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Black Workers in the Export Years: Latin America, 1880–1930

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Some fifteen years ago in these pages, Emília Viotti da Costa noted a characteristic of Brazilian labor historiography that she could have applied to Latin America as a whole. “Historians rarely mention blacks or mulattoes. . . . Clearly there is here a problem that deserves more attention. What role did blacks play in the working class? How did they relate to immigrants and vice-versa? . . . These are some questions waiting for answers.”¹

Da Costa was not alone in wondering about these questions; and in the years since she posed them, a good deal of research and writing has appeared on the historical experiences of Afro–Latin Americans in the work force. This essay attempts to synthesize that literature into some general observations concerning the role of black workers in the initial period of working-class formation in Latin America from 1880 to 1930.²

These were the years of the “export boom.” Intensifying industrialization and urbanization in Europe and North America greatly stimulated demand for Latin American primary commodities, producing a wave of export-led economic growth that had profound social and political consequences for the region.³ Inevitably, some of those consequences were racial in nature. Latin American societies had a long history of being organized and stratified along racial lines, and throughout the Atlantic world the export years saw the development of racial theories and institutions the consequences of which we are still wrestling with at century’s close: scientific racism in Europe and North America, Jim Crow segregation in the United States, the beginnings of apartheid in South Africa.⁴

What were the impacts of the export years on racial dynamics and “racial orders” in Latin America, particularly at the level of the working class? In proposing some answers to that question, this essay focuses on three principal areas of conflict and negotiation among the region’s multi-racial work forces: access to land, racialized labor migration, and unionization.

Land

From the colonial period onward, control over rural labor in Latin America has been inextricably tied to control over land. Rural workers who hold sufficient land to feed themselves and their families are workers who can

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refuse plantation employment or accept it only on terms that are advantageous to them. In colonies such as Brazil, Cuba, and Venezuela, African slavery became so widespread precisely because low population densities and easy access to land on the frontiers produced chronic shortages of free workers. Not surprisingly, then, the abolition of slavery during the 1800s and the freeing of black workers ignited intense struggles over control of and access to land in the plantation zones.

In mainland Spanish America, slavery gradually disintegrated during the independence wars of the 1810s and 1820s and the subsequent civil wars that afflicted much of the region through the 1850s and 1860s. Numerous plantations and haciendas were destroyed or badly damaged in these conflicts, and thousands of slaves won their freedom through military service or by fleeing the estates. "Plantation discipline collapsed" in Venezuela, reports John Lombardi, as slaves fled to join *cumbes* (communities of runaway slaves) or guerrilla bands.⁵ In the coastal sugar-growing zones of Peru, many owners abandoned their haciendas in the face of widespread civil violence and banditry. Slaves took advantage of owners' absence to create "liberated territories" on the estates, sheltering runaway slaves and guerrillas and in some cases even administering haciendas in a state of "virtual self-government."⁶ Similar conditions obtained in the sugar-growing Cauca Valley of Colombia, where recurrent civil wars between Liberals and Conservatives made it impossible for landowners to reestablish control over the work force. Many slaves and free blacks withdrew from the plantation sector entirely, establishing armed settlements in the neighboring hills and forests; those who remained behind used their scarcity, and then their newfound freedom (final abolition was enacted in the early 1850s in Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela), to impose new working conditions on the plantations, as a local official reported at the time. The ex-slave *libertos*

have realized their position and rights as free men, leaving estates where they do not wish to remain because of the excessive demands of the landowner and moving to others that offer better terms, so that . . . today one may say that [the *libertos*] set the price for land rentals. . . . Even when it is certain that there exist marked tendencies for some landowners to aggressively confront the *libertos*, imposing high rents . . . they have been forced to accept the counter-proposals made by their former slaves.⁷

This bargaining continued through the 1860s, 1870s, and 1880s, leading many landlords to withdraw from tasks of direct management themselves and, as in Peru, to rent out their estates to intermediaries. "Most *hacendados* are bankrupt," reported a visitor to the valley in 1880. "They lack the capital to rebuild what has been destroyed and most of them, after fighting for many years against the destructive fanaticism of the blacks, have given up and don't want to begin all over again."⁸

