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## Racial Hierarchies in Latin America that Affected My Black Experience

Tiye Gardner

Western Kentucky University, tiye.gardner625@topper.wku.edu

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RACIAL HIERARCHIES IN LATIN AMERICA THAT AFFECTED MY BLACK  
EXPERIENCE

A Capstone Project Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree Bachelor of Arts  
with Honors College Graduate Distinction at  
Western Kentucky University

By  
Tiye Gardner  
May 2019

\*\*\*\*\*

CE/T Committee:

Professor and Director of CCSJ, Leash Ashwill, Chair

Doctor Dana Cuomo, Second Reader

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2019

I dedicate this thesis to my family, who without pushing me to do my best in school, I would not be here. In addition to my late best friend, Nicky, who genuinely motivated, inspired, and supported me in everything I did. I miss you.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to Leah Ashwill and Dr. Dana Cuomo for their time and support of me for this project. It was not easy, but their guidance lead me to the best possible outcome of this thesis and Black Lives Matter fashion show I have ever had. Thank you to the Honors College for being flexible and supportive in every way for this project. You allowed me to do the kind of project that spoke to me and allowed me to learn and grow so much, rather than a strict guide lined paper and project that could have been a bore to do. Thank you to everyone who participated in the Black Lives Matter fashion show. It has been an honor to coordinate five fashion shows in five years, and I hope to continue this event in the future.

## ABSTRACT

I was able to study abroad three times, as well as study away. I went abroad to Buenos Aires, Argentina (fall 2016 for three months); Oaxaca, Mexico (fall 2017 for three months); New York City, New York (spring 2018 for four months); and Heredia, Costa Rica (winter 2019 for three weeks). These opportunities have changed my life tremendously. But no one told me what all going abroad entailed. When a person goes abroad, they do not have a bubble around them that shields them from the way that country operates.

Students all over the world learn about Christopher Columbus but fail to learn the truth about his impact and how it changed the world forever. Europeans (I will be discussing Spanish and Portuguese more specifically) enslaved Indigenous people and Africans. While the Europeans were destroying these countries, individuals, and families, they were also implementing ideas and policies that continue to affect people of color all over the world, today.

Colorism and racism are social constructions that are embedded into our social norms, policies, education, and other institutions that oppress and discriminate people of color only. Colorism and racism are consequences from the racial caste system that the Spaniards created in Mexico to determine a hierarchy based on ethnicity and eventually on race to the liking of the Spaniards.

In this paper, I will analyze my experiences abroad and show the connections between the history of those cities and my experiences. These connections will help readers understand racial hierarchies in Latin America and how they came to be, due to colonizers and slavery. Then, I will write about my Fifth Black Lives Matter fashion

show that I coordinated and used my experiences abroad to inspire my pieces and the messages I wanted my audience to take away. Understanding my experiences and history in these countries are important for the WKU Study Abroad office to know so that they will prepare students for the experiences and challenges they can face while abroad due to the color of their skin.

Vita

*EDUCATION*

Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, KY B.A. in Spanish – Mahurin Honors College Graduate Honors Capstone: <i>Racial Hierarchies in Latin America</i>	May 2019
DuPont Manual High School, Louisville, KY	May 2015

*PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE*

Louisville’s Center for Health Equity Healing Future’s Intern	Summer 2013-2015
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*INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE*

Buenos Aires, Argentina	Fall 2016
Oaxaca, Mexico	Fall 2017
Heredia, Costa Rica	Winter 2018

*PRESENTATIONS*

Gardner, T. (2019, May). *Racial hierarchies in Latin America*.  
Bowling Green, KY.

## CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	iv
Abstract.....	v
Vita.....	vii
History.....	1
Methods.....	8
Buenos Aires, Argentina.....	9
Oaxaca, Mexico .....	21
Fashion Show .....	29
Conclusion .....	37

## HISTORY

I am a young Black woman from the East side of Louisville, Kentucky where growing up there was housing projects, poverty, and violence all around us. My father pushed education on my sisters and I since we began school, because he said it was “the ticket to success.” To date, my father has completed his Doctorate degree, and my mother has two master’s degrees. It was not an option for us to take education lightly, as we were expected to go to college. Therefore, I did.

As I climbed my way through K-12, I realized I wanted to study abroad when I got to college. I cannot recollect who and where I got the idea from; it was just something I heard that people did when they went to college. To my fortune, universities are pushing more students to go abroad now more than ever, and during my four undergraduate years, I was able to study abroad three times, as well as study away. I went abroad to Buenos Aires, Argentina (fall 2016 for three months); Oaxaca, Mexico (fall 2017 for three months); New York City, New York (spring 2018 for four months); and Heredia, Costa Rica (winter 2019 for three weeks). These opportunities have changed my life tremendously.

At the beginning of my sophomore year, I went to Buenos Aires, Argentina. I wanted to go to learn Spanish, to make local friends, and to grow personally, professionally, and academically, but no one told me what all going abroad entailed. When a person goes abroad, they do not have a bubble around them that shields them from the way that country operates. After a month or so in Argentina, I realized that something was off. When I was walking with two white peers of my group down the streets in Argentina and I would be the only one man catcalled and used the words

“negrita” or “morena” I realized that they were making calls based on my color. When I was in Costa Rica, there was a woman who had dropped some money and I helped her by picking it up, she replies with “gracias mi negrita.” If a white person had picked up the money for the woman would she have responded with “gracias mi blanquita?” I realized that skin color plays an important role in Latin America.

In this paper, I will analyze my experiences abroad and show the connections between the history of those cities and my experiences. These connections will help readers understand racial hierarchies in Latin America and how they came to be, due to colonizers and slavery. This research is important because people of color are sent abroad every semester, but they are not made aware of issues they may be subjected to due to the color of their skin while abroad. It is necessary that the student is made aware so they can know what to expect and how to deal with whatever they are faced with while abroad in a healthy way. It is also important to research how people of color are perceived in different countries, as well as what place they hold as people in those countries.

“In 1492, Christopher Columbus sailed the ocean blue...” Students all over the world are taught the history of Christopher Columbus “founding” America while trying to get to India. Students continue failing to learn the truth of what really happened when Columbus reached the Americas and how that contact changed the world forever. When I was in Costa Rica, I took a Culture and Literature of Latin America class, and we had two units; one, before Cristobol Colon; and, two, after Cristobol Colon. The indigenous people gave Christopher Columbus that name because he was a Christian (Cristiano in Spanish) and Colonizer (Colon in Spanish). With the arrival of Cristobol Colon in 1492 came the fall of the last great Indigenous empire – Los Aztecas. The Aztecs were the

backbone of the indigenous world, so when the Aztec empire fell, the rest of the indigenous communities fell with it. “Epidemics raged wherever intruders appeared; with their materials and techniques the Europeans were able to conquer whenever they felt it imperative to do so” (Bushnell, Lockhart, and Kittleson).

