

THE AFRICAN HERITAGE OF LATIN AMERICA**

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with contributions by

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Miami Palmetto Senior High

translation by

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Tulane University

MINIMUM TIME: Five sessions.

OBJECTIVE: To familiarize the student with the rich and varied African cultural heritage of Latin America.

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IMPORTANT TERMS AND CONCEPTS:

Afro-Latin American:	Having cultural roots in both Africa and Latin America. This word is used especially in reference to people or traditions that originated with the African slaves who were taken by force to Latin America.
Candomblé:	A Brazilian religion which consists of a mix between Catholicism and various African religions. Other similar religions include macumba and umbanda.
Cimarrón:	Name given to fugitive slaves in the Spanish colonies of Latin America.
Dahomey:	Africans who came from what is now known as the country of Benin.
Manumission:	Voluntary freeing of a slave by his/her owner.
Negritude:	A cultural movement rooted in the philosophy of Aimé Césaire and Leopoldo Senghor, students in the French Caribbean colonies in the 1830s. Their philosophy is based upon the exaltation and glorification of African culture.
Orishá:	The deity or spirit of African cults. Orishás take physical form in the bodies of believers during a process called possession. (Orishá can also be spelled <u>orixá</u>)
Palenque:	A community of fugitive slaves in the Spanish colonies. (Also called <u>cumbe</u> .)
Quilombo:	A fugitive slave or community of fugitives in Brazil.
Samba:	A type of popular music in Brazil based on African rhythms; also the dance that accompanies this music.
Santería:	A Caribbean religion that combines Catholicism with various African religions.
Religious syncretism:	The combination of elements derived from various religious traditions that form a new and different religion.
Yoruba:	People who come from what is now the African nation of Nigeria.

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BLACK WOMAN¹

I can still smell the spray of the sea they forced me to cross.
But I cannot remember the night.
Not even the ocean could remember it.
But I have not forgotten the first seagull I sighted on the horizon.
The clouds so high, like innocent witnesses.
Perhaps I have not really forgotten my lost coastline, nor
my ancestral tongue.
They left me here and here I have lived.
And because I worked like a beast,
here I was re-born.
[...]

This verse is part of a poem written by Nancy Morejón, a Cuban woman of African descent, and recounts the experience of millions of Africans who were brought by force to the New World to work in the European colonies.

Africans in the Colonial Period

Some Africans reached the Americas with the first European voyages of exploration and conquest. The Spanish already had African slaves and brought them along as personal servants. At first, there were few Africans in the colonies because the Spanish used Indians as forced laborers. But because of the poor conditions and because the Indians had no defenses against European diseases, millions of Indians died. Colonial economies were based largely on mining and agriculture, industries that required enormous numbers of workers. To maintain production, the colonizers looked to Africa for slaves to replace the Indians.

Although the majority of slaves worked as laborers on sugar plantations, in the mines, or as personal servants in the Europeans' houses, many also worked as artisans. African artisans made clothing, shoes, and furniture; they did ironworking, and built many of the most beautiful churches of Latin America, especially in Peru and northeastern Brazil.

¹Excerpt from Nancy Morejón, "Mujer Negra." Translated by Lisa E. Davis in Angel Flores and Kate Flores, eds. The Defiant Muse (New York: The Feminist Press at CUNY, 1986), p. 116.

Blacks who lived in the cities accounted for an important part of the colonial economy. The white colonists depended on the slaves to do much of the dirty work. These jobs were essential to the colonies, but the white colonists refused to do them.

The living conditions of the slaves were often extremely difficult, although the treatment they received differed and depended greatly on the personality of the owners. Two of the factors that most influenced the relationship between slave and master were the type of work the slave performed and the region in which he or she lived. For example, a slave who worked on an isolated sugar field was treated very differently from a slave who worked in a house in the city. But in both cases, the slave was the property of his or her owner.

Living conditions were especially difficult for women. Along with working in the mines or plantations, they were frequently victims of sexual abuse by their owners. This practice was most common during the first years of American colonization as there were very few European women in the New World. In many countries, the child of a slave was automatically the property of the owner.

