



CHAPTER THREE

Latinos and Multiracial America¹

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Reframing Latino Identity for the 21st Century

“Multiracial Americans” is not a term I commonly use to refer to Latinos in my social justice education and antiracism organizing work. In the community and institutional settings where this work most often takes place, it’s hard enough to get people, whether in education, human services, law enforcement, the judicial system, religion, philanthropy, non-profits or government, to examine how they think about race and racism or to explore the powerful personal feelings and challenging social behaviors these ideas generate. It’s much harder to get these community and institutional leaders, policy makers and enforcers to consider how racism — race prejudice plus institutional power, or as journalist Bill Moyers more poignantly declares, “white supremacy enforced through state control” (*Moyers & Company*, 21 May 2014) — continues to operate within their own organizations and institutions, disproportionately and negatively impacting the Latino and Black American communities being served. In these racially diverse educational and organizing contexts designed to promote fundamental changes in institutional practices to foster racial equity, the conversation about Latinos mostly revolves around how “Latino” (or “Hispanic”) should be considered a “race”, a distinct racialized ethnicity, counted separately from whites, Black Americans, Native Americans, Asians and others, in order to account for and counter persisting racial inequities.

Even when working solely with Latino and Latina leaders, the main emphasis of the work is on how we, as Latinos—that is, people of Latin American origin in the United States—have historically come to be collectively racialized as a separate and distinct non-white racial group. This emphasis, deliberately aimed at challenging racism and creating racial equity, is focused on strengthening our collective identity as Latinos as a racial group in the context of the US. Toward such strategic purpose, to refer to Latinos as “multiracial” at the

¹ Quiñones-Rosado, R. (2016). *Latinos and Multiracial America. Race Policy and Multiracial Americans*. K. Odell Korgen (Ed.). The Policy Press, University of Bristol, UK.

outset typically only adds confusion to an already conceptually complex, emotionally charged, and politically challenging process.

It must also be noted that use of the term “Americans” to refer to the people, historically or currently, of the United States can be a source of irritation to many Latinos, particularly to many of us who have lived in Latin America. Many of us tend to affirm—often adamantly so—that “American” refers not specifically or uniquely to *estadounidenses*, that is, “United Statesians.” “American,” we insist, more accurately refers to *all* the peoples of The Americas, from La Patagonia all the way north to Canada and Alaska, and many of us resist the appropriation of the term by those who, herein, I shall refer to as US Americans.

Having clarified these points, I do find it very appropriate, and quite opportune, to examine layers of greater complexity concerning Latinos as “multiracial Americans” and Latino racial identity within the context of a book on multiracial peoples of the United States and critical perspectives on race policy. This exploration is particularly opportune at a time when antiracism organizers, institutional leaders and policy makers alike may be wondering, or perhaps worrying, what will be the impact of the rate and scope of Latino population growth over the coming decades — especially given the anticipation that Latinos, together with other People of Color, will become a racial “majority” in the United States within the next thirty years (Passel and Cohn, 2008; Quiñones-Rosado, 1998, 2010; US Census Bureau, 2014).

Exploration of some of the many complexities regarding Latinos is also timely as this demographic shift coincides with a process, already decades long, of reframing racial categories or, more precisely, a redefining of who is white in the United States. Once again in its history, this country’s race policy is in a process of being re-crafted by policy makers and implemented by institutional gatekeepers. A process of racial realignment is already being entertained by the media, the workplace, the marketplace, the body politic and the general population, impacting perceptions, conceptions, and judgments about who Latinos are and, more importantly, what will be our (new?) place in this racially stratified society in the 21st century.

The pluri-national, pan-ethnic, and racially-mixed peoples of Latin American origin in the US, historically racialized as “non-whites,” are being redefined, reclassified and reconfigured, resulting in the re-racialization of a significant portion of the Latino population as “whites.” Facilitated by current race policy, this process, if left unchallenged, may well

result in maintaining, if only on paper, a “white majority” throughout the century ahead. This racial reframing undermines on-going and hard-fought efforts to recognize and correct racial disparities in educational, health care, human services, law enforcement and criminal justice systems. It is a process that would help to maintain white supremacy—in our institutions and throughout our culture—for the foreseeable future.

