Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Welcome, everyone, to podcast number four of your course, AFR 320C: Power and Place in Making Texas History. For this one, the very last, but not the very least, we will be talking about culture, power, and hegemony, because it is very central to what you will be learning about in terms of Texas history in this course. First question.

Question: What is culture?

Dr. Gordon: What is culture? Well, I know some very cultured people, because, well, I grew up in New York. There's a lot of cultured people in New York. They have the New York Philharmonic over there.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yeah.

Dr. Gordon: And they also have the Metropolitan Opera, and Opera House, and all that. And so, cultured people get together a lot to go out and participate in culture. So, when I say, "What is culture?" it's pretty obvious. Culture is, it's what cultured people do. I think it probably has something to do with civilization, and the people who are the highest up in civilization are probably the people who have culture, right?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: So they all go to the ballet and the opera.

Dr. Gordon: Well, if they want to call themselves cultured, if they want to be designated as having culture, then I think they probably all do have season tickets to the ballet-

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Well-

Dr. Gordon: ... and all that.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: I consider myself pretty cultured and I don't have season tickets to the ballet. Does that mean that I don't have culture?

Dr. Gordon: Well, I don't know. I don't know you well enough to know what you have season tickets to. So maybe you have season tickets to the opera or something else, but so if you didn't have that, I think some people would call you not to be cultured, because one of the aspects of modernity in colonialism has been thinking about people not only as racially inferior, if they weren't part of the European elite and didn't have some of the practices of the European elite, of course we've all seen these kings, and queens, and dukes, and archbishops, and all that.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yes.

Dr. Gordon: They have their, I don't know what do they have. There's-

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Their orchestras.

Dr. Gordon: ... the orchestras, and cellos, and all this kind stuff playing, and all that. That's, I think, what they thought was culture. And I know that they thought anybody who didn't have that kind of sophisticated and complex arts and other accoutrements of what they considered be civilization were understood to be not only uncivilized, but uncultured.

Dr. Gordon: Now on the other hand, I think in the relatively recent past, people have begun to think about that a little more critically and begun to wonder whether or not someone playing a violin, and playing a violin concerto is necessarily a cultured person, as opposed to someone who perhaps is playing the blues on a guitar some place in the Delta, Mississippi, because they're all human. And the guitar playing in the Delta certainly takes some practice, and some knowledge, and not only knowledge, but some deep cultural continuities and socialization. In other words, the blues didn't just come from nowhere. And in fact, I think it's those kinds of experiences that developed a notion of culture apart from the idea of culture only being the practices of the "civilized" and also the practices of only an elite in so-called civilized societies. But our understanding of that is pretty recent.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: So-

Dr. Gordon: And the folks who work with culture the most are anthropologists. That's what anthropologists are supposed to do. So we've come up with, along with cultural studies people, a notion of culture is much less associated with European high culture and much more associated with people in general. And I think the idea now is that one of the distinctive things about humans is that humans are cultural.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yes.

Dr. Gordon: There's some other groups like chimpanzees and maybe some other folks that may have culture, but it's a particularly human characteristics. And all people are cultural, and have cultural, are engaged in cultural processes in some sense. So, what we have written down here is that, "Culture is a constitute of social process creating specific and unique whole ways of life." And that's a pretty abstract concept. But I think one of the things we can say is that human culture, one of the key characteristic of it is that it's learned rather than just being biologically inherited. So I think most humans walk.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yes.

Dr. Gordon: And I think that's something we probably biologically inherit, but the way we walk, and what we wear on our feet when we walk, or whether we wear something on our feet when we walk, and what kind of clothes we have on, and all that, that's probably cultural, rather than biological. So that's the first thing. Culture is learned behavior transmitted across generations, through imitation, teaching, language, et cetera.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: We talked a little bit about culture on the first episode and trying to have the students understand that race, ethnicity, nationality, and culture are not interchangeable. So because culture is a process and it's a social process, we then have to understand or make how we practice the culture as part of this shared pattern of thinking, behavior, things that we do, that we then learn from our parents, from our schools, from our communities at large, which is how something like racism is also learned, but culture as a concept is much broader and encompasses a lot more things.

Dr. Gordon: Yeah. It does. When you start talking about race and culture in the same sentence, I get a little nervous because of course people used to believe that one race was biologically determined. And they also used to believe, because it was biologically determined, that there was a direct correspondence between race and the way people behaved and thought. And so therefore that the way people behaved and thought were biologically determined or racially determined. And that then meant that if they had a concept of culture at all, they understood culture and race to be basically the same thing.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yeah.

