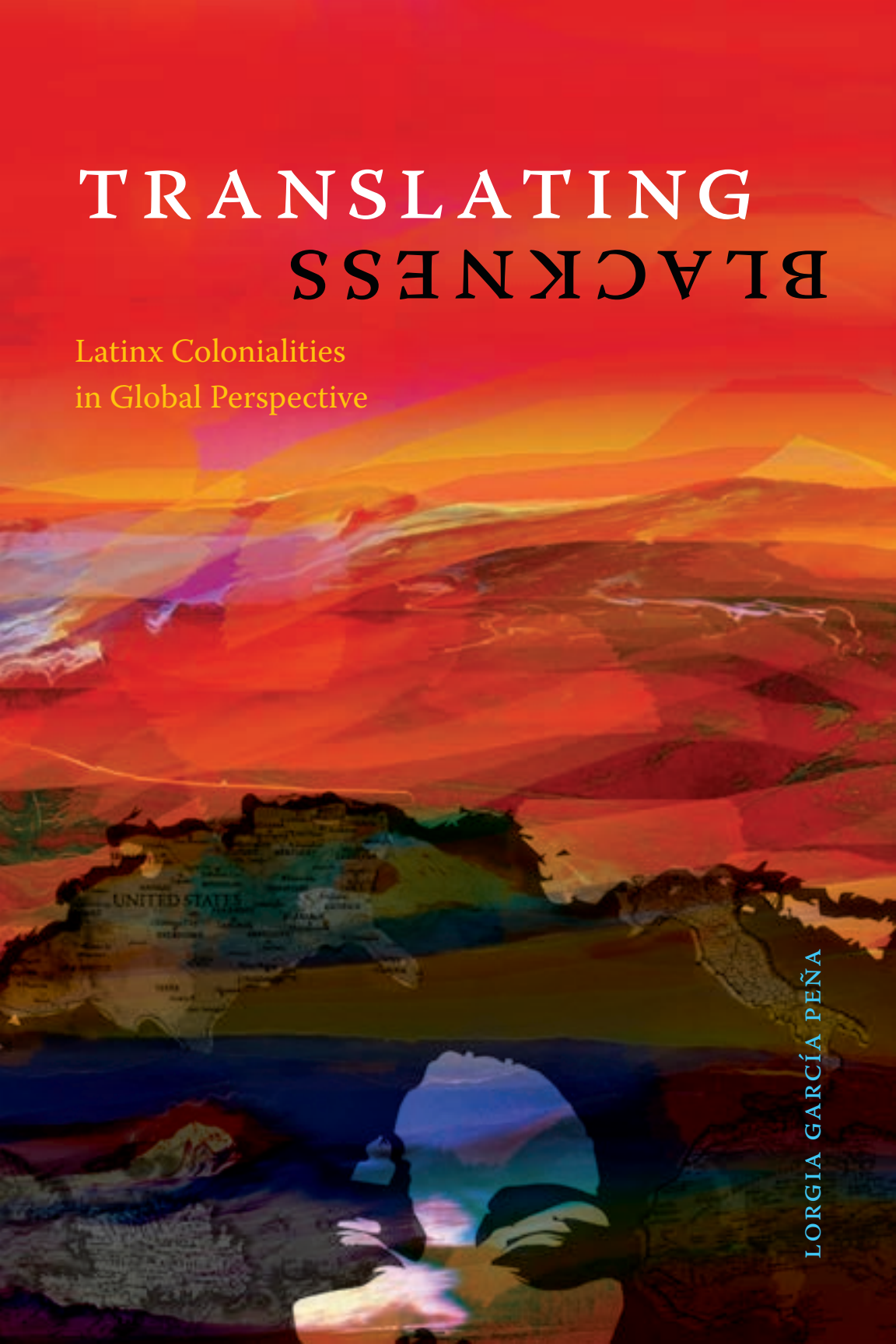
TRANSLATING BLACKNESS

Latinx Colonialities in Global Perspective



LORGIA GARCÍA PEÑA

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For Black Women
Black Migrants
Black Queers
Black Colonized
Black Minoritized
Black Otherized
here, there, and in vaivén

CONTENTS

NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

One of the impulses that led me to write this book is precisely the imperfections of translating racial meaning and racial politics across languages, cultures, and geographies. The terms I use throughout the book are insufficient for describing the ethnic, cultural, and racial experiences of people across geographies and times. The following list highlights some of the most common identity terms used throughout the book, with a brief explanation of how I use them.

AMERICAN: The term *American* refers to the entire hemisphere and its people (North America, Central America, the Caribbean, and South America). I otherwise use specific terms like *US Americans*, *US Black*, or *Latin American* to refer to specific areas or national groups.

BLACK: A global category for naming peoples and cultures of African ancestry, recognizing that different nations and cultural groups use a diversity of terms to name race.

BROWN: Mixed-race blackness and mulataje, used particularly when engaging with nineteenth-century Caribbean people.

HABESHA: People from regions in Ethiopia and Eritrea. In the diaspora, it became a term of inclusion and intra-ethnic solidarity for some people. Over the past thirty years, it has become a politicized ethnic term to destabilize the national bordering project that has separated people from the East African region. I use it following the activists and artists I interviewed who define themselves as Habesha.

LATINX: A gender-inclusive/neutral term that names people who identify a link to Latinidad either through Latin American ancestry or to cultural belonging to communities in the diaspora.

MULATO/A: A category of privilege within the racial hierarchies of the nineteenth-century Hispanic Caribbean. The term refers to a mixed-race Afro-descendant person of light, medium, or dark-brown skin. I use this term only when speaking about nineteenth-century subjects who self-identified as such. Otherwise I use Brown. I use the gender binary *(mulato, mulata)* given this is not a contemporary term and the people I engage in the book identified themselves in binary language.

QUEER: A term used to encompass a diversity of people who do not identify with the heteronormative hegemony, who identify as LGBTQI, or who do not conform to the gender binary.

SECOND GENERATIONS: A politicized yet contested term, used in Italy to name children of immigrants born in the diaspora and those who migrate at an early age. The term highlights the political dimension of citizenship exclusion experienced by people who are cultural citizens of the nation but not always recognized—legally and otherwise—by the state.

WOMEN: People who identify as such regardless of how the state or institutions defined their biological sex at birth.

WOMEN OF COLOR: I use this term here in two ways: first, to highlight the contributions of late twentieth-century Black, Brown, Indigenous, mixed-race, and Asian feminists in the United States who articulated a project of transnational solidarity with the oppressed and colonized across the globe; and second, to take seriously the ways in which minoritized nonwhite women living in the Global North name themselves and build solidarity across ethnic and racial groups.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It takes a village to write a book. My village is multilingual, transnational, and multigenerational. It is inhabited by ancestors, warrior women, scholars, family, and friends. I will not be able to name each member of my village, though you know who you are; and you know my heart. Thank you to each of you for being on my corner and helping me, in your own distinctive way, to complete this book.

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along the way. Thank you, George and Yolanda, for your rigor and generosity. April Mayes, Christina Davidson, and Raj Chetty read chapter 1 and provided feedback that was critical as I theorized Black Latinidad through the stories and words of Gregoria Fraser Goins. My conversations with Margarita Cordero, Yolanda Garden, Tirso Medrano, and Fafa Taveras helped me understand Black Dominicanas' role in the 1965 revolution and beyond. Laura Briggs and Durba Mitra were incredibly generous readers; their feedback helped me think deeper about the ways in which gender violence, migration, and blackness intersect. Feedback from Arlene Dávila, Paula Moya, Michaeline Crichlow, Tommy DeFrantz, Josie Saldaña, Nicole Guidotti Hernández, and Frances Negrón-Muntaner at various stages of the writing process challenged me in the best possible ways. Several chapter workshops and presentations in the Departments of African American Studies at Princeton; Social Cultural Analysis at New York University; Latino Studies at Northwestern; Black Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara; Race, Colonialism, and Diaspora at Tufts; and African and African American Studies at Duke yielded valuable feedback and incredibly productive conversations with colleagues and students. The Ford Foundation awarded me a postdoctoral fellowship in 2015 that allowed me the time to conduct archival research and oral interviews in Italy. In 2018 the Massachusetts Institute of Technology awarded me the MLK fellowship, which gave me the time to write, and which provided me with a treasured intellectual community; thank you to Joaquin Terrones and the Program in Women and Gender Studies at MIT for this opportunity. The Weatherhead Center for International Studies and the Dean's Competitive Fellowship at Harvard provided financial support for travel to different archives in Europe, the Caribbean, Washington, DC, and New York City.