As a social psychologist and member of the Latino community, I wonder—and often worry—not only how Latinos and Latinas will continue to collectively identify ourselves but, in some ways even more importantly, how we will be seen and related to by other racial groups in the US by mid-21st Century—particularly as driven by officially sanctioned, state controlled, race policy. More specifically, I wonder if Latinos, historically racialized as non-whites, will still be considered, referred to, and treated as “People of Color” in the decades ahead. Or, like other previously racialized ethnic groups—Irish, Italians, Jews and others—will Latinos, currently categorized by policymakers as Hispanic/Latino/Spanish ethnics *of any race* (Office of Management and Budget, 1997) also be collectively reassigned out of the racial middle (O’Brien, 2008) to a new place and status, within the historical binary of White and Black upon which race and racism have been constructed (Bonilla-Silva, 2010). In this chapter, then, I describe the current policy of re-racialization of Latinos and the effort to assimilate light-skinned Latinos into the white collective. I also argue for a race policy that supports a collective Latino identity.

Racializing and Re-racializing Latinos

Until very recently, Latinos have been the fastest growing segment of the US population and, at over 53 million people, they now comprise the country’s largest so-called “minority” group (US Census Bureau, 2011). What may not be commonly known, except to US Commerce Department demographers and planners in both public and private sectors, is that Latinos are an economic force with purchasing power of over \$1 trillion annually. Latinos are, and have always been, a vital part of the US labor force, as well as of the US military. Of particular interest to political operatives in both major parties, Latinos also help win elections. In 2012, there were over 23 million eligible Latino voters; with an additional 800,000 Latinos turning age 18 each year, Latinos are increasingly becoming a formidable political force (García, 2013).

As peoples of Latin American origin who live in the United States, Latinos are not members of any singular national, ethnic or racial group. We are pluri-national: we originate

from the twenty different sovereign Latin American nations, plus Puerto Rico, an unincorporated US territory. We are pan-ethnic: even within these individual nations, there are often many ethnicities or cultural groups. We are multi-racial, but not only at a macro-level in terms of the racial diversity within each nation and across the continent; we are also what I refer to as *multizo*² in terms of the large number of persons who are racially-mixed.

Contrary to perceptions that Latinos constitute a body of voluntary immigrants to the US, much like Europeans, though markedly unlike kidnapped and enslaved Africans, the fact is that people of Latin American origin are here as a result of the United States' centuries-long policies and strategies of territorial and economic expansion (González, 2000/2011). The vast majority of Latinos are of Mexican origin and, as an oft-repeated statement reminds us: Mexicans did not cross the border; the border crossed Mexicans. The US war on Mexico (1846-1848) resulted in the transfer to antebellum United States and its slave-based economy of almost half of Mexico's national territory. With the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the United States of America gained possession over the northern-most part of the United Mexican States: Texas, Colorado, Oklahoma and Kansas, New Mexico, Utah, Nevada, Arizona, and California (Acuña, 1988). And, of course, with possession of the lands, the US also gained control of its Mexican and Native American populations. In the case of Mexicans, the treaty granted US citizenship — a major concession to Mexico given that, as per the US Naturalization Act of 1790, citizenship was a status strictly reserved for whites, that is, people of European descent, which, clearly, Mexicans were not (Acuña, 1998; Rodríguez, 2000).

