

The University of San Francisco

USF Scholarship: a digital repository @ Gleeson Library | Geschke Center

Master's Theses

Theses, Dissertations, Capstones and Projects

Spring 5-21-2021

A treacherous journey through Latin America: The plight of Black African and Haitian migrants forced to remain in Mexico

Zefitret A. Molla

University of San Francisco, zamolla@dons.usfca.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://repository.usfca.edu/thes>



Part of the [African Studies Commons](#), [Latin American History Commons](#), [Latin American Studies Commons](#), [Migration Studies Commons](#), [Race and Ethnicity Commons](#), and the [Race, Ethnicity and Post-Colonial Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Molla, Zefitret A., "A treacherous journey through Latin America: The plight of Black African and Haitian migrants forced to remain in Mexico" (2021). *Master's Theses*. 1360.

<https://repository.usfca.edu/thes/1360>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses, Dissertations, Capstones and Projects at USF Scholarship: a digital repository @ Gleeson Library | Geschke Center. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of USF Scholarship: a digital repository @ Gleeson Library | Geschke Center. For more information, please contact repository@usfca.edu.

A treacherous journey through Latin America: The plight of Black
African and Haitian migrants forced to remain in Mexico

Zefitret A. Molla

MASTER OF ARTS

In

MIGRATION STUDIES

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

April 30, 2021

A treacherous journey through Latin America: The plight of Black African and Haitian migrants forced to remain in Mexico

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Master in Migration Studies

By Zefitret A. Molla

04/30/2020

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members, this thesis project has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

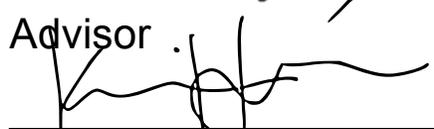
APPROVED:



05/10/2021

Advisor

Date



5-12-2021

Academic Director

Date

Dean of Arts and Sciences

Date

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

I extend my deepest gratitude and appreciation to Professor Diana Negrín for your insights, suggestions and editorial feedback. I will forever be indebted to Professor Yves Bernardo Roger Solis Nicot for your constant belief in my academic abilities and your help throughout my master's program. This project would not have been possible without the support of the University of San Francisco's Department of Migration Studies, the Universidad Iberoamericana and above all the migrants who shared their very personal and deepest stories with me. And finally, I will forever be grateful to Dr. Tadios Belay, Paulina Olvera and Nora Caro for their help in connecting me with research participants.

I would also like to thank my father, for always advising me throughout my research, my mother for her unconditional love, my sisters for their encouragements and my friends who have kept me sane throughout these last two years.

Abstract

The growing presence of Black African and Haitian migrants in Mexico poses a new set of challenges to a country that is already struggling to recognize the presence of Afro-Mexicans and where *mestizaje* still dominates the national discourse on race. Due to restrictive U.S. and Mexican immigration policies since 2016, many of these migrants have found themselves forced to remain in a country they had only intended to transit through on their journey northward to the U.S. Mexico has only recently taken the necessary steps to recognize its Afro-Mexican population which had been marginalized and erased from history. This paper aims to shed light on the specific issues affecting Black, non-Spanish speaking migrants in Mexico due to their intersecting identities by using a mixed-methods approach. It analyzes 86 responses obtained from an online survey administered in Spanish to Afro-Mexicans in order to learn about their experiences as Black Mexicans and to draw a connection between their experiences as Black Mexicans and those of Black African and Haitian migrants in Mexico. It also draws on 23 in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted in French and English with Black African and Haitian migrants in Tijuana and Mexico City and analyzes U.S. and Mexican immigration policies affecting these communities. Black African and Haitian migrants face challenges due to their status as migrants, their race in a country where the majority of the population is not Black and their lack of Spanish which hinders their access to services and makes navigating Mexico harder. Appropriate measures should be taken by the Mexican government to provide assistance and support to these Black African and Haitian migrants, whose intersecting identities increase their vulnerabilities.

Keywords: Black, migration, race, *mestizo*, Mexico, Afro-Mexican

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	
Introductory remarks.....	1
Positionality.....	4
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	
A. Race, <i>mestizaje</i> and Blackness in Mexican society.....	7
B. Recent restrictive U.S. and Mexican immigration policies.....	23
C. Intersectionality: A lens to study the hardships faced by Black migrants.....	29
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	
Setting.....	39
Participants.....	40
Measurement instruments.....	43
Validity and credibility.....	45
Strengths and limitations.....	46
Data analysis.....	48
CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS	
A. Survey analysis.....	49
B. Interview analysis.....	53
1. Push factors: A mix between economic and political factors.....	53
2. Unfair and discriminatory international refugee regime.....	61
3. Discriminations based on race, language and status as migrants.....	66
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	74
APPENDIXES	78
REFERENCES	87

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introductory remarks

The US-Mexican border has recently seen the nature of its migration evolve and diversify. For the first time, Mexicans are not the majority of migrants crossing the border. Aside from Central Americans, there are now extracontinental migrants, “migrants of non-Western Hemispheric origin transiting through Latin America with the goal of reaching the US or Canada”, these are migrants from Asia and Africa (Yates, 2019). While African migrants represent a small fraction of overall migrant apprehensions in Mexico, the number of African migrants has grown significantly in recent years (Yates, 2019; Bolter, 2017). There are currently thousands of African and Haitian migrants forced to remain in Mexico due to restrictive US and Mexican immigration policies. According to the Mexican Interior Ministry, in 2019, Mexico apprehended 7,352 Africans and 3,980 Haitians (Secretaría de Gobernación, 2020), this number has been steadily increasing since 2007, the year Mexico began including African apprehensions in their annual migration reports, when the number of Africans apprehended was at 460 (Secretaría de Gobernación, 2012). In 2011, under President Felipe de Jesús Calderón Hinojosa’s government, Mexico introduced the *Ley de Migración* (Migration Act) which reformed and added new provisions to the outdated 1974 *Ley General de Población* (General Population Act). This new migration act was born out of the necessity to define an immigration policy that accounts for the multiple dimensions and complexities that characterize the migratory phenomenon in Mexico. As such, Mexico has become a sending, receiving as well as a transit country (Ley de Migración 2011). One of the measures implemented by this migration act was the *oficio de salida* (exit permit), this document issued by the *Instituto Nacional de Migración* (National Institute for Migration) authorized migrants without legal status in Mexico to exit the country within an allotted amount of days, usually between 20 to

30 days, by any border desired (Ley de Migración, 2011). These documents were typically granted to citizens from countries that don't have consular offices in Mexico, which was the case of many African countries, or that didn't accept returned citizens, such as Cuba. Many African migrants used this document to travel legally in Mexico and reach the US-Mexico border to apply for asylum in the US, but things are different now. As such, while in 2018, Mexico granted *oficio de salidas* to 2,682 out of 2,791 and to 419 out of 448 apprehended African and Haitian migrants respectively, in 2019 only 755 of 7,352 and 43 out of 3,980 apprehended African and Haitian migrants were issued this document (Secretaría de Gobernación, 2019; 2020).

The U.S.'s threat to increase tariffs on Mexican products, has forced Mexican officials to control the migratory flow by any means necessary. Since June 2019, Mexican officials have refused to issue documents that would allow African migrants to transit through Mexico and reach the US-Mexico border, forcing migrants to remain in the southern state of Mexico, in Chiapas, in a city called Tapachula (Averbuch, 2020). Those that were able to reach the US-Mexican border before the policy went into effect, aren't allowed to cross into the US either, due to the U.S Department of Homeland Security's "metering" policy (Smith, 2019). The "metering" policy also known as the "turnback policy", has been used by Customs and Border Protections (CBP) since 2016 to limit the number of asylum seekers who are processed every day at U.S. port of entries at the southern border. With metering, CBP officials have been turning asylum seekers away and forcing them to wait in Mexico until space becomes available at CBP processing facilities on the U.S. side of the border.

This paper looks at the hardships faced by Black African and Haitian migrants through the lens of race, their status as migrants, and their lack of Spanish. These three intersecting identities of Black migrants puts them at a disadvantage and shapes their experiences. While Mexico has

progressively become a destination and transit country for many migrants in recent decades, it still doesn't have the appropriate services and infrastructures in place to welcome migrants, who continue to face discriminations at the hands of immigration officials and the overall Mexican population. On top of the discrimination they already face as migrants, Black migrants also face discriminations due to their race by simply being Black in a predominantly non-Black country, where Blackness is looked down upon. In addition, Black migrants also face discriminations because of their lack of Spanish, not speaking Spanish hinders their access to services and the lack of interpretation/translation services is yet another layer of hardship they have to go through. It is impossible to understand the complex experiences of people with overlapping identities without recognizing the intersecting nature of their identities. As such, in order to understand the experiences of Black migrants in Mexico, it is not enough to look at their experiences as migrants, or their experiences as Black people in Mexico, or even their experiences as non-Spanish speaking, it is important to look at the effects of being in these three intersecting categories. What makes Black migrants, victims of discrimination is not just being a migrant or being Black or not speaking Spanish, it's those three intersecting identities as they join. This thesis will look at how the intersection of migration, race and language shapes the experiences of African and Haitian migrants forced to remain in Mexico due to restrictive US and Mexican immigration policies. It will start with a strong literature review specifically looking at race, *mestizaje* and migration policies, as well as the use of intersectionality as a theoretical framework to study the hardships faced by Black, non-Spanish speaking migrants in Mexico. The main core of the present work will focus on the analysis of an online survey administered to Afro-Mexicans as well as interviews conducted in Tijuana and Mexico City with African and Haitian migrants. It will draw a connection

between the treatment faced by Afro-Mexicans and those faced by African and Haitian migrants and will propose recommendations on how to better assist this new wave of Black migrants.

Positionality

I am a Black immigrant woman living in the U.S. who was born and raised in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Growing up, my father was a medical doctor who worked in various American NGOs and my mother was a secretary and translator for a French NGO. From the age of three to the age of seventeen, I attended a private French International school where I benefitted from bilingual education, all my classes were taught in both French and English; at home we spoke Amharic, Ethiopia's national language. I grew up multi-lingual, speaking all three languages for as long as I can remember. Nearly all my friends from school had parents who held important positions in the Ethiopian government (Prime minister or other ministerial positions among others), at embassies, international organizations such as the U.N and NGOs or owned the biggest businesses in the country. I lived in an upper middle-class neighborhood and was lucky enough to travel nationally and internationally throughout my school years. While I lived in my small, privileged bubble, I was still very conscious of the poverty that surrounded me. I also heard the stories of my uncles and thousands of other Ethiopians who after being tortured by the communist government in the 80s, had fled the country and spent years in refugee camps in neighboring countries before being resettled as refugees in the U.S. or other Western countries. Upon reaching 18 years old, I moved to France to pursue a bachelor's degree in law and political sciences, right a time when the humanitarian crisis had escalated. Large numbers of refugees were arriving on Europe's shores, fleeing their homes for various reasons. As a light-skin Black woman in France, my race was always ambiguous, I was identified as bi-racial by many, including my white peers, which made my experience in France very different to some of my darker-skinned friends. I moved to the U.S.

after graduating from college in France, my family had won the Diversity Visa lottery a couple of years ago while I was in high school, which automatically granted us the right to a 10-year permanent residence card (Green card). I moved to the U.S. as a Green card holder, who already had a Social Security number and a Maryland State ID. Upon my arrival in the U.S. even though I was racially Black, being of lighter complexion and having only a slightly noticeable foreign accent made my integration very smooth.

As a Black immigrant woman living in the U.S. myself, I share some identities with the migrants I interviewed: being racially Black and an immigrant. As a matter of fact, initially I was skeptical about interviewing African and Haitian migrants as I was unsure about how ethical it would be for me, as an African woman who lives in the US to go interview African and Haitian migrants who are forced to remain in Mexico. I was faced with an ethical dilemma, as a privileged Black woman in Ethiopia but also a privileged Black woman in academia who is able to study in a graduate program at a private institution in the US, I felt uncomfortable with the idea that I would be using these migrants for the purposes of my interview questions and completing my masters, while I wouldn't be providing them with anything in return. However, over the last few months, my point of view has changed. Yes, it's true that I have the privilege of being able to live in the US, and it's true that essentially interviewing them will allow me to complete my master's degree. But it's also true that as a Black immigrant African woman I have the cultural competence and the sensitivity to understand them. I'm also hopeful that my research will help shed light on their issues. This also led me to a deeper reflection on privilege, I asked myself if white male researchers have all these ethical dilemmas before conducting research that involves vulnerable populations that they

have no identifiable connection to. After careful consideration, I came to the decision to conduct the research while constantly checking myself for biases.

I believe it is important to reflect on my own identity, acknowledge my shared and unshared identities and my insider/outsider position with my research participants, in order to fully engage in the research process and capture their stories.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Race, *mestizaje* and Blackness in Mexican society

In order to understand the hardships faced by African and Haitian migrants in Mexico, it's important to understand how Blackness is viewed in Mexico. There is extensive literature on Blackness and how the *mestizaje* discourse has shaped Mexican society. The ideology of *mestizaje* (mixture) is a key concept in the complex of ideas around race, nation and multiculturalism in Latin America, it can be defined as the notion of racial and cultural mixture (Wade, 2005). Vaughn (2005) looks at what Blackness and Mexicanness mean in Mexico. He looks at what they mean for Blacks and non-Blacks as well as what they mean in the regions where there is a bigger Black population and in those with a much smaller Black population. According to an Intercensal survey conducted by the Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (the National Institute of Statistics and Geography, (INEGI)) in 2015, 1,381,853 million people identified as Afro-descendants, they represent 1.2% of the total 119,530,753 Mexican population (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, 2017). While Afro-descendants can be found in all of Mexico, historically they have always been present in the coastal parts of the country, mostly in the Costa Chica region, which stretches across the Pacific coast through the states of Oaxaca and Guerrero, as well as along the Gulf of Mexico, in the state of Veracruz. In addition, due to demographic factors such as internal migrations for economic reasons, there is a significant population of Afro-Mexicans in other states, such as Mexico City where 160,353 Afro-Mexicans reside (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, 2017). The state with the largest number of Afro-Mexicans is Estado de México where 304,274 of them live, but they only represent 1.9% of the state's population. The states of Guerrero,

Oaxaca and Veracruz, have large populations of Afro-Mexicans, where they represent 6.5%, 4.9% and 3.3% of the states' overall population, respectively (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, 2017). Vaughn notes that in Costa Chica, Blacks use the terms “*negro*” and “*moreno*” to describe themselves and others who they consider look like them (Vaughn, 2005). Technically speaking both terms are used to describe Blacks, but ‘*negro*’ refers to darker skinned Blacks while ‘*moreno*’ refers to the lighter skinned ones, thus the word *negro* is usually avoided in polite conversations, even if referring to a person with darker skin. Vaughn (2005, p.54) argues that unlike other Latin American countries, who see themselves as the “product of a somewhat ‘perfect blend’ of races”, in Mexico, the *mestizaje* discourse dominates talks about race. It is assumed that Mexicans are all a mixture between colonizer Spaniards and Indigenous people. It can be argued that Afro-Mexicans prefer to use the term ‘*moreno*’ instead of ‘*negro*’ in an attempt to fit into the *mestizaje* discourse and to distance themselves from the notion of pure Black person, which comes with a negative connotation in the Mexican context (Vaughn, 2005). Wade (2017) argues that *mestizaje* and Blackness can be viewed differently in other Latin American countries, for example in Brazil, a country with a significant population of Blacks, racial inequality is studied and the existence of racism against Blacks is recognized, unlike Mexico. However, Da Costa (2014) adds that Brazil is still plagued by a “hyperconsciousness and negation” of race, in other words while Brazilians are very aware of racial differences and racism, they tend to deny or minimize its importance. On the other hand, Argentina, the only majority-white Latin American country, hasn’t been as heavily influenced by the ideology of *mestizaje*. The country recognizes its Indigenous and African-descent past but struggles to admit the existence of racial differences and racism towards Indigenous and Afro-descendent Argentinians today (Alberto & Elena, 2016). The *mestizaje* discourse has even led to the invention of a new terminology in reference to Afro-

Mexicans, the former dean of Afro-Mexican studies, Aguirre Beltrán coined the term “*Afro-mestizo*”, in the 1950s, a term largely used to this day by Mexican anthropologists and historians to describe Afro-Mexicans (Vaughn, 2005). Aguirre Beltrán (1958) argued that even Blacks, with “Negroid characteristics and African cultural traits” are in reality *mestizos*, they are the product of a racial mixture. More than a term used by anthropologists and historians, “afro-mestizo” has come to be used by Afro-Mexicans themselves. Hoffmann (2007) notes that in the Costa Chica, descendants of enslaved people, refer to themselves as *morenos* and sometimes *negros* or *Afro-mestizos*. Thus, the *mestizaje* discourse has created a racialized system in which everyone who doesn’t pass as white must aspire to fit into this mold of *mestizaje* (Figueroa, 2010). Figueroa argues that while the *mestizaje* discourse was supposed to be an “ideology with a democratic and inclusive aspect, with a promise of improvement for individuals and for the nation through race mixture”, it is in reality a discriminatory ideology that’s based on the idea of inferiority of Blacks and indigenous people (Figueroa 2010, p. 390). As such given that the colonial caste system had negative effects, using *mestizaje* as a unifying ideology to create an egalitarian society only contributes to further invisibilize and marginalize Black Mexicans, and denies them the space to negotiate their differentiated status (Dill & Amador, 2014). Figueroa argues that racism in Mexico exists and is normalized and that it should be exposed and analyzed. It’s very important to make this statement because Mexican society has built its national rational on *mestizaje* discourse as a way to surpass racial distinctions (Figueroa, 2010). Mexico claims to fight against discrimination despite avoiding naming and tackling racism in Mexico. Figueroa argues that due to the *mestizaje* discourse, racist practices in Mexico have been separated from the understandings of race from which they emanated, they have their own dynamics, ‘racist logics’ or ‘*mestizaje* logics’. Thus, racism is omnipresent, it is experienced as a common place element which lowers the gravity of

its effects. In most parts of Mexico including Mexico City, speaking about Blackness doesn't even include Afro-Mexicans. When talking about Blackness in Mexico, the conversation always drifts away from Afro-Mexicans and always shifts to Blacks in the US for example (Vaughn, 2005). When Vaughn (2005, p. 52) asked a *mestizo* in central Mexico if there were any Blacks in Mexico, he answered "There can't be, because here in Mexico we don't have racism like you have in the United States". This proves furthermore that there's a denial of the existence of Blacks in Mexico. So how does racism exist in a context that denies it? Even in the Costa Chica region, amongst Blacks there is always this desire to distance themselves from being pure Black, they would always say "here we're not pure Black but if you go to the next town, that's where you'll find real Blacks" (Vaughn 2005, p.52). A majority of the Afro-Mexicans that Vaughn spoke to in his fieldwork in Costa Chica, had this vision that they themselves were a product of a race mixture and always distanced themselves from being pure Black. One older woman who didn't seem lighter in skin complexion than Vaughn, told him that he would find people "*de tu color*" (of your color) in another nearby town.