I finished writing this book amid a pandemic while archives shut down and libraries went remote. At times, checking citations and accessing documents seemed an impossibility. The staff at the Dominican Studies Institute, especially Sarah Aponte, Jhensen Ortiz, and Anthony Stevens, were always incredibly generous as were the staff at the Dominican National Archive, particularly Aquiles Castro; I want to thank also the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center (MSRC) at Howard University, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture at the New York Public Library, and the Special Collections Research Center at Syracuse University for facilitating my research over this past decade. I am grateful also to colleagues who shared books and scanned documents and manuscripts I could no longer access due to pandemic restrictions and closures, particularly April Mayes, Christina Davidson, Alex Gil, Nelson Santana, Ginetta Candelario, Quisqueya Lora,

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The completion of this book came during a particularly challenging time in my life as I struggled to survive the institutional violence that led to my being denied tenure at Harvard, during a pandemic and amid a global climate of antiblackness, xenophobia, and anti-immigrant violence in our nation and the world. It would have been too easy to give up writing this book, and I would have, had it not been for the encouragement, kindness, love, and support of so many people in my life: my parents, Maritza Peña and Julio García, who have written the manual on unconditional love; my son, Sebastián, who, at his young age, has the most ethical sense of justice I have ever seen in a human being; my brother, Albin, whose quiet but constant presence has always made me feel safe in this world; my incredible tribe of *guerreras* and accomplices, Chandra Mohanty, Angela Y. Davis, Keish Kim, Josefina Báez, P. Gabrielle Foreman, and Catherina González Seligman, who always had my back. Thank you to my wonderful students who made a home for me beyond institutions and whose tireless support inspires me every day. Gracias also to my dearest friends Eric Gómez, Lauren Kaminsky, Irene Mata, Sharina Maillo-Pozo, Pam Voekel, Adnaloy Espinosa, Afia Ofori Mensa, Mé Lo, Claudio Mir, Nuna Marcano, and Kirsten Weld, who fed me, nurtured me, went on masked socially distanced walks with me, and made me laugh out loud with silly memes and Zoom happy hours as I edited notes and complained about absolutely everything. Above all, thank you to my ancestors on whose backbridges I still walk in radical hope toward a future free from white supremacy, racial capitalism, and colonial violence. *Grazie mille de todo corazón.*

INTRODUCTION

Race, Colonialism, and Migration in the Global Latinx Diaspora

My name is Jovanna. I was born in Milan. I speak only Italian and a few words in bad Spanish. I went to school here. . . . Yes, I am Black; yes, I am Latina, but those are races, not countries. Everyone deserves a country. . . . I know a piece of paper will not guarantee my happiness. But people in Italy need to recognize and be aware that my lack of this "piece of paper" limits even the most mundane of activities. That it erases me from this country in which I was born. —JOVANNA RODRÍGUEZ, 23, ethnic Peruvian, born in Italy, from a speech delivered in Milan in 2015

My name is María. This is my country—the only one I have ever known. Here I learned to walk, to talk, and to write my name, María. My parents came here to give me a better life. I have broken no laws. Yet I am treated worse than an animal, like a goat, like a cow brought up to exist without identity. I have no papers. Yet here I am, belonging to no other nation than this one. Why do they do this to us? My only crime is that I was born to poor Black immigrants who followed the route to work and survival. —MARÍA PIERRE, 19, ethnic Haitian, born in the Dominican Republic, from a speech at a rally in Santo Domingo in 2013

My name is Elizabeth. I am undocumented. I was brought to this country when I was five years old. . . . My parents made a choice to move here in an effort to provide a better life for their children. . . . I was enrolled in American elementary school. I take all AP classes. I play violin for the youth symphony. I get good test scores, and I participate in my community. Yet my opportunities get slimmer and slimmer due to recent legislation. . . . This reminds me of Jim Crow, when cus-

tomers were turned away with cash in hand . . . all because they were a different race. . . . How could someone who doesn't know me judge and reject me? . . . I broke no laws. I am not a criminal. Please don't let them treat me this way. —ELIZABETH GARIBAY, 19, ethnic Mexican, born in Mexico, from a speech delivered in Atlanta in 2011

This book is born from my own experience as a Black Latina immigrant scholar living in constant *vaivén* (coming and going) between belonging and unbelonging. It emerges out of the necessity for what philosopher Jonathan Lear calls radical hope: the commitment to dream of the possibility that "from this disaster, something good will emerge. . . . The hope is held in the face of the recognition that, given the abyss, one cannot really know what survival means."[1] In the face of oppression and obliteration, hope and action for another way of being—for a future free from colonial exploitation—is indeed a radical act of possibility. In that sense, this book is a radical act of hope that contra*dicts* impossibility and interrupts the colonial structures that have led us to live "in the wake" of slavery that erases the possibility of Black humanity in the streets and the archives.[2]

Translating Blackness proposes Black Latinidad as an epistemology—a way of understanding and producing knowledge from the site of unbelonging in what Christina Sharpe calls the "unfinished project of emancipation."[3] "Unfinished" implies an opening: that which is not finished is still in the making. Black Latinidad is thus not an embodied identity or a social construct but a point of entry and a set of methods that move us beyond homogeneous concepts of racial and citizenship exclusion. My analysis of Black Latinidad denaturalizes the nation as a site of belonging and invites us instead to learn from a productive detour away from and in contra*diction* to the colonial order that sustains national notions of citizenship and belonging. While these are lessons that can be deduced by reading archives in contra*diction*, against dominant versions of history and accepted hegemonic "truths," this book asks new critical questions to theorize blackness in translation. To think through Black Latinidad—to see the world through the epistemological contributions of Black Latinx humanity—is a project of Black possibility, Black living, and Black being.

Three testimonies open this book, delineating the geographies, axes, and *vaivenes* that structure my conceptualization of Black Latinidad as a site for critical engagement and a political articulation of the intersections of race, colonialism, and immigration in the twenty-first century. The three places embodied by each of these minoritized undocumented women—the United

States, Hispaniola, and Italy—fatefully and symbolically map my conceptual understanding and genealogical framework of Black Latinidad in constant vaivén as it intersects immigration with national belonging and unbelonging. More importantly, these testimonies exemplify the continuum of colonialism and the ruptures of colonial oppression as they appear and reappear in newer sites of racialization and unbelonging for Latinx migrants, such as Italy.

My previous book, *The Borders of Dominicanidad: Race, Nation, and Archives of Contradiction*, closed with the words of Elizabeth Garibay and María Pierre. I open this book with their voices—adding Jovanna Rodríguez's to the chorus—as a reminder of how struggle and oppression operate on a continuum. The similarities among these three experiences of unbelonging are undeniable: Garibay, who was born in Mexico and brought to the United States as a child, was excluded from civic life due to her undocumented status. Pierre, in the Dominican Republic, and Rodríguez, in Italy, were both disavowed from the countries in which they were born due to their parents' immigration status. All three women experience both racial and juridical exclusion—colonial consequences of racial oppression. They speak back to the nation in the language of racial justice *and* immigrant rights.

In the field of Latinx studies in the United States, Latinidad has been imagined as a concept that engages the experiences, histories, and cultural productions of US Latinx people. The geographical and historical borders of Latina/o/x studies have meant that most of our intellectual corpus is centered on the post–civil rights movement era and dominated by conversations about immigration and experiences of the US-Mexico border. In my previous work, I proposed a disruption of the hegemonic conceptualization of Latinidad by centering Hispaniola's encounter with the US empire in the nineteeth and twentieth centuries as another possible site of analysis.[4] My disruption in no way proposes a merging of Latinoamericanism with Latinx studies; these are two distinct concepts and fields. Rather, I suggest an engagement with the former via the Hispanic Caribbean and Haiti as a point of encounter and a reexamination of the geographical boundaries of Latinx to include new diasporas and the experiences of what Jorge Duany calls the culture of vaivén through which diasporic subjects travel back and forth between home and diaspora, participating in the life, culture, and politics of the nation they associate with their ethnic identity as well as the one in which they reside.[5] If Latinidad as an ideology first emerged in contradistinction with the US empire as a site of transnational contestation, as I argue in chapter 1, then that history is very much a part of what we understand to be Latinidad today. The

vaivenes of the term are also crucial to understanding its genealogy. Further, the detours of Latinidad through Latin Americanness via the Caribbean are key to recovering and recentering Latinx blackness.

Translating Blackness intervenes in Latinx studies by geographically and conceptually expanding Latinidad to include the study of Latinx peoples, cultural products, and political processes in diaspora beyond the United States. In *The Borders of Dominicanidad*, I proposed decentering the US-Mexico border as the focal point of US Latinidad, instead thinking conceptually and geographically through US imperialism as constituent of the racial and ethnic production of Latinx as a category beyond the United States. In this book, I further expand Latinidad by examining its multiple vaivenes through blackness as a global racialized category. In so doing, *Translating Blackness* traces how theories and bodies intersect in various geographical and colonial/colonized spaces—Latin America, the United States, and Europe—to map a new cartography for understanding the convergences of colonialism, immigration, and blackness that shape Black Latinx lives in diaspora. The transnational and transatlantic triangulation of Black Latinidad this book proposes explains the implications of blackness as what Frantz Fanon called a "lived experience" while tracing how the construction of racial difference and blackness are the projects of nations as well as of the communities that define, translate, and remake the meanings and entanglements of blackness.[6] People confronting racism ultimately find ways of belonging, engaging terms and ideologies in their particular realities in ways that contra*dict* the persistent violence of colonialism that perpetuates xenophobia and antiblackness across the globe.