After some time of the Europeans terrorizing, enslaving, and erasing their culture, indigenous people began to die in large numbers, leaving the Spaniards with less people able to work on their plantations, houses, and castles. Europeans began stealing people from Africa and bringing them to Latin America, because they knew Africans were more resilient in the face of disease and hard labor. According to Bushnell, Lockhart, and Kittleson, slaves are people who are forced to work without pay and are separated from their families and country of origin. Although the most notable year for the first African slave to reach the United States is 1619, this is not the first time that African slaves had been brought to the Americas. According to *Slavery in Latin America: The Chronology*, in 1442, Portugal starts slave trade when Antón Gonsalves brings 10 black slaves from Gold Coast (Rio d'Ouro) to Lisbon in exchange for Muslim Moorish prisoners.” So, it can be assumed that the first slaves did not arrive as late as 1619, since the first documented African slave activity is in 1442.

In Latin America, colonizers from Spain and Portugal created an ethnic caste system after the introduction and mixing of African slaves from the slave trade with colonizers and indigenous people.

“To organize the diversity, the Spaniards resorted to an ethnic hierarchy, ranking each mixed type according to its physical and cultural closeness to a Spanish ideal.” And as people continued to mix a new generation called “*castas*,” compiled of people

who “assimilated to each other and intermingled, occupied the lower edge of Hispanic society,” (Bushnell, Lockhart, and Kittleson).

According to Douglas (2004), Spaniards wanted to be so clear and descriptive of the hierarchy of people on the caste system. They compared skin color, features, and even hair types as well as who mixed with who to classify people. “Ateizados were very dark-skinned Africans sometimes called Negros retintos, or “double dyed” Africans. Many specific sub-groups appeared: albinos, tornatra’s, sambayos, cambujos, albrizados, barcinos, etc.,” (Douglas 2004).

Even though the caste system was originally based on ethnicity, the physical appearance that the Spaniards also contributed into the hierarchy and the continued intermixing of people helped the system to evolve into a racial caste system after so many generations.

“Race refers to a person's physical characteristics, such as bone structure and skin, hair, or eye color.” However, “Ethnicity, refers to cultural factors, including nationality, regional culture, ancestry, and language,” (Race vs. Ethnicity).

This led to systemic oppression that leads to the lack of equity, justice, and pursuit of happiness for people of color, as well as the delegitimization of people of color inside and outside of their country. This oppression takes many forms, from microaggressions to direct murder of people of color.

The racial caste system in Latin America contributed to what people experience today as colorism. According to a Time Magazine article, “dark skin is demonized, and light skin wins the prize.” In other words, colorism is different from racism in that race is a social construct of biological difference (black, white, Asian), and colorism is about the

hue of the skin. According to Anti-Defamation League (ADL), a leading anti-hate organization, racism is “the belief that a particular race is superior or inferior to another...” These two concepts are similar in their oppressive outcomes and actions towards groups of people, but colorism can happen within the same ethnic groups, whereas racism happens between different ethnic groups. However, you look at it, light skin is valued as ‘better’ than dark skin.

In the United States today, colorism and racism are present, and they both heavily affect us. Not only do people favor light skin over dark skin, but also darker skinned people experience oppression due to that favoritism. According to David Knight, a writer at Southern Poverty Law Center, the association of dark skin with criminality has become a very deep-rooted stereotype. “Multiple studies have shown that dark-skinned people are perceived to be more suspicious, more likely to misbehave and more likely to commit crimes,” says Knight. When speaking about who people in power deem as legitimate people this concept of “dark skin equals criminal” is very damaging to our society. Today, images and video of police brutality and racial profiling of dark skin people, mostly Blacks and Latinos, are taking the media by storm. These issues are nothing new, but with new and accessible technology, people are becoming more aware.

“African-Americans comprise only 13% of the U.S. population and 14% of the monthly drug users but are 37% of the people arrested for drug-related offenses in America...In 2012, 51% of Americans expressed anti-black sentiments in a poll; a 3% increase from 2008,” (dosomething.org.).

There are so many more ways that colorism and racism affect people of color. Not only are people of color disproportionately in jail but also, people of color have less

access to good housing, public space, healthy food, better education, and jobs. In all, the consequences of colorism and racism are real and affect people of color every day. These issues do not just affect people of color in the United States or Latin America, but around the world.

With this background information and knowledge, it is then easier to understand why I had a different experience abroad than my white peers. I understood the social implications of my experiences abroad. In Argentina, I experienced different kinds of microaggressions. In Mexico, I was ‘invisible’ and ignored by people, and in Costa Rica I was also ignored, cat-called, and treated rudely by locals. These experiences affected how I behaved and how I saw myself as a Black woman from the United States while studying abroad. It was surprising to go abroad and have the experiences I had because I was used to certain treatment being from Kentucky. I was expecting to go abroad and escape the realities of the United States. I had faith that surely other countries would be better to me. Whenever people talk about going abroad, they do not mention racial issues that they had; it is always smiles and good memories. Living abroad is different from vacationing. It is also better than sitting in a classroom somewhere because actual physical immersion teaches people about the world that they would never have known if they did not go abroad, and, how the decisions of a few made such an impact on the entire world. It really puts in perspective how similar people’s stories are and that I am not alone.

When I first applied to go abroad to Buenos Aires, I did not know what to expect. I prepared as much as I knew to; including completing WKU’s Study Abroad Pre-Departure work. The extent of that preparation included a few documents to read and mini tests that were to be completed after the reading, as well as links to outside sources

for more information. None of it was sufficient as I was not prepared for the racism and colorism, I did experience. One example of a required document that I read for pre-departure was a Cultural Preparation document that tells students “what to find out” and “resources for cultural information” then the rest of the document is about culture shock. Under the Resources portion of the cultural document, there are five links including; Country Handbooks, CIA World Factbook, Culture Crossing, Lonely Planet, and DK Eyewitness Travel. None of these had sufficient amount of information about racial minorities abroad. I clicked through the Country Handbook for Argentina “Study Abroad Student Handbook – Argentina.” There are 8 sections each with two paragraphs that cover different cultural aspects of Argentina. Section one is women, two is Minorities (Ethnic and Religious), three is LGBT Students, and so on.

