

CULTURE AND SOCIETY

RACE, ETHNICITY, AND IDENTITY

Prof. Joseph A. Torres-González
Spring 2022



READINGS TO BE DISCUSSED (RACE AND ETHNICITY)

- García, Justin. 2020. “Race and Ethnicity” in in *Perspectives: An Open Invitation to Cultural Anthropology*. Ed. Nina Brown, Laura Tubelle de González, and Thomas McIlwraith. Pp. 204-230. (Open Educational Resource)
- Hall, Stuart. 2015. “Cultural Identity and Diaspora.” Williams, Patrick and Laura Chrisman (eds.). *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, 392-403. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Flores, Juan, & Jiménez-Román, Miriam. (2009). “Triple-consciousness? Approaches to Afro-Latino culture in the United States” *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies*, 4(3): 319-328.
- **Music Video:** Joe Arroyo y la Verdad – La Rebelión (1986)

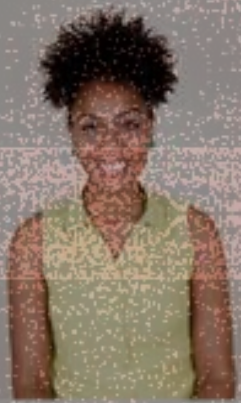
READINGS TO BE DISCUSSED (RACE AND ETHNICITY)

- **Recommended Readings - Further reading**
- De Gobineau, Arthur, *The Inequality of Human Races* (excerpt) - Chapter 8 “Identity Construction #4: Nation” in *Reframing Latin America: A Cultural Theory Reading of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*. Eds Erik Ching, Christina Buckley, Angélica Lozano-Alonso, 2007, 134-143.
- Firmin, Joseph-Anténor. “Introduction”, “Chapter 1: Anthropology as a Discipline”, “Chapter 8: Mestissage and Equality of Races” and “Conclusions” in *The equality of human races: positivist anthropology*, 2002, xi-xlvi, 1-14, 203-224, 443- 451.

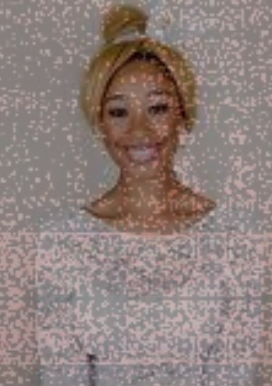
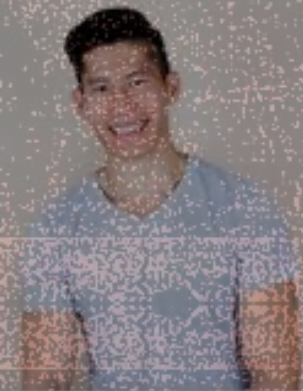
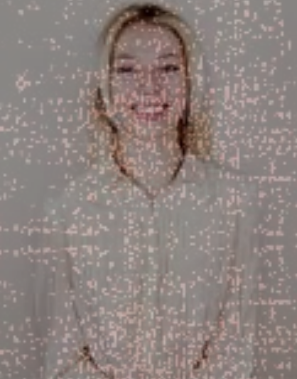
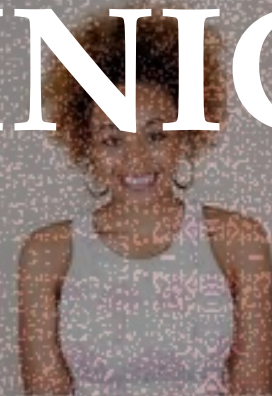
READINGS TO BE DISCUSSED (RACE AND ETHNICITY)

- The region of the open veins – Eduardo Galeano
- Global mobilities - Mimi Sheller - people, things, diasporas, foodstuffs, ideas.
- The Black Atlantic – Paul Gilroy





RACE & ETHNICITY



RACE AND ETHNICITY - A FEW GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What is race? How is it different from ethnicity? Why is it a social construct?
- What are the origins of this category of classification?
- How is power and colonialism related to the establishment of a racial hierarchy?
- How did Anthropology respond (or continues to debate) the concept of race?
- How does DeGobineau use the term “degenerate”? How is it related to race? (136-143)
- How did Anténor Firmin challenge DeGobineau’s theory? How is Firmin’s proposal an early work of Pan-Africanism? How does he conclude that “all races are equal”?

