

THE GRAMSCI MONUMENT.

NEWSPAPER



www.gramsci-monument.com

August 4th, 2013 - Forest Houses, Bronx, NY

"A periodical, like a newspaper, a book, or any other medium of didactic expression that is aimed at a certain level of the reading or listening public, cannot satisfy everyone equally; not everyone will find it useful to the same degree. The important thing is that it serve as a stimulus for everyone; after all, no publication can replace the thinking mind."
Antonio Gramsci
(Prison Notebook 8)



The Gramsci Monument-Newspaper is part of the "Gramsci Monument", an artwork by Thomas Hirschhorn, produced by Dia Art Foundation in co-operation with Erik Farmer and the Residents of Forest Houses

Letters from Prison

by Antonio
Gramsci

selected, translated from the Italian, and
introduced by **Lynne Lawner**

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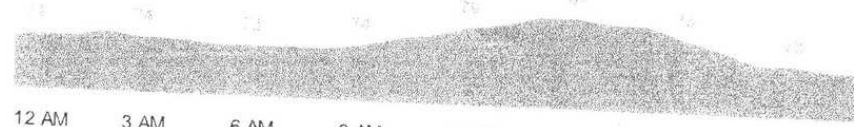
12-14. FEEDBACK/WHAT'S GOING ON?

Bronx, NY 10456
Sun
Thunderstorm

 **84** °F | °C

Precipitation: 20%
Humidity: 47%
Wind: 14 mph

Temperature	Precipitation	Wind
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12 AM	3 AM	6 AM	9 AM	12 PM	3 PM	6 PM	9 PM
Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
88° 72°	82° 72°	84° 63°	81° 63°	81° 68°	81° 73°	84° 68°	88° 66°

Turi
August 24, 1931

LETTERS ANTONIO GRAMSCI WROTE TO HIS MOTHER FROM PRISON

June 6, 1927

Dear Mother,

I received your letter of May 23. Thank you for writing at such length and for sending so much interesting news. You should always write like this and send detailed accounts of local affairs even if they seem unimportant to you. For example, you write that eight other communes are going to be incorporated with Ghilarza¹ but which ones are they? What does this mean and what results will it have? Will there be a single municipal administration under one *podestà*?² How will the schools be organized? Will there continue to be elementary schools in the former communes, or will the children from Narbello or Domusnovas have to go to Ghilarza every day, even those in the first grade? Will there be a single levy for the whole commune? Will the taxes paid by the Ghilarza landowners who have property in all these communes be spent in the individual villages, or will they be used to improve Ghilarza?

This seems to me the chief problem. In the past, Ghilarza's municipal funds were very scanty, since its inhabitants owned land in the neighboring communes and paid the major part of the local taxes there. You should write about these things rather than harping all the time on my sad plight. I want to reassure you on this count. True, I don't think my position is very brilliant. But all things in life are colored by our attitude toward, and feelings about, them. I'm quite calm and view everything with great equanimity and confidence. If the near future is dark, things will get better afterward. As I wrote to Teresina, I'm convinced that I won't lie rotting in prison forever. I have a hunch that I won't stay inside more than three years, even if I'm sentenced to, say, twenty. I'm writing to you with great frankness, trying not to create illusions, because I think that this is the only way to make you strong and patient. Please have no qualms about my attitudes or health. You know what moral fortitude I am capable of. Do you remember our childhood "dare" (did we ever tell you about it then?), when we hammered our fingers with stones until a drop of blood came out at the tips. I would flinch now under such barbaric tests, but I have certainly developed a greater resistance to the bludgeoning of events—those past and those to come. My militant life of the past ten years or so has sufficiently hardened me. I could have been killed a dozen times, yet am still alive: this is already an incalculable asset. Moreover, I was happy for a time; I have two fine children who are being reared as I would want them to be and who will grow up into two strong and vital men. So I'm quite at peace and need neither pity nor consolation. Also, I'm quite well physically. In these last six months, I've been through all manner of things and have discovered that I have a great deal more physical endurance than I thought. This force of resistance will certainly not abandon me, and I'm convinced that I will hug you once more and see you happy.

