

PIGMENTOCRACY: RACIAL HIERARCHIES IN THE CARIBBEAN AND LATIN AMERICA*

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The term “pigmentocracy” has recently been adopted by social scientists to describe societies in which wealth and social status are determined by skin color. There are numerous pigmentocracies throughout the world, and they all have the remarkable characteristic that invariably the light-skinned peoples have the highest social status. These are followed by the brown-skinned, who occupy intermediate positions, and finally by the black-skinned who are at the bottom of the social hierarchy.

Few people are unaware that the United States is a pigmentocracy in which whites and light-skinned East Asians do best in education, earnings, and socio-economic status; brown-skinned Hispanics do less well; while blacks do the least well. Even within these groups, it is the light-skinned who do best. North East Asians (ethnic Chinese, Koreans, and Japanese) do better than the darker-skinned (the Filipinos, Hmong, and other Southeast Asians). The Hispanics have their own pigmentocratic skin color hierarchy. The light-skinned, mainly from Cuba, are the most successful, while the darker-skinned from Latin America do not do so well. And among blacks too, it is the lighter-skinned who do best—people like Condoleza Rice, Colin Powell, Barack Obama, and Jesse Jackson.

The United States is by no means unique. Canada is also a pigmentocracy, and pigmentocracies have emerged in many European countries following mass immigration of darker-skinned peoples during the last half century. Australia and New Zealand are pigmentocracies in which Europeans and growing Chinese populations have higher socio-economic status, while the Aborigines in Australia and the

* This essay is drawn from research presented in the author’s latest book, *The Global Bell Curve: Race, I.Q., and Inequality Worldwide* (Augusta, Ga.: Washington Summit Publishers, 2008).

Maoris in New Zealand form an impoverished underclass. South East Asia has its own pigmentocracy in which lighter-skinned Chinese do better than darker-skinned Malays, Indonesians, Filipinos, and Thais. Finally, nowhere are pigmentocracies more evident than in the Caribbean and Latin America

THE CARIBBEAN

The Caribbean islands were discovered by Christopher Columbus in the 1490s. In the next century the Spanish began to colonize the islands and establish sugar plantations. They tried to enslave the Native American Indian inhabitants, but many of these died of diseases, and those that survived did not make good slaves, so the Spanish imported slaves from Africa to work in the sugar plantations. In the ensuing centuries most of the islands fell under British and French rule. The European estate owners were prone to take black mistresses, who produced half-breed mulattos. Other immigrants settled in the islands including Portuguese, Jews, Chinese, and Indians from the subcontinent.

By the 1800s a racial socio-economic hierarchy had emerged typically consisting of Europeans and small numbers of Chinese at the top; followed by half-breed mulattos, together, in some islands, with Indians, in the middle; and blacks at the bottom. A black sociologist has recorded that by this time "the brown (mixed race) slaves were positioned in privileged occupations in the hierarchy of the slave plantation economy, usually as slave artisans."¹ This may have been because the Europeans preferred mixed-race mulattos and possibly because they were generally found to be more intelligent than the blacks and more competent in skilled artisan work.

After the abolition of slavery in 1833 the European estate and plantation owners found that many of the former African slaves were unwilling to work for wages as day laborers and were unreliable employees. Thomas Atwood, the chief judge in Dominica, described the problem: "Negroes are in general much addicted to drunkenness, thievery, incontinency, and idleness. . . . idleness is so very predominant in Negroes, and their dislike of labour is so great, that it is difficult to make them work: it is sometimes absolutely necessary to have recourse to measures that appear cruel, in order to oblige them to labour."² These "measures that appear cruel" were floggings, but after

¹ D. Robotham, "Blackening the Jamaican Nation," *Identities* 7 (2000): 1-37.

² P. Fryer, *Staying Power* (London: Pluto Press, 1984).

the abolition of slavery this was no longer permitted. To solve the problem of securing a reliable supply of labor, the plantation owners brought in a number of Indians from the Indian subcontinent and also some Portuguese and Chinese, who were found to be more reliable laborers than the blacks: "In Jamaica, Grenada, Guyana, and Trinidad, many ex-slaves rapidly quit the plantations to establish villages where they could live and cultivate subsistence crops without interference from white management and their allies. To replace this lost labor, the planters in these countries used government revenues to import Chinese, Portuguese, and Indians under onerous indentures."³

The racial hierarchy and the intelligence and personality characteristics of the races in the West Indies were described in the mid-nineteenth century by Anthony Trollope, the British novelist, who visited Trinidad, Barbados, Jamaica, and Guyana in 1859 and subsequently wrote up his impressions in his book *The West Indies and the Spanish Main*.⁴ At the time Trollope visited the West Indies, there were already small numbers of Chinese and Indians from the Indian subcontinent. Trollope explained that these were brought over as indentured workers because once the blacks had been freed from slavery it was difficult or impossible to get them to work reliably for wages: "The negro's idea of emancipation was and is emancipation not from slavery but from work. To lie in the sun and eat breadfruit and yams is his idea of being free."