Like the northern Mexican territories, Puerto Rico is also land obtained through US military intervention in Latin America. In 1898, during the Spanish-American War, US armed forces invaded Cuba and Puerto Rico, Spain's last remaining colonies in The Americas, taking both islands as treasure of war.³ Nineteen years later, for geopolitical purposes and against the will of Puerto Rico's local civilian legislative body, the US imposed its citizenship upon its new subjects, conveniently allowing Puerto Rican men to be drafted into active duty

² From *mulato* (Spanish/white and Black) and *mestizo* (Spanish/white and Indigenous), yet inferring our multiraciality—presence of multiple races and history of racial mixing—beyond white (Spanish, other Europeans and Mid-Easterners), Black (African) and Amerindian (Taíno, Azteca, Maya, etc.) of the early colonial period, to include more recent immigrations to Latin America of Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, and others from around the globe.

³ In this war, Spain's colonies in the Pacific, Guam and The Philippines, were also invaded and occupied by US military forces, and transferred in the Treaty of Paris of 1898.

in the US armed forces in World War I (González, 2011; Rodríguez, 2005). And while the former Mexican states were eventually incorporated as states of the Union, Puerto Rico to this day remains an unincorporated territory—a *de facto* colony—of the United States.⁴

Beyond the addition of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans to the country’s population over these past 160-plus years, millions of other Latin Americans have since immigrated to the US. Most significantly, the US Latino community has also come to include people from Cuba, El Salvador, Dominican Republic and other parts of Central America and South America’s Caribbean nations, the regions of Latin America closest to and, historically, of greatest economic and geopolitical interest to the US. This steady flow of political and economic refugees from Latin America has continued as a consequence of US policy toward Latin America (González, 2011; US Census Bureau, 2011).

After its wars on Mexico and Spain’s colonies in the Caribbean, the US government directed its military might towards supporting US American economic interests throughout Latin America. To date, there have been over seventy-six US military interventions and countless covert actions in the region (Global Policy Forum, 2005). These interventions, together with US business and trade agreements with Latin American governments, have resulted in what journalist/historian Juan González refers to as the “harvest of empire”: on-going waves of immigrants, documented and otherwise, from Latin America to the US, forced out of their homelands by economic and political conditions created by US geopolitical and economic interests beyond its own national borders. These geopolitical strategies were implemented in addition to other specific immigration policies established by the US in cooperation with the Latin American governments and local business interests to actively recruit laborers to supplement labor shortages in US farms, factories and mines (González, 2011).

Of the 53 million Latinos in the US today, about 35 percent are foreign-born (Brown and Patten, 2014). The majority of Latinos are US citizens, born and raised in this country, most over multiple generations. Growth of the Latino population, currently driven more by births here than by immigration, is a trend that is expected to continue throughout the 21st century (Krogstad and López, 2014). Already having surpassed the African American

⁴ The 3.6 million citizens living in the colony cannot vote for US President and do not have congressional representation other than a non-voting “Resident Commissioner.” Puerto Ricans that join their 4 million compatriots of the diaspora on the US “mainland” do gain these basic civil rights, though only while officially resident of one the fifty states or the District of Columbia.

population in 2000, the US Census Bureau projects that by 2060 Latinos will comprise just under 30% of the population (US Census Bureau, 2014). “By the end of this century, a majority of the people living in the United States will trace their origins, not to Europe, but to Latin America,” suggests Juan González in the documentary based on his book (*Harvest of Empire* 2012).

In considering race policy, what must remain clear is that throughout this entire history, from pre-Civil War times to the present, people of Latin American origin in the US, collectively, were neither perceived nor treated as whites. Latinos, as a group, even when officially counted as white by virtue of treaty, law or policy, have suffered discrimination based on their perceived non-white racial backgrounds.⁵

Three important legal cases provide evidence of this race policy in regards to Mexicans. In 1897, Ricardo Rodríguez, a Mexican citizen of indigenous ancestry, petitioned the US Federal Court in San Antonio, Texas to become a US citizen, which was granted “despite the court’s belief he was not White,” a legal prerequisite for becoming a naturalized citizen until 1952. This rare exception was granted on the basis of US treaties with Spain and Mexico conferring citizenship to Mexicans in territories now belonging to the US (Haney-Lopez, 1996). In *Hernández v. Texas* (1954), the US Supreme Court found that Mexican Americans were “a class apart” or “other white,” while in *Cisneros v. Corpus Christi Independent School District* (1970) the US Federal Court found that “Mexican Americans, as an identifiable minority group based on physical, cultural, religious, and linguistic distinctions,” warranted protections against discrimination such as those extended to African Americans as per *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) (Allsup, 2010a,b).

