

# Social Hierarchy and Purity of Blood in New Spain

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Racial inequality, white superiority, and socialized economic poverty are issues currently affecting the world. These problems plaguing our nation seem hopeless with no apparent end in sight. All these issues have been repeated time and again throughout history. When the Spanish colonized the New World, they brought with them an ideology known as *limpieza de sangre* or purity of blood. This rigid ideology was based on the premise of White Spanish superiority, which was imposed upon the people of New Spain. *Limpieza de sangre* influenced nobility, socio-economic racial hierarchy, life, and art in New Spain. To fully understand the effects of this ideology, one must understand its origins and its effects on the interracial population of the New World. This study analyzes the research of leading scholars in Spanish art, colonial Latin American history, Spanish history, and religion to create an in-depth analysis of New Spain. Throughout this study, religious beliefs not only played a crucial role in Spanish ideology but also seemed to fuel notions of racial inequality and servitude. Art was also used to spread racial propaganda to further the concept of White Spanish superiority in New Spain. Consequently, Spanish art and ideology created lasting effects still evident in Latin America today.

**Keywords:** white supremacy, racial hierarchy, systemic racism, pure blood, colonization

Racial inequality and social hierarchy are problems that have been chronicled throughout history for thousands of years. In New Spain, racial inequality was documented not only in historical records but also visually in the form of art. Andrés de Islas' 1774 painting entitled, *De Español, y Negra; nace Mulata* (The Spaniard and Black Produce a *Mulata*) (see Fig. 1), is a perfect example of the types of systemic racism practiced in New Spain. This kitchen scene depicts a White Spaniard being attacked by his Black African wife as their child seemingly attempts to intervene. This painting, while imaginary in nature, offers insight into the *casta* (caste) system on which these paintings were based. The artist clearly meant to depict the Spaniard nobly based on his clean-cut and well-dressed disposition. Furthermore, even though he is a man, he is the one being victimized. His appearance may allude to his prestigious upbringing, hinting that he is not the aggressor in this situation. His wife is not only depicted as aggressive but is also dressed in common apparel, holding some type of kitchen utensil. Her overall dress, the kitchen setting, and her weapon of choice may also allude to life in the service industry. Their child, the *mulata*, is portrayed as a mix of both races with a creamy tan complexion. The look on her face is one of distress at the scene unfolding around her as she is shown pushing against her mother in an attempt to make her stop. While this scene is presumably fictional, it is heartbreaking and disturbing. The imagery depicted on panels much like this may have been meant to warn viewers, specifically the Spanish, of the "dangers" of marrying a lower *casta*. Paintings such as this one represents the skewed conceptualization of lower *castas* based simply on race and the absurd notion of "white supremacy" ingrained into the Spanish mentality.



Figure 1. Andrés de Islas, N.4, *De Español, y Negra; nace Mulata*, 1774, oil on canvas 75x54 cm. Museo de América, Madrid. CER.es (<http://ceres.mcu.es/pages/Main>). Photographed by Joaquín Otero Úbeda.

*Casta* paintings, like the one mentioned above, were part of a larger series and created a visual reference to the *casta* system, a form of social hierarchy based on race and the ideology of *limpieza de sangre* or purity of blood. *Casta* paintings, a genre of paintings that emerged in New Spain around 1720, have attracted much recent scholarly attention (*Imagining Identity* 48-50). Each series consisted of sixteen to twenty panels depicting a man, a woman, and the imagined offspring produced from their interracial relationship (“Locating Race” 43). Early *casta* paintings (see Fig. 2) were devoid of background and instead focused on the physical characteristics of the figures depicted (*Genealogical Fictions* 227). The *casta* series were sometimes numbered, and each painting included an inscription detailing the races portrayed in the image (*Genealogical Fictions* 231). After the mid-18th century, *casta* paintings became more elaborate (see Fig. 3), depicting full-length figures engaging in a multitude of activities and shown in a variety of locations and clothing styles specific to their social ranking (“Locating Race” 43).