RACE AND ETHNICITY - A FEW COMMENTS

- Phenotype - physical differences (body, skin color)
- Social construction of race (Historical contexts, meaning, perception, importance people assign to physical appearance)
- Race associated with bloodlines, ancestry, “Pureza de sangre” (Iberian Colonialism, associated with religion)
- Anti-Blackness in the Iberian World - associated with Moorish ancestry.
- Hypergamy - cleaning bloodlines by marriage.
- “Castas” - quality.
- Adding social class markers, “decent people” vs “vulgar people”
- Fluidity of these terms and concepts (think of identity)

Race

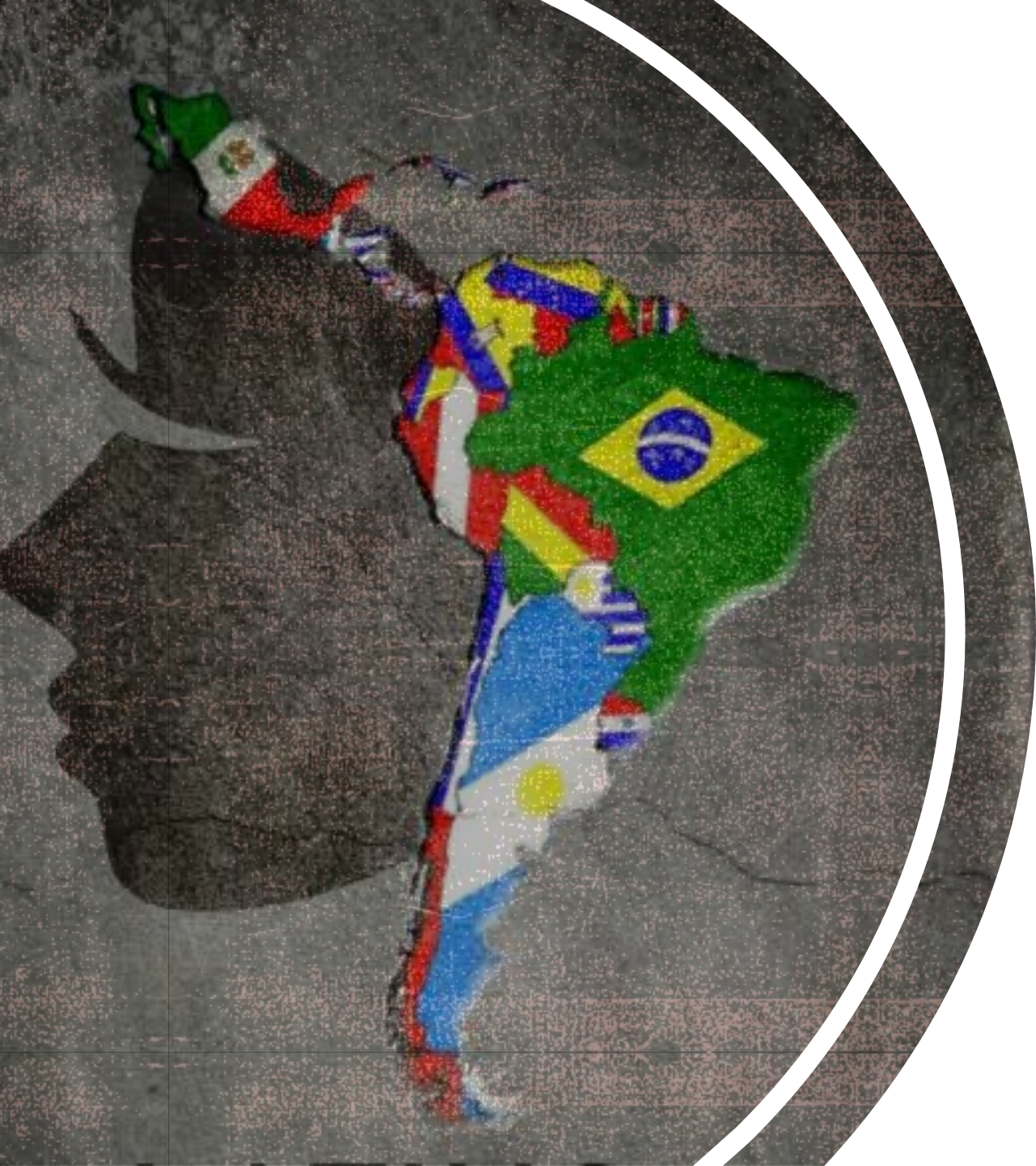


- "Promote the illusion that racial categories are natural, objective, and evident" (García, 2019)
- Racial classification systems emerged from the natural sciences: Taxonomy, Botany
- Used to sustain a hierarchy, and to explain (to some point) the degradation of skin colors.
- Cline - refers to the differences in the traits that occur in populations across geographical areas.
- Melanin- pigment produced in skin cells (natural sunblock) protecting the skin against damage
- It is also a social concept "specific social relations and historical context in which they are embedded"

Ethnicity



- Ethnic groups - claims an identity based on cultural characteristics and a shared ancestry.
- Specific language, religions practiced, distinct patterns of dress, diet, customs, holidays, and other markers o
- Some ethnic groups are geographically located in specific regions (Example: Kurds in Turkey, Basques in Spain)
- Ethnicity is fluid and can change across time. It is tied with identity
- Ethnic groups and ethnicity (like race) are socially constructed identities created in particular moments in history under particular social conditions.

