CONCLUSIONS

1. Summary of arguments

The core argument sustained throughout the first chapter has been that once identity is understood as a "process of meaning making", identity politics is not as problematic as the critics make it out to be. As such, the anti-identity position fails to adequately prove its "constraining and pernicious" nature precisely because, as Linda Martín Alcoff argues, the aversion towards identity is rooted in the homogenisation of all human experience under one analytical umbrella. This wrongly presumes that there are no valid frameworks existing to produce identities that do not merely reflect external imposition, in the same fashion that identities within the tangibility of our social realities do not necessarily dominate or wholly consume the subject as indicative of an essentialism which, by nature, rejects difference. The contours of the African Diaspora were described as providing an illuminating illustration of how identity can co-exist alongside other aspects of the subject, just as difference can be celebrated among sameness as the transnational community reaches to achieve the common goal exemplified as social justice.

With the theoretical framework established in arguing the legitimacy and great usefulness of identity and identity politics, chapter two set out to validate the first sub-hypothesis, regarding the debilitating impact of *mestizaje* on Black consciousness, as internalised by Black Mexicans and also formulated as the national articulation of Blackness. As such, the chapter opened with an analysis of the *Memín Pinguín* controversy, which pitted U.S. social activists against Mexican politicians and intellectuals regarding the racist content of the popular caricature. Hopefully, it convincingly stressed the idea of how foreign and uncritical the discussion of

Blackness is typically engaged, both in national discourse and the academic realm. It also served as an introduction to the broader discussion of how Blackness has been repressed in Mexico, beginning under the racially divisive colonial caste system and continuing in the formative years of the nation-state. By tracing the development of Afro-Mexican studies, starting under Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán in the 1940s until arriving at the Our Third Root programme of the 1990s, the contributing factors in shaping the studies were highlighted in addition to the difficulties confronted, especially with regard to the limitations of the colonial data. Finally, the explanation of the overall economic and social position of Africans in New Spain provided the groundwork for then analysing how the concept of Blackness was conceived in the colonial era. Drawing heavily from the arguments of Taunya Lovell Banks and Bobby Vaughn, this chapter concluded by revealing the racist subterfuge of the *mestizaje* formula, the pillar ideology for underscoring national unity in Mexico (in addition to *indigenismo*, of particular importance to Vaughn's writings).

Far from being irrelevant for the contemporary nation, the discourses and lived experiences based on racial and ethnic identity in the Costa Chica still re-enact how *mestizaje* further institutes separateness among the communities of Blacks and Indians of Oaxaca and Guerrero, albeit in an incredibly "ambivalent" way as Lewis aptly argues. As such, the underlying argument outlined in the third chapter has been that recurring to national, racial, or ethnic absolutisms falls severely short of providing a genuine depiction of the self-identification processes of persons of African descent in Mexico. Additionally, by reformulating what it means to be Black in Mexico, a number of benefits may be derived, including a positive reworking of the complex interaction sustained between Blacks and Indians with the aim of eliminating the discrimination, both in speech and actions, which only serves to contribute to the

marginalised status of the Black communities. *México Negro*, as the closest example in Mexico of the mobilisation of Black identity for creating solidarity among the *costeños* of the Costa Chica, has instigated the beginnings of a social 'movement' that can also be characterised as a Black identity politics. However, by highlighting the way in which the folklorisation of Blackness has served to further segregate Black Mexicans from their sense of being Mexicans, as Laura Lewis convincingly contends, the arguments necessary for validating the second sub-hypothesis were presented. Chapter three concluded with providing the final arguments in being able to validate the central hypothesis sustained in this thesis, being that the mobilisation of Black identity politics, effectuated by consolidating a re-conceptualised, public Black identity, may act as a catalyst for community development. By drawing from arguments that tie personal development to community development, it was demonstrated that the necessity to re-theorise the Black subject status, as developed in chapter one, precedes the ability of the Black Mexican to "harmoniously" effectuate the development of her/his community.

2. Future expansion of study

Another interesting dimension to widening the scope of this study would be to consider the impact of *naturalised* Mexicans of African descent on the propagation of a healthy Black identity politics, participating alongside Black Mexicans themselves, also in an act of bringing the African Diaspora closer and closer to Afro-Mexico. For instance, one of the founders of *México Negro* is a Black, Trinidadian priest, Father Glyn Jemmott, based in the Black town of El Ciruelo on the Oaxacan side of the Costa Chica. Participating in the Black intellectual tradition born from a Diasporic

comprehension of his own Black identity enabled him to diagnose some of the maladies that are intimately tied to Mexican conceptualisations of Blackness. As such, he was readily in a position to help grow a Black consciousness among Black Mexicans. Primarily, this took the form of the annually held Meetings of Black Communities begun in 1997, which was aimed to then lead to the "harmonious" (as Cornel West describes) development of a Black identity that is divorced from its colonial tentacles. The contributions of other Blacks who share this same Diasporic consciousness of the vitality of a positive identity, achieved by way of the counterhistory, counterculture, and counterdiscourses, may prove to be an enlightening area to exploit for the future propagation of Black identity politics in Mexico. Of course, the role of the intellectual and the activist should not be limited solely to persons who self-identify as Black. Just as persons of various backgrounds can be classified as Pan-Africanists, so can persons of distinct races and ethnicities offer extremely valuable contributions to this project, by means of establishing labour training centres, development agencies, creative workshops, etc., in addition to carrying out research investigations, which are indispensable to what is being proposed in this thesis. What should *not* differ is the vision of ameliorating the marginalised situation of Black Mexican communities.

Another enriching way to more effectively articulate the politicisation of an ethnic Black identity is by arguing that the issue is not merely a political one but also a pedagogical one. Two essays which emphasis precisely this point, one written by Paula Moya and the other by Henry Giroux,[1] draw attention to how the classroom is an unique arena in which the productive activation of the potentiality of identities can

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[1] See Moya, "What's Identity Got to Do with It?" 96–117; and Giroux, "Postmodernism as Border Pedagogy," 452–96.

lead to achieving more objective knowledge about the content of our world. This tool could most certainly contribute to the articulated aims of the State-sponsored project, Our Third Root, precisely because the Black subject has been historically negated in the academic realm. The veil of ignorance can be strategically shredded to pieces by seriously considering the classroom as a tremendously suitable arena for holistically educating Mexicans of all shades, tones, and cultures. In this sense, as Giroux argues, "[a]t issue here is not merely the need for students to develop a healthy scepticism towards all discourses of authority, but also to recognize how authority and power can be transformed in the interest of creating a more democratic society."[2] Given that the country's core political concern today is democratic transformation, most comprehensively begun at the onset of the 2000 presidential election that brought the opposition to power after seventy years of one-party hegemony, the democratising agenda can be further advanced by engaging in this approach to formal education, made significant precisely by the politicisation of Black ethnic identity.

3. Reflecting on Gilroy's anti-racist project

The limitations of the socio-political category of race is tantamount, and theoretically speaking it is becoming more and more difficult to *not* coincide with the arguments of the intellectual tradition known as anti-racism, which argues that we *must* begin to re-imagine our community solidarities beyond the entrapments of race. Paul Gilroy offers compelling arguments in his exceptional book, *Against Race*, by appealing in the following way:

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[2] Giroux, "Postmodernism as Border Pedagogy," 482.

But to renounce 'race' for analytical purposes is not to judge all appeals to it in the profane world of political cultures as formally equivalent. Less defensively, I think our perilous predicament, in the midst of a political and technological sea-change that somehow strengthens ethnic absolutism and primordialism, demands a radical and dramatic response. This must step away from the pious ritual in which we always agree that 'race' is invented but are then required to defer to its embeddedness in the world and to accept that the demand for justice requires us nevertheless innocently to enter the political arenas it helps to mark out.[3]

I agree with the sentiment of Gilroy's argument in the sense that a deafening confrontation with White supremacy and similar ideologies of racial superiority necessarily warrants a move away from race and into theoretical ground that instead embraces a "planetary humanism". I do not agree, however, that this can be *practically* effectuated across all of today's societies. The idea of Blackness in Mexico, for instance, necessitates a Diasporic conditioning, given that it continues to be intimately tied to colonial theorisations embedded in racist concepts of the strengths, weaknesses, and purposes of the Black individual's existence. The imperative of "existential freedom", as termed by Cornel West, is so near to being fully engaged it shall no longer be made invisible. The audacity of the debilitating ignorance emanating from the cultural creation of *Memín Pinguín*, for instance, means that a re-conceptualisation of the *racial* formulation of Blackness is the first order of business. Given the multivalent nature of what it means to be Mexican, hopefully more and more Black Mexicans themselves will soon contribute to the global resistance movement known as anti-racism.