The number of slaves who were transported by force to Latin America is astonishing. For example, it is estimated that Brazil, during its 325 years of international slave trafficking, was the final destination for 3,500,000 to 5,000,000 African slaves.² In Cuba, the number is over 2,000,000. In Brazil and some of the large Spanish cities, half of the population were black slaves. The majority of them were taken from the West coast of Africa, at first from what are now Senegal, Gambia, and Guinea, and later from the Congo and Nigeria. The Yorubas from Nigeria were one of the last groups to be brought by force to the New World. Their influence is very evident in the culture of Cuba and Brazil, as is that of the Dahomey from Benin.

Many slaves died during the trip from Africa, and many more died as a result of the horrible conditions in which they lived in the New World. In Brazil, for example, on the average, a slave survived only eight or nine years after his capture. Rebellions and escapes were frequent occurrences throughout Latin America.

Fugitive slaves in the Spanish colonies were called cimarrones. Sometimes cimarrones united to establish communities in remote areas far from the authorities. These communities were called palenques or cumbes in the Spanish colonies, and quilombos in Brazil. Some of these communities were able to remain separate from white colonial society for long periods of time. Palmares, a quilombo that declared itself a Black Republic, is a

²By means of comparison, during more or less the same time period, approximately 427,000 slaves were taken to what is now the United States of America.

unique example. Established in 1603, Palmares had a very sophisticated political system based on an African tribal monarchy with a king and court. A portion of the national territory was privately owned, but there was also a system of communal property. They had an army and a class of priests. With a population of close to 20,000, the republic proved to be so strong and well-organized that the Portuguese colonial government sent troops many times before they were able to defeat this quilombo in 1694.

In addition to escape, there were other ways slaves could obtain their freedom. In many countries, slaves could buy their freedom. Especially in the cities, slaves could keep a small part of the earnings gained from their work. Little by little, they were able to save enough money to liberate themselves. The slaves who lived in the cities were more aware of colonial emancipation laws than those who lived in rural areas and thus bought their freedom more frequently.

Manumission was also widespread throughout the colonies in Latin America. An owner could free a slave as a reward for good service. Many owners included in their wills a clause guaranteeing the freedom of a favorite slave, and sometimes all of their slaves, upon the owner's death. This procedure most often affected female slaves and children who worked in white colonists' houses. By being in daily personal contact with the slaves, an owner was more likely to recognize their humanity. Furthermore, owners who had had children with their female slaves often freed them.

The mixing of races was common, to the point that after various generations the lines that divided the races were blurred. The result of this mixing was a hierarchy of castes. The lighter a person's skin, the more opportunity he or she had to advance within the social structure.

Each type of mixture had its own "category" which was associated with an economic and social class. Haiti, for example, had fourteen skin color categories. In Cuba, the mulattoes, a mixture of a black person and a white person, constituted a totally separate class with interests separate from those of either blacks or whites. Other common categories were those of the mestizo, the result of a union between an Indian and a white, and the zambo, the result of union between a black and an Indian.

As the races mixed, so did the cultures. Much of what we call "Latin American" is actually a mixture of Iberian, Native American, and African cultures. The Africans brought with them their religion, music, and political system. Their culture was rich in music, art, and dance, as well as in oral literature. Notwithstanding their low position in colonial society, they were essential in the daily functioning of the colonies.

Creole Africans and the Century of Independence

The word "creole" was originally used to distinguish the sons of Europeans who were born in America from those who were born in Europe and later migrated to the colonies. But it is also used to refer to the descendants of Africans born in America to distinguish them from the bosales, the Africans who had just arrived. In the 19th century the majority of blacks in the Americas were creoles. These blacks, together with the bosales and mulattoes, played an important role in many independence movements in the New World.