Blackness in Mexico can be understood from two different perspectives. On one hand, many *mestizo* Mexicans, refuse to recognize there are Black Mexicans and even when they do, they insist on the fact that they're mixed. On the other hand, Black Mexicans recognize their existence as Black people all whilst trying to distance themselves as much as possible from the idea of pure Black person. However, there is no doubt in any of the Afro-Mexicans' minds that they are indeed Black, and that Blackness comes with its set of racism and racial stereotypes which they sometimes subscribe to (Vaughn 2005, p.54). Blacks in Mexico recognize that the nationalist discourse on race emphasizes the idea that *mestizaje* is preferable, but they don't accept the fact that Mexico is a *mestizo* nation, for them there is a clear difference between a *negro*, a *moreno*, an

indigenous and a *mestizo* (Vaughn, 2005). Most Mexicans still don't know that Black Mexicans exist since the national discourse on race is dominated by the *mestizo* narrative, but in the last 30-40 years there have been significant changes (Vaughn, 2005).

Since the 1980s, the success of multiculturalism in Mexico has led to a politics of recognition and has pushed successive Mexican governments to adopt new strategies to fight against the marginalization of ethnic, racial and cultural minorities such as Afro-Mexicans (Vasquez, 2010). Many Afro-Mexicans are trying to put their culture forward and celebrate their Blackness. In the 1970s and 80s Black Mexican activists started making similar demands to indigenous people, demanding a fairer, more equitable integration in the nation (Hoffmann & Rinaudo, 2014). This led to the creation of "*México Negro*", in Costa Chica, in 1997, it was the first political organization oriented towards Blacks. Furthermore, that same year was held "*Primer encuentro de pueblos Negros*" (First meeting of Black people) in El Ciruelo, the Costa Chica of Oaxaca (Velázquez & Nieto, 2012). This political activism has led to many milestones, for instance in October 2013 Oaxaca State decreed the constitutional recognition of Afro-Mexicans as a distinct people (Dill & Amador, 2014). In 1987, at the port of Veracruz, in the city's museum, an exposition centered around slavery was organized (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2016). For the first time ever in a Mexican museum, there was an exhibition room dedicated to showcasing slavery and thus recognizing the local cultures and traditions' afro influences (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2016). That same year, the *Instituto Veracruzano de la Cultura* (Veracruz Institute of Culture) was created, this led to a decentralized cultural policy in Veracruz which highlighted the Afro-Caribbean influences in Veracruz (Hoffmann & Rinaudo, 2014). There have also been efforts by the Mexican government to recognize the importance of the contributions of the Afro-Mexican community, one of such efforts was the creation of the *nuestra tercera raíz*

(our third root) special program. In November 1989, which marked the 500 years since the “discovery” of the Americas, the Dirección General de Culturas Populares (General Office for Popular Cultures) launched the *nuestra tercera raíz* program to study and acknowledge the nation’s third root, in the formation of the *mestizo* culture. This program included public programs, research on Afro-Mexicans, exhibitions, symposiums as well as workshops (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2016). As part of this program, in 1992, the National Museum of Popular Cultures, held different exhibitions such as “México Negro” of Tony Gleaton and “Afroamérica” of Adalberto Rios, to highlight Afro-Mexican culture (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2016). In addition, in 1997, the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH) created the “*Seminario de poblaciones y culturas de origen Africano en México*” (Seminar for peoples of African origin in Mexico). This permanent seminar brings together researchers from different Mexican institutions as well as foreign ones, with the objective of sharing experiences in order to conduct historical and anthropological research on the Afro-Mexican community. It also organizes expositions, international conferences as well as educational courses (Velázquez & Iturralde, 2016). In 2012, the National Council for the Prevention of Discrimination (CONAPRED) in collaboration with National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH) published a book to recognize and highlight the contributions of Africans and Afro-descendants in the construction and formation of Mexico (Velázquez & Nieto, 2012). The book aimed to help raise awareness about the importance of the roles that Afro-descendants played in the social, political, economic and cultural life of Mexico. It looks at the history of Africans and Afro-descendants from the moment they were either forcibly brought to Mexico as enslaved people in the 16th century or came as part of expeditions of the Spanish Crown, to their lives in New Spain, followed by Independence and the Revolution, up until modern times (Velázquez & Nieto, 2012).

Furthermore, following the 2015 Intercensal survey, the 2020 census will officially recognize Afro-Mexicans as a distinct ethnic group. The 2015 Intercensal survey, was carried out in hopes of updating the socio-demographic information before the 2020 census; it found that 1.3 million people in Mexico identify as Afro-descendants (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, 2015). Leading up to the 2020 census, different Afro-Mexican organizations have been working on raising awareness about the importance for the Afro-Mexican population to be accurately counted in the census in order to benefit from adequate and specific public policies to solve the issues affecting this community (Colectivo para Eliminar el Racismo en México (COPERA), n.d.). One of such organizations is the Colectivo para Eliminar el Racismo en México (Collective for the elimination of racism in Mexico (COPERA)), who launched an “AfroCensoMX” campaign in partnership with states agencies such as INEGI and CONAPRED, among others. The campaign highlights the importance for the Afro-Mexican community to be accurately counted and encourages anyone identifying as Afro-descendant to make sure to self-identify as such in the census (Colectivo para Eliminar el Racismo en México (COPERA), n.d.). Afro-Mexican public personalities and actors such as Adrián Makala have also been very vocal about the importance of the 2020 census for the Afro-Mexican community and have encouraged Afro-Mexicans to make sure to self-identify as such in the census (Makala, 2020). There clearly have been efforts from both the Afro-Mexican community and the Mexican government to show the importance and the diversity of the contributions made by the Afro-Mexican community and establish its place in the nation’s formation.

However, there is still a long way to go before we can say that Afro-Mexicans enjoy the same recognition and visibility as other ethnic groups in Mexico. The historical and linguistic negation of African presence in Mexico has led to the underdevelopment of Afro-Mexican

communities (Dill & Amador, 2014). This underdevelopment cannot be overcome in such a short amount of time. Savannah Carroll (2015) argued that Black Mexicans didn't have access to the same socioeconomic resources as other Mexicans due to their race and because of their location in Mexico. While it's true that Afro-Mexicans are no longer invisible, at least statistically speaking, and that there have been efforts to showcase their historical contributions to Mexico, they had been marginalized for so long, generational poverty cannot be overcome in just a couple of years. Carroll argued that since Afro-Mexicans were not included in the census as a distinct ethnic group, they had a harder time accessing services. The 2015 Intercensal survey found that Afro-Mexicans had a slightly higher illiteracy rate than the national average; only 66.5% of Afro-Mexicans have access to running water compared to the national average of 74.1%; on average they also have less access than the rest of the Mexican population to technological and communication tools such as television or telephones (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, 2015). Furthermore, statistical invisibility has also led to the absence of a Black consciousness in Mexico and the foreignness of Blackness to the general population (Dill & Amador, 2014). The lack of awareness of the existence of Black Mexicans by the general population directly affects Afro-Mexicans; García, an Afro-Mexican from Costa Chica, gets interrogated by soldiers at military checkpoints and is sometimes asked to sing the national anthem to prove he is Mexican (Agren, 2020). With the 2020 census, they will no longer be statistically speaking invisible, they will finally be an officially recognized ethnic minority. *México Negro's* founder, Sergio Peñaloza Pérez, states that the next step will be to include African and Afro-Mexican history in Mexico's education curriculum since state-mandated textbooks don't include the contributions of Afro-descendants (Gavia, n.d.). The recognition of Afro-Mexicans as a distinct ethnic minority will help make visible

their community and their existence to the overall population, but this will take time, it will be a process, it won't happen overnight.

While some have argued that racism and discrimination are at the heart of the explanation for regional inequalities in predominantly Afro-Mexican regions (Hoffmann & Rinaudo, 2014), Carroll (2015) attributes this negation and invisibility in part to the erasure of Afro-Mexicans from Mexican history. As such colonial documentation in New Spain doesn't refer enough to the presence of African peoples and provides very minimal description of their experiences or cultural practices, this relates a lot to the problem of the archive itself (Vasquez, 2010). Most documentation downplayed African religious traditions and many writings from the colonial period had negative and derogatory depictions of African peoples, which all contributed to their racialization (Vasquez, 2010). In addition, their participation and impact in the Revolution wasn't properly documented and was undermined. There was a process of selective memory by academia and researchers in Mexico (Dill & Amador, 2014). The Mexican Revolution is painted as a conflict between the criollo class which owned the land and the *mestizo* and indigenous classes which fought for agrarian reform. Afro-Mexicans were erased from the history of the Revolution, this erasure laid the foundation that allows for the contestation of their citizenship (Carroll, S., 2015). The modern narrative of Mexican society romanticized European and Indian cultural amalgam and left out the contributions of Afro-descended peoples (Vasquez, 2010). Mexican history puts the highlight on the accomplishments of *mestizos* which are viewed as the champions of the Revolution. The failure to recognize Afro-descendants' contribution to Mexico's history has contributed to their erasure from Mexico's history which translates into the economic and social hardships they are facing today. However, once again there have also been efforts to recognize the different roles that Afro-Mexicans played in Mexico, even though derogatory notions of Blackness

affected them, they were present in Mexican society as individuals, laborers, militiamen, business owners and even leaders (Carroll, P.J., 1991). Several historians have insisted that Afro-descendants had agency, they participated in the formation of Mexico, they shaped civic and political discourses. Throughout Mexican history, from the colonial period under Spanish rule to Independence then the Revolution, Afro-descendants have not only contributed to the formation of the Mexican nation but they have also negotiated their place (Vasquez, 2010). Juan Manuel de la Serna Herrera (2005) looked at how the society of New Spain was organized and the place of Blacks that society. He took a special interest in the daily lives of Black enslaved people in Veracruz and the work they performed. Most female enslaved people served, alongside indigenous women, as domestic workers for Spanish women while most *mulattas* were able to live independently. Furthermore, it was also common practice for slave owners to “rent” their enslaved people to others as form to supplement their income. The enslaved people were only allowed to keep a small part of this income, since the majority would be taken away by their masters. However, this meager income did allow some enslaved people to save up enough money to buy their freedom; which explains why more of the “rented” enslaved people gained their freedom than those who worked in the fields (Serna Herrera, 2005). Von Germeten (2009) argued that during the colonial period, free *mulattos* (of mixed African and European heritage) used the Catholic church’s *cofradías* (religious associations) as an opportunity to develop a unique religious identity. Furthermore, many Blacks and *mulattos* also used their service to the Spanish crown to demand monetary rewards, similar to *mestizos*, as well as social privileges they are entitled to (Vinson, 2001). Many Black men participated in expeditions, alongside Spanish *conquistadores* (conquerors), playing a critical role in the development of New Spain. One of such men was Juan Garrido, a free Black man who fought in the battle of Tenochtitlan in the 16th century and who

petitioned for recognition of his participation by the Spanish Crown (Velázquez & Nieto, 2012). There were also other Spanish *conquistadores* who were accompanied by African enslaved people, such as Pánfilo de Narváez, who was accompanied by a certain Guidela (Velázquez & Nieto, 2012). Many historians of the early Independence days of Mexico, such as Francisco Primo de Verdad and Melchor de Talamantes, argued that the colony of New Spain didn't only constitute of Europeans and Indigenous people, Afro-descendants were also present in New Spain. Many of the Afro-descendants had managed to acquire freedom and had formed families with people from different ethnic groups, which allowed them to access better living conditions; they worked as muleteers, merchants, artisans (Velázquez & Nieto, 2012). At the beginning of the 18th century, many had managed to acquire freedom, the new generations of Afro-descendants were born free; some had even acquired social status such as the famous *mulatto* painter Juan Correa, whose painting *Sacristía de la Catedral Metropolitana* has been acclaimed (Velázquez & Nieto, 2012). During the struggle for Independence, Afro-descendants held a variety of political positions, while some such as Manuel Cortazar, a *mulatto* man, actively participated in the struggle for independence, others, such as Cortazar's brother, Luis Cortazar led a regiment of royalists fighting for the Spanish Crown (Vasquez, 2010). Furthermore, one of the most known presidents of Mexico, its second president after Independence, Vicente Guerrero, was of African descent, although this is usually not mentioned; he decreed the abolition of slavery in 1829. Afro-descendants also held positions of leadership in the army, for example the insurgent leader José Maria Morelos, after which the town of Morelos in Oaxaca was named, managed to convince Afro-descendants to fight for independence on the side of insurgents. Many Afro-descendants such as Morelos or Vicente Guerrero were an essential component of the insurgent struggle. While their contributions are recognized in Mexico's history, there is little to no mention of their Afro-

descendance. Furthermore, the influence of African cultures on many ceremonial practices in Mexico, as well as dance, music, religion and healing, has been documented by anthropologists such as Aguirre Beltrán. For instance, in Veracruz, many towns names such as Mandinga, Matosa or Mozomboia clearly have African origins (Velázquez & Nieto, 2012). Another important historical event that formed Mexican colonial history was the “Yanga rebellion”, which was closely studied by Vicente Riva Palacios, an Afro-Mexican writer in the 19th century. The “Yanga rebellion” was led by Gaspar Yanga and other Africans insurgents and took place in Córdoba, Veracruz in 1570. After almost 40 years of fighting, in 1609, the government conceded to the establishment of the first free town in Mexico, San Lorenzo de los Negros de Cerralvo, which was organized around African cultural traditions and is has now been renamed Yanga.

Morelos is a small town with 2,000 habitants in the state of Oaxaca, in the Costa Chica region (Carroll, S., 2015). Carroll’s extensive fieldwork in the town of Morelos, Oaxaca sheds light on some of the issues the town’s residents, a region with a large population of Afro-Mexicans, are facing. They lack major infrastructure such as running water, public sanitation, proper drainage system. Most residents in the region rely on farming and production to subsist but even so, they struggle to make ends meet. Most residents believe the lack of sufficient funding and support from the government is directly related to race. They believe that the erasure of Blacks from Mexico’s history and the failure to recognize them as a distinct ethnic group, is a major reason the government doesn’t provide them with sufficient support (Carroll, S., 2015). The Black community in Morelos isn’t just plagued with poverty due to lack of funding, the lack of funding also affects other areas such as healthcare. Due to lack of funding, there aren’t many programs focused on the prevention of teen pregnancy or STDs, thus teen pregnancy is very prevalent in the

region, which in turns puts a strain on the community and further reinforces generational poverty. The absence of Afro Mexicans as a distinct ethnic group is a real barrier to their access to funding and more support, federal recognition is necessary for social, political and economic advancements for Afro-Mexicans. Now that Afro-Mexicans have been recognized as a distinct ethnic group they will be able to make more claims, as Beatriz Amaro Clemente, from the Consejo directivo de unidad para el progreso de Oaxaca, put it, “we need statistical recognition in order to start asking for other things” (Camhaji, 2020). In other words, the very recent statistical (2020 census) and historical recognition by Mexican institutions is the first step before the Afro-Mexican community can start expecting changes in terms of public policies designed to address their needs. Two federal state entities, the Secretary of Indigenous Issues (SAI) in Oaxaca and the Secretary of Indigenous Issues and Afro-Mexican communities (SAICA) in Guerrero have been commissioned to conduct research, in collaboration with Afro-Mexican communities, on the issues affecting these communities in order to implement adequate public policies (Consejo Nacional para Prevenir la Discrimination (CONAPRED), n.d.). However, some argue that asserting their Blackness could also place Afro-Mexicans in the margins of Mexican society and further ostracize them. Nonetheless, Afro-Mexicans are aware that even if the federal government recognizes their existence and legitimizes them, it doesn’t mean it’s the end of racism and discrimination against them, but it will provide them with legal recourse they can use when it occurs. They understand that this recognition should be supplemented by pro-active policies to bring about change in the economic, social and educational sectors. As such initiatives such as the creation of the *Consejo Nacional para Prevenir la Discriminación*, CONAPRED (National Council for the Prevention of Discrimination), in 2003, is a step in this direction (Dill & Amador, 2014).