“You may be considered an ethnic, or religious majority in the United States, but by going to Argentina you become, in a sense, a minority...Sometimes the locals’ curiosity, interest, ignorance of misunderstanding of you can be unpleasant,” (Study Abroad Student Handbook-Argentina).

This is the extent of the information that this country handbook provides for students of color and it is not enough. Students of color do not need to just know that their experience may be unpleasant, but an in depth account of what can happen, why, and how to deal with it. The point is to prepare students as much as possible so that they are not impacted greatly by social and political issues that distracts them from enjoying their time abroad and learning. Because I was not fully prepared, I had to take the issue in my own hands and find out why I was experiencing what I was experiencing. I did this by researching “where are black people in Buenos Aires” and I ended up writing a final

paper for my Spanish class and wrote about the disappearance of people of color in Buenos Aires. When I did my research, it made me feel like black people always feel. Alone. If we need anything, we have to go and get/do it ourselves and cannot expect anyone else to care or know enough to do it for us.

## METHODS

I will use journal entries and notes that I wrote abroad in my journals and classwork to remind me of what I experienced and how I felt. My entries mostly include what happened very briefly, and mostly how I felt about what had happened. I also have notes and text messages in my phone that I used to remember what I felt and when. Not only do I have these entries, I have photos as well to help me remember certain days. As I used these notes, journal entries, photos for this paper, I am able to account for days and events years ago.

In what follows, I discuss history of slavery in Buenos Aires and Mexico City (I could not find sufficient research on slavery in Oaxaca, Mexico), my experiences in each country, and my Black Lives Matter fashion show and how my experiences abroad inspired the show. By discussing the history of slavery in each city and my experiences, I aim to show that slavery still affects institutional policies and social norms today that oppresses and are discriminatory to people of color, whether they are native to that country or are temporarily living there. I conclude by discussing my fashion show and offer suggestions to WKU Study Abroad for how to prepare students of color for their travels abroad.

## BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA

The first slaves that arrived in Buenos Aires came in the year of 1587. “More than 70 percent of the value of all imports arriving in Buenos Aires were enslaved Africans,” (Edwards 2017). The Portuguese provided slaves from Angola and other Western African cities, once they got to South America they primarily entered through Brazil.

“Responding to the colonists' repeated requests for additional slaves, in that year the Crown granted an *asiento*, a royal concession, to the Portuguese slaver Pedro Gomes Reynel to bring 600 slaves into Buenos Aires annually for a nine-year period. Gomes Reynel proved unequal to the task, providing only 2252 slaves to the labor-hungry townspeople.” (Andrews 2004).

The slaves contributed to the booming economy in Buenos Aires, and therefore more and more Africans were brought to the city. No one can estimate the number of slaves that entered into Buenos Aires. There were times when slaves were brought illegally by competing people and companies who wanted a percentage of profits. It is known, though, that slaves who entered Buenos Aires were not at their final destination, there was an output of slaves sometimes higher than the input. That is when Governor Hernandarias decided to appoint “*asientos*” to companies rather than individual people, which brought in thousands more slaves into the city than was needed. The trauma the Africans faced on their journey to South America was outstanding. According to a doctor at the Buenos Aires seaport, he describes the trauma from being raised free, captive by peers, and then taken as prisoners on a journey that they then experienced, thirst, hunger, and imprisonment. “Everything [act of slavery] that is capable of wounding the human

heart, such as leaving their friends, their country, their freedom, and being deprived of all the things that gave them happiness,” (Andrews 2004).

The city of Buenos Aires depended solely on African slaves to keep their city running, and it was no secret to the citizens of the city. Slaves were responsible for all household duties, including but not limited to, laundry, cooking, cleaning, ironing, and sewing. Slaves were also responsible for artisanal and factory work (like meat factories). There were groups who were against slavery that wanted to end it, but the town’s council fought against that notion. The town council knew that the city of Buenos Aires ran off the backs of the African slaves (at this point mixed persons with any “impure” blood constituted as a slave). “The large ranches, the haciendas, would go barren [if slavery ended] and uncultivated, both for lack of men to farm them and for lack of the necessary tools and equipment made and repaired by the artisan slaves,” (Andrews 2004).

When the slaves ran the city as they did, masters did not have to work. Soon masters with slaves not having income became a problem. Therefore, masters who were mostly unmarried women without jobs would hire out their slaves for money. “In the 1810 sample, 76.7 percent of the whites had no listed occupation, compared to 80.6 percent of the free blacks and 98.2 percent of the slaves” (Andrews 2004). Hiring out is when masters rented their slaves to other people who needed their services, thus receiving a direct cash income from the slave’s labor. Once the slaves made the amount requested by masters, it was Spanish law that anything the slaves made over the amount of the master’s request was theirs. Hiring out also gave slaves the ability for freedom and mobility within the streets.

The city becomes known as the Paris of South America. This attracted artisans from Europe. Only for them to be disappointed to see the artisan market ran by slaves and people of color (including native peoples and poor whites.) The artisan Europeans took it upon themselves to try to eliminate the competition of skilled artesian slaves. However, this task was unsuccessful due to the “hiring out” of slaves. The European artisans could not compete with this system, so they tried to prohibit slaves from attaining master ranks. Mostly African slaves and Afro-Argentines filled the apprentice positions while the white Europeans filled the master ranks.

As slaves and freed blacks had more time on their hands, they began taking to the streets their culture and becoming self-made entrepreneurs. This is where the street culture of African roots began. They would go to the streets to sell “empanadas” (meat pies), drum and make music (tango music and dance have deep African roots), and built and sold brooms, candles, even dairy products. “The Afro-Argentines thus gave Argentina one of its favorite dishes, chinchulines, braided and grilled intestines, the same dish known as chitlins in the United States,” (Andrews 2004). These freedoms became more surveilled and stipulated after one case of a slave being accused of rape of a white woman. Although it was later found that he actually did not rape the white woman, he was still punished with 200 whippings and six years in prison. This was done to show other slaves not to get too carried away with their freedoms and to act well.

The first Constitution of Argentina abolished slavery in 1853. Although this constitution abolished slavery, after the Independence war in 1810, in which the participation of slaves was crucial to Buenos Aires’ victory, granted slaves at that time gradual abolition that was introduced in 1813 with the “Free Womb Act.” (Edwards

2017) The Free womb act (there were free womb laws in North America at this time) granted the children of enslaved mothers “freedom”. The children were labeled as Libertos/as. They neither were slaved nor freed. However, of course, if they were not free, they were slaves. “Libertos/as would owe their mother’s master a term of service until age twenty for boys and sixteen for girls (earlier if they married) before they became fully free” (Alberto 2018). This was done to elongate the time of servitude. Giving slaves freedom too quickly, says a report from a town council meeting, would have turned the city into a disaster. As they did not know how to care for themselves and act in good manner since they were raised up in servitude. Although, The Siete partidas, a codification of Spanish law by King Alfonso the Wise, gave slaves a few ways they could integrate from slaved to free more quickly.