Trollope noted that the mulattos — "those who are of mixed race, be it in what proportion it may, between white European and black African" — were higher in the socio-economic hierarchy than the blacks: "they are to be met at the Governor's table; they sit in the House of Assembly; they have forced themselves forward and must be recognized as being in the van." He noted that mulattos ran most of the shops:

Let any stranger go through the shops and stores of Kingston, and see how many of them are either owned or worked by men of color; let him go into the House of Assembly, and see how large a proportion of their debates is carried on by men of color; how large a portion of the public service is carried on by them;

³ M. G. Smith, *Culture, Race, and Class in the Commonwealth Caribbean* (Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 1984).

⁴ A. Trollope, *The West Indies and the Spanish Main* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1985).

they make money and enjoy it; they practise as statesmen, as lawyers, and as doctors.⁵

He observed that the intelligence of the mulattos was related to their skin color, which itself reflected the amount of white ancestry. Thus, if one wished to assess the amount of white ancestry “the speech and the intelligence would afford the sources of information on which most reliance could be placed.”⁶ He also considered that “the Chinese and the Coolies (Indians) greatly excel the Negro in intelligence.”⁷ He evidently regarded these as innate racial characteristics, for he wrote that, “God, for his own purposes has created men of inferior and superior race.”⁸

The racial socio-economic hierarchy described by Trollope in the 1850s persisted into the twentieth century and right up to the present. Europeans have continued at the top together with some rich Chinese. Mulattos and Indians still occupy intermediate positions, while blacks are largely at the bottom. West Indians have a finely graded sense of racial distinctions. The term *mulattos* is generally used for those who have one white and one black parent. Those who are one quarter black and three quarters white are designated *quadroons*, while those who are one-eighth black and seven-eighths white are termed *octo-rooms*. In the 1950s a sociologist carried out field work on the racial hierarchy and wrote of “the high status whites, mid-status browns, and low status blacks throughout the West Indies.”⁹ A few years later, another sociologist wrote that “class distinctions are mainly seen in racial terms; color in the sense of physical appearance carries extraordinary weight. West Indians conceive differences in appearance in terms of social segmentation” and “race and color are shorthand designations of class.”¹⁰ Similarly, in Barbados “the economic elite is comprised of local whites”¹¹; “lighter-skinned elites and darker-colored lower income groups in general typify Caribbean societies”¹²; and “in

⁵ Trollope, 62.

⁶ Trollope, 60.

⁷ Trollope, 58.

⁸ Trollope, 47–57.

⁹ M. G. Smith, *The Plural Society in the British West Indies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965).

¹⁰ D. Lowenthal, “Race and Color in the West Indies,” *Daedalus* 96 (1967): 580–627.

¹¹ D. Robotham, “Blackening the Jamaican Nation,” *Identities* 7 (2000): 1–37.

¹² D. Howard, *Coloring the Nation: Race in the Dominican Republic* (Oxford: Signal Books, 2001).

the color-class system, there is a clear hierarchy of social gradings, and for the most part, these divisions are strongly reflected in skin color, with those of high standing being white, and those with black skins generally occupying the lowest levels of the social spectrum."¹³

Throughout the West Indies the Chinese have typically prospered and entered the middle class: "the Chinese in the British and Dutch Caribbean are largely recognized as a successful upper-middle class, their members based not only in the traditional retail grocery trades but in the import, service, manufacturing, and professional sectors"¹⁴; "the economic success of the Chinese in the former British colonies propelled them firmly into the middle class."¹⁵

The Indians also have done better than blacks: "originally, the new migrants from India were regarded by all as merely 'coolies' at the foot of the social ladder, but eventually they, too, would rise into middle class positions."¹⁶

THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC AND HAITI

The Dominican Republic and Haiti were originally a Spanish colony named Hispaniola that was taken by the French in the seventeenth century. In 1804 the black slaves rebelled against French rule, and Napoleon was too busy fighting wars in Europe to quell the rebellion. The blacks established a republic and massacred most of the whites. In 1844 the island was divided into two, the eastern half becoming the Dominican Republic and the western half Haiti. In the Dominican Republic a number of whites survived, and over the next decades there were some white immigrants. A social anthropologist has written that by the end of the nineteenth century "the racial factor acted as one of the main determinants of social status . . . white somatic norm image was dominant in regard to social prestige, as in all multi-racial societies of the Caribbean."¹⁷

¹³ R. B. Potter, D. Barker, D. Conway, and T. Clark, *Contemporary Caribbean* (Harlow, UK: Pearson Education, 2004).

¹⁴ L. Pan, *The Encyclopedia of the Chinese Overseas* (London: Macmillan, 1998).

¹⁵ R. B. Kent, "A Diaspora of Chinese Settlement," in L. J. C. Ma and C. Cartier, eds., *The Chinese Diaspora* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003).

¹⁶ I. Oxaal, "The Dependency Economist as Grassroots Politician in the Caribbean," in I. Oxaal, T. Barnett and D. Booth, eds., *Beyond the Sociology of Development* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975).

¹⁷ H. Hoetink, "The Dominican Republic in the Nineteenth Century," in M. Morner, ed., *Race and Class in Latin America* (London: Routledge, 1990).

At the end of the twentieth century 16 percent of the population of the Dominican Republic was white, 73 percent of mixed race, and 11 percent black. A British social anthropologist who carried out field work in the country has written that "Dominican society has been characterized by a light-skinned elite and a mulatto majority since the seventeenth century" while among mulattos "lighter skin color allows a greater chance of social mobility than for dark-skinned Dominicans."¹⁸ In another study a sample of the inhabitants of the capital city, Santo Domingo, was surveyed in 1999, in which they were asked to assess the relationship between color and socio-economic status. The results were that "whites were perceived to have the highest level of social status, with progressively darker racial categories receiving lower social status ratings."¹⁹ They describe the country as a "pigmentocracy" in which skin color is the major determinant of social status.

