

# The Africas in the Americas: Afro-Cubans as Part of the Afro-Latino Family\*

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## *Introduction*

Latin America might be the largest African country in the world. The most populous of African countries, Nigeria, has only 174 million inhabitants. The more than 200 million Afro-descendants in the Americas constitute a “minority” that is often invisible, that is often marginalized. Unfortunately, two hundred years after the end of slavery, they are still on the bottom of the social pyramid. Whether we are considering an African-American, Afro-Cuban, Garifuna or Afro-Aymara, we Afro-descendants of the Americas have a great deal in common but share very little amongst ourselves. We all come from Africa, but there are various Africas in Africa. Whether it is West, East, Central or South Africa, our skin is always darker than that of those who came from other lands. For reasons we do not know, it was decided we were uglier and dumber; it was decided we were inferior; without our consent, it was decided that we would be slaves. Even the holy books served

those who were making the decisions justified our new status (*Exodus* 1; *Leviticus* 25, 44; *Ephesians* 6.5).

Our pagan peoples had their own languages, cultures, customs, foods and gods. Yoruba, Lukumi, Wolof, Bamileke, Mandingo, Bantu, Bambara, Peul, Swahili, Lingala and surely other languages and dialects were spoken on the slave ships we were forced to board. Those who got on those ships were rich, poor, royalty, wise men, *babalawos* [priests], healers and every other kind of person found in our societies. The traffickers dispersed us all over the continent—and everything changed. This was all done so we would change, because what was ours was no good; what we had was not civilized. The New World would make us into new people, with a better faith, more culture and more education. We had to forget all our Africas.

Let us take a look at what is still left and was not totally forgotten. I am not offering a scientific survey or academic presentation about Latin Afro-descendants. I just want to partially reflect on my travel experiences through all these Afro-Latin communities. It is my own personal view as a Cuban Afro-

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descendant discovering the Africans in the Americas.

### *Mexico's black people*

My travels through the United Mexican States (Mexico), from Ciudad Juárez in Chihuahua, to Ciudad Cuauhtémoc, in Chiapas, did not afford me much contact with Mexican blacks. Mexican scholar Hernández-Díaz wrote: "It is easy to state that there is a group of people who descend from the people who were brought over from the African continent in Mexico. What is hard is identifying them. It is not possible to confirm who they are or where they are."

Afro-Mexicans are also called Afro-Mestizos, blacks, browns, coastal people—or even Cubans! Mexico is not like Cuba, where there are blacks everywhere. Afros in Mexico principally live on the Gulf coast and river banks of Guerrero, Oaxaca, Michoacán, Veracruz, Campeche, Quintana Roo and Yucatan: where the land is hot and humid. The word *jarocho* also identifies the inhabitants of the Oaxacan and Veracruz Papaloapan basins, who have Negroid features.

For Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) researcher Nemesio Rodríguez Mitchell, who coordinates the Mexico Multicultural-Nation University Program (PUMC), Mexico accepts itself as a multicultural nation. Yet, the government does not constitutionally recognize the black population. As in Cuba, Mexico has no official figures on Afro-Mexicans. The National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) does not catalog or consider them in their censuses and studies. An estimate puts their number at between 250,000 and 300,000, and had them living primarily on the coasts of Guerrero

and Oaxaca, where they are omitted from social programs and national holidays.

Afro-descendant José María Morelos y Pavón is the author of *Los sentimientos de la nación* [The Nation's Feelings] and part of the country's history, as he was a prominent insurgent leader. Another Afro-descendant, Vicente Guerrero, was the second president of Mexico. The state of Guerrero is named after him. Black prince Gaspar Yanga could be considered the first American *cimarrón* (runaway slave), and the San Lorenzo Uno Olmec head confirms for me what Victor Dama Hernández wrote in *Palenque*—that the Africans came before the Spanish. Despite this, Mexican Afro-descendants continue to be excluded. They have been erased from Mexican history. The dark-skinned heroes have been represented as browns and called *mestizos* in order to ignore their identity and impose on them a *mestizo* one bound for globalization. In Cuba, we all know the song "Sabor a mí," by Álvaro Carillo, but not everyone knows that this great composer, with his more than 300 songs, could nobly represent the Afro-Mexicans.

