Pan-Americanism and Anti-Racism

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INTRODUCTION

The "discovery" of the Americas created the modern world-system, linking the Americas with Europe, Africa, and Asia in the largest genocide in history. The Western hemisphere was invented in an unremitting, world-historical, blood-dimmed tide of racial violence that ultimately killed as many as 150m Native Americans and c. 50m Africans, a record of mass murder that has endured for centuries and will likely remain unbroken by any other sequence of events in the future, short of nuclear war or planetary ecocide through global heating.

The conquest of the Americas was a racial project undertaken before the term "race" was known, before the ascent of the capitalist mode of production, and indeed before the geographic extent of the hemispheric landmass was understood by its conquistadores. Pan-America, from Nome to Tierra del Fuego, plus substantial amounts of African territory as well, were swept up in the slave trade to the Americas.¹

The event I am describing occurred over almost half a millennium (from c. 1500 to 1900 CE), and was comprehensively structured by race. Europe and its "others" -- the Indio/as and the Africans, not so much the Asians -- combined in a racial project of planetary plunder and slaughter that still shapes our lives today. That is worth repeating: Race structures every aspect of our lives.

Over all this time the Western hemisphere has been the destination not only of European settlers, not only of kidnapped and brutalized Africans, but also of immigrants from the global South and global East. When current US President Donald Trump inveighs against immigrants and calls African nations (and Haiti, let it be remembered) "shithole countries," he reinvokes this legacy of colonialism and racial slavery. He endorses the American Holocaust (Stannard 1992) and gives unconscious testimony to "the fact of Blackness" around the world today.

In short American peoplehood, from North to South, is racially demarcated, racially identified. Nearly all of humanity is racially coded now, but the Americas first perfected the racial formation process -- at least on a comprehensive, mass
scale -- and subsequently divulgated it globally. Special credit to the United States empire here, but all empires propagate racially.

The Americas have been under White rule for more than half a millennium. This vast region is its own "case": of settler colonialism and of the aftermaths (still not fully visible) of African slavery and the culture it produced: hybridized and divided, highly unequal, and prone both to waves of violent repression and determined popular uprising.

Well, what about resistance in this grim picture? Given the abysmal depths of the conquest and slavery into which the Indian and African subjects of the European empires were plunged, it is nothing short of miraculous that those subjects even survived, remarkable that what Marx sarcastically labeled "the rosy dawn of primitive accumulation" did not convert virtually the entire pan-American population into homo sacer (Agamben 1998): sacrificial humans. But here we are, the descendants of ancestors who preserved themselves and their progeny, allied with other, overlapping, exploited classes and groups -- the working class and women's movements, notably -- to confront the still-hulking Moloch that is itself a descendant: the descendant of the conquistadores, north and south.

The only response to this world-historical situation that truly makes sense today is anti-racism. And the only anti-racist stand worth taking is Pan-Americanism. After all, race was made in the Americas -- I mean the race-concept and the racialized structuring of the social world -- by the bringing-together of the world across the Atlantic. American society after "contact" (that is, by means of ongoing genocide), produced criollos, the raza cosmica, and the novo homem dos trópicos, as well as the White supremacist settlers we still see among us. The American hemisphere is the world's racial entropōt. It has been built over the centuries, socially (and historically) constructed, not only by displacement and settlement, not only by slavery, but by imperialism, global capitalism, and immigration from everywhere.

In this essay I take up this concept of Pan-Americanism as a transnational (or if you prefer, hemispheric) anti-racist social movement. All the principal actors are present, geographically speaking: the Native Americans, the Europeans, and the Africans are all active participants, as they have been for centuries. Today in most of the national settings where the confrontation between authoritarianism and democracy is being fought out, particularly in the Americas, this conflict necessarily takes racial form.

We live in that legacy. These countries were created as colonies, subjects of European empires. Their native populations were nearly annihilated in the process: the biggest and most prolonged genocide in history. About 12 million enslaved Africans arrived alive on their shores; this was a transcontinental kidnaping, also something unique in history, at least in scale and duration. The colonies then revolted against their metropolitan masters, in uprisings led by elite
criollos (native settlers), mostly slave-holding, and generally White supremacist themselves (Simon 2017). Yet the original elite logic of anti-imperialism could not be sustained: the imperative of abolition, the roots of indigenismo, the origins of democracy, lay in the sheer numbers of (ex)slaves, immigrants, and pardo peoples who comprised the mass base of these societies. These people fought in their independence and subsequent revolutionary wars, from the American and Haitian revolutions to the American Civil War and the Guerra do Paraguai. They ended slavery, and Indios/as gained citizenship. The legacy of these conflicts endures today.

