

UvA-DARE (Digital Academic Repository)

[Review of: R.E. Carrasquillo (2006) Our landless patria: Marginal citizenship and race in Caguas, Puerto Rico, 1880-1910]

Baud, M.

DOI 10.1086/ahr.113.2.538

Publication date 2008

Published in American Historical review

Link to publication

Citation for published version (APA):

Baud, M. (2008). [Review of: R.E. Carrasquillo (2006) Our landless patria: Marginal citizenship and race in Caguas, Puerto Rico, 1880-1910]. *American Historical review*, *113*(2), 538-539. https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr.113.2.538

General rights

It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations

If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

UvA-DARE is a service provided by the library of the University of Amsterdam (https://dare.uva.nl)

By the 1930s "all of [the] elements characterizing deportation law to this day" (p. 161) were pretty much in place (with important additions in 1950, 1952, 1996, and 2001). Thus, by 1954 the U. S. Supreme Court, in a case involving crime figure Carlos Marcello, could declare that Congress may deport non-citizens "at any time for any reason even on grounds nonexistent at the time of their entry" (p. 176).

In the last segment of the book, the progressive evolution of deportation that Kanstroom has laid out gives way to a more piecemeal treatment of various topics. Regarding Japanese Americans during World War II, he refers to "judicial passivity" (p. 213) but says nothing about Ex Parte Endo (1944) or the later compensation to survivors. Concerning the repatriation of Mexicans during the early 1930s, he refers to the voluntary departures as "self-deportation" and, as noted, the removal efforts as "ethnic cleansing"—although no comparable murders took place. He labels Mexicans' migrations during the 1950s (both legal and not) as the "greatest peace time invasion ever" (p. 222), a rather inflammatory choice of terms. Kanstroom also comments that the Braceros' numbers were "almost exactly the same as the number of deportees," implying they were one and the same (p. 224).

The final chapter would have contributed more with a closer analysis of post–9/11 round-ups, registration of specific non-citizen populations, and deportations of many Middle Eastern visa violators rather than a discussion of prosecutorial, ultimate, interpretive, and factual interpretive discretion in deportation cases. Nonetheless, although Kanstroom gets a bit preachy at times and inexplicably becomes less sharp in his presentation of events after the 1930s, there is still much that is valuable in this book. He argues that readers need to acknowledge the evolution of arbitrary aspects of American immigration laws. Critical policies and administrative practices emphasizing the deportation option did gradually emerge but were not always as apparent as Kanstroom shows us.

ELLIOTT R. BARKAN, EMERITUS California State University, San Bernardino

CARIBBEAN AND LATIN AMERICA

Rosa E. Carrasquillo. Our Landless Patria: Marginal Citizenship and Race in Caguas, Puerto Rico, 1880–1910. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. 2006. Pp. xxiv, 202. \$55.00.

Caguas is a small town in Puerto Rico's heartland, south of the capital, San Juan. Rosa E. Carrasquillo takes the region around this town as point of departure for a micro-historical analysis. On the basis of local documentary sources and some interviews, she focuses on the period when Spanish rule in Puerto Rico was replaced by that of the United States.

After an introductory chapter, the book touches

upon a number of themes. First Carrasquillo analyzes the relationship between national and local politics in this period of transition. She demonstrates how the Spanish colonial government embarked on a policy of administrative centralization after the end of the Ten Years' War in Cuba and the subsequent Paz de Zanjón. The Municipal Law of 1878 sought to undermine the power of local elites and, more important, to expand state power in the countryside. Its ultimate goal was control of the rural population. The law fundamentally changed the relation between the central government and local structures of governance and prepared rural society for the push toward capitalist modernization and labor control. Carrasquillo especially focuses on the awkward position of the intermediary officials, comisarios (commissaries) and alcaldes de barrio (justices of the peace) charged with controlling the rapidly changing relationship between the rural population and the state. These officials were caught in the middle of an increasingly conflictive relationship.

In the following two chapters, Carrasquillo focuses on the crossroads of class and race. The changes in the administrative structure of the country diminished access to land for the rural population. New systems of land tax led to the privatization of land and eventually to increased power for large landowners. Popular forms of access to land became more restricted, and all kinds of means to increase labor control were invented, especially through the infamous *libreta* (passbook) and later the so-called *cédula de vecindad* (identity document). The *cédula* had a double edge: it provided new income for the municipal coffers (in the process, further impoverishing the poorest sectors of society), and it provided employers with a legal instrument to control their laborers.

But this was not only a class issue. In the aftermath of slavery the former slave population, but also the free "people of color," gradually lost access to natural resources. This process began with the so-called Mortgage Law of 1880 but became more visible in the following decades. Carrasquillo cleverly uses the information from census reports to illustrate the daily reality of this process. The new relations of production supported by new laws increasingly drove the ex-slave population from the land and turned them into day laborers.

