Building the New Field of Afro-Latin American Studies
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Housed at the Hutchins Center for African & African American Research at Harvard University, the Afro-Latin American Research Institute is the first research institution in the United States devoted to the history and culture of peoples of African descent in Latin America and the Caribbean. Over 95 percent of the Africans forcibly imported into the Americas went to Latin America and the Caribbean, almost two-thirds of them to the Spanish and Portuguese colonies. Many Hispanics in the United States are also of African descent. Cultural forms and community practices associated with Africa are conspicuous across the region—indeed, the very existence of Latin America would be unthinkable without them. During the last few decades, Afro-Latin Americans have created numerous civic, cultural, and community organizations to demand recognition, equality and resources, prompting legislative action and the implementation of compensatory policies. The Afro-Latin American Research Institute stimulates and sponsors scholarship on the Afro-Latin American experience and provides a forum where scholars, intellectuals, activists and policy makers engage in exchanges and debates.
The Afro-Latin American Research Institute (ALARI) at Harvard University stimulates and sponsors scholarship on the Afro-Latin American experience and provides a forum where scholars, intellectuals, activists and policy makers engage in exchanges and debates. Our main mission is to build the new field of Afro-Latin American Studies in dialogue with the variety of actors involved in the design and implementation of race justice initiatives in the region and in the production of knowledge about Afrodescendants.
Our initiatives and programs connect with the various constituencies involved in the development and consolidation of Afro-Latin American Studies.
Afro-Latin American Studies partners with knowledge producers who come from academia, activism, culture and the arts, policy makers and representatives of international organizations. We seek to highlight the richness and diversity of Latin America through the contributions, histories, and cultures of its populations of African descent.
In response to the United Nations Resolution that proclaims 2015–2024 as the International Decade for People of African Descent (resolution 68/237) the ALARI has launched an ambitious program of consultations where activists from the Afrodescendant movement in Latin America, representatives of international agencies and foundations, government officials, and scholars come together to articulate concrete goals for the Decennial.

Highlights of this program include:

• The symposia “Afrodescendants: Fifteen Years after Santiago. Achievements and Challenges” (Harvard University, December 2015) and “After Santiago 2000: The Afrodescendant Movement and Afro-Latin American Studies” (Universidad de Cartagena, December 2016) with the participation of activists, scholars, agency representatives and policy makers from the whole region.
• The symposium “The Afro-Cuban Movement: Activism and Research. Accomplishments and Challenges” (Harvard, April 2017), with the participation of activists from the Afrodescendant movement in Cuba.

• “Afrodescendants in Brazil: Achievements, Present Challenges, and Perspectives for the Future” (Harvard University, April 2018) with participation of scholars and activists from Brazil.
• “Visión Afro 2025” (University of Cali, Colombia, October 2018)
Pre-Texts

Developed at Harvard University by ALARI-affiliated faculty Doris Sommer, Pre-Texts is a user-friendly pedagogy to achieve rigorous holistic education. The approach is simple: treat texts as prompts for making art. Artists interpret material, including written material. They welcome difficulty as a challenge that may require collaboration. With Pre-Texts, Literacy, Innovation, and Citizenship become gears that drive one another.

From Boston to Bogotá, from Ireland to India, Pre-Texts works across the Americas, Africa, and Asia among educators for schools, museums, public health and violence prevention. Pre-Texts is democracy in action.
"I would like to express my gratitude to the AfroLatin American Research Institute for this initiative [the Mamolen Dissertation Workshop], for inviting black and quilombola women, "intellectuals in formation," to this prestigious academic space, for causing "internal revolutions" that transcend me, because other quilombolas around me are now motivated to share their stories."

~Gessiane Ambrosio Nazario, "Uma quilombola brasileira em Harvard: reflexões sobre estigma e autoestima" (2018)
A yearly event hosted by the ALARI, the Mark Claster Mamolen Dissertation Workshop selects the best doctoral dissertations on Afro-Latin American topics anywhere in the world and invites its authors for a two-day meeting at Harvard. The class of 2018 was selected from a pool of 140 applicants from universities and research institutions in Latin America (Brazil, Colombia, Mexico), Europe (Spain, Germany, England), and the United States. This program is supported by a bequest from Mark Claster Mamolen (1946-2013), the Weatherhead Center of International Affairs, the Ford Foundation, and the International Academic Program of the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (IAP UAM).
In December 2019 will take place the ALARI First Conference on Afro-Latin American Studies in an effort to bring together a wide community of senior and junior scholars, students, researchers, artists, policy makers, and activists. The Conference will address pressing issues on the Afro-Latin American Studies, such as slavery and slave trade, inequality, culture, archaeology, black mobilization, afro-indigenous relationship, Afro-Latino studies, and gender and feminism. ALARI also supports conferences organized by our faculty, such as “Energies of Nature: Landscape of Orisha Devotion in West Africa and Brazil” in September 2019, organized by Gareth Doherty; and GEALA Conference on Afro-Latin American Studies in Buenos Aires in September 2019.
Working Group on Comparative Slavery

