



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2010 Volume I: Connecting the Visual to the Verbal in the Classroom

Art and Poetry of the Afro Mestizos

Curriculum Unit 10.01.01, published September 2010
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Introduction

I have been teaching Spanish in public elementary schools in Richmond, Virginia, since 2007. Before moving to Virginia, I enjoyed working twenty years in bilingual education and full-Spanish immersion classrooms in San Diego, California. I love all facets of language acquisition, and I am intrigued by the interaction of languages in culturally diverse communities.

Since arriving in Virginia, I have been working with students who attend Kindergarten through Third Grade (Summer Hill/Ruffin Road Elementary school). The Summer Hill school building is one of those old, red-brick buildings that are so abundant in Richmond (and which I find so charming despite their paucity of modern comforts). The building is used to provide educational services to students in 1st Grade through 5th Grade. Our Pre-School and Kindergarten students attend the Ruffin Road building, which is situated about a mile away from Summer Hill. Most of our students are African-American, but we also have a significant percentage of Hispanic children, mainly of Mixteco (one of Mexico's largest indigenous people) and Central American origins. Many of these children were born in the United States of immigrant parents who came to this country seeking a better life. Students of Anglo-Saxon ancestry are few in number, along with a very few children from other ethnic groups. In terms of overall diversity of the student population, Summer Hill/Ruffin Road Elementary has the highest number of Hispanic ESL students in the entire City of Richmond public school system. Almost all of the children in the neighborhood live in difficult financial circumstances and, consequently, most of the children receive free or reduced-price meals from our school cafeteria.

Students in Richmond Public Schools, as in many other places in our country, are expected to meet rigorous academic standards that require daily hard work and discipline. At Summer Hill and Ruffin Road, our days are filled with numerous activities, and our children not only spend a considerable amount of time studying the core curriculum subjects, but they also benefit from a number of extra-curricular activities during the regular school day, and a variety of after-school programs offered free of charge. Children attending public schools in the City of Richmond enjoy the benefit of learning Spanish from the time they are enrolled in Kindergarten, which allows them to acquire Spanish at a stage in life when children are particularly receptive to the acquisition of a second language.

Learning a second language requires much more than just being able to occasionally use a limited number of conventional phrases. We do not want to approach others in a superficial manner; we want to be in real

communication with them. For that reason, it is not surprising to see that promoting cultural knowledge is one of the critical elements contemplated by the Spanish as a Foreign Language Standards of Learning.

With this in mind, one of my priorities in my daily work as a teacher of Spanish is to introduce my students to the beauty and richness of the Latin American and Hispanic cultures, a purpose that involves much more than the mere teaching of the language. I certainly want my students to be able to communicate their ideas using Spanish in a comprehensible way, but I don't want to limit my teaching, or their learning, to the traditional practice and drill sessions that result in little more than vocabulary retention. I am convinced that in order for my students to get the most out of our sessions, I must find ways to enrich my lessons with activities that are not only informative and engaging, but that will allow them to recognize the sometimes hidden commonalities existing among people from different cultures. I want my students to open themselves and look at life the way people in other countries do, and in that process, to gain information not only about those others, but also about themselves.

I believe that becoming fully aware of how deeply interconnected we human beings are, despite differences in languages or geographical distance, may be one of the most liberating experiences in life. As the Mexican poet Octavio Paz says in his poem "Piedra de Sol",

"Para que pueda ser, he de ser otro, salir de m, buscarme entre los otros, los otros que no son si yo no existo, los otros que me dan plena existencia..."

("In order to be, I must be another, leave myself, search for myself in the others, the others that don't exist if I don't exist, the others that give me total existence.")

Unfortunately, while our public schools are fully integrated, and children from all over the world may sit side-by-side in our American classrooms, the lack of mutual understanding may be a serious obstacle affecting the way individuals in our society approach each other as they grow. This lack of understanding, as we know, may become a fertile ground where all sort of racial conflicts may easily germinate. As a teacher, I feel obligated to do my part to minimize tension between the children, and to promote compassion and tolerance through our classroom activities. Sadly, I only get to spend a limited amount of time with my students, and it is difficult to eradicate certain negative attitudes that may be the result of years of misunderstandings. For example, my African-American students have stereotyped ideas about Latin Americans, they believe that everyone who speaks Spanish in this country is from Mexico, and that Mexicans celebrate their Independence Day on the Cinco de Mayo.

The same holds true for the Hispanic children, who fail to see how strong the African influence is in the Latin American countries. They look at their African-American co-students from a painful distance, as if there was no connection between these ethnic groups. They are not aware that some of the most "Latino" elements in Hispanic-American culture, such as music, food and a variety of artistic manifestations, are tightly connected with Africa. In other words, Latin American culture would not be what it is without the African influence, and I find very painful to observe how my students move away from each other because of their cultural ignorance.

Consequently, I have decided to prepare a curriculum unit in which I can blend the teaching of grade-appropriate Spanish vocabulary with information about some of the traditional art and poetry produced in Latin American regions. Taking into consideration that most of my students are Hispanics and African-Americans, I have chosen as the topic for this unit the art and poetry created by the Afro Mestizos, which is the term used to refer to those Hispanics with an African background. Unknown to many North

Americans, Afro Mestizos are the descendants of the African slaves brought to Latin America during the Colonial times. It is my hope that by studying this unit, students will develop an appreciation of the cultural elements they share. More specifically, as they learn more about the social and cultural legacies that slavery left in Latin America, students may grow closer together instead of further apart. I also expect to see my students making steady progress in their learning of the Spanish language, since they will be required to read, write and speak in complete sentences, using the appropriate Spanish vocabulary. They will also demonstrate their understanding of the content in a variety of ways.

This unit is intended primarily for students in 4th to 6th grade levels; however, with modest modifications of content and activities, the unit may be adapted to older students studying Spanish at a more advanced level. For example, teachers working with older students may choose to reflect upon the manner in which some traditional festivities among the Afro Mestizos mirror celebrations such as the Brazilian Carnival, and even Mardi Gras, to stress the existing interconnection between people with African ancestry living in the Americas. There are dances and rituals that have been practiced in Mexico through the centuries, which are not only fascinating because of their resemblance to African practices, but they are also a display of the beautiful outfits, masks and music especially prepared for certain occasions.

Regarding the portion of the unit that is dedicated to poetry, while conducting research on Afro Mestizo poetry in Mexico, I discovered poems that have been written to express the love and emotional connection between the poets and the land where they were born. For this reason, and since one of my main objectives in preparing this unit is to help my students to see how they are culturally interconnected, I will also share with the children a few poems written in Spanish by poets having an Afro Mestizo background who were born in countries other than Mexico, for example, the Cuban poet Nicolás Guillén. In these poems, students will find the issue of slavery and oppression mentioned in a manner reminiscent of that offered by many Afro American poets. Again, because of time limitations, I will share with my students only a few poems that should be easy for them to understand. Finally, I expect the students to be able to write short poems inspired by a piece of art, or by an image related to the Afro Mestizos.

Afro Mestizos, also known as Afro Hispanics, have lived in the Latin American countries under very similar circumstances for many years, and are linked by many commonalities. However, there are also distinctive features that characterize each of the Afro Mestizo communities, and it would be extremely difficult to include information about all of them in this unit. For this reason, I will limit the scope of my work to the Afro Mestizos living in Mexico, and more specifically, in the region occupied by the states of Oaxaca and Guerrero. This area is known as la Costa Chica ("little coast"), which is an area particularly rich in Afro Hispanic traditions. Interestingly, it is also the region in Mexico where most of the Hispanic families living in the City of Richmond had their home before moving to the US. I want to take this opportunity to explain to those teachers who may read this work that while I did not prepare this unit with the intention of teaching geography I believe it is important for my students to gain a better grasp of where regions actually are. I think it is unfortunate that in times when young people are becoming used to receive instant information from or about people living in places far away from us, they cannot find those same places on a world map. For that reason, some of the activities planned for this unit will provide students with opportunities to review their knowledge about geography. I have included a number of suggestions on excellent maps, which are available online, in the list of references at the end of this unit.

I would like to mention that an important factor that motivated me to prepare this unit was my participation in the National Seminar "Poems about Works of Art, Featuring African American, Hispanic, and Women Writers", organized by Yale University, under the expert leadership of Dr. Paul Fry. This National Seminar had a special

emphasis in what is known as "ecphrastic poetry" (that is, poetry directly inspired by works of art). Participants had the opportunity to study and share their thoughts about the poetic interpretation of some very well-known paintings and sculptures. They also prepared individual presentations, and made valuable suggestions about practical applications of similar activities in the classrooms. Taking part in this National Seminar helped me to realize how the analysis of art and poetry can greatly stimulate my students' critical thinking skills, while they can also gain valuable information about the world around them.

During the process of planning this unit I asked myself many questions. For example, just how much information do I need to share with the students? Should I include historical facts about slavery in Latin America? Would the unit be meaningful and complete if I focus my teaching only on the artistic and poetic works? I could limit the scope of the unit to an analysis of Afro Mestizo poems and art, but including the historical context may significantly enrich the overall experience. After all, art and poetry are intimately connected to the period in time in which they are created, as mirrored in the social circumstances surrounding the writers and artists. So much poetry has been written because of historical events. Perhaps more importantly, so much history has happened because of skilful writing and oratory. I doubt that my students will have many subsequent opportunities, as they move to upper grades, to be exposed to information about the implementation of slavery in Central and South America. As a Hispanic woman who has had opportunities to enjoy the richness of the African contribution to culture in Mexico, I would not be satisfied with this unit if I did not mention the historical facts. That having been said, including the issue of slavery within any curricular unit requires sensitivity and careful planning from those who aim to introduce children to a particularly brutal time in history, when millions of human beings were treated as "property" by people who considered themselves educated, civilized, and faithful practitioners of their religious beliefs.

This unit can be taught in five weeks, implementing two sessions each week, with each session requiring at least an hour of classroom work. Every session has been carefully prepared to make sure it meets the Standards of Learning (SOL's) for Spanish while it also supports other core subjects. In addition, each session includes activities that respond to individual learning styles, with a special emphasis on acquiring Spanish vocabulary, through the usage of a variety of teaching resources, including photos, charts, diagrams, videos, music, books, and even food. Every teacher knows that meaningful communication is a main component in any effective learning session, and for this reason my lessons will be delivered in both English and Spanish, to minimize what is known as "language anxiety" and to promote active oral participation by every child. Activities include working as a whole class, but there will be plenty of opportunities for the students to work in pairs and small groups, with African-American children working side-by-side with their Hispanic "colleagues," so they can all practice Spanish and benefit from each other's learning. Instead of a written final evaluation, students will be required to complete a comprehensive final project, in the form of a journal among other items, which may include facts, drawings, tables, texts (such as poems) as well as writing of their own. Students will be invited to share their personal thoughts with the rest of the class, to expand on what they have learned, and we will have a celebration at the end, with the participation of at least one special speaker--hopefully a poet or an artist.

Since I took part in a seminar about poetry inspired by works of art, I wanted to make sure my curriculum unit included poems and art created by Afro-Hispanic poets and artists. This will provide the students with a broader understanding of how people who speak different languages may express similar hopes and concerns through art and poetry. My students already have some knowledge about American art and poetry, and this unit will enrich their knowledge with information about artistic production from other areas in our continent.

For organizational purposes, I have divided this unit in two sections. The first section offers information about

the African presence in Mexico, including facts about the slavery trade that was implemented in Mexico during the Colonial years. This part also provides general information about the Afro Mestizo population living in Oaxaca and Guerrero, Mexico, and their art and poetry. The second part of this unit will include the lesson plans and classroom activities as well as a list of resources that can be used while teaching the unit. Before I start the informational part of this unit, I want to express my gratitude to the cultural organization Xquenda, located in Mexico City, and to its director, Ms. Susana Harp, as well as to her staff, who have passionately worked for the past eight years in the compilation, promotion and protection of important and beautiful samples of the traditional art and poetry produced in the Costa Chica area in Mexico. They have graciously provided me with authorization to use some poems and images that will make the lessons a very stimulating experience. To Xquenda, and the dedicated artists they represent, goes my admiration and respect.

I have been very excited during the preparation of this unit, and I can hardly wait to introduce my students to an experience that will help them see how culturally connected they really are. It is my hope that at some stage in this journey of learning about the Afro Mestizos, my students' perception about themselves and the rest of the class will positively change. Finally, I would like to invite teachers who may be interested in implementing this unit, to send me any comments or suggestions that may improve this work.

Part I - First Africans in Mexico

When it comes to the issue of the African presence in Mexican territory, opinions from some well-known Mexican anthropologists have been fiercely divided for decades. There are many who believe that Africans arrived in Mexico for the first time as a result of the slave trade implemented in the Spanish colonies. A number of careful studies conducted by other experts, however, seem to demonstrate that, although the slave trade caused a dramatic increase in the black population living in Mexico during the Colonial era, it was really during the Pre-Columbian Period when African travelers made the first contact with the Olmec people, who had their main ceremonial centers in the southern area of Mexico.

The heart of the Olmec civilization was located in the area presently known as the Mexican state of Tabasco and part of Veracruz, and it flourished there from approximately 1200 to 500 B.C. Numerous specimens of Olmec sculptures of extraordinary beauty have been found in the southern region of the Mexican republic, especially in La Venta, Tres Zapotes and San Lorenzo. Among those specimens, the best known are the "colossal heads", which have been analyzed using modern methods of dating and determined to have been made as early as 800 to 700 B.C. These monumental sculptures, which can weigh more than 25 tons each, were mentioned by the British anthropologist Ivan Van Sertima in his interesting book, *They Came Before Columbus*. The Olmec heads are among other archeological artifacts that have clear Negroid features, strongly suggesting the possibility of African presence in Mexico centuries before the arrival of Christopher Columbus.

Besides the colossal heads, there are other Mexican archeological artifacts depicting intriguing figures that show African characteristics. For example, Van Sertima's book refers to the so called Bearded Negroid wanderers in medieval Mexico, which appear in the Mixtec Codex Dorenberg, a beautiful codice from the 14th Century, that was donated by Joseph Dorenberg, a German Consul, and also a collector, to the National Library in Mexico, in 1892. Other representations of figures, these ones made with clay, have been found in Veracruz, Mexico, and they also have characteristics that are common to African ceramics. At the end of his book, Van

Sertima says, "The African presence is proven by stone heads, terra cottas, skeletons, artifacts, techniques and inscriptions, by oral traditions and documented history, by botanical, linguistic and cultural data. When the feasibility of African crossings of the Atlantic was not proven and the archeological evidence undated and unknown, we could in all innocence ignore the most startling of coincidences. This is no longer possible." (Van Sertima, pages 255–256)

Fifteen years after the first edition of his famous book, Van Sertima wrote *African Presence in Early America*, offering new information gathered from recent discoveries, as well as important contributions made by other experts in the field. The book has numerous illustrations and abundant new data, which seem to corroborate the idea of an early encounter between the Natives living in Central and South America with Africans.

Slave Trade in Mexico

Since this unit is not intended to explore historic data in depth, but only to provide a coherent framework that can be used to guide the students in the study of the Afro Mestizos' art and poetry, I will briefly describe how slavery was implemented in Mexico, without expanding too much into this topic.

First, we need to remember that slavery had been practiced in Spain before the "discovery" of the New World, as a consequence of Spain's efforts to recuperate the power and territory lost to the Moors. We also need to remember that slavery was already practiced by indigenous tribes like the Aztecs, who not only organized local wars called *Guerras Floridas*, with the intention of capturing enemies to use them for human sacrifice, they also integrated a certain form of slavery within their society. In Spain, during the Pre-Columbian time, slavery never became a powerful and well organized system, or a vital financial network that produced significant profits. Conversely, slavery would reach its peak in the Spanish colonies, as a result of Spain's insatiable desire to exploit the recently discovered mines with precious metals, as well as forests, sugar cane plantations and many other promising sources of wealth.

As for the indigenous population, the new diseases and harsh treatment imposed by the Europeans had greatly diminished their number in a very short period of time, and the Spanish monarchy decided to import slaves from Africa. A system of *licencias* (commercial permits to import a specific number of slaves) was created and regulated, and formal routes were established to bring slaves into Mexican territory through places such as the port of Veracruz. That decision would prove to be a clever move, and very soon Spain would become one of the most powerful countries in the world. It is not surprising then to find that by the end of the Colonial period twenty times more slaves had been brought to the Latin American region than the number of slaves taken to the English colonies in North America.

Mexico's Independence

Mexico's War of Independence began on September 16, 1810 and ended in 1821. It resulted in numerous and famous battles against the Spanish forces, and required the active participation of thousands of individuals from different social classes and nationalities. The triumph of the Independence represented a critical step in the fight for freedom, and slavery in Mexico was finally abolished in 1829. This would be a life-changing event for the thousands of African slaves who lived in Mexico, most of whom never returned to their ancestral homes in Africa. Other Spanish colonies would follow the same example, and very soon, Central and South America would become a region where national identity would be permanently shaped by the presence of Mestizos, Europeans and Africans, the latest nowadays considered the *Tercera Raz*, or Third Root. Teachers interested in finding relevant sources of information about the Mexican independence can consult the list of references included at the end of this unit.

Afro Mestizos in Mexico

Afro Mestizos, also known as Afro Hispanics, are now living in every state of the Mexican republic, and it has become difficult to differentiate them from the rest of the population, due to the mix of ethnic groups that has occurred in Mexico over the last few centuries. However, there are some areas in Mexico where the Afro Mestizo presence is markedly more numerous, and as a result, those areas have kept a distinctive identity compared to many other communities. One of those regions is the area known as Costa Chica, which includes parts of the Mexican states Oaxaca and Guerrero. In that region, which has been home to numerous indigenous groups, the Afro Mestizos have lived a quiet existence, which is characterized, in many cases, by a precarious economy. In spite of this, Afro Mestizos have kept their cultural traditions alive, by the uninterrupted practice and teaching of their artistic manifestations and rituals. Unfortunately, Afro Mestizos in Mexico have not received the same recognition given to other ethnic groups, and most Mexicans ignore the important contributions made by this group to the rest of the country. In addition, very little is said about their African ancestry, as well as the important role they have played in Mexico's history--for example, during the Independence Movement. Fortunately, there is a world-wide movement that started years ago, focused on bringing attention to what is known as African Diaspora, and more people are learning about the life and achievements of the Afro Hispanic population.

Artistic Manifestations

Some of the Afro Mestizos' most traditional artistic manifestations are: Sculpture – This is primarily made using wood from the parota tree, which grows in tropical regions and has a softness that allows for easy and intricate carving. Many of the pieces made by the Afro Mestizos in Oaxaca are notably similar to African sculptures, reminding us of small totems. Figures may represent fantastic beings, which have a close resemblance to el Diablo, or the devil. It is important to mention that the use of parota wood in Afro Mestizo sculpture is not accidental, but a deliberate choice made by the sculptor to show his profound connection with the land where he lives.

Xylography – It is a common practice among Afro Mestizos artists to create small and interesting images using woodcutting techniques. Many of the pieces are made in black and white, with only a few embellished with shades of red and yellow among other colors. Images usually depict domestic scenes in which men and women are portrayed working or hunting and fishing. One characteristic of these beautiful pieces is the emphasis placed on tropical landscape backgrounds. Palm trees and clusters of birds or fish are frequently represented, as is water, which usually appears in the form of a river. Mixed with those images, the artists provide bits of information about the lifestyle in the Costa Chica region, for example by including a hammock in the image, which is a common element in Afro Mestizos homes, where furniture has been reduced to the absolutely indispensable. Life in these artistic pieces is faithfully represented as it is seen through the eyes of the Afro Mestizos: simple but meaningful, precarious but also beautiful and rich in visions of exuberant landscape.

Painting – There are interesting samples of paintings made in the Costa Chica region, which show a clear African influence. For example, there are masks made by painting leaves taken from the local palm trees, which are decorated with bright colors and ornamented with numerous dots. These masks represent faces which are particularly narrow and long, and have distinctively African features. In both painting and xylography, one can see how the Afro Mestizos have chosen to keep their artistic manifestations faithful to their traditions, by using wood and leaves from the land that means so much to them. There are also samples of paintings made on flat surfaces, and those too repeat the same bright coloration as the masks, and may

include symbolic elements related to spiritual beliefs.

Poetry – Much of the poetry I found while conducting research for this unit is descriptive and composed in a traditional form. The poems tend to be relatively unsophisticated and, therefore, readily understood by the average reader. The topics lean toward the universal: love of the land, love of family, love between a man and a woman. One particularly good example of this genre was written by Alvaro Carrillo, who was born in the Costa Chica, and became famous as both poet and composer.

Teaching Strategies

As I have already said, I teach Spanish at the elementary school level, and most of my students are African-American and Hispanics. While the level of difficulty within the Spanish curriculum may vary according to grade level, there are teaching strategies that I regularly use with all of my students, to make sure every child is participating in our activities and making progress in the learning of Spanish as a second language. I also look for as many opportunities as possible to use my teaching of Spanish to support the English language skills already developed by my students, and vice versa.

While planning my lessons, I take into consideration three major factors. First, I consult the Standards of Learning for the teaching of Spanish as a Foreign Language, to make sure my teaching will help my students to achieve the expectations contemplated by the SOL's. Second, I look at the Spanish curriculum to identify the most relevant content and Spanish vocabulary for each unit and grade level, to make sure I am covering the appropriate material through the school year. Finally, I plan activities that are consistent with the goals for each lesson, and decide on the formal and informal evaluation tools that I will use with each unit, to make sure my teaching is effective.

For this specific unit about the Afro Mestizos, I will use some of the following teaching strategies.

1. I will explain to my students the content and language objectives for each lesson, and the reason why it is important for them to learn the new content. Before we start working, I will ask the children to tell a partner what the goal for each lesson is, so they can share their thoughts with each other, and reinforce mutual understanding. We will keep our goals written in a visible place so we can revisit them if necessary.
2. I will make sure the goals, vocabulary and activities for each session are appropriate to the level of each class. I will explain the key words in a comprehensible way, doing my best to illustrate the use of each word within a meaningful context. We will use a variety of graphic organizers, such as content maps or word webs, to make sure students understand the key terms and concepts. We will have Spanish dictionaries available, so children can consult them with the help of a partner. There will be a list with key words on the board, with the English meaning written next to each word, if possible with an illustration. When providing directions before an Activity, I will make sure I am explaining only one step at a time, and I will ask students to talk to a partner and summarize what I said, to see if they understood my directions. Also, I will have a task "checklist" in a place where students can see it, so they can work in a sequential way during the hands-on activities.
3. I will activate my students' prior knowledge in a variety of ways--for example, by asking the children to work with a partner and share what they already know about the topic of the African presence in the American continent. Students will then share their thoughts with the rest of the class and we will make a K-W-L chart with their ideas. I will use illustrations such as maps to prompt the students to share their knowledge about the topic. When using a book, I will do what is known as "walking the text" so children can make predictions, identify important words and also gain meaning from looking at the illustrations. I may also use some of the

images I gathered for this unit to activate my students' prior knowledge.

4. As we progress through the unit, I will use different strategies to see if I am providing my students with comprehensible input. For example, I will speak slowly, paying special attention to the way I pronounce words in Spanish, and I will include cognates when possible. I regularly use gestures and body language to facilitate comprehension. I also use visuals, realia, games and music. I have noticed that my students learn more, better and faster when I combine resources that appeal to all of their senses and individual learning styles.

5. Students will have plenty of opportunities to work in pairs, small groups, with the entire class, and also on their own during our hands-on activities. Small groups will have at least one Spanish speaking child who will provide support to the Spanish learners. I will show to the students how to proceed during the activities, and after I have modeled, I will ask a child to explain what I just did to the rest of the class. Then, as children work, I will approach them to provide feedback.

6. As children learn new words, I will look for engaging ways for them to apply the newly acquired vocabulary in meaningful, real-life situations. We will summarize and review the concepts learned from each session, and students will take active part in helping each other to better retain those concepts. We will review the key vocabulary and create a dictionary with all the key terms learned from the unit.

Part 2 - Samples of Lessons

Lesson 2

Goal: Students will learn about the contacts between Africans and Olmecs.

Instructional time – 60 to 90 minutes

Spanish SOL's: SII.1, SII.2, SII.5 and SII.8

Introduction – I will start by briefly reviewing with the class what we learned yesterday, to bring my students' attention to the topic of the African presence in the Latin American countries. I will remind the children that Afro Mestizos is the term used to designate those individuals born in Latin America who have a mixed African and Mestizo ancestry. I will add that today we will learn about the African presence in Latin America during the time before Christopher Columbus' arrival in our continent.

Activity 1 – We will read aloud the Spanish sentences written at the end of our previous session (from our journals), and we will take another look at the American continent map to find some of the Latin American countries where Afro Mestizos live—for example, Mexico and Colombia. The goal for this activity is to help the students to understand that Afro Mestizos are now dispersed everywhere in our continent. I will add that due to modern immigration, Afro Mestizos are now living in the US and parts of Europe too, for example in Spain, where language is not a barrier for them.

Activity 2 – I will show the students photos of archeological artifacts found in Mexico, for example, the colossal Olmec heads together with photos of other Pre-Hispanic sculptures discovered in the area where the Olmec civilization flourished. These photos will be organized in a PowerPoint presentation, and I will guide the

students in a whole-class conversation as we see each image, asking the children if they see anything that resembles African features. I will write a list in English and Spanish with their answers. Since my students do not know about the Olmecs, I will use a large map of the Mexican republic so students can see the place where the Olmecs lived, as well as a second map illustrating the maritime routes which experts believe were used by African sailors to arrive in the American continent. Finally, students will have an opportunity to see the photo of a boat replicating the type of ship that could have been used by African sailors to reach South and Central American land. We will use geographical terms in Spanish to refer to places on the maps and to describe the maritime journeys. We will then write two or three sentences in Spanish using our journal.

Activity 3 – This time I will give the students printed copies of the images (archeological specimens) used in the previous activity to compare them to the photos used in Lesson 1. Students will work in groups of four, and they will observe all three sets of photos (African-Americans, Afro Mestizos, and Olmec heads and other pieces) looking for similarities. We will write a list in Spanish with those characteristics, and we will read the list a couple of times. Depending on time and grade level, teachers may want to share with their class some of the other photos included in Van Sertima's books. Please refer to the bibliography for more information.

Activity 4 – To end this lesson, I will give each student a world map where they will color and label Africa, the Atlantic Ocean, Mexico, and the area in Mexico where the Olmecs lived. The students will trace lines on this map to represent the maritime routes that may have been followed by the African sailors to reach South and Central American land. We will write two or three complete sentences in Spanish on the bottom of the map summarizing what we learned today, and they will attach this map to their journal.

Activity 5 – Each student will write a few sentences in their journal, in English or Spanish, to answer the following questions:

1. "How are the Afro Mestizos similar to African-Americans?"
2. "How are they different?"
3. "How are they similar and different to you?"

Lesson 7

Goals: Students will identify connections between the Afro Mestizos' art and life.

Instructional time –60 to 90 minutes

Spanish SOL's: SII.1, SII.2, SII.5 and SII.8

Introduction – I will start by summarizing what we learned during the last session: about how art can capture moments in time in a highly descriptive manner. I will remind my students that artists frequently use their talent to portray their life and the world around them just as a writer may use words to produce similar results. As an example, I will show my students the image of Picasso's Guernica, which we saw during our last class, to stress the idea that while a writer can use words to describe the carnage and destruction which occur during a military confrontation, an artist can create images powerful enough to communicate the same message, stirring deep emotions in the viewer. I will explain to my students that today we will explore how some of the art produced by the Afro Mestizos who live in la Costa Chica is closely connected to their daily life.

Activity 1 – The students will work in groups of four, with one Spanish-speaker in each group to provide

vocabulary support. I will tell the children that we are going to see some photos to remember what we have previously learned about the way Afro Mestizos live in la Costa Chica. I will add that it is important for us to keep in mind how they live, so we can understand how their living circumstances have an influence in the art produced in that region. I will show a PowerPoint presentation, with approximately six photographs, wherein they will see Afro Mestizos of different ages as they take part in daily activities. I will be using a variety of images to ensure that the students will observe people whose faces and body language suggest different emotions under normal circumstances. As we observe the photographs, I will ask my students to carefully look for those visual elements that provide a clue as to what may be meaningful to the photographed individuals. For example, there is an image of an old man, standing behind a large fishing net that hangs next to his house, who looks directly into the camera with an expression of determination on his face. The man's sun-damaged skin tells a story about someone who has worked very hard for most of his life to survive (Figure 1). Another photograph shows a young father, sitting on a hammock inside his modest home, tenderly embracing a child. Father and daughter look peacefully happy despite the almost absolute lack of material comforts (Figure 2). As I show each image in sequence, my students will talk with their partners, in Spanish, about everything they see and share their thoughts with the rest of the class.

Activity 2 – I will tell the children that we are going to work together finding adjectives that can be used to describe the same images, so we can put in writing what we see. We will look at the pictures again describing them in Spanish, using complete sentences, making sure everyone is pronouncing the words correctly and understands their meaning. This time I will write a few of the sentences on a large piece of paper, while the students copy the words on their journals. Once the students finish writing, we will see the photos again, reading the sentences to double check that they accurately describe the images. Finally, I will show the same photos, this time randomly, and the students will read the sentences that match each image without my help.

Activity 3 – I will explain to the students that this activity will stress the idea that art has a purpose, and it does not happen in a "vacuum", but it is connected to the artists' lives and the world around them. I will show the children six images made by Afro Mestizo artists from la Costa Chica using woodcutting techniques. We will look at the beauty of these images, talking about what we perceive. I will ask the children to observe the images carefully and see if they can find any similarities between the photographs used in the previous activity and these images (Figures 3, 4 and 5). The students will exchange ideas with a partner, and they will have an opportunity to share their thoughts with the rest of the class. I expect that the children will notice how the water, palm trees, fish, and birds, as well as people engaged in survival activities (fishing, hunting, making hammocks) appear in almost every image, just as it happens with the photographs, thus pointing to the fact that those elements play a very important role in the life of the Afro Mestizos communities living in la Costa Chica.

Activity 4 – I will explain to the children that we are now going to record our observations about how Afro Mestizo art includes elements taken from the artists' life. Using an overhead projector, I will show to the students one of the photos and one of the images used during the previous activities. With the images arranged side by side on the whiteboard, I will ask the students to find specific similarities between them, and I will write their answers, using complete sentences, on a large piece of paper. We will read the list together, making sure every child understands the meaning of the words, and is pronouncing them correctly. I will then give each student a printed copy of both images (placed together), so they can copy the sentences on the bottom. We will read the list together a couple of times, and then they will read the list aloud without my help. The students will attach this paper to their journal.

Activity 5 – I want my students to make as many personal connections as possible with what they learn about

the Afro Mestizos through this curriculum unit. With this in mind, before we start this activity I will remind them about how human beings are all interconnected despite cultural differences, because we all have the same basic needs. We may speak different languages and use different tools and strategies to solve problems, but there are still more similarities among us than differences. I will have printed copies of all the images we saw today, numbered and placed on the whiteboard. I will tell the children that for this activity, I want them to carefully look at all the images, and choose one they may feel especially connected to. While they observe the images, I will ask, "Do you see something that reminds you of a past experience, or that brings memories about your family, your home or the community where you live? Do you see something that is meaningful to you?" Once every child has made a selection, the students will talk with a partner to explain the reasons for their choice, and they will be invited to share their thoughts with the rest of the class. I will then give each child a printed copy of their selected image. The students will work with a partner who chose the same image, so they can help each other to write a few sentences in Spanish explaining their thoughts. They will attach the paper to their journal.

Activity 6 – Each student will write a few sentences in English or Spanish to answer the following question: "If you knew how to use woodcutting to make an image and tell others something important about you, what would you include in your image?"

Lesson 9

Goal: Students will draw a picture inspired by an Afro Mestizo poem

Instructional time –60 to 90 minutes

Spanish SOL's: SII.1, SII.2, SII.5 and SII.8

Activity 1 – I will briefly summarize what we learned during our last two sessions about the way artists can use images to show their connection to the world around them by implementing elements taken from their daily experiences into their art. I will show three of the images studied during the last lesson, asking questions such as, "What do you see? What is this image telling you about the artist who made it, and the place where he or she lives?"

Activity 2 – The students will work in groups of three, with one Spanish-speaker in each group. I will explain that today we will learn how Afro Mestizo poets use poetry to create images inspired by the world around them. I will add that just as it happens with other forms of artistic creation—for example painting—poetry can refer to different situations, and can convey a variety of emotions and reactions in the readers. I will tell my students that today we will read a poem written by Alvaro Carrillo, a very well-known Afro Mestizo poet who was born in the Costa Chica, and whose mother was a mulatta. I will share with the students some biographical information about Carrillo before we read one of his poems titled Costa Chica Ma. In this poem, Carrillo describes the land where he was born, combining details about its beautiful natural characteristics, while he also provides subtle clues in relation to some of the challenges faced by those who live in that secluded area. Using an overhead projector, I will have the poem enlarged on the whiteboard so I can guide the students in the reading and understanding of the poem. I will clarify the meaning of some words that may be confusing. We will read the poem twice, paying special attention to the content as well as to the correct pronunciation of the words.

Activity 3 – I will tell the students that we are going to read the poem again, but this time we will underline those passages where the poet describes his native land using adjectives to refer to colors, shapes, size, etc. I

will guide the students during this reading, giving them time to identify descriptive words. The students will work in groups of four. When we finish, we will read together only the underlined words, making sure we didn't miss anything.

Activity 4 – I will tell the students that just like images and written narrative, poetry can help the reader create a mental image about a place, a person or an experience. I will explain that our goal for this activity is to see whether we can develop a mental image of the place described by Carrillo in his poem. We will use the underlined fragments to work together in creating an image. The students will work in pairs, to make sure every child has an opportunity to share their thoughts. Using the enlarged poem projected on the white board, we will read again those underlined passages, pausing at each of them to build a mental image of what is been described. For example, when Carrillo writes "entre tus altas montañas" ("between your high mountains"), our mental image should be that of a quiet village located between clusters of large mountains, where Nature offers its beauty to the local population, but also keeps the inhabitants isolated from the progress and modernity enjoyed by those who live in more accessible communities. As we read the underlined passages, I will write interconnected words such as solitario and tranquilo (lonely, peaceful) next to the underlined sections, so that we can use word clusters to create a more concrete mental image. When we finish reading, we will talk about the image we all have in our mind about the place described by the poem.

