

Valentina Anea

Slug: Latino colorism

Headline: Internal racism and colorism in the latino community is real

Budget line: How the Latino community perpetuates internal racism and colorism.

Interviewed Sources:

Juan Tiney Chirix, PhD student at The University of Texas at Austin. Interviewed over zoom.

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Giselle Aranday, CASA Volunteer Coordinator. Interviewed over phone.

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- Date(s) contacted: via phone 04/05/21, interviewed 04/07/21

These sources represent a diversity of voices for the article because it includes both a man and a woman, one a professional in a social service field and the other an expert in Latin American Studies. These sources are also both diverse because they can attest to different experiences within the Latino community with Chirix being Indigenous and Aranday being Mexican-American.

Background Sources / Websites Used:

United Nations Website

<https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/race-and-poverty-latin-america-addressing-development-needs-african-descendants>

(used a Latin American demographic statistic)

Bla

WLRN News Website

<https://www.wlrn.org/2020-10-05/why-are-so-many-latinos-obsessed-with-black-lives-matter-its-complicated-or-simple>

(outlined why some Latinos condone racism)

Council on Hemispheric Affairs Website

<https://www.coha.org/the-persisting-impact-of-racial-construction-in-latin-america/>

(outlined some Colonial Latin American history)

HED: Internal racism and colorism in the latino community is real
By: Valentina Anea

Latinos can be racist too.

But because Latinos don't associate with race and instead label people based on the color of their skin, hair type and facial features, it is referred to as colorism.

As an Argentinian immigrant who was raised in the United States for most of her life, I lived pretty sheltered from this reality.

But by the time I reached middle school, I started to realize these subtle tones of colorism.

"Don't dye your hair blonde, it will bring out the darkness in your features," family friends would say.

When I went back to Argentina, I would overhear why other Latin American countries do not like us.

"They're jealous that we are European, that we are white," I would hear.

There are 150 million people of African Descent in Latin America and 28 million Indigenous people, according to the [United Nations](#).

Latin American countries have a rich and multiracial history and yet Latinos continue to discriminate against each other.

Juan Tiney Chirix is a University of Texas at Austin PhD student in Latin American Studies and Community and Regional Planning from Guatemala who identifies as Indigenous Maya-Kaqchiquel-Tzutujil. Before coming to Texas in 2016, Tiney attended the University of Havana, Cuba, from 2009 to 2014, where he experienced discrimination based on the color of his skin, he said.

"There weren't many people who looked like me, and people made that obvious," Chirix said about his Indigenous roots.

The erasure and discrimination of Latin American Indigenous people is what inspired him to study Latin American Studies where he has decided to concentrate on the empowerment of the Black and Indigenous women of Guatemala and the Dominican Republic.

"I think it's very prevalent and I think a lot of the time there is not as much of an effort put into making people from different backgrounds as comfortable as their white counterpart," said Giselle Aranday, CASA Volunteer Coordinator when asked about whether colorism is a prevalent issue in the Latino community.

Aranday is Mexican American and thinks Latinos must begin to acknowledge the harm they do by judging people on the color of their skin.

Some people attribute and condone this colorism because of Latin America's history, according to Miami-based radio station, [WLRN](#).

“Latin American countries have inherited the racial classification imposed by Spain and Portugal, in which the white color of the skin and the European features are enthroned,” according to [The Council on hemispheric Affairs](#).

Colonial Latin America had a caste system that put Spaniards at the top and people of African descent at the bottom. While this caste system was formally eradicated, it has left a lasting effect on Latinos in a form of internal racism and colorism.

I grew up in majority white, suburbs. But when I took an implicit bias test on race and skin tone, I got contradictory results to what I expected. The results said I had a slight automatic preference for lighter-skinned people over darker-skinned people, while on the other hand, I had a slight automatic preference for African Americans over European Americans. How can two results be so contradictory? It makes me wonder how accurate the test truly is.

No matter how contradictory the results were, they still indicate I have work to do. As a white-passing Latina, it is important to acknowledge the privilege that my skin color gives me.

While many Latinos attribute their internal racism to their deeply embedded colonial history, it does not make it okay. We need to change.

Reframing biases start at the beginning. For the Latino community to change, they must be willing to put in the work and willing to teach the coming generations. I think schools must teach anti-racism classes to teach the next generation of people the importance of inclusion and diversity.

It is time that the Latino community acknowledges its racist past and works towards a brighter future. Reframing hundreds of years of racial bias will not be easy, but it will be worth it.