“If a master made a slave the tutor of his children, the slave was entitled to freedom. If a slave married a free person with the master's knowledge and consent, the slave was free. If a slave was made an heir of the master in the master's will, the slave was free. Any slave forced into prostitution by her master was entitled to freedom.”

Citizens of Buenos Aires were concerned about the newly freed slaves. Therefore, with the Free Womb act, some masters would give some money to the Liberto/a their last year of servitude, and in some cases, grant deeds of houses and land, so that they are more easily able to integrate into society as productive citizens. Still, black men had it the most difficult to become freed. Their ways of freedom included service in the military among other dangerous and physical tasks.

After the liberation of slaves, the population of people of color began to drop significantly. To the point, even tourists and people in government were writing articles

and journals commenting on a once 40% population of blacks decrease to 1.8% (Andrews 2004). Where did they go? According to Andrews, due to high mortality rate, black men (ages 15-60) going to war, and due to the abolition of the slave trade in 1813, that stopped bringing more Africans into the city, Africans, people of African descent, and people of color were disappearing. That 1813 abolition of slave trade was not official until 1840, when a pact with Britain effectively put an end to it (theroot.com).

After 1840, the President, Sarmiento sought to wipe out Afro-Argentines. He had different policies to institutionally get rid of Afro-Argentines. In a diary entry, Sarmiento wrote about his intentions;

“A policy of covert genocide through extremely repressive policies (including possibly the forced recruitment of Africans into the army and by forcing blacks to remain in neighborhoods where disease would decimate them in the absence of adequate health care) ... In the United States ... 4 million are black, and within 20 years will be 8 [million]. ... What is [to be] done with such blacks, hated by the white race? Slavery is a parasite that the vegetation of English colonization has left attached to leafy tree of freedom” (Sarmiento diary entry 1848).

According to Andrews 1989 [1980]; Frigerio 2006, 2008; Geler 2008; Guzmán 2008). At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was a massive migration of Europeans, called Generation 80. This migration was supported and pushed by President Sarmiento who wanted to whiten the Argentine nation. “Así, buscaban modificar la estructura social transformando su composición étnica. En definitiva, la nación argentina fue concebida y construida, en los discursos y en las prácticas, como predominante y preferentemente blanca y eurodes- cendiente; y las alteridades negras, entre otras, fueron negadas e

invisibilizadas en la sociedad, identidad y memoria nacional” (Andrews 1989 [1980]; Frigerio 2006, 2008; Geler 2008; Guzmán 2008). [Looking to modify the social structure to transform the ethnic composition. The Argentine nation was conceived and constructed, in the discourses and practices, to predominately and preferably white and European descendants; alterations of black people, among others, were negated and invisible in national society, identity and memory.]

Black people in Argentina were forced out and because of the genocide the President committed, people began associating blackness negatively and they themselves began to also intentionally erase their blackness by mating with white skinned people and not claiming their history in censuses. “By the second decade of the twentieth century, approximately one-third of the country’s population was foreign-born.” And today, in a population of 42 million, an astonishing 97 percent of Argentinians are (or at least claim to be) white!” (theroot.com). Because of the policies implemented by President Sarmiento, the population of black people disappeared from public eye and quantitatively on censuses as well. To this day, the black population is still invisible and so is the knowledge of African history. So much so that museum historians do not even want to implement exhibits that recounts African history because “it has nothing to do with [our] history.” This disappearance of the black population is the main reason for the experiences I had in Buenos Aires. Because people do not see black people, I was subjected to different types of racism and oppression including microaggressions. It is ironic that a country so whitewashed has an infatuation with black people when they finally see them. Maybe it is ignorance to the history and that is why people do not know why there are no people of color and I happened to be the first person of color many have

encountered. In the next section, I will explain my experiences and connect them to the history, consequences of slavery, and disappearance of the black population in Buenos Aires.

## EXPERIENCE

Buenos Aires, Argentina was the first country I lived in. My first time outside of the United States as well. Going through old scholarship and study abroad applications, I found what my expectations were in that country. I expected to become fluent in Spanish, make local friends, and grow personally, academically, and professionally. I guess I truly did not understand what that growth entailed. I did not expect what I did actually experience.

During three months in Buenos Aires, I only saw three African man. I did not see any other people close to my color or darker than a paper bag. (Paper bag test refers to the colorist mechanism to place people in groups and was used on censuses in different countries in Latin America, including Brazil.) A part of me thought it was weird to not see any people of color in a huge city, the nineteenth largest in the world to be exact (<https://www.archdaily.com/906605/the-20-largest-cities-in-the-world-of-2018>).

The disappearance of Black people from Buenos Aires makes sense as to why I only saw three African men and no one else that looked like me or had darker skin. For many people, I was the first black person they had ever met or seen physically in their lives. I was perplexed. How could people go their whole lives not seeing a person of color in a very African rooted city? Africans contributed every piece of culture in Buenos Aires, it seemed to me that citizens did not know that or denied that part of their heritage. I experienced different kinds of microaggression in Buenos Aires, such as an assumption

of criminality. A taxi driver asked me if it was true that all black people were bad because he always saw black people on the news being arrested. When I listened to the *Danger of a Single Story* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in Intro to Social Justice last semester, I thought heavily about my experiences in Buenos Aires. Especially the question asked by the taxi driver made me feel very sad at that moment. It made me sad because the media is so powerful, and for a city that does not have a visible black population, they are willing to accept any kind of information, regardless if it is true or not, because they do not know any better or for themselves.

In addition, not only does the media play a huge role in how people in Buenos Aires viewed people of color, but as well as history. Before the abolition of slaves, the mayor wanted to move the slave markets because,

“the slave market would lower property values (“if a market of this nature is established in that area, nobody will want to buy the surrounding land because of the bad quality of the neighborhood”) and posed a serious threat to public health: “diseased blacks, full of lice, skin diseases, and scurvy, and exuding from their body a foul and pestilential odor, can infect the whole city, especially when that site dominates the city and lies to the north of it, the direction of the prevailing winds,” (Andrews 2004).