The segregation of Mexican and Puerto Rican military personnel in the US Armed Forces from WWI through the Korean War, like that of Blacks and Asians, also stands as evidence of the *de facto* racialization of Latinos as People of Color (Oropeza, 2013). Moreover, the documented and undocumented stories of Latinos and Latinas segregated into urban *barrios* or bordertown *colonias*, exploited in factories, farm labor camps, hotel rooms or restaurants, mistreated and miseducated in English-only schools across the nation, stand as unimpeachable testimony to the daily reality of being identified as a racialized “other”: other than white.

⁵ In each census since the Mexican-American War until 1980, except for the 1930 Census, people of Latin American origin were to be counted as white, unless deemed of another race by census enumerators during in-person interviews (Rodríguez, 2000).

Yet in spite of this long history of racialization, race policy of the past decades has sought to de-racialize Latinos: to assert that Latinos are not to be viewed as members of a distinct *racial* group, but rather, should be considered members of an *ethnic* group who can be of any race. That is, as “Hispanic/Latino/Spanish,” we can be: White; Black/African American/Negro; American Indian/Alaska Native; Asian; and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. Or, at least, we can be *counted* as one of these races.

Racial Assimilation through Race Policy

The racial assimilation of People of Color has always been a concern in efforts to end racial oppression, to mitigate its negative impacts, and to create racial equity in US society. In contrast to *integration*, a group’s process of gaining admission into and occupying a legitimate place within society while maintaining their own group identity, *assimilation* is the process by which People of Color psychologically internalize patterns of thought and behavior of white culture while largely *replacing* their own cultural and racial identity. In a racist society such as ours, assimilation, whether that of individuals or of entire groups, requires that the distinct identity of those previously racialized as non-white is absorbed into whiteness. At the individual level, a Person of Color who assimilates *passes* for white. At the collective level, a People of Color who assimilate lose their distinct identity and their unique existence as a group *dissolves* into the white collective.

The assimilation of Latino/a individuals, and potentially our various collectivities, is another negative outcome of living within a culture of racial oppression and yet another challenge for antiracism and racial equity efforts. As a manifestation of internalized racial oppression, assimilation functions as a disruption within the process of racial identity development. This disruption can occur to a person born and raised within a Latino-identified family or, as is increasingly the case, to a child of mixed Latino and white parents (Vargas, 2015). Assimilation is a psychosocial phenomenon that occurs mostly beyond the conscious awareness of the individual, someone who is, to some degree, distanced from their cultural heritage, unaware of their people’s history, disconnected from family roots, or disassociated from community.

At this individual level, assimilation may be mitigated or prevented through any number of liberating and transformative psycho-educational strategies—a topic beyond the scope of this chapter. Yet, beyond efforts to mitigate or avoid the negative impact of assimilation on Latinos individually, it is fundamentally important and urgently necessary

that we examine the impact, if not question the purpose, of race policy on a larger scale and its role in assimilating many Latinos into the white collective, rather than integrating all Latinos into US society.

As antiracism organizers and racial equity advocates work in Latino communities and build multiracial alliances to transform institutional practices and change race policy, there are multiple layers of cultural complexity to consider. Many involve how dynamics of internalized racial oppression of Latinos in the US may interact with historical patterns of structural racism in Latin American contexts—cultural, sociological and psychological backdrops of Latino identity. For example, the cultural legacy of Spain’s racist caste system⁶ throughout Latin America, which like the historical racial paradigm of the US, also privileges people deemed to be white, is an issue that needs to be acknowledged and examined among Latinos. Addressing light-skin privilege, colorism, eurocentrism and their intersections with classism, sexism and nationalism within our Latin American cultures of origin and, then, how these in turn may relate to Latino assimilation and collusion with white supremacy in the US, remains a primary task of antiracism. Meanwhile, we must also examine the extent to which race policy supports or undermines efforts toward racial equity and the potential for true integration without racial assimilation into whiteness of all Peoples of Color.