The first Latin American republic was Haiti, a former French colony, which established its independence in 1804. The creation of the Haitian Republic was a direct consequence of the French Revolution, which was based on the principles of democracy and liberty. According to historians, the revolution in Haiti began with a slave rebellion during a voodoo ceremony on a plantation. Later, it was headed by the hero of the revolution, the ex-slave Toussaint L'Ouverture.

Haiti was the richest colony in the New World. This black revolution that abolished slavery was a source of great fear for many white Latin American colonists whose economies depended upon the system of slavery. However, in Latin America there were already many white abolitionists. One of them was Simón Bolívar, the freedom-fighter who would later visit Haiti and receive military assistance from President Alexandre Petión³ for the liberation of parts of Spanish South America.

In the 19th century slavery was in decline in almost all Latin American nations. It was an inefficient, outdated system in moral contradiction with the "cultured" ideas of modern states. In 1838, Great Britain was the first nation to declare slavery illegal. This declaration also freed slaves in the English colonies, which at that time included Jamaica, the Bahamas, Trinidad, and many other parts of the Caribbean. There were many reasons for abolition, both moral and economic.

Later, France joined the process of abolition of slavery in the colonies in 1848. Holland followed suit in 1863 and the United States in 1865. The only two countries where slavery persisted until almost the end of the century were Cuba (1886) and Brazil (1888).

When Cuba and Brazil finally declared total abolition, there were more "free people of color" than slaves. In Cuba's War of Independence in 1898, many blacks like Antonio Maceo joined in the struggle for the liberation of the island. José Martí, a hero of this war, and one of Cuba's most famous writers, spoke and wrote constantly about the importance of the cooperation of the races in a better society for all.

³Haiti in 1806 was divided into two sections, the North, sympathetic to French rule, and the South, fiercely independent. Petión presided over the southern portion of the republic.

Contemporary Afro-Latin American Culture

The political influence of Africans on Latin America has been less than that of other ethnic groups because they entered into American society as an oppressed class and therefore with little political power. However, throughout the history of the Americas, the African sectors of the population have always had an important influence on the region's economy and culture. One of the cultural arenas where they have had the most evident impact is in religion. In many cases African religions have been combined with Christian traditions to form new religions in a process called religious syncretism. Some examples of these new religions are santería in Cuba, candomblé in Brazil, and voodoo in Haiti.

Santería is a syncretic religion that combines the Lucumí-Yoruba religions with Catholicism. Santería is associated principally with the island of Cuba, but is practiced in many other parts of the Caribbean. Historically, santería provided not only spiritual guidance but also a type of resistance against the dominant white society. For this reason, its practice was censured and at times prohibited. Nevertheless, with the passing of time, santería crossed ethnic and class lines and has become popular among the population at large. It is important to understand that today blacks are not the only ones who practice these religions; they are widespread throughout society. In places where these syncretic practices are common, participants come from all racial, ethnic, and social groups.

In santería as in the Catholic Church, there is a spiritual guide or priest, called the santero or santera. He or she is the intermediary between the orishá and the congregation. The orishás truly represent a mixture of Catholic saints and African gods. For example, St. Barbara is known as Changó, and St. Lazarus as Babulú-Ayé. And just like the saints, each orishá has a day of special celebration.

While the Catholic saints and African orishás share some common features, they are differentiated by an essential element: orishás have human-like desires. While they are more powerful than humans, they are not necessarily morally superior. Like us, for example, they have favorite foods. On the orishás special days, their favorite dishes are served and are included in the offerings made to them. If a human wants to ask a favor of an orishá, he gives him a gift of his favorite food or other favorite things. Each orishá is also associated with a color and during the day of each orishá's celebration everyone dresses in the corresponding color.

September 7th, for example, is the celebration of the patron saint of Cuba, the Virgin of Charity in the Catholic tradition, and Ochún in santería.⁴ As honey is one of Ochún's favorite foods, people make honey-sweetened candies and foods to be used in offerings. Many celebrations are held on the beach, as Ochún is closely associated with the sea.

⁴The same celebration is held in Puerto Rico and Miami on the same day as in Cuba.

