



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2019 Volume II: Teaching about Race and Racism Across the Disciplines

Latinx History

Curriculum Unit 19.02.03
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Context

In 2019 the activism of the youth of color across Connecticut came to fruition with the passing of statewide legislation requiring that all high schools in Connecticut offer an African American and Latinx History course as an elective option for students. On the one hand it is disappointing that in 2019 such legislation is necessary, that African American and Latinx history — not to mention Native American and Asian American history — is not already an integral component of U.S. history and high school curricula. On the other hand, given the reality of the situation, it is undeniable that this is a step in the right direction. Now that this legislation has passed, it is crucial that high-quality curricula is created by teachers, and that teachers across the state receive ongoing training in how to facilitate this curriculum.

The teaching of African American and Latinx histories is vital for students of color, who deserve to know their history. But it is also important to acknowledge that the learning of this history is actually necessary for (young) people of all races, including those who are white. Black and Latinx history is American history. The United States was founded and expanded on the backs of people of color, and to deny that history is to live a lie. Furthermore, the myriad contributions of people of color throughout this country's history and today make America what it is. In other words there is no United States of America without people of color, and thus there is no U.S. history without these histories, which must be learned by all those who identify as Americans.

The following curriculum will focus on one component of this new mandate, Latinx history. It is important to note that Latinx history is incredibly vast in terms of space, time, and peoples. To offer it as a half-year component of a course is already limiting this history. In the same vein, it is necessary to acknowledge that this curriculum will by no means be exhaustive. The hope is that teachers can take what is useful to them from this curriculum, as well as build upon it. Furthermore, although Latinx history is presented here in isolation, my intention is to integrate it with African American history, and I recommend other teachers do so as well. Teaching histories in isolation can purport the false notion that these different groups of people did not interact and that their histories do not overlap and intersect, when in fact they do.

Countering Dominant Narratives

In researching and developing a curriculum about African American and Latinx histories, there are a score of dominant narratives that rise to the surface. Many residents of the U.S. have been socialized into believing these narratives, when in fact they are incomplete and inaccurate versions of history. As teachers, it is particularly important for us to be aware of these dominant narratives, to name them, and to research beyond them. As educators, we have the power to reproduce these narratives, consciously or unconsciously, or to resist and replace them with accurate and more complete histories. Making explicit these dominant and counter narratives for our students is important in helping them understand not only the history, but also the ways in which history is constructed, and the fact that historians are not neutral.

Foundational Activity:

I recommend using these dominant and counter narratives as an activity with students early in the school year, putting these statements around the classroom and asking students to select ones to which they react strongly, either in agreement or disagreement. Students can work individually or in pairs to analyze and respond to these statements, followed by a class discussion in which students share a statement they disagree with, and other students are invited to share the statement they believe challenges the dominant narrative shared. This will continue until all 16 statements are shared. The activity should also allow space for students to disagree with one another and engage in discourse about their differing views. Finally, this activity will layout the enduring understandings – that is, the counter narratives – that form the basis of the course. In addition to this foundational activity, these dominant and counter narratives will be investigated throughout the course with specific evidence, which will help students unpack assumptions they may have had, as well as trace the potential shifts in their views throughout the timeframe of course.

Dominant Narratives:

1. Latinx history is only important for those who identify as Latinx.
2. Latinx history is monolithic, and all Latinx people share singular or at least similar experiences.
3. Latinx people are a specific racial group, whose identity and history is entirely distinct from other racial and ethnic groups, such as indigenous or Black people and their histories.
4. Latinx history is primarily a history of oppression, and Latinx people deserve pity for what they have experienced.

Counter Narratives:

1. Latinx history is a major part of U.S. history, and is important for all who identify as Americans to know, as well as for anyone studying U.S. history.
2. The history of Latinx people is vast, diverse, and contested, in terms of time, place, and peoples. The themes of borderlands and migration, occupying various and changing identities, must be central to any Latinx history curriculum.
3. Many Latinx people also identify as indigenous and/or Black (Afro-Latinx), and Latinx history is deeply intertwined with indigenous and African American histories in various ways. The complexity of *latinidad* must be uplifted, and themes of *mestizaje* (*mestiza/o* or mixed-race identity) should be central to any Latinx history curriculum.
4. While it is true that Latinx people have faced significant oppression in the history of the U.S., their identity and history is much bigger than oppression. Any Latinx history curriculum must highlight Latinx people's culture, inventiveness, achievement, and radical reimagining, which have created new possibilities for what the U.S. could be.

5. Latinx history is all about resistance to white supremacy, a struggle that Latinx people have fought for themselves alone and by themselves.

6. The fact that Latinx people have been able to fight for their rights is a testament to American exceptionalism.

7. Latinx history, like all histories, is full of individual heroes who deserve to take center stage for what they have contributed to Latinx history, success, and culture.

8. The racism of the past and the present is a result of individual choices and people. Changing the hearts and minds of these individuals will eradicate racism.

5. While resistance to white supremacy is indeed a reality of Latinx history, this is not the only focus of Latinx history. Furthermore, Latinx resistance has – and continues to be – intersectional, fighting for workers rights, economic justice, health care, women’s rights, queer and trans rights, and many other struggles. This resistance has been and continues to be in solidarity with many other groups.

6. The oppression Latinx people have experienced in this country is a reflection of the United States, a country founded on and sustained by colonization, imperialism, war, land conquest, and white supremacy. Furthermore, that Latinx people – and many others – are still struggling for freedom and justice in this country demonstrates that the U.S. continues to be driven by these forms of domination.

7. While the achievements, stories, and words of specific Latinx people will be highlighted, it is necessary to acknowledge that especially when it comes to struggles and victories in the name of justice, no individual does that work in isolation. There may be a face or voice of a particular movement, but movements – and especially victories – are always about the groups of people, many unnamed or unknown, who made it possible. Even when looking at art, literature, or music, rarely is anything created in complete isolation.

