

The Origins and Development of Racism and Eugenics in Latin America

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Abstract

This article aims to describe historical population changes in Latin America – the crisis of indigenous groups, the arrival of enslaved Africans and, later, of free European immigrants to replace both the indigenous and Africans in the labor market during the colonization, and the subsequent propagation of modern racism and eugenics in the new independent republics as a result of the change from the ancient to modern regimes of slavery in Europe. The article adopts the perspective of discrimination and racism as constructs built on human interactions in contexts of unequal power relations between individual and societies, based in beliefs, values and ideologies, and reproduced by policies and institutions in almost all societies, particularly in Latin America, favoring white population and excluding indigenous and Afro-descendants for centuries. The method describes and analyzes the historic origin, dynamic, and evolution of indigenous and African discrimination based on a literature review of the predominant concepts, visions and discourses on slavery, racism and eugenics, and on their cultural and scientific expressions and interrelationships in Latin America. This review focuses on the analysis of the historic processes, policies and networks through which eugenicism originated in modern Europe and the United States and the results show the various mechanisms by which it spread throughout Latin America reinforcing discrimination and underpinning the disadvantages of indigenous and black populations. The results also articulate the arguments regarding how slavery and eugenics reproduced and strengthened the persistent racism against indigenous and Afro-descendants in the region, as an ideological obstacle to economic and human development, and to achieving universal citizenship and rights, as well as democratic and human rights values.

Keywords: eugenics, racism, slavery, ideology, Latin America

1. Introduction

Discrimination, social inequalities and racism today are treated as a problem of blacks, indigenous people, gypsies, the disabled, women, LGBT groups, sex workers, the poor, and immigrants. However, discrimination and racism are built on human interactions, and on unequal power relations between individuals and societies. They are historical

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constructs of beliefs, values, ideologies, policies, institutions, attitudes and practices reproduced from the different positions assumed by social groups with unequal powers, rights and privileges and which, precisely because of these differences, establish the systematic favoring of certain people and groups, and the exclusion of others (Brown, 1995; Vala & Lopes, 1999). For centuries, slavery has been one of the systems that reproduce inequalities among human beings, through allowing some groups or populations to force other groups to work without rights and freedoms.

This article aims to describe the persistent reproduction of inequalities in Latin America from a historical perspective. Since the conquests, and through four centuries of colonization, at least three phases of historical population changes occurred in Latin America – the crisis of indigenous groups, the arrival of enslaved Africans and, later, the arrival of free Europeans immigrants to replace both the indigenous and Africans, in the labor market. And, at the beginning of European and United States modern racism and eugenics—an European and United States effort to justify the change from an ancient to modern slavery regime.

1.1 Conquest, Colonization, Indigenous Slavery and Population Crisis

Slavery was universal in all the ancient regimes. From the classical empires of Greece and Rome to those of the Aztecs, Mongols and African kings, wars were common, and defeated enemies were enslaved and forced to work for their conquerors.

Between the 10th and 16th centuries AD, until the Middle Ages and the discovery of America, Western Europe used Eastern Europe as the main source of enslaved people. The word "*Slav*" comes from Slavs, or "*people of Eastern Europe*", the majority of slaved in Europe, who were considered "*barbarians*" due to their cultural differences. This ancient slavery was not based on the distinction of skin color as most of the slaved were white people, there was no record of prejudice against Africans or other groups due to their skin color, but ethnocentrism and cultural discrimination (Klein & III, 2007).

Today, this ancient worldwide slavery is often omitted, as if it only occurred in ancient Africa. This distortion of the history of the slavery by Europeans and other ancient civilizations is used to justify the new regime of slavery that emerged in Modernity – the hunting of Africans by European traders, and their forced removal from their homelands to work in the New World. This effort aims to mitigate the role of Europe in the trafficking of Africans, assuming that it would be a pre-existing experience, legitimized and acceptable in ancient African societies. This assumption denies the origin of modern slavery, characterized by human trafficking, the inferiorization of human beings due to their skin color, their sale as commodities, inhuman treatment, the construction of the modern concept of races and racism in Modern Europe, and the international legitimation and dissemination of Eugenics as a pseudoscience, while Europe was consolidating the values of equality, fraternity and liberty for all their citizens (Selfa, 2002).

In America, the conquest adopted strategies of war, slavery and over-exploitation of the indigenous peoples, resulting in massive reductions in their populations and even the extinction of some groups. According to the censuses of tributaries and inspection visits of the Spanish government. Before the Conquest, the indigenous population of Hispanic

America corresponded to 8-10 million and, 80 years after Columbus discovered America (50 years after the destruction of the Aztec capital and 40 years after the assassination of the Inca emperor), this population decreased to around 2 million. In a few decades, the Azteca population decreased from 2.7 to 1.4 million, the Inca population decreased from 1.3 to 0.9 million in 1600. In most of Central America and all the Caribbean, indigenous people were exterminated (for example, about 1 million of Tainos were driven to extinction in 1550). The Gulf of Mexico and the coast of Peru were depopulated in the middle of the century, the inhabitants were killed or forced out by malaria or by the Conquered wars (Livi-Bacci, 2006).

A multicausal set of factors explains this population crisis: Biological components included epidemics of new diseases imported from Europe and environmental components included the destruction of previous indigenous infrastructures, deforestation and the new livestock being brought in from Europe. Political factors such as wars and the loss of freedom and autonomy had a severe effect, as did social components like the dislocation and rupture of communities and forced migration. Economic factors like changes in production patterns, exploitation and confiscation of work, lands and tributes played an important part, along with demographic components which included the kidnapping of women to breed with their conquerors and the separation of indigenous couples, families and communities. Migration was also forced upon the indigenous people by the conquistadors, so that they could work in mines, construction, and perform other activities, leading to escapes and suicides.

Friar Bartolomé de las Casas's *Brief history of the destruction of the Indies. 1542-1552*, emphasizes the cruelty of Spaniards and the horrific violence perpetrated by conquerors and *encomenderos*, as well as the cruel wars and hard servitude against men and animals, a version named "The Black Legend". As new laws were established in 1542 and the *encomienda* system changed, Spain rejects this version, and explains away the population crisis with epidemics, considering that in some decades, the diseases introduced by Europeans and subsequent contact between tribes would alone kill about 95% of the native American population, and it became the exclusive reason to explain a decrease from the original Americas' population of 100 million to 5 million. However, epidemiologists consider it unlikely or impossible that chickenpox would disseminate in few decades across the continent, from Mexico to South America, with such a massive impact. Chickenpox epidemics would not be considered the main or the only culprit in the South American population catastrophe, particularly during the reign of Inca Emperor Huayan Capac, when there were thousands of tribute payers (Livi-Bacci, 2006).