Due to the large number of blacks in Brazil, syncretic religions have a stronger African influence than those of other countries. There are a wide variety of Afro-Brazilian cults.⁵ Candomblé is most common in Bahia; macumba and umbanda in Rio de Janeiro, while in Recife the predominant cult is known as xangó. All of these, however, are variations of candomblé.

Generally, there are three important differences that distinguish African religions from European religions. First, in the African tradition, both gods and humans share the same world. Man and woman are part of a continuum that also includes the dead and the gods. The physical realm is as important for the gods as it is for humans. It is for this reason that gifts of food, cigarettes, and soap are included in the offerings to the orishás. Second, evil is not recognized as an absolute power, but rather in relation to the forces of good and life. In other words, the Christian concept of "original sin" does not exist in the majority of Afro-Latin American religions. Finally, the physical evocation of an orishá effects a physical change in the believer. Possession is a mode of communication between gods and humans.

Music and dance are integral components of candomblé, santería, and voodoo ceremonies. But African music has influenced secular music as well. Brazilian blacks danced to a rhythm known as umbigada. Today this dance is the national dance of Brazil: the samba. Merengue and salsa are also "Latin American" dances with African rhythms.

Other elements of African culture are found in the kitchen. The slaves brought with them their own cooking style, spices, and herbs. They modified European dishes by introducing their own condiments such as dendé⁶ and different types of beans.

Afro-Latin American Political Culture

In spite of the many African cultural influences in Latin American nations, there is still a certain level of prejudice against blacks in many of these countries. This is intimately related to the issue of class. Because they are poor, blacks are discriminated against. But they are also discriminated against simply because they are descendants of African slaves. In great measure, the cultural and political movement called negritude was an attempt to fight against this discrimination.

Negritude is the most important movement by blacks in Latin American arts and politics. The purpose of this movement was to celebrate all things associated with the Black

⁵"Cult" is used here as a synonym for "denomination" or "religion."

⁶Dendé: palm oil.

race and to combat racism. The movement began in the Caribbean and later took root in all Latin American nations with black populations.

The most important name associated with the Negritude movement is that of the Martiniquais⁷ poet, Aimé Césaire. Together with other intellectuals from the French colonies, Césaire founded the magazine Légitime Défense in Paris in 1932 in order to begin his attack against racism.

Many white intellectuals such as Maurice Delafosse, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Pablo Picasso supported the movement because they found artistic inspiration in the traditional cultures of Africa. In Latin America, the Negritude movement was a very important weapon in the hands of blacks, even though it developed differently in each cultural region.

The Spanish Caribbean: Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic

In Cuba, the person who is most identified with the Negritude movement is the poet Nicolás Guillén (1902-1989). Guillén was at the center of the movement, called Negrismo in Spanish, which introduced elements of African culture like folklore and religion to Cuban poetry. Later Guillén created a type of poetry that criticized Cuban society for its racism. He included Spanish and African elements in his poetry and in this way created what has been called "mulatto poetry." One of his most famous poems is "Sensemayá."

Other spokespeople for the movement in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean were Luis Palés Matos of Puerto Rico and Manuel de Cabral of the Dominican Republic. The two mixed African influences with Antillian poetry in an ingenious fashion.⁸

Negritude in the Other Parts of Latin America

As in the Caribbean, blacks from many other countries in Latin America proclaimed and celebrated their African heritage and fought against discrimination. In Brazil, for example, a civil rights movement emerged in the 1930s called "A Frente Negra Brasileira" (The Black Brazilian Front) which lasted until 1938 when the dictator Getulio Vargas prohibited all political organization. Despite these restrictions, another movement emerged in the 1940s carrying the flag of Negritude: the "Teatro Experimental do Negro" (Black Experimental Theater) directed by Abdias Nascimento. This institution was more than a theatre. It included a literacy campaign and black beauty contests and sponsored theatrical

⁷Martiniquais: from Martinique.