So how should we characterize contemporary hemispheric struggles over race? In the 21st century, racial conflict overlaps with every other social issue, from the precarity imposed by neoliberal austerity and greed, to the ongoing institutional sexism and degradation of women, to the endless assault on nature itself and on the determined Native Americans who defend it. Pigmentocracy (Telles 2014) endures, insisting, however irrationally, on a natural hierarchy of the phenomic, perpetuating White paranoia and Negrophobia, which either implicitly or explicitly associates dark skin with crime, indolence, inferiority -- you know the drill. Anti-immigrant "nativism" is on the rise again, continuing a centuries-long cycle in which White nationalism and White supremacy require the demonization of new arrivals.

At the same time, though, anti-racist resistance is also resurgent, provoked not only by current racial reaction, but by the extensive mobilizations of Black folk and indigenous people that have occurred since World War II, not only in the Americas but all around the world. The wave of decolonizations and national liberations that swept away the old European empires, the defeat of US imperialism in Vietnam, the rise in worldwide influence, both political and cultural, of the US-based Black movement, the return of pan-Africanism via hip-hop, and the internationalization of indigenous resistance both through direct solidarity initiatives and through the growing challenge to corporate-led ecocide, have all strengthened anti-racist resistance. In many places, the struggles of immigrants have played an important role, deepening international solidarities and pan-ethnic movements, framing nationalist initiatives "from below," and in some cases (like the US) threatening the political demography of White supremacy itself.

In North America, and in much of Latin America as well, the Black struggle has taken on new forms, incorporating the legacy of the 1960s and 1970s upsurges of those Black freedom movements. But today's Black movement also goes beyond them to develop the more comprehensive and radical viewpoint best illustrated by the US Movement for Black Lives (M4BL). That movement is not confined to the US. In Colombia, Brazil and elsewhere we hear the cry, "Vidas Negras Importam" (Black Lives Matter) [Carazzai and Hass 2019]. Black women's organizations and protest campaigns are active in every country in the Americas.
The Indian struggles of today are more explicitly ecological than they were in the past, but the core of those efforts remains the same: to fight for the people is to fight for the land, and for the nature of the land. At the moment I am writing, indigenous organizers and land-defenders in the Amazon are being hunted and killed by paramilitary gangs. These groups are hired by landowners seeking to clear the forest for ranching or farming. Agro-conglomerates and Wall St. financiers are backing some of these efforts. As I write this, the Oceti Satowin (Standing Rock Water Protectors) are dealing with a massive oil spill in Southeast North Dakota; this is the very pipeline they fought to prevent.

THE STRUGGLE TODAY

Also as I write these words, one million Chilenos are demonstrating in Santiago against the neoliberal Piñeda government. Chile is a nation of about 18 million. In other words, more than 5% of the nation is in the streets of the capital. Echoes of the Allende period can be heard in the streets: masses of people singing "El Derecho de Vivir en Paz," a protest song by Victor Jara about Vietnam, for example.

A movement upsurge of this scale and quality is an exhilarating event. But it is hard to know today how this surging protest movement will turn out. At this moment, it appears that the government is making concessions, trying to stem a proto-revolutionary tide. Gramsci would say this is a moment of political crisis in the "war of position."  

Sometimes an insurgent moment takes power. Allende was elected. Sometimes the flowering of a freedom movement is cut off. We know what followed Allende's moment. Fascism is never far away in Latin America; consider the presence of the Bolsonaro government in Brazil, or that of Juan Orlando Hernández in Honduras. Pinochet's fascism was a gift (or a curse) from the United States, as was the country's use as a neoliberal "laboratory." Pinochet is no more, but the Chilean protestors are still fighting Milton Friedman and los Chicago Boys' austerity policies, as administered by Piñera. They still sing the songs of Victor Jara.