With this knowledge of the horrible conditions the slaves were forced to live in, people began associating black people with low property value and being dirty and stinky. In my Reimagining Citizenship class, I learned about public space and how people in power wanted to take back public space from unsightly actions and unwanted people. People in power since Athenian and roman civilizations have decided who belongs in public space. The only people during those civilizations who were permitted

into public space were the men, who were citizens. Slaves were not citizens, neither was I traveling in Buenos Aires, but as people in power began making laws about who should be in public space and what they looked like and could do, that put a push on people who do not fit the description to stay out of those areas. Therefore, the disappearance of people is also contributed to the laws of public space and a case of “go where celebrated and not tolerated,” the people of color left.

I also experienced a high level of sexualization. Every time I left a building, I was catcalled. I knew that I was fetishized by the catcalls because the first and last thing that the men would call out was “negrita” or “morena” which means black/brown girl. I made a local friend, who was a man, that accidentally sent a voice message per WhatsApp and said that he had never seen such a black queen and that he would totally f\*\*\* me. I stopped talking to him after that. This attention made me feel super uncomfortable, because; one, I was not used to that in the United States; and, two, I felt watched and that the men felt like they could make any move they wanted to make. Which included grabbing me, kidnapping me, and groping me, these actions by men are well known in Buenos Aires. The city deals with high volume of feminicides (kidnapping and killing of women for the simple fact they are women.). I experienced being groped and grabbed in nightclubs by Argentine men, one night in a gay bar, Crobar, one tried to kiss me.

I also experienced environmental microaggressions. The fact that I did not see any black people or people of color except for the few African men showed me that black people/people of color were not welcomed in that city. There were also a lot of statues and buildings named after white men (Spaniards and Italians) all over the city. In San Telmo, a port city, there was many graffiti and more cultural representation of people of

color and Africans. I understand this because this is where the slaves came through once they got in Buenos Aires, where the slave markets were, and where they were living after they were freed. This, I understood, was where I was “supposed” to be. I did not belong in Belgrano, where my host mother lived.

“Morenos, mulattoes, and Afro-Indians were barred from the city's schools and from service in municipal, royal, and ecclesiastical government. Craft guilds prohibited nonwhites voting or holding office in the organizations. Free blacks' freedom of assembly and association was abridged by a series of ordinances banning *candombes*, their street dances...” (Andrews 2004).

I learned that the *Portenos* (What citizens of Buenos Aires call themselves) did not like Uruguayans or Paraguayans, mostly due to their color. I learned that there was a city outside of Buenos Aires where those groups of people lived so that they would not be subjected to the hateful words or harm done by the *Portenos*. This sickened me and made me feel small. I was in a city that did not want black people there. I caught myself acting differently in certain areas because I knew I was being watched. I told myself that I needed to behave “well” so that people would not assume I was a savaged, unruly, dirty black person, as the African slaves were made out to be. I had to be the representation for my people, changing the face of black people that the media portrays so negatively. That responsibility I had thrown onto me and that I placed onto myself was very energy depriving. To always feel surveilled and make sure I was acting my best, when what was acting my best? Acting white? So, then I had to figure out how to maneuver within this city and to not think of myself needing to act white, but like myself. I am a beautiful, intelligent, strong black woman and that is all I need to act like.

There were certain people in my group who I could turn to that empathized what I was going through. There were multiple times I caught people pointing and taking pictures of me. There were times when people asked me to take pictures with them because I was the first black person they had ever seen in their lives. Or even, a woman asked me to speak to her daughter on the phone because she “loved black people” and would only allow her mother to buy her black dolls.

Although I had these experiences, I had to stay OK. This means that I could not act out against a person because they more than likely did not know what was going on. They probably did not understand what they were doing was wrong because they never had been in that situation. I took those opportunities to talk to those locals and tell them about myself, I am not what they see in the media, and to show that there is no true difference, I am only human, just like them. I hope that I changed the way many people saw black people and that in turn created space in their hearts to be more mindful of other people of color that are citizens of that country or neighboring countries. I will continue the next section with history of Mexico City as well as my experiences and connect them to the history.

### OAXACA, MEXICO

Like Argentina, Mexico was very dependent on African slaves. Between 1519 and 1810, slavery was well alive in Mexico City. The first African slaves came from Cuba, with Hernan Cortez and Panfilo de Narvez, (Douglas 2004). “After a three-month siege, Spanish forces under Hernán Cortés capture Tenochtitlán, the capital of the Aztec empire. Cortés’ men leveled the city and captured Cuauhtemoc, the Aztec emperor,” (<https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/aztec-capital-falls-to-cortes>). After the fall

of the Aztec Empire in 1519 at the hands of Cortes and his African slaves, the rest of the prehispanic world fell with it. After the decline of indigenous people, African slave trade began to dramatically increase. “An estimated 25 million indigenous people inhabited Mexico by 1519. But their numbers plunged to six million by 1548 and 1.5 million by 1600,” (Douglas 2004). African slaves’ resistance to disease, weather, and labor made them great candidates for slavery, and unfortunately, the number of slaves continued to rise. Slaves’ resilience to this horrible treatment is a reason slavery continued.

Eventually with the help of an Indigenous bishop, Bartolomeu las Casas and his advocacy for humane treatment of indigenous people, indigenous people began to receive favoritism from the Catholic Church and eventually earning them a higher status on the ethnic caste system, before it turned to a racial caste system. Even when the racial caste system came to be, indigenous people still had the upper hand because they were lighter skinned. Darker skinned people made up the very bottom of the caste system. “In the minds of most Spaniards, it was natural for Africans to be slaves,” (Douglas 2004).

Like Buenos Aires, no one really knows how many Africans were kidnapped and brought to Mexico. Documented there were roughly 60,000 that came through Mexico in the sixteenth century, but as mentioned in Buenos Aires section, that slaves were also transported illegally into Mexico. Of course, no one batted an eye because Africans were seen as “weak, hedonistic, subservient, and fit only for bondage” (Douglas 2004). With there being so many Africans in this country, they eventually became the majority. “By 1560, 10,595 negros and 1,050 mulattoes (people of black-white ancestry) lived in Mexico City-a total of 11,645 Africans. Whites numbered only 9,495,” (Douglas 2004). This helps understand how Mexico has deep roots with African heritage and culture.

Africans are responsible for the Mexico we see today. According to Douglas, to talk about modern Mexico and Mexican history without African slaves and their contribution of culture and building of Mexico is incomplete. Slaves in Mexico were used differently than in Buenos Aires. As in Buenos Aires, slaves were mostly indoor while slaves in Mexico were “personal attendants burden bearers, and laborers,” (Douglas 2004).