### *Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, Nicaragua: the Garifuna Nation*

It is believed that two Spanish ships loaded with Africans sank on the coast of San Vicente Island, in 1635. I would like to equally credit a version that says the African fleet of the Mansa of Mali, Abubakari II, who was very interested in the western sea, sent two expeditions to the Atlantic that possibly reached it way before Columbus discovered America. Hence, the Black Caribs or Garifunas (Garinagus), as the result of the mixture of Africans and indigenous Caribs and Arawaks. Around 1797, came their exile to the

Punta Gorda, Roatán zone. Their arrival in Honduras is celebrated every April 12<sup>th</sup>, their largest concentration living on the Caribbean coast. Today, there are many Garifunas living in Livingston (named in honor of Edward Livingston, with no connection to the city of Livingstone in Zambia), Puerto Barrios (Guatemala), and on Nicaraguan Miskito Coast. Many immigrated (and continue to emigrate) to the United States, fleeing unemployment.

It was from Honduras, from San Pedro de Sula, that Cuban General Maceo wrote the famous phrase: “Cuba shall be free when the redeeming sword throws its enemies into the sea... But whosoever tries to take Cuba will hold the dust of her blood-soaked land in his hand, or die in the struggle.” His inspiration might have come from the fact that these people had never been enslaved.

I crossed from Puerto Barrios to Punta Gorda (Belize) by ferry, and then returned to Puerto Cortés (Honduras). People on both sides believe in *gubidas* (spirits) and remember heroic Joseph Satuyé, dance *punta (bangidy)*, *yancumú*, and *jungujugu*, and cultivate the Rasta look. Africa is quite present in their religious practices and music, but they all said the same thing to me: the Garifuna have been excluded from all the country’s decisions. Forty-three percent of them live in poverty, 17% in extreme poverty.

Before the Garifuna, there were also Angolan and Senegambian Africans in Central America. According to colonial documents, they were Arará people from Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria; Ashanti from Ghana, Yoruba from Nigeria, and Congo, Mina and Mandinga from Angola.

In July 2013, the National Institute of Statistics (INE) began to survey the entire Afro-Honduran population, which is concentrated on the country’s Atlantic coast.

Apparently, it has the same problem that Afro-descendants have in Cuba: it is not known how many of them there are. Unofficially, the estimate is a million and a half, or 12% of all Hondurans. I am very curious about how many there really are. They exemplify rebelliousness and courage.

The Miskita Coast, where Nicaragua’s Afro-descendants live, is on the Atlantic. When the Garifuna arrive, in about 1832, they encountered Miskito *zambos* (Afro-Indians) and black *criollos* (native-born blacks). There was a riot on a Portuguese slave ship coming from the Gulf of Guinea in 1639. It ran ashore and hundreds of blacks escaped to the coast, where they were received and accepted as Miskito Indians, with whom they ended up mixing. Later, the English founded two cities, and they also mixed with the Miskita population. Yet, most of the British population moved to Jamaica when the Republic of Nicaragua annexed the territory. The English had brought with them slaves who eventually created the area’s *criollo* communities. Research and publication about the black *criollos* is extremely scarce, unlike work on the Garifuna.

### *El Salvador*

What is the true cultural heritage and African genetic makeup of El Salvador? They say there are no Afro-descendants because it has no Atlantic coast nor did it have large banana plantations, and because dictator Maximiliano Hernández Martínez prohibited their entry with the *Ley de Migración* [Migration Law] (1933). I do not recall seeing many blacks when I traveled through El Salvador. Those I saw, security guards at clothing stores in San Salvador, told me they were from Tela (Honduras). Salvadoran anthropologist Marielba Herrera Reina wrote that peoples

such as the Ereguayquín and religious practices like the one found in San Benito de Palermo, which dates back to 1670, are bastions where African influence is clear in a country that has always turned its back on its Afro roots, a place blacks never left and instead are part of its racial universe.

### *Tiquicia [the place of the Ticos] and the Afro-Ticos*

One of the most pervasive myths affecting the Costa Rican consciousness concerns their overwhelming Spanishness and whiteness. Yet, the primordial origin of the Costa Rican people is tripartite, just as in Cuba: indigenous, Spanish and African. There were blacks, slaves, in Costa Rica ever since colonial times, but most of the black community got to Costa Rica in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth. They were brought from Jamaica as cheap labor to work on the railway to the Atlantic. This explains why most Afro-Costa Ricans have English names and surnames, like one of my favorite poets, Shirley Campbell Barr. They also tend to be Protestants and speak English or Limonese Creole.