In the Santiago protests the Mapuche stand out. The Mapuche are the leading indigenous group in Chile. Reports from the city stress that a fare hike in the metro system triggered the outpouring of protestors; most coverage fails to note that just before the protests began, thousands marched in Santiago in protest against Columbus Day, known in Chile as the "Encuentro de dos mundos" holiday (Meeting of Two Worlds). Across the hemisphere, this holiday is anathema to Native Americans and their allies; it is an institutionalized celebration of settler colonialism. Led in Chile by Mapuche marchers, the demonstration began with a female shaman scattering dried corn as she prayed. Imprisoned Mapuche activist Alberto Curamil sent a letter, which was read to the crowd by his daughter Belen:
Today we reaffirm that there is nothing to celebrate on these dates, but that we must make visible all the resistance that the community has made to the attacks of destruction that are being carried out by large national and international companies in our territory. Chile’s indigenous groups decry discrimination on Columbus Day (Thomas-Johnson 2019)

Resisting dams, logging, and land seizures in their territory, and challenging anti-Indian discrimination and violence throughout the country, the Mapuche are the largest group among the c. 2 million Native Americans in Chile. They are the main water-protectors, the most important anti-ecocide activists in Chile, as well as the most important opponents of settler colonialism and racism. Although in the forefront of that struggle, they are not alone, as shown in the October 12, 2019 march: students, people from working-class neighborhoods like Recoleta, and members of feminist organizations marched with them, prefiguring the enormous demonstrations that would break out a few days later.

Right now there is an emergent wave of protest movements around the world, in which the Chilenos are playing a starring role. The world as a whole, and the American hemisphere in particular, is moving through a new political cycle. As always, race and racism play a central role. Across the world, democratic trends have been blocked or reversed; more reactionary and authoritarian governments have come to power. The rulers are a familiar type: Trump, Modi, Bolsonaro, Orban, Xiyan Ping, Piñeda, Erdogan (it’s a long list) are uniformly nationalist, corrupt, oblivious to the ecocidal consequences of their policies, and fundamentally racist. Indeed every one of these reactionary and authoritarian leaders has mobilized racism in his (they are all men) bid to curtail democracy. Anti-Indigenism, Negrophobia and Islamophobia, and anti-immigrant "nativism" are all pressed into service: Narendra Modi’s repression in Kashmir and Gujarat unites with Xiyan Ping's Islamophobia in the Xinjiang region of Western China. Trump embraces Jair Bolsonaro and Sebastian Piñeda in a common quest to assault native lands and to extract fossil fuels. Viktor Orban and Bolsonaro are in agreement on their fear and hatred of people of African descent.

These authoritarians may be in power, but they have not won their battles to regress to White supremacy (or Han, or Hindu, or Turkic supremacy). Instead they have reinvigorated the democratic and egalitarian opposition that for centuries has mobilized against the sorts of repressive agendas their regimes embody at present. Yes a new anti-racist resistance is emerging. How could it not? The roots -- the radical sources -- of the Indigenous and Black movements, the immigrants rights movements, and the movements of many other oppressed and excluded peoples..., these radical roots are very deep. The Americas are not only Indian lands, but countries built on the backs of enslaved Africans. As James Baldwin put it in his legendary debate with William F. Buckley at Cambridge University (1965):
Let me put it this way, that from a very literal point of view, the harbors and the ports, and the railroads of the country—the economy, especially of the Southern states—could not conceivably be what it has become, if they had not had, and do not still have, indeed for so long, for many generations, cheap labor. I am stating very seriously, and this is not an overstatement: *I* picked the cotton, *I* carried it to the market, and *I* built the railroads under someone else’s whip for nothing. For nothing.

I offer these reflections on what I consider the key theoretical and political issues raised by the effort -- decentered yet deeply connected as well -- to challenge and indeed to overcome the legacies and present-day practices of racism that have produced the modern world. I take the Western Hemisphere (itself a Eurocentric phrase) as my key subject: Pan-Americanism and Anti-Racism.

Yet this subject is so vast and deep that I must limit myself severely. In what follows I discuss what I take to be three of the most important themes raised by any attempt to interpret and theorize the dynamics of racism and anti-racism in the Americas today. These are the following: settler colonialism, the fact of Blackness, and the interaction of race and gender. I offer only short notes on these matters. I conclude this essay with some thoughts, again necessarily brief, on the research methodology employed here, which I take to be a model for future work.

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SETTLER COLONIALISM

Patrick Wolfe (2006) notes that "The question of genocide is never far from discussions of settler colonialism." Thus he situates the key issues -- of incursion, displacement, ethnic cleansing, and so on -- in their true context of imperial murder or "war" on the racialized other. Settler colonialism is often seen as a "one-off": however brutal, as in: it happened and now it is over. We may owe this singular-predation theory to Marx's concept of primitive accumulation. Introducing his idea of "accumulation by dispossession" in 2002, David Harvey developed a new approach: what he called "the new imperialism" was an ongoing and iterative assault by the metropole on the periphery. Something like a framework for understanding the accumulation of capital through imperialism (that is, racial despotism) had already been theorized by Luxemburg (2003 [1913]); this idea has also bounced around in world-system theory circles for awhile.