According to Livi-Bacci (2006), *"it is true that there was a demographic collapse, disease is certainly a probable explanation (crises in 1546 and 1558), but also wars, devastations, famines and a myriad of causes are combined... Spanish armies were small, but they brought indigenous auxiliaries for transport, service, and support, they plundered fields and cut supplies from opposing factions, and they took revenge on hostile tribes or natives who supported the enemy. After a quarter century of uninterrupted wars, the country was devastated and exhausted. There was much forced migration of entire tribes, and natives also left their mountain hiding places and returned to their people, farms, and plantations, making their plantations near the roads and no longer left, as they used to do with the Spanish."*

For one to two centuries after the initial contact, the epidemic continued to continuously devastate the natives, who were no longer an immunologically virgin population, since two out of three people were susceptible – and the high density of the population increased the risk of infection even when the sick were isolated. The epidemic was no less destructive than wars and over-exploitation, and indigenous American deaths cannot be explained by a single causal paradigm, as disasters were complex and due to interrelated causes, and varied between groups. In the Caribbean, the violent conquest and the extinction of indigenous people was firstly due to chickenpox, but the Black Legend also impacted them. The murder of indigenous people, subjugation, slavery and forced labor, the destruction of communities and forced migration, kidnapping of women of reproductive ages, and the search for gold worsened the impact of the conquest, with increased mortality and weakened reproduction. That included the coast of Venezuela and the complete and rapid extermination of natives occurred within a few decades (Livi-Bacci, 2006).

In the Gulf of Mexico and the Pacific coast of Peru, the depopulation was faster than in Mesoamerica (Mexico and Guatemala), or in the high Andes, and has multiple explanations – the pathogenic burden in harsh environments negatively interacted with new diseases imported from Europe; the arrival of the mosquitos in Mexico spread malaria, and on the Pacific coast of Peru, in the valleys surrounded by mountains, in which the natives lived. In the same occupied areas, there were destructive efforts of European invasion, appropriation of the best lands and the irrigation systems, which deprived the indigenous people of resources for survival.

Emigration and high mortality with low reproduction rates caused depopulation. Before that there was violent expulsion of natives, weakening their ability to survive and reproduce, as occurred in Brazil, where the Portuguese occupied the east coast. In the Guaraní Missions in Paraguay and Brazil, social change applied in accordance with Jesuit rules brought stability, monogamy, and, without contact with Europeans and Africans, reinforced community solidarity which minimized conflicts and promoted high reproduction rates. Despite the new diseases, the population grew throughout the seventeenth century. Central Mexico and Peru are similar cases, but the burden of the conquest was greater in Peru, with large wars and conflicts, and also higher taxes, along with imposed resettlement. (Livi-Bacci, 2006).

The social disruption, over-exploitation and epidemic diseases resulted in severe shortages in the indigenous labor force, an economic obstacle for the European development, which was highly dependent on the exploitation of American colonies, lands and populations (Darien, 1995; Selfa, 2002). From the first decades of the 14th Century, to supply the New World with labor force, since the first decades of the 14th Century, European kingdoms promoted the trafficking of enslaved Africans as an alternative that became a highly profitable business mainly for Britain, Spain and Portugal (Klein & III, 2007).

1.2 The Arrival of Africans in Europe and America

Even before the discovery of America, European-African relations were based on negotiations between leaders from both continents, with some free Africans living in Europe, while others were involuntarily settled in the Iberian Peninsula. In the context of the Crusades, in 1452, the Portuguese King was authorized by Pope Nicolas V to enslave the “Saracens, pagans and any other unbelievers” who resisted conversion to Catholicism. In particular, those living on the southern coast of Africa were considered the enemies of Christ and a modest slave trade existed on the western coast of Africa.

The Portuguese started a small volume of trading with some African tribes for slaves to work in factories and trading posts in urban areas alongside Jews, Arabs, and Christians. The Afro-Iberian population and their communities increased and achieved 50 percent habitation of several neighborhoods in Lisbon and Seville, which was known as the "New Babylon. “The African populations became so socially and politically important that in 1475 the Crown appointed Juan de Valladolid, its royal servant and mayoral, to represent Seville's Afro-Iberian community. Churches and charities catered to its spiritual and material needs” (Darien, 1995).

Some of these free African-Iberians participated in the Conquest as free Iberians, and they were recognized by indigenous people as conquistadors. In Chile, the African conquistadors Juan Valiente, Juan Beltran and Juan Fernandez took part in the conquest, as well as the Catholic Juan Garrido in Mexico. After the discovery of America, the European-African relationships changed to the trafficking of millions of enslaved Africans to the New World, a commerce that continued for over three hundred years (Darien, 1995).

This new system of slavery through massive human trafficking was completely distinct and cruel, never having been seen in previous forms of slavery. Africans were treated as inhuman, in contradiction to the legitimized European and Catholic values (Selfa, 2002; Klein & III, 2007). Catholic values were disseminated by the pioneer free and converted African-Iberians who arrived in America and participated in the conquest to save indigenous souls in the name of Christ.

As a result of the massive African slave trade, in some Latin American countries there were 15 Africans to one European, and in colonial Buenos Aires, Lima and Mexico City, almost one half of the population were Africans. These proportions corresponded to the economic and labor needs in each region, including pearl fishing, mining, carpentry, sharecropping, domestic chores, and mining in Mexico, Argentina, and Chile – substantially different from the slavery in the plantation economies of the Caribbean and Brazil. Each slavery regime had specific laws and actual processes for manumission, inter-race marriages, and the treatment of slaves that depended on local practices rather than on laws or abstract codes of conduct (Darien, 1995).

1.3 Modern Slavery in Europe and North-America and the Emergence of Racism.

In the United States, until the end of the 17th century, slave labor of already operated on a large scale up to the end of the 17th century, but, until then, slavery was not related to the color of the worker, but only to the lowest cost of his labor, since the cost of

bringing white servants and contracted European migrants, became much greater than the cost of trafficking Africans. The African slave trade was a large commodity business, more advantageous than the servitude of Europeans. While this economic advantage lasted, there was no rigid racial division of labor in the colonies and, until the 17th century, there were even many joint escapes and revolts by white servants and enslaved blacks, which provoked the elite's fear of a multiracial revolt (Selfa, 2002).