There are different issues that are affecting Afro-Mexicans and they're all intertwined. Afro-Mexicans have been erased from Mexican history and more specifically the Revolution and the Independence, which are considered to be major turning points in Mexican history and in which they participated. Their erasure from Mexican history has made it easier to render them invisible and to not constitutionally recognize them as a distinct ethnic group. The 1917 Mexican Constitution's Article 1 states that "all individuals are entitled to the human rights granted by the Constitution and that any form of discrimination based on ethnic or national origin, gender, age, disabilities, sexual orientation or any other form, is prohibited" (Constitución Política de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos, 1917). Furthermore, Article 2, states that the Mexican Nation "is unique, indivisible and multicultural and is originally based on its indigenous peoples" (Constitución Política de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos, 1917). It defines indigenous community as a "community that constitutes a cultural, economic and social unit settled in a territory that recognizes its own authorities, according to their own customs" (Constitución Política de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos, 1917). It also adds that the recognition of indigenous communities and peoples should also take into account other criteria such as ethno-linguistics and settlement on a land. The Constitution also recognizes and protects indigenous peoples' right to self-determination and their right to autonomy. Article 2, section B recognizes the need to promote equal opportunities for indigenous people and to eliminate discriminatory practices and it establishes a set of actions authorities must take to ensure this. They must stimulate regional development in indigenous areas; increase educational level of indigenous peoples; establish a scholarship system for indigenous students at all levels of education; assure access to health services by expanding the coverage of the national health system, among other things. The 1917 Constitution didn't recognize Afro-Mexicans as a distinct ethnic group as it did with Indigenous

people, which means they weren't entitled to the same kind of special funding that indigenous communities were entitled to. Since they were not recognized as a distinct ethnic group, it's difficult for them to request more resources be allocated to their communities.

We can draw a parallel between the way Mexico is treating its own Black population and the migrant Black population that has found itself in its territory. This recent migration of Black people comes at a time when Mexico itself is grappling with issues of Black identity and what it means to be Afro-Mexican. As a matter of fact, after the findings highlighted by the 2015 Intercensal survey, the Mexican Constitution's Article 2 was modified in August 2019. A section C was added to recognize Afro-Mexican peoples and communities, as a "part of the multicultural making of the Nation". It also stated that Afro-Mexicans are entitled to all the rights listed previously in the article, in order to guarantee their self-determination, autonomy, development and social inclusion (Constitución Política de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos, 1917). They are finally recognized as a distinct ethnic group and can enjoy the benefits of being recognized as one, similarly to Indigenous peoples. Furthermore, there is also the question of the presence of Afro-Mexicans in sports and media. In Mexico, the media and the film industry perpetuate racism towards the Afro-Mexican community as well as the Indigenous community. There is a lack of representation of Afro-Mexicans and Indigenous peoples in media and in Mexican films. Even when they are represented, they always have the role of someone from a lower social class; when it comes to advertisement, most companies are looking for a "Latino international" look, which consists of people with white skin, dark eyes and dark hair (Jones, 2019). There is a perception in the advertising industry in Mexico that if someone white uses a certain brand, the product will be considered desirable; the idea of being "aspirational" (Jones, 2019). This doesn't leave much space for Indigenous and Afro-Mexican people who are almost absent from advertising in Mexico.

However, there are some exceptions, some Afro-Mexicans have managed to succeed in music and films in Mexico. For instance, M'Balía and Kalimba Marichal are Afro-Mexican singers, with Afro-Cuban parents, who started their music and acting careers at a very young age. Kalimba has doubled as an actor for the Spanish versions of famous cartoons such as *The Lion King* and *Chicken Little*. M'Balía and Kalimba have also been long-time on-and-off members of the famous pop music Mexican group, OV7, since its formation in 1989. However, M'Balía has revealed that as a young child she has been discriminated against because of the color of her skin (Contreras, 2019). When it comes to sports, soccer is considered to be Mexico's national sport, as a result, the country's soccer national team players are highly respected, irrespective of their skin color. Giovani dos Santos' is a 26-year-old striker, whose father is a former professional soccer player and an Afro-Brazilian, while his mother is a *mestiza* from Nuevo León, Mexico (Thompson-Hernández, 2016). Giovani is one of the most popular players on the Mexican national team, he is known for his precise ball passing and exceptional goal scoring skills. However, while he is constantly praised for his skills, his Afro-Brazilian heritage and his "Black" features such as his curly hair and bronze-colored skin that make him stand out amid his *mestizo* teammates, is almost never mentioned (Thompson-Hernández, 2016). Mexico and Mexicans claim him as theirs and praise him for his talents but deny his Blackness (Thompson-Hernández, 2016). While singers such as M'Balía and Kalimba and soccer players such as Giovani have won Mexican hearts, their Blackness remains an issue one way or the other, in Mexican society. We can ask ourselves how does a society that only recently recognized the existence of Black Mexicans, deal with the presence of Black immigrants on its territory? The fact that both non-Black Mexicans and Afro-Mexicans struggle with the idea of pure Blackness in Mexico, and the fact that Afro-Mexicans are still invisible in most of Mexico, even in parts of the country where there is a large population of

them, such as Mexico City and Estado de México, is reflective of how Blackness is viewed in Mexican culture.

B. Recent restrictive U.S. and Mexican immigration policies

Recent restrictive U.S. and Mexican immigration policies have forced thousands of African and Haitian migrants to remain in Mexico, a country they had only intended to transit through. How does the intersection of migration, race and language shape their experiences while they are forced to remain in Mexico? The most important immigration policy that's forcing Black migrants to remain in Mexico is the Department of Homeland Security's "metering" policy (Smith, 2019). The "metering" policy also known as the "turnback policy", has been used by Customs and Border Protections (CBP) since 2016 to limit the number of asylum seekers who are processed every day at U.S. port of entries at the southern border. Before this policy, any non-U.S. national also referred to as "alien", without a valid documentation could present themselves at any U.S. port of entry and apply for asylum. The alien must demonstrate a credible fear of persecution or torture in their country of origin. However, this is no longer the case since Trump came to power in 2016 and even more so since 2018 when CBP issued official guidance to officers on how to practice metering. With metering, CBP officials have been turning asylum seekers away and forcing them to wait in Mexico until space becomes available at CBP processing facilities on the U.S. side of the border. These asylum seekers then put their names on informal "waitlists", which are maintained by an organization or an individual on the Mexican side of the border. Individuals are called off the list daily, CBP informs the organization or individual in charge of the list, how many asylum seekers can be processed on that day (American Immigration Council, 2020). Wait times vary at each port of entry, from a low of one to three days at Reynosa-McAllen, Texas port of entry

to a high of six months in San Ysidro-Tijuana, California, port of entry. Furthermore, the number of people being called off the list every day is very low, it's usually between 0 to maximum 30 people per day (Leutert, S., Arvey, S. & Ezzell, E., 2020). As of February 2020, there are an estimated 15,000 asylum seekers on waitlists in 11 Mexican border cities, the majority being in Tijuana with almost 10,000 asylum seekers (Leutert, S., Arvey, S. & Ezzell, E., 2020). This "metering" policy puts asylum seekers' lives at risk by forcing them to remain in border towns/cities that are known to be dangerous. For instance, the U.S. Department of State advises citizens to exercise increased caution in Tijuana, Baja California state and emphasizes the significant number of homicides in non-tourist areas of Tijuana (U.S. Department of State – Bureau of Consular Affairs, 2019). The border state of Tamaulipas where some African migrants await for their turn on the list, was designated by the US State Department as a level 4 threat risk, which is the same as countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Somalia, North Korea and Yemen, war-torn countries (American Immigration Lawyers Association, 2019).

In addition, while they await in Mexico they live in deplorable conditions, without access to shelters, many of them are forced to sleep on the streets and have no access to adequate food or healthcare either. Furthermore, Mexico deployed its National Guard on its northern as well as its southern borders ("How Mexico beefs up immigration", 2019). The *Guardia Nacional* (National Guard) was initially created, in February 2019, as part of newly elected President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador's (AMLO) National Plan for Peace and Security which he presented in 2018 (Wilson Center, 2019). The National Guard whose role is to preserve public security, is a hybrid institution made up of army police, naval police and federal police. AMLO's plan was to progressively expand this new force over a 5-year-period until it's fully operational and can finally replace the military in the fight against crime (Melimopoulos, 2019). However, with increasing

pressures from the US government to curb migration flows by all means necessary, in June 2019 Mexico instead deployed 6,000 National Guard agents in the country's southern border with Guatemala and thousands more at its northern border with the US, to assist with the increasing flow of migrants. The National Guard is working to ensure that migrants don't cross into Mexico through its border with Guatemala, that those in the southern state of Chiapas don't attempt to travel through Mexico to reach the US-Mexico border and ensure that those already at the US-Mexico border don't cross into the US.

This sudden shift in policy raised many questions as to why a force, which was supposed to preserve public security is now dealing with immigration (Melimopoulos, 2019). It also drew criticism on AMLO who ran a leftist campaign to make Mexico a welcoming country for migrants, whether they are here to settle or transit on their way to the US (Meyer & Isacson, 2019). Instead, he created one more institution that would crack down on migrants and asylum seekers transiting arriving in Mexico. During AMLO's first few months in office, Mexico's apprehensions and deportations of migrants were relatively low and his administration was issuing *tarjetas de visitante por razones humanitarias* (humanitarian visas) to migrants from Central America and other parts of the World, which allowed many to obtain temporary legal status (Meyer & Isacson, 2019). Now his administration has shifted its migration policy, with the Foreign Secretary Marcelo Ebrard constantly highlighting Mexico's success in curbing migration flows, by deporting more migrants, amongst other measures. In addition, Mexico has added more checkpoints on highways in the southern part of the country and is doing more raids on a network of freight trains called *La Bestia*, these freight trains are used by many migrants to travel north. In Tapachula, the National Guard is making sure migrants don't leave the camps they're being kept in, if some try to escape, they will be brought back to the camp. These immigration policies have forced African and Haitian

migrants to remain in Mexico for months, indefinitely. Their hypervisibility as Black migrants makes it harder for them to travel northward undetected. Many of these migrants are Black and non-Spanish-speaking; their lack of Spanish certainly hinders their access to migrant services (Adossi, Belay, Lipscombe, & Ndugga-Kabuye, 2018). The *Asamblea de Migrantes Africanos y Africanas en Tapachula* (The Assembly of African Migrants in Tapachula), comprised of 3,000 Africans migrants, has reported that many of them haven't received translation or interpretation services in their languages and were forced by the Immigration Detention Center, to sign documents they didn't understand (CDH Fray Matías, 2019).

The US government's efforts to export border enforcement has had an impact on migrants trying to cross Mexico in hopes of reaching the US-Mexico border. As of July 2019, due to mounting pressure from the US, Mexico has stopped issuing 20-day permits that would allow migrants to cross Mexico and reach its northern border with the US (Averbuch, 2020). As a result, thousands of African migrants, who unlike Central Americans migrants are almost impossible to deport, are now stuck in limbo in Tapachula, where they have set up makeshift camps. Some of these Black migrants have come all the way from countries such as Eritrea, the Democratic Republic of Congo or Cameroon (CDH Fray Matías, 2019). These migrants have diverse backgrounds, from a restaurant owner to an accounting student to political sciences graduate, but they all have one thing in common, they have been forced to flee their country. The Mexican government refuses to give the permit that would allow them to cross the country, instead these migrants are being kept in camps where they are being guarded by the National Guard and the municipal police of Tapachula. The Mexican government did half-heartedly offer them to apply for asylum, but many feared that applying for asylum in Mexico would affect their chances of getting asylum in the US or Canada. This 'strategy of containment' as described by the Jesuit

Refugee Services in Tapachula, has forced migrants to find alternative means to reach the US-Mexico border, some risked their lives by boarding boats up the Pacific coast, in an attempt to circumvent Mexican authorities, others boarded north-bound buses with fake documents hoping they won't be apprehended once on the bus, and those who could afford to, paid smugglers thousands of dollars (Averbuch, 2020). Eventually, after months of this unbearable situation for many, Mexican officials somewhat compromised by offering these African migrants' permanent residency. However, in order to qualify for a fast asylum, they had to declare they were stateless. Many hesitated to do so, since they were unsure of how that would affect their asylum process in the US (Averbuch, 2020). Others took the residence permits and got rid of them as soon as they were able to cross Mexico and they reached the US-Mexico border.

While these dynamics at the southern border of Mexico with Guatemala are fairly new, Mexico's northern border with the US has always been impacted by different migration flows, especially cities such as Tijuana. In 2016, Tijuana welcomed its first and largest wave of Haitian and African immigrants. Many of these migrants' journeys started in Brazil or Ecuador; they made the treacherous journey through several South and Central American countries before reaching Tijuana. As such after the devastating 2010 earthquake many young Haitians left to work in Brazil, however when Brazil was hit with its worst recession in 80 years, followed by political unrest due to a right-wing coup, unemployment levels as well anti-immigrant sentiment rose in the country (Adossi, N., Belay T., Lipscombe C., & Ndugga-Kabuye B., 2018). This forced many Haitians to leave and head northward in hopes of reaching the U.S. or Canada. As for the African migrants, many of them escaped war or unrest in their countries. They usually travel to either Brazil or Ecuador, the two countries with relatively lax visa regulations for Africans, then they continue

their journey northward by foot and by bus, travelling through seven to nine Latin American countries, depending on whether their journey started in Ecuador or Brazil (Adossi, N., Belay T., Lipscombe C., & Ndugga-Kabuye B., 2018). Many of these migrants preferred Tijuana to other border cities/towns because of its relative safety. Most of the Haitians, had been living and working in Brazil in the construction industry to prepare the country for Olympic games but were forced to leave when the country encountered economic problems (Marchand & Ramirez, 2019). Most of them heard from family and friends in the US about the possibility to file for Temporary Protected Status (TPS) in the US and started their journey northward from Brazil in hopes of reaching the US. However, unfortunately, starting summer 2017, the daily limit on migrants being received for interviews by US authorities in Tijuana had been lowered to 50, thus many of these migrants found themselves waiting for months before getting an interview (Marchand & Ramirez, 2019). In January 2017, there were already an estimated 4,000 Haitian migrants in Tijuana and 30 migrant shelters who were catering to their needs (Marchand & Ramirez, 2019).

Over the years Tijuana has also received an increased number of African migrants, in 2019 Mexico apprehended 7,352 African migrants, a large number of which live at the Northern border (Secretaría de Gobernación, 2020). After the election of President Trump and the hardening of the US' stance on immigration, the Mexican government decided to give Haitian migrants work permits. The Mexican officials' logic was long term, they argued that these migrants would leave shelters if they make enough money to support themselves, thus freeing up shelters' space for deported Mexicans from the US (Marchand & Ramirez, 2019). While initially Haitian migrants garnered support from the local population, with many residents dropping off donations at the shelters assisting them, gradually there were also many xenophobic comments, accusing the shelters of helping foreign migrants at the expense of deported Mexican migrants (Marchand &

Ramirez, 2019). In addition, once these migrants got jobs in construction they were also accused of stealing Mexicans' jobs.

C. Intersectionality: lens to study the hardships faced by Black, non-Spanish speaking migrants in Mexico

The theoretical framework of intersectionality can be used to study the hardships faced by Black migrants in Mexico because it is an analytical approach that explores people's overlapping identities and experiences, such as gender, race/ethnicity, sexuality, social class, migratory status, in order to understand the complexity of the prejudices and discriminations they face. Initially coined more than 30 years ago by Kimberlé Crenshaw, a Black feminist and legal scholar, this approach is now used to study migration. In "Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics" (1989), Crenshaw draws from critical race theorists such as Angela Davis and Audre Lorde, who reject the notion that class, race and ethnicity are separate essentialist categories, to develop intersectionality. Crenshaw theorized the term to help explain the oppression of African American women. Crenshaw examines the lapses in legal recognition of the discriminations that Black women face, her premise is that people with overlapping identities face a different type of discrimination, which creates a negative space where there is no protection, there are no legal precedents for their experience, thus they don't have remedy under the law (Crenshaw, 1989). In her analysis Crenshaw looked specifically at three court cases which highlighted how discrimination against Black women were difficult to prove specifically because they were Black women. In *DeGraffenreid v. General Motors*, five Black women argued that General Motors' 'last-hired first fired' policy was discriminatory. They alleged that this seniority system actually perpetuated effects of past discrimination against Black women. The court looked at the case and

noticed that General Motors did hire women (although they didn't hire Black women until 1964) during that period, hence concluded that there was no gender discrimination. While it was true that all the Black women hired after 1970 lost their jobs when the company had a seniority-based layoff during recession, the court didn't look at the fact that race and gender needed to be recognized to see the discrimination.