Activity 5 – I will tell the students that it is now time for us to draw a picture based on Carrillo's poem. They will work with a different partner, using their journals, pencils and crayons. I will draw my own image, but I will show it to them only after they finish theirs. We will read one interconnected word at a time, talking about its meaning and how we can graphically represent it, and I will give time to the children to do their drawings. At the end, the students will exchange their journals with two or three other students to see if their drawings show any similarities. I will show them my drawing at the end, using the overhead projector, so they can see if my drawing is similar to theirs, commenting as to how differences enrich the interpretation. To close this activity, I will ask the children if they agree that poetry can create images, just as painting can help us to write a story. The students will attach their drawings to their journal.

Annotated Teaching Resources

Maps

1. This link offers an excellent map which can be used to illustrate the West African slave trade from 1701 to 1810.

<http://www.uwec.edu/geography/lvogeler/w111/slaves.htm>

2. These two links offer good maps of the Costa Chica region in Mexico, as well as some information about that area.

<http://www.mexconnect.com/articles/1937-the-costa-chica-of-guerrero-and-oaxaca>

<http://costachica.net/subdocs/mapasgeneral/mapacostachica.htm>

3. This link offers instant access to high-quality maps of the world. Teachers may want to use some technological devices to amplify the images.

http://www.printableworldmap.org/printable_world_map_wiki1.htm

4. This is a link where maps can be printed free of charge.

<http://printable-maps.blogspot.com/2008/07/printable-blank-world-map.html>

5. This is an excellent website where teachers can print great maps free of charge.

<http://www.eduplace.com/ss/maps/pdf/americas.pdf>

6. Wikipedia offers a variety of images about slave cargo ships in this page.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slave_ship

Olmecs

There are many interesting websites where teachers can find excellent images of the colossal Olmec heads mentioned in this unit as well as maps and other relevant information about this ancient civilization. Some of those websites are:

1. <http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/olmecs.htm> This website has good information and interesting images. Some of the links included in this website can only be opened by pasting the URL address in a webpage called Archives.org. Teachers will find references about the contact between Africans and Olmecs.

2. This page in Wikipedia has good information about the Olmecs and attractive illustrations, including photos and maps.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olmec>

Spanish Colonization of the Americas, Slavery Trade, African Diaspora

These are websites where teachers can read more about the Spanish Colonial period in Latin America, the slavery trade and what is known as African Diaspora. Some of these websites are written in Spanish.

1. <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/indiv/africa/cuvl/diaspora.html> This is one of the best sites on the Internet where teachers can access first-class information as well as great images about many African related topics.

2. http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Spanish_Empire Basic information about the Spanish colonization in the American continent.

3. http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colonizaci%C3%B3n_espa%C3%B1ola_de_Am%C3%A9rica (Spanish) This page has clear information and appealing illustrations in color.

4. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001286/128631eo.pdf> This is a very complete document that carefully describes the way slavery was implemented in different parts of the American continent.

5. <http://www.johntoddjr.com/86%20Yanga/yanga01.htm> This is a very interesting website, with information and photos of Yanga, the first town for escaped slaves in the American continent, dating to 1618.

Afro Mestizos

There are numerous sites on the Internet where teachers can find excellent information and good images that

can be used while teaching this unit. Some of those websites are:

1. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001838/183846s.pdf> This site offers a wonderful text written in Spanish with detailed information about the Africans and Afro Mestizos in Central America.
2. <http://www.afromexico.com/index.htm> This site has an excellent gallery with photos in full color where Afro Mestizos are the main characters. The site also offers interesting links as well as books relevant to this topic.
3. <http://www.nacionmulticultural.unam.mx/Afromexicanos/introduccion.html> This is a wonderful site, in Spanish, with images and interesting information. Pay special attention to the links listed on the left column.
4. <http://www.rebelion.org/noticia.php?id=49594> Information about poetry. In Spanish.
5. <http://www.smithsonianeducation.org/migrations/legacy/almbinfo.html#av> This link lists important centers dedicated to distribute information about the African presence in Latin America.
6. <http://myblog-arborescencia.blogspot.com/2009/06/afro-mexican-dance-of-devils-i.html> This is a great website for those who want to see videos of traditional Afro Mestizo dances. It also has links to other pages. In English.
7. <http://www.xquenda.info/> This website has valuable information about special events organized by this cultural group located in Mexico. There is also information about Afro Mestizo art and music. In Spanish.
8. <http://lanic.utexas.edu/la/region/african/> This is one of the best websites dedicated to divulgate information about Africa, Afro Mestizos, and so on.

Bibliography

1. Van Sertima, Ivan. *They Came Before Columbus*. New York: Random House, 1976. This book offers interesting and well-organized information, and it is illustrated with maps and pictures, used by Van Sertima to support his conclusions about Africans reaching the American continent centuries before Columbus' trips. Plates 11 to 14 show images of the ship mentioned in the lessons.
2. Van Sertima, Ivan. *African Presence in Early America*. New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 1992. This book has good information and illustrations, which provide some evidence to Van Sertima's claims about the early contacts between Africans and Pre Hispanic communities. The book is a compilation of research done by a variety of experts, and was edited by Van Sertima.
3. Sullivan, Charles, Editor. *Here Is My Kingdom: Hispanic-American Literature and Art for Young People*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1994. This is an excellent book about poetry that goes along with a variety of artistic pieces.
4. Alarcn, Francisco X. *Poems to Dream Together*. New York: Lee & Low Books Inc., 2005. Bilingual poems, illustrated with attractive images.