From the 18th century onwards, the American Revolution and the French Revolution replaced Christianity with new moral values: "*all men are born free and equal.*" However, this ideal did not include indigenous people, blacks and women, who were the majority of the population. Slavery remained an excellent business for the economy, so the enslaved Africans should not be tempted by revolutionary freedom, even though, the trafficking and slavery of Africans in the Americas was at odds with the new modern values of freedom, equality and fraternity.

It was necessary to justify why these values, supposedly universal, should be applied only to some men and denied to others. For this, the modern theory of human "*rac*es" was created – indigenous and black slaves were considered races of sub-human beings, intellectually and morally inferior, with little intelligence and no moral values, while the white race was composed of superior men, more intelligent and with firm moral values. This division was ordained by God, who, in creating man, attributed natural supremacy to whites and natural inferiority to blacks. In addition to its divine and natural character, the division of men was also legitimized by modern science, which studied ethnic and phenotypic differences, and the physical traits and diverse cultures of human, indigenous, black and other groups, in order to identify, scientifically, the true human beings and the sub-humans (intellectually and morally lower beings). Institutions and laws were created to apply such scientific criteria and classifications that would prove the supremacy of the white man. Therefore, racism is a product of modernity, of modern science, and was not observed or registered in previous civilizations (Selfa, 2002; Klein & III, 2007). "*The brutality of this form of slavery was so shocking, so contrary to all conceptions of religion, society, and humanity at the time, that philosophers had to find an acceptable justification.*" (Selfa, 2002)

The scientific racism of the 1800s and 1900s was widely reproduced by opinion makers in Europe and the United States by religion and science, and by churches, universities and newspapers. Scientific papers, manuals, encyclopedias and educational materials were published to teach and popularize the concept of races and to legitimize the idea of the divine, natural and scientific inferiority of enslaved blacks. Hume and Thomas Jefferson reinforced these ideas during the 18th century, in order to justify the "*naturalness*" of black slavery in the United States. Legitimized by religion and science, the African slave trade uprooted more than 15 million people to work in the New World plantations. About 13% of the enslaved (1.5 million) died during the ships' voyages (Selfa, 2002).

Scientific racism has made it possible to ignore the historical responsibility of human beings themselves in this tragedy and conceals a brutal historical fact – racism was

invented in modern times, so that we would accept the attacks against millions of enslaved Africans as natural (Selfa, 2002).

1.4 The Emergence and Scientific Legitimizing of Eugenics

At the end of the 19th century, in 1863, the modern scientific concept of the upper and lower races led to another theory that was intended to be scientific – eugenics. Created by Francis Galton, this pseudoscience claimed that the upper classes in Britain assumed better social positions because they had a superior genetic makeup, which should be adopted as a model for the human species, since modern man was already capable of directing his evolution himself through science, seeking to *“improve the innate qualities of a race to the maximum advantage”*. The mechanisms for this *“creative selection”* included the selection of people with genetic superiority (Nordic and Saxon) and the prevention of miscegenation, through immigration control and the forced sterilization of the poor, disabled, malformed, mentally ill, migrants, black people and other groups who were considered immoral or undesirable, and who should therefore be gradually eliminated from society. The characteristics considered *“incompatible with life”* were present in the *“bad species”* and would impoverish the racial qualities of a population and its future generations. For this reason, societies should *“leave out the moral discussion”* and assume that *“it is better to be healthy than sick, vigorous than weak, well-equipped than ill-equipped”*.

Therefore, each social class or sect should be represented by its best examples, and society should *“let them work for their common civilization in their own way”*. Desirable special skills would be *“assessed by those who possess them: artistic faculties assessed by artists, the ability for inquiry and veracity would be assessed by scientists, the capacity for religious absorption by mystics, and so on.”* These would be the members and representatives of a community, men better than their constituent bodies, because they would have more of the qualities needed by the state – more vigor, more capacity and greater consistency of purpose. Thus, the community could be *“confident of refusing criminal representatives and those defined as undesirable, chosen legitimately by the best examples of its class, according to health, energy, skill, virility, and courteous disposition”*. (Galton, 1904).

“Large and prosperous families are more often the source of Eugenia's conditions. The definition of a prosperous family is one in which children have clearly gained levels above the positions reached by their peers early in life. Families considered “large” contain, at least three adult male children ... It would be no great burden on society, including many members who had eugenics at heart, to initiate and preserve a large collection of records for the use of such student statistics.” (Galton, 1904)

In 1908, in London, the Eugenics Society was founded, which promoted policies of *“hygiene or social prophylaxis”*, with the aim of preventing the procreation of people with hereditary diseases and of eliminating those with physical or mental problems (Goldim, 2003).

In 1912 the First International Eugenics Congress was held in London with 750 participants from several European countries as well as from the United States (Stepan, 1996).

In 1924 the International Commission of Eugenics published a report written by fifteen full members: Argentina, Belgium, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Russia, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States. In addition, seven other countries were eligible for cooperation – Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Mexico, Venezuela, Australia, and New Zealand (Adams, 1990).

By 1930, eugenics had been accepted by thirty countries with diverse Galtonian approaches, under local scientific, cultural, institutional, and political conditions, and developed by biologists, animal breeders, physicians, pediatricians, psychiatrists, anthropologists, demographers, and public health officials, adopting two methodologies – predominantly Lamarckian (inheritance of acquired characteristics and hygiene approach) or, alternatively, Mendelian (biological determinism) (Bowler 1984; Adams, 1990), according to the different religious, cultural, social, economic, institutional, and scientific contexts in each country (Adams, 1990).

Most educated whites in Europe and North America accepted the racial and cultural superiority of Caucasians, a different approach when compared to the ideologies of Aryan or Nordic supremacy adopted later by the Aryan-minded eugenicists during Hitler's dominant period, but this was rejected by some eugenicists. All the regions of the world were influenced by Western science, medicine, values and ideas, and Latin America is considered to have been the “mainline” of eugenics movements, contributing to their development (Stepan, 1996).

1.5 German and Italy Eugenics and Fascism

Between 1890 and 1903 eugenics emerged in Germany and Italy as an ideological perspective of the defense of the Nordic race and Aryan supremacy, based on the Darwinist ideology in order to improve the human race. The contexts of social crisis, rapid industrialization, intellectual and medical development were the background that explain the German eugenics even during the Wilhelmine and Weimar political period — the promotion of a healthier, more productive and powerful nation through race hygiene. Almost all German intellectuals were race hygienists with a technocratic and rational logic applied to managing the population through strategies of race hygiene and hereditary fitness in order to prevent a cultural, economic, and political German decline and to promote the survival of Germany and Western Europe's superior cultural traditions (Adams, 1990).