Undoubtedly, an ambivalent national race policy that insists on dividing Latinos among multiple races and, then, re-racializing more than half of this segment of the population as white would surely appear to foster the process of Latino assimilation. On the one hand, current race policy ensures that Latinos are counted as a specific demographic separate from whites, African Americans and other racial groups, for the purpose of monitoring shifts in economic, political, cultural and social patterns of this group relative to other groups and toward establishing other relevant public policy. Implemented through institutions’ use of “Hispanic” and “Non-Hispanic” labels, this policy simultaneously tracks persons by the official “races”: White, Black, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. Census reports, for example, typically show complex population tables with three data sets: (1) total population; (2) Non-Hispanic population, and; (3) Hispanic population. An additional layer of complexity, and difficulty in using the information, is that numbers for people of “two or more races” also appear in each set. Yet,

⁶ Early in its colonization of The Americas, Spain created a system of *castas* that classified people, not only as Spanish, *indio* (indigenous) and *negro* (African), but also according to their “racial” mix: Spanish and *indio*, *mestizo*; Spanish and *negro* were *mulato*; *negro* and *indio*, *sambo*, etc. “Racial nomenclature was variable and dozens of labels existed,” according to Wade (2010:27).

on the other hand, when presenting total population by race in simplified form, the Census Bureau aggregates much of the “Hispanic” population to the “white” totals (US Census Bureau, 2014b). Such application of current race policy, intentionally or unintentionally, would maintain a numerically white majority well beyond 2042 when the demographic shift has been projected to occur. Besides ensuring that whites remain the racial majority and retain the “majority rules” rationale for their continued cultural dominance, privileged social status, and political-economic control,⁷ the ambivalent nature of current race policy would certainly serve to perpetuate structural racism and its corollary racial inequities.

“Hispanics” as a Policy of Racial Assimilation

The term “Hispanic” was adopted in the 1980s, a time when Latinos were identified as the fastest growing segment of the population and were, within a mere two decades, projected to numerically surpass the African American population. The adoption of this term also followed on the heels of the US Census Bureau moving away from a door-to-door census-taking process to using, starting with the 1960 Census, the national postal service to collect the raw data. A term more politically convenient, if not also seemingly more culturally fitting, than those previously used (such as Spanish, Spanish-language, and Spanish-surnamed) was deemed necessary as household occupants themselves, and no longer Census enumerators, would be the ones to identify and report the race(s) of household members and return completed forms by mail (González, 1999; Mora, 2014).

G. Cristina Mora, in *Making Hispanics* (2014), convincingly argues that government bureaucrats adopted the term “Hispanic” with the active involvement of Latino activists and corporate media. Each of these three sectors, Mora posits, needed a simple label that could potentially reconcile the many different national identities combined under it, distinct groups often at odds with one another. Each of them needed a term that could serve their particular interests: race policy in the case of government bureaucrats; regional and national politics for Latino activists; and demographically targeted marketing for the media and their corporate clients.

To be clear, the adoption of a term that sought to create a unifying identity for peoples of Latin American origin in the US, groups often at odds with each other, was indeed a political achievement. In large measure, it reflected a major shift of critical consciousness

⁷ Clearly, the South African apartheid experience serves as a reminder that a numeric majority is not required for white cultural dominance, privileged socio-economic status and state control.

spurred by decades—from the mid-1950s into the early 1980s—of African American civil rights and Black Power movements, then expanding into the liberation struggles of women, of American Indians, and of Latinos: the United Farm Workers, the Brown Berets, the Young Lords, and the Puerto Rican pro-independence movements, among others (Mora, 2014).