Images

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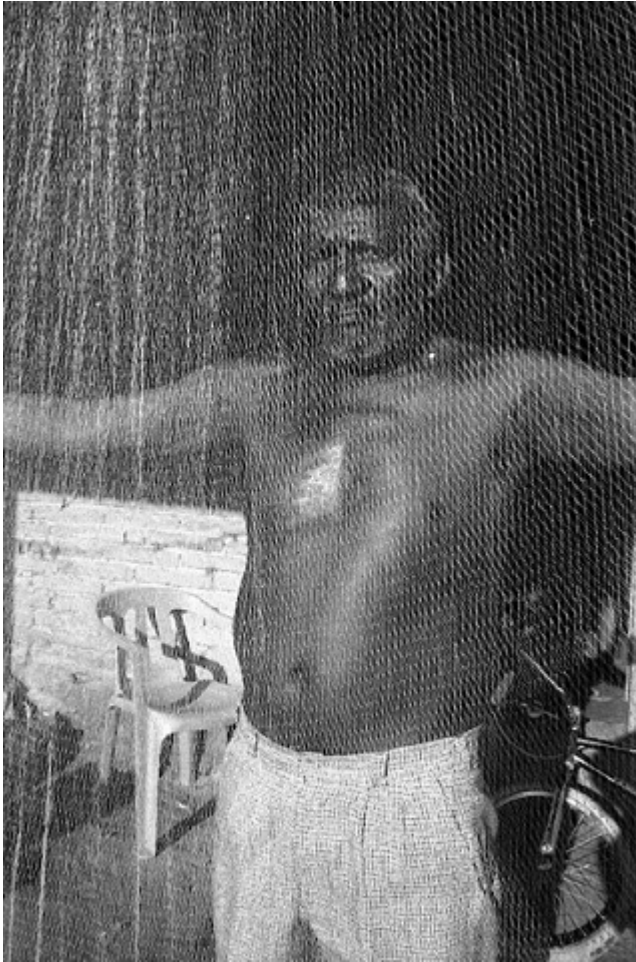


Figure 1 (Photograph taken by Vittorio D'Onofri)

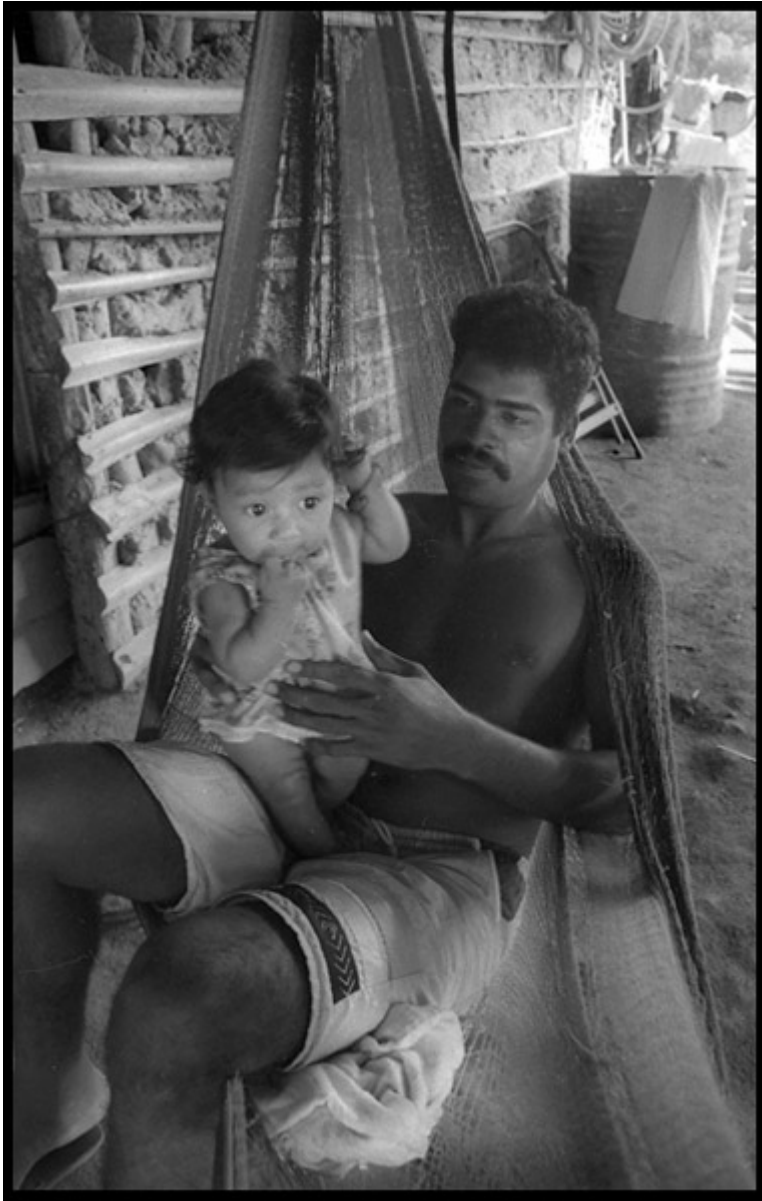


Figure 2 (Photography taken by Vittorio D'Onofri)



"El Rostro de Corralero"

Alberta P. Hernández Nicolas

Xilografía, 2005

El Tamal, santiago Pinotepa Nacional, Oaxaca

Figure 3



"El Rostro de Corralero"
Baltazar Castellano Melo
Xilografía, 2005
Cuajinicuilapa, Guerrero

Figure 4



"El Rostro de Corralero"

Julieta J. Díaz Vargas

Xilografía, 2005

El Tamal, Santiago Pinotepa Nacional, Oaxaca

Figure 5

<https://teachers.yale.edu>

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