At the very moment that those words were being written, however, the relationship between landowners and laborers throughout the region was starting to shift. During the first fifty years of independence (1820–1870), war, economic dislocation, and abolition had combined to place landowners in much of Spanish America in a position of marked disadvantage in bargaining with their black laborers. With the coming of the export boom, this bargaining relationship began to reverse. Increased demand for exports gave landowners more incentive to regain control over their holdings, to increase them where possible, and to expand production. Inevitably these efforts encountered resistance from peasant cultivators; but national governments financed by revenues from import and export duties were now in a position to field armed forces that could meet that resistance far more effectively than earlier in the century. By the late 1800s Peru's *bandoleros* and guerrillas, many of whom in the coastal areas were Afro-Peruvian, no longer roamed with impunity through the countryside.⁹ Colombia's Liberal guerrillas (in the Cauca Valley drawn heavily from the black peasantry) fought their last actions during the War of the Thousand Days and finally acknowledged Conservative victory in 1903.¹⁰ Even in the Dominican Republic, one of the least developed nations in the region, a growing US-financed sugar industry, and later direct intervention by the United States itself (1916–1924), provided the means for a potent offensive against rural *gavilleros*, who were then finally subdued by Rafael Trujillo's National Guard during the 1920s and 1930s.¹¹

This extension of state authority into the countryside enabled landowners to reestablish control over lands that, earlier in the century, they had been forced to cede to squatters and tenants. It also permitted national governments to reassert control over publicly owned state lands, vast tracts of which were now handed over to private investors through land grants or sales. In Mexico the distribution of state-owned lands during this period struck directly at Indian and mestizo peasants and played a central role in creating the preconditions for the Mexican Revolution; in Colombia and the Dominican Republic the privatization of public or communally owned lands (*terrenos comuneros*) had similarly negative effects on Afro-Latin-American peasants, who found themselves pushed off their subsistence farms and losing the investments that they had made in buildings, coffee bushes, fruit trees, and other crops.¹²

As suggested above, struggles over land were simultaneously struggles over labor. Workers denied access to the squatting rights or public lands that they had claimed earlier in the 1800s were now far more dependent on plantation employment, and thus more vulnerable to the pressures of proletarianization. Those pressures varied, however, in response to the intensity of export-based growth in given regions. Where such growth was weak or limited, black peasants were more able to retain access to land and thus escape proletarianization. One such case was the Pacific coastal rain forests of Colombia and Ecuador. During the colonial period these had been

centers of placer gold mining carried out by African slaves. Following emancipation the ex-slaves remained in the rain forest, organizing themselves into extended kinship networks that held communal mining, hunting, and cultivating rights to specific parcels of land.¹³ During the late 1800s British, American, and Colombian investors obtained government concessions to mine the major rivers of the Colombian part of the region and brought in mechanized dredges to do so. This set off a flurry of lawsuits by Afro-Colombians attempting, in some cases successfully, to document their rights to the land. In cases in which they were unable to establish those rights, black families responded by moving deeper into the rain forest, where neither the companies' dredges nor hacienda agriculture could follow.

This continued access to frontier land enabled Afro-Colombians to remain in the subsistence economy and accept employment on the dredges only when the terms and conditions suited them. "Every black has his placer or little mine, where he works several days of the week . . . with his family," observed a Colombian visitor to the coast in 1895. "He prefers to earn little but to be free and work on his own account[;] rarely does he endure a permanent job."¹⁴ Unable to contract a stable labor force—neither Europeans nor highlander Colombians could withstand the rigors of the rain forest—most of the mining companies had abandoned the region by 1900, leaving production in the hands of local miners.¹⁵ "There reigns a total absence of an industrial mining tradition" along the coast, complained a Colombian government report in 1943; and as late as the 1970s, female miners outnumbered males in the region, reflecting the continuing family basis of mining.¹⁶