8. The racism of the past and present is upheld by the systems within our society, including but not limited to the criminal justice system, the lawmaking and judicial systems, the education system, and many more. Although individuals work within these systems and those individuals might indeed be racist, it is the systems that justify and perpetuate the racism on a much larger scale. Thus, it is not until racism is eradicated from these systems that racism will end. Finally, this does not mean that working with individuals to challenge their racism is not also an important part of anti-racism efforts.

Curriculum Essential Questions:

1. Who and what are the diverse people, places, and time periods that Latinx history covers?
2. In what ways is Latinx history intertwined with indigenous and African American or Black histories?
3. What does Latinx history reveal about the United States, its foundation, and the ways it maintains power today?
4. How have Latinx people fought for freedom and justice throughout history and today, and in what ways have their struggles been in solidarity with various other groups?
5. What do the themes of borderlands and *mestizaje*, which are central to Latinx history, teach us about the country and the world?
6. What do Latinx people, history, and culture teach us about radically reimagining new possibilities and futures?

Curricular Units:

Unit 1 - What's in a Name: Hispanic, Latina/o, Latinx

Unit 2 - Indigenous Latin America, Spanish Colonization, and Latinx Resistance

Unit 3 - Movements for Independence and Revolution throughout Latin America

Unit 4 - Moving Borders / Moving Across Borders

Unit 5 - 20th Century Latinx Movements: Intersectionality and Cultures of Resistance

Overview of the Curriculum:

For each of the five units listed above, this curriculum will first offer some essential content and context for teachers, which can be used as background information for educators, as well as for content that can be taught to students. After the content section, there will be a set of guiding questions for each unit. These too can be shared with students, and are oftentimes central to activities that engage with the curriculum. The final section for each unit is a list of a few activities that pertain to that unit. A variety of resources are included at the end of the curriculum in the form of a bibliography, which is mostly intended for teachers, and Appendix I, which includes many online resources that are accessible to students.

Unit 1 - What's in a Name?

While the U.S. Census is just one of many factors that define a person's race, the racial categories the Census creates have a real impact on our society, how people see one another, and to a certain extent, how people self-identify. "In their classic on 'ethnic labels,' Suzanne Oboler (1995: 166) notes 'the names adopted by different groups or imposed on them by others emerge as a result of particular historical and political contexts.'"¹ In response to the Civil Rights Movement, in the 1960s the government began to collect racial statistics in order to determine eligibility for civil rights protections and affirmative action participation. When they began this process, however, there was no racial category for Latinx people. Beginning in 1970, the categories of "Mexican," "Puerto Rican," "Cuban," "Central or South American," and "Other Spanish" were added to the Census. Previously, no such categories existed in the Census, with the exception of "Mexican," which was used only in the 1930s Census.² In 1976, Congress passed Public Law 94-311, in which they stated that the 1970 Census revealed that there were over 12 million "Spanish-speaking" Americans, many of whom "suffer from racial, social, economic, and political discrimination." In response to this, in 1977, the government adopted the label "Hispanic," defining it as: "A person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race."³ Thus, Hispanic is not technically a racial category, but rather an ethnic category, based on ancestry from Spanish-speaking countries. Given the term's

link to speaking-Spanish, for those from Latin America who are labeled “Hispanic,” this title erases their indigenous, racial, or even geographic identity in favor of their colonized identity as those whose ancestors were colonized by the Spanish empire. “For both Latino immigrants and US-born Latinos, the Census categories simply do not coincide with identities based on conceptualizations of race in Latin America or identities constructed via national origins.”⁴

Some Latinx people use the term *latinoamericanos* to self-identity, and this term has been shortened to Latino. Google’s ngram for the terms Hispanic and Latino reveal that although Hispanic is still used more, since the mid-1990s it has seen a significant drop, while the term Latino has been on the rise since then. The question of using Latino is further complicated given the gendered nature of the Spanish language. Many have protested the use of Latino, one that carries a masculine connotation, to refer to all Latin Americans. More recently, many have used Latino/a or Latina/o or Latin@ to make the term inclusive of men and women. In a 2014 Master’s thesis, the term “Latinx” was used for the first time in a scholarly text. The author, Stephanie Alvarado, explains this term by saying: “I choose to use the word ‘Latinx’ instead of ‘Latina/o’ or ‘Latina’ or ‘Latin!’ to symbolize and include gender nonconforming Latinxs, to challenge gender binaries, and to queer myths about a unified homogenous Latinidad and challenge conventional identity politics.”⁵ While this is not a term used by most people within or outside of the Latinx community, it is significant in demonstrating the intersectional identities of Latinx people, ones that extend beyond race or ethnicity, national origin, or language. This intersectionality and complex identity is also evident in terms like Afro-Latinx, which highlight the multi-racial identity of many Latinx people, whose history and culture is intertwined with people of African descent. Panethnic terms like Hispanic, Latino, or even Latinx fail to acknowledge the indigenous roots of many Latinx people, which include hundreds of distinct groups. Whether using the term Hispanic, Latino/a, or Latinx, these terms refer to millions of people (most recent estimates suggest approximately 55 million or 17% of the U.S. population), the largest non-white group in the U.S., and no term can capture the fullness of their identities.⁶ Many groups resist these panethnic terms, preferring to identify themselves as Mexican or Chicano, Puerto Rican or Boricua, Cuban, Salvadoran, Dominican, Guatemalan, or so many more – not to mention terms like MexiRican, which also speak to the countless multi-ethnic identities within Latinidad.

Unit 1 - Guiding Questions:

1. What are the origins of the terms Hispanic, Latino/a, Latin@, and Latinx, and what was/is the purpose of their creation and use?
2. Are these terms more helpful or harmful to the community they claim to serve? Does a singular term for such a large group of people advance political struggles? Does it erase other aspects of identity and difference?
3. How should this community (or rather, these communities) be labeled? How and why do different Latinx-identified people answer these questions differently?