Sometimes I long to see Giulia and the children. I'm sure that they're well and that the children are being pampered if anything: their mother, grandparents, and aunts would starve rather than let them go without cookies and fine clothes. I never discovered exactly what Nannaro³ was up to: I only knew he was living in Paris and working, nothing more. Nannaro is a strange character: I think that it was he who didn't want to get in touch with me, perhaps because he thought I was angry with him for drawing my salary for five or six months without letting me know, while I was ill in a sanatorium. At least this is what I imagine and what makes me think he's gone mad. I knew what kind of a state he was in and how he had been wounded because of me,⁴ and would never have dreamt of reproaching him or asking him for a cent.

Dear Mother, be strong, don't worry, and don't be too hard on the people from Abbasanta.⁵ An affectionate hug.

Antonio

Dear Mother,

I received letters from Mea, Franco, and Teresina telling me how everyone is. But why did you let so much time go by? Even with malaria, it's possible to write, and I'm satisfied to have a few picture postcards. I'm getting old myself, you see, and more and more irritable and impatient. It seems to me that a person stops writing to a prisoner because of indifference or a lack of imagination. In your case and that of the rest of the family, I can't believe it's a question of indifference, but rather of lack of imagination. You're not able to picture life in prison or to realize just what importance keeping up a correspondence can have, to occupy time and lend some flavor to life. I never speak of the negative side of existence, mainly because I don't want to be pitied. I was a soldier who had bad luck in the immediate battle, and soldiers can't (at least they shouldn't) be pitied when they fight of their own free will. But this doesn't mean that the negative aspect of my life in prison is absent. Since it not only exists but also weighs heavily on me, at least it ought not be aggravated by the persons who are closest. In any case, what I'm writing is directed more at Teresina, Grazietta, and Mea, than you—it would be easy for them to write me a few cards.

I enjoyed Franco's letter very much describing his toy ponies, cars, and bicycles. As soon as I can, I'll send him a present, too, so he'll know I love him and realize what a good, kind little boy he is, despite the pranks he plays. To Mea I'll be sending a box of pastels when I can, but tell her not to expect anything out of the ordinary. Teresina never answered my question about whether the parcel of books and magazines Carlo sent from Turi last March arrived. Let me know whether they're in the way, since I still have half a ton to send you. If my books are going to be scattered, at least a part of them ought to be donated to the prison library. But in any case, even if they crowd you there in the small living space you have, I believe that the books will be useful for the children when they grow up: I take this matter of building up a family library very seriously. Teresina surely must remember how we devoured book after book when we were young and complained bitterly about never having enough to read.

But how is it that malaria is ravaging the heart of town? Or is it affecting you only? The town council ought to build sewers in the same way that their predecessors built the aqueduct. An aqueduct without sewers guarantees the diffusion of malaria wherever the disease is already sporadic. Once the women of Ghilarza were ugly and had swollen bellies from the rotten water, now they'll be even uglier on account of malaria. I suspect that the men treat themselves with large doses of wine. Many affectionate hugs.

Antonio



Gramsci as a young man.

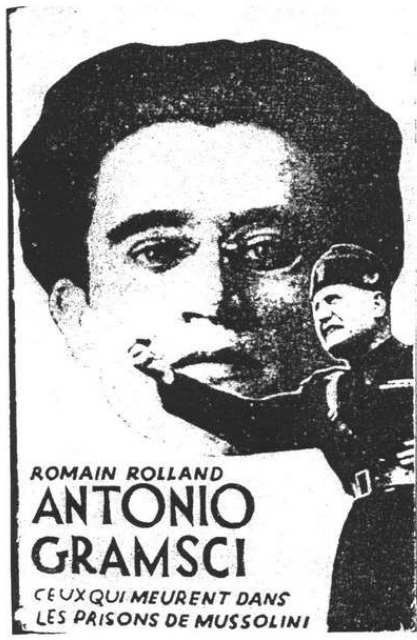
PENALE SPINALE
1971

È un quasi responsabile del destino del disprezzo dovuto sempre portato da questo mondo. Questo mondo è stato. Questo perché l'umanità, divenuta così perché un ben grande. È un
 una certa qualche eccitata in questi disegni, ma allora di molti più che divenne rispetto di
 spavento e invece forse una grande comprensione, perché intanto che il destino non un avvenimento
 e [per un altro tempo].

3) Osservazioni e note critiche su un tentativo di abbozzo popolare di tecnologia.