Crenshaw argues that this case illustrates the biggest problem with anti-discrimination laws, as such race and gender discriminations are defined by Black men and white women's experiences, respectively. The court rejected the case by stating that the plaintiffs hadn't cited any decisions which stated that Black women were a special class to be protected from discrimination. They concluded that the plaintiffs would be entitled to a remedy if there was discrimination against them. However, they can't claim a "super-remedy" and further suggested that the lawsuit should be examined to see if there was discrimination based on race or on gender but not on the combination of both (Crenshaw 1989, p. 141). The court argued that they couldn't create a new classification of Black women because creating new classes of protected minorities clearly creates a problem of opening Pandora's box (Crenshaw 1989, p. 142). In a second case, *Moore v Hughes Helicopter, Inc.* a Black female plaintiff alleged that race and gender discrimination by Hughes Helicopter Inc. impeded Black women from accessing upper level and supervisory positions. The certification of this suit as a class action was denied because the plaintiff referred to herself as a Black woman in her complaint which the court argued "raised doubts about her ability to represent white female employees" (Crenshaw 1989, p. 144). Crenshaw argues that this case highlights the centrality of white female experiences in the conceptualization of gender discrimination. It also shows how narrow the scope of antidiscrimination doctrine is and how it fails to embrace intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989). Finally, in *Payne v Travenol*, two Black female plaintiffs

alleged Travenol Laboratories perpetrated race discrimination and brought a class action suit on behalf of all Black employees. The court refused to let them include Black males in their complaint but allowed them to narrow it down to Black women only. The court ruled in their favor but limited the award of back pay and seniority to Black women “for fear that the conflicting interests with Black men would not be adequately addressed” (Crenshaw 1989, p. 147). These three cases prove that single issues analysis doesn’t work, we need intersectionality. Crenshaw argues that Black women’s exclusion isn’t unidirectional, Black women can actually experience discrimination in ways that are both similar to and different from those experienced by white women and Black men. As such, Black women can sometimes share similar discriminations with white women and sometimes share similar discriminations with Black men. Furthermore, too often they experience double discrimination, the combined effects of discrimination on the basis of race and gender and sometimes discrimination as Black women, not the sum of race and gender but simply for being Black women.

Crenshaw has defined intersectionality as “a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects” (Columbia Law School, 2017). It’s used to describe how race, class, gender and other individual characteristics intersect with one another and overlap. Instead of seeing discrimination as being solely on the basis of race or gender or another individual characteristic, it aims to see it as a combination of different characteristics. The intersecting identities of people means that they are impacted by a multitude of social justice and human rights issues. Crenshaw argues that there is a tendency to treat race and gender as mutually exclusive categories of experience and analysis and that this tendency is perpetuated by a single axis framework which is dominant in antidiscrimination law as well as feminist theory and antiracist politics (Crenshaw, 1989). She wants to center Black women in her analysis to contrast

the multi-dimensionality of Black women's experience with the single-axis analysis which distorts these experiences. There is always this dominant conception of discrimination where we think of subordination as a disadvantage that can only occur in single categorical axis. She argues that Black women are sometimes excluded from feminist theory and antiracist policy discourse because usually these measures focus on a specific set of experiences and don't reflect the interaction of race and gender. The solution to these problems is not to simply add Black women within this already established analytical structure, she argues that the intersectional experience of Black women is much greater than the simple sum of racism and sexism. As a result, in order to address the particular discriminations that Black women face, any analysis should be intersectional. As such a group such as Black women, which belongs to multiple categories simultaneously has experiences that are unique to the group and also overlap. Crenshaw examines the lapses in legal recognition of the discriminations that Black women face, her premise is that people with overlapping identities face a different type of discrimination, which creates a negative space where there is no protection, there are no legal precedents for their experience, thus they don't have remedy under the law (Crenshaw, 1989).

Patricia Hill Collins, another Black feminist author and sociologist further developed intersectionality by creating frameworks to think about it. In *Black feminist thought: knowledge, consciousness and the politics of empowerment* (2000), Collins argues that Black feminism's goal is to empower Black women within the context of social injustice they live in, characterized by intersecting oppressions. Collins' main argument is that Black women in the U.S. live in a different world from that of people who aren't Black AND female. She analyzes Black women's experiences through a paradigm of intersecting oppressions, and while intersectionality was initially used by Crenshaw to analyze two intersecting identities, race and gender, Collins includes

class as well. She argues that while Black women share intersecting oppressions as it relates to gender and race, class is also increasingly a factor of oppression. Collins also includes sexuality as a form of oppression. She argues that systems of oppression such as race, gender, social class and sexuality are interconnected, developing on Crenshaw's new term 'intersectionality', she argues that oppression "cannot be reduced to one fundamental type and that oppressions work together in producing injustice" (Collins, 2000). While these two prominent authors introduced and further developed intersectionality as a theoretical framework to study the different identities that are a source of oppression of people, it took some time before intersectionality was used to study migration. Tanja Bastia (2014) in "Intersectionality, migration and development", looks at the ways in which intersectionality has been used in the area of migration studies. While it's true that race and gender are usually seen as the 'quintessential intersection' because of the origins of intersectionality, coined and studied initially by Black feminists, she argues that recently intersectionality has been taken up by researchers who study migration especially in European contexts.

When intersectionality first began to be used in the field of migration studies, several key publications presented a "critique of migration studies from a feminist perspective, highlighting women's role in migration." (Bastia 2014, p. 240). The field of migration studies had been very gender blind until the 1970s and men were viewed as the primary migrants while women were considered secondary migrants; the use of an intersectional approach in this context helped shed light on women migrants' experiences (Bastia, 2014). Progressively, intersectionality as an approach, started to grow in the field of migration studies, mainly in Western Europe, for example it "has been used to highlight the interplay of categories of difference and identity in Bulgarian migration to Austria" or to study "ethnic minority women's experience of service provision

following domestic violence” (Bastia 2014, p. 241). Bastia argues that intersectionality is an attractive and original approach, “sufficiently malleable so as to enable the inclusion of multiple and complex categories of identification.” (Bastia 2014, p.245). Similarly, to Bastia, Dina Taha in “Intersectionality and other critical approaches in refugee research” (Taha 2019, p. 3) argues that intersectionality as a framework “has the potential to reveal the systematic discrimination in refugee and migration policies and systems” among other things. An intersectional approach is beneficial to study migration studies, it highlights the diversity of refugees and their experiences which are shaped by multiple intersecting identities such as gender, race, national origin, class, age, (dis)ability and sexual orientation. Taha argues that refugee policies and programs should be flexible enough in order to take into account the diversity of the migrants’ experiences instead of applying a singular universal approach for all refugees (Taha, 2019). She argues that one of the objectives of intersectionality is to give voice to the oppressed or the invisible groups by for example revealing the systematic discrimination in refugee and migration policies.

When it comes to the application of intersectionality to study migration, Bolatito Kolawole has done a good job at using intersectionality to look at the experiences of Black immigrants in the US. Kolawole argues that despite Africans being one of the fastest growing immigrant groups in the U.S., they’re invisible in the discussion about immigration. He tributes this to the intersectional identity of African immigrants, being Black and foreign. They become victims to discriminations due to their Blackness as well as their status as foreigners (Kolawole, 2017). Kolawole looks into the theory of intersectionality and how we can apply it to the study of migration. Immigration and the study of migration deal with questions of race, gender and status as a foreigner, which makes it by essence intersectional. He uses intersectionality to shed light on how the intersecting identities of Black African immigrants puts them at a disadvantage and

stresses the importance of recognizing the intersection of both identities and what it entails. Black African immigrants are invisible in the discourse about immigration, conversations about immigration in the US revolve around Latinos and Asians, which in turn means their interests are usually not taken into account when immigration policies are being created. This article was instrumental in my understanding of how the intersecting identities of Black African immigrants in the US, has shaped the nature of the discriminations they faced. I am using this theoretical framework to study how the intersection of race, migration and language shapes the experiences of Black migrants forced to remain in Mexico.

While intersectionality was a theory initially used in feminism by Black feminists in the US, its malleability has made it useful for studies in other fields, such as migration. My research topic focuses on the experiences of Black (African and Haitian) migrants forced to remain in Mexico, I look at their experiences through the lens of race, status as migrant and lack of Spanish. My premise is that these three intersecting identities of Black migrants puts them at a disadvantage and shapes their experiences. I argue that Black migrants in Mexico face discriminations due to their status as migrants, discriminations due to their race (being Black in a predominantly non-Black country) and discriminations because they are Black migrants. As the literature highlights, it is impossible to understand the complex experiences of people with overlapping identities without recognizing the intersecting nature of their identities. As such, I argue that in order to understand the experiences of Black migrants in Mexico, it is not enough to look at their experiences as migrants, or their experiences as Black people in Mexico, it is important to look at the effects of being in these two intersecting categories. What makes Black migrants, victims of discrimination is not just being a migrant or being Black, it's those two intersecting identities and the legal gap it creates. While there is legislation in Mexico that protects migrants and legislation

that protects racial minorities from discrimination, there isn't legislation that recognizes the two intersecting identities of Black migrants and the discrimination that comes from being in that intersection. I believe that intersectionality will be able to address this legal gap and seems to be the most suitable theoretical framework for my research.

However, I also recognize that intersectionality has its own limits, Leslie McCall (2005) in "The complexity of intersectionality" argues that there is a lack of discussion about the methodology of intersectionality, how to study it. She argues that this is in part due to the complexity that arises when the subject of analysis included multiple dimension, in this case multiple identities. Some also argue that intersectionality focuses too much on personal identities and gives too much credit to people's account of their stories. However, I argue that the aim of using intersectionality is to give voices to the migrants and a space to express how they see their different identities intersecting.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

There are currently thousands of African and Haitian migrants forced to remain in Mexico due to restrictive U.S. and Mexican immigration policies (Yates, 2019). These migrants made the treacherous journey through several Latin American countries before reaching Mexico. They pose a new set of challenges to a country like Mexico that is still struggling to recognize its own afro-descendant population. The Mexican Constitution recognized Afro-Mexicans as a distinct ethnic group only very recently in 2019 (Constitución Política de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos, 1917). However, despite being constitutionally recognized as a distinct ethnic group, Afro-Mexicans continue to face challenges in all aspects of their lives and don't have access to the same socioeconomic resources as others. Furthermore, the *mestizo* national discourse on race continues to uphold a racialized society, where Blackness is perceived negatively (Figueroa, 2010). It is in this complex racial system that waves of Black, non-Spanish speaking migrants continue to arrive in Mexico. These migrants face hardships due to their intersecting identities navigating a country where the majority of the population is non-Black and where they don't speak the national language, Spanish. These African and Haitian migrants are in a state of limbo, trying to adapt to a new culture while they wait on the sidelines, hoping to cross the border into the U.S. at some point. Mexico in general and border cities such as Tijuana more specifically are not prepared to deal with such an important number of African and Haitian migrants (Marchand & Ramirez, 2019). The shelters in Tijuana are over-crowded and the city can be unsafe as well. While Mexico is a country of transit and now of destination, it still remains a country of origin for migrants, "it often cannot offer its own citizens access to education, housing, employment, let alone extend those rights and services to migrants" (Castro 2018, p. 34). It's the first time that it has seen such important waves of migrants transiting through the country and only recently became a destination country for

migrants. Mexico's asylum system is not prepared to handle such high numbers of asylum-seekers, especially extra-continental migrants who don't speak Spanish. The country's migration law is very recent (2011) and its asylum agency, the Comision Mexicana de Ayuda a Refugiados (COMAR) is understaffed and under resourced (Asylum Access Mexico, 2020). It is unable to provide asylum decisions on time and keep migrants safe while they wait for their decision, forcing many to abandon their asylum application. This paper draws on 23 semi-structured interviews conducted with Black African and Haitian migrants in Tijuana and Mexico City, Mexico to shed light on the specific issues affecting them in Mexico.

I chose to adopt a mixed-methods research method, using semi-structured interviews as well as a survey. I chose a qualitative research method to study the experiences of Black African and Haitian migrants in Mexico since it is the best way to truly understand their experiences, as such "qualitative interviews are uniquely capable of grasping human experiences" (Leavy 2014, p. 278). Furthermore, from the different qualitative methods, I specifically chose semi-structured interviews because compared to structured interviews, they "can make better use of the knowledge-producing potentials of dialogues by allowing much more leeway for following up" (Leavy 2014, p. 286). They also allow me to focus the conversation on issues that they deem important to the research. Semi-structured interviews help highlight how the intersections between discriminations based on race, on language and on their status as migrants shape their experiences in Mexico. These interviews shed light on how these different discriminations are intersectional and intertwined. I then chose to use a survey to look at the experiences of Afro-Mexicans in Mexico because given the target population and the information desired a survey allows me to have access to a large population and therefore gather large amounts of information.

Setting

This study took a multi-cited approach, the interviews were conducted in Tijuana, Mexico from February to July 2020 as well as Mexico City, Mexico from August to September 2020. The city of Tijuana was chosen because of its strategic location on the migrants' journey northward as a city bordering California. It has a long history of being a city of immigrants, it has attracted many internally displaced Mexican migrants from states such as Michoacán and Guerrero who came with the objective of crossing the border in the US but stayed in Tijuana, it has also become home to thousands of Mexican return migrants, and more recently extra-continental migrants from different parts of the World, including Haitian and African migrants (Marchand & Ramirez, 2019). As of February 2020, there are almost 10,000 people on asylum waitlists in Tijuana, making it the border city with the highest number of asylum seekers (Leutert, S., Arvey, S. & Ezzell, E., 2020).

Mexico City is not a traditionally migrant-receiving city or even a transit city for Central American migrants since it isn't located on their journey northward (Latin America Working Group, n.d.). However, recently Mexico City has been receiving a growing number of migrants from the Northern Triangle of Central America as well as South America and Africa (Latin America Working Group, n.d.). Many migrants arrive in the city only in passing on their way to the North, but more migrants are staying in Mexico City and applying for asylum or refugee status (Latin America Working Group, n.d.). With Mexico City increasingly becoming a destination for migrants from Africa, it was chosen as the second city for this research.

An online format was chosen for the survey due to the numerous advantages it presents. Distributing the survey link is easy and cheap through an online format, storing and visualizing the survey responses is also made easier through this format.

Participants

In Tijuana, the sampling procedure I used to select interview participants was purposive sample. The interview participants were selected based on the following established criteria:

- (1) Individuals (regardless of gender) who are 18 years old or older
- (2) Individuals who are Black African or Haitian
- (3) Individuals currently in Tijuana but whose initial intention was to go to the U.S. and/or Canada
- (4) Individuals whose native language isn't Spanish

These criteria were established to make sure all participants were Black African and Haitian migrants who have been forced to remain in Mexico because of restrictive U.S. and Mexican immigration policies. A total of seventeen migrants were interviewed of whom fifteen were male and two were female. Each interview lasted between twenty minutes to an hour and 15 minutes, depending on how extensively the participant answered the questions. Each participant was read a consent form in their language of preference, either English or French, and had any questions they might have, answered prior to the interview. Eight of the participants were referred by a U.S.-based immigrants' right organization which provides assistance to migrants in Tijuana. Two of the participants were referred by a Tijuana-based non-profit organization supporting immigrants, six were recruited through the snowball method. And finally, I joined several Facebook groups for Haitians in Tijuana and recruited one participant through this method. The first five interviews were conducted in-person on Saturday, February 8th, 2020 in downtown Tijuana, Mexico; two of them at Centro Plaza and the other three in a local Haitian restaurant close to the border. The remaining twelve of the interviews were conducted through WhatsApp from

May to July 2020. A total of seven Cameroonian, four Haitian, three Ghanaian, two Ugandan and one Eritrean, migrants were interviewed from February to July 2020. Ten of these interviews were conducted in English and seven in French. They all have varying levels of education, two participants didn't finish high school, eight have a high school diploma or the equivalent in their countries of origin, two did some college/technical school and five have either a bachelor's or a master's degree. The participants are in different age groups, there are only two participants in the 18-24 age range, there are eight participants from 25 to 34, there are six participants from 35 to 44 and finally there is only one participant in the 45 to 54 age range.

In Mexico City, I used the same purposive sampling procedure to select interview participants. The interview participants were selected based on the following established criteria:

- (1) Individuals (regardless of gender) who are 18 years old or older
- (2) Individuals who are Black African or Haitian
- (3) Individuals currently in Mexico City but whose initial intention was to go to the U.S. and/or Canada
- (4) Individuals whose native language isn't Spanish

These criteria were established to make sure all participants were Black African and Haitian migrants who have been forced to remain in Mexico because of restrictive U.S. and Mexican immigration policies. Six migrants were interviewed, five were male and only one was female. Each interview lasted between twenty minutes to two hours and forty-five minutes, depending on how extensively the participant answered the questions. Each participant was read a consent form in their language of preference, either English or French, and had any questions they

might have, answered prior to the interview. Five of the participants were referred by Programa Casa Refugiados, an organization collaborating with the UNHCR in Mexico City to provide services to migrants and assist them with applying for asylum/refugee status in Mexico. All the interviews were conducted through WhatsApp from August to September 2020. A total of one Congolese, one Guinean, two Haitian, one Malian and one Nigerian, migrants were interviewed. Five of these interviews were conducted in French and only one in English. They all have varying levels of education, one participant didn't finish high school, two have a high school diploma or the equivalent in their countries of origin, two did some college/technical school and one has a bachelor's degree. The participants are in different age groups, there is only one participant in the 18-24 age range, there are four participants from 25 to 34 and there is only one participant in the 35 to 44 age range.