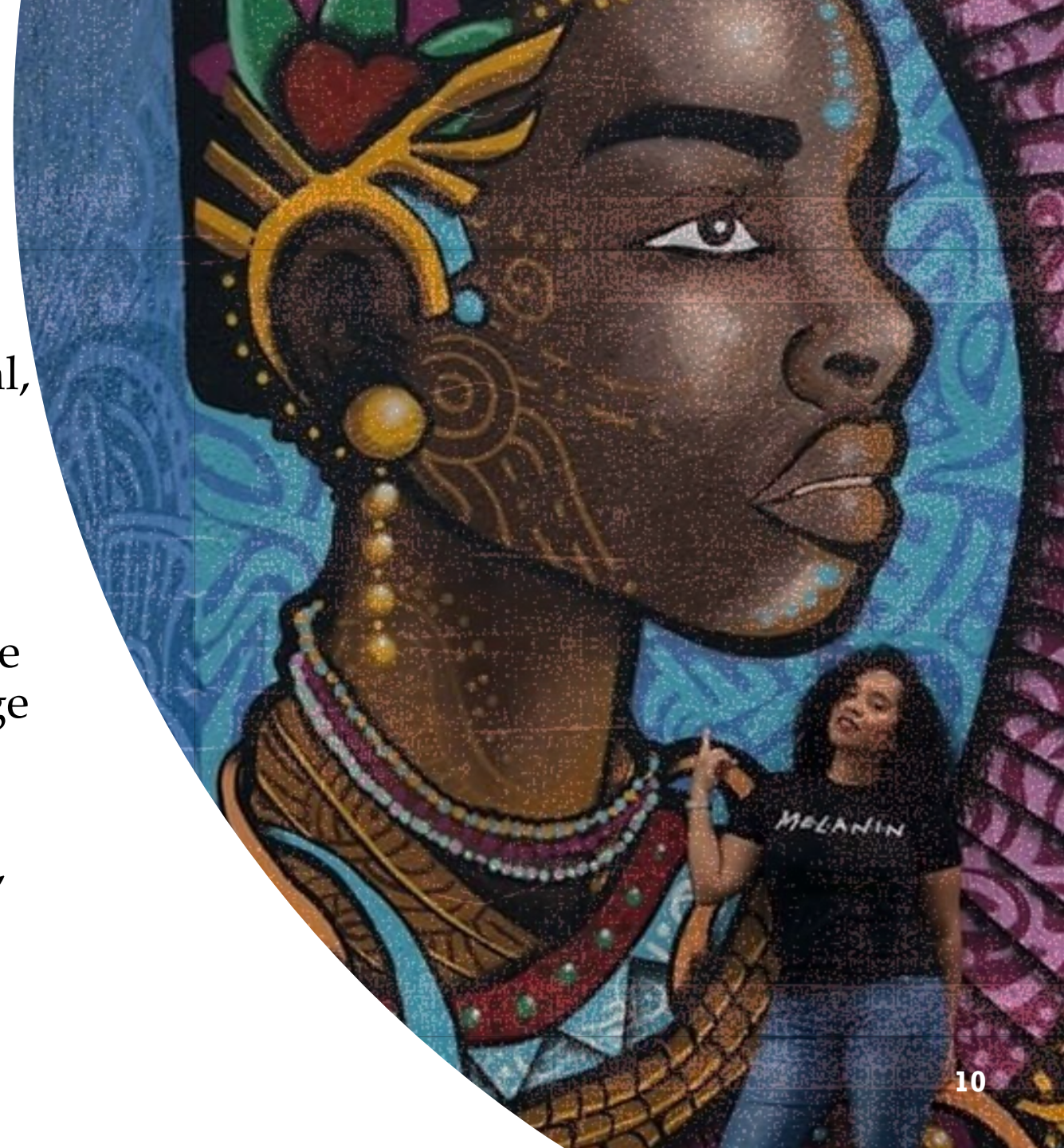


HOW IS RACE AND ETHNICITY CONCEPTUALIZED IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN?

- “Because colonial rule in the Americas relied largely on the exploitation of the labor of indigenous habitants and African slaves, determining and regulating who corresponded to the subjugated Indian and African slave classes was a key component of the European colonial rule” (Sanabria, 2007: 111)
- Existence of “intermediate” categories that overlap with Black or White, Indian and White, among others.
- **Mestizo** - complex and fluid category between Indian and White
- **Mulatto**- complex category between Black and White.

HOW IS RACE AND ETHNICITY CONCEPTUALIZED IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN?