Harsh environmental conditions and the almost complete absence of plantation agriculture in the region permitted black workers in the rain forest to retain uninterrupted access to, and indeed control over, the means of subsistence. It thus represented one end of the spectrum of black workers' experience during the export years: virtually complete freedom from proletarianization. Lying at an intermediate point on the spectrum were those regions of secondary importance in export production, which were affected by the boom but not wholly transformed by it. The growth of sugar exports, for example, was most strongly felt in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic; growth was much weaker in Brazil, once the center of world sugar cultivation but now surpassed by more highly capitalized producers of cane sugar in the Caribbean and beet sugar in Europe. Lacking the wherewithal either to expand cultivation or invest in more mechanized forms of production, and facing the loss of their slave labor forces after abolition in 1888, Brazilian sugar planters encouraged ex-slaves to remain on the estates as sharecroppers or labor-tenants, growing their own crops for subsistence or sale. This represented a considerable step up from slavery, and sometimes even more than that. In the sugar zones around Rio de Janeiro, for example, Afro-Brazilian tenants producing corn, beans, and

manioc for sale in the capital enjoyed “a high degree of autonomy in relation to the administrators of the plantation,” concludes one historian.¹⁷ Conditions were more difficult in the sugar zones of the northeast, where urban markets were smaller and poorer and the region was buffeted by multiyear droughts. Even (or especially) under these conditions, however, tenantry represented a means to escape complete dispossession, which did not occur in the northeast until after 1950, when a revived, recapitalized sugar industry gradually eliminated tenantry in favor of wage labor.¹⁸

Workers in the secondary sugar zones—that is, those bypassed by the export boom—thus retained access to land through the first half of the twentieth century.¹⁹ The story was different in the core zones of export production, where black workers suffered almost complete dispossession. The principal example of this phenomenon is Cuba, the epicenter of the sugar export boom. The boom had actually begun precociously in the island, in the 1820s and 1830s, and had been based initially on African slavery. Unlike mainland Spanish America, which struggled for independence during the first half of the 1800s, Cuban elites remained loyal to Spain. This enabled the island to escape the violence and destruction that undermined slavery on the mainland. Instead slavery, the slave trade, and plantation agriculture all continued intact in Cuba, and indeed at levels higher than ever before, into the second half of the nineteenth century. When the island finally experienced the violence of the independence wars (1868–1880, 1895–1898), it suffered much the same effects as the mainland half a century earlier: the destruction of much of the sugar industry, flight and insubordination on the plantations, and the eventual abolition (in 1886) of slavery.²⁰

Unlike the mainland, however, Cuba’s economic recovery from the wars was almost immediate. Capital swept in from the United States to buy ruined plantations and create a new, expanded, and modernized sugar industry. The resulting recovery and expansion of the sugar estates hit hard at all the island’s peasant cultivators, and especially at Afro-Cubans. Part of the reorganization of the sugar industry was the subcontracting of cane production to small- and medium-holder *colonos*, who grew cane either on their own land or on land rented from the plantations. Some black farmers, particularly those who owned land, were able to take part in *colono* production; but as early as 1900 the ranks of the *colonato* were overwhelmingly white, and they became even more so as time went on.²¹ Withdrawing in the face of the plantations’ advance, many Afro-Cubans, especially ex-slaves with no claims to land ownership, migrated from the central and western parts of the island to the eastern province of Oriente, where large expanses of land remained unsettled and available for cultivation by squatters. But empty land attracted not just peasants but sugar companies as well. During the early 1900s a number of US-owned firms opened operations in the province, again driving smallholders off the land. The result was increasing tension and petty banditry in the countryside and

then a full-fledged *jacquerie*, the Race War of 1912, in which 5,000–6,000 Afro-Cuban peasants and independence war veterans were massacred by government forces.²²

For black workers in Cuba, the export boom meant almost total dispossession from the land and full proletarianization. The same was true in the coffee zones of southeastern Brazil, another center of export production. Here the final abolition of slavery in 1888 posed the usual challenge to landowners—how to keep newly freed *libertos* at work on the plantations. In the older parts of the coffee zones, cash-starved planters trying to coax yields from aging trees and badly eroded land were forced to cede sharecropping and tenantry rights comparable to those granted to Brazilian sugar workers. Under these conditions, however, coffee cultivation was barely profitable, and during the early 1900s more and more plantation owners turned their land over to cattle grazing, in effect withdrawing from the export sector and dispensing with most of their workers.²³

In the newer frontier zones of western São Paulo, where recently cleared virgin lands were far more productive, planters hired families of *colonos* on multiyear contracts to care for several hundred coffee trees in return for a cash payment, housing, and the right to plant wheat, corn, and other crops in the rows between the trees. Growing their own crops for subsistence and sale enabled *colono* families to escape complete proletarianization. By the 1920s and 30s a significant proportion of them had succeeded in acquiring small- and medium-sized holdings of their own bought with savings earned from family labor. The coffee boom thus generated a substantial rural middle class in São Paulo, but very few of those new smallholders were black. As in Cuba, the coffee planters had opted to keep the *colonato* white and to deny such employment to their former slaves.²⁴ That decision had devastating consequences for long-term black upward mobility, or rather the lack thereof; it also reflected, and was made possible by, a second important consequence of the export boom: racialized labor migration.