È un lavoro come il meglio popolare, destinato essenzialmente a una comunità di lettori che non sono
 intellettuali di professione, ma che devono prendere le mosse dall'analisi critica della filosofia del tempo
 comune, che è la filosofia dei nostri giorni. È la concezione del mondo attuale, acclamata dai
 vari ambienti sociali e culturali ai cui si sviluppa l'attività normale dell'uomo moderno. Il tempo
 comune non è una concezione unica, abstratta nel tempo e nello spazio; è il risultato della filosofia
 di fatto e come il filosofo si presenta in forme immutabili. È un fatto puramente e più razionale,
 netto e di essere una concezione (anche se singoli concetti) di tipo generale, universale, inconfondibile, con
 forme alla precisione tecnica e culturale delle istituzioni di cui è la filosofia. Questo intellettuale
 si elabora in gruppi sociali omogenei, si elabora anche, certo il tempo comune, ma filosofia
 empirica, nel senso di empirica. Il meglio popolare, abbozzo nel pensiero (intellettuale) del
 progresso che a questa elaborazione di una filosofia semplice delle masse popolari si applicano i
 di alcuni delle filosofie tradizionali e la religione dell'alta classe, con le concezioni del mondo degli
 intellettuali e dell'alta cultura. In questi quattro sistemi non esiste alla verità e non hanno
 efficacia diretta sul suo modo di pensare e di operare. Però un suo sviluppo che essi hanno

A page from one of the prison notebooks in Gramsci's handwriting. It bears the stamp of the Turi prison colony.



The cover of a pamphlet by Romain Rolland, published in Paris in 1933 and translated into many languages all over Europe.

**Le 27 Avril 1937
le fascisme italien a tué Gramsci!**

« Il est le chef de la vie même de son bon sens le design. Son a sera inscrit dans l'histoire, à côté de celui de Matteotti... »
 ROMAIN ROLLAND



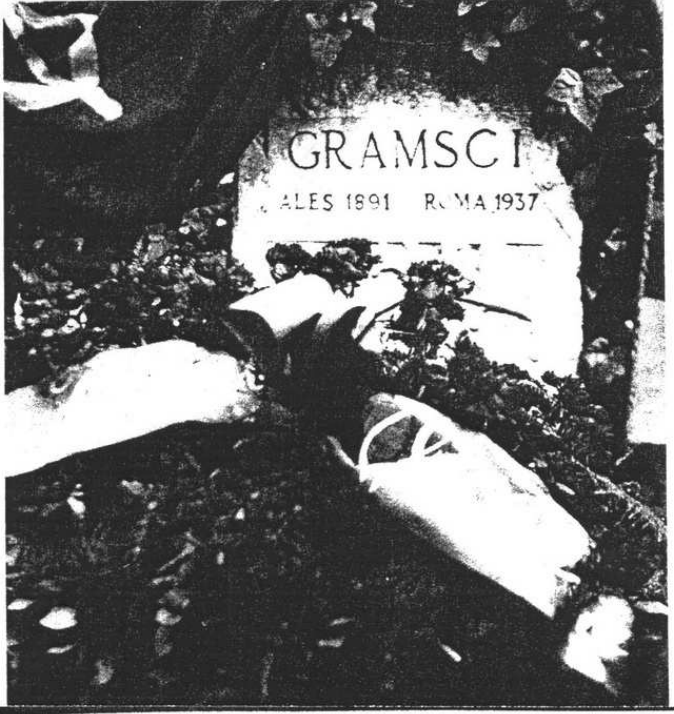
A French leaflet announcing Gramsci's death.

Le 27 avril, Gramsci, le chef des travailleurs italiens, est mort. Gramsci a été tué par des années de réclusion, de vexations, de souffrances. Cette destruction lente et monstrueuse de la vie humaine menée aussi Terracini, Parodi, Scaccimarro, Li Cavi, et tout d'autres emprisonnés politiques et intellectuels a ouvert la voie à la déportation. Sauvez-les!
 Honorez le mémoire d'Antonio Gramsci en réclamant leur libération, en élevant votre voix, en exigeant l'amnistie immédiate.
 LE COMITÉ INTERNATIONAL D'AIDE AUX VICTIMES DU FASCISME ITALIEN.
 Dans le courant de la semaine prochaine, un grand meeting aura lieu à la mémoire de Gramsci, pour l'amnistie, contre l'Internationale en Espagne, venant...

The last photograph taken of Gramsci.



Gramsci's tomb in the English Cemetery in Rome.



22 giugno 1924

Mia carissima Rosa,

ho atteso di poter partire. La mia partenza sembra rimandata da giorni in giorni; così non te ho scritto, pensando che io stavo lassù quasi prima della partenza. Partirò, però, presto perché tra giorni? Non lo so e preferisco non saperlo, perché mi sei stato lo stesso vicino a te, cara, per me tutto il mio essere è e abbraccio tutto il tuo.