Setting off from Frederick Douglass's interpellation of Black Latinidad as *different from* (read: inferior, less civilized) US blackness in chapter 1, *Translating Blackness* historicizes multiple vaivenes, (mis)translations, and detours of Latinx colonialities through what I call hegemonic blackness—blackness defined through US culture, politics, histories, and the Anglophone experience (which sometimes includes the Anglophone Caribbean and South Africa via iconic representations of popular and political figures such as Bob Marley and Nelson Mandela). Attending to the various ways US blackness has itself migrated through imperial impositions, cultural expansion, academic discourse, and political diction, I argue that from the middle of the nineteenth century to the present, hegemonic blackness has shaped how global Black experiences, particularly those of Global South migrants and their descendants, are understood, analyzed, engaged, and translated

around the world. This book thus historicizes Black Latinidad in the context of global blackness and in relation to hegemonic blackness. Thinking about the Caribbean, Édouard Glissant proposed the idea of "relationality" to help us consider the ways people—particularly Afro-diasporic people—are connected through their shared experiences, through what Glissant calls "shared knowledge."[7] Following Glissant, *Translating Blackness* brings attention to how Black Latinxs living in the Global North access the knowledge they share with other Black subjects in ways that indict their common colonial experiences of violence and exclusion and summon the historical legacy of resistance from which Black people across the globe have demanded inclusion and belonging throughout modern history. In so doing, I propose Black Latinidad as a category from which we can better understand the vaivenes of colonialism and migration that shape Black experiences in diaspora.

This book expands the geographies of Latinidad, and more specifically of Black Latinx colonialities, through my engagement across geographies: the Dominican Republic, the United States, and Italy. In turning to Italy, I analyze a region that does not immediately come to mind as critical to the geography of Black Latinidad. Yet the case study of Italy speaks to the global dimensions of blackness across overlapping histories of colonialism and racism. While the United States is the largest and most significant location of Latinidad outside of Latin America, Latinx migration has, since the mid-twentieth century, increasingly diversified because of the labor demands of global capital, shaping not only the experiences of migrants and their national cultures but also how people who identify as Latino/a/x imagine themselves in an ever-diversifying diaspora. What I find most interesting about these new Latinx migrations across the United States and Europe is how Second Generations (children who migrate at an early age and those born abroad to immigrant parents) living all over the world create new transnational imaginaries through claims to a global blackness that defies national borders. I analyze how these global Black diasporas, from the Dominican Republic to Italy, look to the cultural and political production of established Black diasporic enclaves in the United States to shape their political and cultural language vis-à-vis the dominant hegemonic and often white supremacist cultures of their new nations: that is, how and why a Second Generation woman of Peruvian descent from Italy like Jovanna Rodríguez, whose words open this book, looks to New Jersey rather than Lima to find a political language with which to talk back to Italy, translating Latinidad through US experiences and political frameworks of blackness.

In his 1923 essay "The Task of the Translator," Walter Benjamin asserts that translation participates in the "afterlife" (Überleben) of the foreign text, enacting an interpretation informed by history.[8] This interpretation does more than transmit messages; it re-creates the significance of the multiplicity of experiences amassed by the word/text over time that attempts to "make visible" the meanings that have been invisibilized by hegemonic language. For Lawrence Venuti, translation is never perfect, but it is always an antihegemonic project of bringing forth that which is not at the center.[9] I argue, following Benjamin's and Venuti's interventions, that to translate thus presents us with the possibility of *seeing* the Other. This act of seeing is also an act of recognition that can contra*dict* hegemonic knowledge. Interpolating these understandings of textual translation with the political interjections of people and institutions speaking to the nation and beyond, I argue that translating coloniality into hegemonic blackness can be a strategy for making visible the experiences of Global South Black people by asserting their belonging in a global network of anti-colonial contestation. But counterhegemonic translation is never a gentle process of historical summoning. Rather, as Gloria Anzaldúa asserts, it is always a violent process of erasure—an act of terrorism because foreign words cannot encompass the specificity of the experience being translated.[10] Brent Edwards taught us that the process of translation for Afro diasporic people is always messy, sometimes even a failure in which not even the very basic "grammar of blackness" can be translated.[11] Translations are thus always lacking, always amiss. For Black Latinx immigrants living in the Global North, translated half truths often separate them from Black nationals, further marking their unbelonging to the nation. The impossibility of full recognition leaves them, as in the case of Black Latinxs in the United States, outside of even minoritarian discourses of contestation (Latinidad and hegemonic blackness), their blackness called into question because of their linguistic and cultural differences.

Blackness is a local and global construction that, though historically and geographically specific, develops as a process of vaivén across geographies, histories, markets, and polities through formal and informal channels. The construction of blackness is always situational. However, hegemonic globalized versions of ethno-racial concepts dominate popular perceptions, intellectual discourse, social and popular media, and, at times, even legislation, shaping people's actions and encounters with race and coloniality. Confronting these hegemonic racial meanings thus also requires an intentional translation that

engenders a larger network of recognition and inclusion. For undocumented Latinxs in Georgia like Elizabeth Garibay and Black Latinx Europeans like Jovanna Rodríguez, the language of Black resistance—often framed through US hegemonic discourse—provides a platform from which to speak back to the nation while garnering a larger network of transnational political solidarity.

Translating Blackness proposes translation as a metaphor for understanding how dominant ethno-racial labels are used by multiple communities to make visible the historical processes that (re)produce their minoritized subjectivity: colonialism, global capitalism, and migration. At times, as in the case of Black Latinxs in the United States, the translation of blackness has been part of national projects of self-definition vis-à-vis colonial impositions by the United States and Europe. At other times, as in the case of migrants and new Black diasporic sociopolitical movements in Europe and Latin America, translations of blackness summon common historical experiences to garner inclusion and political representation. In both cases, the translation goes beyond a literal understanding of the ethno-racial hegemonic label "Black" to the circulation of knowledge about the historical processes informing the lives of human beings living the social costs of racism and exploitation that result from the colonial regimes that engender blackness as exclusion.

In *Translation and Subjectivity*, Naoki Sakai exposes the challenge of translating belonging because the subject in translation, as Sakai explains, is in tension, struggling with the ownership of words and meaning.

> The translator must be responsible for her translation, for every word of it, but she cannot be held responsible for what is pledged in what she says. For she is not allowed to say what she means in what she says in translation—she is supposed to say what she says without meaning. At the same time that the translator must be absolutely responsible for what she says, her task begins with her pledge to say what the original addresser means to say. *Her responsibility consists in her commitment to withdraw her wish to express herself* from what she says even though she has to seek and interpret what the addresser means in the first place. Therefore, the translator is also the interpreter.[12]

Bearing in mind the "task of the translator"—their responsibility as an interpreter of lived experiences—*Translating Blackness* proposes translation as an expression of belonging that seeks to conjure unbelonging: to make visible the colonial/colonizing process that engenders human exclusion. It challenges the monolithic representations of Black people and Black histories that

dominate hegemonic narratives, archives, and the public sphere through an engagement with the internal and transnational colonial regimes that operate within and across states, communities, and institutions that force people to "withdraw their wish to express" their sense of belonging. Yomaira Figueroa-Vásquez argues that to label people as Black without nuance is an act of violence; it is to "reduce the complexity of Black life."[13] Simply naming all Black experiences through hegemonic blackness can lead to a "withdrawal of the self"—to the erasure, mistranslation, and silencing of the specific experiences of nonhegemonic Black people. *Translating Blackness* moves away from the simplistic grouping of Black experiences to complexify the narrating, sharing, and historicizing of the multiplicity of global and relational Black experiences. At times, as we will see throughout the book, translating blackness leads to transnational, intra-ethnic political solidarity; at others, it erases nonhegemonic Black experiences. For Black Latinxs in the Global North, particularly in the United States, translating blackness can simultaneously confront the internal borders that produce them as foreign (and therefore Other within the nation) and the pervasive dominance of Hispanicity and *mestizaje* that erases them from the dominant understanding of Latinidad and Latinx diasporas. Translating blackness is thus always in tension with hegemony, exposing the experiences of nonhegemonic Black subjects living between belonging and unbelonging.