An international network of scholars interested in comparative and transnational questions concerning slavery, the Group organizes a yearly research conference to discuss new research on slavery in the Americas, Africa, and the Mediterranean world. ALARI Visiting Research Scholar Marial Iglesias Utset leads this initiative. Co-sponsored with the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice at Brown University, the 2015–16 conference was titled “New Scholarship on the Slave Trade.” The 2016–17 conference was devoted to the theme “Slaves and the Law: Comparative Questions and Approaches.” The Group sponsored conferences at Leeds University and at Pompeu Fabra University (Barcelona) in 2017 and 2018. In 2019, the conference on “Comparative Studies on Slavery and Race in the Atlantic World” in collaboration with CSIC will take in place in Madrid, on June 17–19.
Cambridge University Press has launched a new and unprecedented book series, Afro-Latin America, edited by George Reid Andrews (University of Pittsburgh) and Alejandro de la Fuente (Harvard University). The series aims to showcase scholarship produced by different disciplines, including history, political science, sociology, ethnomusicology, anthropology, religious studies, art, law, and cultural studies. It covers the full temporal span of the African Diaspora in Latin America, from the early colonial period to the present.

Submissions should be sent to: George Reid Andrews (reid1@pitt.edu), Alejandro de la Fuente (delafuente@fas.harvard.edu), and Deborah Gershenowitz, senior editor for history at Cambridge University Press (dgershenowitz@cambridge.org).

Recently published:

Specialization and International Course on Afro-Latin American Studies

The Specialization on Afro-Latin American Studies is done in collaboration with CLACSO (Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales). It includes seminars offered by scholars from the Insituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (Mexico); CEAF/ICESI (Colombia), University of Sao Paulo (Brazil), UC Irvine (US), GEALA (Argentina), and CSIC (Spain). The Specialization seeks to reach out to a diverse audience, which includes academics and researchers, activists, private citizens, and civil servants.
ALARI is helping constitute a new visual archive, a new field of study, a new approach to collecting, by promoting serious study of the artistic production of Afrodescendants and of representations of blacks since colonial times in Latin America. This field has enormous transformative potential, as many cultural products and creations of perceived European origin—from altars to cathedrals—were in fact manufactured and built by African workers. This body of artistic work has been systematically ignored and remains heavily understudied.
Africans left numerous material traces in the urban and rural landscapes (plantations, haciendas, runaway slave communities) of Latin America. Closely intertwined with our project in Afro-Latin American Art, the ALARI has been promoting the new field of Afro-Latin American Archaeology, which opens new windows into the lives and material cultures of Africans and their descendants in the region. Through this field, we participate in regional debates concerning how to memorialize slavery and the slave trade through public history projects.
Culture Together ALARI Music
Leaders Education Students
Afro-Latin Studies Mission People

Yosvany Terry, Bata Concert, April 15, 2017

Photo by Amilcar Ortiz
Every year, the ALARI hosts two to three visiting fellows. Some of these fellows come with funding from their own institutions. Others apply to the Mark Claster Mamolen Research Fellowship at the W.E. B. Du Bois Institute’s Fellowship Program. Visiting scholars applying to the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies may also obtain an ALARI affiliation when appropriate.

“My academic year at the Afro-Latin-American Research Institute was one of the best intellectual experiences I’ve had. This unique research institute centers on the study of racial issues in Latin America and will contribute to develop Afro-Latin American Studies in the USA and in Latin America as well. To be a Fellow at the Afro-Latin-American Research Institute was a possibility to build new networks in an interdisciplinary and highly qualified environment. The fellows colloquium was excellent and allowed me to learn about new approaches and perspectives. Also, the Institute has an excellent workspace and a very professional and kind staff.”