Ho vissuto giorni indimenticabili e continui a vivere. Dai giorni di inaspettata presa in considerazione della mia vita che sto avvenendo in Italia. Conosciamo come un vulcano in ebollizione; ai tempi, quando nessuno se l'aspettava, specialmente i partiti comunisti del proprio potere ripreso, il vulcano è scoppiato, spargendo un'immensa pioggia di lava e ardente che ha ucciso tutto il paese, lasciando tutto e tutto dei paradosi. Gli avvenimenti si sono sviluppati con una rapidità fulminea, inaudita; di giorni in giorni, di ora in ora la situazione cambiava, il regime era rivoltato da tutto la parte, il partito sembra isolato nel paese e intorno il suo intervento nel paese dei suoi capi, nella fuga dei suoi dirigenti. Il lavoro fu faticoso; scarseggiò di così se così fosse di pensiero, di idee, di cultura, di lavoro di una indagine al terreno popolare steso. Dopo la fase acuta della crisi è apparsa una calma apparente. Il partito sembra a noi che si è ristabilito le sue forze che, riunito, ridotti, continuano a lavorare, collegando una serie da tutti gli avvenimenti italiani, per la costruzione di una vita di pensiero e di organizzazione in cui si trovano le nostre. Ma un grande peso ci avverte e stato fatto dal

A letter of Gramsci's to his wife in 1924, before his imprisonment.

A DAILY LECTURE WRITTEN BY MARCUS STEINWEG

35th Lecture at the Gramsci Monument, The Bronx, NYC: 4th August 2013
HYPERBOLIC AFFIRMATION
Marcus Steinweg

1. To open up to the future means rather to affirm oneself as the subject of the future's necessarily hyperbolic affirmation.
2. One affirms what one does not know; otherwise one does not affirm.
3. The affirmation of the known would be nothing other than its confirmation; it would be the legitimation or ratification of what exists, an act of conservation.
4. The progressivism of thinking lies here: in the refusal to refuse a blind affirmation which keeps the subject of affirmation open toward the future which is the space of the unknown or of contingency.
5. This is perhaps the meaning of the *grand politics* belonging to Nietzsche's problematic legacy: that there can be no politics that is nothing other than the politics of the possible, that the politics of the possible includes its self-extension to the impossible for it not to be *dead*, for it not to be diffused in the space of mere options, instead of dynamizing these options for a demand that transgresses and surpasses them.
6. The difference between these two politics, the politics of the possible, which could be called *small politics*, and the politics of the impossible, which is *grand politics*, mirrors the older metaphysical conflict between reality and ideality in order to show us that, precisely speaking, it has long since traversed the concept of philosophy, that there is no philosophy and (this is my assertion) no politics which did not already participate in this conflict, that therefore philosophy is neither realism nor idealism, and politics is neither small nor grand politics, but already both in one.
7. The fissure between the possible and the impossible runs through the concept of both philosophy and politics.
8. Philosophy and politics are akin in carrying out this immanent conflict in the form of a never-ending affirmation of conflict which makes of the subject of philosophy as well as the subject of politics the arena for a kind of ontological fever that is perhaps nothing other than the liveliness preserving the subject against philosophical and political death.
9. Probably we must insist that these two kinds of death are identical.
10. They concern the subject as such.
11. Politically dead, the subject is no longer a subject; to be politically dead means to leave the political order as a subject in order then to be the object of these orders, their laws, imperatives and decrees.
12. The philosophical death of the subject is the death of a subject robbed of its subject-status that has lost the capacity to think, to extend itself into its impossible.
13. To renounce being a subject and to agree to this renunciation, what does this mean other than to privilege the path of self-passivization which has as its most extreme point of flight the objectification, passivization and neutralization of the subject as against the problematic, because wholly non-guaranteed, self-assertion as subject?
14. That is the further meaning of affirmation from which Blanchot's thinking (as already Nietzsche's, and also Deleuze's and Derrida's and Badiou's thinking, despite striking differences in their positions) draws its elementary restlessness.
15. In a sometimes implicit, sometimes explicit Spinozan gesture, the affirmation defies death insofar as it negates the possibility of affirmation itself.
16. Both political and philosophical death mark the limit of the category of the subject as such as long as to be a subject means to be something other than merely an object, the object of this hetero-affective structure and this anonymous web which I call the texture of facts, reality.