I used the same purposive sample to select survey participants. The following criteria were established:

- (1) Individuals (regardless of gender) who are 18 years old or older
- (2) Individuals who identify as Black Mexican in other words Afro-Mexican or Afro-descendant
- (3) Individuals who currently live in Mexico

These criteria were established to make sure that all participants are Afro-Mexicans, in other words Black Mexicans or Afro-descendants, currently living in Mexico. A total of 115 responses were recorded, after careful review of the responses, I identified 86 completed and valid responses. Out of the 86 participants, 47 identified as female, 36 identified as male while 3

individuals preferred not to disclose their gender. The survey included a consent form available in English as well as in Spanish, the participants' language. I joined several Facebook groups for Afro-Mexicans and advertised the survey on these groups. I also took part in a Facebook live hosted by the administrator of one of these Facebook groups, during which I was able to present the aim of the research and answer questions. The survey was advertised online on September 3rd and has been online ever since, the responses were recorded from September 4th, 2020 to February 15th, 2021. The respondents have varying levels of education, 3 of them only received some schooling, 18 of them have completed high school, 6 of them have gone to trade/technical school, 15 of them have gotten some college education, 43 of them have a bachelor's degree or higher and one of them preferred not to disclose this information. The respondents are in different age groups, 27 of them are in the 18-24 age range, 27 others are in the 25-34 age range, 21 of them are in the 35-44 age range, 9 of them are in the 45-54 age range, the 55-64 and 65 and over age ranges have only one participant each. The respondents are from different parts of Mexico; however, some states are overrepresented. 18 respondents are from Guerrero, 16 are from Oaxaca, 15 are from Mexico City, 11 are from Veracruz and 5 are from Estado de Mexico, the rest are spread out across the country.

Measurement instruments

The data for this research was collected through semi-structured interviews which covered different aspects of the migrants' lives. The first part of the questions focused on the educational and professional backgrounds of the participants as well as the reasons for leaving their countries. By asking these questions, I hoped to gain an overall understanding of the push factors for these migrants as well as establish the demographics of this migrant population. In the second part of

the interview, the questions touch upon their trajectory before Mexico, the reasons they chose the US and/or Canada as their ultimate destination. These questions are important because they touch upon a larger issue of the length African migrants are willing to go for a chance at a better life. Over the last few years, we have witnessed thousands of Africans perish in the Mediterranean Sea, on their way to Europe and now we are seeing thousands making the journey through South and Central America, risking their lives on the way. This is reflective of an international immigration system that devalues Black lives and is willing to let them risk their lives instead of creating more humane immigration policies that are more reflective of the globalized world we live in. The third and most important part consists of questions that will focus on their lives in Mexico, their interactions with the local Mexican population, Mexican law enforcement agents and staff at migrant shelters in Mexico. These questions helped me understand how the migrants see their different identities intersecting in Mexico. And lastly to finish the interview, they were asked more policy related questions, this is in hopes of providing insight for future policies. There are twenty-five questions in the interview protocol, all of which are open-ended.

As for the survey, the respondents were asked a series of twenty-three multiple choices and open-ended questions which covered different aspects of their lives in Mexico. The respondents were asked questions covering their educational and professional backgrounds as well as some biographical questions. These were followed by questions relating to their experiences with racism/racial discrimination in accessing services and in their interactions with Mexican officials and society in general. Finally, they were asked questions relating to their view of the role of race and Blackness in the treatment of Black African and Haitian migrants in Mexico. By Asking Afro-Mexicans about their experiences as Black Mexicans, I aimed to investigate and draw a connection

between their experiences as Black Mexicans and those of Black African and Haitian migrants in Mexico.

Validity and credibility

In order to ensure the authenticity of the research, its validity and credibility are essential. The data was obtained through semi-structured interviews conducted with Black African and Haitian migrants in Tijuana and Mexico City, because of the nature of the research method there can't be any guarantee that all the information obtained from the participants is completely accurate. However, since all the participants understood the voluntary nature of the interview and that there would be no direct monetary compensation for their participation, we can believe that the participants wanted to share reliable information about their experiences as Black, non-Spanish speaking migrants in Mexico. Furthermore, the use of pseudonyms and the protection of their confidentiality made the participants feel more at ease to share their experiences. In addition, sharing my own experiences of navigating Mexico as a Black woman and being an immigrant Black woman in the U.S. helped me build a genuine connection with the participants, creating a safe space for participants to share their stories.

As for the survey, due to its online nature there cannot be any guarantee either that all the information obtained from the respondents is completely accurate starting with their identity as Afro-Mexicans or their age group. However, once again because of the voluntary nature of the survey and the absence of any kind of monetary compensation, we have reason to believe that the respondents wanted to truly share their experiences as Afro-Mexicans and contribute to this research. Furthermore, the survey was strictly anonymous, no identifying information such as

name was asked of the respondents. The protection of their identity was one way to ensure the respondents felt at ease to share their experiences.

Strengths and limitations

This mixed-methods research study like any other research has its own set of strengths and limitations. Its strength lies primarily in the nature of the topic discussed, the presence of African and Haitian migrants transiting through Mexico is a very recent topic. It is a very under researched topic, there is a lack of literature on this, which is why this research is even more important, to add to the limited literature on this topic and to inform future research on the issue. Furthermore, this research required in-depth discussions with Black African and Haitian migrants who were able to truly speak about their experiences as Black, non-Spanish speaking migrants navigating the complex racial and immigration system in Mexico. In addition, the research includes a large number of interviews which can provide an insight into the experiences of Black African and Haitian migrants navigating Mexico. Another strength of this research lies in the diversity of the African countries represented, the participants hail from Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Nigeria and Uganda, in addition to Haiti.

A notable limitation of this research study was the lack of incorporation of a significant number of women-identifying participants, there were only three women participants from a total of twenty-three participants of the semi-structured interviews. This lack of representation means that unfortunately the study isn't able to fully capture African and Haitian women migrants' experiences in Mexico and concentrated primarily on male migrants' experiences. In Tijuana, ten of the participants, of whom two are women, were recruited through referrals by non-profit

organizations, the remaining seven were recruited through the snow-ball method and messages sent to members of Haitians in Tijuana Facebook groups. All the participants referred by other participants were men; the Facebook groups for Haitians in Tijuana were also predominantly men, making it extremely difficult to recruit women participants. In Mexico City, only one of the five referred participants is female, the rest are all male. However, although the number of women participants is low, this research is still very pertinent. It is important to look at the experiences of Black African and Haitian migrants as they navigate discriminations based on race, lack of Spanish and status as migrants because it can help raise awareness about the specific issues that these migrants face in Mexico. In addition to raising awareness, it can contribute to the literature on race and Blackness in Mexico and can also provide policy recommendations for how to respond to these new waves of Black African and Haitian migrants. However, this limitation can also be seen as a discovery, the migration of Black Africans and Haitians to Mexico, is a gendered experience, it is an expensive and dangerous journey, which might help to explain why most of the participants are men.

Another limitation of the research is the setting, while the first five interviews were conducted in-person in Tijuana, Mexico which allowed me to see participants face-to-face and really take notes of their facial expressions, hand gestures and other things that help provide context to their words, due to the coronavirus pandemic I wasn't able to conduct the rest of the interviews in-person. As such, for the second round of interviews, all twelve participants from Tijuana and all six participants from Mexico City were interviewed on the phone through WhatsApp. While this allowed me to still conduct interviews in a safe manner for all parties involved, I wasn't able to observe in-person all the elements that constitute a qualitative interview.

Similarly, to the semi-structured interviews, the survey also has its own set of strengths and limitations. The strength of the survey lies in the diversity of the respondents, there is a proportional number of male and female respondents, ensuring that the research reflects both the experiences of male and female identifying Afro-Mexicans. The respondents also hail from different parts of Mexico, from states where the largest community of Afro-Mexicans live such as Guerrero, to states with much smaller Afro-Mexican communities. A wide range of age groups as well as educational levels and professions are also represented. Furthermore, there is also a large set of responses to analyze, making this research stronger.

The limitation of the survey lies primarily in its format, while its online format allowed the me to easily advertise it on different Facebook groups and gather a significant number of responses, it also means that I wasn't able to expand on the responses gathered.

Data analysis

All twenty-three interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed by myself. Each participant was assigned a culturally appropriate pseudonym based on their country of origin, their gender and their year of birth. I used a website which provides statistics on the most common names in each specific country each year and assigned a pseudonym accordingly. I used three different colors to highlight the elements of the transcriptions which speak to each part of the research question, language discrimination, racial discrimination, discrimination based on the migrant status. The highlighted information was categorized into specific themes and I compared the information with information from the literature.

As for the survey, I downloaded the data into an excel file and used excel's data analyzing features to extract the data.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

A) Survey analysis

I administered an online survey in Spanish for Afro-Mexicans from September 2020 to February 2021 and out of 115 recorded responses, 86 valid ones were identified. According to the 2015 Intercensal survey 1,381,853 million people identify as Afro-descendants, representing about 1.2% of the overall Mexican population (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, 2017). Most Afro-Mexicans have historically lived in the coastal parts of the country, such as Guerrero, Oaxaca and Veracruz but they are also known to reside in the country's largest cities such as Mexico City where 160,353 Afro-Mexicans live (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, 2017). However, the state with the largest number of Afro-Mexicans is Estado de México where 304,274 of them live, but they only represent a small fraction of its population, 1.9% to be exact. In the states of Guerrero, Oaxaca and Veracruz, they represent 6.5%, 4.9% and 3.3.% of the states' overall population, respectively (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, 2017). The states that are over-represented in the survey respondents' pool are also Guerrero (20.93%), Oaxaca (18.6%), Ciudad de México (17.4%) and Veracruz (12.79%). I analyzed the questions in two separate groups; the first group of questions focus on their experiences as Black Mexicans navigating a predominantly non-Black country. The second group of questions focus on how Afro-Mexicans think Mexican society and government will treat Black African and Haitian migrants in Mexico.

45% of respondents said they experienced racism/racial discrimination from government officials such as municipal, state, federal police; immigration authorities and government employees while 34.8% weren't sure whether they had experienced racism/racial discrimination

from this particular group. On the other hand, 87.2% of respondents said they experienced racism/racial discrimination from non-Black Mexicans, in other words not Afro-Mexican or Afro-descendent, while only 10.46% said they have not experienced racism/racial discrimination. This data confirms the literature on racism in Mexico which affirms that racism against Blacks in Mexico exists even though it is normalized (Figueroa, 2010). One respondent commented “Mexico is a very racist country even though there are a lot of mixed-race people”. Mexico’s tactic of avoiding naming and recognizing racism isn’t beneficial to its Afro-Mexican population. How can Mexico tackle and fight against racism if there is no recognition of racism? In order for Afro-Mexicans to have access to the same rights and privileges as other Mexicans, Mexico needs to address racism against Black Mexicans.

More than 80% of respondents believe that non-Afro Mexicans (*Mestizos*) are not aware that more than 1 million Afro-Mexicans live in Mexico. Furthermore, almost 50% of respondents believe that Mexican society doesn’t recognize the existence of racism against Afro-Mexicans. As one respondent put it, “México tiene que aceptar sus raíces negras para poder prosperar en la empatía, actualmente en el país se vive mucho racismo y mucha ignorancia” (“Mexico needs to accept its Black roots in order to grow in empathy, currently in Mexico there is a lot of racism and ignorance”). Another respondent commented:

“Black Mexicans are not recognized in Mexico unlike white or indigenous Mexicans. They are portrayed as slaves, comics or as delinquents. In addition, in Mexico it is common to be proud of pre-Hispanic indigenous culture but not of Black culture. In Mexico, one’s skin color has an impact on the opportunities that one has access to as well as their social status. If you have dark skin and Afro features you are identified as a foreigner or as someone from a lower social, economic and even political status.”

One other respondent's comment alluded to the lack of proper inclusion of Afro-Mexicans' contributions to the Mexican state: "Black history in Mexico is reduced to a single page in a history book." Another respondent commented "I identify as Afro-indigenous and not just *mestizo* like they teach us at school", the racialized society that the *mestizaje* discourse has created forces and teaches everyone who doesn't pass as white to aspire to fit into this mold (Figueroa, 2010). *México Negro's* founder, Sergio Peñaloza Pérez stated that in order for Mexico to fully recognize Afro-Mexicans' contributions, the next step should be to include Afro-descendants' contributions in state-mandated textbooks (Gavia, n.d.). Furthermore, more than 60% of respondents answered they have felt unsafe due to their race and more than 80% answered they had been called a derogatory term because of their identity as Black Mexicans. This also aligns with the literature where many Afro-Mexicans spoke of their experiences navigating Mexico with their Mexicanness being constantly questioned (Agren, 2020). The racism that Afro-Mexicans face also affects their employment, almost 40% said they have experienced racism/racial discrimination while looking for employment.

In the next section of the survey, I asked respondents questions based on the following statement: "The number of Black African and Haitian migrants apprehended by Mexican immigration authorities has been growing since 2016; in 2019 a little over 11,000 Black African and Haitian migrants were apprehended. While many of these migrants have been able to cross into the U.S, others have been forced to remain in Mexico". When asked if they believe race plays a role in how these Black African and Haitian migrants are treated by Mexican officials, more than 80% responded yes and all of them believed that race plays an important role. One respondent even commented "In general migrants are rejected, but in the case of Black migrants, the rejection

is higher because Mexico's institutions have invisibilized the presence of Black Mexicans." This statement truly summarizes the current Mexican situation, a country that has managed to invisibilize Black Mexicans for centuries is struggling to deal with Black migrants. When asked if they believe race plays a role in how Black African and Haitian migrants are treated by Mexican society, 87% not only answered yes but also estimated the role to be very high. Furthermore, about 70% of respondents believe that Black African and Haitian migrants' treatment will be different than that of other migrants such as non-Black Central American migrants because of their race and almost 60% believe that Mexico isn't prepared to welcome Black migrants. As one migrant put it "Creo que Mexico no esta preparado para recibir ningun tipo de migrantes" ("Mexico is not ready to receive any type of migrants, even less Black, non-Spanish migrants").

I administered this survey in the hopes that I could draw a connection between the way Afro-Mexicans are treated and the way Black African and Haitian migrants are treated. Through the survey we are able to realize that most Afro-Mexicans who completed the survey have experienced racism/racial discrimination from government officials such as municipal, state, federal police; immigration authorities; government employees as well as from non-Black Mexicans. Most of them have also felt unsafe due to their race and have been called a derogatory term because of their identity as a Black Mexican. Furthermore, most of them believe that non-Afro Mexicans (*Mestizos*) are not aware of the presence of more than 1 million Afro-Mexicans in Mexico and they also agree that Mexican society doesn't recognize the existence of racism against Black Mexicans. It is in this context that thousands of Black African and Haitian migrants have found themselves in Mexico. The respondents' answers can help us draw a connection between the treatment of Afro-Mexicans and those of Black African and Haitian migrants. How can a

country struggling to properly recognize the presence and the contributions of its Afro-Mexican population properly assist Black African and Haitian migrants?

B) Interview analysis

I coded and categorized the different themes in the transcriptions, three major themes were identified: discriminations based on race, discriminations based on language and discriminations based on their status as migrants. Aside from these three main themes, I chose to analyze contextual elements which will help strengthen our understanding of the experiences of Black African and Haitian migrants. In terms of contextual information, it is important to pay special attention to the push factors which led these migrants to flee their countries of origin and undertake this dangerous journey through Latin America. It is also crucial to analyze their trajectory to Mexico and analyze the international refugee regime which has forced these migrants to embark on this dangerous journey.

1. Push factors: A mix between economic and political factors

This section analyzes the factors which pushed these Black African and Haitian migrants to flee their countries of origin. A total of seventeen migrants were interviewed in Tijuana, fifteen of them were male and two were female, ten of the migrants were between 18 and 34 years old while seven of them were between 35 and 54 years old. The migrants came from Cameroon (7), Haiti (4), Ghana (3), Uganda (2) and Eritrea (1). A total of six migrants were interviewed in Mexico City, five of them were male and only one was female, five of them were between 18 and 34 years old and only one was between the 35 to 44 age range. The migrants came from the Democratic Republic of Congo (1), Guinea (1), Haiti (2), Mali (1) and Nigeria (1). Each of these countries has

its own set of political and economic problems which has forced its people to flee in great numbers. According to the Instituto Nacional de Migración, in 2019 the highest number of African migrants apprehended by Mexican officials were Cameroonians, which helps explain why almost half of the seventeen interviewed migrants in Tijuana, seven to be exact, are Cameroonians.

The most represented country among the interviewees, Cameroon, is a bilingual English French country in Central Africa. Despite being a bilingual country, anglophones are a minority who only make up about 20% of the population. After the Cameroonian government tried to impose French in the anglophone region's schools and courts, by sending French speaking personnel, the anglophone region's teachers and lawyers went on a strike to oppose these measures. They were met with repression and many were arrested; this led to civil unrest in Cameroon's predominantly anglophone regions. I interviewed seven Cameroonian migrants in Tijuana, five of them came from the English-speaking region and described with a lot of sadness and anger their last few months home before being forced to flee. One former anglophone teacher from the North-West region, Marie*, described with tears in her eyes why she left Cameroon:

“Being harassed, persecution from the military, and the secessionist fighters. Because I used to go to school, there were the secessionists, the problem we have in Cameroon right now they don't want teachers to go to school and teach, so any teacher who goes against that law, you are a target. And with the military I had a problem because of a lesson I taught students about the abolition of the federal system in Cameroon. During class I brought up the various ways in which anglophones are marginalized, some of the students then started singing the Ambazonian anthem, I told them to stop but they didn't. Then the military in the school came, that's when all my problems started.” (02/08/2020).

* All participants were assigned a pseudonym to protect their identity.