Costa Rican blacks did not have equal rights. They could not leave Port Limón and experienced a form of racial segregation similar to that of South African apartheid. It was only after the revolution of 1948 that they were given equal rights and freedom of movement. In 1978, following the lead of an initiative of the Union of Costa Rican Educators, Rodrigo Carazo Odio's government decreed August 31<sup>st</sup> to be Black and Afro-Costa Rican Culture Day, in commemoration of the First International Convention about the Situation of Blacks (in New York, on August 31, 1920).

In Spring 2012, a national plan to combat racism and discrimination was created.

While visiting the Province of Limón (where blacks constitute a majority), I was able to confirm that they were the poorest of Costa Ricans. Some said it was due to government neglect. Culturally, official rhetoric seems to indicate that more and more black Costa Ricans are following the country's majority religion and not maintaining an important connection to their African heritage. Yet, the *cuadrilla* dance [Square Dance] is still quite popular. It reflects a time when black slaves used it to ridicule their masters, imitating their music, dancing and even costumes. This reminded me a bit of the Cuban Contradance. We should also not forget that *Mekatelyu* and Limón Calypso, which have been revitalized by the group *Cantoamérica*, are doubtlessly valuable contributions the Afro-Costa Ricans have made to the culture of Costa Rica and Latin America.

### *Afro-Panamanians*

One could say that Panama is a black country. At least, that was my impression when I traveled from Bocas del Toro to Colón.



*15th Birthday Party. Colón, Panamá*

Forty-one percent of the Panamanian population has African ancestry. Like in Cuba, one can see and feel this on the streets. Mulattoes are 24% of the population, *zambos*, 12%, and blacks, 5%. The African slaves brought to Panama included Gagos, Pololos, Mondongos, Ashantis, Ararás, Bais, etc. Legend has it that Ethiopian pirates already lived in the area before the whites arrived. In the past, Congo, Guinea and Ethiopia were synonymous with Africa. French ethnologist Brasseur de Bourbourg reported the existence of two aboriginal tribes in Panama: the Mandingas (black skinned) and Tules (red skinned).

Given its privileged geographic position, Panama became a slave distribution center for all of America. The customary route after their arrival at Portobelo, in the Caribbean, was to follow the 'royal route' to Panama City, where they were shipped anew to work on colonizing projects along the South American Pacific coast.

It was precisely in Portobelo where slave insurrectionists were given their collective freedom around 1579, a precedent in American history. The story of the rebel Bayano, of Mandinga origin, is essential to the history of runaway slaves. About 1,200 runaways fought under his orders to defend their *palenques* from colonizing troops.

Just about Panama's entire musical legacy comes from its Afro-Panamanians, e.g., in folkloric rhythms such as *Tamborito*, *Congo*, *Bullerenque*, *Bunde* and Panamanian *Cumbia*. Black Congo folklore in Panama is filled with wonderful personalities who dance to the rhythm of the drums: *La Reina*, *Juan de Dios*, *Juan de Diosito*, *El Pajarito*, *El Juraquín*, *Matuanga*; *Cande o Candelaria*, *El Barre con Todo*, *El Agarrado*, *El Letrado* y *El Troyano*. Afro-Antillean Panamanians, who suffered discrimination for a long time, and were

called *chombos*, introduced rhythms like Calypso, Soca, Haitian Beat and Reggae, which Eddy Lover or El Chombo used for *regguetón* in Colón.

I was able to confirm that the Afro-Panamanian population suffers constant victimization via a criminalization base upon old, Lombrosian models that attribute dangerousness and criminal tendencies to their ethnic condition.

### *Afro-Colombianness*

My visit to Colombia began when I read the novel *Changó, el Gran Putas* [Chango, the Big Badass], by Manuel Zapata Olivella. Colombia has approximately 5 million Afro-descendants in it: they represent 10.6% of the population. Almost half of them are concentrated in the Cauca Valley, Antioquía and Bolívar. Africans were brought as slaves and were situated in hot, jungle or coastal zones, in environments similar to those of their homelands. Between 1553 and 1580, they came mostly from the coast of Guinea, and were called Guineas or Mandingas. Between 1580 and 1640, they were groups of Bantus called Congos, Luangos or Angolas. By the mid sev-



*Pier in Quibdó, Chocó, Colombia*

enteenth century, those who came were Ewe-Fon from the Otrora Kingdom of Dahomey. They became known as Ararás or Jojos. The eighteenth century saw the arrival of mostly Akanios and Ashantis from Ghana. They were called Minas. Yorubas from Nigeria, who were called Carabalis, Lukumis or Chalas also came.