TEXT BY RUPE SIMMS

De Afromexicanos a Pueblo Negro
FORO: AFROMEXICANOS
Por el Reconocimiento Constitucional de los Derechos
del Pueblo Negro de México

Compoladores: Israel Reyes Larrea, Nemesio J. Rodríguez Mitchell, José Francisco Ziga Gabriel

CHAPTER ONE

ANTONIO GRAMSCI: THE MAN AND HIS POLITICS,

The Life and Ideological Production of Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937)

The Social Theory of Gramsci

The Essence of Hegemony and Counter-hegemony

The Creation of Hegemony and Counter-hegemony

The Application of Counter-hegemony

The End of Counter-hegemony

Antonio Gramsci: The Italian Communist, The Marxist Theorist, And the Revolutionary Ideologue

CHAPTER TWO

AFRICAN RESISTANCE TO EUROPEAN EXPLOITATION (1519 – 1829)

This research employs Gramscian theory in examining the resistance of African people to European exploitation from 1519 to the present. It divides this period into three major segments: 1519-1829, when enslaved Africans opposed colonial subordination, 1829-1950, when free Blacks tended to assimilate into Mexican society, and 1950-present, as Afro-Mexicans organize their communities to confront present-day racist discrimination.

The following discussion focuses on the first segment. Utilizing Gramscian thought, it reviews how the Catholic Church, an institution of civil society, collaborated with the Spanish monarchy, an institution of political society, to create a historic block. That is, hegemonic intellectuals, committed to advancing the political interests of the papacy and the Crown, produced and disseminated a multifaceted dominant ideology which constituted the popular conception of reality. A preminent feature of this belief system was its racist component which categorized Africans as inherently inferior to Europeans, and it thereby justified white ruling class ascendance. The following discussion examines in detail the production and propagation of this hegemonic philosophy and its racist dimension, while giving attention as well to how, on occasion, the colonial authorities used military violence against African resistance when it seriously threatened to subvert the dominant order.

According to Gramsci, during the initial phase of a cultural revolution, oppressed people defy exploitation, attempting to free themselves from the immediate circumstances of their

subalternation, without becoming formally politicized. The following discussion argues that enslaved Africans opposed domination in this manner, utilizing five strategies of resistance, which include community solidarity, Christian piety, militant insurrection, strategic miscegenation, and guerrilla warfare.

The Creation and Propagation of Colonial Racism

Five Strategies of African Resistance To Colonial Oppression

The colonial society of New Spain was notoriously tense and unstable. The dominant class was in constant fear of a violent uprising by the hostile enslaved Africans that lived in its midst. At the same time, the Blacks became progressively more confident and aggressive in challenging the restrictive legislation and military forces of their oppressors. Using Gramscian theory, the following section discusses first, in brief, the history and politics of this relationship; it then examines in detail how Africans resisted white subordination.

A Historical Review of Colonial Slavery

The Political Collaboration of the Catholic Church and the Colonial State

The Resistance of Enslaved Africans

Resistance in the Form of Community Solidarity
Resistance in the Form of Christian Piety
Resistance in the Form of Militant Insurrection
Resistance in the Form of Strategic Miscegenation
Resistance in the Form of Guerrilla Warfare

**THE EFFECTIVENESS OF
AFRICAN RESISTANCE**

CHAPTER THREE

**MESTIZAJE, A HEGEMONIC IDEOLOGY OF RACIAL CLEANSING AND
“MEXICO NEGRO,” A COUNTER-HEGEMONIC IDEOLOGY
OF BLACK RESISTANCE
(1821 – PRESENT)**

Mexicans of African descent have waged a relentless struggle against European subordination from the colonial era (1521-1821) to the present day. As mentioned in the previous chapter, between 1519 and the late 1600s, European settlers imported thousands of enslaved Africans to New Spain to serve as a massive and remarkable lucrative unpaid labor force. From 1821, when the colony gained its independence from Spain, to the present day the white ruling class has attempted to force Black people into extinction. They have done this, and are doing it still, through mestizaje, a hegemonic ideology created and popularized by traditional intellectuals to

destroy the identity and heritage of Afro-Mexicans and to render them invisible in Mexican society through racial absorption.