Dr. Gordon: And that's not right, because we know that there are people who, first of all, we know that race has no biological meaning. So if race has no biological meaning, if it's socially constructed, then in that binary, culture has to be socially constructed as well. But we also know that there's no necessary correspondence between someone's racial identity and someone's cultural practice so that people who are different races can engage in some of the same cultural practices. That's why you have Benny Goodman, for example, who's a White guy, but he plays Black music, or what's understood to be Black music, jazz music. So there's no necessary correspondence between them at all. And that's important. But culture is a shared patterned behavior, behavior and thinking. And oftentimes folks who are racially identified, like Black people in the United States, it's commonly understood that we share a culture as well. But that's not necessarily because we're all the same race in a biological sense, especially since race doesn't exist in a biological sense. It's because we're a community that has been socialized generation after generation into similar kinds of patterned behavior and thinking.

Dr. Gordon: So because culture is not biological, and because different cultures are very complex adaptations over time to particular kinds of circumstances. It's hard to make a judgment about whether one culture is better than another. You could say that one is more complex in certain ways.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yeah.

Dr. Gordon: So for example, maybe the United States in terms of its technology is more complex than, say aboriginal societies in a place like Australia. On the other hand, we know that aboriginal societies have much more complex linguistic ways of talking about their own environments and/or their own kinship relationships than people in, say the United States. So one culture can be more complex in one way while another culture's more complex in another way. You may individually think that one is more important than the other, but basically they're equivalent in the sense that it's hard to say that one is better than another, one is higher than another, one is, you know, et cetera.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dr. Gordon: So that's called cultural relativism, when the notion that all cultures should really only be judged and understood on the basis of their own workings, rather than in a comparative process of one over another. Now, one of the things I said here was that cultures are shared patterned behavior and thinking, and we talked about how that is generationally transferred. So that would make it sound like I'm saying that cultures are a thing that's stable, and unchanging, and all that. What do you think about that idea?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Well, I think that just like everything else we've talked about, cultures are not static. Cultures are ever evolving because of, not only, now in a contemporary sense, we live in a very globalized world where, if you want to, for example, learn another language from the other side of the world, you can easily do that because of the internet. You can travel because of aviation technology. And the world is, as people say, becoming smaller and thus cultures are still connecting and interacting in very interesting ways that are made easier, but also evolving cultures.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: For example, in Puerto Rico, where I'm from, we do have English and Spanish as official languages because we're an American territory, though we still speak a lot more Spanish than English. I grew up watching a lot of TV and movies from the United States, but also watching TV and film from Puerto Rico. And so there's ways in which these cultures are converging, and sometimes mixing, and sometimes influencing each other, and that makes them change and not be static.

Dr. Gordon: Well, the other thing, once we've said that cultures are not biologically constituted, in other words, that they're socially constructed, we've said that about race also. Then we're already condemning them not to being static because things that, something that's biologically fixed, at least theoretically, the way we think about it, doesn't really change. Although we do have evolution and we know that actually, biologically, things change as well. But cultures are even more so because they're not biologically determined. And so cultures are not static. They're always changing. So what stands as Black culture or stood as Black culture or Black cultural practice in the 1930s, here in Texas, even here in Austin, Texas is not the same thing as what stands for Black culture or stands as Black culture in 2021, here in Austin, Texas they're different things because the culture has moved.

Dr. Gordon: I wouldn't say it's evolved because evolving gives you a notion of somehow that something is moving forward or there's some better aspect of it. But I would say it's changed in that sense. So cultures are not stable, circumscribe things. They're evolving processes. To understand how that's happening. Let's get our next question and apply a little philosophy to this discussion.

Question: What is hegemony?

Dr. Gordon: What is hegemony? Man, that's one of the key questions. And it's something of a hard thing to understand. To understand hegemony, the first thing that needs to be understood is the notion of power. So I like to use a notion of power that derives from, first of all, the idea that power's always is about a relationship, a human relationship. And power is about a relationship of influence. And power is not a one way relationship. It's a relationship. And so the interactions of individuals and the interactions of groups of folks are all about the influence of each other in that relationship. And that's a relationship of power.