Figure 2. Unknown Artist, *Las Castas*, c. 18th century, oil on canvas 40 7/8 in. (104 cm.), W: 58 1/4 in. (148 cm). Museo Nacional del Virreinato, Tepotzotlan, Mexico. Accessed October 25, 2023. <http://commons.wikimedia.org/>.

If a picture is worth a thousand words, then the *casta* paintings have a long and complicated story to tell. In reading the paintings from left to right, the top row of *casta* paintings focuses on Spanish relations with Indians, which by the third generation created more Spaniards. The next cluster of paintings (generally the second row) concentrates on Spanish and Black African unions. The last portion of the *casta* series emphasizes the unions of Black Africans and Indians (Katzew 49). The Spaniards are on the top tier of these paintings because Spanish Christian blood was considered to have redemptive qualities when mixed with Indian blood; however, mixing with Black blood was seen to corrupt the Spanish bloodline (*Genealogical Fictions* 235). *Casta* paintings were not only a pictorial representation of race, but they also served as a warning reflecting the visual consequence of introducing “tainted” blood into the family genealogy (Gutierrez and Ware 125). Some images of Spaniards and Africans also hint at dysfunction in the home through images of violence and discord as mentioned above concerning the painting by Islas, *De Español, y Negra; nace Mulata*.

Today, topics concerning race relations is still a burning issue in our society. To understand the present, one must look to the past. Issues of pure blood and racial inequality were common in New Spain. The ideology known as *limpieza de sangre*, or purity of blood, influenced New Spain’s social hierarchy, life, and art. Even though *limpieza de sangre* is no longer practiced, this ideology has had lasting consequences, which are still evident in Latin American countries.

### | *Limpieza de Sangre*

What is pure blood? One might argue that someone of pure blood would be considered innocent and without sin or corruption. To others, the phrase “pure blood” conjures up references from the Bible. “Indeed, under the law, almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins” (*Lexham English Bible*, Heb. 9:22). Jesus’ blood was considered pure. According to the Bible, his sacrifice and the spilling of his pure blood brought redemption for the world’s sins. This ideology of “pure blood” can be traced back to scripture and would be used as a way to exert dominance over races the Spanish deemed as less superior.

In the Middle Ages, Jews, Muslims, and Christians were able to live in Spain and share a mutual religious tolerance; this period is referred to by modern day scholars as *Convivencia* (co-existence) (Poole 360). This time of tolerance soon ended when the Roman province of *Hispania* was overrun by African Berber armies, bringing about the start of the *Reconquista* War (Tyerman 285). The *Reconquista*, also known as the Spanish Crusade, began in 711 and ended on January 2, 1492. This war to expel the Jews and Muslims from the Iberian Peninsula lasted almost eight centuries (Roberts). The end of the *Reconquista* was followed by a spiritual reconquest headed by the Spanish Inquisition to expel the Jews and Moors from the Iberian Peninsula by royal edict (Roberts). This also led to the expulsion of the Jews from Spain that same year, bringing *Convivencia* to an end (Poole 361).

The ideology of *limpieza de sangre* emerged in Spain in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries creating racial divisions that would favor the Spanish. In 1455, Pope Nicholas V granted Portuguese the right to conquer and enslave African unbelievers (Tyerman 285). At the same time, distinctions were made between “Old Christians” and “New Christians” (those tainted with the conversion from Islam and Judaism) (Tyerman 360). Medieval and early modern Christian Europe considered Jews to be stained due to their ancestral involvement in the death of Christ or deicide (“The Black Blood” 484). Black Africans also could not be fully assimilated into the Spanish colonial society or into Spanish “Old Christian” blood due to their “biblical” association with the Curse of Ham and taint of slavery (“The Black Blood” 515). This concept of stained and tinted lineage would apply only to those of Jewish descent and Black Africans as the Spanish ideology of *limpieza de sangre* and slavery moved into the New World.

*Limpieza de sangre* was initially associated with notions of nobility. Later requirements were established in the 16th century in religious and secular institutions (*Genealogical Fictions* 25).<sup>1</sup> Spanish society became obsessed with genealogy, believing that lineage was a sign of loyalty to the faith. Descent and religion, or blood and faith, became the foundation behind the ideology of *limpieza de sangre* (*Genealogical Fictions* 1). According to Martinez’s research, the offspring of Spaniards and Indians were considered redeemed through a “whitening” infusion of Spanish “Old Christian” blood, echoing the Christian notion that Christ took on the world’s sins to purify it (“The Black Blood” 485).

## Spanish Nobility

As previously mentioned, the Spanish considered themselves superior to the races they conquered, often claiming nobility. Spanish were considered “pure-blooded” if they could trace their lineage to the *Reconquista* Wars. These wars were backed by a long line of Popes and therefore considered “Holy” (Roberts). Spanish who could trace their lineage to the *Reconquista* Wars in the Iberian Peninsula referred to themselves as *hijosdalgos* (sons of somebody or noble status), and their blood was considered pure of Jew or Muslim taint (Gutierrez and Ware 120). The Spanish took the claim of nobility and pure blood very seriously. Those found lying about their bloodline or lineage were brought before the Spanish Inquisition. The punishments included persecution, confiscation of property, executions, and burnings if found guilty (Burkholder and Johnson 195). Africans were often associated with the Islam practitioners of North Africa; as such, the Spanish were worried they would “taint” the blood of descendants, therefore, condemning their *casta* to never achieve *limpieza de sangre* (Gutierrez and Ware 120). Furthermore, through the ideology of *limpieza de sangre*, Black Africans’ blood was also seldom allowed the possibility of redemption due to their mythological link to the Curse of Ham (“The Black Blood” 485).

## Biblical Curses and Slavery

The Curse of Ham was a biblical curse enacted by Noah on Canaan, the son of Ham (*New International Version*, Genesis 9:20-27).<sup>2</sup> The Bible is unclear as to what offense Ham committed that was worthy of such a curse, though theological scholars have several theories ranging from voyeurism to maternal incest (Bergsma and Hahn 25). The biblical Curse of Ham, also known as the Curse of Canaan, was responsible for spreading the idea that black skin can stain White people. While the Bible mentions Noah’s curse on Canaan involving slavery, it does not reference skin color or race (Fracchia 12).<sup>3</sup> The Bible does, however, mention another curse that is often tied to skin color. According to Magali Carrera, black skin was considered a mark associated with Cain’s sin (*Imagining Identity* 12). In biblical texts (Genesis 4:15), Cain, the son of Adam, was cursed by God for killing his brother Abel. Cain was marked “so that no one who found him would kill him” (Goldenberg 178).<sup>4</sup> The Curse of Cain has been linked to blackness in English, French, German, and Irish literature. Its earliest mention is in the “Animal Apocalypse” (1 Enoch 85-90), written in the 2nd century BCE, which describes Cain as a black bull (Goldenberg 179). The theory of the Curse of Cain being tied to black skin color does not, however, tie into the aspect of slavery unless Ham married a descendant of Cain, making Canaan’s descendants both Black and enslaved (Goldenberg 178). These biblical curses and their various interpretations within religion were a way to legitimize the social order through divine justification (Goldenberg 177).<sup>5</sup> Goldenberg’s research discovered that Dominican Fray Francisco de la Cruz was influential in developing the attitudes towards black Africans in the New World. In 1575 he reported to the Inquisition that “[B]lack are justly captives by just sentence of God for the sins of their fathers, and that in sign thereof God gave them that color” (Goldenberg 177). With all this biblical “proof” associating Black Africans with slavery, the papacy justified the action on the basis that slaves could be converted to Christianity, even though Castilian Law classified slavery as an unnatural human condition (“The Black Blood” 488).<sup>6</sup>