The history of Afro-Colombians is as long and complex as that of their country. The struggle of runaway slaves was synonymous with the road to independence. Today, it would be impossible to understand the *comunero* revolution and independence movement led by Bolívar without the history of *palenques* and famous Afro-Colombians like Vicente de la Cruz and José Prudencio Padilla. Even today, it is difficult to understand why the absolute freedom that was promised fell short and became only the capacity to have a “free birth” (from a ‘free womb’), which was accompanied by humiliating laws against idleness created by the slave owners to force freed men to work for them. From the very earliest rebellions, to the collaboration (and resistance) of Afro-Colombians during the independence struggle and effort to create the State of Choco as an autonomous entity, to the creation of the Afro-Colombian Chair and acknowledgement of Palenque de San Basilio as a World Heritage Site, the struggles and achievement of the Afro-Colombian people have been as continuous as they have been invisible.

I had the opportunity to visit the city of Quibdó in Choco. As happened in Puerto Limón, I was able to confirm that it was one of the country’s least developed areas—due to neglect by the central government. I was unable to remain for the San Pancho festivals, but I can still imagine the melodious *salsa* music played by Quibdoan Jairo Varela and

his group *Niche*. I greatly admire coastal resident Joe Arroyo and his “JoeSon” style, and his legendary song “La rebelión.” I also won’t forget the African drums to which Malapé and Chandé are danced, or the sacred *Pechiche* drum of the Lumbalú ritual, or the black Carnival dances.

### *Ecuador: The World’s Middle*

Ecuador is an imaginary line that has named two Spanish-speaking countries: the Republic of Ecuador (South America) and Equatorial Guinea (West Africa), both of which chose a geographic-scientific concept denoting their centrality on the Earth’s globe at a crucial, historical moment in their independence periods. They are at the middle, yet are two largely marginalized countries. In Ecuador, the population of African origin has been there since the Spanish conquest. There are two, distinct geographic areas with a majority Afro-Ecuadorean presence: the Province of Esmeraldas, on the Pacific coast, and the Chota Valley, in the mountainous Imbabura region of the Andes. Legends holds that the first black inhabitants of Esmeraldas arrived accidentally in the mid-sixteenth century, when a ship carrying slaves from Panama to Lima sank. A group of survivors, possibly from West Africa, escaped into the forest to be free. They joined up with Cayapa Indians and other groups to form the “Zambo Republic of Esmeraldas,” which sought recognition from the Spanish colonial authorities—but they were not successful.

Later on, additions to this population take place in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, during the construction of the Duran-Quito railroad. Eloy Alfaro’s government contracted Jamaican black en masse. The abolition of slavery by mid-nine-

teenth century did not help black Ecuadoreans fully integrate into the country's life. It took another fifty years for them to gain access to land or property, and even this was a troubled process. Beginning in the 1920s, many Esmeralda residents emigrated to Guayaquil and its sphere of influence. According to the 2011 census, black and mulattoes represented 7.2% of the Ecuadorean population.

Music is one of the ways in which the Afro-Ecuadorean population has been able to maintain its identity and organize, in order to struggle for their rights. Coastal Afro-Ecuadoreans are different from those of the *sierra* because most Esmeralda blacks lived primarily as *cimarrones*, while those from the mountains were almost exclusively slaves. These sociological differences are reflected in their music. Esmeraldas is the land of *marimba* and *arrullo*, rhythms that sound purely African. El Chota is the land of the *bomba*, a style of music that combines more indigenous and European influences, more like Andean music. Both genres are unknown to most people in Cuba, despite the fact poly-rhythmic nature of their music comes from Africa.

### *Black Peru*



*Making Decision on Digital Literacy. Chincha, Perú*

The first Africans arrived in Peru with the *conquistadores*. The route went from Africa to Cuba and Hispaniola (currently Haiti-Dominican Republic), went through Panama, Cartagena and Veracruz, all the way to the distant *encomiendas* (land grants) of the Vice-Royalty of Peru, where 95,000 arrived up till 1850. A group of Afro-Cubans arrived in 1980, but it was fleeing a dictatorship.