She was holding back tears and her voice was shaking when she told me “In Cameroon if you are identified with anything concerning Ambazonia, it’s a death sentence or a life imprisonment. So that’s why I had a problem with the military.” The tension between the Cameroonian government and the anglophone teachers and lawyers led to civil unrest all over the Anglophone region and affected the whole region. A 36-year-old Anglophone farmer, Jean* who I interviewed in Tijuana didn’t think the unrest would affect him, he thought this would pass just like other unrests. Aside from farming, he owned a motorcycle transportation business; one night he was called by someone in the village to take their sick mother to the city hospital. On their way there, they were stopped by French-speaking military and were all arrested. The military set fire to his motorcycle but he was luckily able to eventually escape. However, the military didn’t stop there, he told me with so much anger “they later came back, chased me, looked for me, destroyed my properties, my house, my family compound and threatened my wife. Those threats made me leave my country.” (02/08/2020)

Cameroonians are not the only ones fleeing their country for political reasons, an Eritrean migrant also spoke to me about his flight from Eritrea. Eritrea is a small country in Eastern Africa, bordered by Ethiopia, Djibouti and Sudan, and with access to the Red Sea. After Eritrea gained its independence from Ethiopia in 1993, the country has been ruled for the last 28 years by the same man, Isaias Afwerki. Isaias Afwerki is a dictator who led the guerrilla struggle of the EPLF (Eritrean People’s Liberation Front) along with the TPLF (The Tigrayan People’s Liberation Front) against the then-communist government of Ethiopia, the DERG, officially the Provisional Military Government of Ethiopia. After leading the struggle for independence, Isaias has maintained full control of the country, cutting the country’s ties with its neighbors such as Ethiopia, but also politically and economically alienating the country. The country’s youth has been fleeing

in astonishing numbers over the last twenty years, many are fleeing the country's mandatory and indefinite military service. Its military service forces all secondary school students, regardless of gender, "to complete their final year at the Warsai Yekalo Secondary School which is located in Sawa military camp (Sawa Defense Training Center)" (Human Rights Watch 2019, p.2). Sawa military camp is located in the hot and dry Gash-Barka region, near the border with Sudan. Students spend a year in Sawa, preparing for their secondary school exams and getting military training. Some of these students are not even 18, their forceful conscription violates international law. Not only do these students go through very painful exercises in an extreme climate, but they also face military discipline and punishments; female students also have to deal with sexual harassment and exploitation at the hands of military officials (Bader, 2019). Once they complete a year of mandatory service and take their high school exams, based on how well they do in the exams, they are either forced to join the army or sent to vocational training programs or university. However, they usually don't have a say in which education they get to pursue. Despite Eritrean law limiting national service to a maximum of 18 months, many are forced to serve indefinitely (Human Rights Watch, 2019). This has led thousands of Eritreans, mostly between the ages of 18 and 24, to escape and seek refuge in neighboring countries such as Sudan or Ethiopia before continuing their journey to either Europe or North America. As this young Eritrean migrant, Kidane*, put it "I had one dream when I went to Sawa, military school, I spent 6 or 7 months, after that I escaped with four other people, we were five including myself. But in Sawa at 12 o'clock, at midnight, all the lights go out and they control us. I was the only one who ran, the other four guys got killed." (07/06/2020) Dictators who have been in power for decades are all but uncommon in Africa, the Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni has been known to torture and murder his opponents and anybody who dares to question his power. A 47-year-old Ugandan migrant,

Robert*, whom I interviewed in Tijuana, explained how the political situation in Uganda made him fear for his life, “I got scared because a number of my fellows had been killed. I got scared because I was imprisoned almost thrice for nothing. They don’t just imprison you, but they kidnap you and keep you in those houses, in torture chambers.” (05/23/2020) Another 34-year-old Ugandan businessman, Patrick*, who left his country in 2019 spoke about what led him to leave. He used to import rice from Dubai and sell it in Uganda, but since one of the president’s many businesses included importing and selling rice, in an attempt to monopolize this business, the government put in place some measures to restrict access to this business. Hence, the customs office increased the import taxes on rice and would even purposely delay cartons of rice at customs. This unfairness led him to join the struggle and fight for his rights. A couple of months after the main leader of the opposition was kidnapped, killed and dumped in front of a hospital, he tells me that he was also kidnapped and tortured but later released. This traumatizing experience truly scared him and led him to think “I have no way of surviving in Uganda, I have seen many people getting killed in these kinds of circumstances so anyone fighting for change, this is what could happen to you? I realized when will I stop hiding from these people, when will I and how? If you keep silent how many more people are going to suffer?” (05/21/2020)

While the most common push factor for Cameroonians, Ugandans or Eritreans was political instability, migrants from other countries such as Haiti or Ghana have different push factors. A 33-year-old Ghanaian migrant, Samuel*, who worked as an excavator operator in Ivory Coast explained how he was forced to flee because he feared for his life. While he was working in Ivory Coast the heavy machinery he was working with broke down. He attempted to fix it but unfortunately the machine got bent and it caught fire. He then explained “The owner of the machine was hunting me; you know these machines are very expensive and I didn’t have the

money to buy this machine and I didn't have any means to solve the problem. So, the only means was just to move out of the country, find some place to escape." (06/20/2020) When I asked him why he couldn't return to Ghana, he explained "The person I was working with was my boss in Ghana and he took me to Ivory Coast, so he knew where I lived in Ghana, he knew my family and everything. It was riskier to go back and stay in Ghana because it was like going back to my boss' hometown, he can do anything to me." (06/20/2020) The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights' (UNDHR) article 3 stipulates that "everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person", while article 7 stipulates that "all are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law" and article 8 states that "everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law" (UN General Assembly, 1948). In this case, the Ghanaian state failed to provide the necessary protection and security Samuel* needed, pushing him to flee his country and seek refuge elsewhere. When I asked a 38-year-old Ghanaian migrant, Michael*, who worked in a construction company as a road safety officer why he left his country he started by explaining his financial struggles, "My boss was the one who signed my timecard when I get to work but since we had a disagreement, he wouldn't let me work my regular hours, so my salary was obviously less. The money wasn't enough for me because I have kids, so I decided to sell the taxi and leave." (06/21/2020) One 32-year-old Haitian migrant, Joseph*, who used to be unemployed in his country before leaving described his situation in Haiti as the following:

"I personally left for a better life, I finished school, but I didn't have anything to do, I couldn't work, I couldn't feed my family, I couldn't do anything. There is no future for me, it is very difficult to live in Haiti, because there is also a security problem, there are a

lot of problems. I can't say more about this country except that it is extremely, extremely complicated.” (02/08/2020)

He left his family and his 5-year-old child because he didn't have a choice, he wanted to go abroad and work to provide for his son since he couldn't help his child in any way when he was back home. The economic crisis in Haiti affected everyone, across all professions and all education levels. A 30-year-old Haitian elementary school teacher, Daniel* also spoke about his struggles of supporting himself with his salary “We work in Haiti, but the salary isn't enough to survive, for our daily needs. My salary wasn't enough for me, my parents had to support me. I left Haiti to find a better life in another country. I wanted to find a job to help my parents who are still in Haiti and who don't have anything.” (02/08/2020)

Most Haitians interviewed had similar reasons for fleeing their country, they all stemmed from economic and financial struggles. The push factors for Haitians can be defined as multidimensional vulnerability “jointly with demographic and economic structural factors, the succession of major natural disasters over the last ten years (Hurricane Jeanne in 2004, four storms and hurricanes in 2008 and finally the earthquake of 2010) has brought about the extreme vulnerability of the Haitian society” (Cedric 2017, p. 57). In addition to this, “only about one-seventh of Haiti's land is arable and this land is eroding at a rate of one percent per year” making it harder for Haitian farmers to make a living and provide for their families (Russell, 1981). Furthermore, Haiti's per capita yearly income is a meager 100 USD, one of the lowest in the world. On the political front, since the Duvalier family took power in the 1950s, with the dictator “Papa Doc” Duvalier followed by his son Jean-Claude “Baby Doc” Duvalier, the country's poverty has only gotten worse; the government is corrupt, repressive and authoritarian.

Even though some migrants are defined as solely economic migrants, I believe that in reality most migrants usually flee their countries for a combination of economic and political reasons. The choice to define some migrants as economic migrants and others as political refugees is purely dependent on the receiving countries', mostly western countries', geo-political and economic interests. For instance, in the case of Haitians, the US government refuses to classify Haitians as political refugees; classifying them as economic refugees helps them justify their deportation (Russell, 1981). In the 1970s and 1980s it also helped them make sure it doesn't affect their relationship with "Papa Doc" their former anti-communist ally in the Caribbean and now in the 21st century, their relationship with his son "Baby Doc". The US government further argued that returned/deported Haitians didn't face reprisals when they return to Haiti. To prove this the State Department had sent a task force to Haiti in 1979 to investigate the conditions of returned Haitians. This task force consisted of white men who didn't speak French or Creole, didn't really try to locate the returned refugees and only interviewed 10% of them. Furthermore, these interviews were conducted within close proximity of local authorities, how can we expect returned refugees to really explain what they suffer from if the same entity they're fleeing from is right there? The task force tried to reassure them that the US Embassy would help them in case of reprisal but without really explaining how to access this help. Haitian sources continuously asserted that these reprisals do take place, often times leading to confiscation of valuables, detainment and even imprisonment. The Haitian example is a perfect illustration of the complexity associated with defining a group of migrants as political refugees or economic migrants.

I argue that it is also important to highlight that the reasons that force people to flee are much more complex than what they seem. While internal factors such as violence and economic

policies play a major role, “external factors such as imperial and post-colonial policies and practices from actors largely in the Global North, including military interventions and encampments and economic and trade policies” (Elsheikh & Ayazi 2017, p.9) shouldn’t be forgotten. It is crucial to keep in mind that the Global North and more specifically former colonial powers continue to disrupt the peace in many African, Latin American and Asian countries. The refugee label has been politicized in the last couple of decades since migration flows have diversified. In the 1970s and 1980s most refugee crises were regionally contained in the South, now that it has reached the North’s border, especially with the migratory crisis that unfolded at the UE’s doors, “there is the increasing complexity of determining who is a refugee” (Zetter 2007, p.175).

2. Unfair and discriminatory international refugee regime

The complex and discriminatory international refugee regime that is currently in place has forced millions of migrants, such as the ones that were interviewed in this research, to resort to difficult migration journeys. All of the migrants interviewed intended to go to the U.S. and in some cases to Canada, but because of how difficult it is to obtain an immigrant visa to these countries when you are from Africa or the Caribbean, they have had to embark on dangerous and very long migration journeys in hopes of reaching the U.S.-Mexico border. I asked all of the migrants why they chose this specific route to come to Mexico, the following section will be providing an in-depth analysis of their responses to this question as well as their understanding of the current immigration system. These migrants have very few legal and truly attainable ways to immigrate to the U.S. and/or Canada. Getting an immigrant visa to the U.S. and/or Canada is close to impossible, being relocated by the UNHCR after being recognized as a refugee is also a very

lengthy process which requires years of patience, usually in refugee camps in neighboring countries. The last option is applying for asylum once in the destination country. However, this again requires first being able to enter the country on a tourist, student or similar visa, which has very strict financial requirements which most migrants don't necessarily fulfill. In sum, the current international refugee regime makes it nearly impossible for refugees to legally and safely immigrate to countries where they can seek protection.

From the interviews I conducted and the literature, I was able to identify three common routes taken by migrants to reach Mexico: obtaining a visa to Brazil then making the journey northward all the way to Mexico; taking advantage of Ecuador's visa-free policy with most countries to fly to Ecuador then make the journey northward to Mexico or last but not least flying directly to Mexico with a valid Mexican visa or transiting through Mexico on their way to Cuba or the Dominican Republic before deciding to stay in Mexico.

Jean*, explained how he ended up in Mexico in the following way:

“There is a visa agent that helps people get visas, so if you have money, you can contact him, he can give you a visa to any country you like. When I heard the other guys talking about that, I thought to myself I don't feel safe, I don't even know where to go, so I asked the visa agent to look for me for a country to go to, a country where I can be safe. The visa agent came back and told me he got me a visa for Brazil, so I went to Brazil.” (02/08/2020)

However, his journey didn't end in Brazil, once in Brazil he faced a lot of difficulties. He was sleeping on the streets, he got robbed and assaulted and he had trouble communicating with others, forcing him to once again migrate. He recalls that he met other Black folks who advised him to go to the U.S. One of them told him

“This place is not safe; I am going to a safer country. The safer country is America, in America you can live there safely, if you don’t have a place to stay, you can sleep in the streets, nobody will attack you. Here there are too many problems, if you continue staying here, they will end up killing you so if you have money, you can follow me to America.”

(02/08/2020)

That is how he embarked on a dangerous and long journey to reach the U.S.-Mexico border, going through several South and Central American countries. The first one was Peru, a country which doesn’t even give migrants the option to apply for asylum; migrants are told to leave the country within an allotted time. The next country is Ecuador which doesn’t have an inclusive immigration regime either, forcing migrants to continue their journey to the third country, Colombia, where they are once again told to leave the country within an allotted time. The hardest part of the journey usually starts at this point, the migrants must cross the Darien Gap, which is a very dangerous jungle located between Colombia and Panama. The Darien Gap is known to be full of all types of life-threatening dangers, from armed robbers and drug traffickers to poisonous animals, what some migrants refer to as the “deadly route”. Emmanuel*, a 24-year-old Cameroonian migrant commented “I had to cross the Darien Gap; I can’t talk about this because the experience was very painful. All the bodies I saw, it is still very fresh in my memory. All the kids I saw get taken away by the water, oh God.” (07/01/2020) If the migrants manage to cross the Darien Gap they arrive in Panama where they usually continue their journey northward to Costa Rica. From Costa Rica, migrants continue to Nicaragua before reaching Honduras, then finally Mexico. Most of these migrants don’t seek asylum in these countries for a combination of reasons. Firstly, many of them already have the U.S. or Canada as their ultimate destination, in addition, in most of these countries

they are not even given the option to seek asylum and lastly, they don't feel safe in these countries. For example, Jean* recalls his first thoughts in Ecuador

“We went to Ecuador; I saw Black people so I thought I can stay here so I left the rest of the group I came with from Brazil. I didn't have any money, so I started sleeping on the streets and I was harassed. I left that spot and went to another spot; in the middle of the night, the police arrived and started asking me questions about who I was and what I was doing there. I told them I was Cameroonian; I fled my country, so I don't have any place to stay. They told me to put my hands up, they searched me and took all my money.”

(02/08/2020)

He felt unsafe and decided to continue his journey northward. In Peru, he recalls “We went to the immigration office, they didn't ask us if we wanted to stay here or not. They told us to leave their country, we had two weeks to leave the country.” In Nicaragua “they told us to go ahead and leave their country”, in Honduras “go ahead and leave our country.” (02/08/2020)

While this migrant came through Brazil to reach Mexico, other migrants took different routes, for instance flying to Ecuador before embarking on a similar journey through several South and Central American countries. Emmanuel*, from Ghana, shares that “Ghana, with our passport we can travel freely to Ecuador, so I just moved to Ecuador, but you know in Ecuador there is no job and I had to continue. So, I continued, and I got here in Mexico.” (06/20/2020) His experience is very similar to that of many migrants from Ghana or other African countries with visa-free access to Ecuador, they use Ecuador as an entry point to Latin America before continuing their journey northward. Others were only transiting through Mexico on their way to seek refuge

elsewhere in the Caribbean when they decided to stay in Mexico instead. A 47-year-old self-employed Ugandan migrant, Robert* when asked how he came to Mexico answered:

“When I left Uganda, I did not have a clear destination in mind because of the pressure of just wanting to go as far away as possible from Uganda, because usually once you run away from Uganda you go to neighboring countries in Africa but the Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni chases after those people and kills them. So, I just wanted to go as far away as possible from Uganda and go to a giant powerful country where I can be protected. That was my goal and that is how I managed to acquire a Cuban visa.” (05/23/2020)

He was transiting through Mexico City airport when he met some people from the Dominican Republic who advised him not to go to Cuba because of the political situation there and instead told him to either go to the Dominican Republic or stay in Mexico. He chose the latter and stayed in Mexico. While some migrants might have ended up in Mexico while transiting through the country, the most common route either starts in Brazil or Ecuador, but in both cases, migrants have to go through seven to nine countries mostly by foot or bus. When asked how to describe her journey to Mexico, Marie* a Cameroonian migrant, answered holding back tears “It’s a tough, a very tough journey, tough and difficult. I don’t know, because if I start explaining... it’s a dreaded experience” (02/08/2020), before starting to breathe very heavily and crying. I think this statement perfectly illustrates the amount of pain and suffering most migrants go through before they make it to Mexico.

Most Haitians interviewed had a different trajectory to Mexico, many of them left their country a couple of years ago and spent some time in a South American country, such as Brazil or Chile, before heading to Mexico. Daniel*, a Haitian migrant, explained to me that “when I planned

to leave Haiti, getting a Brazilian visa wasn't really easy but after the earthquake of January 12th, 2010 the Brazilian president Dilma Rousseff went to Haiti and negotiated with the Haitian government. They decided to give Haitians the opportunity to go to Haiti to work.” (02/08/2020) Joseph*, another Haitian migrant said that he had gone to Mexico from Chile, “I spent more than four years in Chile, and I couldn't get a work permit. But even if I did, in Chile there aren't a lot of jobs, I couldn't work there and I couldn't support my family.” (02/08/2020)

All these examples are perfect illustrations of the struggles Black African and Haitian migrants have to go through in order to find refuge. The international refugee regime currently in place is unrealistic and doesn't take into account the realities of the world we live in. It is in this specific context that Black African and Haitian have found themselves in Mexico, a majority non-Black, Spanish-speaking country already struggling to appropriately recognize its own population of Afro-Mexicans. Black African and Haitian migrants face difficulties due to their race, their status as migrants and finally their lack of Spanish.