Slaves worked on sugar plantations and in gold and silver mining. “Other Africans worked in skilled trades or on cattle ranches. Some toiled in the Obraje textile factories, (Douglas 2004). Slavery in the United States inspired slavery in Mexico with the types of labor that the slaves performed. Compared to Buenos Aires, slavery in Mexico was a lot harder in terms of labor and masters very strict. There were no deals between masters and slaves about going out to the streets and making their money, slaves made their masters money in Mexico by working on crop plantations.

Rulers of African empires that were engulfed with greed made African slavery possible. “Slavery was fundamental in African Society because land could only be owned by rulers and kingdoms. Landlord-peasant relationships characterized West African society during the slavery period,” (Douglas 2004).

As African slavery became normalized, so did stereotypes. Because Africans were so resistant to disease, weather, labor, Spaniards thought of them as ‘hardy.’ They were resisting diseases like Malaria better than whites and indigenous people, (Douglas 2994). Today, we can see this stereotype through sports in the United States, but also around the world. Especially in track, football, and basketball, there are a lot of people of color on world teams as well. A common stereotype about black people in sports is that they are better athletes and that is why there are so many more black athletes than whites in sports

like football and basketball. According to, Considering the NFL in black and white numbers, 67% of all NFL players were black and 31% were white compared to 100% of team ownership are whites. Black people are still not in a position of power. These numbers show how black people make up large number of players in certain positions, but still the power dynamic between the two shows with the 100% of white people owning teams. Stereotypes and the resilience of Africans were justifications for the continuance of slavery.

Spaniards in Mexico were the ones who created the ethnic caste system. The fear of impure blood was strong for the Spaniards and they decided to classify people in an attempt to prevent intermixing. According to Douglas, “Skin color had become ingrained in the Hispanic psyche long before the slave trade in Mexico even started,” (2004). Spaniards in Mexico were insecure and very caught up in keeping themselves as superior. They were so threatened by the continued intermixing of people because people were becoming lighter and lighter, so Spanish masters decided to take on cruel punishments such as branding their slaves and restricting the mixing between different ethnic groups. “Spanish law dictated that children born from an Indian woman could not be enslaved,” (Douglas 2004). Because of this, African males would purposely try to mate with Native women so that their children could be free. This cost slave masters generations of no labor that lost them money. Another fear of “impure” whites included the fear of Anti-Spanish movements.

The fear of anti-Spanish movements can be compared to the fear of some White groups following the end of South African apartheid. Apartheid was similar to segregation in the United States, it called for different ethnic groups to live and develop

separately. On paper it seemed like the separateness would be equal and cause no harm, in reality, “Apartheid made laws that forced different racial groups to live separately and develop separately, and grossly unequally too. It tried to stop all inter-marriage and social integration between racial groups,” (South African History Online 2006). After Nelson Mandela ended apartheid, there were groups of white people that fled those cities and began preparing for combat incase black south Africans decided to gain revenge violently upon them. Well, instead of Spaniards fleeing and preparing for assumed attacks, they created inhumane legislation instead because they knew how terribly they treated slaves, and since they knew that slaves rebelled since the beginning, they knew they had to put a halt to the uprisings because of their growing fear.

Spaniards created different legislation, one created in 1776 required parental consent before marriages. This legislation was meant to stop the intermixing of Native women and African men so that they would not have children that would create generations of freed children. Other legislation affected African’s ability to develop economically and politically. They made legislations that prohibited certain groups from trading certain things. “Blacks and mulattoes could not sell chickens, fruits, and vegetables, although Indians could market such items,” (Douglas 2004). They also had no ability to vote or had political representation, although they had to follow laws and were mandated to serve in militaries. The fear of slave uprisings became so enormous that Spaniards created legislation against rioting that included very harsh and cruel punishments; such as, lashes starting at 50, mandatory castration, mutilation of limbs, death, ear being chopped off, wearing iron fetters, and other punishments.

Although the Spanish created harsh punishments for their fear of anti-Spanish movements, slaves did uprising and rebel. The first rebellion occurred in 1522 on the Hispaniola Island, today known as Haiti and Dominican Republic. In Mexico, the first documented rebellion was in 1537 but was squashed quickly due to another slave reporting the conspiracy to slave masters. The Spanish was so scared at this point of rebellions that they did not import anymore slaves to Mexico for eight years and brought in Spanish troops for future uprisings. Even with Spanish troops in the country, slaves still found other ways to rebel against slavery, like by running away. Runaway slaves were known as ‘cimarrones.’

“Whites [Spaniards] realized the ineffectiveness of their own efforts and arrived at a compromise with the cimarrones. Authorities allowed them to settle a town. But in return, the newly freed runaways agreed to submit to Spanish authorities and act as slave catchers,” (Douglas 2004). It was easier for slaves to run away in Mexico compared to the United States because Mexico had poor roads and communication, as well as marshlands that were owned by other people. These circumstances aided in the running away of slaves and hastened the end of slavery. Another way slaves hastened the end of slavery were by the continued defiance of the laws and mixing with native women. Anyway, there was a lack of African women to begin with, as in the known number of slaves, only one third were African women. African males mated with Native Americans mostly for the law that enabled their children to be free. Whether African males and Native American women truly loved each other, it is not known, but their defiant mating also helped speed up the end of slavery as more mixed people, called Mestizaje, were born. By 1680, 70% of African residents in Veracruz enjoyed freedom.

“When slaveholders could not find buyers for their slaves, they often invited slaves to purchase their freedom. Many slaveowners set slaves free in their wills. The result was that the slave population had diminished greatly by 17 15,” (Douglas 2004).

Finally, in 1829, slavery was abolished. But the oppression and discrimination of black people did not stop along with the abolishment. During slavery, slaves and black people were not allowed to do certain things that helped them be stable and healthy individuals, families, and most importantly citizens. In the long run, policies and legislation continued to put black people at the bottom and make it hard for them to survive. The law that did not allow slaves and black people to sell certain produce and animals directly affected black families economically and generations later, those families are still paying from it because it set them back so much. Today, there is racism and colorism that still affect black people today. An example would be the use of Tinder in Mexico. I use Tinder when I am abroad to meet locals and make new friends. Well, there were people who put in their bios that they did not want black people and in the total of three months, I got three matches. While I was in Buenos Aires, I got 112. So, the slavery institution created oppression that still affects black people today, whether economically or socially. In the next section, I will explain my experiences in Mexico and connect them to the history.