It was only between the two world wars, after Hitler's rise to power, that political diversities in eugenics were eliminated, being disseminated all over the world through international organizations and pressure groups, in connection with other themes of modern times — nationalism, racism, sexuality and gender, social hygiene, and modern genetics in Europe and the United States (Stepan, 1996).

The “*positive Eugenic policies*” were legitimized. In 1933 the Sterilization Act was approved in Nazi Germany, followed by the prohibition of marriages; and “*negative Eugenic policies*” such as the extermination program aimed to decrease the number of individuals classified as “*degenerated*” (Weiss, 1986).

In Italy, fascism sought to “root out the unhappy unions and the inferior race not inheriting Ancient Rome (including from the Ethiopia colony). Fascism did not value the biological race as much as Nazism, but adopted the spiritual and historical-linguistic sense of recovery of the prestige of the Ancient Rome, the defense of preciousness, and the unity and the Aryan type.

1.6 Eugenics in the United States, its recognition as science, and its application as National Policy

In the United States, the eugenic movement received generous funding from institutions such as the Carnegie Institution, Rockefeller Foundation, Harriman Railway and the Race Betterment Foundation. In 1906, the American Breeder's Association (ABA) was created, with the aim of *"investigating and reporting on heredity in the human race, emphasizing the value of higher blood and the threat to lower blood society."* In 1910, a wide network of scientists, reformers and professionals was formed to promote eugenic legislation and in 1911, in New York, the Eugenic Data Workshop, ERRO, was founded by Charles B. Davenport, which collected information from families with pedigrees and identified those that were inappropriate, of poor origin, black and sick. For these, considered *"unfit"* or *"genetically defective"*, it was proposed to remove them from society, through sterilization, marriage restrictions and emigration. This cleansing was defined as *"selective breeding of high quality individuals"*. In 1928, eugenics was an official discipline offered in 376 university courses at major schools in the United States, with more than 20,000 students. Critics of eugenics as a scientific method, like Thomas Hunt Morgan, were rare. (Kimmelman, 2007; Kuhl, 2002)

With great public acceptance, US eugenic legislation was passed. As of 1896, 27 states enacted laws with eugenic criteria. In 1897, a compulsory sterilization law was suggested, but not passed by the Michigan parliament. In 1905, the parliament of Pennsylvania passed a sterilization bill, but it was vetoed by the governor. In 1907, Indiana was the first state to enact the sterilization law, and was followed by Washington and California in 1909. California completed a record 20,000 sterilizations, out of the 60,000 performed in the country until the 1960s. Eugenics of North Carolina promoted and implemented the sterilization of thousands of people between 1933 and 1977, who, after being evaluated by social workers, were given an Intelligence Coefficient (IQ) below 70. This was considered a preventive method of unwanted pregnancy, and was cheap and practical. The poor and black people, with a low level of education, were most affected by mass sterilization as a result of tests that indicated their low IQ. Most of the sterilized people were women, many classified as *"bad girls"*, *"in love"* or *"ultra-sexualized"* (Kuhl, 2002; Black, 2003).

Immigration laws and restrictions, proposed by scientists trained at Harvard University, have also worked since 1894 to prevent the entry of inferior races into the United States of America, since they considered that sexual involvement with less developed and civilized races was a biological threat to the North American population, as it would *"dilute the upper American racial stock"*, that of the upper Anglo-Saxon class in the north of the country (Kuhl, 2002)

In 1902, the president of Stanford University created the notion of *"blood race"* in the

document *"Blood of a Nation"* declaring that talent passed through blood as human qualities. In 1904, the Carnegie Institution established a laboratory with millions of racial index cards for Americans' families, lineages and entire populations. The Harriman Railway financed New York charities, the Bureau of Industries and Immigration, to look for Jewish, Italian and other immigrants for their deportation, confinement or forced sterilization, as the desirable species to populate America included only strong people and talented, blond and blue-eyed Nordic types, the only ones *"apt to inherit the land"*. Thus, the American eugenic movement worked to remove the freed blacks, the immigrant Asian workers, the indigenous indians, Hispanics, Eastern Europeans, Jews – all of them with dark hair – and the poor and sick from the genetic line of the country, eliminating their lineages and descendants, by extinguishing the reproductive capacity of those considered weak and inferior (Kuhl, 2002; Black, 2003; Cohen, 2016).

In 1911, economist Frank Taussig, from Harvard University, published his book *"Principles of Economics"*, in which he proposed the sterilization of unworthy individuals, with a special focus on the poorest, saying...

"The human race could be vastly improved in quality, and its ability for a happy life, if those with bad physical and mental gifts could be prevented from multiplying", and *"Certain types of criminals and poor people only generate people of their own kind, and society has the right and the duty to protect its members of the permanent maintenance and guard load of these parasites."* (Taussing, 1911, as cited in Cohen, 2016).

In 1918, a specialist in venereal diseases published the textbook *"Eugenia Aplicada"*, and one of the chapters was entitled *"Lethal Selection"*, stating that...

"...from a historical point of view, the first method presented is execution ... its value in maintaining the breed standard should not be underestimated. ... through the destruction of the subject by some negative characteristic of the environment, such as excessive cold or bacteria, or due to physical disability." (Popenoe, 1918, as cited in Black, 2003).

Although the most suggested method of eugenic homicide in America was a *"lethal chamber"*, or gas chambers operated in public places, it was believed that society was not prepared for an organized lethal solution. Thus, many eugenic institutions and doctors started to practice eugenic lethality on their own initiative, for example, by offering milk from tuberculous infected cows to patients, neglecting the care of newborns or applying more aggressive methods to mental patients, in addition to forced segregation, sterilization and restrictions on marriage (Black, 2003; Cohen, 2016).

In 1927 the United States Supreme Court legitimized methods of eugenics saying

"It is better for everyone if, instead of waiting to execute degenerate descendants for crime, or to let them starve for their imbecility, society can prevent those who are manifestly unfit to continue to exist Three generations of imbeciles are enough." (Minister Oliver Wendell Holmes, STF, quoted in Black, 2003 and Cohen, 2002)

Despite the historical record that eugenics was created by Galton, it had appeared earlier in the United States, where it had already become popular.

Hitler studied US eugenic laws, and his racial hatred program, starting in 1924, acquired scientific legitimacy in the American intellectual and academic milieu, which established deep relations with Nazism, and advised and financed professional fascist eugenic experiences in Germany.