Dr. Gordon: Now, in some circumstances or in many circumstances, some individuals and especially some groups have more influence over other groups than that group has in relationship to them. That's a situation of unequal power. And so, because humans are social, much of our sociality has to do with interrelations that are concerned with influence.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yeah.

Dr. Gordon: And because much of our social relations are concerned with, or involved in, or in processes of influence, power relations are some of the most basic social relations that we have. And unfortunately, unequal power tends to be characteristic of human relationships in that sense. So unequal power creates things that we've come to call dominance or subordination, et cetera. And so domination, which is unequal power or a characteristic of unequal power, it is a characteristic of the more powerful in a social relationship. Can be political. It can be economic, it can be military, it can be legal, it can be interpersonal. All right?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Hm.

Dr. Gordon: And so these are things that then are all cultural. Politics is cultural, economic practices are cultural, legal practices are, et cetera. Culture is the way in which different groups of people organize their sociality. And because we just said that sociality is about influence, and we also said that influence is about power, cultures are infused with power. Culture's never power neutral because social interaction is its most basic component. So culture's infused with dominance and subordination. Now that's a philosophical mouthful. But basically what it says is that culture is a social practice. And social practices are always practices and processes of influence.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yeah.

Dr. Gordon: They can be other things as well, but influence is always there. Influence is power. So culture is infused with power in that sense. Now, there are power relations in our culture that we recognize immediately as being power relations and issues of dominance. So at this institution, for example, the position of a president, we've got a president, other universities have presidents. Having presidents of institutions like this are aspects of our culture. They're about social relations. And probably all the students in the class recognize that there's a power differential built into that cultural process of having a president. In other words, they're subordinate to the president. So am I, for that matter.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yeah. Because there's a hierarchy and the higher up you are, the more power you have.

Dr. Gordon: But there are ways in which the power that infuses culture is much less noticeable. So, for example, you teach. When students arrive at your class, where do they go?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: They go to the seats.

Dr. Gordon: They go to the seats.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yeah.

Dr. Gordon: And where do you go as professor?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: To the lectern.

Dr. Gordon: All right. And how do the students know that they're supposed to go to their seats?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: They've been socialized-

Dr. Gordon: Socialized into-

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: ... as-

Dr. Gordon: ... it, it's like-

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: That is it.

Dr. Gordon: Do you think they think that-

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: You go to your seat and you listen to the person in front of you.

Dr. Gordon: And do you think that they think a lot about it when they walk in the classroom door?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: I don't think so. I didn't think about it when I was a student.

Dr. Gordon: Right. You probably didn't even think about it when you walked up to the lectern, right?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yeah.

Dr. Gordon: So it's common sensical, but is that the place in which people occupy their positions in the classroom? Is that an issue of power?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: I would say yes. Because I do have, it is a two way street, like you said, it's a two way relationship. So I have power over what they learn and how they're evaluated for it. But students, in turn, have power over me because they evaluate me as well.

Dr. Gordon: Yeah. Eventually.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Eventually.

Dr. Gordon: They're probably not going to give you, just by saying that you didn't do a good job teaching, you're probably not going to lose your job. But by saying that they didn't do a good job learning, you're going to give a poor grade. And so there's a power differential.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yes.

Dr. Gordon: So you're right. There's an interrelationship. But the question is then, who's in the dominant position? And the question there is, so I'll ask you, when you walk into the classroom and you've assumed your position as the professor, and they've assumed their position as the students, who has the power of speech?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Unmitigated speech, I guess me.

Dr. Gordon: Yes, you do.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: But they have the ability to speak.

Dr. Gordon: They have the ability to speak, but that's not necessarily the power-

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: If they raise their-

Dr. Gordon: ... to speak.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: ... hand.

Dr. Gordon: They had to beg your permission to be able to speak.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yes.

Dr. Gordon: So the power to determine speech in the classroom setting is in your hands.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yeah.

Dr. Gordon: And if someone gets at out of hand and start speaking out of turn enough, you'll have them removed because the power of speech is in your hands, the power of determining time is in your hand as well. That's why in any classroom, the clock is behind the students and in the full view of the faculty member. Right?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dr. Gordon: So is there a relationship of power in terms of positionality in the classroom and in terms of speech in the classroom?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yeah.

Dr. Gordon: Do people generally object to it?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: No. It's-

Dr. Gordon: Yeah, they think that that's-

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: ... ingrained.

Dr. Gordon: ... the way it's supposed to be.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yeah.

Dr. Gordon: It's common sensical, right?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yeah.

Dr. Gordon: And so there's a word for that, and that's hegemony, in other words, hegemony is the normalization of dominant power, right?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dr. Gordon: It's the normalization of a dominant power over a subordinate within a culture. But also it's culturally expressed.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yeah.

Dr. Gordon: In other words, this is how we do school. This is how we do higher education here. It's part of our culture. But it's absolutely infused with power. So hegemony is the education of consent. In other words, the students have, from kindergarten, been educated to consent to your position of power in the classroom. And that's how it is in the university as well. We've been, as individuals, I as an employee, you as an employee, the students as students, we've been educated to consent to the position of dominant power that the president has in relationship to us. That's how the society works in this particular situation.

Dr. Gordon: One of the things that's interesting is that there are some societies in which hegemony doesn't play that much of role, although it always does. One of the societies where it doesn't play that much of role is a slave society, where the position of the master and the position of the slave are mostly maintained through coercion of one sort or another. Now there's some hegemony, some enslaved people feel like the master is better than them, and has a right to rule. But for example, as soon as enslaved people were liberated in 1865, in this country, most enslaved people were ready to leave and ready to get out. They weren't begging for a maintenance of that positionality. Right?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dr. Gordon: So it was coercion that kept them going.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yep.

Dr. Gordon: But in a society like this one here, particularly amongst the middle classes, most of us have become accustomed to the common sense hierarchies of power in our culture. And we go along with them.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: We consent.

Dr. Gordon: We consent.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yeah.

Dr. Gordon: Basically, because most of the time we think it's in our own interest to do so. I consent to the rule of Bezos and Amazon because I can get cheap stuff.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yeah. And very quickly.

Dr. Gordon: And very quickly. Right. But he can get cheaper stuff even more and he doesn't have to worry about the ... But he and people like him exert enormously more power in this society, more dominant power on this society than I do, but I'm okay with it because I can get my piece of cheap stuff from him. Now, let's get the next question because it'll take us further into the realm of understanding the relationship between power, hegemony, and culture.

Question: What is hegemonic culture? What is anti-hegemonic culture?

Dr. Gordon: Funny you should ask those questions. Well, Dr. Colon Pizzini, you're from Puerto Rico.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yes.

Dr. Gordon: And as you were saying before, Puerto Rico, what is the status of Puerto Rico? Because probably most people don't even have any idea what that is.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: We are a commonwealth.

Dr. Gordon: A commonwealth.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: But not in the same sense as other Caribbean countries are a commonwealth of the United Kingdom, for example. Those countries are, at the moment, independent. They were formal colonies of Great Britain and through independence, there was some machination for them to be part of this commonwealth of larger former colonies that have the Queen as the head of state. Now, in the case of Puerto Rico and other American territories, some of which are incorporated, and some of which are unincorporated, we are what is called an associated free state. And this all came about in the early 1950s. But it's a form of colonialism that has a certain relationship and power differential still between the United States and Puerto Rico after the United States won Puerto Rico in 1898 as a result of the Spanish Cuban American war from Spain.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: So the way that we see hegemony in terms of our culture is, like I said, we have English as one of the official languages. We get US media and US culture in Puerto Rico. And we have to follow basically the same political model that the United States has. We have a bicameral system. We have a head of state, which is the governor. We don't have a president because we're a territory. And the United States president then has more decision making power on the federal level than our governor does.

Dr. Gordon: Is there a dominant culture in Puerto Rico? Sounds like there's more than one culture, right?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yes. There's a multiplicity of cultures.

Dr. Gordon: So is there a dominant culture?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: I would say that there is a dominant culture that tries to approximate US culture, for sure. In the way that the government operates and in the way that we understand the political makeup of Puerto Rico, but there's also resistance and variations to that mainstream understanding of culture.

Dr. Gordon: So the dominant culture in Puerto Rico, you're saying is emulating the political and economic structure of reality not only in Puerto Rico, but in relation of Puerto Rico to the United States.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yes.

Dr. Gordon: So culture can be infused with power in a bunch of different kind of ways. Let's take that and think about enslaved people. Well, you say there's Black people in Puerto Rico.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yes.

Dr. Gordon: What language do they speak?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Spanish, for the most part. Yes.

Dr. Gordon: But the indigenous people of Puerto Rico weren't Black or what we understand are Black, or of African descent, were they?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: No, they were indigenous. Yeah.

Dr. Gordon: So those, those Black people who came from someplace else, they had to come from someplace else besides Puerto Rico. And one presumes that that's probably Africa.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yeah.

Dr. Gordon: And one presumes that, in Africa, they weren't speaking Spanish.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: No.

Dr. Gordon: So why they speak Spanish now?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Because of the hegemony.

Dr. Gordon: Well, I'm not sure I would agree-

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Colonialism.

Dr. Gordon: ... with that. How about because of the dominance of the situation of slaves. So at first it must have been coercive. You know?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yeah.

Dr. Gordon: You're brought in and say you're Akan, no, probably didn't come from ... Where did the Spanish enslaved people come from?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: I would say Benin and the Guinea area.

Dr. Gordon: Yeah. So maybe they spoke Yoruba or something like that. Okay. But that didn't last. And so they were coerced in just at least understanding Spanish so they could take them.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yeah.

Dr. Gordon: All right. But I guess the hegemonic aspect of it is now, is that over time, those descendants to those originally enslaved Black people speak Spanish.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Spanish. Yes.

Dr. Gordon: So there's a cultural hegemony going on. So it's not just dominance. It's also common sensical.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yeah.

Dr. Gordon: It's not even common sensical. They wouldn't know anything else to speak, except for Spanish. So in some sense, the dominant culture, which was the culture of the Spanish, becomes hegemonic with Black people, with the enslaved population, and then their descendants. After a particular time, it becomes common sensical.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yeah.

Dr. Gordon: Do you think that those Black folks in general would think that Spanish has a higher value or is a more civilized kind of language than the African language that they may have left behind?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Not necessarily. I think in many diasporic communities, there are some people that would love to relearn and reclaim those languages, as much of those are still spoken, because through violence and coercion, some languages have disappeared, unfortunately. But I think that, now, in the contemporary moment, in a place like Puerto Rico, for example, there's an understanding that Spanish is what we speak because of colonialism, but also it's what we speak because we are now, in some senses, culturally resisting American imperialism and our involvement in that.

Dr. Gordon: But when you were a young person growing up in Puerto Rican schools, I would imagine, you say you're Afro-Puerto Rican. Right?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dr. Gordon: So I would imagine there was some attempt to discipline the way you spoke Spanish. Were you taught to speak correct Spanish?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yes. I was. We are taught through about, I would say between, depending on the school, sixth and eighth grade, grammatical rules. It's a very insistent process of what correct Spanish sounds like and what it's supposed to look like in the written form.

Dr. Gordon: So as an Afro-Puerto Rican person, if there was any vestiges of African survival, or language, or something like that, that was pretty much beaten out of you as you went through school?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: In some senses, yes. But in others, it's become some of these African or West African vestiges are part of Spanish language in Puerto Rico, writ large. You know?

Dr. Gordon: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: It's just as taíno words also are.

Dr. Gordon: Are in there.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: So it's quite complex.

Dr. Gordon: But there is a sense that there is a way to speak Spanish.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yes.

Dr. Gordon: Yeah. And that you're disciplined into it. So one of the things that happens in most societies, particularly societies that have more than one culture in it, and particularly in societies, in which the people who are understood to have, be petitioners of the dominant culture are also in the dominant political and economic position. They get to determine what the true culture of the society is.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yes.

Dr. Gordon: And they get to see and look on peoples who are not practicing those versions of that culture as being inferior in one way or another. And that becomes common sensical. And that's part of what hegemony or cultural hegemony is, the assumption that one culture is the culture. The dominant generally is the right culture, the superior culture, et cetera. But what you're pointing out in terms of Puerto Rico is that there's also an opportunity for people to engage in other kinds of practices, that resist the notion that the dominant culture is a superior culture.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yeah.

Dr. Gordon: That's what we call antihegemonic culture of one sort or another. And one of the things that we teach in AFR 303 is that the maintenance or the production of cultural difference from the dominance is a politics, right?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dr. Gordon: Because it's resisting the power of the dominant culture to make common sensical and superior its own culture.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yeah.

Dr. Gordon: And that's an important part of what we're doing. We're saying that people who are creating alternative cultural practices are engaged in cultural resistance.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yeah.

Dr. Gordon: Contestation of the dominant hegemonic power of the culture and politics of the dominant group. And that Black cultures across the African diaspora are engaged in these kinds of acts of maintaining their own communities by maintaining their own cultural difference from the dominant, and in doing so they're engaging in a culture resistance or a cultural politics. So Black cultures could be considered to be political, and have the negotiating power. All right. So let's get the next question, which talks a little bit more about this subject, but in a different kind of way.