Till the nineteenth century, Afro-Peruvians were in the majority all along the coast, and had a powerful influence—but 1890 saw the beginning of its decline. This may be when the saying: “*El que no tiene de inga, tiene de mandinga*” [If he's not Inka, he's Mandinga] became popular. Our version in Cuba goes: “If he is not Congo, he's Carabalí.” Peruvian slavers preferred blacks from Guinea, from the Senegal River, because they were deemed as easier to manage and had skills like rice cultivation, breaking horses, move cattle with horses, etc. The next most popular group was from the area of Ghana till Eastern Nigeria and, finally, from the Congo, Angola, Mozambique and Madagascar. In the early twenty-first century, the Yapatera community in Morropón (Piura) had about 7,000 farmers, mostly Afro-descendants of Malgache origin. The *pícaro festejo*, *amestizado landó*, *ingá*, *dulces pregones*, *agüeneives* and joyful *panalivio* are well known, Afro-Peruvian melodies, songs and dances in Latin America.

I was told that the *zamacueca* that derives from a birth and umbilical ceremony, and the *tondero* are danced to the rhythm of the Peruvian *cajón* [a drum box]. There are very traditional dances in Cuba that are also only accompanied by a set of *cajones*, like the *rumba yambú*. For us Cubans, with our dances of sexual initiation, like *vacunao*, the *cajón* seems to have been born in Cuba. I was able to personally appreciate how the *cajón* is played

in a *yunza negra* in Chíncha. The *yunza negra* is a ceremonial carnival dance in which people dance around a tree in a group or pairs. They compete to fell it and share its fruits in order to receive future abundance and prosperity. Later, they plant one of two trees where the felled one was. I have to learn from what part of Africa this tradition comes, but have no doubt that it is living African tradition in the Afro-Peruvian world.

### *Bolivia and the Afro-Aymaras*

According to reports by the Charcas Court, in the sixteenth century, Africans from the Congo, Senegal and Angola traversed Brazil and arrived in Potosí, America's most populous city: 120,000 inhabitants in 1574. They were forced to work in subhuman conditions in the silver mines, endure the cold and an altitude of nearly 2.6 miles above sea level. Estimates calculate that eight million Africans and natives perished due to working in the mines between 1545-1825, when Bolivia's independence was declared. As mining diminished, Afro-Bolivians were then sent to the Los Yungas region, where they had to learn to cultivate coca leaves and engage in other agricultural work. Thus, this population quickly established its cultural roots on the foundation of their African ancestors, the suffering of their elders, due to slavery in Potosí, and their natural assimilation into the Aymara culture.

In 1945, President Gualberto Villaroel issued Supreme Decree 319, which declared *pongeuaje* and *mitanaje* (forms of forced tenant servitude) abolished. In 1952, free labor and all servitude were eliminated. On August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1953, Legal Decree 3464 ratified the abolition of *pongeuaje* and *mitanaje*, favoring Afro-Bolivians by freeing them from slavery

and giving the lands where they currently reside and work. The highest concentration of Afro-Bolivians can be found in Los Yungas, the same are chosen by Che Guevara early on for his *guerrilla*.

One finds lands in perennial production, mostly coca plantations, as coca leaves are the basis of home economies there, and a primary source for the communities' economies, as well, although they also grow coffee, citric fruits, bananas, *yuca*, papaya and cereals for their own consumption. It is estimated that 25,000 Afro-Bolivians reside in Los Yungas, but another important sector lives in cities like La Paz and Santa Cruz de la Sierra. Although they are more than 10 million strong, the Afro-Bolivian population is hardly a symbolic percentage, like a species that is becoming extinct.

Afro-Bolivian cultural traditions have taken root, especially their popular *saya* dance, which expresses social concerns, joy, pain and criticism through rhymed couplets and African-style drum rhythms. All this includes the sharp minds and tongues of the *copleros* (the rhymers), who instantly improvise verses to be sung socially and in chorus. For three months, I shared Afro-Aymara life in the Tocaña community. They initiated me in the coca leaf culture, its history and traditions; I initiated them in the use of computers and new information and communications technologies. It was an unbelievable experience, the kind that only happens once in a lifetime.

### *Chile and Argentina: no blacks*

Spanish historians Agustín de Zarate and Jerónimo de Vivar confirm that the name 'Chile' derives from the Quechua word *chire*, which means *cold*. There were never great tropical (cotton, sugar, tobacco plantations)





*In the struggle against the digital divide. Azapa Valley, Arica, Chile*

in Chile, which explains how Diego de Almagro arrived in 1536 with 250 Spaniards, 1,500 natives and 150 enslaved Africans, but colonizers did not find it necessary to import large numbers of black slaves because Mapuche Indians were cheaper. Between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, approximately 6,000 blacks slaves were imported. Only after the War of the Pacific, after the annexation of Tarapaca (1883) and Arica (1929), did a distinguishable Afro-Chilean group appear, which even today is considered Peruvian. I began my visit to Chile in Arica; I still have in my possession the National Goods Ministry's pamphlet about the slave route in the Azapa Valley.