Unit 1 - Activities:

1. To begin this unit, the first of the course, students will be given artifacts; half the class will receive a world map, and the other half Pew's census categories timeline. Students will work in groups to identify and analyze what they observe, and more importantly, will generate a list of questions that these artifacts raise. Students will share their observations, analysis, and questions with one another in a jigsaw, followed by a whole class discussion.
2. This unit will conclude with a structured academic controversy, centered on questions 2 and 3 above. In groups of four students, each group will be assigned a different term to debate, including Hispanic, Latina/o, and Latinx. In each of the groups, the teacher will provide readings in favor and opposition to the term (some of which are linked as resources in Appendix I below). Students will work in pairs to analyze their reading, followed by a structured academic controversy, in which they provide the four most convincing pieces of evidence that support their stance. Students will also actively listen to the opposing pair's evidence in support of their stance. After sharing their own side and hearing the other side, all four students will shed their assigned roles and discuss the merits and nuances of the questions at hand. Finally, after all groups have finished their small-group discussions, the class will conclude with a large group discussion regarding whether these labels are helpful or harmful, to whom they are most helpful and harmful, and which should and should not be used. This activity will require at least one class for preparation, and one class for the discussion.

Unit 2 - Indigenous Latin America, Spanish Colonization, and Latinx Resistance

Just as African American history does not begin with slavery, neither does Latinx history begin with Spanish colonization. For thousands of years before the first Europeans arrived in Central and South America in the 1490s, hundreds of indigenous communities thrived, numbering millions of people. “In 1491, on the eve [of] the Columbus voyages, there were some 123 distinct indigenous language families spoken in the Americas, with more than 260 different languages in Mexico alone. Perhaps as many as 20 million people were living in the Valley of Mexico in 1519.”⁷ There is still a great deal of uncertainty as to the exact years of existence or numbers of distinct indigenous groups in Latin America prior to European colonization. New findings and interpretations by archeologists and historians continue to clarify this history. “Evidence suggests that human settlement existed in the Valley of Mexico—the central region of Mesoamerica—as early as 9000 BCE.”⁸ Below is a list of some of the indigenous groups, most of which are Mesoamerican, which students can choose to research as part of this unit:

1. Olmec
2. Zapotec
3. Maya
4. Aztec/Mexica
5. Toltec
6. Mixtec
7. Nahua

8. Inca
9. Taino
10. Pueblo

Many students are familiar with stories of conquest and the names of Christopher Columbus and Hernan Cortes. These are the histories that are typically centered when students across the country are taught Latin American (or U.S.) history. Indeed Spanish control of half of the Caribbean, the present-day U.S. Southwest, Mexico, Central America, and most of South America lasted for hundreds of years. However, it is important to note that: “The process of European domination was never fully completed, as today, indigenous traditions and cultures still persist.”⁹ Indigenous resistance was a consistent response to colonization and domination in the Americas, some resistance movement more successful than others. We must acknowledge and perhaps even mourn the fact that many of these stories of resistance are not only untold, but also unknown. This curriculum will focus on three specific stories of indigenous resistance.

Since the Spanish landing in 1492 in what they called “Hispaniola” and what today we call Dominican Republic and Haiti, the Taínos resisted colonization. One of the leaders of this resistance was Hatuey, a Taíno *cacique*. Taíno resistance increased in 1502 when a fleet of Spanish ships arrived with more European settlers and approximately 100 enslaved Africans, the latter whom escaped and joined with the Taínos. Together, the Africans and Taínos resisted the European colonizers. “After about a decade of armed resistance in Hispaniola, in 1511 Hatuey and 400 of his followers climbed into canoes and headed to Cuba. His plan was to mobilize his fellow Caribbean islanders [. . .] Hatuey’s strategy to attack, guerilla fashion, and then disperse to the hills, and regroup for the next attack, kept the Spaniards pinned down and afraid at their fort at Baracoa for at least three months.”¹⁰ Although in the end, Hatuey and his fellow freedom fighters were conquered and Hatuey executed, this rebellion represents a significant multi-racial resistance, which spanned not only decades, but also stretched across multiple islands in Central America.

The Pueblo Revolt of 1680 in modern day New Mexico was an indigenous uprising against Spanish rule. Not only did the European settlers exploit the labor of the Pueblo, but they also attacked the Pueblo culture attempting to convert them to Catholicism, often violently. “The Pueblo Revolt was the most complete victory for Native Americans over Europeans and the only wholesale expulsion of settlers in the history of North America.”¹¹ Eric Foner’s *Voices of Freedom* includes two powerful primary sources, which are declarations from two indigenous people, Josephe and Pedro Naranjo, explaining their rebellion.

In the 1700s, Spain instituted Bourbon Reforms, which involved increased taxes on poor and indigenous people. In response to this, from 1780-1782, one of the largest revolts against Spanish invasion took hold of the Andes region of South America, in what we now call Peru. Named after its leader, who was executed by the Spanish in 1781, it was called the Tupac Amaru Rebellion. This rebellion was “larger in terms of geographic area, combatants, and mortality than the American Revolution, which occurred at the same time.”¹² Although occurring in the 18th century, this rebellion was a predecessor—and perhaps an inspiration or distant cause—of the movements for independence that would take hold of the continent in the following century, beginning less than thirty years after the Tupac Amaru Rebellion.

Unit 2 - Guiding Questions:

1. What are some of the qualities of the many indigenous civilizations of Latin America? What do these qualities suggest about these communities?
2. What does this history of colonization reveal about the Europeans who came to the Americas?
3. How did indigenous groups resist colonization?
4. What are some of the current indigenous Latinx groups, and what does their artwork, music, literature, and/or performance reveal about them? How is the message they are sending different from the dominant narrative about indigenous people?

Unit 2 - Activities:

1. This unit presents an excellent opportunity to visit the Yale Art Gallery and examine the artifacts in the Art of Ancient Americas. For educators who do not live in the New Haven area, I encourage you to explore your local museum and resources, as well. Teachers should request that docents bring students to specific artifacts that have a direct connection to civilizations, cultures, histories, and/or practices they learned about in class. Students should also have framing questions to help them critique the exhibit, and teachers must expose students to the concept that museums are not neutral prior to this visit.
2. The final project for this unit will be to make connections between the past the present. Another dominant narrative we have been socialized into believing is the idea that indigenous people from the Americas no longer exist, which of course is not true. Students will analyze writing, music, and art by folks who identify as indigenous Latinxs. They will analyze and annotate this work, putting it in conversation with another artifact, be it the dominant narrative that the artwork disproves, a primary source, an artifact referenced in the piece, or original artwork produced by the student. Both artifacts will be displayed in a gallery walk/chalk talk, where students can see each other's chosen pieces and analyses, and can engage with them through writing on chart paper posted at each station. Students may find their own artists for this project, or choose from the preliminary list below:
 - a. Aztlán
 - b. Olmeca
 - c. MAIX

Unit 3 - Movements for Independence and Revolution throughout Latin America

After Spanish colonization throughout Latin America, Latinx people fought for their independence and self-government. Movements for independence spread across the continent in the early 1800s, and continued to burn until the end of the century – and beyond with revolutions. Another example of the intersecting histories between Black and Latinx people, the slave revolt of 1791 in Haiti was the spark in Central America, which would light the flame across the continent. In 1804 Haiti was the first nation to declare independence from

France, the first nation in the Caribbean or Latin America to regain their freedom from their European colonizer.¹³ “Between 1810 and 1826, all Spanish colonies in Latin America, except Cuba and Puerto Rico, secured their independence from Spain.”¹⁴ This spirit of independence was fierce, sometimes regional, with juntas fighting across nation states for their freedom, at other times distinct, boundaried by borders that would come to define their countries. Some wars for independence lasted over a decade, while others declared and won their independence more quickly. “For Panama, which had been part of Colombia since this nation’s independence in 1819, sovereignty would not come until 1903. Cuba, one of Spain’s first colonies in the New World, was finally able to break its colonial ties in 1898. Finally, Puerto Rico was freed from Spanish control during the Spanish-American War of 1898, but was immediately annexed by the United States, and remains a U.S. territory to date.” By the early 1900s Latin America was free of European colonization, yet was quickly subject to U.S. imperialism.

In some cases, the independence movements and victories stopped at freedom from colonizers, while freedom for indigenous, poor people, and women were not realized. Despite women’s roles in independence movements, they were rarely given credit for their contributions. Women like Juana Azurduy, Manuela Saenz, Micaela Bastidas, Maria Ignacia Rodriguez, and Gertrudis Bocanegra all played important roles in independence across the continent. “Despite their contributions and sacrifices, Latin American women did not fare well in postindependence years. Scholars have noted that as the region moved from absolutism to republicanism, the new countries’ constitutions systematically denied rights to women in particular—whereas before, during Spanish monarchical rule, political rights were denied to most men and women alike.”¹⁵ This incomplete liberation, not only for women, but for working class and poor people, led to later revolutions in countries like Mexico, where a monarchy continued to reign even after independence, and in Cuba, where communism and massive land reform marked a new era for the country that had been under U.S. rule until the early 20th century.

Below is a list of Latin American independence movements and revolutions, and their years of victory, which students will choose from for their research project for this unit. It is essential to note, as evidenced by the same years of independence across many countries, that these movements for independence were oftentimes not bound by the borders of nation-states, but rather were regional. Leaders like Jose Marti, as can be read in his speeches and letters, held a view of liberation that went far beyond national boundaries. The hope is that students can discover this through both their research and through discussions of similarities and differences that are essential to the activity below:

1. Paraguay, 1811
2. Argentina, 1810 and 1816
3. Chile, 1818
4. Colombia, 1819
5. Venezuela, 1821
6. Costa Rica, 1821 (1838, independence from Federal Republic of Central America)
7. Guatemala, 1821 (1838, independence from Federal Republic of Central America)
8. Nicaragua, 1821 (1838, independence from Federal Republic of Central America)
9. Honduras, 1821 (1838, independence from Federal Republic of Central America)
10. El Salvador, 1821 (1838, independence from Federal Republic of Central America)
11. Mexico, 1821
12. Dominican Republic, 1821 and 1844
13. Panama, 1821

14. Ecuador, 1822
15. Peru, 1824
16. Bolivia, 1828
17. Uruguay, 1828
18. Cuba, 1898 (from Spain), 1903 (from U.S.)
19. Mexican Revolution, 1910-1921
20. Cuban Revolution, 1953-1959

Unit 3 - Guiding Questions:

1. How did Latin American countries gain independence?
 1. Who were the groups that fought for independence?
 2. Who were some of the leaders of these movements? What were their beliefs and strategies for independence?
 3. Who were some of the unsung heroes of these movements? Why were they less known?
2. What were similarities and differences in the movements for independence across the continent?
3. What were the outcomes of these independence movements? What were some of the ways people in these countries still did not have their freedom after their country won independence?
4. How did the United States react to independence for countries across Latin America? What were Latin American leaders' critiques of the U.S.?

Unit 3 - Activities:

1. The speeches and letters of some of the leaders of Latin American independence movements are rich primary sources. Close readings – at least of key excerpts – from Jose Morelos, Simon Bolivar, and Jose Marti's most famous writings are vital, especially as they reflect not only on Latin America, but also offer a significant critique of the United States. I recommend doing these close readings together with students, modeling how to annotate texts, followed by small group discussions with guiding questions, including:
 1. What were these revolutionaries fighting for?
 2. What were their critiques of Europe and the United States?
 3. What inspires you most about their writing?
 4. What critiques, if any, do you have of their ideas?
 5. What questions does their writing leave you wondering?
2. There is a rich history of music from independence and revolutionary movements in Latin America. Throughout this unit, students will listen to the songs and artists of these movements, reading and analyzing the lyrics, and discussing the role that art and music can play in social movements.
3. For their final project in this unit, students will choose a Latin American movement for independence, and will conduct independent research on it, using the guiding questions above. Students will then share their research in small groups, while learning from their peers about other movements across the continent. Students will then have a discussion, comparing and contrasting these movements, and

connecting them to the present.

Unit 4 - Moving Borders / Moving Across Borders

After the many successful independence movements across Latin America, indigenous and Latinx people continued to struggle for sovereignty and freedom. At the same time, the United States continued its quest for land and domination under the banner of Manifest Destiny. “Over the years, the United States would repeatedly assert its power and economic interests in Latin America through military and political interventions in the region’s affairs, contributing to or exacerbating political conflict and economic instability in Latin American nations. This resulted in mass migrations of tens of thousands of Latin Americans fleeing civil wars, violence, and poverty and seeking shelter in the United States throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.”¹⁶ These migrations from Latin America to the U.S. in search of safety are still occurring today, and too many Americans fail to realize the true cause of instability in Latin America is in large part due to the United States’ repeated interventions in the interest of the U.S. and at the expense of Latin America.

Thus crossing borders has long been and continues to be an aspect of Latinx identity for many people. Furthermore, not only have Latinx people been crossing borders to safety, but also borders have been crossing them, changing their government, their national identity, and their citizenship – or lack of citizenship – without their consent. The popular saying amongst Chicanos is: “We didn’t cross the border; the border crossed us.” This will be a theme for this unit.

The Mexican-American War of 1846-1848 is a prime example of this concept. President James Polk’s campaign was built upon the promise of expansion and annexation of Texas – which had in 1836 broken off from Mexico with the support of U.S. aid – and northern Mexico. Polk was elected and just before he took office, in 1845 President Tyler annexed Texas, and no longer the independent “Lone Star Republic” entered the United States as a slave state. Soon after taking office, Polk ordered troops to the Rio Grande, 150 miles south of the mutually recognized Texas-Mexico border, clearly provoking Mexican troops by entering their country’s territory. Thus began the very war Polk had hoped to instigate, claiming Mexico had fired the first shot.¹⁷ After a bloody two-year war and a U.S. victory – despite significant opposition by Congress members, abolitionists, and deserting soldiers alike – the United States negotiated the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which seized half of Mexico’s land. Article VIII of the treaty promised Mexican citizens who remained for more than a year in the newly acquired territory, U.S. citizenship, and with it a claim to their land and property.¹⁸ “Within a year of the treaty’s ratification, the United States government violated the citizenship stipulation and began a process of racialization that ascribed to Mexicans different legal rights on the basis of race. Mexicans who were White were given full legal citizenship, while *mestizos*, Christianized Indians, and *afromestizos* were accorded inferior legal rights.”¹⁹

This American racialization points to a distinction between Mexico, which had abolished slavery in 1824, and the U.S. who would not abolish slavery for another twenty years after acquiring these new territories. It also reveals a multi-racial cross-national antiracist solidarity that American abolitionists and Mexicans shared, one that is too rarely taught in schools. Abolitionists knew that the expansion of U.S. territory would also mean the expansion of slavery, adding another reason to their opposition to the U.S.’s calculated instigation of war with Mexico. Abolitionists also recognized antiracism as a component of the Latin American independence movements, and viewed those fighting for their continent’s liberation as fellow black, brown, and indigenous

comrades. “The antislavery spirit stoked by Jose Morelos, Vicente Guerrero, and the Mexican War of Independence persisted, and made Mexico a sanctuary for African Americans fleeing from the burgeoning slave labor camps of the Southwest. Sensing the possibility of finding freedom in Mexico, enslaved African Americans as far away as Florida escaped to the Republic of Mexico.”²⁰

Changing borders – and forced movement across borders – did not end with the 19th century. For Mexicans and Mexican-Americans the United States continued to determine their ability to reside in the U.S. based only on U.S. interests. While the 1910s and 1920s were a time of immigration acts and quotas, which restricted immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe, Mexicans were largely exempt from these restrictions because of the United States’ desire for steady Mexican labor in the Southwest of the U.S. The Immigration Act of 1929, however, began to regulate Mexican entry in the U.S., classifying crossing the border without permission as a misdemeanor. After the stock market crash of 1929 and the Great Depression, the United States’ treatment of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans changed drastically. In the 1930 Census, for the first time in history “Mexican” was listed as a distinct race, while earlier policies had classified Mexicans as white. Thus, not only did the U.S. use nation-state borders to impose new lives and identities onto Mexicans, but also Census categories, which legally changed the race of an estimated 600,000 Mexicans living in the United States at the time. Mexicans were scapegoated during the Great Depression, not only by white Americans, but also by the U.S. Government who “repatriated,” or forcibly removed somewhere between 350,000 and 500,000 Mexican and Mexican American people.²¹ This pushing and pulling across borders would repeat itself again during and after World War II. That is, when U.S. found itself in need of labor, the government attracted male Mexican workers back to the U.S. through the Bracero Program, which lasted 20 years and was well documented for its abuses of Mexican workers. During this same era, the U.S. government and media claimed that Mexican immigrants were coming to the U.S. illegally. So, from 1954-1958, in what the U.S. called “Operation Wetback,” Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) and the U.S. Border Patrol began instituting raids and sweeps. They claimed that they had deported more than a million people and that hundreds of thousands left on their own. “In the end, Operation Wetback neither deported as many people as the Border Patrol claimed, nor solved the problem of unauthorized immigration, and its short-term, success relied on changes in the Bracero Program. In the long term, Operation Wetback changed how the Mexican American community saw itself, led to a movement to end the Bracero Program, and led to a push for civil rights in the 1960s.”²²

While Mexico has been the focus of this unit on borders, it is also important to note a very different kind of border surrounding Puerto Rico. Unlike most of Latin America, which gained independence in the early 19th century, it was not until the conclusion of the Spanish-American War when both Cuba and Puerto Rico finally got independence from Spain. Yet, U.S. imperialism kept – and in fact, keeps – Puerto Rico, and to a certain extent Cuba under its control. In 1824, once most of Latin America had gained their independence from Spain, the Spanish retreated to the islands of Cuba and Puerto Rico. In Cuba, the Spanish crown became increasingly repressive, taking all control away from Cubans and taxing them more heavily. Wealthy Cubans supposedly appealed to the United States to annex Cuba, and President Polk attempted to purchase the island from the Spanish. Cubans rebelled and the Ten Years’ War for Cuban independence began in 1868. The war did not actually end in 1878, though it did free enslaved people who fought for either side of the war. In 1895 the conflict escalated again, and by the following year Cuba was seeing success in their struggle for independence. Despite this, the U.S. found a pre-text to enter the conflict against Spain, and the war was dubbed the Spanish-American War of 1898, ending in victory against the Spanish. The U.S. was given sovereignty over Cuba, and although the United States granted Cuba autonomy the U.S. retained Guantanamo Bay and continues to occupy it as a prison camp to this day.²³