Márcia Lima, ALARI Visiting Fellow, Academic Year 2016–2017
Professor of Sociology at the University of São Paulo
“ALARI es el sitio donde confluyen al fin la diversidad afrodiaspórica en América Latina, en un ambiente de máximo respeto por la experiencia particular, excelentísimo nivel académico y vibrante multidisciplinaridad. Conjuntamente con la pluralidad de las comunidades afrodiaspóricas, ALARI fomenta el reconocimiento y celebración de la expresión africana, origen común, presente en cuanto hacemos generación tras generación en nuestras existencias americanas. Personalmente, mi vínculo con ALARI se traduce en la potenciación de la creatividad y la expansión del conocimiento, en el regocijo de vivir la afrodescendencia como un fenómeno global e íntimo a la vez. ALARI se ha convertido ya en una necesidad. Un espacio para dar y recibir, con entera confianza, en total libertad.”

Odette Casamayor Cisneros, ALARI Visiting Fellow
Associate Professor of Latin American and Caribbean Cultures at the University of Connecticut-Storrs
• OAS-Hutchins Center Agreement: The Afro-Latin American Research Institute and the Department of Social Inclusion at the Organization of American States are working together to implement the collaborative agreement that General Secretary Luis Almagro and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Director of the Hutchins Center, signed on April 4, 2017. The institutions are working together to realize the goals of the United Nation’s International Decade for People of African Descent (2015–2024) in Latin America.
IDB-ALARI Postdoc Fellowship on Race and Public Policy in Latin America

In 2018, ALARI launched a monthly Newsletter aiming to highlight and disseminate important knowledge on the various initiatives making an important contribution to inclusive policy, governance and democracy in Latin America. This is made possible by the generous support of the Gender and Diversity Division (GDI) of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) as part of the IDB-ALARI initiative on Race and Public Policy in Latin America.
The Inter-American Network of High Authorities on Policies for Afro-descendant Populations (RIAFRO, for its initials in Spanish) was established on June 11–13, 2018 in Lima, Peru, at the first Inter-American Meeting of High level Authorities on policy for Afro-Descendant Populations, organized by the OAS Department of Social Inclusion, the Afro-Latin American Research Institute of Harvard University, and the Direction on Policies for the Afro-Peruvian Population of the Ministry of Culture of Peru. RIAFRO will coordinate policy initiatives on Afrodescendants at the continental level.
People
Faculty Advisory Committee
Alejandro de la Fuente

Director, Afro-Latin American Research Institute, Hutchins Center for African & African American Research at Harvard University
Robert Woods Bliss Professor of Latin American History and Economics
Professor of African and African American Studies and of History

George Reid Andrews

Distinguished Professor of History, University of Pittsburgh

Vincent Brown

Charles Warren Professor of History
Professor of African and African American Studies
David Carrasco

Neil L. Rudenstine Professor of the Study of Latin America, with a joint appointment with the Department of Anthropology in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences

Sidney Chalhoub

Professor of History and of African and African American Studies

Thomas B.F. Cummins

Dumbarton Oaks Professor of Pre-Columbian and Colonial Art
Gareth Doherty
Assistant Professor of Landscape Architecture and Senior Research Associate, Harvard University Graduate School of Design

Lorgia García Peña
Assistant Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures and of History and Literature

Tamar Herzog
Monroe Gutman Professor of Latin American Affairs—Radcliffe Alumnae Professor
Marial Iglesias Utset

Visiting Research Scholar at the Afro-Latin American Research Institute

Doris Sommer

Ira Jewell Williams Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures, Director of Graduate Studies in Spanish

Yosvany Terry

Visiting Senior Lecturer on Music / Director of Jazz Bands
James Almeida  
Ph.D. Candidate,  
History Department  
His research examines the relationship between imperial powers in the first century of the Atlantic slave trade and the implications for international law. He is most interested in questions of how people created and navigated social order, focusing on the intersections between the law, social identification, and categories of difference (especially race and ethnicity).

Eduarda Araujo  
Ph.D. Candidate,  
Department of African and African American Studies and History  
Eduarda studies Afro-Brazilian social history in 19th Century Rio de Janeiro, using race and class as units of analysis. Her research focuses on the formation of urban space, as well as its connections with the slave trade, slaving practices, and struggles for freedom and dignity in the city.
Jonathon Booth  
JD-Ph.D. Candidate, History Department and Law  
His research focuses on criminal law and race in the post-emancipation Atlantic World, particularly the United States, Jamaica, and Cuba.