## *Limpieza de Sangre* and Life in New Spain

The conquest of Latin America began in the 15th century by Spanish and Portuguese *conquistadores* (male soldiers) from the Iberian Peninsula (Estes). Few *conquistadores* and settlers came from nobility; however, this didn’t stop them from claiming *hidalgo* (nobility) upon arriving in the New World and taking on the title of *don* (Burkholder and Johnson 192). The titles *don* and *dona* commanded a certain amount of respect, as these individuals were often recognized by their noble status and not by their race (Althouse 159). Spanish *conquistadores* viewed race as a means of dividing the spoils of the New World. They considered themselves *gente de razón* (people of reason), marked by Christian faith and capable of making rational decisions, whereas the Indigenous people were considered heathen (Vinson 2-3). In the 16th century, society in New Spain was perceived as divided and separate. The initial separation of New Spain into two republics, the *República de Españoles* (Republic of Spaniards) and the *República de Indios* (Republic of Indians), was due to the Indian population being considered “pagans” (*Imagining Identity* 34).<sup>7</sup>

The dual republic of New Spain was the Spanish attempt to transfer Old World hierarchies to the New World and was loosely based on the estate system practiced in medieval Spain (Vinson 3).<sup>8</sup> The dual republic was also known for its spatial boundaries. When the Spanish conquered the Aztecs, Tenochtitlan became the new capital city. The Spanish developed the *traza* (city center) system to separate the Spanish population from the Indigenous population. The Spanish occupied the center of the city, which consisted of thirteen city blocks surrounding the *plaza* (square). The Indigenous population was assigned to live outside the city center in four *barrios* (neighborhoods) located at cardinal points of the *traza*. As with most civilizations, the wealthiest noble individuals were found in the very center of the city closest to key buildings, while “lesser” Spaniards were located on the edge of the *traza* (Vinson 3-4). This attempt to keep races separate did not last long and measures were taken to ensure Spanish superiority in the colonies. By the end of the 16th century, the ideology of *limpieza de sangre* (pure blood) was deployed in the colonies through *probanzas de limpieza de sangre* (purity certifications) issued by the Spanish Inquisition and Franciscan Order (“The Black Blood” 483). These certifications were considered proof that a bloodline was unsullied or free from Jewish and Muslim ancestry (“The Black Blood” 483).

Between 1509 and 1539, Spanish women were in short supply, making up only five to six percent of the Spanish population in the New World. This placed stress on the Spanish republic causing many men to take Indian women as brides, sometimes by force; consequently, this led to interracial offspring (Vinson 6). The offspring of early unions between the Spaniards and Indians were considered Spaniards, but by 1530 this changed, and they began being labeled as *mestizos* (*Imagining Identity* 36). *Mestizos* could be either promoted to the Spanish group or demoted to the Indian group after two generations of consecutive marrying with either Spanish or Indians (Gutierrez and Ware 126). Over time, light-skinned *mestizos* were accepted into the Spanish *casta* due to a fear of being overrun by the African and Indian populations (Gutierrez and Ware 125). The mixing of Black African and Indigenous people was viewed negatively, though the Black Africans were seen as more of a stain on the lineage (“The Black Blood” 484). The early 17th century brought the rise of the transatlantic slave system, causing an increase in the population of Blacks and *mulattoes* (offspring of Spaniards and Black Africans) in the colonies (“The Black Blood” 514). Offspring of Black Africans were deemed free or unfree based on the mother’s status. As a result, the Spanish government tried to prevent the conception of Black African children to curb the rise of a population of free Black Africans in the colonies (“The Black Blood” 496).

### *Limpieza de Sangre* and Social Hierarchy

The word “*casta*” is derived from the Latin word “*castus*,” implying that lineage must be kept pure (Estes). The society of *castas* was created due to the mixing of races, ethnicities, and cultures (Burkholder and Johnson 188). In New Spain, there were three original races: *Espanoles* (Spanish), *Indios* (Indigenous people), and *Negros* (Black Africans), which made up all the other racial *mestizaje* (cultural blending) in the *casta* (caste) system (Burkholder and Johnson 188). By the mid-16th century, the *sociedad de castas* (society of castes) was established to recognize the offspring of interracial marriages (*Imagining Identity* 36). In the 1540s, the *casta* system consisted of fourteen to twenty classes, ranked according to their percentage of Spanish, Indian, and Black blood (“Locating Race” 38). This separation of race and racial classifications given to the offspring of interracial unions was visualized in art (see Fig. 2 and Fig. 3).



Figure 3. Ignacio María Barreda, *Las Castas Mexicanas*, 1777, oil on canvas, 77 cm (30.3 in) x 49 cm (19.2 in). Real Academia Española de la Lengua, Madrid. Accessed October 25, 2023. <http://commons.wikimedia.org/>.

The *casta* system dictated all aspects of life in New Spain, including education, occupation, residency, clothing style, taxes, and tribute payments (Estes). Within this system, only certain *castas* enjoyed educational opportunities, mainly the Spanish. While education was initially allowed among the Indian *castas*, they were later excluded from this privilege (Burkholder and Johnson 110). During the 18th century, the principle of gradation ranked beings according to their degree of perfection or wholeness. Higher status beings, in this case, the Spanish, were considered of greater worth than those of lower ranking (Hill 80). Lower *castas* soon realized the only way to be treated fairly was to accept Spanish rule and what it offered (Zelaya 17). Interracial marriages, especially among Indian women of the highest rank, occurred as a means for the Spanish to acquire land and influence (Burkholder and Johnson 193). In contrast, the goal of Indian interracial marriages with the Spanish was to move up the social ladder so they could eventually be considered Spaniards (Estes).

## Employment and Clothing Restraints

Employment in New Spain was also influenced by blood purity and position in the *casta* system. Spain discouraged laziness and expected all people to be productive members of society (Zelaya 15). Early in New Spain, races were considered to have certain economic associations based on their respective *casta*. The Spaniards were often landowners and merchants, Indians were regarded as unskilled labor, and Black Africans were enslaved people or servants. As time went on and the races became intermixed economic associations shifted to include these new race classifications. Through the 18th century, *peninsulares* (Spaniards born on the Iberian Peninsula) and *criollos* (Spaniards born in the New World) were shop owners and merchants, *mestizos* (offspring of Spaniards and Indians) worked as artisans but were also known to be laborers and servants, and free *mulattoes* (offspring of Spaniards and Black Africans) were artisans and servants. In general, lower *castas* were likely to work in production or service jobs (*Imagining Identity* 41). The Spanish regularly employed Indigenous people, “Indians,” to live and work on their estates. Often, they were exploited and considered “free wage labor” (Burkholder and Johnson 135). Some Indigenous people were drawn to the cities, as they were more likely to acquire property and escape tribute payments than those who chose to remain in rural areas (Burkholder and Johnson 191).

Black Africans were employed or enslaved by the Spanish, though some free Africans had professions (Vinson 101). Even so, most members of the urban poor consisted of the offspring of Black Africans and Indians (Vinson 102).

The 18th-century Bourbon Reforms brought about the reorganization of the Spanish government while also making life in the colonies more rigid, such as dictating clothing styles in New Spain (Zelaya 14). In New Spain, the Crown allowed Indian leaders and nobility to distinguish themselves from the commoners by wearing more elaborate clothing. Regardless of nobility, they were still prohibited from imitating Spanish fashion. No women of Black African descent, including *mulattoes* (offspring of Spaniards and Africans), *negros*, freedwomen, or enslaved people, were allowed to wear woolen cloth, silk, lace, gold, silver, or black. These clothing restrictions were also depicted in the *casta* paintings (Fig. 1 and Fig. 4) as evident in comparing the dress style of the women in the paintings. The penalty for breaking this order included confiscation of the clothing, one hundred lashes, and/or exile (Burkholder and Johnson 250).