From the beginning of the twentieth century a number of Chinese arrived in the Dominican Republic, and within a few years "many Chinese immigrants established small businesses and manufacturing enterprises."²⁰

In Haiti far fewer whites survived the 1804 massacres, and today the population consists of 95 percent blacks and 5 percent mulattos. Despite their minority status, mulattos enjoy higher economic and social status. In the 1960s a sociologist wrote of "the colored elite" (i.e., mulattos).²¹ Because Haiti has been an independent republic governed by blacks for two centuries, there is no reason to expect that mulattos would have higher socio-economic status than blacks. There has been no white ruling class whose racism can have held down the blacks and favored the mulattos. Yet at the end of the twentieth century Haiti was the poorest country in the Caribbean with an annual per capita income of \$1,383. Remarkably, its neighbor the Dominican Republic, whose population is 16 percent white, 73 percent mulatto, and 11 percent black, has a per capita income more than three times greater at \$4,598 (real GDP at PPP, 1998). Haiti also has much higher fertility than the Dominican Republic at 6.4 TFR as compared with 3.3, and much higher infant mortality at 105 per 1,000 births as compared with

¹⁸ Howard, *Coloring the Nation*.

¹⁹ J. Sidanius, Y. Pena, and M. Sawyer, "Inclusionary Discrimination: Pigmentation and Patriotism in the Dominican Republic," *Political Psychology* 22 (2001): 827–85.

²⁰ Howard, *Coloring the Nation*.

²¹ D. Lowenthal, "Race and Color in the West Indies."

43 (1998 figures).²² Both of these are indicative of a low IQ population.

Nothing is known of the intelligence of the population of Haiti. However, there is a study of the math abilities of Haitian immigrant school students in Florida, and math ability is highly correlated with intelligence. The study compared the math abilities of second generation Haitian immigrant school students with second generation Cubans and Nicaraguans. The students were tested in 1992 and 1995, and on both occasions the Haitians scored significantly lowest, the Nicaraguans came next, while the Cubans scored highest.²³ Once again we see a pigmentocratic gradient. The predominantly European light-skinned Cubans do best. The differences can be explained by percentages of Europeans in the racial compositions of the populations.

GRENADA AND JAMAICA

There are similar pigmentocracies throughout the Caribbean. In Grenada where the population consists of approximately 73 percent black, 21 percent mulatto, 5 percent East Indian, and 1 percent white, the race differences in social status were studied in 1952–1953 by a sociologist who described the racial hierarchy as consisting of "a white elite, a larger brown upper middle class, next in rank, who dominated Grenadian commerce, official councils and committees, certain clubs, and other organizations," and a "lower or peasant class" of blacks and some Indians.²⁴

In Jamaica also it was observed in the 1930s that "it is the browns, especially the lighter ones, who have the most chance to enter higher professions, and the blacks as a class do the most menial work."²⁵ In the 1960s Philip Vernon, who carried out some intelligence testing in Jamaica and reported that the average IQ was about 75, wrote that the mixed race mulattos "are of the utmost importance as constituting the bulk of the middle classes who provide most of the country's commercial and professional leadership; lightness of color is one of the

²² R. Lynn and T. Vanhanen, *IQ and Global Inequality* (Augusta, Ga: Washington Summit Publishers, 2006).

²³ T. D. Rodriguez, "Oppositional Culture and Academic Performance among Children of Immigrants in the USA," *Race, Ethnicity and Education* 5 (2000): 199–216.

²⁴ Smith, *The Plural Society in the British West Indies*.

²⁵ M. W. Curti, F. B. Marshall, M. Steggerda, and E. M. Henderson, "The Gesell Schedule Applied to One-, Two-, and Three-year-old Negro Children of Jamaica, B.W.I.," *Journal of Comparative Psychology* 20 (1935): 152–56.

major criteria of social class.”²⁶ There is a small population of Chinese in Jamaica, whose numbers have been estimated at between 5,000 and 22,500. In the second half of the twentieth century “they controlled the retail grocery trade and were prominent in the civil service and the professions” and were “among the best educated and wealthiest of Jamaicans.”²⁷

In the second half of the twentieth century the pigmentocratic hierarchy in Jamaica expressed as percentages of professional and managerial occupations was Europeans 36 percent, followed by Chinese (28 percent), mulattos (15 percent), East Indians (13 percent), and finally blacks (6 percent). These differences are also present in intelligence. In a study of the intelligence of racial hybrids it was found that in relation to an IQ set at 100, the average IQs were 104.5 for the light-skinned, 101.0 for the intermediate, and 98.0 for the dark-skinned.²⁸

Trinidad and Tobago were British colonies until 1962, when they were united and became independent. By the end of the twentieth century the population consisted of 1 percent Europeans, 1 percent Chinese, 14 percent mulattos, 44 percent Indians, and 40 percent blacks. The pigmentocratic hierarchy in the two islands had emerged by the 1800s: “The nineteenth century bequeathed a three-tiered hierarchy . . . whites for the most part occupied the dominant position economically and politically, there was a brown (mixed European and African) middle stratum, and at the bottom was the black descended majority.”²⁹ And “the traditional colonial social pyramid consisted of the English and French white elites at the top, generally socially and occupationally aloof from a developing brown-skinned middle class, who were in turn at a social and cultural distance from the masses of black Afro-Trinidadians.”³⁰

The Chinese have done well in Trinidad and Tobago, as they have throughout the Caribbean. Already in the mid-nineteenth century they were prospering in market gardening and the retail trade. In the

²⁶ P. E. Vernon, *Intelligence and Cultural Environment* (London: Methuen, 1969).