⁸Antillian: Caribbean.

works with themes of interest to blacks. In sum, it was an organization for raising the consciousness of the black race.

In other countries there were also movements which tried to shed light on the history of a sector of society which had been ignored despite its immense contributions to the nations' development. For example, in Costa Rica the writer Quince Duncan wrote about black immigrants to the Antilles who moved to Central America to work on the plantations of the United Fruit Company. In Panama, blacks had a great influence on cultural life as a result of their immigration to work on the construction of railroad lines and later on the Panama Canal.

Even in countries where the indigenous culture is dominant, one can find African influences. In Peru there is a very strong African tradition in the city of Callao which is especially evident in black music. In a certain era of the colonial period, the population of Mexico City was 50% black and mulatto. The small islands of the Caribbean are not discussed here but most had economies based on African labor.⁹

As indicated throughout this essay, the African heritage is remarkably rich and even today has an immense influence on the social, cultural, and political structure of Latin America. African culture is a vital contribution to the fusion of people and cultures that constitute what today is called Latin America.

⁹English is spoken on many Caribbean islands, and for this reason this essay does not discuss them [remember: this unit was originally for use in Spanish classes]. Nevertheless, these islands are often considered a part of the Latin American community from a historical, economic, and especially political perspective. The cultural movements of Jamaica in particular (e.g. Rastafarianism) contributed greatly to raising the consciousness of blacks in all of Latin America.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Before reading the introduction, consider the following: Do the students know that Latin America has a strong African influence? Was it mentioned previously in any of their classes? Is it mentioned in textbooks that they have used? If not, why not?
2. We know that the Spanish, the Portuguese, and the English (and later the North Americans) participated in the slave trade. What other countries were involved? Besides the southern United States and Latin America, what other parts of the world practiced slavery?
3. Discuss the history of slavery in Latin America. How is it similar to what we know of the history of slavery in the U.S.? In what ways is it different?
4. In the United States, the abolition of slavery was only possible through a civil war. In the majority of Latin American countries, abolition occurred through much more peaceful means. What explains this difference?
5. The Independence and abolitionist movements in Latin America occurred simultaneously and often helped each other. Why was there a relationship between these two movements?
6. Racism between blacks and whites seems to be less problematic in most Latin American countries than in the U.S. Why?
7. Discuss the concept of religious syncretism. What are some examples of syncretism in religions that the students themselves practice? (e.g. if there are Christians in class, consider some of the traditions of the Easter celebration. What do dyed eggs and a rabbit have to do with the resurrection of Jesus Christ?)
8. In the United States, there is not the same level of syncretism between African religions and European ones. Why? What is the importance of the religious history of the U.S. (e.g. the influence of Puritanism) for the country's development?
9. African music had a tremendous influence on the music of Latin America as well as on the music of the U.S. Why is this influence so strong?
10. Compare Catholicism and Afro-Latin American religions. What do they have in common? Is syncretism an easy process? Why did it occur?
11. According to the discussion of the Negritude movement in the previous essay, did this intellectual movement have political implications? What were they?

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

Two recipes for dishes influenced by African cuisines.

Selection of Autobiography of a Runaway Slave by Esteban Montejo

Slides with written descriptions

ACTIVITIES

Note to the professor

You will find in the chapter some recipes that demonstrate the influence of African culture on Latin American cuisine. We recommend that secondary school teachers make arrangements with home economics teachers in their school to use the school kitchen for an hour. In the university, it may be possible to use the kitchen facilities of one of the residence halls. The instructor can distribute a list of the necessary ingredients during the first session of this unit and the students can decide among themselves how to obtain the items.

Activity #1

1. The students should read and discuss the first part of the article, "Africans in the Colonial Period", using Discussion Questions 1-3.
2. Discuss the excerpt from the poem "Black Woman" utilizing the following questions and others that occur to the students.
 - a) The poet was born in 1944, almost 60 years after the abolition of slavery in Cuba. What does it mean, then, when she says that "I can still smell the spray of the sea they forced me to cross"?
 - b) What does the following phrase mean: "Perhaps I have not really forgotten my lost coastline"?
 - c) To what does the narrator refer when she says, "here I was re-born"?