## EXPERIENCE

Mexico was actually peaceful for me. I did not have any issues with locals. Sure, people referred to me as negrita when they did not know my name and wanted my attention, but I did not deal with catcalls or people wanting to take my picture. I did realize though that the white students in my group kept having their phones and wallets

stolen by locals. The directors would advise us to not walk down the streets with our phones out or in our back pockets, and when my white peers did so, their phones were stolen. The directors advised us to put our wallets in a secret, hard to get to place, but still my white peers had their wallets stolen from those spots . Even when their phones and wallets were tucked inside of their backpacks, they still had their belongings stolen by tricks the locals used. Such as “accidentally” bumping into someone, and while they would apologize and distract their target, they would have an accomplice behind the target digging into the backpack to steal. I was the one who did not listen and had my phone in my back pocket or had my phone in my hands with my Beat headphones on my ears, and still never had anything taken away from me. At first, I thought this was because maybe the Mexicans thought of me as intimidating because they may have never saw a black person before. I assumed this based on my experience abroad, but I did not ask anyone this. I knew the locals I had contact with had seen black people before because of the study abroad program that their moms worked for. I got back to the United States and a professor challenged my recollection of being left alone in Mexico with the fact that maybe Mexicans did not place any value onto me. She asked me this based on her experience in Europe when she overheard locals speaking about her thinking that she did not know what was going on. Well, in Mexico, I believe the locals did not see me a valuable person of material or financial wealth, and that is why they left me alone.

This makes sense, corresponding with history and black women during slavery. First of all, black slaves had little representation in the population, as one third of the known slave population were women. With the lack of representation of black women, black children from a black man and woman during slavery in Mexico was not that

common. It was also not that common because black men wanted to enable their children to be free. If the black women were not free, the black man would not mate with her because their children would not be free.

Black men mating with native women was more common because it was against the law, as well as created mixed babies of Native American blood that constituted them free from slavery. This is one reason that slavery was ended more rapidly because slave men were having children with native women, since the native women were free, so were their children. Generations of black men mating with native American women can affect the black man's psyche because it puts the idea in their head that black women were not good enough to be free. Therefore, furthering the idea of other groups of people as better than their own.

"Black identity was constructed separately from white identity as sub- or nonhuman and thus justified a separate set of governing principles within the larger society." This differentiation and othering were, therefore, critical to the enterprise of maintaining racial dominance and white supremacy," (Ocen 2012).

Since the Spaniards created their caste system based on ethnicity, the mating of black men and native women was key to the hastening of slavery. It was illegal for black men and native women to mate and marry, but they did anyway. Today, interracial/interethnic relationships can still be seen as defiance to social norms. Specifically, for black and white people, this defiance can be seen as exciting and that is why they continue to do it. Not necessarily for love, but because it goes against their family's wishes.

This excitement could be seen by the actions of Mexicans when they cat-called my white peers and only showed attention to them. Not only did Mexicans not pay any attention to me and left me alone, they obviously did not find me attractive or worth getting to know. I used Tinder abroad to find local friends. I did not use it in a romantic tool in any way and out of my three months in Mexico, I had three matches. In Argentina I did use Tinder, and because they “loved” black people, I got a lot of matches. Although, I understand it was the fetishization of me.

“By the evolving nineteenth century ideology of femininity, which emphasized women's roles as nurturing mothers and gentle companions and housekeepers for their husbands. Black women were practically anomalies.”^^ In this regard, the exploitation of Black women's labor acted to masculinize them in a society that viewed "womanhood" through a lens of domesticity,” (Ocen 2012).

In this article that is based in the United States, Punishing Pregnancy: Race, Incarceration, and the Shackling of Pregnant Prisoners, the author, Ocen, made connections from how slavery created the idea of the masculine black woman and how slavery stripped away a black woman’s femininity, justifying their back breaking labor as well as rape. White slave masters did not only rape their black slaves for the fun of it, dehumanization of it, but also because they knew the law about the child’s freedom based on the mother’s status. The stripping away of the black woman’s femininity justifies this rape, that they are just a reproductive tool and nothing more. Mexico was very influenced by slavery in the United States and mimicked slave owners and their treatment. So, this affected the African slaves and when black men and other ethnicities are seeing this treatment, it can affect their mentalities and view black women as nothing but

reproductive tools as well. There is no humanization of the black woman that is why they are able to be overlooked. So, as I understand my place in Mexico, I realized I was overlooked and probably not seen as human. I probably was nothing more than a reproductive tool to Mexican men.

I did have an instance, where in the first time in my life I received treatment solely for my woman identity by two Mexican tourist officers. They harassed me and two other white peers on a beach, asking numerous times why we were “so alone without our boyfriends,” and that they were there for whatever we “desired.” Because I was with two other white women, I knew I was not being sexualized because of my blackness, but because of the fact that I am a woman.

It took a conversation with a professor after my travels to understand what was going on in Mexico and why I basically was left alone. Mexicans did not value me because of my color. Due to slavery and the lack of representation of black women and that they were not free, black men mated with Native Americans. That mating instilled in the black men the idea that other women are better than black women, because they have more value. They have more value because their skin is lighter and the mixing of black and Native Americans created lighter generations that enabled their freedom and have better opportunities. In this next section, I will write about my fashion show and how my experiences abroad influenced how I coordinated it and decided what aspects that I deemed important for my guests to take away.

## FASHION SHOW

To showcase my experiences abroad, I coordinated a fashion show. It was my fifth Black Lives Matter fashion show that I had coordinated. I became interested in

fashion because when I was a child, I was not able to pick out my own outfits or go shopping, because my family was poor. We received hand-me-downs from churches or organizations from my community. So, I daydreamed and sketched blazer ideas and if I were to become a designer, lines I would showcase. The first show I had was in the summer of 2014. It was a Bullying Awareness fashion show. I chose that topic because as a victim of bullying, I did not understand how suicide could be a consequence from bullying. The message I created that I wanted my audience to take away from the show was “CIMS,” Confidence, Independence, Motivation, and Security. These four qualities are what I attributed to my ability to overcome the bullying because no one else helped.

I decided that I needed to create an event that was fun and brought the family together. I did this because I believed that people responded to events that had themed messages better than events that spit statistics at them or in a formal setting. I organized a fashion show because that is how I express my creativity. My creativity is what I wanted to use to make call to actions and show what I was and am passionate about. At the fashion show I used people’s stories to convey what I wanted to make call to actions about. I had two speakers at that Bullying Awareness fashion show, as an example.

After that fashion show I began designing handmade pieces. I decided to have another fashion show that next year in December. That was my first Black Lives Matter fashion show. I decided to have a BLM fashion show because I had just heard about Trayvon Martin and I was outraged. This was my first time really learning about black people and the injustices they faced because of how society and governments see people of color. It was my first time learning about police brutality. I wanted to do more research on the subject and found organizations in Louisville that were advocates and activists for

the BLM movement. I brought my talented peers in from the community to perform entertainment, such as singing and rapping and spoken word.