"I have been studying with great interest the laws of several American states regarding the prevention of reproduction by people whose offspring would, in all probability, be of no value or harmful to racial stock." (Hitler, as cited in Cohen, 2016)

The Rockefeller Foundation helped found the German eugenics program by funding Josef Mengele's program before his trip to Auschwitz, with a donation of about USD 410,000 in 1926 and the Institute for Brain Research donated USD 317,000 to the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute to spend on the study of the biology of the German race, led by Ernst Rudin, whose organization implemented murderous experiments through research on Jews, Gypsies and other groups (Black, 2003; Cohen, 2016).

Anglo-American eugenics was largely private and supported by philanthropy, whereas German race hygiene evolved within a statist medical tradition. (Adams, 1990)

From 1940 onwards, it is estimated that between 50 and 100 thousand elderly and mentally ill Germans were deinstitutionalized and taken to the gas chambers (Cohen, 2016). That is why, years later, at the Nuremberg trials, the Nazis cited American scientists in their own defense (Black, 2003; Cohen, 2016).

In 1948, in response to these crimes against humanity – including eugenic practices – the countries of the international community, at a meeting at the UN, adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, recognizing among their principles that we are all part of a single human race.

"The inherent dignity and equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world"

"Contempt and disrespect for human rights have resulted in barbaric acts that have outraged humanity's conscience, and that the advent of a world in which human beings enjoy freedom of speech, belief and freedom from fear and want to have proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the people "

"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and must act with others in a spirit of brotherhood. "

Recently, the Third World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerances, held in 2001 in Durban, South Africa, during the presidency of Nelson Mandela, resulted in a Declaration and Plan of Action expressing the commitment of States in the fight against discrimination and racism, which persists

until today. Among their statements, the heads of state considered slavery to human beings and racism as crimes against humanity...

“Currently, countries that participate in the UN recognize that slavery, the sale and trafficking of enslaved people were atrocious tragedies in our history, they were true crimes against humanity, organized barbarism against millions of people, which denies the humanity of the victims.” (OHCHR & UNESCO, 2001).

2. Methods

The method was based on the analysis of the social historic origin, dynamic and evolution of indigenous and African discrimination based on a literature review of the predominant concepts, visions, discourses and scientific expressions on slavery, racism and their relationships with emergence of eugenics in Europe and the United States and its arrival and adaptation in Latin American countries, in the period between the two world wars. The review focuses on the processes, policies and networks through which eugenics originated in modern Europe and the United States in the context of rapid industrialization and economic growth. However, social changes are not analyzed through the economic lens, considering mainly the development experienced in the passage to becoming Modern-industrialized countries. Instead, the emphasis is placed upon the historical population changes (Lloyd, 1991) and the role of scientific and intellectual actors in creating and promoting the institutional and population policy changes, upon the origins of the modern cultural background, interests, values and ideologies moving these activities, and upon policies implemented in very close collaboration with international partners. International collaboration between colonizers and colonized countries is a stress point in a region moving from four centuries of colonization and slavery to recent independent republics and with continuous reproduction of extreme population inequalities. The historical evolution of eugenics from Europe and the United States and its arrival in Latin America in the first decade of the 20th century is analyzed through the various mechanisms, activities, congresses and policies by which eugenics spread throughout Latin America, and how it was transformed by local elites according to their own interests, and reinforcing the discrimination and disadvantaging of indigenous and black populations.

3. Results. Racism and Eugenics in Latin America: Cosmic Miscegenation or Latin Superiority?

In Latin America, in the first decades of the 20th Century, Italian and French academic and scientific eugenicists were pioneers in disseminating Lamarckism, puericulture, and French concerns about the prospect of underpopulation.

Later, the USA promoted and financed the Anglo-German eugenics perspective and projects in Latin America and the Caribbean, and even sent Harvard professors to organize curricular reforms in the universities, particularly in Law and Medicine. However, while in the USA academics and government advocated for racist eugenicism, Latin Americans, mostly miscigenated, adapted Eugenics to develop a new construct of miscigenation, represented as being of high value and a way of showing their appreciation of the Latin American race.

Eugenics brought new conflicts and traumas to the Latin American identity and gained strength at the moment of the formation of nation-states and national identities. Eugenic societies were created in Buenos Aires in the 1930s, inspired by Italian fascism, with the objective to “*create a national racial archive for matrimonial selection and (compulsory) sex education*”.

After exterminating indigenous people and making African descendents almost invisible through European immigration, Argentinians lived through a moment of crisis and a predominance of the extreme right and xenophobia. Argentina was the only country in the region that achieved the desirable racial whitening – 50% of the population could be traced back to Italian migrants, and fascism was legitimated in the ideal of the “*difesa della stirpe*”, opposition to abortion, and the defense of breed reproduction for the European descendants.

Eugenics movements were extended in to the whole region and shaped science, social thought, and policies primarily between the two world wars, through congresses and social legislation on child welfare, maternal health, family law, the control of infectious diseases, and immigration, as well as establishing some of the first courses on genetics in the region, including the Pan American conferences between 1900 and 1940. The International Latin Federation of Eugenics Societies was founded in 1935 by Corrado Gini, president of the Italian Society of Genetics and Eugenics. Eugenics societies from Italy, France, Romania, Mexico, Peru, Catalonia, Brazil, and Belgium and delegates from other 20 Latin American countries participated in an international meeting in Mexico City. In 1937 the International Federation held its first and only congress in Paris (Adams, 1990).

Medical-legal debates and legislative activities promoted the state in regulating marriage, according to the Lamarckian approach, influenced by France and Italy, but also adopted the “Anglo-Saxon” type.

For example, Mexico started the 20th Century as a Secular State, after the popular Revolution of 1910. The new laic and revolutionary State faced the Catholic obstacles experienced by other Latin American countries. Mexico adopted the Vasconcellos’s vision of a superior mestizo or “cosmic” race, born out of the fusion of Caucasian, Indian, and African peoples, and an unofficial, real marginalization of the Indian and non-aculturated mestizo. However, Mexico was the only country in the region to adopt national health and sterilization policies and, since 1932, children have continuously received sex education at school (Adams, 1990).

In the early twentieth century, Argentina received a large-scale European immigration and the indigenous were exterminated. In Cuba, eugenics ideology and policies were copied from the United States.

Although these Latin American eugenics movements differed individually from one another, they seem at the same time to have shared a number of common features, mainly the eugenics approach shared with France and Italy.