- These categories in Latin America and the Caribbean also are intertwined with physical, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds.
- Racial classifications are different from society to society points to the social construction of racial differences.
- How racial categories are recognized and the meanings attached to these categories change over time and in different social contexts.
- **“Racial classification is complicated in Latin America by occupational differences, wealth, education, among other factors”**
(113)



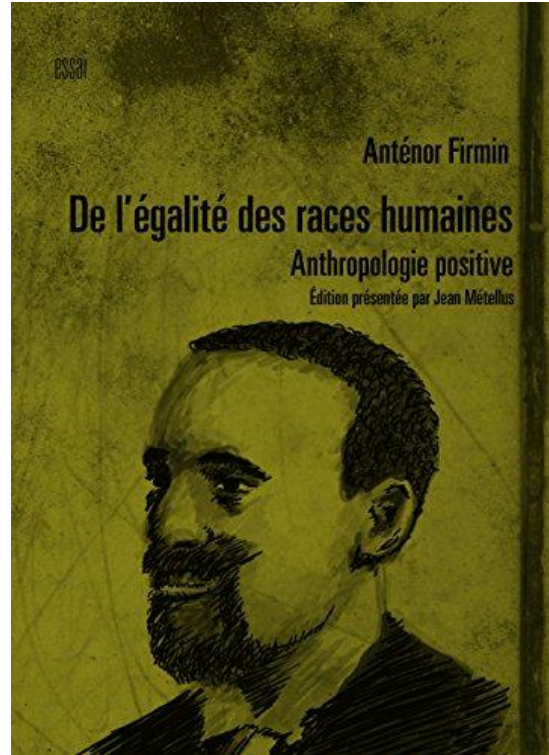
HOW IS RACE AND ETHNICITY CONCEPTUALIZED IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN?



