



SECTION: REVIEWS

History and Historiography of Black Latin America

*História e historiografia da América Latina Negra**Historia y historiografía de la América Latina Negra*

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Abstract: This book review examines the piece *Afro-Latin American Studies: An Introduction*, an edited volume edited by historians Alejandro de la Fuente and George Reid Andrews (2018). The book comprises fifteen chapters, which examine various aspects of Blackness in Latin America, ranging from the colonial times through more recent developments. As a survey of the region, it touches on issues of slavery, slave trade, rebellion, the afterlives of slavery, Black association and rebellion, organized social movements, public policy, cultural expression, the role of legal instruments, among other facets of Black experience. This review presents an overview of selected chapters and contextualizes the piece within contemporary discussions that examine the role of Afro-descending populations in Latin America.

Keywords: Slavery and Freedom; Black Social Movements; Afro-Latin America.

Resumo: Esta resenha crítica analisa a obra *Afro-Latin American Studies: An Introduction*, editada pelos historiadores Alejandro de la Fuente e George Reid Andrews (2018). O livro é composto por quinze capítulos, que examinam diversos aspectos que envolvem negritude na América Latina, desde os tempos coloniais até fatos recentes. Como um apanhado de temas da região, o livro discute tópicos como escravidão, tráfico de escravos, rebeliões, o pós-escravidão, a associação de pessoas negras e rebeliões, movimentos sociais organizados, políticas públicas, expressões culturais, o papel de instrumentos jurídicos, dentre outras facetas da experiência negra. Esta resenha apresenta um panorama de capítulos selecionados e contextualiza o livro de acordo com discussões contemporâneas que examinam o papel de populações de ascendência africana na América Latina.

Palavras-chave: escravidão e liberdade; movimentos sociais negros; Afro-América Latina.

Resumen: Esta reseña de libro examina *Afro-Latin American Studies: An Introduction*, un volumen editado por los historiadores Alejandro de la Fuente y George Reid Andrews (2018). El libro consta de quince capítulos que examinan varios aspectos de la negritud en América Latina, desde la época colonial hasta desarrollos más recientes. Como estudio de la región, aborda cuestiones de esclavitud, trata de esclavos, rebelión, vida futura de la esclavitud, asociación y rebelión, movimientos sociales organizados, políticas públicas, expresión cultural, el papel de los instrumentos legales, entre otras facetas de la experiencia negra. Esta reseña presenta una visión general de capítulos seleccionados y contextualiza el artículo dentro de las discusiones contemporáneas que examinan el papel de las poblaciones afrodescendientes en América Latina.

Palabras clave: esclavitud y libertad; movimientos sociales negros; Afrolatinoamérica.



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Black contributions to Latin America are central to *Afro-Latin American Studies: An Introduction*, an edited volume edited by historians Alejandro de la Fuente and George Reid Andrews (2018). The book is an extensive piece, which compiles chapters from different authors, including historians and other social scientists. Texts vary from historical accounts to sociological perspectives. Professor De La Fuente is a Professor of History at Harvard University, whereas George Andrews is a Distinguished Professor of History at the University of Pittsburgh. The book is divided into four parts: "Inequalities" (Chapter Two through Chapter Five), "Politics" (Chapters Six, Seven, and Eight), "Culture" (Chapter Nine through Chapter Thirteen), and "Transnational Spaces" (Chapters Fourteen and Fifteen). The first chapter is not assigned to any specific part, being in fact an introduction to the field. This book review emphasizes the historiographical and historical relevance of this edited volume, which is in line with current academic and non-academic discussions related to the role of Black Latin Americans in the region's multilayered and complex history. Given the significant length of the book, this review will focus on Chapters Two, Three, Five, Eight, and Fourteen.

Among chapters written by historians, those include historiographical analyses as well as historical ones. Chapter Two exemplifies a historiographical approach to the field, presenting a discussion by Roquinaldo Ferreira (University of Pennsylvania) e Tatiana Seijas (Rutgers University). discuss the emergence of slave trade in Portuguese and Spanish Americas, dividing their analysis into four historical phases (Ferreira; Seijas, 2018). The authors attempt to highlight the participation of the Spaniards in slave trade, since historians tend to focus on the Portuguese involvement with such practice. Before discussing the above-mentioned phases, the authors problematize quantitative approaches to slave trade, which, according to them, 1) create a structure in which the human dimension is not duly expressed; 2) rely on data as if it was entirely reliable; and 3) disregard contraband, a relevant practice in the Iberian-American context. Moreover, Ferreira e

Seijas cite the cultural anthropologists' influence over historians, who shifted from discussing cultural retention and creolization in order to also analyze issues concerning the formation of communities and cultures in both the African and American continents. Chapter Two, thus, provides an important historiographical discussion, also illuminating the uses and limitations of popular primary sources, namely those concerning the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database. Chapter Eight also provides a historiographical account of discussions on racial democracy. Authors Paulina L. Alberto (University of Michigan) and Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof (University of Michigan) examine the impacts of ideologies of colorblindness, namely those arising from Gilberto Freyre's work, and how academics and activists challenged these through the twentieth century (Alberto; Hoffnung-Garskof, 2018). While the chapter includes Brazil, it also investigates discussions held in the US and beyond. Authors place an important emphasis on discussions held in the 1970s, when social movements in the Americas gained strength and adhered to more critical instances on the alleged colorblindness. While discussing different topics, both chapters contribute to a systemic and transnational analysis of historical production related to racial issues.

Chapter Three exemplifies the long historical periodization the edited volume adheres to. George Reid Andrews provides a complex transnational analysis of intersections of gender, class, and race in Latin America (Andrews, 2018). Issues vary from slavery-era economic discussions to social mobilization in the twentieth-century. Andrews highlights, for instance, the variety of tasks enslaved persons were subjected to, some of which being even waged and comparable to the ones executed by freemen. With that regard, the author contends that the fact that some slaves were able to obtain small payments by working side jobs reflected "the downward pressure exerted by slavery on the wages of free workers," (Andrews, 2018, p. 58) rather than improving their place in socioeconomic terms. The author also underscores that evidence does not support the claim

that slavery drove down wages of free workers as, in both Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro, wages of freemen rose in parallel to hikes in slave importation (1700s-1800s). When discussing more recent developments attained to gender, Andrews contends that while significant number of women obtained manumission, either due to either their household roles that approximated them to their owners or due to violent extramarital relationships with them, they ended up occupying a much lower percent of the job market, often being left with domestic jobs. This, in its turn, left legacies in countries such as Brazil, where domestic work remained a common occupation for Black women after abolition.

Chapter Five investigates the influence of legal aspects in the lives of Black Brazilians. Brodwyn Fischer (University of Chicago), Keila Grinberg (formerly at Universidade Federal do Estado do Rio de Janeiro – UNIRIO, currently at the University of Pittsburgh), and Hebe Mattos (Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora) examine historical approaches to race in Brazil and the United States, emphasizing the maintenance of racism within legal frameworks (Fischer *et al.*, 2018). Whereas the section is concerned with comparative approaches, it also gives particular attention to legal and political developments in Brazil. Activism and discussions in the Global South, according to the authors, also contributed to challenges to the idea of racial democracy, even though the Brazilian dictatorship (1964-1985) attempted to shut down inclusive debates. The country's post-dictatorial constitution, enacted in 1988, paved the way for new rights, but, even so, Afro-Brazilian populations still suffered with issues such as housing and healthcare. If at one side Brazilian institutions and laws adopted after the abolition were less racialized than the ones adopted in the US, the "vertical inequality" (Fischer *et al.*, 2018, p. 149) made racism prosper. Other than the inequality argument, the authors also cite the embedding of racialized legal biases in practice and the structure, even though they are "never explicitly articulated in racial terms" (Fischer *et al.*, 2018, p. 150).

Whereas transitional discussions are central to almost all sections, the last part of the book, comprising two chapters, gives special attention to it. In Chapter Fourteen, Lara Putnam brings the topic of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database back, but not to discuss numbers or oppression, but rather to emphasize the active role of enslaved people in their societies (Putnam, 2018). Central to the author's argument is the notion that other than compiling numerical estimates, the TASTD has also allowed researchers to map trade routes, revealing an intricate trans-continental system, with multiple layers and networks, but also visible direct links from Angola to Cartagena and Veracruz, from Luanda and Benguela to Rio, among other important Trans-Atlantic connections. Putnam also stresses the agency of Afro-Latinos, who engaged in rebellions, formed maroon communities, and engaged in association, demanding for the recognition of rights. In sum, Putnam stresses the importance of quantitative analyses of slave trade for the definition of main routes and, more broadly, connections between Africa and the Americas, while simultaneously adopting a more qualitative approach when discussing the abilities and knowledge brought by Africans into the Americas.

The 2010s were marked by a renewed boom in studies of Blackness in Brazil. There has also been a focus on Blackness in other parts of Latin America, where indigeneity has been thoroughly studied, but where the role of Black Latin Americans still demands greater academic inquiry. The book *Afro-Latin American Studies* lies on this broad discussion of rights, citizenship, slavery, and freedom in Latin America. The book is not limited to historical analyses, also encompassing other disciplines. Black sociologist Tianna Paschel (University of California, Berkeley), for instance, who is also a contributor (Paschel, 2018), provides another insight into the role of Black social movements which have attempted to affirm rights over time. In doing so, the scholar complements her earlier work. In *Becoming Black Political Subjects: Movements and Ethno-Racial Rights in Colombia and Brazil*, published roughly two years earlier,

Paschel (2016) provides a comparative analysis of Black social movements in Colombia and Brazil, comparing racial politics in both states. In her book, which dialogues with the piece under review, Paschel contends that a more vehement language against racism, accompanied by effective public policies, only emerged towards the end of the 1990s into the early 2000s, with Brazil's commitment at Preparatory Conference in Santiago, in the year 2000, and at the subsequent 2001 Durban conference. Later, affirmative action, and other measures of reparation and affirmation expanded, especially in the 2000s and 2010s. Such emphasis on a long history and more recent developments within social activism, a marker of the edited volume, can also be seen in other works, namely those concerning public history and reparations. Ana Lucia Araujo (Howard University), for more than a decade, has been a central figure in discussions on public displays of slavery and on the lack of a revision of such works. In *Public Memory of Slavery: Victims and Perpetrators in the South Atlantic* (2010), Araujo claims that many major museums only superficially addressed slavery and slave trade, many times incorporating those themes into a broader history of coloniality. Institutions that pioneered a different trend include the Afro-Brazilian Museum of Salvador, founded in 1982, and the House of Benin, which was established in the same city in 1988 (Araujo, 2010, p. 253-254). In the 1990s and 2000s, the House of Angola and the House of Nigeria, were respectively established in Salvador (Araujo, 2010, p. 255). Still, Salvador only constructed a public monument in memory of Afro-Brazilian history in the 2000s, when different sculptures honoring important Black actors were opened to the public. Alejandro de La Fuente and George Reid Andrews's attempt to provide an overview of race in Latin America successfully manages to continue an ongoing debate on the multiple aspects of race, which inevitably passes through bold historical analyses and historiographical discussions. As a book with a wide theme and various contributors, it may lack at times the depth required to examine difficult topics.

But as a gateway to the region's intricate racial relations, it offers a rich insight into various facets of Blackness of Latin America, being aligned with contemporary academic debates.

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