Once we see settler colonialism as ongoing rather than originary or episodic, its preeminent logic as a racial project is inescapable. Seizure of lands, as the Dakota Access Pipeline did or as deforestation in Brazil is doing; and destroying nature as oil shale development in Alberta is doing, is the sharpest weapon of accumulation by dispossession, its ecocidal drives have now been exposed
before the entire world. Settler colonialism is also Negrophobic: it takes the form of seizures of Black farmland in Georgia (Newkirk 2019) and in "shock doctrine" seizures of land in New Orleans after Katrina (Klein 2008). In Brasil, Bolsonaro is a settler colonialist: he threatens to liquidate state recognition of quilombo communities and to shut down FUNAI (the government-based National Indian Foundation). These practices are still going on everywhere. In some cases, across the Americas, there has been at least relatively successful resistance: the Mapuche are a leading example.

But in most of the hemisphere today, settler colonialism is still running wild. Consider the assassination of Berta Cáceres, a member of the Lenca nation, the largest Indian group in Honduras. An internationally known activist in defense of her people and the rainforest, an outspoken feminist and midwife, Berta Cáceres was known for leading opposition to illegal logging, the super-exploitation of Hondureños/as (many of them Indian women; see Frank 2016 [2005]) by agribusiness, and the presence of the US military on Lenca land. Her leadership of resistance to a proposed series of dams on the Gualcarque River, which the Lenca hold sacred, was the proximate cause of her assassination on March 2, 2016. Cáceres was well-known, the most prominent victim of these struggles. But dozens of Indian activists have been killed in Honduras, especially since the US-backed coup in 2009 (under the Obama administration and Hillary Clinton's State Department).

The presence of Native people, and claims of autochthony anywhere outside of Europe, threaten to undo capitalist modernity. Pan-American history is the story of wave after wave of this undoing. In Mexico the Zapatistas politicized indigenismo to an extent not seen since the 1930s, provoking plenty of reactionary racism. Evo Morales's (an Aymara Indian) election to the Bolivian presidency in 2006 (based on a remarkable series of Indian demonstrations for water rights in Cochabamba in previous years), and Hugo Chavez's 2006 election in Venezuela, also upset the apple-cart of Ladino rule.

THE FACT OF BLACKNESS

In contrast to colorblind racial ideology, the aversive racisms of Trump, Bolsonaro, and other rightwing leaders perversely recognize "the fact of Blackness." They seek to undo ongoing racial resistance -- what I am calling Pan-Americanism -- rather than denying or dismissing it as their recent predecessors did by making use of colorblind racial ideology. Beginning at the end of WWII and continuing into the 21st century, assimilationist and inclusionist politics -- however contradictory these initiatives were in practice -- dominated much of the mainstream discourse on race (Winant 2001). The reformist trajectory of racial formation extended from states to civil society organizations, such as social movements, corporations, NGOs, political parties, interest groups, and universities. Across the Americas the anti-racist struggle was muted. Movements recognized that racial conflict was always present -- a luta continua.
But as long as reform-oriented racial regimes were in power, mainstream politics seemed open to mildly progressive racial politics, for example on affirmative action, throughout the hemisphere. Even center-right political currents, both neoconservative and neoliberal, converged on such formulas, identifying their political positions as "color-blind," "post-racial," and "racial realism."

A decade after that, racial reaction is pouring out of the state and rightwing politicians in many American countries. Contradictory and flawed ideal that it was, colorblindness is now nowhere to be seen. Criminalizing people of color and immigrants has of course been going on for a long time, but the surge in state violence against people of color is notable. In the US, in Brazil, in Central America, there have been increases, not only in tacit state support for ever-more aggressive and offensive attacks on Blacks and Indians, but in overt state support for racial reaction. Heads of state such as Trump and Bolsonaro have openly praised extra-judicial police action against Blacks. Immigrant restriction has been on the rise, as large numbers of refugees from climate collapse, from rampant violence, from economic desolation, and from various forms of group persecution, have been on the move: to Colombia and Brazil from Venezuela, to Mexico and the US from Central America, and along many other routes as well.

