



Yale-New Haven  
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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
2022 Volume II: The Long Fight for a Free Caribbean, 1700s-1959

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## **The Origins of Colorism in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic and its Effects on Identity Formation**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 22.02.04  
by Nancy Bonilla

One of the main objectives of this unit titled: The origins of Colorism in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic and its effects on identity formation is to introduce the concept of colorism. This concept of colorism should not be confused with racism and it is important to make that distinction. The next objective of the curriculum unit is to present a brief look at the history of the two Island nations mentioned and their history and relationship to slavery. Once the history and origin of the African population on these Islands is established, students can then begin to see the relationship between slaves, Europeans, and Indigenous people in regards to socio economics and familial dynamics. The unit then goes on to address the history of slavery in the United States. This front loading of history in regards to slavery helps re-enforce the ties we all share and how colorism evolves and takes form. The unit then moves on to the study of colorism in the present day and how we may be guilty of having those predispositions but may not be aware. We are also able to see the effect of colorism on people in the media. One commonality shared by the Hispanic and Black population is that no one is exempt from colorism. The unit then closes out with students changing the narrative and recognizing colorism and taking concrete steps to make the necessary changes to switch the negatives to positives.

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