2.1 Slavery, Eugenics and Racism in Brazil

French and Italian collaboration was relevant to eugenic dissemination in Brazil. Many Brazilian physicians participated in developing a Lamarckian movement and increased the effects of the special racial and political situation in Latin America's largest country.

In Brazil, slavery was also one of the mainstays of the economy for four centuries. It is estimated that between three and six million Africans were trafficked and enslaved in Brazil between the 15th and 19th centuries, to work on sugar plantations. At the time, in Europe, theories of racial inferiority of Africans predominated, which served to promote their comparison with animals and their enslavement.

Brazil was the last independent country in the world to outlaw slavery, despite pressure from England for Spanish and Portuguese colonies to adopt wage labor, and domestic markets consuming products of the industrial revolution. Thus, the long period of more than four centuries of slavery ended with an abolition proclaimed by Princess Isabel, great-granddaughter of the King of Portugal and daughter of the last emperor of Brazil, D. Pedro II. This was the cause of the expulsion of the entire imperial family from the country, just eighteen months after the liberation of the slaves was enacted, even though it was against the interests of the landowning slaver elite. For more than 60 years, the main steps to emancipate blacks were taken by the Crown and conservative governments (Soares, 2010). Only in 1888 did the Crown extinguish slavery and, together with it, extinguish its 66-year empire.

Contrary to the French Revolution, the Brazilian Republic was proclaimed through a military coup promoted by the slaver elites – a marshal in the army took over the government and expelled the imperial government. At the time, republican intellectuals and the media defined Brazilians, mostly newly freed and illiterate enslaved blacks or their descendants, as “*bestialized*”, who passively watched the proclamation of the Republic as if it were a simple military parade or a carnival, without knowing that a new political and government regime was beginning, a cause of national shame (Carvalho, 2003).

This was the first military coup by a secular slaver elite, composed predominantly of large landowners and traders involved in the export-import economy. This slaver elite successfully resisted England's ban on slavery from its commercial and political partners for nearly a century. This resistance only weakened when the English prohibition raised the costs of slavery, until it became more expensive than the hiring of whites (Prado, 1999).

In the new republican economy, newly freed blacks were replaced by millions of European and Asian immigrants. After being uprooted and treated like commodities for four centuries, they were left to their own devices when released. They never received citizenship conditions, were not included in schools and health services, had no civil registration or the right to vote, own land or property, and started to occupy marginalized areas. Nor were they accepted as legal workers and continued to seek any type of work to survive, (basically services or providing favors and domestic work) (Prado, 1999; Costa, 2001).

On the contrary, European immigrants were benefited from affirmative policies, their tickets were paid for by the State to travel to Brazil and they received jobs, equipment and land titles – a State policy to attract new white immigrants. Despite the glaring differences, the State implemented a policy of denying black predominance and racism and the myth that there was a racial democracy in Brazil, in which the three races, indigenous, whites and blacks would harmoniously coexist. This myth allows us to hide and deny the presence of the racist ideology of white superiority and black inferiority among us.

As in the United States, racism arrived in Brazil with slavery and the eugenicist theories of the biological inferiority of blacks; but it spread and consolidated itself masked in the myth of racial democracy. On the contrary, State policy also included the ideal of “*whitening the population*”, with the importation of “*civilized*” white workers and the abandonment of freed blacks, in addition to the death of thousands of them in the Paraguayan war (Fernandes, 1978).

The ideal of whitening the Brazilian race coincides chronologically with eugenic theories and practices, which arrived in Brazil long before German Nazism.

Brazil was the first Latin American country to have a significant, organized eugenics movement. Between 1900 and 1940, Brazil experienced profound social and political changes caused by the dependent industrialization, urbanization, and massive European immigration. Many of these changes were associated with eugenics in other parts of the world (Adams, 1990).

The first phase, from 1897 to 1919, was focused on urban hygiene and sanitation. In 1897 a proposal for mandatory pre-nuptial examination and to prevent marriages of tuberculosis and syphilitic patients is made. Dr. Renato Kehl, surely a European descendant, was the main eugenicist in Brazil. From a very young age he worked at the National Department of Public Health, carrying out policies of rural sanitation and hygiene and sanitation education.

From the late 1920s, he would become an entrepreneur in the pharmaceutical industry, standing out as Director of Bayer a German multinational.

In 1917 Kehl published the book “The cure for ugliness” in which he criticizes lawmakers and lawyers for implementing the Civil Code to protect the families against diseases communicable by contagion and inheritance. In the same year the Eugenic Society of São Paulo was created, with 140 members. Its objective was to develop “laws of heredity, regulation of redress, marriages and immigration, sterilization and pre-nuptial examination, dissemination of eugenics, influence legislation, customs on physical, intellectual and moral aptitudes”. In 1918, the Brazilian Association for Sanitation were created, and Monteiro Lobato published his first book ‘Vital Problem’.

Doctors started to interfere in the construction of laws and to medicalize Brazilian society, in alliance with lawyers, who produced Eugenic laws, while doctors took responsibility for the good application of Eugenic laws through medical diagnostics and

the identification of degenerated individuals. Two of the most important doctors in the period, Miguel Couto and Alexandre Tepedino, published their thesis on Eugenia.

The results of the collaboration between lawyers and doctors resulted in the regulation of prostitution, immigration control, marriage regulation and compulsory sterilization. Eugenic publications increased and gave prestige to the authors. For example, Fernando Azevedo launched his article “Ugly and beautiful girls” to great success.

Policies approved direct intervention regarding individuals’ bodies, with the objective to change the collective body and assist the formation of the Brazilian nationality.

Eugenic ideas achieved great publicity in the State of São Paulo through the *Correio Brasiliense*, a newspaper “read by the elite, with immense repercussion and credibility”. The most important Brazilian intellectuals, Renato Khel, Roquete Pinto, Oliveira Viana, Fernando de Azevedo, Vieira de Carvalho, Olegário de Moura, TH Alvarenga, Xavier da Silveira, Argemiro Siqueira, Arthur Neiva, Juliano Moreira, Nina Rodrigues and Monteiro Lobato issued publications and promoted Eugenics but, later, all of them deleted them from their bibliographies.

In 1922 the Brazilian Hygiene League was created, with the participation of recognized intellectuals Gustavo Reidel, Juliano Moreira, Fernando Magalhaes, Carlos Chagas, Henrique Roxo, Antonio Austregésio and Afrânio Peixoto.

