
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Problems with Self-Identification as a base for “Afro-Latin America”

“I am not Black but probably there are Blacks in my family. I'm not of African descent but in my family by my father, there are blacks. They are not West Indian but they are Black.”
Various Experiences of Blackness

They [comecocos] are still learning of their racial identity... they just don’t want to be called Black.... Black women of West Indian heritage, they are creative... The comecocos are an inferior product. Food, conduct, everything. They have not created anything...”
Historical and Contemporary Frameworks

Race in Black and White

“... because of the historic bipolar formation, and despite the presence and struggles of other groups in the United States, racial politics are still often painted in Black and White [especially in the South].” (Simmons 2008: 100)

Legislated Difference

• Anti-immigration state laws
• Jim Crow
• Silver/Gold Roll (Panama)
• Jim Crow abroad (Panama)
• Citizenship laws (Panama)
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Arriving in Washington, D.C.

The way the United States is portrayed in my country... I thought I was coming to live in a city of white people.

I came... before this big explosion in terms of communication... I didn't know there were any other Blacks in the U.S. I didn't know there were any other Blacks besides my mother!

...People were separated like victims of tuberculosis—blacks and white were apart. I was not aware of discrimination.

...Everybody was Black. There was a lot of poor people, a lot of destroyed housing... That was a tremendous cultural shock for me... I could identify with the people in many ways— I was Black.
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“...I’m proud of my culture and black ancestry... regardless of my white features... you expect to find support from the people, but what you find is rejection.”

“It was almost being caught between two worlds. I was not African American. They knew it and I knew it... “

“If you are black Latino and you want to maintain your Latino identity, the opportunities are not there for you. You have to melt into the Black community...”

“I think the Black [African-American] community was very isolated. They thought they were the only Blacks in the world... We have different languages, different cultures... but we are Black.”

“I learned how to like Black people, especially Black women. I had sort of hate for them not because they were Black, but because they didn’t accept me as a Black person. They said... I was white... I wasn’t accepted by Black people in this country....”
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- **Nativism vs. Diasporic Identification**
“How will immigration reform affect black America”

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Black Mosaic REVISITED

• Reconnect and re-engage with participants
• Bridge past and future ACM research initiatives
• Review existing narratives with new lenses
  ▫ Latino specific
  ▫ Place-based (African-American urban space)

Documenting the active forging and transforming of transnational Black Atlantic communities
Questions, comments, suggestions, contacts to share, stories of solidarity or to join our events mailing list: