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Colonization and Eugenics Renewed in International Migration

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Abstract

Latin American migration to the USA and Canadian labor markets has been historically determined by economic factors as the USA pays higher salaries compared to Latin American countries. However, since 2007, increases in violence, organized crime, insecurity, political intolerance and environmental disasters in Latin America, Africa and Asia have increased the number of forced displacements of large population groups of migrants from the Global South who have migrated to Latin America looking to cross the US border. The strengthening of the border controls has limited their aspirations and countries like Brazil and Mexico are now countries of transit and also of residence for migrants. The article adopts a methodology of integrative review of migration, colonization, slavery, eugenics and racism in Latin America to analyze how the history of colonization, racism and eugenics in the region is reproduced against large population groups of Black immigrants from Haiti and Africa, who are compelled to escape a second time due to the xenophobia and racism historically reproduced in these societies. Results indicate that eugenics, racism, and xenophobia have intersected in Latin America since the formation of national states, with the acceptance of the population miscegenation and homogenization, through population engineering projects of “The Cosmic Race” in Mexico and “Racial democracy” in Brazil, which are reproduced until current days with explicit xenophobia and racism against Black migrants and refugees.

Keywords: Eugenics, International Migration, Racism, Latin America, Mexico, Brazil, Borders Control

1. Introduction

The Europe and Asia are the most attractive regions for migrants in the world, and Latin America and the Caribbean are not numerically relevant regions in the international migration framework, although their number of immigrants has doubled from 7 to 15 million in fifteen years (OIM, 2024).

Latin American migration to the USA and Canadian labor markets has been historically determined by economic factors. Salaries in the USA are from 8 to 14 times higher on average, compared to Mexico (Mexicans from a bachelor to a high school education degree, respectively) (Vega et al, 2023), and the USA is the most important destination country for migrants in the world.

The countries that most supply labor migrants are India, Mexico, Russia, and China. Mexico is ranked second in the number of emigrants in the world and the main country of transit for youth and adult male migrants from Central and South America to the North — workers looking for better jobs and higher salaries than those available in their countries of origin, are followed by their relatives looking for family reunification.

However, since 2007, increases in violence, organized crime, insecurity, political intolerance and environmental disasters in Latin America, Africa and Asia have increased the number of forced displacements of large population groups. Instead of unemployed young men, now family groups represent more than a half of the total number of immigrants from Haiti, Venezuela, Honduras and Africa in transit through and living in Mexico (SEGOB, 2017; OIM 2023, 2024). These groups first migrated to Chile or Brazil, from where they felt compelled to escape a second time due to xenophobia and racism historically reproduced in these societies. This apparent contradiction, particularly in Brazil, a country where more than a half of the population is Afro-descendant, is the reason why this article analyses the relationship between migration and the eugenics legitimization in Latin American societies.

In the state of the art, several studies analyze how Africans slavery was legitimated by Catholic church was a way to supply the indigenous labor force decimated during colonization and an excellent business responsible for the UK economic accumulation, banks and financial system. (Darien, 1995; Selfa, 2002; Klein & III, 2007; Keynes (1931) cited in Pecchi L, Piga L, 2008; Hall, 2020). Others analyze how, between the two world wars, eugenics shaped science, social and intellectual thoughts, policies and legislation in health, social behavior and immigration control (Stepan, 1991). Latin American studies show that the large majority of the population was formed by “Blacks, Indians, mestizos, and mulattoes” (Graham, 2006; Livi-Bacci, 2006; Goebel, 2016). And even Latin American elites were not eugenically pure, but racially miscegenetic, and the predominant indigenous and/or African features could not be hidden.

In this article, racism as a construct from colonial origins until modern republics has been reproduced, and that the racial heterogeneity of Latin American population challenged eugenics principles of racial purity in the ex-colonies. And how it was transplanted by European and USA scientific to the region as an academic elegant mean of domination, compared to previous explicit colonization means of domination. And the analysis shows how miscegenation was the main Latin America contribution to eugenics development, adaptation and updating.

The article concludes that race mixing miscegenation was a construct to represent a homogeneous population and identity of the new free nations. In Mexico ‘The Cosmic Race’ was built as a miscegenation as an ideal- Hiding indigenous and Afro descendants in the national population. In Brazil, the myth of Racial Democracy was useful for Brazilian elites to represent themselves as colorblind and merciful people, while Black people continue to be victims of racism and discrimination in all the spheres of the society.

As a result, eugenics, racism, and xenophobia are intersected in Latin America based on an ideal of whitening the population. And the new trends in immigration, with the predominance of migrants from Venezuela, Bolivia, Haiti and Africa is accompanied by several episodes of explicit and violent racism exposed in communication media, and it is visible in public life and institutions in Brazil, particularly against Black migrants from Haiti and Africa. The results are presented in three sections: the first analyses the trends in migration in the world and in Latin America — particularly in Brazil and Mexico — and the main changes in legislation in Brazil and Mexico which affect the numerous flows of migrants and displaced people in these countries, in a moment of strengthening of the controls over borders through the region, as an inheritance of the history of colonization and modern eugenics in the region. The second section presents the development and main features of eugenics in Latin America focusing on miscegenation in Brazil and Mexico, and the reproduction and updating of eugenics regarding perceptions, behaviors and regulations observed in Brazil and Mexico against migrants, and particularly against Africans and Afro-descendants. The third session presents the case of Haitian and African migrants moving through Latin America and how they are discriminated and victims of violence in Brazil due their skin color, reinforcing racism, xenophobia renewing old eugenic values and practices interiorized in Brazilian population.

2. Method

This study used a narrative or integrative review of literature on many empirical findings on migration and historical studies on colonization and eugenics to address a research overview of investigation in areas which are disparate and interdisciplinary. On the one hand, books, articles, OIM and government documents were analyzed to address changes in international migration and in border controls; on the other hand, a review of racism's origin, its reproduction and perpetuation from colonization and slavery to modern eugenics in order to analyze recent xenophobia, attacks and murders against Black immigrants in Latin America, in particular against Haitians and Africans in Brazil, the country with the second largest number of Afro-descendants in the world. Integrative review analysis is useful in this case to access a broader topic that has been conceptualized differently and studied within diverse disciplines and needs to be accessed based on a combination of perspectives and empirical data. The purpose of the integrative review is not to cover all articles ever published on each topic but rather to combine perspectives to create new analytical models, to map the development of diverse research fields over time and combine with data on other topics, based on a non-systematic review of research articles, books, and other published texts and official documents. This review allows the integration of the main ideas and relationships between migration and eugenics as a guide to analyze racism against Black immigrants (Snyder, 2019).

3. Results

3.1 Trends in international migration in a context of global colonization and eugenics

Europe and Asia are the most attractive regions for international migrants, receiving more than 80 million migrants in 2020, followed by North America (59 million) and Africa (25 million). The USA is the country with the highest number of immigrants, corresponding to 15% of its total population; followed by Germany, Saudi Arabia, Russia, UK, UAE, France, Canada, Australia, and Spain. In contrast, Latin America has the lowest number of immigrants in the world, along with Oceania, despite it having doubled from 7 to 15 million between 2005 and 2020 (OIM, 2023).

The high level of economic and social development, employment and salaries in the North explains their capacity to attract labor from Latin America, Africa and other less developed regions.

In 2020, the USA was the country with the largest foreign-born population in the world (15% of the total population), of whom nearly 341,000 are refugees and more than 1 million are asylum seekers, mostly from Latin America, and mainly from Venezuela, Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras. Canada hosted nearly 110,000 refugees and more than 85,000 asylum seekers, mainly from Nigeria, Turkey and Pakistan. In contrast, the main source countries are India (18 million), Mexico (11 million), Russia (11 million), China (10 million), Syria, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Ukraine, Philippines, Spain and Afghanistan. The corridor between Mexico and the USA is the largest in the world. Mexico has the highest number of emigrants in the world — 11 million, the second largest diaspora in the world, mostly living in the USA. The next largest diasporas are Indians and, in LAC, Venezuelans (5 million) and Colombians (3 million) (OIM, 2023).

Mexico is now a destination country for international migrants, who are living there, not only crossing the country to move to the USA.

3.1.1 From adult male job seekers to families escaping from violence and disasters.

From 2012 to 2018, most of the immigrants arriving in Mexico were temporal. After 2018, conflicts and disasters increased the proportion of permanent immigrants living in Mexico to 48%, which rose to more than 50% in 2019. The higher increases are observed among refugees and humanitarian asylum seekers, who are escaping from political conflicts in Haiti and Venezuela, or from organized crime in Colombia and El Salvador.

Mexico is the main country of transit for youths and adult male migrants from Central and South America to the North. Recent migration is increasingly composed of people displaced by violence or disasters (more than a half of the total), family groups, children and women, from Latin America, Africa and Asia.

As a result, Mexico is now not only a corridor for adult job seekers in transit to the USA, but also a country of residence for Latin American and African immigrants and their families.

3.1.2 Immigrants in Mexico are not mostly poor people from Latin America and Africa.

In Mexico, temporary licenses of residence are mostly given to North Americans (15,000), Europeans and Asians (around 8,000 each), countries of origin of 31 million immigrants living in Mexico, while South Americans (17 000) and Central Americans (3,900) total 21 million. By contrast, permanent licenses are mainly given to Central Americans (26,000) and South Americans (19,800), followed by North Americans (10,700), Caribbean people (8,574), Europeans (5,278) and Asians (4,140) (OIM, 2024).

Mexico is now the country of temporal and permanent residence for fifty thousand Latin Americans, who were in transit and found difficulties to live in the USA and decided to live in Mexico with their families. However, Mexico is also a place of residence for 23 million temporal immigrants from North America and Europe, who have never been seen as a problem; on the contrary, they are welcome, even though it is resulting in the gentrification of the most valued zones in the country like Mexico City.

The narrative about immigration as a “problem” is based on a discretionary criterion. The “troublesome immigrants” are labelled by nationality, country of origin, ethnicity, race, education, labor condition and culture, in brief, according to their inferior level of development and status, as established by eugenics laws since the beginning of the 20th Century.

Only half of the immigrants are considered to be part of the “troublesome” narrative — the 210,000 South and Central Americans in transit and at the US border, are in need of social policies, budgets and support. The other half of North Americans and Europeans have always been welcome (Pérez, 2012). Immigrants who need international protection because they are escaping from conflicts and politic persecution in their countries of origin are mainly Central Americans: 69% are from Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, or Nicaragua; and 28% are from South America — Venezuela, Colombia, Chile, as well as Caribbean countries. Those needing humanitarian support after disasters are mainly Central Americans (59%), Caribbean people (25%), Haitians, Cubans and Dominican Republicans, and South Americans (16%, mainly from Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Ecuador) (OIM, 2023).

Irregular immigration from the Global South increased dramatically after COVID-19: from 82,000 in 2020 to 310,000 in 2021 and 441,000 in 2022; three out of four of them are adult men and one quarter is women, although women, adolescents and youths are increasing proportionally (ICMPD, 2024). They are mostly coming from Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, Venezuela, Cuba, Nicaragua, Haiti, Ecuador, and Colombia; but also from other countries very far from Mexico — India, Bangladesh, China, and Nepal, crossing multiple borders to escape from violence and disasters (OIM, 2023).

In 2020, after Syria, Venezuela had the second highest number of displaced people through borders in the world. Moreover, Venezuela also has 171,000 refugees and 4 million displaced people not recognized formally as refugees in neighboring countries. Colombia is the main receiver country for Venezuelans (1.7 million). There are also 450,000 asylum seekers from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras living in other countries. Additionally, 106,000 Colombians and 114,000 El Salvadoreans were displaced from their country due to conflicts and violence in 2020 (OIM, 2024; ICMPD, 2024).

3.1.3 Irregular migration exposes migrants to criminalization, trafficking and slavery

Trafficking for forced labor predominates in all types of borders crossings, representing 83% of the total who pass through official border control posts. Depending on “polleros” or traffickers, migrants are submitted to practices similar to slavery and forced labor, as well as sexual exploitation. The main sectors using abuse against migrants and forced slavery are domestic employment (30% of the victims), construction (16%), agriculture (10%), manufacturing (9%) and hospitality (8%) (OIM, 2024).

3.1.4 Strengthening Border Controls

Since COVID-19, this migration crisis escalated and the USA hardened border closures and restrictions, leading migrants to postpone their trips, to become stranded in transit in Central America and Mexico, or to opt for more risky journeys, like the Darien Gap (Colombia-Panama), one of the most dangerous migration routes in the world. The employment of traffickers, mobility restrictions like the disrupting of asylum processes, and resettlement programs force migrants to remain in makeshift camps, and few countries facilitate the return and repatriation of those stranded abroad (Lucio et al., 2023).

The Mexican government has been forced to strengthen border controls in the North (Mexico/USA border) and in the Southeast (Mexico/Guatemala border). The use of military personnel at the border is growing, even detaining and expelling migrants with excessive use of force (SEGOB, 2017).

The authorities of Guatemala and Mexico returned 2,000 migrants to Honduras and the number of migrant arrests in Mexico increased from 8,500 in 2019 to 13,500 in 2020. The last decades have been characterized by regulations and policies to contain migration and a lack of effective protection for migrants (2001-2018).

A bilateral agreement between Mexico and the USA in 2000-2006 promoted the containment of migrants in transit and a new agreement from 2006-2012 established a policy based on two main goals: national security and the fight against the organized crime. Checkpoints were installed at the borders and the militarization of the southern border got stronger, with stricter control and the involvement of security forces.

The Mérida Initiative (2008), agreed with President Obama included an anti-immigrant policy, with equipment for registration of people at the border between Guatemala and Mexico, in what was considered an intervention in the international relations.

After denunciations of disrespect of human rights principles, between 2012-2018 a new national security paradigm of containment was implemented, influenced by the USA, based on two objectives: the management of migratory flows and the respect and guarantee of the human rights of migrants. However, in practice, the number of arrests and deported people increased, migrants' human rights were not respected, with the denunciation of several abuses and attacks, robberies, kidnappings, extortions, sexual violations, and murders against migrants.

In 2019, the current government assumed power in Mexico and the federal government's migration policy was included in regional development projects to generate employment and rights, to integrate migrants into the labor markets. Migrants who participated in caravans received a Visitor Card for Humanitarian Reasons (TVRH).

However, the implementation by the US government of section 235(b)(2)(c) of its Immigration and Nationality Act (SRE, 2018), established that asylum seekers in the United States must wait for their process in Mexico; a high number of foreigners detained by US at the border, crossing without documents, was the excuse to pressure the Mexican government with the threat of an increase in tariffs for all imports from Mexico, from five to 25 percent.

Mexico was forced to sign a “joint” declaration to take measures to reduce irregular migratory flows, deploying the National Guard on the border in the south, dismantling a caravan of Central American, Caribbean and African migrants, although respecting their human rights.

In Central America, migration from and through the northern areas became more difficult, due to restriction controls, economic insecurity, violence, crime and the effects of climate change. At the end of 2020, Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador had nearly 900,000 forcibly displaced people living within or outside their territories. Of them, more than half a million had crossed several borders, and an enormous majority (79%) were living in the United States of America.

Since 2018 migrant caravans, cross-border collective flows of migrants by land have increased in number and frequency, increasingly comprised of families, women and children. In 2021 only, 226,000 migrants from Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador arrived at the border with the USA in caravans, about 34,000 of whom were unaccompanied minors (Vega et al, 2003). The USA and Mexican governments strengthened their border controls and the military personnel at the border, detaining and expelling migrants. The same happened at the Southern border Mexico-Guatemala. The authorities of Guatemala and Mexico returned 2,000 migrants to Honduras, as well as the number of migrant arrests in Mexico increased from 8,500 in 2019 to 13,500 in 2020.

In the Caribbean, the corridor from Cuba and the Dominican Republic to the USA is one of the most important in the region — in 2020, there were 860,000 migrants. 200,000 Venezuelans lived in the Caribbean, in 2021: Dominican Republic (100,000), Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana and Curaçao (10% of the total population).

In South America, 80% of migrants are intraregional. More than 5 million Venezuelans emigrated since 2015, of whom more than 4 million moved to South America in an irregular situation to neighboring countries: Colombia, Brazil, Peru, Chile and Ecuador. The governments need to adapt their legislations; Colombia offered temporary protection for the next 10 years, Brazil and Peru granted humanitarian visas (OIM, 2023).

Violence fueled by paramilitary groups in Colombia caused more than 100,000 new displacements in 2020, with an increase of 177% in 2021. In 2020, rains in Brazil caused about three-quarters of the year's 358,000 disaster displacements. As a result, 80% of South American migrants are intraregional migrants and this is increasing, almost equaling the number of South Americans living outside Latin America, due to tightening immigration policies and increasing employment opportunities, proximity and reduced transportation costs.

The regularization of displaced Venezuelans is the major challenge for South American countries. Since 2015, more than 5 million Venezuelans emigrated, and more than 4 million have moved to other countries in South America as irregular migrants: Colombia (more than 1.7 million), Peru (more than 1 million), Chile (about 460,000) and Ecuador (more than 360,000) (OIM, 2023).

The large influx of immigrants has been a challenge for the issuance of visas and the granting of asylum. In 2020, Brazil and Peru were granting humanitarian visas to a substantial proportion of Venezuelans, but many remain in an irregular situation. Colombia offered temporary protection for the next 10 years to displaced Venezuelans. In Argentina and Chile, women outnumber South American migrant men, working predominantly in domestic service and caring for the elderly.

These new trends in the arrival of irregular immigrants from the region, Africa and Asia in transit and living in Latin America have challenged governments, institutions and the population. Politicians, the media and the societies have renewed old narratives about the foreigners as a security risk, a threat, and competitors in the labor market, adopting dehumanizing and abusive discourses and behaviors against them.

Haitians, Venezuelans, Hondurans and Africans first migrate to Chile or Brazil, but they must escape a second time due to Xenophobia and racism. This reaction against specific groups of immigrants renewed the eugenic assumption of racial inferiority and superiority, and the need to control and restrict the considered “problematic” immigrants — the genetically undesirable targeted ethnic-racial population groups and nationalities.

3.2 *From colonization to modern eugenics, from European colonizers to privileged creole diaspora in modern States.*

Latin America's racial mixture is a unique feature of the political and social landscape. Interracial descentance was necessary to reproduce the few colonizers, a minority of European single men (Pérez, 2012). During colonization, indigenous women were raped and kidnapped to produce mixed children with European origin and identity (Darien, 1995), alongside indigenous genocide and enslaved Africans being trafficked to Latin America for three centuries.

In the context of the Seven Years' War 1756/73, European Empires fought to establish control over Silesia, North America and India; France and Spain lost dominance to Britain, changing the European balance of power. Spain recognized the land ownership of the American Creoles (1759), but in sequence, the English colonial troops in North America invaded Dominica (1761), Havana, and other Caribbean islands. (Baugh, 2011).

Spain was progressively weakened and then, occupied by Napoleon troops (1808/1830) (Webster and Magdoff, 2024). Conflicts and rebellions for independence broke out in Venezuela and Mexico and then, inspired by the USA independency, spread throughout the region.

Antislavery and independence's leaders from the Creole elite (Navarro, 2023) mobilized the population to confront colonial forces and, in the second half of the 19th century, achieved independence -- the Haitian Revolution was followed by Venezuela, Paraguay, Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, Central American countries, Bolivia, and Brazil. Mexican indigenous actively participate in the twelve years independence war (Von Wobeser, 2011).

The new independent nations continued influenced by the intellectual and philosophical movements in Europe and the USA. And the new liberal republics continued with economies based on mineral and agriculture exportation, deep inequalities and the majority of the population -- indigenous and Afro descendent groups, excluded from development and citizenship, although developing national identities based on diverse and original cultures, arts and traditions.

During the first two decades, marked by conflicts, the Great War (1914-1918), and the fall of three royal empires -- Austria (1918), Russia (1917) and Ottoman (1922), whose colonies were in conflict and achieving independence: Portugal, Mongolia, Albania, Tibet, Finlandia, Estonia, Islandic, Polonia, Hungry, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Right away, one of the deadliest pandemics (the Spanish flow 1918-20) and the economic depression broke out in Europe (1920-21), as well as the economic crash of 1929, and the 2nd World War. (Webster and Magdoff, 2024).

For two decades Europeans were escaping from war, destruction and poverty, moving to the ex-colonies (Pérez, 2012), recently rebelled and liberated in bloody wars against European domination. There is a general consensus that European emigration increased, above all, from a double impulse, the pushing European crisis and, on the one hand, the pulling America's economic growth.

In contrast to crisis, conflicts, wars and epidemics in Europe, Latin American new republics guaranteed stability and new opportunities. During the 18th century, migrations from Europe to the Ibero-American colonies grew significantly. A large European diaspora composed by thousands of Spaniards, Portuguese and other Europeans moved in search of enrichment, a better life and lands. Latin American population doubled between 1850 and 1900 (from 30 and a half million to almost 62 million). In 1920 there were about 2 and a half million Spaniards, the majority of poor origins and illiterate (Pérez, 2012; Goebel, 2016).

Despite the massive immigration, European and their descendants continued being a minority among large non-European hostile populations. Even as a minority, European men, even those who were part of the lowest occupational strata, were part of the dominant group in the colonial relationship, integrating Latin American elites, defining political, military and social transformations, or simply accessing discretionally the best professional

positions since the colonial time, as colonizers, until the independence process as creole, and in new republics as European descendants and new immigrants.

During this period, Europe progressively lost the profitable slavery commerce, colonies, and the colonial geopolitics power around the world, while developed the social Darwinism and positivism, (Stern, 2016). Eugenics was created in Britain and the USA as a pseudoscience and, in the early 19th century, was legitimated in Europe and exported to the colonies. In the early 19th Century, European intellectuals implanted the supremacist myth in Latin American universities and curricula, in policies, law and medicine, in intellectual and scientific environment and media. For decades Eugenics oriented the development goals of governments and elites through international diasporas and networks, as an efficient neocolonial tool of European dominance, reinforcing the narrative of inferiority to submit the majority – the indigenous and Afro-descendant populations in the ex-colonies.

In the next session we discuss the eugenics history and legacy in Latin America, with focus on immigration, xenophobia and the selective and affirmative policy of privileges and quotas for European

3.2.1 Eugenic racial purity and cleaning populations

Racism against indigenous and Afro-descendant people was created in Europe in parallel with colonization, implemented directly by the Cristian churches, whose religious authorities legitimized the inhuman and soulless condition of the non-Europeans. In Modern Europe, while the colonizers were consolidating the values of equality, fraternity and liberty for all their citizens (Selfa, 2002), in America, the conquerors adopted strategies of war, slavery, and over-exploitation of the original populations, resulting in massive reductions in indigenous populations and even the extinction of some groups (Livi-Bacci, 2006).

To supply the indigenous labor force, since the first decades of the 14th Century, European kingdoms promoted the trafficking of millions of enslaved Africans — an excellent business responsible for the UK economic accumulation, banks and financial system consolidation and industrialization (Darien, 1995; Selfa, 2002; Klein & III, 2007; Keynes (1931) cited in Pecchi L, Piga L, 2008; Hall, 2020). As a result, in some Latin American countries there were fifteen Africans to each European: in colonial Buenos Aires, Lima and Mexico City almost one half of the population was African, in contrast to the vast majority in the Caribbean and Brazilian plantation economies, where this population lived under cruel laws and treatment, forced inter-racial intercourse and marriages predominant in local practices (Darien, 1995).

In the 18th century, values of equality and rights inspired the American Independence and the French Revolution, in contrast with Africans' trafficking and slavery — the highly profitable business that could not be interrupted, but reframed. Instead of previous religious beliefs and values on the "soulless" Africans, the modern science of human races targeted non-Europeans as sub-humans, with inferior phenotypes, intellectual capacities and moral values. From 1860 to the first half of the 1900s, modern institutions, laws, curricula and policies were created to disseminate eugenics' values, criteria, classification and policies around the world (Selfa, 2002; Klein & III, 2007). From Hume and Thomas Jefferson in the United States to British intellectuals and decision-makers supplanted the medieval-Christian "royal blue blood" with the modern-scientific "upper racial blood" to legitimate social control and inequalities.

The eugenics' framework and policies aimed to "improve the innate qualities of the human race" through "creative selection," preventing the reproduction of the inferior people or "parasites" — through sterilization, isolation, prohibition of interracial marriage and offspring, as well as controlling immigration of the "bad species" — with bad physical and mental gifts, disabled, malformed, mentally ill, black, degenerate, immoral, criminal, and undesirables, who should be "gradually eliminated for the goodness of humanity and the future generations". (Galton, 1904; Kuhl, 2002; Black, 2003; Weiss, 1986; Taussing, 1911, as cited in Cohen, 2016).

In the USA, the "Lethal Selection" was cited in a book proposing the execution or destruction of people with infections or physical disability (Popenoe, 1918, as cited in Black, 2003), as well as the "lethal chamber" or gas chambers operating in public places. However, "the American society was not prepared for an organized lethal

solution” and, instead, many eugenic institutions and doctors adopted the old colonial practices used against the indigenous: offering milk from tuberculous infected cows to patients, neglecting the care of newborns, forced segregation, sterilization and restrictions on marriage (Black, 2003; Cohen, 2016).

Between the two world wars, after Hitler’s rise to power and radicalized policies to promote the pure and superior race while eliminating the bad-inferior races and elements, eugenics was legitimized and disseminated in the USA and Europe by international organizations and pressure groups, in connection with other modern values — nationalism, racism, sexuality and gender control, social hygiene, and modern genetics (Stepan, 1991).

In 1928, eugenics was an official discipline offered in 376 university courses at major schools in the United States to more than 20,000 students, and critics of eugenics were rare. (Kimmelman, 2007; Kuhl, 2002). As an international project of population engineering, by 1930, eugenics had been accepted by thirty countries under local scientific, cultural, institutional, and political conditions in all scientific disciplines. (Bowler 1984; Adams, 1990). With great public acceptance, eugenic legislation, policies, and curricula were officially reproduced by the elites of scientists, intellectuals, and decision-makers, as well as internalized by populations.

After the Second World War, Nazi crimes against humanity were condemned, eugenics fell into disgrace and came to be frowned upon, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) was approved. However, after decades of scientific and popular legitimation, eugenics was already internalized in the political and intellectual elites and in the population, and continued to be reproduced in medicine and genetics, in laws and justice, in policies and communication media, in population beliefs, attitudes and practices.

3.2.2 Eugenics - a more civilized and pseudoscientific mechanism of colonization

In the ex-colonies, Eugenics was a modern, more civilized and elegant mean of domination, compared to previous explicit colonization means like war, rapes, slavery, and catechization.

In the first decades of the 20th Century, Italian and French eugenicists promoted Lamarckian eugenics in Latin America, training scientists and implementing sanitary systems, urbanization, public health, vaccination, child and maternal health. Some decades later, the Anglo-German eugenics or Mendelism (Stern, 2016) was financed and disseminated by the USA, and Harvard professors moved to regions to reform universities’ curricula mainly in Law and Medicine, followed by policies and laws.

Between the two world wars, eugenics movements were multiplied within the whole region, shaping science, social and intellectual thoughts, policies and legislation in health, social behavior and immigration control, as well as offering courses on genetics and the Pan American conferences until the 1940s. The International Latin Federation of Eugenics Societies was founded in 1935, followed by the creation of eugenics societies in Mexico, Peru and Brazil. Several delegates from twenty Latin American countries participated in an international meeting. Eugenic policies updated and renewed some colonizer privileges and imbalanced power over the local population through discretionary selection of immigrants accessing governments and positions in the economy, qualified employment, interracial marriage, land and housing expropriation.

3.2.3 Latin American mixing race is not eugenically pure: A mixed, but whitening population.

Latin American racial heterogeneity challenged eugenics principles of racial purity. In the new republics, the elites in power imagined and aspired to be Europeans and even Nordics. They made efforts to establish economic, social and family ties primarily with these regions, adopting liberalism and overpowering influence to survive as a minority, to achieve social mobility, and to justify their local dominance over a large majority of “Blacks, Indians, mestizos, and mulattoes” (Graham, 2006). Even Latin American elites were not eugenically pure, but racially miscegenetic, identifying themselves as a minority of superior European descendants managing numerous races in the ex-colonies.

A pure White supremacy was not immediately possible, the predominant indigenous and/or African features could not be hidden, and miscegenation was recreated from the past by force and racial agreements among different original population groups and multiple diasporas, always preserving European racial superiority and privileges.

The eugenic principle of racial purity must be put aside, and overcome with a proxy, a eugenic adaptation – a homogeneous mixed population but with an aspiration of purity in the future — something to be built in due course with engineering population policies. Eugenics was adapted to value miscegenation instead of racial purity, in a moment when the new nation-states and national identities were the main formative components after the independence. Latin America contributed to eugenics development, adaptation and updating (Stepan, 1991).

Race mixing miscegenation was a construct to represent a homogeneous population and identity of the new free nations. However, White supremacy should be preserved and reproduced in the eugenics engineering project and, for that, a racial mixing scale coexisted as a mechanism to continue building racial superiority and oppressing those perceived as inferior, remarking power limits and inequalities among classes and ethnic-racial groups. In the absence of racial purity, some racial mixtures are better than others: the most European is on the top, followed by mixed, indigenous and, on the bottom, Africans. The racial scale of preferences builds a homogeneous mixed population aspiring to progressively whiten in the future.

The same population policies were reintroduced with new faces: miscegenation privileging whiter offspring, selective population control to limit non-White reproduction, and migration of the “best” desired groups — Western Europeans.

Racial mixture in Chile, Argentina, and even in Brazil, claims to racial homogeneity and, also, to a superiority relative to the rest of Latin America.

3.2.4 The Mexican ‘The Cosmic Race’. Miscegenation as an ideal- Hiding indigenous and Afro descendants

The Mexican transition to independence was achieved by a twelve-year war. The first three decades were marked by several coups’ d’état, a monarchy with a self-proclaimed emperor, revolts, struggles for power between conservative and monarchy groups versus republicans supported by the United States, an intervention of the USA, and the constitution establishing a federalist republic. Mexico had two French interventions, one of them after the Independence, with a European emperor named by Napoleon.

During the following period, the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz (1876-1911), intellectuals adopted positivism and social Darwinism to envision a Europeanized society looking for whiteness in phenotype and culture. Indigenous, African, or Asian ancestry were roadblocks to progress and should be excluded or wholly absorbed into a whitening body politic.

The revolutionary literati Andrés Molina Enríquez rejected the veneration of whiteness and instead elevated the mestizo as the superlative racial type.

The 1910 revolution had massive participation of indigenous people and women. Mexico started the 20th Century as a laic and secular post-revolutionary State, that faced the Catholic obstacles and resistance against political changes. Reconciled with the emergence of modern eugenics since 1920, the revolutionary government adopted the Vasconcellos’s vision of a homogeneous population, the mestizo as the “cosmic” race, born out of the fusion of Caucasian, Indian, and African peoples. Homogeneity resulted in an unofficial but real marginalization of the indigenous and non-aculturated mestizos. The indigenous population was assimilated into the homogeneous race and development project. Indigenous languages and cultures were hidden and seen to be inferior by the mestizo ideal of a homogenized race and development project (Stavenhagen and Carrasco, 1988). Moreover, 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). Although Mexico received the third largest group of enslaved Africans in America, this population group was denied in The Cosmic Race, and only since 2015 have they been identified in the census.

3.2.5 Brazilian Racial Democracy. A paradise for Whites, a burning hell for Black people.

Brazil has the largest and longest-lasting slavery system in the Americas, characterized by plantations economic system and, after abolition, Black people continued in subaltern positions. Until the 1950s Brazil was defined by scholars, governments, and international agencies (UNESCO) as a Racial democracy: “a racial system without any legal or institutional obstacles for racial equality... without prejudice or discrimination”.

Gilberto Freire identified racial “zones of confraternization,” using as example that White settlers had sex with Black enslaved women and, consequently, by miscegenation... “there were cases of pure confraternization between the sadism of the white settler and the masochism of indigenous and Black women”, that would decrease the social distance between Black and White people, promoting harmony between races and creating an inclusive democratic system — the racial democracy.

Brazilian elites used these ideas to represent the nation as a land of progress, where “advanced” inhabitants had eliminated “backward prejudices.” Brazilian elites portrayed themselves as colorblind and merciful people, who were even willing to have sex with “them”.

However, currently, Black people are still the main target of homicides: 75% of people murdered are Black, mainly youths. Violence against Black women in the country increased 54% between 2015 and 2020. White people represent 70% of the wealthiest Brazilians, while Black people represent 75% of the poorest ones. Structural racism is denied by the elites and explicit in everyday news, in all the institutions, and in daily family and social life.

3.2.6 Brazilian “racial democracy” denies racism.

At the end of the nineteenth Century Brazilian government financed the immigration from Europe. After the abolition of slavery, European workers arrived to work in the new economy in a process of technification and pre-industrialization, combined with a project of Eugenic engineering of whitening the nation. Eugenics was institutionalized and internalized universally in the intellectual networks, universities, in policies and among the population.

Until today Brazilians don't declare themselves as Black: only 5% in 1991 declared being Black and, after 30 years of affirmative policies, the proportion of self-declared Blacks has doubled and achieved only 10% in 2022. The proportion of people who declare themselves as mixed/pardo increased from 38% to 45%, and White self-declared decreased from 52% to 43%. Being Black is the worse situation on the social scale, and therefore, the population resists assuming black skin-color and phenotype.

During the military dictatorship (1964-1980), migrants were classified in the National Security law, considered invaders and dangerous. In 1980, a Foreigners Statute was approved considering migrants to be a security threat to the country, and only qualified migrants were welcome and authorized to live in the country.

After strong mobilizations and the approval of a new Migration Law, the terms “refugees” and “asylum seekers” were included in legislation, in concordance with the human rights approach. The new law substituted the term “foreign” by “immigrant” and established their right to access public policies, organizations, humanitarian support, following the international framework of the UN.

3.3 *Brazilian racial democracy, xenophobia and racism against indigenous and Afro-descendant migrants from Latin America and Africa*

With the increasing political conflicts and disasters around the world, Brazil assumed the role of both route of transit and destination for migrants from the Global South. Migrants were more numerous and facing inflexible border controls, criminalization, racism and xenophobia in the North, and escaping through Latin America and the Caribbean region. In the last two decades, the immigrants' profile changed: Caribbean people, Africans and Asians arrived, mainly Haitians, Venezuelans, Senegalese, Bolivians, Colombians, and Bengalis.

However, eugenics and the criminalization of Black people were internalized in the population, and xenophobia and racism have always been present.

After the coup d'état, in 2017, the authoritarian governments organized anti-immigration protests in Sao Paulo asking for a New Law of Migration, accusing immigrants of being rapists and bandits. In 2019, the migratory policy again adopted the perception of immigrants as a problem of national security, Brazil left the UN Global Agreement for a Secure Migration of the UN, and migrants were considered dangerous, when exposed to be summarily deported, renewing eugenic policies of discretionary acceptance and rejection of migrants, according to their country of origin and race.

3.3.1 The Haitian crisis, 2010 earthquake and current violence, moving to Brazil, Chile, Panama and Mexico.

After the earthquake in 2010 in Haiti, facing the destruction of infrastructure around the country and particularly in the capital, hundreds of thousands of people were displaced to live in refugee camps and several increased emigration flows to North and Latin America occurred. This trend continued and was reinforced with a recent crisis of political and civil violence. In 2020 there were 15,000 Haitian migrants at the US-Mexico border, suffering restrictions, coercion, and inhuman treatment. Thousands of people spent days under the bridge that connects the Mexican and US sides. As soon as the border restrictions of the pandemic were lifted, hundreds of thousands have spread across the Americas over the past 24 years: Brazil, Chile, Colombia, and Panama, even crossing the dreaded Darién Gap between Panama and Colombia. Colombia, Costa Rica, Brazil and Mexico have become receiving countries and granted humanitarian visas and residence visas to displaced people from Haiti, but Panama has strengthened the controls at the Darien border with Colombia and the proposal to build a wall to stop migration was an important topic in the elections in 2024.

3.3.2 *Haitians large transit in LAC to USA*

Haitians migrated firstly to Brazil, then from Brazil to Chile, then from Chile to Colombia, and then to Panama. In Colombia, Panama and other Central American countries, the governments and populations pushed them towards the north, supporting their trip to leave the country. That is the opposite situation, in contrast with the immigration of retired and investor immigrants from the north.

Haitians' invisible migrant status is tied to structural racism and discrimination, including Brazil or Chile, where migrants were also displaced, for a second time. Their double condition of being migrants and refugees implies a double or triple vulnerability of migrants of African descent.

It is not surprising that Haitians and Africans are discriminated against in Brazil, a country of which half of the population is of African descent. Xenophobia and discrimination are not due to language -- they speak neither Portuguese nor Spanish, nor is it because they aren't national citizens. The French have never been discriminated against in Latin America. African migrants also suffer discrimination due to their country of origin and because of their skin color – black (Cogo and Silva, 2019).

3.3.3 *Haitians cross several countries suffering racism and xenophobia.*

In the 2000s, Haitian, Congolese, Bengali and Senegalese accelerated immigration to Brazil.

A group of Senegalese lives in the city of Niteroi, State of Rio de Janeiro, where they built family and community networks supporting arriving and transiting Senegalese migrants with the integration process in the community, working in precarious jobs, finding a house, establishing social and institutional contacts, getting formal documentation, mediating tensions and contradictions, and facing racism. In the process of control and selectivity of the “desired immigrants”, according to their qualification and race conducts, Brazil reproduces eugenic policies and beliefs.

In 2012, Cuban doctors were contracted to work in marginalized communities, but at the airport, they were attacked by a group of Brazilian doctors who organized a violent protest, accusing the Cubans because they were Black and they “don’t look like doctors, but like domestic workers.”

Silva et al. (2024) identifies the phases of contact between the Brazilian and Haitian populations: In 2004, Brazil commanded a UN mission to stabilize Haiti – MINUSTAH, the 2010 earthquake started the greater migration process and Brazilian government opened opportunities with an easy legal registration of migrants.

4. Discussion

Cogo and Silva (2019) describe how racism is explicit in coverage by the Brazilian media, when analyzing six events related to Haitian immigration between 2014 and 2016, which relates the presence of Haitians in Brazil with veiled or explicit racism, selectivity in the treatment of different migratory groups in the country and the ties between racism and xenophobia, and between migrations and the domestic political situation.

UN analyses of cases of racism and xenophobia against Haitians in Brazil registered by communication media confirm this trend: In 2015 a Haitian was beaten in the street in the State of Mato Grosso do Sul, when he was approached by a group of eight men who soon began kicking him, mainly in the face.

In 2017, a Haitian was killed in Porto Alegre with a knife in a guesthouse where he lived.

In 2019, a shop whose owner organized a support network for migrants was attacked with bombs in the city of Sao Paulo; and another man was beaten when he was working in the streets of Manaus. In 2020, a Haitian was beaten and killed in the State of Sao Paulo, and another was beaten to death in Manaus.

In 2024, 46,000 refugees live in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, most of them are Venezuelans, Haitians and Cubans. The heavy rains in this state displaced almost 10% of the population (850 422) in three hundred and forty-five municipalities, who moved to shelters provided by the government. Haitians and Venezuelans affected by the floods reported xenophobia and racist behavior in the shelters where they sought protection as victims of the disaster. The UNUR confirmed that these reports of xenophobia cases are not isolated: “Food is mainly being served raw... children who are not eating because the food is being raw. ...refugees receive only one toothbrush per family... Clothes and other hygiene materials are not equally distributed among the homeless. ...They are not giving bottles of water”.

Eugenics, racism, and xenophobia have intersected in Latin America since the formation of national states, with the acceptance of the population miscegenation and homogenization, through population engineering projects of ‘The Cosmic Race’ in Mexico and ‘Racial democracy’ in Brazil, which are reproduced until current days with explicit xenophobia and racism against Black migrants and refugees.

Several episodes of explicit and violent racism are exposed daily in the communication media, and it is visible in public life and institutions in Brazil, against migrants from Haiti and Africa.

Even in a situation where the federal government promotes equality and the law protects Black and migrant people from discrimination and racism, the population reproduces racist and eugenic behaviors, and some local officials adopt the eugenic logic of criminalization of migrants, in particular Afro-descendants who are not desirable in the whitening project of the nation.

The inheritance of colonization and slavery as well as modern eugenics has a continuity in the present, through the belittling and criminalization of Black people, that can be observed also against immigrants who are Afro-descendants, particularly against those with the darkest skin colors, who are not only a threat as foreigners, but also a threat against the eugenic project of mixing races, but only to improve the population through whitening the population.

5. Conclusion

Eugenics continues to reproduce the belittling of Black people inherited from colonization and slavery, but hidden behind a scientific base, not to be seen as explicitly cruel, but justified and legitimate in modernity with a new legitimization to do the same in democratic states. Black immigrants are targeted as foreign undesirable groups when crossing borders and countries in the region, where the history of colonization, slavery, racism, and eugenics survives in societies with speeches, perceptions, attitudes and relational behaviors against the “others” who are seen as a threat against the whitening eugenic population project and aspirations.

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