White Immigration

The explosive growth in trans-Atlantic commerce during the 1880–1930 period was paralleled by equally explosive growth in trans-Atlantic migration. Almost twenty-eight million Europeans migrated to the United States during those years, and ten to eleven million to Latin America.²⁵ Most came to Argentina, Uruguay, and southern Brazil, where meat- and cereals-based economies offered working conditions and opportunities comparable to those of the Midwest of the United States and Canada. Fewer were willing to travel to the plantation zones, where they would face harsh disease environments, degrading working conditions, and job competition from large ex-slave populations. (Similar objections applied to the US South, which received correspondingly little European migration.)

Latin American elites and policymakers invested considerable effort in trying to overcome these obstacles and persuade Europeans to come. They had two main motives for doing so: first, to undercut the bargaining position of native-born “national” laborers by flooding the labor market with foreigners; and second, in keeping with the scientific racist dictates of the era, to “improve” the national population through “whitening.”²⁶ National and state governments throughout the region created programs to promote, and in some cases actually to subsidize, European immigration, but only in Brazil and Cuba did these programs come close to achieving their objectives. In both countries, success was closely tied to export performance. A number of Brazilian states created such programs, but it was São Paulo’s, funded by abundant coffee earnings, that ended up attracting over half of the Europeans who came to the country: 2.0 million immigrants between 1890 and 1930 (out of a national total of 3.5 million), a figure larger than the entire state population (1.4 million) at the beginning of that period. Cuba did almost as well, attracting 780,000 Spaniards between 1900 and 1930, a figure equal to almost half the national population in 1900.²⁷

Immigration at these levels more than fulfilled elites’ goals of flooding local labor markets. As Europeans poured in, they displaced black workers in almost direct proportion to the volume of migration: The larger the number of Europeans, the more devastating the impacts on local black populations. Thus in Buenos Aires, which by 1914 had 780,000 immigrants and fewer than 10,000 Afro-Argentines, blacks and mulattoes were virtually eliminated from the skilled trades, factory employment, and even street vending, in which they had been quite visible through the 1870s. By 1900, workers of color were confined almost entirely to domestic service, occasional day labor, and low-level service positions in government offices.²⁸

The displacement of black workers in the Brazilian state of São Paulo, where by 1920 the immigrant population was 830,000 and Afro-Brazilians some 650,000, was almost as extreme as in Buenos Aires. Immigrants pushed blacks and mulattoes aside not just in the rural sector, as we have seen, but in urban employment as well. In the state capital, by the early 1900s the labor force in construction and industry was eighty to ninety percent foreign-born. Some Afro-Brazilians found regular jobs in factories or as laborers building the city’s tramways and power grids, but most were relegated to domestic service and informal day labor.²⁹

More of an equilibrium was struck in cities like Lima and Rio de Janeiro, where blacks continued to outnumber Europeans. In Lima, immigrants displaced Afro-Peruvians from factory work but were insufficient in number to push them out of construction, transport, or the artisan trades.³⁰ Afro-Brazilians in Rio de Janeiro also succeeded in retaining a place in the wage-labor market, by holding their own in urban transport, as dockworkers, and in factory employment. Europeans were clearly preferred for employment in commerce and the skilled trades, however, and within the

industrial sector there were clear disparities between the two groups. Afro-Brazilians were most likely to be found in the textile industry, the most poorly paid industrial employment, and European workers in the textile factories were far more likely to be paid an hourly wage and thus to have higher earnings than Afro-Brazilians, who were generally paid piecework rates.³¹