Through mestizaje the dominant class Europeans have attempted—and are still attempting—to whiten the nation by denying the existence of Africans, while creating a social hierarchy that placed a premium on whiteness. At the same time, they offered social and political rewards to African descendent people who disclaimed their blackness and attempted to become as white as possible through miscegenation and acculturation.

This chapter employs Gramscian theory in developing a thesis with two basic points. First, it argues that the Mexican-born criollos introduced mestizaje, a hegemonic ideology, during the period immediately following the War for Independence (1810-1821) and that Jose Vasconcelos (1882-1959) and other traditional intellectuals intensified and broadened its application in the years following the Revolution (1910-1920). In developing this argument, the study examines initially the creation of mestizaje as a philosophy employed by the white ruling class to facilitate the subordination of Afro-Mexicans; it then discusses the historical development of mestizaje, emphasizing the influence of Vasconcelos' The Cosmic Race, the most influential hegemonic work of the early twentieth century.

Second, the chapter argues that in 1997 a group of Afro-Mexican organic intellectuals challenged ruling class ascendancy by organizing a counter-hegemonic movement in Black Costa Chica, Mexico, advocating ethnic pride, political resistance, and class solidarity. The chapter develops this argument by first discussing in brief the ruling class subordination of Afro-descendent Mexicans. It then examines in detail the Black liberation struggle, giving specific attention to the organization and idea production of three of the thirteen sociopolitical meetings held in between 1997 and 2011.

Creation and Historical Development of Mestizaje:
A Hegemonic Ideology

Advent and Struggle of “Mexico Negro:”
A Counter-hegemonic Ideology

Ruling Class Domination

Afro-Mexican Counter-hegemony in the Costa Chica

For approximately four decades, a number of Afro-Mexican organic ideologues have been resisting the subordination of their people by Mexico's ruling elite by producing a counter-hegemonic movement which stresses consciousness raising, class solidarity, and political defiance. The following discussion examines this movement in detail after a brief introductory review of the geography and sociopolitical climate of the Costa Chica, the setting in which these ideologues have been most active.

Population and Geography of the Costa Chica
Ethnic Consciousness, Class Solidarity and Political Defiance

“I Encuentro de Pueblos Negros” (First Meeting of Black People), 1997
“XI Encuentro de Pueblos Negros” (Eleventh Meeting of Black People), 2007
XIII Encuentro de Pueblos Negros (Thirteenth Meeting of Black People), 2011

THE NATION OF MEXICO

From the Front:

AFROMEXICANOS: For the Constitutional Recognition of the Rights of the Black People of Mexico

Based on the ideas expressed in Article #2 of the Constitution of the United States of Mexico in which it is established that Mexico is a multicultural and pluralistic nation in which there exists diverse peoples, communities, and families of African descent; that we live in the territory of Mexico, with Mexican nationality and with residence abroad, we make known that:

There exist a total ignorance on the part of the State of Mexico with respect to recognizing and valuing the African presence, and the contribution of Africans to the culture and history of Mexico. This attitude is reflected in the absence of legislation that recognizes our right to our identity and to a diverse culture. This situation has produced a political system that is inadequate relative to the character and necessities of our people who are to be found in a condition of marginalization and vulnerability.

Therefore, we demand:

1. The Constitutional Recognition of the Rights of the Black Peoples and families of Afro-Mexican descent that live inside and outside of the country. Further we demand attention to the many contributions to the culture and to the history of our country, as well as to our concerted participation in the creation of the national identity. This must be firmly established through a constitutional change and the consequent modification in secondary legislation that will make possible our right to visibility, to live in a diverse society without discrimination and without xenophobia. We demand further the elimination of acts of racism and the positive affirmation of our identity from the perspective of race.
2. [We commit] to work for the legal recognition of our existence as a people, over against the systematic negation, and for the winning of a space in the cultural map of Mexico.
3. [We demand] that the three levels of government give attention to our needs in terms of education, health, nutrition, housing, natural resources, environment, and economic and cultural rights.
4. [We demand] immediate attention to the farming activities, tourism, forests, and fishing with the consideration that they are essential to the material and spiritual reproduction of Black People.¹

Conclusion

CHAPTER FOUR

Some reflections about the constitutional recognition Of the rights of the black people of Mexico

Jorge Amos Martinez Ayala
Afro-descendants from the lowland
(CIESAS-Mexico)