Torres-González, J.A.

- **Racial passing** – social process which an individual comes to move from one position on a racial hierarchy to another.
- Example: Appearance change – hair styles, dress styles, differences from family and friends.
- **Racial democracy**- offering marginal Black populations avenues for social inclusion and a language with which to challenge for equal positions in society.
- **The concept of race is largely a result of colonial expansion.**
- **Relationship with identity and identification.**
- **Indigenismo** – offers an alternative explanation rooted in histories of subjugation and the lack of access to education.
- In these cases, race and culture are both intertwined (Questions of belonging to the nation, inclusivity, part of the national identity)

JOSEPH-ANTÉNOR FIRMIN



Joseph- Anténor Firmin 1850-1911 (Haitian anthropologist, journalist, politician, scholar
The Equality of Human Races)

Minister of Finance, Commerce, and Foreign Affairs (1896-1897)

Minister of Foreign Affairs and Agriculture (1889)

<https://journals.openedition.org/gradhiva/302>

Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban, « Anténor Firmin and Haiti's contribution to anthropology », *Gradhiva*, 1 | 2005, 95-108.

Université Anténor Firmin (Haiti)
www.unafhaiti.net/

De Gobineau



- Essentialist- respond to the appeal of a national essence. “Rudimentary type of organization”
- They believe certain people share certain nationalist traits which are almost like bloodlines. They determine who they are.
- Defined the nation in racial terms – national spirit could be identified. Idea of a “racial purity”
- This was used to promote the "real truth" of how people should organize themselves.
- Degeneration- prove the existence of a racial hierarchy. Race is collapsed to the nation and both are inherited through bloodlines.