In 1925 Eugenic ideas were radicalized and consolidated as policies strongly financed by the State, with massive public defense of the race mentality, and policies to control marriages and educational methods, along with the compulsory sterilization of degenerates.

In 1929 Renato Khel moved to the capital, Rio de Janeiro and organized the First Brazilian Congress of Eugenia with more than 200 participants – teachers, doctors, biologists, psychiatrists, journalists, writers, and deputies. The theme of the congress was “The Eugenic Problem of Migration”. Eugenics strengthened as the official policy of government, with laws, pre-nuptial examinations, protection of nationality, immigration, identification of mental illness and sex education. However, divergences about whitening the population emerged.

The Eugenics Bulletin proposed the exclusion of all non-white immigrants and in 1931, the Central Eugenic Commission was created, with the objective of “spreading the ideal of physical, psychological and moral regeneration of man”. Count de Gobineau wrote an essay in which he proposed the recognition of the superiority of the “Aryan race”, an ideology put into practice by Nazi theorists between the years 1920 and 1937. (Goldim, 2003).

Monteiro Lobato was the representative of eugenics in literature. In his book *Choque*: “A cry for the pro-eugenics war” he opined that “humanity needs only one thing: pruning. It's like the vine”. Dr. Miguel Couto affirmed that “science has shown that something that does not depend on hygiene is the seed, the inheritance, which depends on eugenics.” Khel's “The Cure of Ugliness” defended the idea that the State should select individuals and make them the most solid units of the race. Eugenic academic

publications abounded and the Special Supplement of the Eugenics Journal opened to public disclosure (Diwan, 2015).

The Immigration Policy of the 1930s, defended by Kehl and Miguel Couto, was the responsibility of Roquette-Pinto as the Ministry of Labor, and restricted the immigration of Asians and Jews.

Kehl proposed three measures: the separation of eugenic types, the elimination of dysgenic factors (deviations and hereditary diseases), and immigration control. The orientation of eugenics policies was contrary to social assistance - the imperfect, dysgenic body, ugliness, abnormality, sick people, deformity, monstrosity and diseases became circus spectacles, have incivility status, and they must be placed under the authority of the doctor and the State, they are a burden to society. According to Kehl: the patient is a monster: "the word ugliness ... has a broader meaning ... dysgenesis ... abnormality, morbidity ... (as opposed to) beauty equals normality, integral health" (Diwan, 2015).

Based on theories of racial supremacy, Brazilian eugenicists claimed that the mestizo would be inferior to the "pure", white and black races. They considered that the Brazilian racial "problem" was not simply the presence of blacks, but mainly miscegenation, since "pure" races were always seen as endowed with greater eugenics than the product of their mixture (Osório, 2003).

After the Second World War, Eugenics decreased its influence in Brazil, Kehl refocused his career to Psychology, a pioneer in the study of personality (Diwan, 2015).

2.2 Slavery Abolition

Although they look like similar processes, a big difference between abolitionists in Brazil and the United States is the fact that American abolitionists adopted the concepts of human rights, democracy and civil liberties, but also saw the need to delegitimize and attack slavery as an offense to freedom. In the United States, there was a war against slavers in the south of the country, which lasted four years and claimed the lives of 600,000 soldiers, until Congress approved the end of slavery. At the end of the war, a process of guaranteeing civil rights to freed slaves began. In Brazil, on the contrary, the Brazilian elite not only repressed the abolitionist movements and massacred slaves during revolts, but, even under pressure from Great Britain, postponed the liberation to the maximum extent possible, and punished the Crown for having abolished slavery, usurping them through a military coup, perpetuating cruel punishments in institutions such as the armed forces, prisons, police, and even in institutional and daily life, and postponing and stigmatizing black access to civil rights and compensatory policies until the present day.

Modern slavery and scientific racism have taught and accustomed us to humiliate and dehumanize some human beings, to use political, socio-economic, military and cultural mechanisms that make us accept cruel, "exemplary" treatments and punishments against certain people. Over 400 years we have perpetuated unequal power relations, believing that we have the right to label and reduce people by their color, sex, gender or culture.

This ideology, established in slavery, continues to disunite human beings today, through discrimination and racism.

By treating the Negro as the “*other*”, not as an equal, the use of violence and cruelty by the owners allowed them to maintain absolute control over slaves. Scientific racism and the concept of “*rac*es” became the scientific paradigm and dominant ideology in the 18th century, the beginning of modernity, and lasted until the end of apartheid in South Africa. These ideologies of superiority and inferiority of human beings have been reproduced for centuries throughout the world, through systems of domination and subjugation that we inherited from the times of slavery, colonialism, imperialism and apartheid. (UNHCR & UNESCO, 2001).

In order to maintain these differences, it was necessary to legitimize irrational ideas, to reconcile the profits and the terror of slavery with ideas such as “land of free men”, but only for whites, who had the right and freedom to enslave black men (Bales & Reitz, 2005). In Brazil, the landowning and commercial elite had to combine slavery with Christianity and, after the Industrial Revolution, with a conservative liberal discourse, to avoid Britain's sanctions on the export of its agricultural products. (Prado, 2001; Costa, 1999).

Slave imagery and racism still mark the formation, social, cultural and political development of Brazilian society, which is among the most unequal in the world, while, even before the quota policies for importing European migrants, it has propagated, until today, the myth that there would be a “racial democracy” in the country, all the while promoting the ideal of whitening the population. These concepts were built and reproduced over the centuries and continue to be present in a generalized way in all power structures, at State and institutional levels, and in family and individual micro-relationships. As a result, blacks in Brazil have the worst rates of morbidity, mortality and illiteracy, the lowest educational levels and the highest rates of poverty.

Several cases of racism have been reported in the media, in public and institutional spaces, and even among members of the same family, highlighting the falsity of the supposed racial democracy.

Racism in Brazil is historical and structural, manifested both by actions and omissions, through institutions and in interpersonal relationships. Structural racism is reflected in all areas of society. At the institutional level, the idea that blacks would be stronger and more resistant to pain and suffering is spread, which is reflected in health institutions (according to comparative data on anesthesia in childbirth among black and white women, showing that the former receive less anesthesia).

In the media, blacks play subordinate roles, reflecting the reality of racial discrimination.

In individual and family relationships, racism is reproduced in an internalized way, from the formation of the identity of whites and blacks, through looks, silences, shouts, offenses, popular sayings, derogatory jokes about blacks, concepts of good hair and bad hair, verbal and physical aggression, and relating black color to violence and crime, the

belief that all and only black people know how to dance, or that there is a relationship between skin color and sexual performance.