Do we even remember colorblindness? My point here is about the death of an illusion. Opposed to those views is the racial recognition that happens in the real world:

And then the occasion arose when I had to meet the White man’s eyes. An unfamiliar weight burdened me. The real world challenged my claims. In the White world the man (sic) of color encounters difficulties in the development of his bodily schema. Consciousness of the body is solely a negating activity. It is a third-person consciousness. The body is surrounded by an atmosphere of certain uncertainty (Fanon 2008 [1952], 83).

This section of my essay should perhaps be called the "the fact of raced-ness" but Fanon's Afrocentric title is obviously better. The upsurge in the deployment of new reactionary racialization practices began in earnest in the US with the election of Obama, although obviously a huge warehouse of racist weaponry was ready and waiting. In face of reactionary attacks, Obama tried assiduously to propagate colorblind racial ideology himself, but to little avail. Obama's mere election was probably enough to doom the dominant racial ideology of colorblindness, but this was not obvious at the time.

We should think about racial reaction -- about the fact of Blackness, about the return of the Native (pace Thomas Hardy), and about the demonization of immigrants -- as Pan-American problems. Blackness upends the White world.
Both resistance to settler colonialism and the "fact of Blackness" also bring into focus the political pliability of nationalism, something that Ernesto Laclau (1977) theorized somewhat problematically as a form of populism. Both on the left and the right, nationalism is available for emancipatory and authoritarian purposes. On the left nationalism "of color" have often been democratic and egalitarian: consider Du Bois's pan-Africanism and that of the Black Panther Party in the US, or Abdias do Nascimento's Quilombismo in Brazil. But there are exceptions to this rule: Paul Gilroy (2002) has critiqued Garveyism for its flirtations with fascism; the 1930s Frente Negra Brasileira was open about its affinities with Integralismo. On the rightwing side, White nationalism is a thin cover for White supremacism, as Trump and Bolsonaro repeatedly demonstrate.

RACE AND GENDER

Both settler colonialism and White supremacism are resolutely masculinist. The US empire state (Jung 2015) subjugated the Indian nations of the Great Plains through a combined assault on women and their natural world, which was commmodified and de-collectivized (Karuka 2019; Estes 2019; Dunbar-Ortiz 2015). After WWII, and especially after the rise of "second-wave" feminism, women's activism expanded enormously across the Americas (Saffioti 1979; Hernández Castillo 2010; see also Méndez 2018). Black, Latina, and Native feminisms, however, struggled to be born, even though the stories of their foremothers were known (Painter 1997; Hernández-Ávila and Cantú, eds. 2016; Miles 2005; Hopkins 1992 [1882]). The emergence of a Black women's critique of post-1970 Latin American feminism paralleled and influenced feminist movement developments in North America and Europe (Davis 1983; Gonzalez 1982; el-Tayeb 2011; Anzaldúa and Moraga, eds. 2015).

The politics of gender have very strong links to the politics of race and racism. Intersectionality theory and a host of social scientific research tell us that experientially, identity politics is produced and reproduced simultaneously across race/class/gender/sexuality lines. My own work (with Omi [2015]) on racial formation points to the uncertainty, contestedness, and instability of these processes. Of course all identities are socially constructed; is it necessary to argue today that gender is socially constructed? We all experience our lives that way, as we modulate the various frequencies of our identities, consciously or automatically.

Not only has the rightwing extensively played both the race and gender cards, but so has the feminist movement. In Brazil, the Latin American country where feminism is most developed, the movement's intersectional commitments are necessarily heightened by the rightwing Brazilian government. In part as a result of dire necessity in the present situation (and not just under Bolsonaro either; Brazil has been politically unstable now for several years...), and in part because of sustained critical work by Latin American women of color, the pan-American women's movement finds itself in a much more autonomous and racially conscious place than it was during its tumultuous early years. The extensive
critique of second-wave feminism posed by women of color across the Americas has born fruit. A lot more race-consciousness now exists among all women, women of color (Black/Brown/ Yellow/Red to use the odious "color code") and White women too, about each other. Not that conflicts don't arise: over racism and sexism, over Islamophobia or anti-Semitism (notably in the US), and over class differences (in numerous Latin American women's movements). But in a process that parallels the Black movement in the US (the Movement for Black Lives, for example), US women's movements are more race-conscious, decentered, and overlapping today than they were in the past. In Brazil a host of autonomous Black women's political organizations have sprung up in the past decade or so (Perry 2013)⁹