3. Intersectionality of discriminations based on race, language and status as migrants

As mentioned above Black African and Haitian migrants face discriminations based on their race, being Black, in a predominantly non-Black country, being non-Spanish speaking and based on their status as migrants. While initially I wanted to analyze each discrimination separately, after some reflection I decided that in order to truly highlight the intersectional nature of these three discriminations, it is important to analyze them all together. Furthermore, I initially wanted to analyze Tijuana and Mexico City separately, but after going through my transcriptions, I came to the conclusion that analyzing these two cities together can help us see if migrants who

are transiting through Tijuana have a different experience than the ones who are currently in Mexico City. Migrants who are currently in Mexico City still face discriminations based on their intersectional identities, however not living in a border city/town such as Tijuana or Tapachula does have an impact on their safety, for example. Some of the border towns/cities in which migrants live such as Tijuana have been identified by the U.S. State Department as a level 4 threat risk, which is the same as countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Somalia, North Korea and Yemen, war-torn countries (American Immigration Lawyers Association, 2019). Hence, generally speaking the insecurity that migrants face tends to be higher in these border cities/towns than in a city such as Mexico City. Furthermore, most migrants in Tijuana are only transiting through the city, their final destination is the United States, while migrants in Mexico City have already received their temporary residence card or awaiting one. This is another element which affects not only their experiences but their perception of their experiences as well. From the interviews, I was able to conclude that since migrants in Mexico City intend to stay in Mexico rather than simply transit and already have some sort of residence permit their approach to life in Mexico is different. The migrants tend to already be working; working also provides a space for them to not only learn Spanish but also integrate into the society.

All twenty-three migrants who were interviewed in Tijuana and Mexico City spoke about the racism they face either at the hands of Mexican law enforcement such as the local police or Mexican immigration agencies such as COMAR and INM or from the local Mexican population. Jean*, a Cameroonian migrant, told me about his experience being homeless in Tapachula after spending three weeks in a migratory detention center he was put into by Mexican law enforcement agents. He was homeless and jobless for a couple of days before he eventually started working in construction. After saving up enough money he decided to rent a room. However, on his way to

rent a room, he was stopped by two unidentified men who threatened him and took his money and phone. After these two men fled the scene, he saw a police car driving his way, he waved his hand at them to ask for their help, unfortunately due to his lack of Spanish they couldn't understand what he was explaining to them despite several attempts. They eventually got frustrated and said "Negro, vamos, negro" and left him there. He adds "So I didn't know what to do, so I just kept quiet, since they cannot understand me, I just stayed quiet." (02/08/2020) Another incident that left its mark on him was when he almost got abducted; a car was driving really close to him and the driver was trying to talk to him. When he got closer to try to understand, two other men came out of nowhere and tried to force him into the car, but he kept resisting. Luckily when they heard the siren of a police car approaching, they immediately stopped and left. Due to these circumstances, he felt unsafe in Tapachula and wanted to leave. He approached COMAR and explained what had happened to him and asked if he could process his asylum in a different, safer city. However, they refused his request and ordered him to remain in Tapachula until his asylum is processed. In addition, he went to the police station and filed a complaint but was told that due to insufficient information, the police wouldn't be able to catch the perpetrators of these attacks. This is a perfect illustration of how all three identities intersected to create discriminations against this migrant, his status as a migrant made him homeless, jobless and vulnerable to attacks by robbers. On top of this, since he couldn't speak Spanish, he wasn't able to communicate with the police officers to get the appropriate assistance and protection he needed from them. Not only did they refuse to help him they used racial slurs against him before abandoning him on the side of the road in the middle of the night after he had just been attacked. He explains "There is trouble here, I can end up being killed here, I ran away from my country because of problems, here again I have to face other problems?" (02/08/2020) I believe this statement truly summarizes the frustration

that many migrants and in this specific case, many Black African and Haitian migrants feel about their situation in Mexico. They had to flee their country, make the treacherous journey through Latin America only to be forced to remain in Mexico in these difficult conditions where they struggle on a daily basis.

Joseph*, a Haitian migrant told me about his experience being denied pay after working for two weeks, “They told me I was supposed to work for 4,000 pesos for fifteen days but when I finished working, they just said goodbye and they still haven’t paid me. I think it is because I am a migrant.” (02/08/2020) Joseph*, then told me about the racism he has been facing in Mexico:

“Some Mexicans are very, very racist. For example, I went to a pharmacy just to buy a tablet, a Mexican working there told me they didn’t have the tablet even though I could see the tablet. Then they told me they didn’t want to sell this tablet to Black people. Mexicans can be very racist.”

He adds “for Mexicans, I think Black people are not humans.” (02/08/2020) This is similar to what Marie*, a Cameroonian migrant expressed as well “some of them are nice, some of them when they look at you and see you are a Black person, they look at you like you are something strange.” (02/08/2020) Jean*, a Cameroonian migrant explained to me his daily racist encounters with so much frustration in his voice:

“You get in the bus; people will cover their nose. If I seat behind someone, they cover their nose, and if they don’t cover their nose as soon as they find a free seat, they will change their seat. If they can’t change seats, they will get off the bus, sometimes I think to myself maybe the person has reached their destination but when I turn around, I see them waiting for another bus.” (02/08/2020)

Jean* also spoke about his other racist encounter at the bank, “I went to the bank to do some transaction, I didn’t have a pen, so I asked the teller for one. She gave me the pen then I could see her looking at me. When I went away, she grabbed the pen and started looking for a sanitizer then she sterilized the pen and threw the tissue in the trash.” (02/08/2020) Emmanuel*, a Cameroonian migrant spoke about his struggles with Spanish, “You arrive at work, you don’t speak Spanish, they insult you in Spanish and you don’t understand what they are saying. And all this make you feel uneasy, very uneasy but we don’t have a choice but to bear with it.” (07/01/2020) As for his experience with the Guardia Nacional he adds:

“These guys are really crazy. In Chiapas, it’s even worse you know? They see you they stop you and ask you if you smoke weed. You tell them you are smoking cigarettes, but they will still pat you down and when they get into your pockets, they will try to get all your money you know?” (07/01/2020)

When asked if this happens to him a lot in Tijuana, he adds “not so much here because there many Blacks but in Huatulco I had this problem many times, I can’t really go anywhere without being stopped five times because I am a Black man. And every time they stop me, it’s 200 pesos, I even started to keep money somewhere.” (07/01/2020) Emmanuel’s* experience is an overlapping of racism and discrimination based on his status as a migrant, he adds that the Guardia Nacional “they talk to me as if they are threatening me, as if my card is fake. They will try to intimidate you.” Jean*, a Cameroonian migrant also spoke of his encounters with Mexican law enforcement,

“On my way here to Tijuana, I took a night bus, everybody was sleeping in the bus, so I was sleeping too. When the police came to check in on us, they realized everybody was sleeping so they didn’t disturb them. But they woke me up and said ‘give us your

documents' but I could see everybody was still sleeping. They didn't wake up anybody else, they only woke me up because I was the only Black one in the bus." (02/08/2020)

As for Emmanuel*, when asked what he thinks Mexicans think of him and other migrants he adds in a very distressed voice "everywhere I go they let us know they don't want us here. Every day I feel bad, there are some days where I cry and ask God why he created me, I feel like my life is miserable that I cannot even eat even though I have food." (07/01/2020) Not only has he experienced so much discrimination since being in Mexico, he also doesn't feel like he could stay long term in the country "you arrive somewhere and you immediately don't feel at ease, if it was just only a quarter or even half of them you would think they are a minority. But since it is the majority, you realize that a Black person will never feel at home in Mexico. No matter how someone might treat you in Mexico, you will never feel at home in this country, because sooner or later there is always someone that is going to be racist towards you." (07/01/2020) Migrants also experienced racism inside the migratory stations at the hands of staff; Jean* says "When we were in the cells, when it's time for food, they would come and call Central Americans, they were the first ones to be served. Even if you are hungry, they will say Central Americans first." (02/08/2020).

Kidane*, an Eritrean migrant, also spoke of his experience struggling to navigate Mexico without speaking Spanish "Mexico is very dangerous and especially since I cannot speak Spanish. For example, sometimes I go to the shop and they talk to me, but I don't understand because I don't speak Spanish." (07/06/2020) Robert* also spoke of how unsafe he feels in the streets of Tijuana "In the streets of Tijuana it's very, very rough. You see someone with a knife they might try to kill, rob or knock you. If you look at someone he could say 'why are you looking at you?'" (05/23/2020) He also highlighted how it would be difficult for him to learn a new language at this

age “I don’t want to stay in Mexico anymore because language first is a very big problem for me. I am almost 48 years old so I feel like learning such a different language might be hard for me so I better join a country where I can speak the language.” (05/23/2020) This sentiment is one that is shared by most migrants, they are from non-Spanish speaking countries and navigating Mexico is really hard when you don’t understand the language. They struggle on a daily basis from going to the supermarket, to taking public transportation to immigration processes. As Robert* describes it “The language barrier has turned into a very big problem, someone can try to say something to you, he says something in his language you don’t get him, you speak the one you know he doesn’t get you. So, interactions are not at all easy.” (05/23/2020) He spoke about his experience being detained “After two weeks of being detained they took me out of detention with a certain paper which was in Spanish, I could not understand a word. Then they took me to a certain hotel that only provided sleeping and no food.” His experience is all too common amongst the interviewed African and Haitian migrants.

If there is something that I noticed from the transcriptions is that all migrants agreed that while they were victims of racial and other types of discrimination from government agencies as well as the local Mexican population, there was a general consensus on the positive treatment they received from shelter staff. None of them spoke negatively of the staff at shelters or NGOs, as Joseph* put it “the staff was always really nice, really hospitable” (02/08/2020). Samuel* spoke very highly of shelters as well, “The only person I know from shelters is Paulina, she has been very kind to me she has been very good. You know when we got into this quarantine, she did her best to help the stranded migrants here.” (06/20/2020) Emmanuel* said he personally hasn’t had many interactions with shelter staff, but he has heard that “they treat others quite well.”

(07/01/2020) I was also able to understand from the interviews, that in addition to local Mexican shelters and churches, U.S.-based immigrants' rights organizations also provide support to migrants in Tijuana. As George*, a Ghanaian migrant put it "When the NGOs come, most of them can speak English since most of them come from the United States and other countries. So, when they come here, they engage in conversations with migrants so that's when you feel happy that they are here." (06/25/2020) This example illustrates how U.S.-based immigrants' rights organizations support is crucial for Black African and Haitian migrants forced to remain in Mexico. These migrants don't just need financial support; speaking with staff from U.S.-based immigrants' rights organizations is one of their only ways to speak English.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Understanding the role that race and the *mestizaje* discourse play in Mexican society has proven to be crucial to study the experiences of Black African and Haitian migrants in Mexico. As the online survey administered to Afro-Mexicans highlights, we can draw a parallel between the way Mexico is treating its own Black population and the migrant Black African and Haitian population that has found itself in the country. The survey highlighted the ways in which Afro-Mexicans experience racism/racial discrimination from government officials such as municipal, state, federal police; immigration authorities; government employees as well as from non-Black Mexicans. The survey also helped shed light on the connections between Afro-Mexicans' experiences and those of Black African and Haitian migrants in Mexico; race plays an important role in how Black African and Haitian migrants are treated. It should come as no surprise that a country that only recently acknowledged the presence of Blacks amongst its population, reserves an inhumane treatment to Black migrants. While Mexico has been accused of using violence against migrants in general regardless of their race, it is evident that the race of Black migrants has reinforced the violence and the mistreatment they received from Mexican officials. Furthermore, as the twenty-three in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted with Black African and Haitian migrants highlight, the overlapping identities of these migrants, being Black, non-Spanish speaking migrants puts them at a greater risk to extortion from criminals and hinders their access to justice and assistance from the Mexican government. They also become vulnerable to racist attacks at the hands of Mexican officials as well as the Mexican population. They face discriminations from state agencies such as the National Institute for Migration (INM), the Comision Mexicana de Ayuda a Refugiados (COMAR), the National Guard and local police, as well as from the local population.

While Mexico is strengthening its asylum system and has laws in place to protect migrants, in practice Mexican officials haven't been able to provide the protection and the various legal services that Black migrants so desperately need. The Mexican government can do more to ensure the protection of migrants, COMAR is an understaffed and under resourced agency, the first step the Mexican government should be taking is providing better funding and well-trained, culturally competent staff to COMAR, so as to ensure a faster process of asylum requests. As such, while under law COMAR has 45 working days to make a decision on an asylum application or 90 working days under exceptional circumstances, the current backlog means that migrants wait way beyond 90 days, from 6 months to a year actually (Asylum Access Mexico, 2019). In addition, COMAR should also make it possible for migrants to continue their asylum process in any part of Mexico, in an effort to protect migrants from the dangers of living in border towns/cities which they first enter into and are usually more dangerous. Mexico should also restart the issuance of humanitarian visas for asylum-seekers to travel north and should stop the deployment of the National Guard to impede the freedom of movement of migrants. Furthermore, similarly to COMAR, other state institutions such as municipal police and the Instituto Nacional de Migración (INM) should be more culturally competent and have access to interpreters in the main languages spoken by African and Haitian migrants such as English and French, in order to provide a better protection for these migrants. Moreover, Mexico should put in place government shelters to house migrants instead of having thousands of migrants homeless and at risk for all kinds of crimes. For non-Spanish speaking migrants, state-funded small courses of Spanish, would help these migrants better navigate Mexican bureaucracy and also find employment to support themselves. The government should also provide social services such as putting migrants in touch with local businesses and employers who are looking for workers. The civil society can also play a role in

the well-being and the protection of migrants by offering these migrants work opportunities adapted to their language skills.

We must also examine the U.S. government's role in all this; after all Mexico's change in terms of migration policies was prompted by increasing pressures from the U.S. The U.S.' threat to increase tariffs on Mexican products, is undoubtedly the major factor which pushed the Mexican government to adopt stricter migration policies and collaborate with the U.S. in controlling migrant flows. It collaborated by deploying the National Guard at its northern and southern borders; by forcing many migrants to indefinitely remain in the southern state of Chiapas, where they first entered Mexico through its border with Guatemala; and by accepting the 'metering' system which forces thousands of migrants to wait for months at the U.S.-Mexico border, among other measures. These efforts to externalize the U.S.' migration governance have a significant economic impact on Mexico, they put a financial strain on Mexico's immigration system which was not prepared to deal with such an important number of migrants and even less so, of Black migrants. Had it not been for mounting pressures from the U.S. the Mexican government would have probably let these migrants make their way through Mexico until they reach the U.S.-Mexico border, at which point they would either cross into the U.S. by foot or would turn themselves in to CBP agents.

Border externalizations have been used by the EU to control irregular migrations and asylum flows, especially since the war in Syria. In 2016, the EU signed an agreement with Turkey, which declared Turkey a "safe third country". This agreement stated that undocumented Syrian migrants arriving in Greece would be returned to Turkey, in addition Turkey received 6 billion € for facilities for refugees (Geddes, 2018). In the case of the E.U. the externalization of borders to Turkey was accompanied by a substantial financial assistance to improve the living conditions of

refugees. However, we can still argue that this financial assistance cannot be considered an alternative to providing a new life in Europe to these refugees. In the case of the U.S. and Mexico, if the U.S. intends to indirectly force Mexico to curb the migration flows to the U.S. by keeping the migrants within its borders, the U.S. should be providing a significant financial assistance to improve the lives of migrants in Mexico. Mexico's asylum system needs help, financially but also in terms of training to COMAR staff, in addition, Mexico only has one federally owned migrant shelter at the border with the U.S. which is clearly not enough to provide shelter to all the migrants being forced to remain in the country due to the 'metering' system.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

Semi-structured interview questions

1. Where are you from?
2. How old are you?
3. What was your educational level in your country? What was your profession?
4. Tell me about a typical day in your country
5. What do you miss the most about home?
6. Can you tell me what made you leave your country?
7. What is your ultimate destination and why?
8. Do you already have any connections in your destination country?
9. Can you tell me about your trajectory before Mexico? How did you get here?
10. Why did you chose this route to come here?
11. How long have you been in Mexico?
12. Tell me about a typical day in Mexico. Where do you currently live?
13. Do you have friends here? Which countries are they from?
14. What role do they play in your daily life in Mexico?
15. In what languages do you communicate with people around you?
16. Have you had any interactions with the local Mexican population? If so, how would you describe your interactions with them?
17. Have you had any interactions with shelters and NGO staff? If so, how would you describe your interactions with them?

18. Have you had any interactions with Mexican law enforcement, the National Guard, the Police? If so, how would you describe your interactions with them?
19. What do you think the Mexican population thinks of you and others like you? Do you think they know why you're here?
20. Do you think you could ever see yourself calling Mexico home?
21. What do you hope for the future?
22. Do you think the international community has a responsibility towards you and others like you? If so, what does that responsibility look like?
23. What do you think nations or international entities could do to lessen your suffering?
24. Is there something you would like to add?
25. Is there something you think I should have asked, something you wish I had asked you about?

APPENDIX B

1. Based on your culture, history and traditions, do you consider yourself Black, in other words Afro-Mexican or Afro descendant?