Black *en inglés*: The Latinx Colonial Difference

The significance of US Black politics and the legacy of US Black struggles for freedom have undoubtedly made visible a multiplicity of colonial exclusions and discriminatory regimes as well as the resistance to these forms of exclusion that US Black people have exercised for centuries. Angela Davis writes, "Black struggles in the United States serve as an emblem of the struggle for freedom"; she goes on to note that the Black radical tradition is relevant not only to Black people in the United States but also to "all people who are struggling for freedom," including Latinxs, LGBTQI people, immigrants, Palestinians, Indigenous, and incarcerated people.[14] Engaging US blackness as Davis describes is an example of "translating blackness": embodying, engaging with, interpolating, and dialoguing with hegemonic Black struggles for equality and freedom. By translating their experiences through hegemonic blackness, historical actors, organizations, and communities across the globe make their experiences of unbelonging visible to a larger, more powerful constituency, gaining solidarity in their assertions of belonging and their strug-

FIGURE I.1 Swedish activist Tess Asplund interrupts a neo-Nazi march in Borlänge, Sweden, May 1, 2016. AP images.

gles for freedom. I argue that translating blackness makes coloniality visible, transforming the epistemological, historical, and cultural experiences of a small collective into a recognizable global marker to gain access and mobility and produce social change. Translating blackness conjures the universal violence against Black bodies and calls upon the poetics of blackness as a series of cultural and linguistic codes that go beyond the particular experience of exclusion from the nation-state. Translating blackness contra*dicts* and transcends the nation, claiming Black humanity as a global category of belonging.

On May 1, 2016, Tess Asplund, an Afro-Latina Swedish activist, translated her blackness to the world when she stepped out in defiance of white supremacy, her clenched fist raised in front of three hundred marching neo-Nazis from the Nordic Resistance Movement in Borlänge, Sweden (see figure I.1).[15] Asplund was born in Cali, Colombia, in 1972 and adopted by a Swedish family at seven months old.[16] While Sweden prides itself on progressive ideals of inclusivity and social justice, race and multiethnicity are not part of that inclusive agenda. In fact, like most of Europe, Sweden imagines itself as nonracial and insists on assimilation to Swedish values and identities as the only road to national inclusion.[17] Thus, Asplund grew up Swedish, distanced from Colombian linguistic and cultural heritage, while simultaneously suffering racism and exclusion due to her racial and ethnic identity as a Black

Colombian. Legal adoption and Swedish citizenship did not exempt Asplund from anti-immigrant racist violence. Asplund identifies as Black, Latina, immigrant, and ethnic Colombian.[18] As she explained to me, her Black Latina identity comes not only from her ethnic background but from the experiences of unbelonging that shaped and gave meaning to her everyday life in Sweden—from being singled out at school to being asked for a passport on a train to being at the receiving end of racial slurs and anti-immigrant violence.

The photo of this petite Black woman standing in defiance of white supremacy resonated with Black activists around the world. Asplund's heroic actions earned her the respect and admiration of many, including recognition by the BBC as one of the most influential women of 2016.[19] Reflecting on her actions and on the overwhelming global reception of the photograph, Asplund stated that her bravery was fueled by the urgency of this moment in which "racism has become normalized."[20] It was thus her hope that people would think about her action as a symbol of what one person can do if they get out of their comfort zone and fight for what is right. "I have been fighting against these people for twenty-seven years," she said. "If you stay at home, they have won."[21]

In their article "From Afro-Sweden with Defiance: The Clenched Fist as Coalitional Gesture?," Nana Osei-Kofi, Adela Licona, and Karma Chávez analyze the symbolic significance of Asplund's performance of anti-racist defiance, referring to her clenched fist as a "coalitional gesture" that defies global racism: "In the case of Asplund, we contend that the image of her clenched fist acquires its power by doing *historical, political, and relational memory* work as it gets linked to earlier anti-racist struggles, while at the same time making visible a *contextually specific* expression of the movement against racism in Sweden."[22] Asplund's clenched fist—her Black Latina body's interruption of state-sanctioned white supremacist violence—summons the memory of twentieth-century Black resistance we associate with the US Black Power movement that, as Davis argues, shapes how we understand anti-colonial resistance and freedom struggles across the globe.[23] Asplund herself says she was inspired by Malcolm X, Nelson Mandela, and Angela Davis—further evidence of her translation of blackness through the global narrative of anti-racist, anti-colonial struggles for freedom and justice.[24] As Osei-Kofi, Licona, and Chávez argue, Asplund's raised fist sparked "relational memory work," allowing a transnational audience to engage with Asplund through their own affective, political, historical, and cultural understandings of her raised fist.[25] Visual artists from all over the world interpreted Asplund's gesture (see figure I.2), while memes and videos inundated social media. Political actions by women of color of multiple ethnicities and identifications

FIGURE 1.2 Luiso García, *Viva la gente de color*, 2016.

that mimicked Asplund's protest spread across Europe and Latin America in defiance of the growth of the extreme Right that seems to be spreading like a virus across the globe.[26] In the process, these interpretations consecrated Asplund as a global icon of anti-racist resistance.

Asplund's embodiment of Black political performance against white supremacy points to two significant processes that are foundational to my theorization of translating blackness: the cultural translation of specific local contexts to the world through the interpolation of recognizable symbols and/or the language of hegemonic blackness, and the contextually specific engagement of racialized immigrants' experiences through the language of Black liberation and resistance. Asplund's blackness is translated to a global audience through a recognizable symbol of Black Power: the fist. In turn, this translation establishes her belonging and solidarity beyond the nation. Her identity as a Black Latina Swede, however, shifts and refocuses her historical interpellation of the fist, summoning a specific colonial-diasporic experience—the confrontation with white supremacy in Sweden's anti-immigration climate following the 2015 "refugee crisis." Black Latinidad contra*dict*s her oppression and reminds us of the parallels and intersections between race and migration in the present day.

Translating blackness can be an effective political strategy for shattering the hegemony of white supremacy and nation-states through cultural, political, and social media translations historically grounded in racial struggles for liberation and citizenship, as seen in Asplund's case. But it can also reproduce other forms of erasure and unbelonging for Black communities across the globe: the image of Asplund does not immediately summon a confrontation with xenophobia and anti-immigrant violence as she intended. It produces Asplund as a Black woman protesting white supremacy rather than a Black Latina facing antiblackness due to the rise in anti-immigration, anti-refugee sentiment in contemporary Europe. That is, Asplund engages hegemonic blackness via an emblem of the Black radical tradition to be visible in the world. Hegemonic blackness, in turn, gains her access to a discourse of political dissidence, historical belonging, and global recognition. Her translation allows the world to *see* her and, in this seeing, formulate questions that may inform a dialogue about nonhegemonic blackness (e.g., What is happening in Sweden? What are the experiences of Black Swedes?). Or, as Asplund explained to me, "People saw this little Black woman and recognized what I did as something we must do. We have done. But the picture allowed me to connect with Colombia. To find my family, to talk about the way this [white supremacist violence] is affecting all of us [nonwhite people,] you know, like Muslims, and Asians, and Latinos."[27] Translating blackness is only the first step; to be seen as a Global South person in the world requires the audience to reach beyond the universalizing hegemonic symbol and ask questions about specifics. To translate blackness can lead to contest exclusion and demand Black belonging, protection, and rights within the nation.

Historical representations of US slavery and emancipation, Jim Crow, the Harlem Renaissance, and the global significance of the US civil rights, Black Power, and most recently Black Lives Matter movements, in addition to the cultural representations of US Black global icons of success, have made US blackness appear to be the *only* way to be Black *and* a citizen. Put another way, to have access to political power, historical presence, and representation as a Black human, one must necessarily engage blackness as it is understood, produced, and mediated through US discourse. The translation of multiple forms of oppression, colonialism, and exploitation to US blackness can successfully speak to a global public—even when one's nation is not listening. Asplund's raised fist gestures toward a global understanding of Black Power grounded on the historical experiences of US Blacks. It also inserts her—and by extension, her local struggle—into globalized conversations about Black belonging and antiblackness. As such, her story and her struggle, symboli-

cally encapsulated in the image of her raised fist, are situated within a historical continuum. Translating blackness requires the simultaneous reminder of difference and the demand for inclusion by virtue of the shared experience of colonial oppression and contestation.