²⁷ R. B. Kent, “A Diaspora of Chinese Settlement.”

²⁸ R. E. Grinder, W. S. Spotts, and M. W. Curti, “Relationships between Goode-nough Draw-a-Man Test Performance and Skin Color among Preadolescent Jamaican Children,” *Journal of Social Psychology* 62 (1964): 181–88.

²⁹ M. Crichlow, “Reconfiguring the Informal Economy Divide,” *Latin American Perspectives* 25 (1998): 62–83.

³⁰ Oxaal, “The Dependency Economist as Grassroots Politician in the Caribbean.”

1850s they were described as "the best gardeners in the colony, responsible for supplying the local markets with most of their vegetables,"³¹ while "in the 1970s, when the Chinese represented a scanty 1 percent of the population, they represented about 10 percent of the business elite; they were members of some of the islands' most exclusive social clubs; Black Power advocates viewed the Chinese as members of the nations' ruling elite, along with whites."³² The intelligence of the five racial groups in Trinidad was investigated in the early 1970s in a study of 14–15 year olds. It was found that the Europeans and Chinese scored highest, the mixed race group came next, while the blacks scored lowest.³³

Martinique remained a French colony until 1946 when it was incorporated as part of France and its inhabitants were given French citizenship and permitted to move to France. The population is divided into *blanc* (white), *mulatre* (colored, mulatto), *noir* (black), and *coolies* (Indians), and "Among the *blancs*, the *bekes*, descended from the original French colonists, control the great majority of the economy; the *coolies* are the descendants of Indians (south Asians) who came to Martinique as laborers following the abolition of slavery."³⁴ French estate owners brought Indians to the island for the same reason that the British did into their Caribbean colonies. They found that blacks would not work reliably after slavery had been abolished. The French sociologist E. Kovats-Beaudoux has also documented the racial hierarchy in her book *The White Creoles of Martinique: A Dominant Minority*.³⁵ The title says it all.

PUERTO RICO

Puerto Rico was a Spanish colony until 1898 when it was ceded to the United States. A social hierarchy based on skin color has often been observed. "In Puerto Rico the prosperous classes tend to be

³¹ W. L. Lai, *Indentured Labor, Caribbean Sugar* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

³² Kent, "A Diaspora of Chinese Settlement."

³³ A. N. B. Nedd and L. W. Gruenfeld, "Field Dependence-Independence and Social Stratification," *International Journal of Psychology* 11 (1976): 23–41.

³⁴ J. M. Fish, "The Myth of Race," in J. M. Fish, ed., *Race and Intelligence* (Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2000).

³⁵ E. Kovats-Beaudoux, *Les blancs créole de la Martinique: Une minorité dominante* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2002).

lighter-skinned."³⁶ It has been also been found the light-skinned have a higher IQ than the dark-skinned.³⁷ In another study people were asked to assess the characteristics of those with five skin colors ranging from "very light" through "light," "medium," "dark," and "very dark." Responses were scored 5 for "very light" through 1 for "very dark." One of the questions asked was "The skin color of smart Puerto Ricans is . . ." Of the sample, 81 percent endorsed "very light" and "light." Only 8.5 percent considered that the skin color of smart Puerto Ricans is "darkest" or "dark."³⁸ The study shows that the general population of Puerto Rico is aware that there is an intelligence gradient corresponding to a light–dark skin color gradient.

CUBA

Cuba is instructive because of the efforts by Fidel Castro to eradicate racial inequalities. After seizing power in 1959, Castro introduced socialism and expropriated the assets of many middle-class whites. As a result many of these fled the island and established a colony in Miami. This white exodus and low fertility reduced the numbers of whites, and by 1995 they had declined to 37 percent of the population.

Europeans controlled the island until the abolition of slavery in the late nineteenth century. Since then they continued to hold most of the wealth, have had higher social status, and occupied most of the professional and administrative positions. European racial prejudice and discrimination against blacks and mulattos was strong in the first half of the twentieth century. Whites had exclusive use of their own clubs and beaches and the smarter restaurants and hotels. In 1937 an African-American Congressman Arthur Mitchell was refused admission to one of the best hotels in Havana. Public schools were open to all, but many whites sent their children to private schools that were largely or exclusively white.

From 1959 Fidel Castro dedicated himself to attempting to eliminate racial differences in socio-economic status and improving the status of blacks by outlawing discrimination and by nationalizing private

³⁶ N. Lemann, "The Other Underclass," *Atlantic Monthly*, December 1991, 96–110.

³⁷ H. B. Green, "Temporal Attitudes in Four Negro Subcultures," in J. T. Fraser, F. C. Haber, and G. H. Miller, eds., *The Study of Time* (New York: Springer, 1972).