They cry out to me black!
I am scarcely seven years old,
Scarcely seven years old,
I have not even reached five.
Immediately some voices in the street shout out to me "black!"
Black, black, black, black, black, blaaack!
Am I perhaps black, I said to myself. Yes!
What is it to be black? Black!
And I did not know the sad truth
that was hidden. Black!
And I feel black.
As they were saying to me: Black!
And I stood back black. Black!
As they were wanting: Black!
I saw in my hair and my thick lips.
And my bare skin, my toasted flesh
And I stood back. Black!
And I stood back. Black!
And I stood back.
Black, black, black, black, black, black, blaaack!
Black, black, black, black, black, black, blaaack!
Black!
And the time was passing
and always embittered,
continuing to carry to my back
my heavy load,
and how heavy. . .
I straightened my hair,
I put makeup on my face,
and within my inner being
the same word was always resounding. Ah!
Black, black, black, black, black, black, blaaack!
Until one day I stood back,
I stood back, and I was going to fall.
Black, black, black, black.

¹ "DECLARATORIA-FORO-AFROM-JULIO2007.doc – Diversidades." Deversidades.org.mx/.../DECLARAGTORIA-FORO.

Black, black, black, black.
 Black, black, black, black.
 Black, black, bla . . . and what!
 And what black!, yes, black!, I am, black!
 Black!, black!, I am, black!
 Black!, black I am!
 From today and going forward, I do not want to straighten my hair, I do not want to.
 And I am going to laugh at those who want to avoid me,
 that want to avoid us as trouble
 they call the blacks people of color.
 And what color, black,
 And how pretty sounds, black.
 And what rhythm it has,
 black, black, black, black
 Black, black, black, black
 Black, black, black, black
 Black, black, finally!
 Finally I understood, finally!
 Now I do not stand back, finally!
 Now I advance secure, finally!
 I advance and I hope, finally!
 And bless heaven because I love God
 to have placed intense blackness in my color,
 and now I understood, finally!
 I have the key.
 Black, black, black, black.
 Black, black, black, black.
 Black, black, black, black.
 Black, black, I am black!

**The Educational Experience Relative to the Subject
 Of Afro-Mexican History and Culture in
 Jose Maria Morelos, Oaxaca (p. 85)**

Rodolfo Prudente Dominquez (Black Mexico AC)

In this article, I have been asked to expound the prominent features of my experienced over a period of two years in teaching the class Culture of the Afro-Mexican Race. This class is offered at Jose Maria Morelos and Pavon High School in the community of the same name, in the municipality of Huazolotitlan, Jamiltepec, Oaxaca. In terms of my approach, I have decided to employ an intentionally positive viewpoint, using the first person to refer to my personal experiences. I do this in order to emphasize the influence and importance that black culture has for me, a culture with which I proudly identify. . . .

In our country, the black population has received very little attention from historians and even less from the State. This is in spite of the arrival of blacks in Mexico at the time of the Conquest

[1519], and therefore, at the same time as the coming of the Spanish. This presence of blacks in Mexico has become an important element in the nation's cultural plurality, and in addition many expressions of ethnicity continue to exist and preserve specific traits of the African continent. Also, blacks have participated in the tripartite biological mixture among the Indian, European, and African populations, from which originated a blend that, in my opinion, predominates all across the continent. It is obvious that blacks played and continue to play an important role in the cultural, sociological, and economic development of the majority of the countries of the Americas.

This and much more such information is unknown by the majority of the Afro- descendent population of our country. This is a very sad situation in that it denies the basic capacity to who we are, which is essential to know where we are going. If we do not know who we are and do not know our history, we, for all practical purposes, loose our true identity.

The interest in knowing and spreading my culture has its birth in personal experiences that made me feel discriminated against. The experience of being black in my country gave me the sense that I was in someone else's house. In certain zones of the republic and even in the interior of our state of Oaxaca, I have been stopped and detained by security and immigration agents for having dark skin. These authorities did not have the slightest idea that we, people with preponderantly black features, exists in this country. I was not able to travel freely without a credential that would verify my nationality. Beginning in 1997, at the first meeting of black people in El Ciruelo, Pinotepa Nacional, a small community in the state of Oaxaca, politically aware leaders organized the Black Mexico AC. From this, I felt the desire to know and do everything possible, so that my black culture might be recognized.

Black Mexico is a civil association that promotes the development, education, and recovery of the Afro-descendent culture of the black people along the coast of Guerrero and Oaxaca. This organization works through the management of financial, material, nutritional resources available to Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) or through private sources for the development of Afro-Mexican people. It is an organism that has united us in the search for better conditions of life for our people in the struggle against racism and xenophobia in our own country.