Much the same was true in Cuba, where Afro-Cubans retained employment opportunities in construction and industry but complained of being relegated to the least-skilled, most poorly paid positions. A principal area of conflict was the tobacco industry, in which Cubans formed the majority of workers but Spaniards were favored for more highly paid positions as cigar rollers. So marked was the preference for Spaniards that many Cuban rollers left the island to seek work in the United States, fueling the growth of the cigar industry in Tampa and Key West. Spaniards were also favored for employment in cigarette factories, where wages ran some thirty percent higher than in the cigar factories.³² They completely dominated employment in commerce, as well as technical positions in industry, including the all-important sugar industry. At the level of field workers, seasonal migrants came from Spain every fall to work in the sugar harvest, returning home in the spring with their earnings. Their presence formed a formidable obstacle to black canecutters' efforts to bargain for higher wages. Not for nothing did the Afro-Cuban newspaper column "Ideales de una raza" complain in 1929 of blacks being caught between "two great evils: foreigners in the cities and foreigners in the countryside."³³

Why were European workers so consistently able to push Afro-Latin-Americans aside in the competition for jobs? Part of the answer lies in the racialized images that employers throughout the region held of European and Afro-Latin-American workers: the former as industrious, reliable, responsible; the latter as lazy, recalcitrant, and irresponsible. Both images corresponded to the racist ideologies of the period. The image of black workers was further grounded in and confirmed by employers' and landowners' experience with black workers, first under slavery and then during the postemancipation years. Resistance to work discipline had been a constant feature of plantation slavery, and that resistance had intensified under conditions of freedom. Ex-slaves and their descendants were determined to avoid any form of labor discipline that threatened to restore them to the condition of slaves. From the point of view of employers, this made them deeply problematic as potential employees.³⁴

Once arrived in the region, European workers proved no fonder of local forms of labor discipline than their black counterparts. In Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, and elsewhere they took a prominent role in labor mobilization and work stoppages, and as many as half of the Europeans who came to Latin America either returned home or moved on to the United States rather than submit to local working conditions.³⁵ Nevertheless, they remained much-sought by local employers and continued to receive prefer-

ence for employment throughout the export period. Given the racial doctrines of the day, it was hardly surprising that the preferences expressed in state policy were replicated in individual hiring decisions—especially when many of those decisions were being made by immigrants themselves. While most Europeans worked as unskilled laborers, a number succeeded in establishing themselves as small tradesmen and shopkeepers, in the process posing a significant competitive challenge to members of the native-born middle class. In Buenos Aires in 1914, eighty percent of small proprietors—shopkeepers and owners of workshops and small factories—were immigrants. Europeans were similarly overrepresented among employers in Cuba and São Paulo. In the latter they formed a visible wing not just of the middle class but of the industrial bourgeoisie. Immigrant proprietors showed a strong tendency toward ethnic solidarity in their hiring practices, leading Cuban workers in 1902 to protest to Congress the “odious privileges in hiring enjoyed by Spanish workers protected by bosses of their same nationality.” Immigrant workers capitalized on that tendency by bringing in their relatives, friends, and neighbors to apply for jobs at the firms where they worked.³⁶

Formal and informal racial preferences and ties of ethnic solidarity among immigrant employers and workers thus played a powerful role in determining the outcomes of labor market competition in the export economies. The importance of racial and ethnic preferences during this period is further evidenced by the contrasting case of export-based economies which, having failed to obtain white European immigration (or, in the case of Cuba, sufficient white immigration), instead resorted to blacks: West Indian laborers from Jamaica, Haiti, and other Caribbean islands.

Black Immigration

Throughout Latin America, employers and elites openly preferred white workers over nonwhites. But only four countries—Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, and Uruguay—had the combination of job opportunities and working conditions required to obtain such workers. Those countries that did not, and that required large labor forces to undertake major infrastructural and construction projects, were forced to turn elsewhere. One source of such workers was East Asia; the other was the British and French West Indies, where the decline of the sugar industry and severe economic stagnation had forced laborers to seek work abroad.

West Indian immigration diffused through much of Spanish America during this period; the largest migratory streams went to Cuba (slightly over 300,000 immigrants between 1900 and 1930), Venezuela (200–300,000), and Panama (150–200,000).³⁷ All three countries were undertaking massive projects: in Cuba, the reconstruction and expansion of the sugar industry; in Venezuela, the creation of the oil industry; and in Panama, the building of the Panama Canal and of banana plantations along the Caribbean coast.

And in all three countries those projects were undertaken by corporations based in the United States: in Cuba, by US-owned sugar companies; in Venezuela, by Standard Oil and other firms; and in Panama, by the Panama Canal Company and the United Fruit Company.