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[3] Gilroy, *Against Race*, 52.

4. Intersubjectivity of International Relations and the Black experience

This thesis has posed to contribute to the refashioning of IR necessitated by the all-too-narrow scope relegated as the acceptable domain of study by the traditional hold of realism and its bosom-buddy theories. The inclusion of a sociological approach to IR has proven not only to broaden the spectrum of acceptable concepts to study but also challenge the very idea of *what* international politics are and *why*. The theme of Black identity politics in Mexico thus has been propounded by drawing justification from an intersubjective approach to IR that broadens and deepens the studies, to engage in analyses situated at the level of the individual and the community, both in and outside the parameters of the State, and oriented towards the epistemological tools societies employ in (re)creating themselves. As Albert Paolini convincingly argues,

> [w]ithout an account of differentiation, of the role of the imaginary and the epistemological, of people themselves in the course of their everyday life strategies and interaction with forces and pressures that are at once global, modern, and local, all that is left is a static, inadequate chronicle of international politics.[4]

A theory of intersubjectivity, then, may serve as the desperately lacking factor in international politics that enables marginalised societies to be situated within what is deemed relevant in the global context, in emphasising their analytical value. Precisely given that the lived experiences of marginalised societies often point to the existence of non-static concepts of time and space, the victories of cultural difference and ambivalence signify greater possibilities for democracy as opposed to death-ridden fragmentation. Thus, "intersubjectivity signifies the capacity of individuals and societies to live with, work through, and manage the anxieties, uncertainties, and

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[4] Paolini, *Navigating Modernity*, 19.

contingencies of modern living, without some overarching universal code or rationally constituted lifeworld."[5]

Indeed, Black communities in the Diaspora are rich, analytic ground for discovering the imaginary capabilities of the human for confronting adverse circumstances which, more often than not, also include an oppressive State. Famed African-American author Toni Morrison very solemnly drives this point home in an interview with Paul Gilroy; as such, I feel obliged to quote her at length.

> [M]odern life begins with slavery… From a women's point of view, in terms of confronting the problems of where the world is now, black women had to deal with post-modern problems in the nineteenth century and earlier. These things had to be addressed by black people a long time ago: certain kinds of dissolution, the loss of and the need to reconstruct certain kinds of stability. Certain kinds of madness, deliberately going mad in order, as one of the characters says in the book, "in order not to lose your mind." These strategies for survival made the truly modern person. They're a response to predatory western phenomena. You can call it an ideology and an economy, what it is is a *pathology*. Slavery broke the world in half, it broke it in every way. It broke Europe. It made them into something else, it made them slave masters, it made them crazy. You can't do that for hundreds of years and it not take a toll. They had to dehumanize, not just the slaves but themselves. They have had to reconstruct everything in order to make that system appear true. It made everything in world war two possible. It made world war one necessary. Racism is the word that we use to encompass all this.[6]

In closing, I wish to capitalise on this idea of pathology which very intelligently embraces both the slave master and the slave in the process of brokenness produced by racism as defined here by Morrison. It thus seems pertinent not *only* to engage in the Diasporic challenge of redemption and transformation, although not in a sense that seeks to recover a wholly racialised being unaltered by the intricate

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[5] Paolini, *Navigating Modernity*, 15.
[6] Paul Gilroy, "Living Memory: An Interview with Toni Morrison," in Paul Gilroy, *Small Acts*, 175–82 (London: Serpent's Tail, 1993), cited by Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 221.

processes of creolisation. Instead, it should also be emphasised that the prerogatives of recovery and advancement are not purposed for a purely Black account of historical appropriation. The potential of applying the lessons that humanity can learn from the breadth and profundity of the Black experience is far greater than ought to be limited to the African Diaspora for internalisation. It ought to transcend the arbitrary divisions cemented in the (fallacious) logic of the colour spectrum. In this sense, the vision of creating a more just, inclusive and egalitarian world for tomorrow is not naïvely conceived as an unattainable accomplishment. For it is not an accomplishment per se, but a process legitimated by the imaginary capabilities of the oppressed, which have tested and proven ways to confront the ugliness and the brutality of this pathology.