Activity #2

1. The students should read and discuss the second part of the article, "African Creoles and the Century of Independence", using Discussion Questions 4-6.

2. The class should be divided into groups of approximately five people in order to consider the following ideas.

a) The students should imagine that they are slaves on a Caribbean island who want to escape from their masters. How would they do it? What are the risks? They should consider the fact that none of them knows the terrain which is markedly different from the African terrain. Moreover, plantation slaves often came from many different parts of Africa and did not share a common language. How would they live without the food, clothes, shelter, etc. provided for them by their master? Where would they go? Could they take children and elderly family members with them? Would it be better to stay together and help each other or to separate to avoid capture? If they decide to stay together, what would their new community be like?

b) The students should imagine that they are slaves living in a Spanish colony. Many people in the colony want to rebel against Spain and declare independence. The slaves should discuss the advantages and disadvantages that independence will bring for them. Will they participate in the rebellion? How will their social position change if the rebellion is successful? What will happen to them if the rebellion fails?

The students should write a short dialogue (5 lines per actor) dramatizing this situation. They should memorize the dialogue and present it to the class.

Activity #3

1. The students should read and discuss the third part of the article, "Contemporary Afro-Latin American Culture", using Discussion Questions 7-11.

Activity #4

1. The students should read the excerpt from the autobiography of the Cuban Esteban Montejo that is included with the supplementary materials. Discuss the excerpt using the questions included in that section.

2. Show and discuss the slides.

Activity #5

1. The class should meet on this day in the school kitchen (See the Note to the Professor above). They should prepare food using the recipes included with the supplementary materials.

or:

2. Review with the students the material they have studied and administer the suggested test.

or:

3. Use one of the Advanced Activities listed below.

ADVANCED ACTIVITIES

1. The students should study the phenomenon of religious syncretism in the Americas. They could investigate syncretic practices found in the U.S. (e.g. various versions of vodun/voodoo are practiced in the southern U.S., especially in cities like New Orleans and Miami). How do they compare with candomblé or with santería? How are they different? Are they practiced by the entire local population or a specific group? What is the attitude of those who do not practice the syncretic religion? [Instructor: you may want to look at Flash of the Spirit, listed below with the suggested readings. The author explores African-American art and the continuation of African religious practices in the southern U.S.]

2. Using all the resources available in the school library, the students should work in groups to draw a map of the ethnic population of the Americas (Don't forget to include the U.S.). Where do the majority of the descendants of Africa live? And the indigenous population? European? After they have created their maps, discuss possible historical explanations for this distribution.

3. The essay suggests that the abolition of slavery had economic as well as moral motivations. Discuss this idea. What might have been the economic reasons? Can the students see any correlation between the types of industries practiced in a country and the date of abolition? Some historians maintain that slavery would have ended for economic reasons even if political pressure had not existed. The students should investigate this theory and form their own opinion. They should present the theory to the class with a review of the documentation they used to formulate it.

4. Using encyclopedias, biology textbooks, etc., the students should verify the geographical origin of all the ingredients used in the recipes included in this chapter. What do the results tell us about the cultural influences of Latin America? The same project can be done with a student's favorite dish, especially one which is considered particularly "American."

TEST

TRUE OR FALSE

1. Slaves were used only on sugar plantations.
2. Many slaves came from the west coast of Africa.
3. Mexico was the first Caribbean colony to declare its independence.
4. In the Spanish colonies of Latin America, fugitive slaves were called quilombos.
5. There were fewer slaves in Latin America than in the southern U.S.
6. In all Latin American countries it was illegal for a slave to buy his/her own freedom.
7. The music of Cuba and Brazil has African roots.
8. Only blacks participate in candomblé and santería ceremonies.
9. Africans brought their cuisine to the New World.
10. The first African slaves arrived in the New World during the eighteenth century.
11. Santería is practiced principally in Brazil.
12. Simón Bolívar wanted to continue slavery in the Americas to ensure the region's economic stability.
13. Ochún is an important orishá in the Caribbean.
14. The orishás only exist in Brazil.
15. Negritude is a political movement developed to destroy the racist governments of the world.