Puerto Rican history follows a similar trajectory as Cuba during these thirty years. That is, in 1868 Puerto Rico initiated its struggle for independence against Spain shortly before Cuba. And in 1897, Spain granted both Puerto Rico and Cuba “political autonomy” scheduling elections for the following year. At the conclusion of the Spanish-American War, like Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines were all ceded to the United States. However, while Cuba gained independence for most of its country, Puerto Rico and Guam were kept as U.S. possessions. In 1900 the Foraker Act established a civilian government in Puerto Rico and in 1917 the Jones-Shafroth Act granted limited U.S. citizenship to Puerto Ricans. Given this history and current status, the borderland space and identity that many Puerto Ricans occupy and experience is a complicated one. Most Puerto Ricans speak Spanish because of their centuries of Spanish colonization, and at the end of the 19th century, with U.S. imperialism, a new border crossed them, one that eventually made them Americans. Yet, they are not full Americans and the borders of Puerto Rico, the island and commonwealth, continue to feel very distinct and in some ways distant from the mainland United States. Puerto Rican citizens—U.S. citizens—are still not permitted to vote in U.S. presidential elections, and as we saw with Hurricane Maria, the residents of Puerto Rico are not given the same aid and support as official U.S. states. Finally, it is important to note that the Jones-Shafroth Act granting Puerto Ricans limited U.S. citizenship was passed just a month before the U.S. entered World War I, and 20,000 Puerto Ricans served in this war wearing U.S. uniforms.²⁴ Thus, Puerto Ricans are imposed with the burdens of being American citizens, but not the privileges.

Gloria Anzaldua’s 1987 publication, *Borderlands / La Frontera*, speaks to the experience of Latinx people caught between different languages, contradicting worlds, and straddling identities. While these experiences are in some ways unique to Latinx people, especially those living along/across the U.S.-Mexican border and those living in the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico, there are also ways that other groups of people can understand a borderland identity. Anzaldua’s preface to the first edition of her book is a required reading for this curricular unit:

“The actual physical borderland that I’m dealing with in this book is the Texas-U.S Southwest/Mexican border. The psychological borderlands, the sexual borderlands and the spiritual borderlands are not particular to the Southwest. In fact, the Borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy.

I am a border woman. I grew up between two cultures, the Mexican (with a heavy Indian influence) and the Anglo (as a member of a colonized people in our own territory). I have been straddling that *tejas*-Mexican border, and others, all my life. It’s not a comfortable territory to live in, this place of contradictions. Hatred, anger and exploitation are the prominent features of this landscape.

However, there have been compensations for this *mestiza*, and certain joys. Living on borders and in margins, keeping intact one’s shifting and multiple identity and integrity, is like trying to swim in a new element, an “alien” element. There is an exhilaration in being a participant in the further evolution of humankind, in being “worked” on. I have the sense that certain “faculties” – not just in me but in every border resident, colored or noncolored – and dormant areas of consciousness are being activated, awakened. Strange, huh? And yes, the “alien” element has become familiar—never comfortable, not with society’s clamor to uphold the old, to rejoin the flock, to go with the herd. No, not comfortable but home.

This book, then, speaks of my existence. My preoccupations with the inner life of the Self, and with the struggle of that Self amidst adversity and violation; with the confluence of primordial images; with the unique positionings consciousness takes at these confluent streams; and with my almost instinctive urge to communicate, to speak, to write about life on the borders, life in the shadows.

Books saved my sanity, knowledge opened the locked places in me and taught me first how to survive and then how to soar. *La madre naturaleza* succored me, allowed me to grow roots that anchored me to the earth. My love of images—mesquite flowering, the wind, *Ehecatl*, whispering its secret knowledge, the fleeting images of the soul in fantasy—and words, my passion for the daily struggle to render them concrete in the world and on paper, to render them flesh, keeps me alive.

The switching of "codes" in this book from English to Castillian Spanish to the North Mexican dialect to Tex-Mex to a sprinkling of Nahuatl to a mixture of all of these, reflects my language, a new language—the language of the Borderlands. There, at the juncture of cultures, languages cross-pollinate and are revitalized; they die and are born. Presently this infant language, this bastard language, Chicano Spanish, is not approved by any society. But we Chicanos no longer feel that we need to beg entrance, that we need always to make the first overture—to translate to Anglos, Mexicans and Latinos, apology blurring out of our mouths with every step. Today we ask to be met halfway. This book is our invitation to you—from the new *mestizas*.”²⁵

Unit 4 - Guiding Questions:

1. What impact did and does U.S. intervention in Central America in the mid-to-late 1800s have on migration to the U.S. from Central America?
2. What is the meaning and significance of the quote: “We didn’t cross the border; the border crossed us”?
3. What does it mean to be living on Borderlands? What Borderlands do you occupy or witness? How do they impact you or those living within them? What are the “compensations” and the “joys,” as Gloria Anzaldua calls them, to living a border existence?

Unit 4 - Activities:

1. Students will participate in a role-play, adapted from the Zinn Education Project (and linked in Appendix I below) in which each student will be given a description of a different group or individual involved in the Texas Independence movement of 1835-1836 or the Mexican-American war of 1846-1848. Both of these complex historic events included many different parties, and a role-play will help clarify the different interests. In Texas, for example, students will be assigned roles of European colonists (both Tejanos and Anglo Americans who migrated more recently), northern Mexicans, and several indigenous groups, as well as Mexican and U.S. government officials. For the Mexican-American war, students will

consider the roles of Mexican and U.S. officials, Mexican and U.S. soldiers, and other residents of both countries, including Mexicans who fled the area for fear of war, and American abolitionists who saw the expansion of U.S. land as expansion of slavery. Students will have a series of guiding questions to help determine the perspectives, goals, and interests of the different parties involved. After students analyze their assigned role, they will interact with other parties involved in their assigned conflict, and will predict how the situation plays out. A debrief activity will involve comparing what they expected to happen in each case and what actually happened, followed by a closing discussion to analyze the conflicting interests, the forms of power that were used, and the solidarity that was formed or developed in both conflicts.

