

actively maintained, simultaneously opposed to dominant norms while seeking legal protection by and inclusion within them, puts a new spin on that “special class of societies in which culturally distinct groups, each with its own institutions, are aggregated by politically dominant powers into hierarchically ordered ‘plural societies’ held together only by the force of political coercion” (Smith 1996:8). I raise these points not in criticism, but to suggest that Thomas’s book will inspire a re-examination of settled theoretical knowledge in the anthropology of the Caribbean.

Thomas renews issues plumbed by anthropologist Diane Austin-Broos, whose *Jamaica Genesis* (1997) investigated how the spread of American Pentecostalism in early-20<sup>th</sup>-century Jamaica enhanced the possibility of radical social transformation and culture change. Although the two scholars deal with different subject matter, both question the legacy of slavery in contemporary Jamaican society and morally as well as politically acceptable sources of contributions to an “authentic” Jamaican culture. In this connection, and considering that each text is under 250 pages, pairing the two into one unit of a mid- to upper-level undergraduate course or graduate seminar would be productive. Approaches to teaching students productive ways to study “cultural authenticity” and related problems may vary, of course, and rely on different mixes of theories, methods, and research sites. However, the specific trajectory I have in mind is a case study in the politics of cultural struggle, one that necessarily plays out across disparate histories, domains, territories, and repertoires.

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## LUMINIȚA-ANDA MANDACHE

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“Today, 54 per cent of the world’s population lives in urban areas, a proportion that is expected to increase to 66 per cent by 2050” (United Nations 2014). Brazilian cities, most along the coastline, accounted for 85 percent of the national population two years ago, and the urbanization trend had been stable for many years (World Bank 2014). “With an income share of the richest 20 percent of the population equal to 33 times the corresponding share of the poorest 20 percent,” the World Bank (2004) reported a decade earlier, “Brazil has one of the highest levels of income inequality in the world.” Surprisingly, despite high levels of violence and “development” intervention in Brazil’s cities, little is known about forced urban displacements (Muggah 2015). Urban poverty and forced displacement must be understood in the larger context of Brazilian structural inequalities perpetuated over time. Therefore, most urban “development” interventions carry marks of historical inequalities where race and gender play key roles.

Keisha-Khan Perry’s book, winner of the National Women’s Studies Association’s Gloria Anzaldúa Prize in the USA, contributes to understanding urban realities in Salvador de Bahia (northeast Brazil) by fashioning a detailed ethnographic case study while showing that the situation under scrutiny is far from unique. As a Black American female from the USA, her experience is rooted in her home country’s similar though perhaps less severe problems. Although most research in Brazil on urban displacement has concerned southern cities, such as Rio de Janeiro or São Paulo, focusing on Salvador de Bahia underscores the analytical significance of race and gender.

“[R]acism is part of everyday experience for Afro-Brazilians,” Perry maintains, and “contrary to the popular myth, racial democracy does not exist in Brazil” (p. xv). To demonstrate these points, she “explores the concrete examples of state-sponsored racism and violence toward Blacks in the forced demolition of urban neighborhoods” (p. xv). Her fine ethnographic analysis tells the story of Gamboa de Baixo, a community of 2,000 people strategically situated in the bay area of Salvador de Bahia and close to a middle-class neighborhood. In Gamboa, a grassroots organization led by local

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*Black Women Against the Land Grab: The Fight for Racial Justice in Brazil*. Keisha-Khan Y. Perry. Minneapolis, MN, and London, UK: University of Minnesota Press, 2013. vii + 213 pp. (Cloth US\$75.00; Paper US\$25.00; EBook US\$25.00)

women facing possible removal in the name of urban “development” fights to defend the community’s territory. These activists contend with three main challenges: police violence (e.g., arbitrary use of force against local residents); state-sponsored urban renewal resulting in arbitrary demolition, forced expulsion, and displacement; and the media “misrepresenting the poor black urban spaces as dangerous and criminal” (p. xvi). Local resistance also targets social injustices hidden within conceptions of urban renewal, and Perry deftly discloses how “complex racial politics of identification are linked to gender and class consciousness and identification as blacks, women and poor people” (p. xvii).

The opening chapter, “Engendering the Grassroots,” establishes a broad framework for understanding Brazil law and politics in relation to Blackness. Law is only accessible to the middle and upper classes, Perry argues, adding with regard to land rights and improving city life that “urban spaces are the manifestation of racial, gender and class marginality” (p. 9). Furthermore, she emphasizes that Brazil as a nation recognizes only certain aspects of Black culture, and recognition does not always include acknowledging citizenship rights. This situation calls for the kind of ethnography that Perry undertakes, because “exploring black activism, gender identity, and grassroots activism allows us to recognize the existence and central role of community based movements in black identity politics” (p. 25).

“The Gendered Racial Logic of Spatial Exclusion” (chapter 2) treats discriminatory state-sponsored zoning in Gamboa de Baixo as an integral part of Salvador de Bahia and essential to its functioning. Black people operate a substantial portion of the informal economy’s businesses, and Black culture is a major attraction in local tourism, an indispensable revenue source for the city. Thus, attempts to “whiten” Bahia blatantly contradict efforts to capitalize on tourism by revitalizing Black culture, past and present.

Chapter 3, “The Black Movement’s Foot Soldiers,” discusses the emergence and organization of women’s grassroots activism in Gamboa de Baixo. “For these women contesting racial domination means reclaiming collective power through redefining black womanhood,” Perry argues, and “reconstructing political identities based on their own understanding of themselves as Black is a source of empowerment necessary for political action” (p. 79). “Violent Policing and Disposing of Urban Landscapes” (chapter 4) examines the different forms of violence instituted in an urban context:

from the symbolism of walls as delimiting objects to the spectacle of state violence and the White politics of exclusion. “Picking up the pieces” (chapter 5) discusses the more hidden forms of violence, such as disguised statistics, the daily stress of being a Black woman in a poor Salvador de Bahia neighborhood, or internalized aggression. It is worth recalling here Nancy Scheper-Hughes’s comment about politically embedded measurements: “Public records—whether official censuses, birth and baptismal certificates, marriage and divorce records, or death or burial certificates—are no ‘pure’, ‘accurate’, or ‘objective’ sources of information. Nor are they politically ‘neutral’. But they do reveal a society’s system of classification and its basic values including what is considered hardly worth tracking or counting at all” (Scheper-Hughes 1996:891). In addition, analysis of public records underscores the role we, as anthropologists, have in documenting the human realities behind numbers.

Historically the people of Gamboa de Baixo have been subjected to human rights violations and experienced different forms of violence, regardless of their age or gender. Structural violence is concretized in multiple forms of everyday aggression cross-cutting spaces and classes: “the violence of displacement through private and state-sponsored urban development is inextricable from the private and the public security mechanisms that police employ in neighboring communities of the elite” (p. 127). “Politics is A Women’s Thing,” the last chapter before the book’s conclusion, deals with the engagement of women in political struggle and community formation to combat these conditions.

Keisha-Khan Perry’s brilliant ethnography reveals not only the complexity of Brazil’s young democracy but also the interconnections among conceptions of gender, race, community, and “development.” Its value as a case study derives, above all, from penetrating description and analysis of the situation in Gamboa de Baixo. The focus on land rights as a human rights issue allows a better understanding of the deep roots of Brazil’s structural inequalities and underscores the need for global dissemination of this message, because similar land problems exist around the world. Adding to the case study’s value are Perry’s strong suggestions that Salvador de Bahia, neither atypical nor exceptional among Brazilian cities, may also resemble cities elsewhere.

Nevertheless, questions remain. One concerns Perry’s conception of “community,” which she apparently understands as a monolithic block. She briefly discusses far too briefly fractures and fac-

tions within Gamboa de Baixo, many revolving around different levels of participation by local residents in the grassroots women's organization or other community groups. Although Perry focuses on gender, race, and grassroots movements, greater attention to the voices of men and local authorities would have enriched the ethnographic description and analysis. Similarly, greater attention to local women leaders' action strategies and sources of inspiration would have enhanced her case study's contribution to understanding Brazil's urban realities.

Clearly, these questions outline issues for future ethnographic research. For now, *Black Women Against the Land Grab* offers further proof that anthropology might have a significant impact on the design of public policies, if powerholders made social justice a goal of policy decisions.

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*Latino Immigrants and the Transformation of the U.S. South.* Mary E. Odem and Elaine Lacy (eds.). Athens, GA, and London, UK: University of Georgia Press, 2009. xxvii + 170 pp. (Cloth US \$71.95; Paper US\$25.95)

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This edited volume brings together scholars from the United States and Mexico in five disciplines—

history, sociology, anthropology, geography, and economics—to consider how the influx of immigrants from Mexico and other Central or South American countries since the 1980s has affected ten states in the U.S. South. The co-editors and eight contributors discuss conditions in Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana and Kentucky. Florida and Texas were excluded due to their distinctive and much longer histories of immigration. According to the U.S. Census, from 1990 to 2006 the Hispanic population of North Carolina increased by 678 percent, while that of Mississippi increased by 190 percent. The volume thoughtfully examines the reasons for increased immigration, and how immigrants have been received in host states and cities, focusing on five themes presented in the co-editors' introduction: (1) immigrant transnationalism, (2) economic incorporation and impact, (3) place-making and community building, (4) changing racial dynamics, and (5) Southerners' responses to Latino immigration.

Questions about the social and political-economic reasons for increased immigration from sending countries, as well as its consequences in host countries, are complex. The contributors' answers to them reflect the concerns of their disciplines and, thus, the volume's chapters display contrasting information-gathering and analytical methods. However, scale—geographical, social, and political-economic levels of operation—establishes a common thread for analysis and discussion. Each contributor deals with a particular combination of four scales: international (e.g., the effects of transnationalism and globalization); regional (i.e., general conditions in the U.S. South); state (i.e., characteristics of one of the ten host Southern states or an analogous political-territorial division in a sending country); and rural or urban area.

Rosío Córdova Plaza (chapter 2), a research professor at the Instituto de Investigaciones Histórico-Sociales at the Universidad Veracruzana, devotes careful attention to circumstances that prompt immigration from Mexico's State of Veracruz. Economic factors, like Mexico's economic crises since the 1980s and the U.S. economy's annual demand for labor, she argues, are some of the most important "push" factors. Legal and social "pull" factors, like the 1986 changes to the U.S. Immigrant Reform and Control Act allowing for family reunification and the maturation of migratory networks in the U.S. are also in play (2009:19). Economists James H. Johnson, Jr. and