Terry Cochran argues that translation is intrinsically linked to national bordering.[28] The need to translate presumes the existence of a hegemonic language—and in the case of Black Latinxs in the diaspora, of a normative way of being Black. In the early twentieth century, Black Puerto Rican bibliophile Arthur Schomburg and Nuyorican poet Piri Thomas struggled to find belonging within the Black literary and intellectual circles of New York. Their ethnic, linguistic, and cultural identities as Puerto Ricans marked them as different from US Blacks, making their integration into US Black political and cultural movements arduous, to say the least. A century later, Black Latinxs still must explain their *other* blackness to a larger US constituency. In February 2018, during an interview with Black American actress Zendaya, popular hip-hop icon Cardi B responded to an inquiry about her racial identification by saying, "I don't got to tell you I'm Black. We came over here the same f*cking way."[29] Since her rise to fame in 2017, the Caribbean American singer has been questioned about her blackness and light-skin privilege by an audience unaccustomed to heterogenous, multiethnic blackness. Antonio López argues that the social difference that blackness makes in the United States is central to Black Latinidad: "how an Anglo white supremacy determines the life chance of Afro-Latinos hailed as Black and how a Latino white supremacy reproduces the colonial and postcolonial Latin America privileging of *blanco* over *negro* and *mulato* [mixed-race] identities, now on behalf of white Latinas/os who may themselves face Anglo forms of racializing discrimination."[30] This logic of hemispheric white supremacy also determines whether one is "white enough or the right kind of white or less black or the right kind of black to receive or be denied rights and advantages based on how one speaks (or doesn't) in English, Spanish, or both."[31] The linguistic experience of diasporic Black Latinxs, Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel argues, is also intrinsic to what she calls the "coloniality of the diaspora" that divides Black people between national subjects (e.g., US Blacks) and minoritized citizens from post/neocolonial spaces (e.g., Black Puerto Ricans living in the United States).[32]

Following Martínez-San Miguel, I argue that the experiences of Black Latinxs also differ from those of other racialized nonwhite national subjects because for them the nation-state is both a colonial power and a bordering agent producing the legal structures of citizenship and belonging. Marked as foreign due to their legal status and/or cultural or linguistic difference, Black

Latinx diasporic subjects struggle to find a political and cultural place within the nations in which they reside as immigrants (or as descendants of immigrants) while simultaneously facing similar forms of racism and exclusion to those confronted by US Blacks: they can be shot by the police *and* arrested by the immigration authorities. For Black Latinxs, translating their racialized immigrant Latinx exclusion by aligning with US Black historical experiences can help them become legible to the nation, access resources, and build antiracist and anti-colonial solidarity.

The contradictions and (mis)translations of Black Latinidad through US coloniality in these examples produce Black Latinxs as both Black and other-than-Black: simultaneously foreign to the nation and constituents of it. This tension is intrinsically linked to the relationship between race and immigration shaping our current global economy—a relationship that stems from the same colonial legacy that produced Black people as inferior, superfluous, and expendable. At the same time, these translations of blackness engage historical legacies of slavery and migration and point to the processes that have consistently shaped Black diasporic solidarity and cultural, political, and social movements across the globe for nearly two centuries.

Colonial Migrations of Black Latinidad

Central to *Translating Blackness* are the colonial structures that link anti-immigrant racism and antiblackness in the twenty-first century, producing globalized categories of human beings "susceptible" to exclusion, in David Hernández's terminology: ethnic minorities, immigrants, and racialized nonwhite subjects.[33] Contra*dicting* the practices that often separate the work of racial justice from that of immigrant rights, this book also grapples with the multiple ways people who are deemed to "unbelong" create collective possibilities of being and belonging through cultural and political acts of alliance building that translate historical experiences of colonial exclusion (such as slavery and segregation) into present-day political contestations of immigrant/minoritized human belonging (such as #BlacksLivesMatter and #NoHumanBeingIsIllegal).

In 2011, after the University of Georgia banned undocumented students from accessing its public universities because they were thought to be "taking seats away from citizens," I joined a group of activists, including students, professors, and community members, to create an alternative school for undocumented students.[34] We called it Freedom University Georgia, following in the footsteps of the Black Freedom Schools that decades before

sustained liberationist education models in the US South. It opened its doors to thirty-two undocumented students in October 2011. Freedom University was a direct response to a racist policy that sought to exclude undocumented students from accessing higher education. It also became a national model for resistance when anti-immigrant sentiment was on the rise, evidenced by the passage of the historic Arizona SB 1070 in 2010, popularly known as the "Show Me Your Papers" law, which required police officers to inquire about people's immigration statuses; the US government's Secure Communities program, which targets Mexican and Latinx immigrants for deportation; and a national financial crisis that led, as they historically have, to a rise in deportation and widespread mistrust of immigrants, particularly those of Latinx descent.[35]

I learned many lessons as a Freedom University teacher, organizer, and co-creator. I learned to be an effective, engaged scholar. I learned to teach in ways that are transformative, create community, and promote social justice. I also learned the very tangible, intrinsic, and often subtle ways anti-immigrant racism is entangled with antiblackness—how, as Garibay explained in her interpellation of Jim Crow that opens this book, anti-immigrant racism emerges out of the same colonial capitalist structures that engendered slavery and continue to sustain the existence of Black and Brown immigrant subjects in the afterlife of slavery, suspended in unbelonging to the nation and the world.

I came to clearly understand twenty-first-century anti-immigrant violence as an iteration of colonialism one afternoon in September 2011 in Pinewoods, a trailer park in Athens, Georgia, where most of the residents are undocumented immigrants. A dozen of us were sitting outside the trailer of Athens's immigrant advocate Beto Cacao, organizing to support undocumented students when Linda Lloyd, a US Black woman from Georgia, walked up. She walked around Cacao's yard, nodding to each of us before standing in the very center of our improvised circle to address the group. "I have been here before," she said by way of introduction, "and we cannot, we will not let it happen again." Lloyd came of age in post–Jim Crow Georgia and, like many young activists of her generation, worked to end segregation and integrate a deeply fragmented community. Since the 1980s, she has fought for equality in Georgia. She eventually became the director of the Economic Justice Coalition, a grassroots organization that seeks to end economic inequality and disparity in Athens.[36]

For Lloyd, the passage of the ban against undocumented students was clearly another iteration of what many Black people from Georgia experienced under Jim Crow: a painful border that divided humans into two categories,

belonging and unbelonging. Like Lloyd, US Black leaders John Lewis and Angela Davis showed their support for undocumented Georgia students in the wake of the ban by publicly linking their exclusion to the history of racial segregation. As Davis put it, "The discourse of 'immigrants' draws from and feeds on the racisms of the past, the racisms that have affected people of African descent, of Native American people. So, it seems to me that the struggle for immigrant rights is the key struggle of our times. And it is a struggle for civil rights. It is a struggle for human rights."[37] Their recognition of the historical intersections of immigrant and Black struggles for freedom provided undocumented students in Georgia with a larger, stronger, and more historically grounded political sustenance from which to speak back to the state and the nation.

As a scholar of US Black Latinidad, I was very familiar with the history of Jim Crow and the social movements that ended segregation in the United States. But having grown up in the Northeast, I had never been immersed in a community that lived "in the wake" of Jim Crow until I moved to Georgia.[38] Lloyd and other locals brought their acute awareness of that recent past to the immigrant struggle, shaping the nature of our organizing, teaching, and solidarity. It also profoundly redefined how I, as a Black Latina Dominicana and a scholar of Black Latinidad in the United States, conceptualize, define, understand, and experience the relationship between blackness, immigration, and Latinidad as a continuation of colonialism—as entangled experiences of past and present colonial oppression. Sharpe argues that the project of emancipation is incomplete, and therefore Black people live in what Saidiya Hartman calls "the aftermath of slavery."[39] But slavery was a product of colonial capitalism. We must thus recognize, as did Lloyd, that the same colonial logic that convinced the world that it was acceptable to profit from capturing and enslaving Africans and Indigenous people continues to sustain "immigrant" as a racialized subhuman category of unbelonging, and racialized immigrant subjects as disposable, consumable bodies without history, aliens to the nation-state at the service of the global capitalist machinery. Following this logic, I argue that racialized nonwhite Latinx immigrants like the women whose testimonies open this book are also living in "the aftermath" of colonialism: their everyday lives are shaped by the continual intersections of antiblackness and anti-immigrant sentiment that produce new categories of "undesirables," to borrow Hernández's term, in the nation. The exclusionary category "immigrant" is an iteration of the global colonial capitalist regime of human exploitation.

Sylvia Wynter argues that our present struggles "with respect to race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, struggles over the environment,

global warming, severe climate change, the sharply unequal distribution of the earth resources" are a result of colonial structures that define people as human or less than human through colonial categories of citizenship based on race, ethnicity, bodily ability, or what I call belonging and unbelonging.[40] For Lisa Lowe, one significant effect of these colonial categories of humanity is the emergence and dominance of an archive that defines humanity through proximity to European values, cultures, and whiteness.[41] In the United States, these categories of belonging and unbelonging determine who goes to prison; who gets pulled over by the police; who must show identification in public spaces; who is left out of institutions, archives, and other sites; and who can run, nap, read, or watch birds in peace.[42] If humans (those who belong) are defined by their proximity to Europe, as both Wynter and Lowe have argued, then lesser human, racialized nonwhite, minoritized, and immigrant subjects (who unbelong) are presumed to be expendable, durable, and uncivil—now, as in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

In many Global North colonial powers such as the United States, these dynamics of belonging and unbelonging manifest through a discursive and economic replacement of the slave with the immigrant of color. As Hernández argues, race and noncitizenship work together as "intertwined vulnerabilities that make whole communities susceptible and at times defenseless against constitutional status."[43] Immigrants now do the labor that enslaved Black and Indigenous peoples and Asian indentured servants were once forced to do all over the Americas. They also occupy the place of liminal humanity that sustains the nation. The oppression of Black people and immigrants must therefore be confronted together.