It is precisely in Black Mexico where I initiated my adventure in pursuit of the cultural recovery and identity of our people, and now I form part of the work group of this organization. It was founded in 1997, when we, the representatives of the black people of the states of Guerrero and Oaxaca, met in order to study the black presence in this country. It was there that we realized that we had to organize ourselves in order to defend our culture. At that juncture, we understood that to be black in Mexico is to bear the full weight of racial discrimination. For certain in that first meeting, we discussed many racist and discriminatory experiences that we Afro-Mexicans are still suffering. Among others, we are required to sing the National Anthem before several authorities, so that they would believe that we were Mexicans. In like manner, we understood

that this racial discrimination is due above all to the fact that Mexico has denied our historical presence. The reason for this is that, for the majority of the population, to be Mexican is to be indigenous, mestizo, or Spanish or to come from any other type of mixed parentage, but not of Afro-descendent ancestry.

Themes for Discussion

1. "ONLY WHEN LIONS HAVE HISTORIANS WILL HUNTERS CEASE BEING HEROES" – African Proverb
2. "THE MOST POTENT WEAPON OF THE OPPRESSOR IS THE MIND OF THE OPPRESSED" – Steve Biko
3. "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e., the class, which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it." – Karl Marx, The German Ideology
4. "When you control a man's thinking you do not have to worry about his actions. You do not have to tell him not to stand here or go yonder. He will find his 'proper place' and will stay in it. You do not need to send him to the back door. He will go without being told. In fact, if there is not back door, he will cut one for his special benefit. His education makes it necessary." – Carter G. Woodson, The Mis-education of the Negro

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Thomas Hirschhorn's temporary cultural project Gramsci Monument in the Bronx

July 5th, 2013

Thomas Hirschhorn's temporary art pavillon "Gramsci Monument", 2013, Bronx, New York, Courtesy Dia Art Foundation, Foto: Romain Lopez



With the help of the Dia Art Foundation, the Swiss artist Thomas Hirschhorn has constructed the „Gramsci Monument“ on the grounds of Forest Houses, a New York City Housing Authority development in the Morrisania neighborhood of the Bronx. In the coming ten weeks (until September 15), the pavilion will invite everybody to participate in lectures, concerts, and many other cultural activities, announced the Dia Art Foundation.

“I decided — O.K., almost for political reasons — that I wasn't going to do it in Manhattan,” Hirschhorn said in the New York Times. “It has to be outside the center.” Many people live in poor circumstances in this neighbourhood with hardly any cultural

offers. This project pays tribute to the Italian political theorist and Marxist Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937).

You can buy works by Thomas Hirschhorn in our [shop](#).

Gramsci Monument is an outdoor pavilion constructed with easily available, everyday materials. The structure will be built—and later dismantled—by local residents of Forest Houses, coordinated by Hirschhorn. As was the case in his previous monuments, it is the artist's intention that Gramsci Monument be built and run with the help of local residents, employed temporarily and involved at every stage of the project.

Gramsci Theater at the art pavillon "Gramsci Monument", 2013, Bronx, New York, Courtesy Dia Art Foundation, Foto: Romain Lopez



The structure will include an exhibition space, a library with books by (and about) Antonio Gramsci, a theater platform, a workshop area, a lounge, an internet corner, and the Gramsci Bar, which will be run by local residents. The Gramsci Monument will be open daily, offering a daily program of lectures, a children's workshop, a radio station, and a daily newspaper. There will be Art Workshops led by Hirschhorn, and field trips organized by Dia curator, Yasmil Raymond.

In order to be continuously present on location throughout the production of his artwork, Hirschhorn will temporarily reside in the South Bronx.

Gramsci Monument is the fourth and last in Thomas Hirschhorn's series of "monuments" dedicated to major writers and thinkers, which he initiated in 1999 with Spinoza Monument (Amsterdam, The Netherlands), followed by Deleuze Monument (Avignon, France, 2000) and Bataille Monument (Kassel, Germany, 2002).

Over the years, Hirschhorn has maintained a commitment to presenting his work in exhibition spaces such as museums and galleries, but also in "public space". Every work of Hirschhorn's aims to include the Other, and address what he calls a "non-exclusive audience."

Gramsci Bar at the art pavillon "Gramsci Monument", Courtesy Dia Art Foundation, Foto: Romain Lopez