My fifth Black Lives Matter fashion show on April 17, 2019 was a representation of everything I am. I represented everything I have learned and who I had become up to that point. My fifth fashion show was originally supposed to take inspiration from experiences abroad and show them through clothing. I was going to show certain feelings of different experiences through different textures and color for example. After a month of working on my pieces, I realized that I could not take specific moments and understand my feelings from them, because that was not the point, I needed to make for this fashion show. Black people do not need to express their negative experiences to show why they are considered strong and resilient. It is the beauty that we create from those negative experiences that help us continue on. Through my fashion shows I try to empower and motivate black people to see the beauty in life and to know their worth so that in the face of discrimination.

I wanted my black peers to take part in this show because my way of advocating for the black community is by showing them how important our culture is, how important we are as black people, and to show the community that we black people are here to stay and that we are not what the media say we are. I showed these by only bringing in black local businesses and talent. I thought this was an important move because it shows my community that there are different stories of black people, we are not these dangerous, savage, criminals, but are humans, just like everyone else.

These shows are important to me because it is necessary to remind the black community all the good they are since society tells them all the bad they think they are. I

believe that my community has come to internalize generations of oppression and that has huge effects on people. The consequences of internalized oppression take form in not participating in their rights and responsibilities as citizens, as well as, not believing in themselves to do more than live in the hood and act how society treats them. I want to show the beauty of black people and inspire and motivate people to keep on keeping on, life will not get easier whether they give up or continue fighting.

These fashion shows represent more than just handmade fashion produced by a young black woman. They represent my anger and hurt from transgenerational trauma, police abuse, racism, internalized oppression, and much more. Transgenerational trauma is:

“what human beings cannot contain of their experience—what has been traumatically overwhelming, unbearable, unthinkable—falls out of social discourse, but very often on to and into the next generation as an affective sensitivity or a chaotic urgency,” (Castelloe 2012).

This past fashion show represented the beauty in black people and how much I love being a black woman. Before college, I did not know that I could represent my layering identities, I always saw myself black first. This is probably because I have always been treated based on my color first and other people point out that fact to me. So now, my fashion shows will represent my layering identities that include being black and how those layering identities and being black cause me to have different kinds of oppression. Understanding how I can experience different kinds of oppression due to a multitude of identities enables me to speak about issues and find passion for other issues and help think about roots of issues.

I created twelve looks and had models of different ethnicities, shapes, and colors. My pieces had color this time, due to my time abroad and seeing how Latinxs love color. This can be seen in their clothing, buildings, and art that I loved while abroad. I also used color to show my love of my late best friend from Puerto Rico. I did not want to be restricted in what I created, so I let my hands go to work.

My pieces were the best in terms of technical skill I have ever created. They were the most me that I had ever created, in terms of what I like to wear and what I find inspiration from. But they also represented my future. Each line that I have created thus far, has gotten better and more me. I first began designing gowns, because they were the easiest. This show I had more than half pants or shorts. I describe my style as androgynous and I want my pieces to represent that. I feel that this line was still feminine, but compared to other shows, definitely had the androgynous aspects.

Not only did my pieces represent my future through style and technical skills, but also because I know that with each line, whatever I had been through or learned until then will come out in the pieces. I am not done growing, learning, or experiencing life, I have just begun, and each line after this fifth line will be better and more me. Not only did I create pieces for this fashion show, but I also brought in two black spoken word artists and had a Black Art Expo. The spoken word artists were chosen because of their strong messages in their pieces. I felt that this was the most powerful way to go because words carry power. I had the Black Art Expo because I always love bringing in other artists from the community to show their work and how they express their creativity. I did not limit the Black Art Expo to only black people though, I opened it up to anyone with pro-

black art, because it is important to recognize your allies and to show them your love and support as they show you theirs.

My experiences abroad helped me understand that there is a bigger world out there that is ready to be explored. Not being made aware of the experiences I could have had abroad made me stronger because in the moment of being abroad, away from home, I had to make the choice on what I was going to do in the face of whatever I was experiencing. Whether it was learning to understand what the men were saying when they cat-called me or enjoying my peace from not being bothered with. I had to make real life decisions that affected my happiness, stress, anger, sadness, anxiety, or depression on my own abroad. It made me stronger. It made me happier as a black woman because I was able to perform decisions that my ancestors had to decide and make when they were kidnapped and taken from their homes. They had to learn to survive, to continue taking care of themselves and their families, and they kept fighting. I was able to do that. And I am proud. As the Spaniards realized, black people are so resilient, and I could not be happier to be any other ethnicity.

## CONCLUSION

Not having sufficient preparation of what minorities-especially black minorities abroad could experience abroad helped me further strengthen skills I had already developed as a child who experienced racism early on. Those experiences included white families harassing and calling us derogatory names on the expressway to police abusing my father right in front of the family. The skills I developed from those experiences included quick thinking (for how to react in the situation) keeping my composure (as dealing with racist white people you need to be composed otherwise they may take your

outrage as further justification for their treatment), and knowing my worth and how to keep my energy positive even in the face of discrimination and oppression. Those skills are what allowed me to continue to enjoy my time abroad. I did just that, I had amazing experiences, doing things I never imagined or knew existed. If I would have allowed the discrimination to take my energy, I would not be here today.

I believe that all people of color, specifically black people should experience and see the world. But with proper preparation, people can have more positive experiences abroad. Oppression and discrimination stem from institutions that are meant to keep certain people down and give other groups the upper hand. Black people should be aware of these systems and know how to handle them. This is why sufficient preparation for black and students of color is important. WKU study abroad should have more preparation and give students tools to do more preparation on their own. I think study abroad needs to work harder in reaching black students and to aware them of scholarships. Since I went abroad three times, and each time my trip was paid for. There is no reason that other students should not be taken more advantage and know about studying abroad.

After the office recruits students of color, they should have face to face workshops about discrimination globally and then more specifically in the particular country. This may seem like a lot of extra work, but this information and times does not have to be extra- it can be included in what study abroad already administers to students in their pre-departure initiatives that includes a mandatory pre-departure session. The sessions should be led by students of color only. This helps students feel comfortable to ask questions to further understand what is being discussed. Also, with a person of color

leading, students will feel connected and have a deeper understanding of the gravity of the topic being discussed. This change needs to happen now as more and more students are being sent abroad and I know that the WKU study abroad office will be open to these suggestions and do what it needs for the safety and wellbeing of students abroad.

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