Nicholas de Genova argues that the category "immigrant" is a modern fabrication that hinges on our collective belief in the nation-state as a "quasi-natural space" rather than the exclusionary regime of the practice of bordering.[44] That is, "immigrant" and "citizen" are "bordered identities" defined through statutory, often arbitrary regimes of human belonging that hinge on notions of presumed legality and illegality.[45] That certain immigrants are presumed to be "illegal" also shapes how citizens who share the ethnic or cultural identity of a racialized immigrant group, such as Latinxs in the United States, experience everyday racism and civic exclusion. For many immigrants of color in the United States—particularly those of Latinx descent—noncitizen discrimination (the presumption of illegality) and racism intersect, shaping their access to civic mobility, from driving to higher education. The intersections of race and immigration shape their unbelonging to state institutions and the nation.

Since the conception of the United States as a nation, citizenship has been equated with whiteness. The Naturalization Act of 1790, in which citizenship was restricted to "any alien, being a free white person" who had resided in the United States for two years, relied on a racial hierarchy rooted in white supremacy and measures of difference, including gender, sexuality, class, bodily ability, religion, and political ideology.[46] Immigrant belonging continues to depend on assimilation to acceptable versions of whiteness that shift over time. As European migration to the United States decreased in the second half of the twentieth century, "immigrant" came to signify a racialized nonwhite category of exclusion—a locus of political and legal negotiation of the nation-state and its narrowing racial and ethnic borders. While European immigrants from the early nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries experienced hardships upon their arrival in the United States, they were eventually able to assimilate (albeit not equally, as we know from the experiences of Irish Americans and Italian Americans) into the white American "melting pot," becoming unhyphenated citizens. By contrast, Black, Asian, Native, and Brown immigrants who arrived in the United States throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries never became "just American." Rather, their insertion into the nation has always been and continues to be conditional to what Gustavo Pérez Firmat has called the "hyphen" (an ethnic and racial qualifier to national identity required only of minoritized citizens) and dependent upon successful performances of white American civility.[47] This hyphenated state of deferred and conditional belonging is due in part to the fact that these immigrants were and are colonial subjects of the expanding US empire (most notably in the cases of Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Dominicans, and Filipinos who migrated throughout the twentieth century), and in part because the United States has not yet resolved the internal borders that exclude Afro-descendants, Indigenous people, and Mexicans—who were never immigrants—from full citizenship. The exclusion of Black, Brown, Native, and Asian peoples from American citizenship at the conception of the nation-state continues to shape present-day ethnic identifications that border notions of national belonging for many of us (presumed illegal) immigrants. The racialized production of "immigrant" sustains the ethno-racial borders of the US nation by excluding racialized nonwhite immigrants and their Second Generation descendants from becoming full citizens by withholding their belonging to the nation through "hyphenated" identities and exclusion based on race. In the current political climate, "immigrant" is thus a category of political and legal restrictions, human negation, and border making, particularly in Global North immigrant-receiving postcolonial nations like

the United States. The legal status and social condition we typically associate with "immigrant" in fact signify, as de Genova argues, a "heterogenous spectrum of legal distinctions and social inequalities" that shapes people's identities and relationships to different forms of belonging.[48] If the law as de Genova argues is the device that produces the universality of "citizen" (belonging to the nation), then "immigrant" functions as its opposite (unbelonging). Immigrant belonging is thus an impossibility.

On Possibility: Black Latinx Belonging

But resistance has always come from impossibility. Haven't all social, political, economic, and cultural counterhegemonic movements been grounded on experiences of unbelonging and the radical hope for belonging?

Black Latinxs living in the Global North—particularly in the United States and Europe—carry slavery and immigration with them as colonial experiences of unbelonging, often while navigating other forms of internal and transnational colonialities. Their subjecthood and bodies are bordered through palimpsestic colonialisms. Their experiences and histories, I argue in this book, can help us make sense of how "Black" and "immigrant" intersect in the twenty-first century, producing other forms of colonized oppression. More importantly, Black Latinidad can help us see possibilities for transnational anti-colonial and anti-racist forms of contestation that go beyond the nation and challenge hegemonic notions of racial and ethnic identification.

My conceptualization of Black Latinidad is guided by the intersections of colonialism, diaspora, migration, and blackness that shape the historical processes and experiences of diasporic Black people who are linked—by birth, language, culture, or ancestry—to Latin America and who are immigrants (whether by their own or their parents' displacement) in the Global North. Black Latinidad differs from Afro-Latin Americanness in the experience of migration. This plurality of diasporas means that Black Latinx people confront and navigate multiple contradictory regimes of coloniality and racial hierarchies: those produced through the colonization of Latin America by the Spanish, French, British, and Portuguese, which shaped their ethno-racial identities and experiences at "home," as well as those imposed by the internal bordering of racialized citizen/immigrant subjects "abroad." The dialectic between here and there, and the symbolic and historical vaivén between sites of belonging and unbelonging, is constitutive of Black Latinidad. Duany has used the notion of vaivén—coming and going—to highlight the transnational experience of Puerto Rican people in the United States as subjects and nations

on the move.[49] In the Dominican Republic, "vaivén" signifies ambivalence and uprootedness. My use of the term departs from Duany's framework and Dominican popular ideology to insist on its dynamic possibilities: to be coming and going to and from the nation and hegemonic notions of belonging is to challenge the social order, the structures of the market, and the ideologies of national identifications.

Translating Blackness engages Black Latinidad as a theoretical category through which to understand the historical intersections of race, ethnicity, migration, and citizenship that have led to the present-day production of minoritized citizens of color. The vaivén of blackness through Latinidad and the multiple colonial entanglements that shape the conceptualization of a global Black Latinx collective exemplify how race and citizenship travel across national paradigms through the movement of bodies, words, and objects. In turn, their vaivenes shed light on colonialism and coloniality in the contemporary globalized nation-state. Translating blackness makes these colonial entanglements visible. Visibility, in turn, places local anti-colonial struggles within a recognizable global historical continuum.

Italy as a Site of Vaivén

People are often puzzled to find out I engage Italy in my research about Black Latinidad. But understanding Italy as a site of postcolonial encounters, as a gateway to the European Union, and as a nation that imagines itself as "clean" from the history of colonization and slavery—and therefore free from the afterlife of slavery—leads us to look at the Black experience beyond the hegemonic narratives and common locations we have come to anticipate as associated with blackness. As SA Smythe argues, "A postcolonial understanding of Black life in Italy creates a spatial transnational continuity with other European countries which also have colonial histories, reinforcing the idea of diasporic communities that share a colonial legacy."[50] Studied in tandem with other sites and historical processes, as it is in this book, Italy can be incredibly productive as a site for understanding contemporary experiences of blackness. In this way, it contributes to the goal of building a more robust articulation of global blackness as we strive to end antiblackness, white supremacy, and violence against immigrants of color.

I began to think about this project in 1998, when I was nineteen years old, a recent college graduate working as a journalist for a nongovernmental organization in Latin America. I was tasked with reporting on the conditions on the ground in the aftermath of natural and human disasters. In

the fall of that year, Hurricane George hit the Caribbean, taking a toll on the southwestern border region of the Dominican Republic, and I was sent to write stories about how people were coping after the storm. In late September, I arrived in the village of Postrer Río, a community of about seven thousand people located in Independencia Province in the southwestern Dominican borderlands. Postrer Río had suffered greatly due to the hurricane. As I talked to people, I noticed that there seemed to be no women in town. Or rather, there were grandmothers and little girls, but all the working-age women were gone. I began to ask around about the women, and one man told me, "They have all gone to Italy." As I later confirmed, Postrer Río, as with the rest of the Neyba Valley and Jimaní Basin area, had experienced a gigantic increase in migration to Europe—mostly of women—since the early 1980s.[51] In the eighties, most migrants went to Spain, but by the late nineties they began increasingly to migrate to Italy.