2. The concept of borderlands and *mestizaje* is central to this curriculum, and especially this unit. Latinx people have blurred lines and labels in liberating and creative ways. Therefore, the final project for this unit, will be a creative one, in which students can make visual art, write poetry, literature, or music, or even create dance or theater performances around the themes of borderlands, *mestizaje*, migration, and movement. Students will use the guiding questions above to complete this project, particularly the third question. They can incorporate what they have learned in this unit, and can draw upon ideas from Latinx history or present day, as well as their own personal experiences and identities.

Unit 5 - 20th Century Latinx Movements: Intersectionality and Cultures of Resistance

The 20th century abounds with examples of Latinx movements for justice. A powerful example is the struggle for quality education that Latinx people fought for across the country. Families of Mexican children began fighting against school segregation as early as 1919, and several court cases were filed and some won throughout the 1930s and 1940s, before the famous Mendez v. Westminster victory in California in 1947. This case became a precedent for integration and equal protection cases in Arizona and Texas, and of course for the Brown v. Board Supreme Court decision of 1954.²⁶ It is important to note that during this same era, Puerto Rican families on the island were fighting for self-determination in a similar way. “Since the time of the U.S. invasions of Puerto Rico in 1898, Puerto Ricans had fought against North Americans’ impulses to impose English as the official language of instruction in the island’s schools.”²⁷ The official language of instruction was finally changed to Spanish in 1945, the same year the Mendez v. Westminster case was filed in California.

Examples like these are important to expose students to – and hopefully these are examples they have previously learned about in U.S. history courses. Similarly the history of the Chicano movement, the United Farm Workers Movement, urban uprisings across the country, and of course the Young Lords movement are all examples students may be familiar with. My suggestion is to teach these histories through an intersectional lens. Kimberle Crenshaw coined the term intersectionality to bring to light the fact that all people exist at the intersection of many different parts of identity. That is, a person’s race cannot be separated from their gender, sexuality, class, citizenship status, and so on. More specifically, Crenshaw developed the term intersectionality to describe the unique forms of oppression people experience when they exist at the intersection of multiple identities that are targets in a white supremacist hetero-patriarchal society – and also the unique and often untold struggles that occur at the intersection of these multiple forms of oppression. For example, the role that Latinx workers have played in fighting for labor and union rights are essential to these movements, and yet are too often left out. Also, feminist activism within both the Chicano movement and the Young Lords must

be emphasized. Finally, coalitions that brought different groups together, such as the Rainbow Coalition, and other examples of solidarity, must be taught as a critical strategy for resistance.

In addition to these more traditional examples of political resistance throughout the 20th century, I would like this unit to expose students to a different form of resistance, through culture, and with it a new way to examine history through the lens of cultural studies. Like jazz to the black community, Latin jazz and Afro-Latin jazz are sites of resistance, as are disco for Black and Latinx queer communities, and hip-hop for the Black and Latinx youth of the Bronx and beyond. These are all sites that created space for freedom, for expression, and for cross-cultural and cross-racial collaboration.

Perhaps a less well-known example of resistance through culture, one that was prominent during the middle of the 20th century in cities across the U.S., is zoot suits. Black and Latinx Americans donned themselves in zoot suits, oversized and extravagant fashion choices that required quite a bit of fabric. For Black and Latinx youth, zoot suits were a sign of their cultural pride, an expression of their sense of self-worth, and an act of disobedience that aimed to subvert white middle-class ideals. Interviews with former zoot suiters revealed their desire to resist white America's negative depictions of them by dressing "to the nines," as well as creating a sense of belonging within a culture where they were seen as outsiders. Zoot suits were also associated with other liberating cultural practices of the time, including jazz music and lindy hop dancing. "People's everyday cultural practices, including fashion, music, and dance are often among the most common resources they use to garner strength, make their lives better, and shape the society in which they live."²⁸

In addition to resisting assimilation to whiteness – though to be sure, some white youth wore zoot suits as well – zoot suiters challenged the gendered roles of the WWII era. "The social practices and behavior of zoot suiters also often conflicted with gender norms regarding how young men and women should act [. . .] Male zoot suiters were often labeled by urban authorities, the media, and the general public as overly feminine for their constant attention to appearance, and female zoot suiters as too masculine for what was perceived as bold and very public behavior."²⁹ Zoot suiters were seen by white America as an affront, and zoot suiters of color were attacked by white mobs across American cities during this time, a violence that was state-sanctioned as police officers permitted or even enabled these assaults. These attacks sparked what were called the Zoot Suit Riots in Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, and several other cities across the country.

Unit 5 - Guiding Questions:

1. What are some of the intersectional movements in which Latinx people have fought and continue to fight? What are the rights and forms of justice for which Latinx people have fought – and continue to fight?
2. How have Latinx people worked in solidarity with other groups in their struggles for justice? How do they continue to work in solidarity today?
3. How has culture been used as a form of resistance for Latinx people? How is it used as form of resistance for Latinx people today? What power does culture have in the fight for liberation?