Russel Burk  
Ph.D. Candidate, Religions of the Americas, Committee on the Study of Religion.  
His research interests focuses on the globalization of Afro-Cuban religions and the appropriation of African diaspora religions in the United States.

Laura Correa-Ochoa  
Ph.D. Candidate, History Department  
Her research focuses on questions of race, nationhood, citizenship and Afro-Colombian and indigenous mobilization in the 20th century. Examining cross-class and cross-ethnic spaces of mobilization such as labor unions, women groups, and political parties, her dissertation studies the possibilities and limits of Afro-Colombian and indigenous solidarity from the 1930s to the 1990s.
Odalis García Gorra

*Harvard Divinity School*

Odalis Garcia is interested in looking at the ways in which Afro Latinx spiritualities have been mainstreamed and disseminated through popular culture through different mediums—whether that is Salsa music, TV, film, or other forms of art and aesthetics. Especially how these forms of pop culture are being used by those born in the diaspora to reconnect with their identities, giving way to new forms of worship and sacred spaces.

Cristina García Navas

*Department of Romance Languages and Literatures*

Her dissertation explores the representation of the Devil and its relationship to religious persecution, racism and capitalism in music, literature and oral tradition from the Caribbean, the Pacific and the Orinoco borderlands of Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela.

Cary Aileen García Yero

*Ph.D. Candidate, History Department*

Her research focuses on the relationship between arts and politics in connection to nation making and racial formation processes in Cuba (1940s–1960s), to better understand performative meanings and practices of identity and belonging.
Marcella (Sally) Hayes  
*Ph.D. Candidate, History Department*

Her proposed dissertation project centers on the legal, political, and social position of black slaves and free people of color in colonial Lima. Theoretically, two legal regimes, the república de indios and the república de españoles, governed colonial Latin America; her research explores how slaves and their descendants fit (or did not fit) into this system, both in theory and in practice.

Matthew Leslie Santana  
*Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Music*

He is broadly interested in race, sexuality, and performance in the Americas and his dissertation project focuses on drag performance and sexual revolution in Cuba.

Brandon Mancilla  
*Ph.D. Candidate, History Department*

He is broadly interested in Latin American & Caribbean revolutionary movements and theory, the political economy of imperialism, decolonization, and race. His future research will focus on the relation between socialism, race, and internationalism in 1960s revolutionary Cuba.
Nicholas Rinehart
Ph.D. Candidate, Department of English

His research focuses on African American, African diasporic, and American multi-ethnic literature across all periods. His dissertation research provides an account of New World slave testimony that challenges scholarly preoccupation with the American slave narrative tradition, asking how various genres of slave testimony produced in the Americas, Europe, and Africa in the 17th through 20th centuries have remained largely illegible to literary criticism and thus marginal to African diasporic literary history.

Christofer A. Rodelo
Ph.D. Candidate, American Studies Program

Broadly, his research interests include theater and performance studies, 19th century American literature and culture, Afro-Latina/o literature and criticisms, critical race studies, aesthetics and critical theory, queer of color critique, and digital/public humanities. His dissertation is a critical study of Latino and Afro-Latino aesthetic and performance cultures in the long hemispheric 19th century.

Angélica María Sánchez Barona
Ph.D. Candidate, Department of African and African American Studies and History of Art + Architecture

Her research studies representations of the black population in the “Comisión Corográfica” project and how these images permeated the construction of a national identity in early 19th century Colombia.
Carolina Silva Portero  
S.J.D. Candidate, Law School

Her research interests are in the area of nationalism, ethnicity, race, and gender in Latin America. She explores the role of people of African descent and indigenous peoples in the processes of constitutional change since the 1980s, focusing primarily on Ecuador and Bolivia.

Miari Stephens  
Ph.D. Candidate, Department of African and African American Studies and Anthropology

Her research interests include the politics and intersections of race, gender, beauty and hair as they affect and shape black women's experiences throughout the diaspora, specifically in the Hispanic Caribbean.

Henry Stoll  
Department of Music

He works on the expressive culture of Haiti, particularly opera and song, in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. In his dissertation, he seeks to examine the role of mizik savant ayisyen (Haitian art music) in the early years of Haitian sovereignty (1804-1820); in so doing, he hopes to edit and make available a corpus of imperial spectacle and song for use by Haitian performers, theaters, and schools.
“Afro-Latin-America, and not just Latin America, because it defines better the importance of the African presence on this side of the world”

~Versus (São Paulo, 1977)