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NOTE ON A RESEARCH MODEL

It is necessary to explore racial authoritarianism and racial democracy -- I know: both these terms are problematic -- largely from the "bottom up." Numerous movement groups, once again both decentered and connected, are doing this work. As movement-identified scholars we need to contribute our research to these groups' racial projects, or more specifically to their anti-racist projects. The Pan-American racial politics I discuss here are linked to the historically fundamental role that race has played in the making of the entire hemisphere (and the modern world). From a racial formation point of view these comparative studies point not only to ongoing struggles between contending racial projects (synchrony), but also to the influence of historical patterns and legacies of race and racism (diachrony)¹⁰ in shaping the political confrontations of today. What is most important is not our social "science," but our explicit political commitment. That commitment, to democracy, racial (and intersectional) justice, and most centrally to the "grassroots," must inform and guide our work. We must imbue ourselves, as much as possible, in grass-roots antiracist movements across the hemisphere. Our research must advance beyond the many anthologies now available on comparative racial politics in the Americas. By focusing our energies on the requirements anti-racist oppositional groups, and indeed by taking direction and inspiration from them, we may be able to explore many of the new dynamics and dilemmas of hemispheric racial politics. A new mode of research might yet come into view, one not primarily oriented to academic outcomes, but instead committed to serving anti-racist resistance. Of course it is not possible to do only that; such committed research has to remain an open project, not a secret manual. By taking our leadership from the indigenous, the diasporic, the immigrant, the anti-colonial and intersectional oppositions of the Americas (and beyond), we anti-racist researchers may yet make an important contribution.

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WORKS CITED


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NOTES

1. The trade initially concentrated on -- and ultimately depopulated -- West African littoral regions. Eventually it encompassed large swaths of the sub-Saharan African interior uplands, as well as East African territory and the Indian Ocean African islands too. Thus was Africa swept up in the aftermath of the "discovery" of the Americas.

2. It is too soon to say if the concessions Piñera is making will have the effect of diffusing and incorporating the protests. As Gramsci writes:

   Undoubtedly the fact of hegemony presupposes that account be taken of the interests and the tendencies of the groups over which hegemony is to be exercised, and that a certain compromise equilibrium should be formed—in other words, that the leading group should make sacrifices of an economic-corporate kind. But there is also no doubt that such sacrifices and such a compromise cannot touch the essential; for though hegemony is ethical-political, it must also be economic, must necessarily be based on the decisive function exercised by the leading group in the decisive nucleus of economic activity (Gramsci 1971, 171; emphasis added).

3. The dams were a joint project of the Chinese-run company Sinohydro, the World Bank's International Finance Corporation, and Honduran company Desarrollos Energéticos (DESA). In the face of ongoing blockades and protests, the Chinese and World Bank withdrew their support for the project in 2013, but DESA continues to work on it, backed by the Honduran military and the government of kleptocratic Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández. See Lakhani 2017.

4. What constitutes a "native" is obviously a more complex issue than I can address here. Indeed, important arguments in political anthropology fundamentally question the autochthony-native linkage. See Clifford 1997.

5. A golpe on November 11, 2019 forced Morales to resign the presidency and flee Bolivia. The coup was the work of the usual suspects -- the US military and CIA, multinational mining
interests, and rightwing Christian groups. Not surprisingly for Bolivía, the golpistas and the new regime also displayed fierce and racist hostility toward indigenous peoples.

6. The Chávez family are pardos of Amerindian, Afro-Venezuelan and Spanish descent (Beaumont 2006).

7. Far from addressing the afterlife of slavery -- another way of saying "the fact of Blackness" -- and the iterative, ongoing nature of settler colonialism in the Americas, colorblindness was an elaborate dodge of that complex issue. In the US it had both a liberal version -- getting "beyond" race -- and a reactionary version -- "reverse racism," in which society has already gone "too far" in appeasing Black demands. In Latin America a parallel schism -- not unlike "colorblindness" -- has a long pedigree. On the left racism is denied in favor of an all-embracing class politics; on the right racism is embraced through ideologies of "Whitening," which have operated for centuries.

8. In the US, particularly under Obama, anti-racist movements went into abeyance, though never completely.

9. Many women's groups (especially Black women's groups in the big cities) now find themselves under threat from the Bolsonaro government. Especially after the assassination of the Black feminist (and LGBT) politician Marielle Franco on March 14, 2018 (Mesquita 2018), the specter of an intersectional, violent, and indeed fascist rightwing has haunted Black feminists in Brazil. This situation resembles and overlaps the one faced by Black youth and Black activists in favelas throughout the country.

10. The synchrony/diachrony dynamic is developed by Claude Levi-Strauss in his classic work The Savage Mind (1966).