While “Hispanic” ostensibly served to unify Latinos, or at least, generate a greater sense of shared identity across Latino groups, it also advertently or inadvertently had other results in the general public psyche. To many other US Americans, the term gave people an acceptable way to collectivize Latinos, as well as a way to avoid calling us “Mexican” or “Puerto Rican,” identifiers that, in the context of post-civil rights racial narratives and emerging multicultural sensitivities of the 1980s and ‘90s, could have been considered “politically incorrect.” To many of us, while still proudly Mexican, Puerto Rican, or, increasingly, Cuban, Dominican, Salvadoran and other Latin American heritages, widespread adoption of the term “Hispanic” in popular and official discourse meant we were finally acknowledged as part of the fabric of US American society.

Yet, in the thirty-plus years since its ubiquitous adoption by public, private and non-profit sectors alike, the term “Hispanic” has also, in effect, reoriented the shared language of race throughout the general public. “Hispanic” seems to have redefined ways in which Latino identity has historically been collectively perceived and conceived, both by Latinos and by other groups. Though still resisted or outright rejected by many Latinos, widespread acceptance of the “Hispanic” label has, for all intents and purposes, functioned as a sociolinguistic reframe that has shifted US Americans’ collective subjective referents of this social identity group away from our actual origin—Latin America—stereotypically characterized as economically poor, politically unstable, ethically questionable, culturally backward, racially hybrid, and thus, decidedly, non-white. Instead, “Hispanic” has redirected our collective thinking toward Spain: European, cultured and, ostensibly, white. In effect, the pervasive use of the term “Hispanic” has not only reoriented the racial narrative of US society; it has misled it, placing it at the service of white supremacy (Acuña, 1988; Quiñones-Rosado, 1998).

It is important to consider the role of the US government in advancing the misleading reframing of Latino identity.⁸ For the Census 2000, the US Department of Commerce,

⁸ In *Making Hispanics* (2014), Mora narrates how media and Latino advocacy organizations also played a key role in advancing this reframing process.

through its Census Bureau, would remind us that, according to official race policy as established by the US Office of Management and Budget (1997), “Hispanic/Latino/Spanish” was not to be considered a *race*, but rather, an *ethnicity*.⁹ In order to reduce the high percentage of Latinos that typically would choose “Some Other Race” in the absence of a Latino category (Rodríguez, 2000), Census responders would first indicate if they were “Hispanic/Latino/Spanish,” and if they answered “Yes”, they would then specify their national origin: Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, etc. Clearly stating that “people who identify their origin as Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish may be of any race” (Census, 2013), the next questionnaire item directed members of this *ethnic* group to identify their *race* based on one of five categories: White; Black/African American/Negro; American Indian/Alaska Native; Asian; and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander.

To be sure, in both the 2000 and 2010 Census processes, Latinos were, indeed, counted as a separate group, albeit not a racial one. Then, like today, the Federal government and its agencies needed data sets specific to this growing demographic sector, information that, in turn, can be used by policymakers and implementers in health, education, public welfare, housing, transportation, industry, retail, banking and finance, and every social, cultural, political and economic institution and system. This information is gathered presumably in order to track health, income, wealth and other indicators of well-being in our communities. And this data continues to be collected, in large measure, because of the activism of Latino advocacy groups and, more recently, the lobbying of Hispanic for-profit interest groups.

Yet, this counting and tracking of Hispanic/Latinos—still necessary because of the legacy and persistence of structural racism—is done in a way that invisibilizes the reality that Latinos have always been and still are a racialized ethnicity, a group perceived and conceived in the collective US consciousness as non-white, as People of Color. This data collection is done in a way that, in effect, steers many Latinos into being counted as white. By separating race from ethnicity as distinct categories, and asking Latinos to identify *both* their Latino

⁹ I would argue that *Hispanic/Latino/Spanish* is a racialized pan-ethnic category, a sociopolitical construct, in effect, no different than *white* (racialized pan-ethnics of European origin), *Black* (racialized pan-ethnics of African origin), *Native American* (racialized pan-ethnics indigenous peoples), *Asian*, and other identity groups commonly referred to as *races* in US society.