- Yes

- No

2. Which part of Mexico are you from?

- Guerrero

- Oaxaca

- Veracruz

- Ciudad de Mexico (D.F)
- Estado de Mexico
- Other: Type in name of state/city
- Prefer not to disclose

3. What is your age range?

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65 and over
- Prefer not to disclose

4. Which gender do you identify with?

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to disclose

5. What is your highest level of formal education completed?

- Did not attend school
- Some schooling
- High school graduate

- Some college
- Trade/technical/vocational training
- Bachelor's degree or higher
- Prefer not to disclose

6. Which of the following categories best describes your occupation or profession?

- Executive and higher managerial professions
- Professional, technician or administrative staff
- Commercial and food and beverage preparer
- Worker in agriculture, livestock, forestry, hunting and fishing
- Artisan and operators of fixed machinery and motor vehicle
- Domestic worker, cleaner or other service industry
- Other:
- Prefer not to disclose

Check here if you are

- Retired or
- Unemployed

7. Do you speak Spanish?

- Yes
- No

8. Do you speak any other language(s) besides Spanish?

- Yes, type name of language:

- No

9. Have you ever experienced racism/racial discrimination from government officials such as municipal, state, federal police; immigration authorities; government employees?

- Yes

- No

- I am not sure

- Prefer not to disclose

10. Have you ever experienced racism/racial discrimination from anyone who is not Black, in other words not Afro-Mexican or Afro-descendent?

- Yes

- No

- I am not sure

- Prefer not to disclose

11. Have you ever experienced racism/racial discrimination while looking for employment?

- Yes

- No

- I am not sure

- Prefer not to disclose

12. Have you ever been a victim of excessive use of force (when a government official such as police uses force that exceeds the minimum amount necessary for the situation) from police due to your race?

- Yes

- No

- I am not sure

- Prefer not to disclose

13. Have you ever felt unsafe due to your race?

- Yes

- No

- I am not sure

- Prefer not to disclose

14. Have you ever been called a derogatory term because of your identity as a Black, in other words Afro-Mexican or Afro-descendent?

- Yes

- No

- I am not sure

- Prefer not to disclose

15. Do you think other non-Afro Mexicans (*Mestizos*) are aware that more than 1 million Afro-Mexicans live in Mexico?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

16. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: Mexican society recognizes the existence of racism against Black Mexicans, in other words Afro-Mexicans or Afro-descendants.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Partly agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

The following questions are based on this statement: The number of Black African and Haitian migrants apprehended by Mexican immigration authorities has been growing since 2016; in 2019 a little over 11,000 Black African and Haitian migrants were apprehended. While many of these migrants have been able to cross into the U.S, others have been forced to remain in Mexico.

17. Do you think race plays a role in how these Black African and Haitian migrants are treated by Mexican officials?

- Yes
- No
- I am not sure
- Prefer not to disclose

18. If you answered yes to the previous question, on a scale from 1 to 5, with **1 being the lowest and 5 the highest**, how big of a role do you think race plays in how Black migrants are treated by Mexican officials?

19. Do you think race plays a role in how Black African and Haitian migrants are treated by Mexican society?

- Yes
- No
- I am not sure
- Prefer not to disclose

20. If you answered yes to the previous question, on a scale from 1 to 5, with **1 being the lowest and 5 the highest**, how big of a role do you think race will play in how they are treated by Mexican society?

21. To what extent do you agree with this statement: Black African and Haitian migrants' treatment will be different than that of other migrants, such as non-Black Central American migrants, because of their race.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Partly agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

22. How prepared do you think Mexico is to welcome Black migrants?

- Very prepared
- Prepared
- Partly prepared
- Not prepared at all

23. Do you have any other comments?

REFERENCES:

- Adossi, N., Belay T., Lipscombe C., & Ndugga-Kabuye B. (2018). *Black lives at the border*. Retrieved from <http://stateofblackimmigrants.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/black-lives-at-the-borderfinal-2-1.pdf>
- Agren, D. (2020, March 19). 'We exist. We're here': Afro-Mexicans make the census after long struggle for recognition. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/19/afro-mexicans-census-history-identity>
- Aguirre Beltrán, G. (1958). *Cuijla: esbozo etnográfico de un pueblo negro*. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Alberto, P.L., & Elena, E. (2016). *Rethinking race in modern Argentina*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- American Immigration Council. (2020, January). *Policies affecting asylum seekers at the border*. Retrieved from <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/policies-affecting-asylum-seekers-border>
- American Immigration Lawyers Association. (2019, February 1). *AILA Policy Brief: "Remain in Mexico" Plan Sows Chaos, Puts Asylum Seekers at Risk*. Retrieved from <https://www.aila.org/advo-media/aila-policy-briefs/policy-brief-remain-in-mexico-plan-chaos>
- Asylum Access Mexico, (2020). *Asylum in Mexico by the Numbers*. Retrieved from <https://asylumaccess.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Asylum-in-Mexico-by-the-Numbers.pdf>
- Averbuch, M. (2020). Mexico's other migrant standoff: African migrants caught in limbo in Mexico highlight the far-reaching impacts of the united states' effort to export its border

- enforcement. *NACLA Report on the Americas*, 52(1), 13-19.
doi:10.1080/10714839.2020.1733218
- Bader, L. (2019, July 17). Interview: The mass exodus from Eritrea. Teachers and students flee forced conscription. *Human Rights Watch*.
<https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/08/09/interview-mass-exodus-eritrea#>
- Bastia, T. (2014). Intersectionality, migration and development. *Progress in Development Studies*, 14(3), 237-248.
- Bolter, J. (2017, February 16). The Evolving and Diversifying Nature of Migration to the U.S.-Mexico Border. *Migration Policy Institute*. Retrieved from
<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/evolving-and-diversifying-nature-migration-us-mexico-border>
- Camhaji, E. (2020, March 2). México pregunta por primera vez sobre la población negra y afrodescendiente. *El País*. Retrieved from <https://elpais.com/sociedad/2020-03-02/mexico-pregunta-por-primera-vez-sobre-la-poblacion-negra-y-afrodescendiente.html>
- Carroll, P.J. (1991). *Blacks in colonial Veracruz: race, ethnicity, and regional development*. (1st ed.). Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Carroll, S. (2015). "Somos de Morelos:" Race, place, and claims to national identity in Morelos, Oaxaca. *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Civic and Political Sciences*, 9(2), 1-12.
- Castro, K. (2018). *On the front lines: Service providers respond to the Haitian refugee crisis*. (Master's thesis). Retrieved from <https://repository.usfca.edu/thes/1083>
- CDH Fray Matías [CDHFrayMatias]. (2019, August 29). "Nuestros países de origen, empobrecidos y sometidos desde las potencias occidentales, a pesar de o quizás a causa de nuestras riquezas naturales, están atravesados por la desigualdad social, la violencia y

- el autoritarismo” #COMUNICADO 📌 bit.ly/2Zq2ZJu [Tweet]. Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/CDHFrMatias/status/1167118267862978560>
- Cedric, A. (2017). The recent geodynamics of Haitian migration in the Americas: Refugees or economic migrants? *Revista Brasileira de Estudos de População*, 34(1), 55-71.
- Colectivo para Eliminar el Racismo en México (COPERA). (n.d.). Afrocenso MX. Retrieved from <https://afrocenso.mx>
- Collins, P. H. (2000). The politics of Black feminist thought. In Taylor & Francis e-Library (Revised tenth anniversary edition.ed.), *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness and politics of empowerment* (pp.1-19). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Columbia Law School. (2017, June 8). *Kimberlé Crenshaw on intersectionality, more than two decades later*. <https://www.law.columbia.edu/news/archive/kimberle-crenshaw-intersectionality-more-two-decades-later>
- Consejo Nacional para Prevenir la Discrimination (CONAPRED). (n.d.). *Ficha temática: Pueblos y comunidades afromexicanas*. Retrieved from [https://www.conapred.org.mx/userfiles/files/FichaTematicaAfrodescendientes%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.conapred.org.mx/userfiles/files/FichaTematicaAfrodescendientes%20(1).pdf)
- Constitución Política de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos. (1917, February 5). Retrieved from http://www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/pdf_mov/Constitucion_Politica.pdf
- Contreras, V.N. (2019, July 30). M’Balía, de OV7, relata que a su papá le escupieron por su color de piel. Retrieved from <https://www.lasestrellas.tv/espectaculos-1/famosos-1/mbalia-ov7-relata-padre-escupieron-color-piel-discriminacion>
- Crenshaw, K. W. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 1989(1), 139-167.

- Da Costa, A.E. (2014). *Reimagining black difference and politics in Brazil: From racial democracy to multiculturalism*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Dill, L., & Amador, L. G. (2014). El Pueblo Negro: Identity politics in Mexico. *Latin American Policy*, 5(1), 87-114.
- Elsheikh, E. & Ayazi, H. (2017). *Moving targets: An analysis of global forced migration*. Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society. https://belonging.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/haasinstitute_moving_targets_globalmigrationreport_publish_web.pdf
- Figuroa, M. G. M. (2010). Distributed intensities: Whiteness, mestizaje and the logics of Mexican racism. *Ethnicities*, 10(3), 387-401.
- Gavia, M. (n.d.). BHM Heroes: Sergio Peñaloza Pérez. Retrieved from <https://www.blackrevolutionarytheatreworkshop.org/bhm-heroes-sergio-penalozaperez/>
- Geddes, A. (2018). The politics of European Union migration governance. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 56, 120-130.
- Hoffman, O. (2007). De las “tres razas” al mestizaje: diversidad de las representaciones colectivas acerca de lo “negro” en México (Veracruz y Costa Chica). *Diario de Campo*, 42, 98-109.
- Hoffmann, O. & Rinaudo, C. (2014). The issue of Blackness and mestizaje in two distinct Mexican contexts: Veracruz and Costa Chica. *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies*, 9(2), 138-155.
- How Mexico beefs up immigration enforcement to meet Trump’s terms. (2019, July 13). National Public Radio. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/2019/07/13/740009105/how-mexico-beefs-up-immigration-enforcement-to-meet-trumps-terms>

- Human Rights Watch. (2019). *“They are making us into slaves, not educating us”*: How indefinite conscription restricts young people’s rights, access to education in Eritrea. https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/eritrea0819_web.pdf
- Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía. (2015). *Encuesta intercensal 2015*. Retrieved from http://en.www.inegi.org.mx/contenidos/programas/intercensal/2015/doc/eic_2015_presentacion.pdf
- Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía. (2017). *Perfil sociodemográfico de la población afrodescendiente en México*. Retrieved from http://internet.contenidos.inegi.org.mx/contenidos/Productos/prod_serv/contenidos/espanol/bvinegi/productos/nueva_estruc/702825090272.pdf
- Jones, C.W. (2019, April 22). La publicidad en México perpetúa el racismo y el clasismo. *The Conversation*. Retrieved from <https://theconversation.com/la-publicidad-en-mexico-perpetua-el-racismo-y-el-clasismo-114487>
- Kolawole, B. (2017). African immigrants, intersectionality, and the increasing need for visibility in the current immigration debate. *Columbia Journal of Race & Law*, 7(2), 373-409.
- Latin America Working Group. (n.d.) *“More migrants are coming, and they’re arriving more hurt”*: Tales from Mexico City shelters. Retrieved from <https://www.lawg.org/more-migrants-are-coming-and-theyre-arriving-more-hurt-tales-from-mexico-city-migrant-shelters/>
- Leavy, P. (2014). *The Oxford handbook of qualitative research*. Retrieved from <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/ebookviewer/ebook/bmxlYmtfXzc3OTUxMV9fQU41?siid=b818de1c-74c0-43c6-9811-a9f8629e9610@pdc-vertexmgr04&vid=1&format=EB&rid=2>

- Leutert, S., Arvey, S. & Ezzell, E. (2020, February). *Metering update*. Retrieved from https://www.strausscenter.org/wp-content/uploads/MeteringUpdate_February_2020.pdf
- Ley de Migración 2011. [Online]. Retrieved from http://www.gobernacion.gob.mx/work/models/SEGOB/Resource/2218/1/images/Ley_Migracion_c.pdf
- Makala, A. [Adrian]. (2020, February 25). México: INEGI informa, cuándo los encuestadores del #Censo2020mx te pregunten si por sus antepasados o según tus costumbres y tradiciones te consideras #Afromexicano #Negro o #Afrodescendiente? Responde con orgullo #PorSupuestoQueSi @INEGI_INFORMA @AfroCensoMX [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/adrianmakalaoficial/>
- Marchand, M. H. & Ramírez, A.S.O. (2019). Globalising cities at the crossroads of migration: Puebla, Tijuana and Monterrey. *Third World Quarterly*, 40(3), 612-632.
- McCall, L. (2005). The complexity of intersectionality. *Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 30(3), 1771-1800.
- Melimopoulos, E. (2019, June 30). Mexico's National Guard: what, who and when. The controversial force is officially starting operations across the country on Sunday. *Al Jazeera*. Retrieved from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/06/mexico-national-guard-190630095444350.html>
- Meyer, M. & Isacson, A. (2019, December 17). *The 'wall' before the 'wall': Mexico's crackdown on migration at its southern border*. Retrieved from <https://www.wola.org/analysis/mexico-southern-border-report/>
- Russell, D. (1981, June). Haitian Refugees. *Cultural Survival*. Retrieved from <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/haitian-refuge>

- Secretaría de Gobernación. (2012, May). *Boletín mensual de estadísticas migratorias 2007*. Retrieved from http://portales.segob.gob.mx/work/models/PoliticaMigratoria/CEM/Estadisticas/Boletines_Estadisticos/2007/Boletin_2007.pdf
- Secretaría de Gobernación. (2019, October). *Boletín mensual de estadísticas migratorias 2018*. Retrieved from http://portales.segob.gob.mx/work/models/PoliticaMigratoria/CEM/Estadisticas/Boletines_Estadisticos/2018/Boletin_2018.pdf
- Secretaría de Gobernación. (2020, March). *Boletín mensual de estadísticas migratorias 2019*. Retrieved from http://portales.segob.gob.mx/work/models/PoliticaMigratoria/CEM/Estadisticas/Boletines_Estadisticos/2020/Boletin_2020.pdf
- Serna Herrera, J.M. (2005). Indios, pardos, mulatos y negros esclavos. Lo cotidiano en el Puerto de Veracruz a fines del siglo XVIII. In Serna Herrera, J.M. (Ed.), *Pautas de convivencia étnica en la América Latina colonial (Indios, negros, mulatos, pardos y esclavos)* (pp.91-110). Mexico City: Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico.
- Smith, H.R. (2019, August 13). *The Department of Homeland Security's reporting "metering" policy: Legal issues*. Retrieved from <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/homsec/LSB10295.pdf>
- Taha, D. (2019). Intersectionality and other critical approaches in refugee research: An annotated bibliography. Local Engagement Refugee Research network paper. Retrieved from <https://carleton.ca/lern/wp-content/uploads/Intersectionality-and-Other-Critical-Approaches-in-Refugee-Research.pdf>

- Thompson-Hernández, W. (2016). “Oye, qué bien juegan los negros, ¿no?”: Blaxicans and basketball in Mexico. In Rivera-Rideau, P.R., Jones, J.A., & Paschel, T.S. (Eds.), *Afro-Latin@s in movement: Critical approaches to Blackness and transnationalism in the Americas* (pp. 109-130). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan US.
- Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. (2016). Afroamérica: La tercera raíz. Retrieved from <http://www.nacionmulticultural.unam.mx/afroamerica/antecedentes/antecedentes01.html>
- U.S. Department of State – Bureau of Consular Affairs. (2019, December 17). Mexico travel advisory. Retrieved from <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/mexico-travel-advisory.html>
- Vasquez, I. A. (2010). The longue durée of Africans in Mexico: The historiography of racialization, acculturation, and Afro-Mexican subjectivity. *Journal of African American History*, 95(2), 183-201.
- Vaughn, B. (2005). The African diaspora through Ojos Mexicanos: Blackness and Mexicanidad in Southern Mexico. *The Review of Black Political Economy*, 33(1), 49-57.
- Velázquez, M.E. & Iturralde, G. (2016). Afromexicanos: Reflexiones sobre las dinámicas del reconocimiento. *Anales de Antropología*, 50(2), 232-246. Retrieved from <https://reader.elsevier.com/reader/sd/pii/S0185122516300054?token=58E2024D0EDA0A22622DE97D525A11C45F52F822390678DAE2C92A5A99F6267C60F86813CC3CE8DB9DF481D2B843DE44>

- Velázquez, M.E. & Nieto, G.I. (2012, September). *Afrodescendientes en México: Una historia de silencio y discriminación*. Retrieved from [https://www.conapred.org.mx/userfiles/files/TestimonioAFRO-INACCSS\(1\).pdf](https://www.conapred.org.mx/userfiles/files/TestimonioAFRO-INACCSS(1).pdf)
- Vinson, B. III. (2001). *Bearing arms for His Majesty: The free-colored militia in colonial Mexico*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Von Germeten, N. (2009). Colonial middle men? Mulatto identities in New Spain's confraternities. In Vinson, B. & Restall, M. (Eds.), *Black Mexico: Race and society from colonial to modern times* (pp.136-154). Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press.
- Wade, P. (2005). Rethinking *Mestizaje*: ideology and lived experience. *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 37, 239-257.
- Wade, P. (2017). Racism and race mixture in Latin America. *Latin American Research Review*, 52(3), 477-485.
- Wilson Center. (2019, January 4). *Infographic: AMLO's peace and security plan*. Retrieved from <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/infographic-amlos-peace-and-security-plan>
- Yates, C. (2019, October 22). As More Migrants from Africa and Asia Arrive in Latin America, Governments Seek Orderly and Controlled Pathways. *Migration Policy Institute*. Retrieved from <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/extracontinental-migrants-latin-america>
- Zetter, R. (2007). More labels, fewer refugees: Remaking the refugee label in an era of globalization. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 20(2), 172-92.