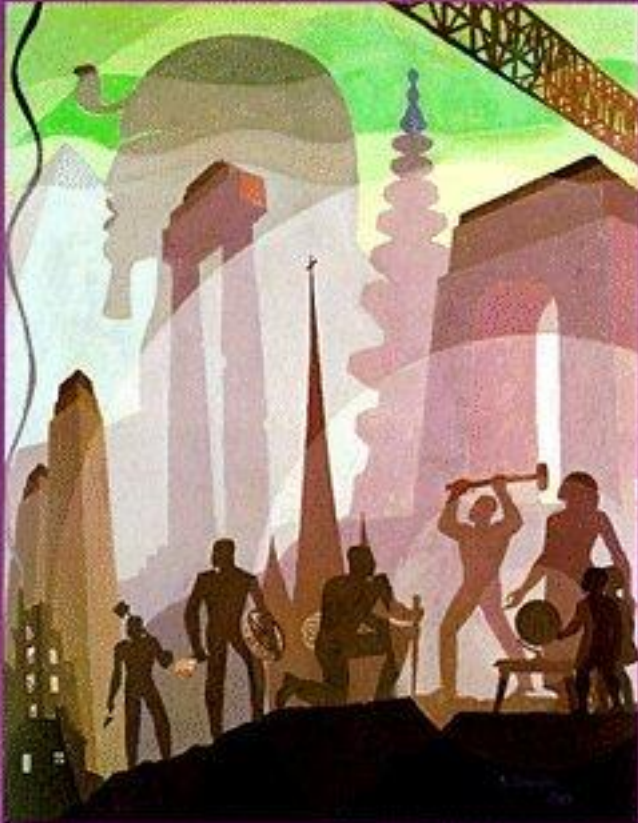
Firmin



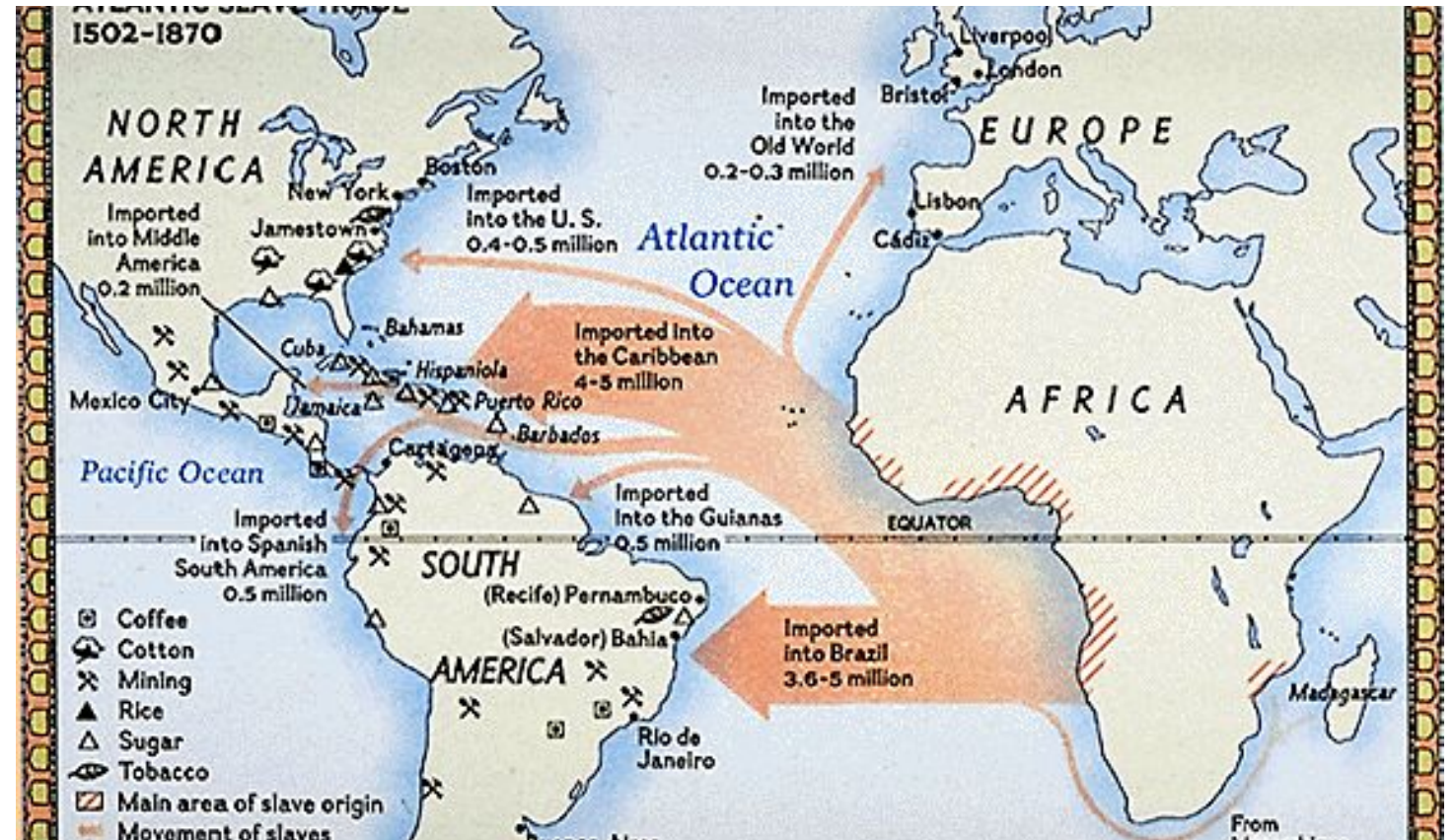
- Firmin presents a counter argument against De Gobineau presenting the theories of human difference and variability.
- Variability is linked to phenotype, varying climates and geographical location (Melanin)
- He used an Anthropological approach to refute De Gobineau's theory. (History and archaeological evidence)
- Firmin theorizes differences based on cultural and material traits, not on racial hierarchies.
- 1885 - before Boasian Anthropology existed.