I was aware of Dominicanas' migration to Spain. In fact, I had two cousins working as nannies for wealthy Spanish families in Madrid. But I can say with certainty that at the turn of the twenty-first century, there was no public or scholarly conversation about Italy as a migration destination for Dominicanas. Rather, most of the attention about Dominican migration centered around the United States, Puerto Rico, and, to a lesser extent, Spain. I became obsessed with the subject and set out to research it. I gathered the little information that was accessible at the time: a few articles by sociologist Luis Guarnizo, some short pieces on the crowning of Denny Méndez as Miss Italia in 1996, and several social science articles on migration to Spain that included statistics or brief mentions of other sites of Latin American migration to Europe, including Italy.[52] I also began to read more generally about Italy as a migrant destination for Global South women.[53] Notably, throughout my two decades of work in and about Italy, I gathered anecdotes and stories, asking friends and family members in the Dominican Republic if they knew of a Dominicana who had moved to Italy. Sure enough, many people had heard of or knew someone who had moved to Italy, and slowly I began to build a network of amazing informants who shared their experiences and connected me with friends and family in Italy willing to share their stories.

By the time I began to travel regularly to Italy to conduct research for this book in 2013, it had become the "door" to Europe for asylum seekers from Syria, Eritrea, and Somalia as well as a contested location for citizenship rights for descendants of immigrants. My interest in Dominicanas' migration to Italy transformed into a project about the ways Black migrants—particularly those who also identify as Latinxs—experience belonging and

unbelonging as they navigate overlapping colonial histories and their place as immigrants in the Global North. The Dominican experience that led me to these questions continued to inform my analysis and bridge my research as I found myself in a long detour through the vaivenes of Black Latinidad in the twenty-first century. Moreover, the Dominicanas who first pointed me toward Italy also led me to the questions that inform this book: How do colonial histories shape the way Black Latinx migrants and their descendants understand and translate race and national identity in the diaspora? How is blackness named, translated, politicized, and historicized in postcolonial nations that did not participate in the colonization of the Americas and the slave trade? And how do these translations of blackness intersect with the experiences of immigration, colonialism, diaspora, and ethnicity in the context of globalized antiblackness?

Over seven years of qualitative research in Italy, I learned about the experiences of people who are Black, migrants, and postcolonial subjects. In turn, my understanding of blackness, Black history, and Black futurity also expanded in ways that at times took me by surprise and at others confirmed what foundational Black Latinx scholars like Gregorio Luperón and Arthur Schomburg seemed to have been suggesting since the late nineteenth century: that "Black" transcends nations, and as such, nations are not sufficient frameworks with which to explain or contain Black belonging. Black Latinidad, in particular, emerges through the Italian experience as a valuable human and epistemological category for understanding the world today: how global antiblackness operates in this historical moment and, more importantly, the possibilities for detours, change, and hope.

Still, Italy is but one of the examples I present in this book. My hope is that my engagement with it opens the possibility for more transnational, global conversations about the intersections of blackness, colonialism, migration, and belonging in immigrant-receiving sites beyond the predominantly studied locations of Latinidad (the United States, Latin America, and Spain). Further, my analysis of Italy insists on the expansiveness of Black Latinidad not only as a category of identification but also as a method of inquiry and an epistemology. Read in dialogue with the Caribbean and the United States as sites of Black Latinidad, Italy offers an immense opportunity to expand the fields of Black and Latinx studies as well as our methods of inquiry through the analysis of overlapping histories of colonialism in present-day manifestations. So while this is not a book specifically about Italy, I ask you, the reader, to accompany me through my own critical vaivén through Italy, linking US abolitionist Frederick Douglass to Black Italian beauty queen Denny Méndez

to Black Latinx scholar Arthur Schomburg to the lives of Black migrants in contemporary Italy.

Black Citizen / Latinx Difference

The first section of this book, "On Being Black and Citizen: Latinx Colonial Vaivenes," interrogates the relationships between citizenship, blackness, and colonialism in the United States from Reconstruction to the civil rights era. Centering Hispaniola's relationship to the US empire as critical to the articulation of Black Latinidad, this section traces the genealogy of Black Latinx intellectual and political discourse and its vaivenes and detours through US Black political thought, highlighting the importance of Black diasporas outside of Africa and Africanist discourse. While acknowledging the violent legacy of slavery and colonialism, my analysis pushes against the dominance of Afropessimism as the lens through which to understand the lived experiences of Black people, insisting instead on the ways Black people within and beyond the United States have constructed being and belonging in contra*diction* to slavery and colonialism.

Chapter 1, "A Full Stature of Humanity: Latinx Difference, Colonial Musings, and Black Belonging during Reconstruction," poses a conversation between nineteenth-century Black intellectuals and freedom fighters Gregorio Luperón and Frederick Douglass, exploring the significance of the two men in the production of Black Latinidad as a category of belonging in the face of US colonial expansion during Reconstruction. This conversation is framed by the vaivenes of Black Latina musician and writer Gregoria Fraser Goins. The lives of the two men intersect in Fraser Goins's own through a series of familial and political ties that emerge as a result of Douglass's trip to the Dominican Republic in 1871 as part of the Commission of Inquiry to annex the country to the United States. Through Fraser Goins, we witness the tangible effects of the relationship between the two nations on her sense of belonging and her identity as a Black/Brown Latina.

Chapter 2, "Arthur Schomburg's Haiti: Diaspora Archives and the Epistemology of Black Latinidad," analyzes how diaspora, migration, and citizenship are constitutive of early articulations of Black Latinx thought. Through a close reading of Black Puerto Rican scholar Arthur Schomburg's writing, archival ethos, and lived experiences, this chapter illustrates the emergence of Black Latinx intellectual discourse, epistemology, and thought in dialogue with the notion of diaspora. Schomburg's sophisticated intellectual project is grounded on the intersections and vaivenes of colonialism, migration, diaspora, and

blackness that shape Latinx struggles for citizenship and belonging in the United States and beyond. Like other Black Latinxs for generations to come, Schomburg struggled to belong within US blackness due to his Puerto Rican cultural and linguistic identity. Yet he did not fully belong in Puerto Rico either, in part due to his migratory experiences and in part due to his awareness of the pitfalls of the Latin American independence projects he once supported. These projects were grounded on myths of racial inclusivity and mestizaje that ultimately erased Black people, Black histories, and Black knowledge from the nation. Translating the multiplicity of his own post/colonial vaivenes through blackness and Latinidad, Schomburg dedicated his life to a "Negro nation without a nation."[54] This "Negro nation," as Schomburg imagined it, was a global collective united by common histories, the acceptance of linguistic, cultural, and ethnic diversity, and, most of all, a desire for equality and historical transcendence.

The book's second section, "Black Feminist Contra*dictions* in Latinx Diasporas," foregrounds gender and sexuality as essential to theorizing Black Latinidad in the diaspora. Centering the lives, work, experiences, and articulations of belonging of Black women living in the afterlife of colonialism and slavery in the diaspora, this section historicizes the colonial violence that has produced Black women as objects for consumption, the systemic state-sponsored violence that leads to Black women's deaths, and the effects of antiblackness and colonialism that prompt Global South Black women to migrate north. In analytical vaivén between colonialism and migration, this section also shows how Black migrant women and their children contra*dict* colonial and state violence through private and public acts of re-membering that interrupt the colonial archive and its afterlife. This section is also in transatlantic geographic vaivén, following the physical, historical, and symbolic movement of Black Latinas through the United States, the Caribbean, Europe, and Africa.

Chapter 3, "Against Death: Black Latina Rebellion in Diasporic Community," examines the civic, social, and physical deaths of Black women in the Dominican Republic as an effect of the alliance between US colonialism and the Dominican state. Through analyses of photographs, interviews, pamphlets, oral histories, and literary texts produced by Black Dominicanas living in the United States, the Hispanic Caribbean, and Italy, the chapter traces the significance of radical Black Latina feminist activism in shaping transnational dialogues around antiblackness and immigrant rights. The chapter engages original testimonies from women who fought in the Dominican Civil War of 1965 and were forced to migrate as a result of their radical political views. Unlike previous work on the women of the 1965 war that focuses on

middle- and upper-class Dominicanas, this chapter investigates the lives of working-class Black guerrilleras in the aftermath of the war, following them through their migrations and vaivenes in diaspora. The chapter maps radical Black Dominicanas' migration and historicizes the Caribbean Latina political legacy of Black contestation that emerged in Italy in the 1980s and 1990s within socialist and feminist migrant women organizations.

Chapter 4, "The Afterlife of Colonial Gender Violence: Black Immigrant Women's Life and Death in Postcolonial Italy," investigates what happens to Black Latina women in Italy in the twenty-first century as the country shifts from being an immigrant-sending nation to an immigration hub. The chapter sets off from an analysis of the posthumous representations of Carolina Payano, a twenty-one-year-old Black Caribbean immigrant murdered in Milan in 2012, in dialogue with colonial photographs, documents, and depictions of Eritrean women during the Italian colonization of Eritrea (1888–1945). It traces the entanglement of multiple colonial regimes in the production of Black women as exoticized, disposable objects of consumption. The media portrayal of Payano exoticized her blackness and the "backwardness" of her embodied Caribbean "essence" even after death, adding to the sensationalism of the tragedy while at the same time erasing the structural violence, colonial legacies, and persistent anti-immigrant legislation that produced the precarious conditions that led to Payano's death. The chapter engages these narratives in the larger context of Italian sex tourism in the Caribbean, paying close attention to how Black immigrant women organize and resist oppressive regimes through acts of solidarity and transnational networks of information and political involvement.