TEST - ANSWERS

1. False
2. True
3. False
4. False
5. False
6. False
7. True
8. False
9. True
10. False
11. False
12. False
13. True
14. False
15. False

SUGGESTED READINGS

Cabrera, Lydia. El monte: Notas sobre las religiones, la magia, las supersticiones y los negros criollos y del pueblo de Cuba. Miami: Rema Press, 1968.

Carpentier, Alejo. El reino de este mundo. Montevideo: Arce, 1966.

----. The Kingdom of this World. New York: Knopf, 1967.

Harris, Jessica B. Iron Pots and Wooden Spoons. New York: Athenum, 1989.

Moreno Fragnals, Manuel. Africa in Latin America. Trans. Leonor Blum. New York: Holmes and Meier, 1984.

Núñez, Benjamin. Dictionary of Afro-Latin American Civilization. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1980.

Price, Richard. Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1979.

Thompson, Robert. Flash of the Spirit: Afro-American Art and Philosophy. New York: Random House, 1983.

AUDIO-VISUAL MATERIALS

De cierta manera. Directed by Sara Gómez. In a cinematic mix of documentary and fiction, this film looks at the marginal neighborhoods of Havana shortly after the beginning of the Revolution. Special attention is given to African culture and its influences in Cuba. 79 min. [CRC collection # FF CUB 16]

El otro Francisco. Directed by Sergio Giral. Based on the 19th century novel by Anselmo Suárez y Romero. The film takes apart the structure of the novel to reveal its racist assumptions, then retells the story to make a socio-economic analysis and reveal the true face of slavery and class struggle. 100 min. [CRC collection # FF CUB 18]

Hail Umbanda. An insider's view of Brazil's fastest growing religion. 46 min. [CRC collection # R BRA 3]

Bahia: Africa in the Americas. A documentary of the impact of African culture on Brazil with particular emphasis on candomblé and the entire region of Bahia. 58 min. [CRC collection # R BRA 4]

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

Recipes with African Influences

Doce de Coco: Brazil

Although coconut is considered to have originated in Asia, it is cultivated in all regions near the equator. In many desserts that have African influences, coconut milk is used as an ingredient.

Makes 4 servings

2 cups sugar
1 cup water
2 cups of grated coconut
4 whole cloves

Mix the sugar and water in a heavy casserole dish until they form a thick syrup. Cook the syrup over a low flame, removing it from the heat occasionally. When the syrup begins to thicken, add the coconut and cloves. Continue alternating cooking and removing the mixture until it thickens completely. Remove from heat and allow to cool. When cooled, invert the cooking dish to place the dessert on a serving platter. Serve at room temperature.

Mofongo: Puerto Rico¹⁰

3 green plantains
4 cups water
1 tbsp salt
3 large garlic cloves, peeled
1 tbsp olive oil
1/2 lb. cracklings (pork skin), well-toasted
Shortening or vegetable oil for frying

Peel the plantains and cut them diagonally into thumb-sized slices. Soak them for 15 minutes in the water and salt. Heat the shortening or oil to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Add the plantain slices and fry them at 300 degrees for 15 minutes or until they are cooked but not golden. Remove them from the oil and dry them with an absorbant paper towel. Set them to one side.

¹⁰Taken from Carmen Aboy Valledjuli, Puerto Rican Cookery (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company, 1980).

In a mortar bowl, crush the garlic very well. Add the olive oil and mix. Remove the mixture from the mortar bowl and set aside. Place some of the plantain slices and some cracklings in the mortar bowl. Add some of the garlic and olive oil paste. Mix well. With a large spoon, remove a portion of the mixture and form small 2-inch balls. Repeat this procedure with the rest of the mix. Serve hot.