Latin American elites and governments, committed to the “whitening” of their national societies, actively discouraged black immigration and in some cases formally banned it.³⁸ US-owned companies, by contrast, were completely uninterested in the racial “improvement” of the countries in which they operated. Rather, their principal concern was the provision of labor in adequate numbers, regardless of its race or provenance. This contrast between Latin American and US interests was most visible in Cuba, where the national government had subsidized Spanish immigration to provide workers for the sugar industry. Spaniards and Afro-Cubans alike found conditions on the plantations barely tolerable, however, and many responded by withdrawing from plantation labor and pursuing other opportunities in the cities. In search of new sources of supply, the sugar companies, and especially the newer US-owned firms in the eastern province of Oriente, turned to Haiti and Jamaica. Cuban nationalists responded with cries of protest against the “Africanization” of the island; but the government was unable to withstand the demands of the sugar companies, and authorized the entry of black immigrants.³⁹

The labor shortage was even more acute in Panama, where by 1913 and 1914 some 45,000 to 50,000 men were on the Canal Company payroll in a country of fewer than half a million people.⁴⁰ The banana zones of the sparsely settled Caribbean coast presented similar problems to the United Fruit Company. The Costa Rican province of Limón, for example, had a total population of less than 8,000 in 1892; between 1900 and 1913 United Fruit imported over 20,000 West Indians into the province.⁴¹

Canal Company and United Fruit administrators gave no formal preference to West Indian laborers over locally born Hispanics. Both groups were lumped together on the “silver roll,” a system of vocational segregation that meant lower pay and inferior medical care and housing for non-US workers.⁴² However, the West Indians’ command of English, and their efforts to cultivate close ties of patronage with their American supervisors and employers, gave them visible advantages in both companies. As the Canal Company sought to reduce its payroll and labor costs during the Great Depression and after, West Indians seem to have been retained in larger numbers than Panamanians, and some were even promoted to replace more highly paid American technicians and supervisors.⁴³

This was even more the case at United Fruit, where outbreaks of Panama disease (a fungus that attacks banana plants) and then the Great Depression led the company to cut back and then close its Atlantic Coast plantations during the 1920s and 1930s. As the company reduced its payroll, West Indians were promoted to replace Americans as clerks and supervisors, and as the plantations closed down in the 1930s, West Indians

who had worked or grown bananas for the company took advantage of its withdrawal to buy parcels of land and establish small- and medium-sized family farms. The result was the creation by midcentury of a black rural middle class in the old banana zones, a complete reversal of the impact of the export boom elsewhere. Indeed, notes anthropologist Philippe Bourgois, “the Atlantic Zone [of Costa Rica and Panama] is one of the few places in the world where bourgeois Blacks exploit an underprivileged white minority.”⁴⁴

The West Indian experience in the banana zones diverges sharply from that of black workers elsewhere in Latin America. If anything it is most similar to that of European immigrants in the coffee zones of São Paulo. In both cases, immigrants were imported to work as plantation laborers, and as the export boom receded in the 1920s and 1930s those workers capitalized on their position to acquire small- and medium-sized holdings on former plantation land and upward mobility into a rural middle class. Clearly, these successes of black workers in one setting and white workers in another cannot be explained by “race” in any biological or cultural sense. But employers’ visions of race, and their decisions concerning race, are certainly relevant to the story.

In Brazil, Cuba, and southern South America, native-born employers gave open preference to European workers over blacks, granting the former much greater opportunities for employment and upward mobility. US-based employers in Central America and the Caribbean shared many of their Latin American counterparts’ racial assumptions, and imposed rigid forms of racial organization and segregation on their Latin American work forces. But they also lobbied for the entry of the West Indian immigrants into Central America, Cuba, and Venezuela, and hired hundreds of thousands of them. West Indian advancement and upward mobility in those countries demonstrated that black immigrants had as high a potential for risk-taking, hard work and achievement as white immigrants, directly contradicting the racial images of the age.⁴⁵ The very success of both immigrant groups, however, and their close, if conflictual, relation with the firms and employers who hired them, posed difficult challenges for labor movements struggling to organize workers in the cities, plantations, and mining zones of Latin America. As in the United States at the same time, how did those movements confront the task of mobilizing labor forces riven by enormous ethnic, national, and racial diversity?