THE BLACK ATLANTIC

Modernity and Double Consciousness



PAUL GILROY



WHAT IS THE BLACK ATLANTIC?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aj_7mOW3BKs



“THE BLACK ATLANTIC
AT WORK” -WITH MUSIC

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PDIY4OzgTWs> Pete Rodríguez 1966 - Latin Bugalú (NYC - R&B, Soul, Mambo, Son Montuno - Cuba)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xTINMmZKwpA> Trap - Reggaetón, Southern Hip-Hop, Dembow, Salsa beats (PR, DR, Colombia, Jamaica)

CULTURAL IDENTITY AND DIASPORA (S. HALL)

- Stuart Hall with his chapter *Cultural Identity and Diaspora*, puts into attention the importance of *positionality*, or how what he calls “the positions of *enunciation*”:

“From where does he/she speak? Practices of representation always implicate the positions from which we speak or write.” (392)

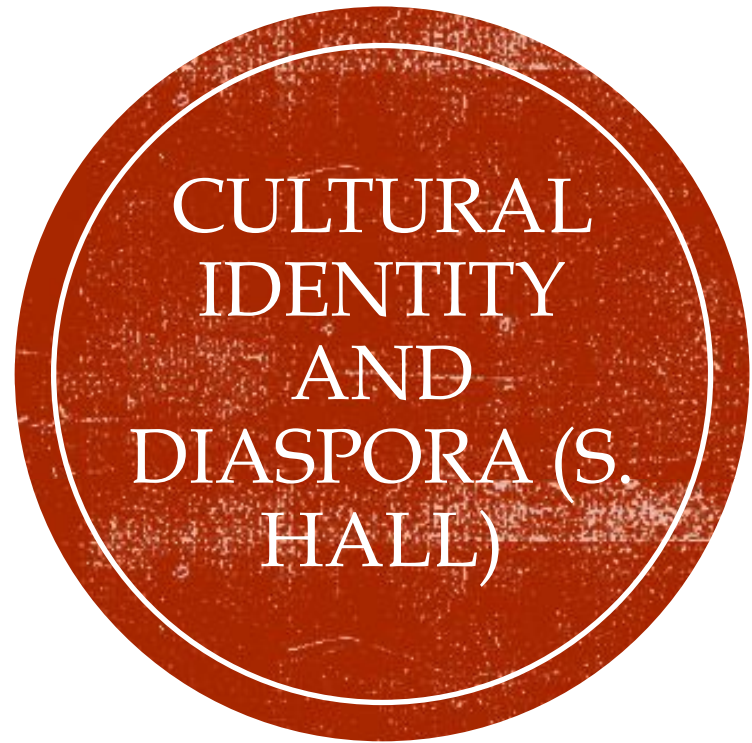
- This is very important when creating his central argument around *identity*:

“*Identity* is not transparent or unproblematic as we think... new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a ‘production’ which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation...” (392).



CULTURAL IDENTITY AND DIASPORA (S. HALL)

- In other words, *identity* is a central concept for Hall when theorizing the Diaspora, especially when he refers to it as something that is in constant flux and change and based on the “retelling of the past” (393).
- *Identity* is a “becoming” as well as a “being”, using Hall’s words, meaning that is a process that has been shaped by colonial experiences, slavery, and it is a process that is never finished nor complete.



How can we define cultural identity?

- Producing and consuming culture at the same time.
- Cultural identity: similar but also different. (Think of shared histories)
- The axis of similarity and continuity.
- Identity is as much about the future as the past and it's not a fixed essence.
- Three presences that Hall identifies in the Caribbean: Presence Africaine, Presence Europeenne, and Presence Americain