ethnicity and their race, the percentage of Hispanic/Latinos who were counted as white by the Census increased from just under 48% in 2000 to 53% in 2010.¹⁰

Conclusion

The US Census Bureau and numerous systems and institutions, public and private, will surely continue to count Latinos and track our outcomes in education, health, law enforcement, judicial and penal systems, employment, income, and wealth for the immediate, and perhaps, for the foreseeable future. However, the historic ambivalence of race policy toward Latinos and the apparent attempt to racially assimilate large segments of the Latino population through current policy do not serve the well-being and development of this community, nor that of US society overall.

A standard and uniform policy-based practice to classify/categorize Latinos as a racial group, albeit a racialized ethnicity, is important and still necessary in order to clearly and accurately document and track over time real outcomes of institutional practices. A new such policy across states and across agencies by federal mandate would ensure a more accurate count of Latinos and racial disparities in the treatment and outcomes of Latinos and all People of Color relative to whites.

The current historical moment of multiracial identity inquiry could provide us with an excellent opportunity to develop common identity and greater sense of solidarity among Latinos across national and ethnic identities. For example, while issues concerning immigration impact Mexican and Central American communities differently than South American or Caribbean immigrant communities, there appears to be pan-Latino activism, leadership and solidarity in the national movement for immigration reform.

Of course, we cannot assume that broadly shared historical and cultural paradigms of pan-ethnic multiracial Latinos are sufficient to organize us to struggle for greater racial equity. Indeed, acknowledgment of our particular national, cultural identities is often a prerequisite to deeper conversations about racial identity and our experiences with racism, whether within our own communities or relative to others in the larger US context. Knowledge and familiarity with the layered complexities of national, cultural and race identity—further textured by class, educational level, citizenship or immigration status,

¹⁰ Please bear in mind that what I am saying is that many Latinos are being added to the “white population count,” not that Latinos *count, matter* or *have value* in the same way that whites do in order to actually be considered white in US society.

geography, age, generation, time in the US, marriage with US Americans and their children—help facilitate trust-building necessary for movement-building. Our experiences of racial oppression, whether through interpersonal micro-aggressions or institutional exclusion, exploitation, or other negative outcomes, are not necessarily the starting point of organizing among Latinos. Often, it's in finding common ground within or between our culture(s) that can lead to reminding people—or informing them for the first time—of a long history of shared struggle against racism and bring us together.

This is also an opportune moment to revitalize a once strong sense of common cause with Black Americans and other communities of color in the US, including those who identify as multiracial, as we together develop antiracist social policy and liberating practice for cultural transformation. An on-going challenge faced by antiracism educators and organizers, particularly in the context of the US, is the persistent fragmentation of our antiracism analysis, efforts and strategies. In many places we observe, Latinos rarely participate in antiracism efforts they may perceive as pertaining or relevant only to African Americans, while relatively few African Americans seem to express much interest in efforts perceived to be geared toward Latinos. This fragmentation, a clear expression of internalized racism and lateral distrust resulting from generations of racism, is evident even within our own national antiracism networks, which have yet to articulate a multiracial vision or strategy that directly address attempts to reconfigure—once again—white racial identity and assimilate large segments of the Latino population into the white collective.

Antiracism educators organizers, Latino or otherwise, cannot and should not assume that the process of assimilation into the white racial collective of at least 50 million people—half of the projected 100 million multiracial Latinos in the US by mid-century—is an inevitable, or even a likely, outcome. From where we stand, among members and leaders within this multiracial national movement against racism, we cannot and should not assume that we, collectively, are destined to repeat what has happened to other racialized ethnic groups re-racialized into whiteness. They did not have the benefit of knowing what we now know. Our participation in the articulation and promotion of an antiracist race policy is crucial. Promoting a combined racial and national origin category on the US Census is an important part of that effort.

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