Not forgetting that Chile was the first country in Hispanic America to abolish slavery (1823), discrimination, maladjustment and social exclusion have continued to be important for dark-skinned people, as the 2010 case of functionary José Corvacho reveals. A parliamentary law to acknowledge Chile's Afro-descendant ethnicity has been in the works since 2009. It would confer greater guarantees to the Afro-Chilean community. The idea of an Afro census and proposal to include the Afro-descendant variable to its pages are not yet a reality.

In Argentina, Africa came in differently. Slaves arrived in reduced numbers before the sixteenth century, from Cabo Verde, but the majority would be from the Bantu-speaking members of the current Congo, Guinea and Angola. In the nineteenth century, when the colonial period came to an end, one of three inhabitants of Argentina's true territory was an Afro-descendant. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Afro-descendants grew to be more than half the population of some provinces. Although their numbers notably decreased throughout the nineteenth century, due to the combined effect of epidemics (Yellow Fever, in particular, in 1871) and wars (such as the one with Paraguay), their apparent disappearance was more due to their historiographical misrepresentation than an empirical reality.

Everyone today acknowledges blacks as important contributors to the musical creation of Argentina's most well known music: tango. Traditional *candombe* turned into the *habanera*, then into *tango americano*, not forgetting the *fandango*, then Argentine tango, and then the *milonga*. For Ortiz Oderigo, 'tango' is a corrupt form of the Yoruba word *Shangó*.

### *Uruguay and the Afro-Uruguayans*

The first Africans arrived with those who established colonies in Sacramento (1680) and Montevideo (1726). Exact figures of those who came are imprecise, particularly due to contraband. As in the rest of the Americas, Afro-Uruguayans are descendants of slaves who contributed to the economy, society and culture.

*Candombe*, recognized by UNESCO as a World Cultural Heritage, contributed decisively to the development of the tradition

of Uruguayan carnivals. Its origins go all the way back to the ceremonial processions of Congo Kings. *Candombe* is related to other musical forms of African origin, like Cuban *son*, *tumba*, Brazilian *maracatú* and *congadas*. It evolved in the early nineteenth century, and was immediately seen as a threat by the elite, who attempted to prohibit this music and dance in 1808. *Candombe* survives and includes a Bantu ancestral legacy: Africans brought it to the River Plate region. This rhythm traveled to Uruguay from African and can still be felt, in all its intensity, on streets, in dance halls, and at carnivals.

### *Conclusions*

I have not surveyed the Antilles here. Their population is primarily Afro-descendant, as is the case with the three Guyanas, Venezuela, Paraguay and Brazil, which is an African colossus in the Americas. I have also left out the Africas of North America and the African-American experience. I have not forgotten any of this. I did not include these places in my first trip, expecting I'd be able to travel again. For me, to speak of Afro-America is talk about the whole Afro world from north to south. Nowadays, African-American is taken to mean only African descendants born between Mexico and Canada. This is just a semantic game, like a Cuban who is not American, but only Cuban.

In 1441, the Portuguese captured African slaves for the very first time. The path Africa's history would take got totally turned around in about 1550. Europe enters a period of economic and geographic expansion, and went to

negatively interfere in the development of African societies. For four centuries, millions of Africans were violently torn from their lands and sent to America, where they were forced to work on large sugar, cotton, tobacco or cacao plantations, and in gold and silver mines. These products function as prime material for the industrial evolution of Europe. The families of those industrial magnates still possess the fortunes they gained through slavery.

In 1794, captain, historian and writer John Gabriel Stedman published the story of his experiences in Surinam. The book became a classic of abolitionist literature. The colony was known for the mistreatment its plantation owners inflicted on their slaves. Stedman gave testimony of these inhuman practices. Upon returning to England in 1784, he decided to denounce them. With support from Editor Joseph Johnson, he published his story of a five-year expedition against the rebel blacks of Surinam, on the savage coast of South America.

The consequences of slavery are still alive and affect society. They directly affect the Afro-descendant and indigenous populations in the following ways:

- A lack of property
- Educational backwardness; the digital divide
- Racism
- Racial, work-related, educational, political and media exclusion
- Triple discrimination of black women
- Racial hegemony
- Self-discrimination and low self-esteem
- Poverty
- Violence

- Marginality
- Political patronage

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