### *Limpieza de Sangre* and Art in New Spain

*Casta* paintings were produced two centuries after the *casta* system had been established, primarily in 18th-century colonial Mexico (c.1711-1760) (Katzew 63). While these paintings depict scenes of life in New Spain, they should not be viewed as a documentary series of work. Ilona Katzew, a leading scholar in *casta* paintings, argues that these works were an idealized form of painting and should not be mistaken for realism (Katzew 8). Many Spanish artists were in the higher ranks of the *casta* system and therefore were highly influenced by Spanish ideology, such as racial purity (Zelaya 13). The artist guild in Mexico City governed artists in a hierarchal style. Often artists created multiple sets of *casta* paintings and were known to copy each other's work, which would account for the similarity among the work of multiple artists (Katzew 9). Several sets were commissioned by colonial officials, such as Spanish Viceroy (Imagining Identity 49). *Casta* sets were also created to be placed in the Madrid Royal Cabinet of Natural History, which Charles III founded in 1771 to display objects from all over the world (*Genealogical Fictions* 227). Katzew attests that the commission of *casta* paintings not only satisfied the curiosity of interracial unions in the colonies but also promoted an orderly image of the colonies to ease anxiety and reassure the Crown that the Spanish were in control (Imagining Identity 52).

While *casta* paintings varied slightly depending on the artist, their overarching themes remained the same. One such theme is that blood controls not only traits but also status, which ties into the next theme that mixed blood is not irreversible. Returning to a status of pure blood is possible with the right racial unions. Finally, the *casta* paintings also depicted a theme of Spanish male superiority. Most unions show a Spanish male and a Black or Indian female. Martinez argues that this “promotes the notion that white men were in command of sexuality of all women and constructs a gendered image of New Spain's three main racial populations” (*Genealogical Fictions* 233). Racial and male superiority seemed to be the trend in colonial New Spain. In her book, Katzew refers to the *casta* system as a type of scientific racism in which blame was placed on the color of society for social-economic status rather than on the people who established this system. The ideas behind this system were meant to guarantee that each class would stay in their social position, that certain bloodlines could be purified through the act of mixing, and that mixing Black and Indian blood was dangerous to the Spanish social order (Katzew 51).

The themes and ideas mentioned by scholars are painfully apparent in two works by Francisco Clapera. His painting *De Mulato, y Espanola, Morisco* (see Fig. 4) once again portrays a scene of violence and dysfunction in the family. This time both parties seem to be active participants. The *mulato* (offspring of Spaniard and African) male, who is clearly agitated, is portrayed pushing his wife away from him. The Spanish woman, who appears elegantly dressed in noble fashion, can be seen pulling at her husband's coat with one hand and reaching for his hair with the other. Their son, whose complexion resembles his father's, is also actively participating by pulling on his mother's skirt with a look of determination. The room around them is in disarray, with food and clothing strewn about the floor, obviously resulting from the commotion. The painting again shows a person of mixed African descent surrounded by dysfunction, chaos, and violence, implying the association of these traits with lower *castas*.



Figure 4. Francisco Clapera, *De Mulato, y Espanola, Morisco*, c. 1775, oil on canvas 20½ × 15½ in. Denver Art Museum. (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/?ref=openverse>). Photographed by profzucker.

The second painting by Clapera, entitled *De Genizaro, y Mulata, Gibaro* (see Fig. 5), this time shows a different theme that is equally troubling. This image seems to take place outside in an alley. The *genizaro* (detrribalized Indian) is shown raggedly dressed, passed out on the street, lying next to a puddle of his vomit. His wife, the *mulata* (offspring of Indian and African), is shown with clothing draped over her shoulder (presumably clothing for her husband), attempting to pull her husband up. Their son, who is equally dark-complected as his mother, is shown trying to help rouse his father from his drunken state. All members are shown poorly dressed, implying a sense of poverty that they may have been subjected to within the *casta* system. The theme, while not violent, hints at dysfunction among the lower *castas*, a trait that the “pure-blooded” Spanish would be wise to avoid. This painting may also have been created to warn Spaniards that wealth did not lie among the lower *castas*. The end of the *casta* painting genre in the 19th century was tied to the rejection of the social hierarchy or *sistema de castas* that was abolished following Mexico’s war of independence (Katzew 37). While no longer practiced, the *casta* system left its mark on New Spain, and the *casta* paintings remain a permanent reminder of the racial injustice endured by the lower *castas*.