Question: How is Black or Afro diasporic culture a repertoire?

Dr. Gordon: Yeah. Well, this is high theory and stuff that people don't learn, I don't think, outside of the kind of courses that we're doing in Black studies here at UT, or maybe even in my courses. A repertoire. Dr. Colón-Pizzini, what is a repertoire? Well, first of all, it's French. Right?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yes.

Dr. Gordon: So-

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: That's French.

Dr. Gordon: They got that.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yeah. A repertoire is a varied collection of, it can be of things, or practices, or understandings, or ideas that can come together under one category. And in the case of Black culture, we've pointed out that there are multiple ways of doing Black culture across time and space. And so Black culture becomes a repertoire in itself.

Dr. Gordon: Yeah. It becomes a repertoire in a whole bunch of ways. In fact, I think what we've tried to teach is that Black culture is not a thing, it's a process and it consists of a repertoire. In other words, there are not a bunch of discrete elements that everybody who practices Black culture automatically utilizes all the time or even any of the time. So the notion that all Black people eat collard greens and fried chicken, anybody who's Black in this country knows that's not the case. Or that we like it, or that watermelon is always on the menu, and all that kind of things. Those are stereotypes that are just not the case. Now, does that mean that Black people don't eat watermelon, and we don't eat fried chicken, we don't eat collard greens, well, no, it does not, but it also means we eat a whole bunch of other stuff.

Dr. Gordon: The other thing about Black people in this country is that a lot of the stuff that folks who consider themselves to be 100% Black, which I do, are doing a lot of stuff on a daily basis that White folks are doing as well. So if people were to step into this recording studio and look at me, they'd see me sitting here in my ... What is this?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Your button down?

Dr. Gordon: No wrinkle, button down from ... What's the name of that Trump-ite?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Brooks Brothers?

Dr. Gordon: No, it's a place up in, of all places, Maine. It's a catalog place and all that kind of stuff. And I got my chinos on all this kind of stuff. So to say that this is Black culture be a little bit weird, but I am Black, right?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dr. Gordon: But I'm yet sporting this stuff that any White person might be wearing as well. So people like me and us, as Black people living in a White society, there's a huge overlap in terms of what we're doing in culture, what white folks are doing in culture. Although there's probably a little bit of concentration in terms of what we're doing towards the realm of what other Black people are doing and away from the realm of what the bulk of Black people are doing, because we're Black identified, and engaged in Black communities, and all that. So that's about a repertoire. In other words, all the very things we're doing is part of the cultural repertoire of what's going on in this country. And within that, Black people have a whole series of things that we're doing and thinking that, you know-

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dr. Gordon: ... are particular to ourselves. And we share a lot of that with White folks, but a lot of commonalities between us, that's what the repertoire is.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yeah.

Dr. Gordon: And then power, like a magnet, moves things in different directions within that repertoire.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: So there's clearly no one way to be Black, or express Black culture, or perform Black culture.

Dr. Gordon: Yeah. To put it simply, but in a very complicated way, it's not Black culture that determines who's Black, it's Black people that determine what's the culture. Black culture is the cultural practices and thinking of the people who claim to be Black rather than that's a Black cultural practice. And so therefore you're Black because you participate in it. So it's the identity in some sense, that creates the realm of activities that can be considered to be Black culture rather than the actual cultural practices that determine who identifies as Black. So there's that.

Dr. Gordon: But the other thing is that, because of the way power operates, Black cultural repertoires are really stretched because most of us have to learn hegemonic or dominant cultural practices is in order to be able to survive. And also because that's what we're forced to do or even want to do in classroom settings. At the same time, to create levels of community solidarity, but also to engage in the traditions and the customs that we have as Black folks in our own communities, and in our own families, and all that we also engage in cultural practices that not that many White folks engage in. And that has to do with power. It has to do with power of the dominant or hegemonic, to be able to stretch us into those kinds of cultural practice.

Dr. Gordon: In other words, I can't just show up to teach at the University of Texas looking any kind of way. I've got to look in a particular kind of way in order to be able to pull it off. But on the other hand when I'm home with my family, or I'm out with the boys, or I'm all these kind of things, then there's a set of cultural practice hat's different than those that I would engage in, in the presence of most White people that I'm engaging. And that's a kind of resistance, right?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yeah.

Dr. Gordon: Because we said that Black culture is a resistance or it's a politic to resist the hegemonic. And so my cultural repertoire, in terms of what I engage in as a Black person, is stretched between the dominant, and in some sense, the resistance. And so are most people's. When we do the 303 class, we talk about that in relationship to language. And so people who are interested in thinking about this or how this model works theoretically or practically, might think about something called the post Creole continuum and the Creole languages that people in a place like Jamaica engage in, in which many people can speak both the standard language that's very similar to standard English, but also they can speak a basilect or deep Creole language, which is very different. And that's basically what we're, we're trying to get across, here. Do you have anything to add to this Dr. Colon Pizzini?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yeah, I would say that just like how there is no one way to do Black culture, I think one of the things that the students, because of this discussion, when we're deep into it with them in the classroom, they realize, "Oh, not only is there not one way to practice or do Black culture, the discourse around gate keeping Black culture within Black communities is also something that's a waste of time." They're of a generation that grew up very online. So they see these diaspora wars, so to speak, on Twitter or Instagram. And it's like, "Jamaicans are better than Dominicans, or Black Americans this, and Afro-Mexicans that." And it's like there's no one way within the diaspora to do Black culture. And there's no one better way to do Black culture within the diaspora. But even within those countries, and even further within cities with large Black populations, there's no specific and standard way to practice Black culture. And it's very diverse, and it's very wonderful. And the gatekeeping within Black people is also a discursive turn that is quite unfortunate because they don't realize that Black culture is a repertoire.

Dr. Gordon: It's a repertoire, it's many things. And also there are Black cultures. You know?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dr. Gordon: So when I was growing up, I grew up in a town in which the Haitian population was rapidly increasing, and particularly when I was high school. And African Americans said that Haitians weren't Black because they weren't practicing what they understood to be Black culture was, which was African American culture, which is patently ridiculous. Right?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dr. Gordon: So one of the things that we didn't say in the module on ethnicity is that one of the key important things about understanding Blackness, particularly in the context of the United States, is that it's ethnically diverse. So we have Jamaican Americans, Nigerian Americans, Ghanaian Americans, you know, Haitian Americans-

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dr. Gordon: ... et cetera. We've got a wide variety of Black people who are practicing different kind of cultures. And all those cultures are Black cultures. And all those cultures stretch and add to the repertoire of what cultural Blackness is.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: So do you want to wrap up?

Dr. Gordon: It's hard to wrap this one up. Culture is a cultural or social invention, right?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dr. Gordon: It's a key outcome of the sociality of human beings, right?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dr. Gordon: Culture is a social process, creating specific and unique whole ways of life. There are different cultures, et cetera, but cultures move and change over time. They are not specific to race because both race and culture are not biologically constituted. They are socially constructed.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yeah.

Dr. Gordon: And so there's that. We also know that cultures are infused with power because power is an aspect of all social relations. All social relations are also power relations. And culture organizes sociality, cultures are infused with power. And one key aspect of that is the notion of culture and cultural hegemony, that dominant can be expressed through, cultures can and is expressed through culture and cultural relationship processes. And when the power in those cultural relations is accepted in a common sensible kind of way, that's understood to be hegemony.

Dr. Gordon: We've been educated consent to the power stratification of society through the everyday-ness, the normality of our cultural practice, which is infused with that power. And a hegemonic culture is often a culture which is the culture of the dominant, which, over time has become common sensical to the dominated as the way to engage in social practices.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yeah,

Dr. Gordon: But culture, because it's political, can also be antihegemonic and the cultural practices, particularly of people who are dominated people, who are engaging in cultural practices which are different than the dominant group of people, those folks are engaged in a politics in an antihegemonic cultural practice. And we're saying that most Black cultures in the Americas, in particular, are counter or antihegemonic in the sense they resist the hegemony of the cultures of White folks. And finally, we're saying that Black or Afro diaspora cultures are repertoires because they're stretched, because of the way power works, between the cultural practices of the dominant, which we all know more or less and are educated into, and the cultural practices of our communities, which are emphasizing our sociality, our commonality, and in some sense, our difference from the dominant.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yep.

Dr. Gordon: So Black folks are engaged in a cultural politics that's antihegemonic, but at the same time, a lot of our practice conforms to the practice of the dominant culture because we have to, because we live in these dominant cultures.