Unionization

The export years marked the beginnings of unionization in Latin America. Such mobilization was concentrated in centers of export production, which earlier historians tended to attribute to the presence of immigrants imbued with European doctrines of anarchism and socialism. More recent work has made clear the equal and often greater participation of native-born work-

ers and activists. This suggests that unionization was most advanced in export centers, not because of the presence of immigrants, but because of the ways in which export production fostered the creation of large, industrial-style labor forces and accompanying forms of organization.⁴⁶

Because of immigration, these labor forces were often multiracial and multinational in character, a factor which historians of the period see as one of the primary obstacles to unionization.⁴⁷ Racialized immigration programs and informal employer preferences for some racial or ethnic groups over others badly aggravated such divisions, which employers did not hesitate to use as a weapon against worker mobilization. In the Brazilian port of Santos, the city's dock and warehouse monopoly resorted to black strikebreakers, many of them former slaves freed in the emancipation of 1888, to break immigrant-led strikes during the 1890s and early 1900s; textile firms in Rio de Janeiro threatened to replace restive Italian and Spanish workers with unemployed Portuguese and Afro-Brazilians; and in 1919 the São Paulo Tramway Company broke a strike of white conductors and drivers by promoting black workers whom it had previously confined to laying track.⁴⁸

In each of those cases, black strikebreakers were used against white strikers; but racial divisions could just as easily be used against black strikers. For example, during the first decades of the 1900s most port workers in Havana were Afro-Cubans organized into semi-religious fraternal organizations, the Abakuá lodges, that negotiated contracts with dock and warehouse companies. When these workers joined the general strike of 1935, the companies brought in 900 strikebreakers, most of them native-born white peasants from southern Havana province. Following the defeat of the strike, these replacement workers were retained in their positions, with the result that by 1940 the work force in the port was majority white and the Abakuá lodges were no longer a power on the docks.⁴⁹

Probably the most effective cultivator and exploiter of ethnic and racial divisions among its workers was the United Fruit Company. Early strikes by West Indians in Costa Rica were defeated in part by exploiting conflicts among groups of workers from different islands; and following a particularly hard-fought wave of strikes in 1918 and 1919 the Company began to diversify the labor force further by hiring Hispanic Costa Ricans and Nicaraguans. This led to the entry into the banana zones of communist organizers from the central highlands who actively sought to promote cross-racial unity against the company but proved unable to overcome antipathies between Hispanic and West Indian workers. And as West Indians left plantation labor and became clerks, supervisors, or independent smallholders, they became correspondingly less inclined to strike. As a result, the general strike of 1934 was carried out primarily by Hispanic organizers and workers, and foundered in large part because of West Indian abstention.⁵⁰

Employers' tactics to divide and conquer proved so effective because

they exploited very real ethnic and racial divisions among workers. However, those divisions should not be seen as automatic and inevitable outcomes of cross-racial contact; rather, they were intensified and aggravated by labor-market conditions that had been made highly competitive through state- and employer-promoted immigration programs, and in which that competition had been structured, again through state policies and employer preferences, along racial and ethnic lines. The result was frequent animosity and antagonism among members of competing groups.

Recent studies of working-class life in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo during the export years argue the “fundamental role played by national and racial rivalries in workplace conflicts” as well as in life outside the workplace. Ethnic and racial tensions spilled over in fights and confrontations in bars and on street corners, and occasionally in full-fledged riots.⁵¹ Italy’s invasions of Abyssinia, first in 1895 and again in 1936, provoked fighting in São Paulo between blacks and Italians; competition between black and Italian Carnival clubs in working-class neighborhoods of Rio de Janeiro erupted in “considerable violence” and the Italians appealing to their consul for protection; and on May 13, 1908, the twentieth anniversary of emancipation, fighting broke out between black and Portuguese members of the Rio stevedores’ union after two Portuguese candidates were elected president and treasurer of the historically black union. In the weeks following the altercation, the organization collapsed, losing almost all of its 4,000 members.⁵²