Figure 5. Francisco Clapera, *De Genizaro, y Mulata, Gibaro*, c. 1775, oil on canvas 20½ × 15½ in. Denver Art Museum. (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/?ref=openverse>). Photographed by profzucker.



## Conclusion

After the Spanish War of Independence, the *casta* system was legally eliminated in 1822. However, it was still practiced into the early 20th century until it was replaced with a new method of “scientific” racism geared towards eradicating the Indigenous population. Since colonization in New Spain, the indigenous population has been subjected to structural poverty (Gutierrez and Ware 131). During the decades following the Spanish occupation of the New World, 97% of the Indigenous population died due to disease and warfare brought on by the Spanish (Phillips 762). Their population never fully recovered from Spanish colonization and the *casta* system. In 2000, the total Indian population equaled only 7.1% throughout the country. Furthermore, a study published in 2005 tested samples from nine self-identifying Indian groups and revealed that there are no “pure” Indian populations in Mexico (Phillips 133). This data and much of the research presented in this essay show the negative effects of the Spanish colonization of New Spain. While expansion isn’t intrinsically wrong, it carries dire consequences for the races subjected to an ideology based on an inherent superiority complex.

Racial inequality, social hierarchy, and white supremacy are unacceptable today, yet this system was a reality in New Spain. The ideology of *limpieza de sangre* influenced all life in colonial New Spain. While this concept is no longer openly practiced, the lasting influence is hard to ignore. Some Latin American countries still favor *mestizaje* (cultural blending) to increase or decrease the White population, depending on each country’s preference (Zelaya 17). Clearly, Spanish ideology, racial hierarchy, and white supremacy left a permanent imprint on the life and art of New Spain, causing a ripple effect that would influence Latin American countries to this day.

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## Endnotes

1. Blood was believed to be the vehicle through which all characteristics were transmitted, including sins (*Genealogical Fictions* 25).
2. Genesis 9:20-27 (*New International Version*), “Noah, a man of the soil, proceeded to plant a vineyard. When he drank some of its wine, he became drunk and lay uncovered inside his tent. Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father naked and told his two brothers outside. But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it across their shoulders; then they walked in backward and covered their father’s naked body. Their faces were turned the other way so that they would not see their father naked. When Noah awoke from his wine and found out what his youngest son had done to him, he said, “Cursed be Canaan! The lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers.” He also said, “Praise be to the Lord, the God of Shem! May Canaan be the slave of Shem. May God extend Japheth’s territory; may Japheth live in the tents of Shem, and may Canaan be the slave of Japheth.”
3. Fracchia’s research also found that in Spain, black Africans were stigmatized by their past and the assumptions associated with their race and color of their skin. This discrimination and the fact that manumissions were not common in Spain made life difficult for freedmen and freedwomen (Fracchia 12).
4. Genesis 4:15, “But the Lord said to him, ‘Not so; anyone who kills Cain will suffer vengeance seven times over.’ Then the Lord put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him” (Goldenberg 178).
5. It is important to note that the Curse of Ham became so widely accepted that it was even used by black Africans to enslave other black Africans. Ethiopians claimed they were descendants of Shem, thereby justifying their claim to enslave other Africans (Goldenberg 177).
6. Castilian Law were laws developed during the Reconquest of Spain and became accepted as the laws of Spain under the reign of Queen Isabella (Martinez 488).
7. The *República de Españoles* consisted of the Spanish and black African population and was governed by the Spanish Crown, while the *República de Indios* was initially governed at a distance by *caciques* (native nobles) who kept their authority even after colonization (*Imagining Identity* 34).
8. The estate system was also known as the Manorial System, which was the precursor to Feudalism (Vinson 3).

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