In colonial Latin America, patriarchy was defined by one's race, class, and gender. Men, especially white elite men, were at the top of the patriarchy pyramid. The Catholic Church governed people's lives, and in charge of the Church were elite white men. In Latin America, women regardless of skin color, had to live as a subject under a man. Latin America also experienced the movement of eugenics during the twentieth century, which transformed women's reproductive rights negatively as it was believed only people with "good" genes could reproduce. Women who notably asserted their agency within these systems of oppression did so by challenging the enforced gender normalities by openly speaking against or resisting said oppression. Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, and Catalina de Erauso were two most notable white elite women who challenged these social normalities as for the women of color who challenged this patriarchy was an indigenous woman, María Bibiana Uribe, the Mexican painter Frida Kahlo, and a slave woman known as Caetana.

The patriarchy in Latin America was created by the Catholic Church, however, the elites of the societies took that patriarchal system a step further. Brazil, for example, was highly influenced by European nations during the twentieth century as they wanted to become a predominantly white nation. It is important to note that Brazil is a predominantly black nation due to its long history with African slavery, therefore, Brazil wanted to erase its blackness by welcoming white Europeans. This was done through the process of eugenics. Eugenics was first introduced in Brazil in 1918 again, with the emphasis on Europe's "whiteness". Nancy Leys Stepan, a historian who published a book on Latin America's eugenics, highlighted that "Brazil entered the twentieth century a highly stratified society, socially and racially…a society [that] was governed informally by a small, largely white elite…a society in which the majority of the

people were black or mulatto and could not read or write". [1] By the 1920s, the educated class "was increasingly "assimilationist" in public discourse, even if privately and in their social relations racist and discriminatory". [2] Eugenics was first brought to attention by Renato Kehl in 1917, who strived for consanguineous marriages to be allowed in Brazil for the first time. This was done by the formation of the São Paulo Eugenics Society, which was highly influential, however, it ended just two years later. However, other eugenists emerged during this time. The main focus of these eugenics was to cleanse mental hygiene. Soon, eugenics became linked to criminality, juvenile delinquency, and prostitution–"to the social "pathologies" of the poor, and of the racially mixed and dark population". [3] In other words, the criminals with poor mental hygiene, who were black, were targeted by Brazilian eugenics. By 1922, a psychiatrist of the name Gustavo Reidel, founded the League of Mental Hygiene (Liga de Higiene Mental), which focused on the belief of those who are disturbed, delinquent individuals, are hereditarily prone to commit crimes, and needed to be segregated from the rest of society. [4] The "whitening" myth of Brazil "rested on the idealization of whiteness; it represented the wishful thinking of an elite in control of a multiracial society in an age dominated by racism–a yearning for a real sentiment of Brazilianness in a country divided by race and class". [5]

This society sparked the rise of eugenics in Brazil: the rise of a white, European society. Brazilians even claimed that they were in the process of a racial transformation and improvement with eugenics. [6] One of the many ways women were affected by the eugenics movement was through their reproductive system: "Eugenists thought human reproduction not as an individual

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[1] Nancy L. Stepan, "Eugenics in Latin America," in *The Hour of Eugenics: Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1991), 37.
[2] Nancy L. Stepan, "National Identities and Racial Transformations," in *The Hour of Eugenics: Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1991), 154.
[3] Stepan, "Eugenics in Latin America," 50.
[4] Stepan, "Eugenics in Latin America," 51.
[5] Stepan, "National Identities and Racial Transformations, 156.
[6] Stepan, "National Identities and Racial Transformations," 154.

activity and as an outcome of human sexuality but as a collective responsibility and a producer of good or bad heredity." [7] Shockingly enough, the Catholic Church rejected the extreme reproductive eugenics as reproduction was under God's will: "the church therefore did not prohibit the marriages of individuals with hereditary diseases or push out of God's kingdom the physically or mentally 'unfit', the Church opposed eugenics precisely because it reversed these priorities–because it attacked the rights of individuals within marriage, deformed what it believed was the proper function of sexuality, and prevented the moral sense of the human species…the church rejected sterilization as an assault on the integrity of the human body which had no justification in science, morality, or Catholic doctrine." [8] The conservative role of women in society was, and remains to be, viewed as primary reproductive as eugenics aimed to "control sexuality and confine women to a reproductive maternal role." [9] Feminism began to rise in Europe, which is crucial considering eugenists were inspired by the Western hemisphere, and women of Latin America followed suit. [10] However, most Latin Americans, specifically Mexicans, Argentines, and Brazilians, viewed feminism as alien interpretations or strange. [11] The Catholic Church "helped to keep the feminist movement within acceptable bounds, preventing feminist attempts to link the oppression of women to motherhood, family or religion." [12] Women were not involved in eugenic politics, however, they were active as nurses and teachers in the polyclinic and school activities.[13] Not only were women the objects of eugenics, but they were also its authors, and produced eugenics for other women. [14]