³⁸ R. E. Hall, "A Descriptive Methodology of Color Bias in Puerto Rico: Manifestations of Discrimination in the New Millennium," *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 32 (2002): 1527–37.

schools previously attended almost entirely by whites. But despite these efforts, blacks remained over-represented in the poorest sections of society. In the army in the 1970s, "blacks were concentrated among enlisted troops and under-represented in the officer corps."³⁹ In the 1980s and 1990s there was still "a concentration of blacks in dilapidated housing in poor neighborhoods; blacks remained under-represented in managerial positions but over-represented in menial jobs; blacks were over-represented in the prison population; and black and mulatto women make up a high percentage of prostitutes."⁴⁰ Whites remain "prejudiced" against blacks or, alternatively, realistic in their perception of blacks. A survey carried out in Havana in 1995 by the Cuban Centro de Antropologia found that 58 percent of whites believed that blacks are less intelligent than whites, 69 percent believed that blacks did not have the same "decency," and 68 percent opposed racial inter-marriage.⁴¹ Whites regard blacks as "more aggressive" and "prone to criminal behavior," which in fact they are, as blacks "are greatly over-represented among those in prison."⁴²

The Chinese have done well in Cuba. They were initially brought to the island in the second half of the nineteenth century to work as laborers in the sugarcane fields. But

during the twentieth century, Cuba's Chinese had moved into a variety of urban service and retailing businesses, and most were firmly entrenched in the middle and lower middle classes; by the late 1940s, Havana's Chinatown bustled with a wide range of commercial activities run by Chinese; small businesses included laundries, retail shops, three theatres, nine hotels, and three pharmacies; by the 1950s, the Chinese had achieved considerable commercial success and they controlled some 3,500 small retail businesses.⁴³

³⁹ H. C. Adams, "Fighting an Uphill Battle: Race, Politics, Power, and Institutionalization in Cuba," *Latin America Research Review* 39 (2004): 168–82.

⁴⁰ C. Mesa-Lago, *Growing Economic and Social Disparities in Cuba* (Havana, 2002).

⁴¹ A. de la Fuente, *A Nation for All: Race, Inequality, and Politics in Twentieth-Century Cuba* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

⁴² B. E. Aguirre and E. B. Silva, "Does Race Matter among Cuban Immigrants? An Analysis of the Racial Characteristics of Recent Cuban Immigrants," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 34 (2001): 311–24.

⁴³ Kent, "A Diaspora of Chinese Settlement."

After the revolution of 1959 small businesses were expropriated and nationalized, and many of the Chinese emigrated, principally to the United States.

Despite Castro's determined efforts to eradicate discrimination and prejudice against blacks, Europeans have continued to perform better than blacks in the educational and socio-economic hierarchy. In 1994 blacks and mulattos were so dissatisfied that they rioted in Havana to demand more equality and to protest "the indignities blacks encounter daily; racial discrimination is a popular theme in the songs by young, black rap artists."⁴⁴ Since the Communist revolution Cuba has been governed by a Council of Ministers consisting of 39 members. In the year 2000, only one of these was black.

In May 2000, Castro made a televised speech in which he "acknowledged the most visible and enduring deficiency of race relations in socialist Cuba: the under-representation of black Cubans among the leadership of a political process now entering its fifth decade."⁴¹ Forty years after Castro assumed power, two authorities on Cuba wrote that

Whiteness is highly valued and seems to be one of the primary dimensions of status by which the overall evaluation of a person's social position is reached. Even though the prevailing ideology of the state tirelessly declares that skin color and other morphological characteristics do not matter, few blacks are found at the top echelons of the bureaucratic structure, the Communist Party, and industry. . . . research suggests that racial prejudice and discrimination are still rampant in Cuba.⁴⁵

LATIN AMERICA

Latin America resembles the Caribbean in its pigmentocratic socio-economic hierarchies. At the top of the socio-economic hierarchies are light-skinned Europeans, although these are mainly of Spanish and Portuguese descent, while those in the Caribbean are largely of British and French stock. Small numbers of Chinese and Japanese are also found among the socio-economic elites. In the middle of the socio-economic hierarchies are the brown-skinned mestizos of mixed-race European and Native American Indian descent, and the mulattos, of mixed-race European and African descent. At the bottom are the

⁴⁴ Adams, "Fighting an Uphill Battle."

⁴⁵ Aguirre and Silva, "Does Race Matter among Cuban Immigrants?"

darker-skinned Native American Indians and blacks. This color coded social hierarchy has been noted by numerous sociologists, economists, and anthropologists. For instance: "Latin American society is characterized by a social spectrum with taller, lighter-skinned, European-blooded elites at one end; shorter, darker, Indian-blooded masses at the other end . . ." ⁴⁶

The British social anthropologist Peter Wade has reached the same conclusion—"whites are at the top, Indians and blacks at the bottom, and positions in the middle are defined by various criteria of status, among which color and descent are very important." ⁴⁷ "Hispanic culture is dominated, socio-economically and politically, by Blancos. Many aspects of Latin culture—from beauty ideals to stereotypes about intelligence and criminality to the correlation between light skin color and higher social class—serve to legitimize and reinforce the stigmatization of Morenos (non-Europeans)." ⁴⁸

Many Latin American countries have small ethnic Chinese and Japanese populations. Most of these arrived in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to work as laborers. The Chinese and Japanese have typically prospered in Latin America. They have risen in the socio-economic hierarchy, and by the second half of the twentieth century most of them typically were running businesses or had entered the professions. Robert Kent, professor of geography at the University of Akron, explains: "the Chinese filled key niches, especially in small-scale retailing. As subsequent generations assimilated, the descendants of early immigrants moved into professional occupations and government services in appreciable numbers." For instance, in Panama "in the 1940s, when their population numbers are estimated to have been less than 3,000, they are reported to have dominated the retail grocery trade; in Panama city the later decades of the twentieth century found Chinese to some extent abandoning their emphasis on commerce and moving into professional occupations." ⁴⁹

The pigmentocratic socio-economic hierarchy has been observed

⁴⁶ A. Chua, *World on Fire: How Exporting Free Market Democracy Breeds Ethnic Hatred and Global Instability* (New York: Doubleday, 2002).

⁴⁷ Wade, *Race and Ethnicity in Latin America*.

⁴⁸ E. Uhlmann, N. Dasgupta, A. Elgueta, A. G. Greenwald, and J. Swanson, "Subgroup Prejudice Based on Skin Color among Hispanics in the US and Latin America," *Social Cognition* 20 (2002): 198–226.

⁴⁹ Kent, "A Diaspora of Chinese Settlement."

throughout Latin America. In Bolivia “broadly speaking, the whites are landowners and government officials, the mestizos are tradesmen, skilled workers, and minor civil servants, and the Indians are laborers.”⁵⁰

In Chile Europeans have higher socio-economic status and score higher in math than Native American Indians.⁵¹

In Colombia “the men of wealth and position in all sections of society are generally white”⁵² while “blacks and Indians are at the bottom of the ladder” which represents a hierarchy of wealth, education, civilization, and race.”⁵³

In Ecuador the population in the mid-1990s was 5 percent European, 40 percent mestizo, 40 percent Native American Indian, and 5 percent black. In the mid-twentieth century, “whites and mestizos were at the top of the class structure” while “mestizos often looked down on the blacks.”⁵⁴ These race differences were present in education and earnings where Europeans had approximately double the years of education and earnings than the indigenous population groups.⁵⁵

In Guatemala 3 percent of the population is European, 42 percent mestizo, and 55 percent Native American Indians, and

those of predominantly European ancestry clearly remain Guatemala’s ruling class; middle and lower class Ladinos’ (mestizos) class position is intermediate between Guatemala’s elites and Maya Indians; the class position of most Ladinos is that of salaried workers and petty bureaucrats, which puts them in the middle, rather than the lower, rungs of the class system. Lower positions are reserved for Indian peasants and artisans. . . . Lighter and more Europeanized Ladinos are more highly valued by other Ladinos, especially as marriage partners, than darker,

⁵⁰ *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1960), vol. 3, p. 819.

⁵¹ P. J. McEwan, “The Indigenous Test Score Gap in Bolivia and Chile,” *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 53 (2004): 157–91.

⁵² *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1960), vol. 6, p. 37

⁵³ Wade, *Race and Ethnicity in Latin America*.

⁵⁴ N. Whitten, *Class, Kinship, and Power in an Ecuadorian Town* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1965), 202.

⁵⁵ A. Garcia-Aracil and C. Winter, “Gender and Ethnicity Differentials in School Attainment and Labor Market Earnings in Ecuador,” *World Development* 34 (2006): 289–307.

more Mayan individuals.⁵⁶

In 1990 a study reported that Europeans and mestizos are about six times over-represented in professional, administrative, and office occupations, as compared with Native American Indians, and the intelligence of Native American Indian children was estimated at an IQ of 79.⁵⁷

In Guyana following the abolition of slavery, East Indians, Chinese, and Portuguese from Madeira were brought in as indentured laborers. Anthony Trollope visited Guyana in 1859 and described the characteristics of the races:

the Coolies (Indians) and the Chinamen have an aptitude for putting money together; the Negroes as a class do not have this aptitude, consequently they lie in the sun and eat yams. There is another race who have been and now are of the greatest benefit to this colony. These are the Portuguese, and they thrive wonderfully. At almost every corner of two streets in Georgetown there is to be seen a small shop, and these shops are, I think without exception, kept by Portuguese who all reached the colony in absolute poverty.⁵⁸

Little had changed by 1995 when a survey showed that 43 percent of blacks, but only 34 percent of East Indians were in poverty.⁵⁹

In Mexico the racial socio-economic hierarchy has been described by numerous sociologists and social anthropologists. Thus "ethnicity is strongly related to processes of social stratification . . . light skin color, bright eyes, and Caucasian features enjoy higher prestige than Amerindian; even members of the Maya-speaking lower classes prefer persons of lighter skin."⁶⁰ "The higher class people are whiter, lower

⁵⁶ C. A. Smith, "Race, Class, and Gender Ideology in Guatemala," in B. Williams, ed., *Women out of Place: The Gender of Agency and the Race of Nationality* (London: Routledge, 1996).

⁵⁷ M. Steele, "Guatemala," in G. Psacharopoulos and H. A. Patrinos, eds., *Indigenous People and Poverty in Latin America* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 1994).

⁵⁸ Trollope, *The West Indies and the Spanish Main*.

⁵⁹ J. Gafar, "Poverty, Income Growth, and Inequality in Some Caribbean Countries," *Journal of Developing Areas* 32 (1998): 467-90.

⁶⁰ W. Gabbert, "Social Categories, Ethnicity, and the State in Yucatan, Mexico," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 33 (2001): 459-84.

class people more Indian-looking.”⁶¹ And “almost without exception the Mexican officials, lawyers, and business executives we dealt with were light skinned and foreign educated, with elegant European names. Meanwhile, the people doing the photocopying and cleaning the floors were all shorter, darker, and plainly more ‘Indian-blooded’ . . . lightness of skin correlates directly and glaringly with increasing wealth and social status.”⁶²

There are also small numbers of Chinese and Japanese in Mexico. These have prospered, and by the beginning of the twenty-first century “most Chinese have taken up residence in middle-class suburbs,”⁶³ while the Japanese, “often desperately poor when they first arrived in Mexico in the early twentieth century, by the late 1960s they were primarily middle to upper class.”⁶⁴ There is a racial gradient for intelligence in Mexico. A study carried out in 2003 reported that Europeans obtained an IQ of 98, almost exactly the same as that of Europeans in Europe and North America, mestizos obtained an IQ of 94, and Native American Indians obtained an IQ of 83, typical of Native American Indians found in other studies throughout the Americas.⁶⁵

In Nicaragua the racial hierarchy has been described by an American anthropologist:

there are a few ruling class whites of primarily European ancestry. Spanish language and Spanish culture have long been enconced in the commanding heights of society. Things Spanish or white are super-ordinate; things Indian or black are subordinate; color participates in each generation’s construction of social and economic hierarchy . . . the mestizos make a range of assertions about blackness vis-à-vis whiteness; black is primitive, irrational, dirty, and less attractive than white.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Wade, *Race and Ethnicity in Latin America*.

⁶² Chua, *World on Fire*.

⁶³ Kent, “A Diaspora of Chinese Settlement.”

⁶⁴ D. M. Masterson and S. Funada-Classen, *The Japanese in Latin America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

⁶⁵ R. Lynn, E. Backhoff, and L. A. Contreras, “Ethnic and Racial Differences on the Standard Progressive Matrices in Mexico,” *Journal of Biosocial Science* 37 (2005): 107–13.

⁶⁶ R. N. Lancaster, “Skin Color, Race, and Racism in Nicaragua,” *Ethnology* 30 (1991): 339–53.

In Peru there is the typical Latin American racial socio-economic hierarchy: "the social pyramid is that Spanish-speaking European descendants are at the top, followed in turn by *mestizos* (who mostly speak only Spanish) and the *cholos* (bilingual Spanish and native language speaking indigenous people; the indigenous languages of Peru are Quechua and Amyara), while the monolingual indigenous speakers are at the bottom."⁶⁷

There are small numbers of ethnic Chinese and Japanese, mostly descended from laborers who migrated to Peru between 1850 and 1880 to work in the guano mines, the sugarcane industry, cotton plantations, and railroad construction. The owners of these enterprises brought in Chinese and Japanese laborers after the abolition of slavery in 1854 because the blacks and Native American Indians proved to be unreliable workers: the plantation owners "were unsuccessful in employing Indian or free African labor on their plantations," and the Chinese "were better than slaves and without the problems."⁶⁸ In the twentieth century, many of the ethnic Chinese and Japanese have risen in the socio-economic hierarchy and entered the middle and professional class. An ethnic Japanese, Alberto Fujimori, was prime minister from 1990 to 2000.

Finally, we come to Brazil which is widely believed to be an exception to the pigmentocracies that are so common elsewhere. This belief is attributable to a Brazilian sociologist, Gilberto Freyre, who published a book in 1945 and in which he wrote that "race relations in Brazil are probably the nearest approach to paradise to be found anywhere in the world."⁶⁹ A number of social scientists believed him, and it came to be widely asserted that Brazil has "a non-racist national culture in which 'racial democracy' flourished."⁷⁰

So impressed were officials at UNESCO by Freyre's claim that Brazil was a racially egalitarian society that in the 1950s they sponsored a number of studies of Brazil in the belief that these would reveal the secret of a racially tolerant, unprejudiced, and egalitarian multiracial nation that would serve as a model for the United States in which

⁶⁷ D. Macissaac, "Peru," in Psacharopoulos and Patrinos, eds., *Indigenous People and Poverty in Latin America*.

⁶⁸ Masterson and Funada-Classen, *The Japanese in Latin America*.

⁶⁹ G. Freyre, *Brazil: An Interpretation* (New York: Knopf, 1945).

⁷⁰ H. Winant, "Rethinking Race in Brazil," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 24 (1990): 173-92.

whites were prejudiced against blacks and other non-white racial minorities and discriminated against them. The results of these researches were disappointing. Indeed, they “documented as never before the prevalence of racial discrimination”⁷¹ and found that “Afro-Brazilians remained overwhelmingly concentrated in the lowest economic strata and that negative attitudes to dark skin were widespread.”⁷² These researches found that the racial socio-economic status hierarchy related to skin color is the same in Brazil as everywhere else throughout Latin America, e.g., “light skin carries higher status”;⁷³ “the higher a job rank is, the lighter the skin is likely to be”;⁷⁴ “the Brazilian social structure is largely divided along racial lines.”⁷⁵

Contrary to the hopes of these researchers, the studies have shown that far from being a racially egalitarian society, racial social inequalities in Brazil are much greater than in the United States and Europe. Europeans in Brazil typically have an affluent lifestyle while many blacks and mulattos live in abject poverty in urban slums on the edge of cities known as *favelas*. Thus in Rio de Janeiro:

clustered on the hill and mountain sides that overlook the fashionable beaches and elegant shopping and high rise centers, the *favelas* are slums in which only a small proportion of households have electricity, running water, or sewage facilities. Juramento, for example, like most other *favelas*, is a self-contained realm of the very poor, with 30,000 residences and a dozen or so entry points. There is no glass in the windows of the shacks, no electricity or water, other than what can be tapped from the city supplies. There are no official street names, and no mail service or telephones lines.⁷⁶

⁷¹ Winant, “Rethinking Race in Brazil.”

⁷² P. A. Lovell, “Development and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in Brazil: 1950–1991,” *Journal of Developing Areas* 33 (1999): 395–418.

⁷³ P. G. Foster, M. Hitchcock, and F. F. Lyimo, *Race and Ethnicity in East Africa* (London: Macmillan, 2000).

⁷⁴ L. Sansone, “The Internationalization of Black Culture,” in H. Vermeulen and J. Perlmann, eds., *Immigrants, Schooling, and Social Mobility* (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 2000).

⁷⁵ E. E. Telles, *Race in Another America: The Significance of Skin Color in Brazil* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

⁷⁶ H. L. Surratt and J. A. Inciardi, “Unravelling the Concept of Race in Brazil,” *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs* 30 (1998): 255–60.

So great has been the disenchantment of blacks, mulattos, and mestizos with their disadvantaged position in Brazil that on May 13, 1988, when celebrations were held to commemorate the one hundredth anniversary of the abolition of slavery, many of the blacks, mulattos, and mestizos considered that there was little to celebrate because they had not achieved economic and social equality with whites. On the day of the celebrations, many mounted *descomemoração* ("discommemorations") with such themes as "One Hundred Years of Lies," "One Hundred Years without Abolition," "March in Protest of the Farce of Abolition," and "Discommemoration of the Centenary of Abolition."

EXPLAINING PIGMENTOCRACIES

Sociologists generally attempt to explain pigmentocracies as resulting from discrimination by Europeans against other races. The light-skinned European and North East Asian peoples have gained political and economic power by historical accident and maintain their dominant position by discrimination against other races to keep them subordinate. For instance, an American anthropologist writes that "there is strong evidence to indicate that the plight of many racial and ethnic groups is the result of structured inequality and racial oppression."⁷⁷ The British social anthropologist Peter Wade asserts that the low socio-economic status of Africans found in many societies is "explained by saying that slavery put them there and class mechanisms maintained their place."⁷⁸ This theory may have some plausibility for the United States but is far less persuasive for the Caribbean where the Europeans and the Chinese are generally a mere one or two percent of the population. It is the blacks who are the majority and have political power, yet the Europeans and the Chinese hold most of the wealth and have the economic power. It is the same throughout most of Latin America, and even in Brazil the Europeans are only about half the population while the Japanese are about 1 percent.

The most straightforward explanation for the pigmentocratic racial hierarchy is that it is sustained by differences in intelligence. Numerous studies have shown that light skin color is related to intelligence.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ T. Li, *Malays in Singapore: Culture, Economy, and Ideology* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1992).

⁷⁸ Wade, *Race and Ethnicity in Latin America*.

⁷⁹ R. Lynn, *Race Differences in Intelligence: An Evolutionary Analysis* (Augusta, Ga.: Washington Summit Publishers, 2006).

But there is probably also another factor that psychologists call “delay of gratification” and economists call “time preference.” These are differences in the preference for present as compared with future gratification. Several studies have shown that Europeans and North East Asians prefer to sacrifice present satisfactions for those in the future, while Africans prefer to have their satisfactions here and now. For instance, in a classical study in Trinidad black and white children were offered the choice between having a small candy bar now or a larger one in a week’s time. It was found that black children were much more likely to ask for the small candy now.⁸⁰ The same difference has been found in Jamaica.⁸¹ The anthropologist Peter Wade has noted this, writing of “the stereotypes of blacks all over Latin America commonly included ideas about the supposed laziness, happy-go-lucky attitudes, disorganized family life, taste for music and dance, and so on . . .”⁸² The anthropologist calls these stereotypes, but stereotypes often have an element of truth.

The likely explanation for light-skinned Europeans and North East Asians having higher intelligence, a strong capacity for delayed gratification, and a low time preference is that these races evolved during the last ice age that lasted from around 28,000 years ago to around 11,000 years ago. Light skin color proved adaptive because it facilitates the production of vitamin D in cold climates. Higher intelligence proved adaptive to solve the problems of obtaining food and keeping warm during the intense cold. A capacity for delayed gratification proved adaptive for the storage of food for consumption in many months’ time rather than consuming it straight away. These were not necessary in sub-Saharan Africa where the climate was warm, and food was available throughout the year.

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⁸⁰ W. Mischel, “Delay of Gratification, Need for Achievement, and Acquiescence in another Culture,” *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 62 (1961): 543–52; 63 (1962): 116–24.

⁸¹ P. E. Vernon, *Intelligence and Cultural Environment* (London: Methuen, 1969).

⁸² Wade, *Race and Ethnicity in Latin America*.