Unit 5 - Activities:

1. A gallery walk of photographs is a powerful way to display the many different forms of Latinx resistance throughout the 20th. Photographs are an incredible primary source that can make struggles for justice far more visible and visceral for students. Students will analyze photos and engage in conversation with one another through a chalk talk, writing their observations, analyses, and questions. Images should reflect the intersectionality and solidarity of these movements, making sure to show the leadership of women and workers in these movements.
2. The debate about the role of culture in struggles for liberation is a compelling one. Can culture have a political impact? What is its role in struggles for liberation? Students will work in small groups to debate this question through a structured academic controversy. As with this activity from unit 1, students will work in pairs to analyze readings and examples, and will then engage with another pair representing a different perspective. Afterward students will have an open discussion in their group and then debrief as a class.
3. 20th century Latinx history and today's realities for Latinx people are all around us, including in the New Haven area. For the final project in this unit, students will create an interactive map called "A Latinx People's History of New Haven." Each student will research a different person, group, or historical event, which they will add to the map. Students may also choose to interview Latinx leaders, family members, or community members in the New Haven whose personal stories are - or should be - a part of this history.

Course Final Project - Latinx History Museum Exhibit:

For the final project for this course, students will share what they have learned with the rest of the school community through a Latinx History Museum Exhibit. Students will choose from the five units we studied, with a small group of students curating each section of the exhibition, related to each of the five units. Within each group, students will work together to frame a collective question for their audience, one that is connected to at least one set of dominant and counter narratives. Students will select and display primary and secondary sources that help to answer the question they pose, and which expose the dominant and counter narratives that form the unit's foundation. Also, each individual student will focus on a specific component within the unit and within their exhibit, if possible, uncovering content we did not have a chance to cover during the year. The research and preparation for this exhibit will take several classes, and the installation will take at least one class. Finally, students will serve as the docents while other students, staff, and community members tour the museum.

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Appendix I - Resources for Teachers and Students:

Arturo O'Farrill, "Radical Acts & Musical Deviancy: Music of Resistance" - <https://www.thegreenspace.org/watch/radical-acts-musical-deviancy-music-of-resistance/>

Frederick Douglass, "War With Mexico" - <https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources/texts/hard-history/war-with-Mexico>

Guante, "How to Explain White Supremacy to a White Supremacist" - <https://www.guante.info/2016/03/new-video-how-to-explain-white.html>

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<https://www.npr.org/2012/10/05/162384391/el-pueblo-unido-more-latin-american-protest-songs>

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https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2015/06/ST_15.06.11_MultiRacial-Timeline.pdf

PBS, "How the Mexican-American War Affected Slavery | The Abolitionists" -
<https://cptv.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/amex25.socst.ush.mexwar/how-the-mexican-american-war-affected-slavery/>

Remezcla, "From Nueva Canción to Tropicália: 5 Music Genres Born Out of Latin American Political Resistance" -
<https://remezcla.com/lists/music/5-music-genres-resistance/>

Rodolfo Corky Gonzales, "I Am Joaquin" - <http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/latinos/joaquin.htm>

Teen Vogue, "How the Zoot Suit Became a Symbol of Resistance for Mexican-American People" -
<https://www.teenvogue.com/story/zoot-suit-riots-symbol-of-resistance-mexican-american-people>

Teen Vogue, "The Problematic History of the Word 'Hispanic'" -
<https://www.teenvogue.com/story/problematic-history-of-hispanic-word>

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<http://blackpower.web.unc.edu/2017/04/the-rainbow-coalition-a-time-to-fear/>

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Zinn Education Project, "Feb. 2, 1512: Taíno Leader Hatuey Executed in Cuba" -
<https://www.zinnedproject.org/news/tdih/hatuey/>

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<https://www.zinnedproject.org/materials/us-mexico-war-tea-party/>

Appendix II - Standards:

All six of New Haven's 21st Century Competencies, which are a graduation requirement for our students, are addressed within this curriculum:

1. Problem Solving and Critical Thinking:
 - Reason effectively
 - Make insightful judgments and decisions
 - Solve problems
2. Accessing and Analyzing Information:
 - Use research tools to access and evaluate information from multiple sources
 - Organize and synthesize information using multiple methods
3. Communication and Collaboration:
 - Articulate ideas clearly to a variety of different audiences using multiple modes
 - Communicate effectively and work productively with others
4. Creativity and Innovation
 - Demonstrate originality and inventiveness in work
5. Initiative, Self-Direction, and Accountability
 - Set and meet high standards and goals for one's self and others
 - Manage time and resources to produce high quality results in a timely manner
 - Take responsibility for one's own learning
6. Citizenship and Responsibility
 - Exercise empathy and respect for diverse cultures and perspectives
 - Contribute to and take responsibility for the larger community

¹ Mize, *Latina/o Studies*, 1.

² Pew Research Center, "What Census Calls Us: A Historical Timeline"

³ Mize, *Latina/o Studies*, 3.

⁴ *Ibid*, 4.

⁵ *Ibid*, 6.

⁶ *Ibid*, 10-12.

⁷ Gutierrez and Almaguer, *The New Latino Studies Reader*, 23.

⁸ Fernández, *50 Events That Shaped Latino History*, 4.

⁹ *Ibid*, 20.

¹⁰ Katz, "Feb. 2, 1512: Taíno Leader Hatuey Executed in Cuba."

- 11 Foner, *Voices of Freedom*, 10.
- 12 Fernández, *50 Events That Shaped Latino History*, 27-28.
- 13 Fernández, *50 Events That Shaped Latino History*, 75.
- 14 Mize, *Latina/o Studies*, 19.
- 15 Fernández, *50 Events That Shaped Latino History*, 84.
- 16 Fernández, *50 Events That Shaped Latino History*, 79.
- 17 Zinn, *A People's History of the United States*, 149-151.
- 18 Gutierrez and Almaguer, *The New Latino Studies Reader*, 99.
- 19 Flores and Rosaldo, eds. *A Companion to Latina/o Studies*, 315.
- 20 Ortiz, *An African American and Latinx History of the United States*, 40.
- 21 Fernández, *50 Events That Shaped Latino History*, 329-332.
- 22 Ibid, 500-503.
- 23 Ibid, 152-156.
- 24 Ibid, 196-199.
- 25 Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/ La Frontera*, 19-20.
- 26 Fernández, *50 Events That Shaped Latino History*, 418-420.
- 27 Song-Ha Lee, *Building a Latino Civil Rights Movement*, 188.
- 28 Ibid, 7-8.
- 29 Alvarez, *The Power of the Zoot*, 5.

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