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[7] Nancy L. Stepan, "'Matrimonial Eugenics': Gender and the Construction of Negative Eugenics," in *The Hour of Eugenics: Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1991), 104
[8] Stepan, "'Matrimonial Eugenics': Gender and the Construction of Negative Eugenics," 112.
[9] Stepan, "'Matrimonial Eugenics': Gender and the Construction of Negative Eugenics," 105.
[10] Stepan, "'Matrimonial Eugenics': Gender and the Construction of Negative Eugenics," 107.
[11] Stepan, "'Matrimonial Eugenics': Gender and the Construction of Negative Eugenics," 108.
[12] Stepan, "'Matrimonial Eugenics': Gender and the Construction of Negative Eugenics," 109.
[13] Stepan, "'Matrimonial Eugenics': Gender and the Construction of Negative Eugenics," 109.
[14] Stepan, "'Matrimonial Eugenics': Gender and the Construction of Negative Eugenics," 109.

Women were given two choices in life, marry a man or marry the Church. Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, a Mexican nun, challenged the Catholic Church because of her education that surpassed religious education. She taught herself how to read and write at an early age, and eventually became the Viceroy of New Spain's lady-in-writing. However, she was a creole, which meant she was white, and she held an elite status. In other words, she was able to accomplish much more than an average woman, especially a woman of color. Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz criticized the patriarchy as well as men's hypocrisy in her poem *On Men's Hypocrisy.* This hypocrisy is how man can essentially do whatever he wants, while if a woman were to do the same, she'd be punished and shamed for it. In the eyes of the Catholic Church, women were required to remain pure and keep her virginity safe. However, a man can sleep with whoever he wants and not be punished, because it was an honor for men to have women submit to them: "Silly, you men–so very adept at wrongly faulting womankind, not seeing you're alone to blame for faults you plant in woman's mind…After you've won by urgent plea the right to tarnish her good name, you still expect her to behave– *you*, that coaxed into shame." [15]

Another example of how important class, race and gender was during the colonial period, is the story of Catalina de Erauso. Despite the fact that Catalina was a white woman, it is important to mention her story and her connection with the Church because she challenged the social normalities at the time, but was respected in a way due to the fact that she remained pure. Catalina de Erauso was born a woman, however, she lived her life disguised as a man. She was supposed to join the convent, however, she fled Spain to South America, and changed her identity. [16] Catalina explored across Spain, most of Europe, and the Atlantic, having a different identity in each town she resided in—she only remained in the same place for only a couple of

[15]Joseph, G. M., Timothy J. Henderson, and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. "On Men's Hypocrisy.", in *The Mexico Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2022), 156-157.
[16] Catalina de Erauso, "Chapter One," in *Lieutenant Nun* (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1829), 5.

days, maybe a week. During her expeditions, she served as a soldier, committed crimes such as murder, assault, and robbery–she even had relationships with other women, both romantically and sexually. [17] Towards the end of her life, she confessed herself to the Church and revealed her true identity. Instead of receiving a trial for treason, the priest allowed her to continue on because she kept her purity, meaning she stayed a virgin. [18] This is important because in the eyes of men and the Church, the only way for a woman to lose her virginity and purity was sexual intercourse with a man.

During the twentieth century, José Vasconcelos, one of Mexico's most influential intellectuals, spoke upon "a cosmic-race" which according to him, will "equate Mexican national identity with the mestizo". [19] Prior to this, a caste system was established in the sixteenth century, which was a way for "the colonial authorities [to try to] preserve the colonial order by discouraging miscegenation" and attempting to keep the "castes" physically and socially separated from one another. [20] Vasconcelos eventually rejected this "cosmic race", and instead was "interested in indigenous Mexico for its glorious pre-contact achievements, not for the potential contributions of living, breathing Indians…[Vasconcelos and other influential figures of Mexico] pursued a policy of ethnocide in the classroom". [21] With ethnocide, Vasconcelos emphasized on rural education to improve and include Indians into Mexico's mainstream, which involved trained teachers, proper education, and the speaking of indigenous native languages, however, the exact opposite occurred. In reality, Vasconcelos' so called missionaries "generally failed to interest indigenous people in a monolingual, monocultural curriculum that was utterly detached from their reality…The schools that the missionaries founded were poorly attended and

[17] Catalina de Erauso, "Chapter Six," in *Lieutenant Nun* (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1829), 21.
[18] Catalina de Erauso, "Chapter Twenty," in *Lieutenant Nun* (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1829), 65-67.
[19] Stephen Lewis, "Mestizaje" in *MESTIZAJE: From "Encyclopedia of Mexico: History, Society & Culture"* (Chicago, Illinois: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1997), 1.
[20] Lewis, "Mestizaje", 1.
[21] Lewis, "Mestizaje", 3.

usually folded after one or two years of operation". [22] In other words, those who attended these schools, known as Casas, were not taught to value their indigenous roots, they were forced to shun their true identity away, and become a part of this "new race", the cosmic race. Despite their efforts, however, miscegenation continued, and "racial" subtypes proliferated". [23] We see this erasing with the case of María Bibiana Uribe, the winner of the 1921 India Bonita Contest.

Another example of where we see this de-valorization of indigenous peoples and cultures is through the India Bonita Contest of 1921. This contest's purpose, however, was to "Indianize" Mexico, yet these winners were actually white, until María Bibiana Uribe, an indigenous woman, won. It is important to note that "to be truly Mexican one was expected to be part Indian or to demonstrate a concern for the valorization and redemption of the Mexican Indian as part of the nation". [24] At the same time, Mexican politicians "rejected altogether this new project of linking Mexican national identity to living Indian cultures, preferring a continued focus on more entrenched discourses that looked to Mexico's Spanish roots and its pre conquest Maya and Aztec past. And some advocated a focus on a form of mestizaje that evaded or minimized the need to validate the idea of Indianness". [25] The stereotype of Indigenous peoples really came into play with the Contest. In fact, "they talked about braids, pure race, passive attitudes, mispronounced Spanish, typical Indian clothes, innocence and awkwardness, prayers to the virgin, grinding of corn, and humble social stations… the newspaper remained unwilling to publicly promote Indian beauty as on the same level, or even of the same type, as white beauty." [26] White beauty were the finalists of the Contest, and this was published without the public's knowledge of who were competing. When María Bibiana Uribe, a fifteen year old, won the

[22] Lewis, "Mestizaje", 3.
[23] Lewis, "Mestizaje", 1.
[24] Rick López, "The India Bonita Contest of 1921 and the Ethnicization of Mexican National Culture" in *Hispanic American Historical Review.* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press: 2002), 295.
[25] López, "The India Bonita Contest of 1921 and the Ethnicization of Mexican National Culture", 297.
[26] López, "The India Bonita Contest of 1921 and the Ethnicization of Mexican National Culture", 306.

contest, she was forced into that stereotype of an indigenous person, however she became the symbol of indigenous beauty in Mexico. In other words, this contest was a way for Mexico to re-established who and what was considered to be indigenous without highlighting the true nature of indigenous cultures.

The story of Caetana, a slave woman from Brazil, is interesting and important to include because it is one of the few stories known about a woman publicly denouncing marriage altogether. Caetana's story demonstrates that patriarchy was not solely the right of a white master, but was claimed as well by a slave man. [27] It is important to note the fact that her owner was willing, not at first, to allow Caetana to annul her marriage. Caetana, a creole, born on a fazenda, or plantation, and grew up speaking Portuguese with no recalled experience of a particular African village or tribe. [28] On this fazenda, Caetans worked as a *mucama*, which meant that she worked in the house. *Mucamas* wore finer clothes, obtained a more varied or ample diet from the family's table, had better attention to illness, and the "small sought-after protections a proper mistress or master was supposed to provide." [29] In other words, Caetana cooked, cleaned, did the laundry, and as she was the most trusted of the other *mucamas*, she would have entered the family's private quarters.[30] Caetana and her owner Captain Tolosa had an interesting relationship that raised questions for historians. Caetana begged Captain Tolosa to not allow her to marry a slave named Costódio, however, he told her she must marry him. He decided that Caetana should marry because "by no means did he wish to have in his house and even less in its interior, single slave women to serve his daughters."[31] He also believed that Caetana was "in danger of becoming an immoral influence by the example of her inevitable sexual conduct. As a

[27] Sandra Lauderdale Graham, *Caetana Says No Women's Stories from a Brazilian Slave Society*, ed. Stuart Schwartz (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 62.
[28] Lauderdale Graham, 20.
[29] Lauderdale Graham, 25.
[30] Lauderdale Graham, 25.
[31] Lauderdale Graham, 50.