Chapter 5, "Second Generation Interruptions: Archives of Black Belonging in Postcolonial Diaspora," focuses on the cultural, political, and social interventions by Black Second Generation activists in contemporary Italy. Through a comparative analysis of a novel, a film, public speeches, and songs, the chapter proposes Black Latinidad as a framework for understanding the multiple ways Black Second Generation subjects translate hegemonic terms (e.g., Black, Afro, immigrant) to build transnational networks of inclusion that help them challenge the colonial legacies sustaining racism in their nations. The chapter shows how colonial histories shape the lives of Black immigrants and new citizens in postcolonial diasporic communities as they negotiate multiple conceptualizations of race while asserting national belonging. I theorize what I call "archival interruptions" as the method by which Second Generations build alliances with other marginalized communities and contra*dict* the colonial and white supremacist logic of the nation-state. Using art and social media, they translate their local struggles into a global language of resistance

grounded in Black freedom. In so doing, they can attract a larger constituency, and at times produce effective local, national, and transnational changes.

Read together, the two sections of this book produce a more complete narrative of Black Latinidad that insists not only on its intellectual history—produced by elite men of letters—but more importantly on the epistemological contributions of people often omitted from or silenced in historical archives. This book, then, reads Black Latinx archives and stories as constitutive of global blackness. *Translating Blackness* is about violence and rebellion, migrations, vaivenes, and returns. It is about belonging and unbelonging. And most of all, it is about Black knowledge and radical existence across place and time against colonial violence and antiblackness.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1 Lear, *Radical Hope*, 97.

2 See C. Sharpe, *In the Wake*. In *The Borders of Dominicanidad*, I use contra*diction* to interrogate how history and historical archives produced hegemonic narratives of oppression. I argue that *dictions* can be, and always are, contested. García-Peña, *The Borders of Dominicanidad*, 13.

3 Following Reinaldo Walcott's terminology, Christina Sharpe proposes the "unfinished project of emancipation" as a historical continuum that reproduces the structures of inequality that lead people to live "in the wake" of slavery. C. Sharpe, *In the Wake*, 4–5.

4 García-Peña, *The Borders of Dominicanidad*, 7.

5 In *The Puerto Rican Nation on the Move*, Jorge Duany theorizes Puerto Rico as a nation in vaivén, coming and going, "on the move," 2, 4. He also uses the term as the title to his Spanish collection of essays *La nación en vaivén*.

6 Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 89.

7 Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 7.

8 Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," 254.

9 See Venuti's introduction to *Rethinking Translation*. See also Venuti, "Translation as Cultural Politics."

10 Anzaldúa, *Borderlands / La Frontera*, 40.

11 Edwards, *Practice of Diaspora*, 5.

12 Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity*, 11, emphasis added.

13 Figueroa-Vásquez, *Decolonizing Diasporas*, 9.

14 Davis, *Freedom Is a Constant Struggle*, 39.

15 The Nordic Resistance Movement is a neo-Nazi group in Scandinavia. It wants anyone who is not of Northern European descent to leave Sweden.

16 "Colombiana que desafió a los nazis en Suecia."

17 Race as a concept is assumed to be divisive in Sweden. It is very difficult to speak about racism in this context.
18 Tess Asplund, in conversation with the author, January 25, 2020.
19 BBC News, "Tess Asplund."
20 Tess Asplund, in conversation with the author, April 18, 2021.
21 Asplund, in conversation with the author, April 18, 2021.
22 Osei-Kofi, Licona, and Chávez, "From Afro-Sweden with Defiance," 139, emphasis added.
23 Davis, *Freedom Is a Constant Struggle*, 39.
24 Venga Le Cuento, "Entrevista a Maria Teresa Tess Asplund."
25 Osei-Kofi, Licona, and Chávez, "From Afro-Sweden with Defiance," 139.
26 Some of the most notable actions include the confrontation between sixteen-year-old Girl Scout Lucie Myslikova and a neo-Nazi group in the Czech Republic, and Saffiyah Khan, a Birmingham, UK, resident who was photographed smiling bemusedly at an English Defense League protester.
27 Asplund, in conversation with the author, April 18, 2021.
28 Cochran, "Translator Introduction," xxi.
29 Zendaya, "Cardi B Opens Up."
30 López, *Unbecoming Blackness*, 5.
31 López, *Unbecoming Blackness*, 12.
32 Martínez-San Miguel, *Coloniality of Diasporas*, 8–9
33 Hernández, "Undue Process," 3.
34 On October 14, 2010, the University of Georgia Board of Regents voted 14–2 "to prohibit public universities from enrolling students without papers in any school that has rejected other qualified applicants for the past two years because of lack of space." The policy, which keeps academically qualified students from attending the top five public research universities in the state, was based on the belief that undocumented students were taking the seats of citizens in the public university system. However, a study conducted by the very Board of Regents enacting this policy found that undocumented students comprise less than 0.2 percent of all public university students; most undocumented students are enrolled in technical schools and community colleges.
35 Nill, "Latinos and SB 1070," 35.
36 According to the US Census Bureau's "Quick Facts," Athens ranks fifth in the nation in economic disparities between rich and poor.
37 Washington, "Angela Davis on Activism and the Dream Act."
38 I borrow here Christina Sharpe's iconic terminology from her book *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being.*
39 Hartman, *Lose Your Mother*, 6.
40 Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom," 260–61.
41 Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents*, 6–7.
42 Over the past couple of years, we have seen a trend in the United States of white people—particularly white women, popularly known as "Karens"—calling the police on Black people engaged in mundane, everyday life activities such as birdwatching or jogging. Those experiences, as seen in the case

of Ahmaud Arbery, an unarmed Black man who was murdered by two white men in Georgia while jogging, are sometimes life threatening.

43 Hernández, "Undue Process," 3.

44 de Genova, "Citizenship's Shadow," 21.

45 de Genova, "Citizenship's Shadow," 17.

46 Hernández, "Undue Process," 8.

47 See Pérez Firmat, *Life on the Hyphen*.

48 de Genova, "Citizenship's Shadow," 19.

49 Duany, *Puerto Rican Nation on the Move,* 4–5.

50 Smythe, "Black Italianità," 13.

51 See Ramírez de Haro et al., *Efectos de la migración internacional*; and Escolano Giménez, "Los procesos migratorios."

52 See Guarnizo, "The Emergence of a Transnational Social Formation"; Guarnizo, "'Going Home'"; and Guarnizo, "The Rise of Transnational Social Formations." See also Pinkus, "Miss (Black) Italy"; Ciarnelli, "Mi spiace per le altre ma sono io Miss Italia"; and Gennari, "Passing for Italian."

53 After I began my graduate studies, I encountered the work of Wendy Pojmann, Heather Merrill, and Jacqueline Andall, among others, which grounded me and provided much guidance as I continued to follow my questions.

54 Schomburg, "The Negro Digs Up His Past," 672.

CHAPTER 1: A FULL STATURE OF HUMANITY

1 Gregoria Fraser Goins, "Biographical Sketch," December 21, 1961, box 36-2, folder 26, Gregoria Fraser Goins Papers, Morland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, DC.

2 In her biographical sketch, Gregoria Fraser Goins refers to Gregorio Luperón as her godfather. In "Miss Doc," she refers to Frederick Douglass in the same way. Gregoria Fraser, "Miss Doc," 141, unpublished manuscript, box 36-4, folder 52, Gregoria Fraser Goins Papers, Morland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, DC.

3 Luft, "Sarah Loguen Fraser," 149.

4 Luft, "Sarah Loguen Fraser," 152; Mayes, *The Mulatto Republic*, 15.

5 Luft, "Sarah Loguen Fraser," 150.

6 Fraser Goins, "Biographical Sketch."

7 Fraser Goins, "Biographical Sketch."

8 Fraser Goins, "Biographical Sketch."

9 I have argued elsewhere that "Black," as a differentiated social category of exclusion, did not exist in the late nineteenth-century Dominican Republic. This is not to say there was no racism. Rather, racism and antiblackness have always been entangled with class, immigration status, gender, and nationality. In the late nineteenth century, the Dominican Republic had Black and Brown (mulato) presidents—something unthinkable in the United States in the late nineteenth century. Yet the light-skinned mulato elite mostly dominated the intellectual class. The entanglement between race, class, and colorism in a