Despite this evidence, learning the myth of racial democracy puts us in a defensive position, denying racism, even though we know of its existence. The Brazilian does not like to talk about racism, not even to openly deny it, believing that racism is an imported problem. Behind the fear of and resistance to talking about the theme, there is the belief that, by discussing it, we could foster racism that is supposedly non-existent.

However, racist labels already exist. They were created and have been reproduced since the 18th century, with its theories of racial superiority. In Brazil, we have been silent on this topic for centuries, believing in the myth of racial democracy. But our condescending silence has borne no results so far, as alarming inequalities persist, according to Western world opinion, which sees Brazil as one of the most unequal countries in the world, with explicit and aggressive racism and is very different from Brazil's own national perception of a harmonious and peaceful miscegenation process (Cardoso, 2016).

Asking the race/color of people or talking about racism does not create inequalities, as they already exist, and cannot be denied – on the contrary, when speaking, we contribute to exposing the existence of inequalities, reflecting upon, talking about, knowing their dimension and effects, and we have instruments to correct them, to change behaviors and reduce the suffering of millions of people who remain silent when they feel discriminated against.

Reflection on racism is important to rethinking our prejudices and accepting that rights should be equal for everyone. We all struggle to understand the idea that, despite our differences, we should all be treated as equals. We often find it “*natural*” to give a negative meaning to our different characteristics. For example, it seems natural when we think that someone is better or worse than us, or that someone is superior or inferior, or that someone is “*dangerous*”, just by looking at their physical characteristics. However, this is not “*natural*”. We have learned since childhood to differentiate and classify people as “*good*” and “*bad*”, and to mock and even condemn these differences. We learn this both at home and at school.

However, just as we learn to discriminate, we can change our customs and behaviors, and relearn to respect everyone as equals, especially when these customs cause suffering to millions of people worldwide.

Some moral opinions and practices are negative and cause suffering, but we can modify them and thus eliminate racism, racial discrimination, misogyny (discrimination against women), homophobia (discrimination against homosexuals) from our world. For this, it is important to have information and knowledge, and to know how we have been constructing our opinions and practices for many centuries, and since our childhood. Our “*opinions*” and attitudes are formed when we are children, and are manifested in the way we teach our children and grandchildren to discriminate against and humiliate other people, and we should understand the effects of discrimination on

our lives and on the lives of others, such as how it affects and causes suffering in the lives of victims (Boyle, 2005).

Talking about racism is necessary. It is important to recognize that racism exists and is reproduced all over the world – in the workplace, in schools, in health services, in the justice system, in the media, on the internet, in families, and in the way that some groups see and treat other groups of people. Racism generally manifests in the stereotypes we create about people, in the displays of discrimination and in the suffering we cause others. For example, discrimination against people with HIV / AIDS is easy to see, when we avoid approaching, touching, looking at or hiring these people for a job. They can tell just by looking at us (Boyle, 2005).

Often, we may not even be aware that we are discriminating against someone and causing them suffering because we are shaped by our history, our customs have been established in the past and over time, and we have learned to discriminate, even without being aware of what we are doing to cause suffering to others.

How can we stop being passive, and reject the history of inequality and discrimination that was prevalent four hundred years ago, and how can we make a positive change that leaves behind the negative customs, inequalities and prejudices that we have inherited from our past? How can we change this reality?

The first step is to recognize the ways in which these inequalities are accepted in the societies in which we live – in the markets, in politics, in institutions, and in families – structured forms of discrimination in human relationships being the basis of the inequalities observed in statistics and in everyday life.

Racial inequalities are the greatest evidence of the persistence of racism in Brazil. In the health arena, infant and maternal mortality, general and preventable mortality, morbidity from diabetes mellitus, hypertension, fibroids and sickle cell disease have higher rates among the black population, compared to the white population. The number of prenatal consultations is higher, and issues regarding birth weight and gestation time are more prevalent among black women; and there are racial differences in the coverage of health plans, in access to, intensity of, and use of health services found in the National Sampling Surveys of Municipality over several years (Cunha, 2013)

Research on racism and discrimination are relevant to analyze how the processes of marginalization and humiliation of certain people and social groups are reproduced. Institutions, formed by human beings themselves to regulate social life, are not exempt from these processes. In recognizing the existence of institutional racism, this book analyzes statistics and reported cases of discrimination in local, national, and transnational contexts. By multiplying connections between economies and markets, globalization mobilizes human beings, and knowledge and information, but it does not prevent – on the contrary, it even encourages – the dissemination and reinforcement of ideologies and practices of disrespect towards people who, from their birth and childhood through to adulthood and, even at the moment of death, face barriers to participate in private, public and institutional spaces. Institutional exclusion processes reinforce discrimination and racism between the determinants of poverty and social

inequalities, affecting the levels of social and human development, the ideals of equity and social justice.

Conclusions

In Latin America, modern slavery was the economic and cultural base of the colonial regimes, which continued discriminating against indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants through the new republics in the process of industrialization, mainly adopting the modern eugenics and racism as mechanisms to reproduce privileges of the white elites and European immigrants, while legitimizing the biological, cultural and moral inferiority of the majority of the population. Argentina, Brazil, Colombia and Mexico participated actively and developed new versions of eugenics, since the majority of their populations were neither Aryan nor white. This adaptation of eugenics to the Latin American context by intellectual elites was a mechanism with which to legitimize and, at the same time, mask racism and inequalities, in order to maintain inequalities and to rewrite the history of slavery.

The main Latin American contribution to eugenics was, contradictorily, that underdeveloped countries, with all the elements considered inferior by eugenics — largely Catholic, rural, racially mixed, and illiterate populations, with a tropical climate and racially mixed people — represented a contribution from the elites who were of European descent aiming to improve their own miscegenation, as part of a new nationalism, based on a desire to project the new independent countries into world affairs, to define and manage the *latino population* in *latino elite* terms, and to take advantage of eugenics to manage the internal context of inequalities, over-exploitation and social conflicts in the promotion of European migration, the whitening of populations, and the continued submission of the majority — the indigenous and Afro-descendants, with no concessions in terms of welfare, as occurred in Europe.

In brief, eugenics was key to closing the history of slavery, racism and inequalities within the region by the creation of a eugenic version of scientific racism in order to control the majority of the “degenerated” population, and to benefit exclusively the inner group of privileged elite and white immigrants enabling them to maintain the control and the *status quo*. In Latin America, “science and social ideologies became linked in culturally and historically specific ways that need to be examined in context” (Adams, 1990).

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