As in other parts of Latin America, this development was accompanied in Puerto Rico by all kinds of ideological musings in the late nineteenth century, the third element of Carrasquillo's inquiry. Such theorizing tended to show that the social cum racial divide was a legitimate and inevitable element of progress and development. During the U. S. occupation of the island, the racial debate acquired new overtones. Interestingly, the U. S. authorities were somewhat at a loss as to how to classify the Puerto Rican population. Some American officials emphasized the "white" origins of Puerto Rico's rural population. However, they also complained about their "indolence" and targeted them equally with policies of labor discipline.

This story is rather well known, but the brunt of Carrasquillo's book is to show how the rural population resisted the efforts of increased state control. She uses the concept of "marginal citizenship" to argue that the rural population resisted state measures and legislation and created their own kind of citizenship on the periphery of state power. They disobeyed state rulings and migrated away from abusive landlords or occupied lands. It is surprising that Carrasquillo does not refer to the work of James C. Scott, particularly his ideas about "every-day protest" and "hidden transcripts," because her concept of "marginal citizenship" seems to refer to the same processes that Scott described in the 1980s (and that engendered a massive literature).

The book's last chapter looks at gender relations within rural society. This chapter is quite interesting because of its original source material but stands somewhat apart from the rest of the book. It intends to unravel the logic of patriarchal relations in the countryside. The author shows how prevailing gender stereotypes determined the measures of the state. At the same time, the reproduction of some touching love letters allows her to show how men and women followed their hearts despite all kinds of gendered state repression.

This book is certainly a welcome contribution to Puerto Rican social history and gives interesting insights into the transition period of the late nineteenth century. Its strength is that it tries to present the viewpoints of the poor rural population. However, its origins as a Ph.D. dissertation have not entirely disappeared. The book sometimes lacks authority, and its theoretical basis is somewhat underdeveloped. In addition, the account of the period of the early U. S. occupation is surprisingly weak. This may be the result of Carrasquillo's exclusive use of local sources, which did not highlight the objectives and measures of the new authorities. This leads to my main concern with the book: its exclusive Puerto Rican focus. Although the bibliography presents a wealth of comparative and theoretical literature, the book's perspective is entirely local. Not even Puerto Rico's history is brought to light, nor is the peculiar history of Caguas compared to regions outside of the island. Local history has proven to be a very important part of the historical discipline, but its strength can only be understood when it is placed in a clear comparative framework. Such a framework is missing in this otherwise very interesting study.

> MICHIEL BAUD CEDLA, Amsterdam

HARVEY R. NEPTUNE. *Caliban and the Yankees: Trinidad and the United States Occupation*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. 2007. Pp. xiii, 274. Cloth \$59.95, paper \$21.95.

From 1941 to 1947, U. S. military service personnel were stationed in Trinidad. The U. S. military built air and naval bases there under the aegis of the "destroyers

for bases" deal (1940) between the United States and the United Kingdom. The mission was to protect the Caribbean region from attacks by Nazi Germany. The deployment of U. S. forces reached 25,000, giving the United States a notable presence in the small island whose population numbered 500,000. Trinidadians have traditionally dubbed the period as the era of "American occupation." As expressed, for example, in the calypso song "Rum and Coca Cola" (1943) sung by Lord Invader, the U. S. presence was perceived as a time of "sexual imperialism." The comparatively wealthy U. S. troops threw their money around, and soon mothers and daughters were "working for the Yankee dollar." The U. S. comedian Morey Amsterdam also acted imperially when he pirated the song and altered the ribald lyrics. The U.S. version of "Rum and Coca Cola" (1944) sung by the Andrews Sisters was an immediate hit, selling 200,000 copies. The song presented a dreamy, tropical vision of international relations. Young girls affirmed that they were treated nice and that the Yankee soldiers "make Trinidad like paradise."

Harvey R. Neptune finds that neither version of the famous calypso song appropriately depicts the wartime experiences of the people of Trinidad. In this delightful cultural history, Neptune suggests that the words "complex" and "ambiguous" best characterize Trinidad's war years. Neptune mined archives in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Trinidad and closely read Trinidad's literary sources. Focusing on the issues of race, class, and gender, the author finds that the U.S. presence in Trinidad did not always negatively influence the British colony's social relations or retard Trinidad's evolution toward independence. Trinidad's patriotic intelligentsia reacted in alarm to the cultural mores of U. S. troops. But Trinidad's subalterns (the poor, women, youth) fashioned something for themselves out of the U. S. presence.

The U. S. military transformed the colony's economy. Over 25,000 Trinidadians worked for the U. S. military. Many more provided services in the informal economy. The poor flocked to work for Americans because of the superior pay and work conditions. The colonial government tried to enforce a "prevailing wages" policy, but the U. S. demand for labor often overwhelmed the British desire to protect colonial employers. Property owners, many of them from the island's tiny white minority, complained that workers had become too demanding. Wealthy homeowners carped about the "servant problem." Trinidad's poor had become conscious of new possibilities in their lives and had begun to undermine the traditional class system.

In the areas of dress, music, and sex, Neptune presents imaginative interpretations. The "zoot suit" became the rage on the island and the local dandies or "Saga Boys" became the island's new cultural arbiters. The U. S.-inspired fashions were rejections of Anglo norms and traditional conceptions of manhood. The embrace of the new fashions, such as untucked shirts, also meant that Trinidadians were choosing clothes