Ethnic divisions were equally problematic in Cuba, where the League of Cuban Workers was founded in 1899 specifically to defend Cuban workers from Spanish competition. Calling for national legislation that would mandate a minimum requirement of seventy-five percent native-born workers in every enterprise, the League centered its efforts on the tobacco industry, where in 1902 Cuban workers struck to demand equal access to apprenticeships “without distinctions of race.” Despite (or perhaps because of) mediation by a blue-ribbon committee of black and white independence war commanders, the strike failed and the League collapsed shortly thereafter. It left in its wake, however, a counterorganization of Spanish anarchists, the Workers Alliance, who criticized the League for aggravating ethnic and racial tensions in the labor movement.⁵³ Cuban activist Carlos Baliño struck back in 1909, denouncing the anarchists’ complicity with employers’ racial preferences. “There are guilds where work is so monopolized by Spanish workers that few Cubans work in the trade,” he bitterly observed, “and *not one black*.”⁵⁴

Racial tensions were even greater in countries receiving West Indian immigration. European immigration badly undercut the position of locally born “national” workers, both black and white; but those workers, apparently accepting the whitening ideologies hegemonic at the time, never protested such immigration in racial terms. West Indians, by contrast, represented the complete negation of whitening, and were further tainted by

their association in the public mind with foreign capital. In their struggles with the immigrants, Hispanic workers were not above invoking racist stereotypes and language in an effort to construct cross-class nationalist alliances with local elites and the middle class. In appeals to the national Congress in the 1920s and 1930s, Costa Rican workers in the banana zones raised

the black problem, which is of transcendental importance, because in the province of Limón it constitutes a situation of privilege for this race and of manifest inferiority for the white race to which we belong. It is not possible to get along with them, because their evil ways do not permit it; for them the family does not exist, nor does the honor of the woman, and thus they live in an overcrowding and a promiscuity which is dangerous for our homes.⁵⁵

Honduran banana workers used similar language in their calls to expel West Indians from the country, threatening with death those who failed to leave.⁵⁶ The nationalist Panama for Panamanians movement cited Nazi anti-Semitic laws as a model for how to treat the immigrants.⁵⁷ The worst case by far was the Dominican Republic, where in 1937 the Trujillo regime ordered the massacre of 10,000–20,000 Haitians and native-born Dominicans of Haitian ancestry.⁵⁸

Racial and ethnic differences clearly formed a significant source of division and discord among Latin American labor forces during the export years. But while acknowledging such divisions, we should also note a strong countervailing tendency in regional labor movements, one that was very much at odds with the racism hegemonic in the Atlantic world at that time and with dominant trends in labor mobilization in the United States and South Africa. This tendency was a purposeful effort by workers and organizers to reach across ethnic and racial divides to construct a unified, pan-racial labor movement. Such efforts faced enormous and sometimes overpowering obstacles, as evidenced by the instances of labor conflict just cited. But the very fact that, for example, Afro-Brazilian and Portuguese workers came to blows in the Rio dockworkers' union in 1908 reflects their attempt to join forces in a single, cross-racial organization. And while that effort foundered, others were more successful. The particular brand of reformist, "laborist" (*trabalhista*) unionism that became dominant in Rio de Janeiro was the product of substantial participation by Brazilian workers and activists, both white and black, in the city's labor movement. The São Paulo unions, heavily dominated both in their membership and their leadership by Europeans, were far more radical in their orientation; but even this immigrant-dominated movement came out forcefully against racial and ethnic preferences in the workplace and made active efforts to recruit an Afro-Brazilian constituency.⁵⁹

Efforts toward cross-racial mobilization were equally visible in Cuba, and in some ways more remarkable. Cuba represented potentially the most

conflictual locus of cross-racial contact in the entire hemisphere: a plantation society already riven by racial divisions, badly devastated during the independence war of 1895–1898, and then inundated first by European and then by West Indian immigration. The likelihood of interracial conflict was very great, and in fact such conflict did briefly explode in the previously mentioned Race War of 1912. “Nothing is as complicated, nor does anything have a more alarming character,” observed the Afro-Cuban newspaper *Labor Nueva* in 1916, “than the current problem of races. The issue is so delicate that . . . nobody dares confront it.”⁶⁰

Despite the pressure-cooker quality of Cuban racial interactions, workers in the island succeeded in constructing perhaps the most genuinely pan-racial labor movement to be found anywhere in the Americas. As early as the first decade of the 1900s, Spanish anarchists and Afro-Cuban veterans of the independence wars were collaborating in efforts to organize black and white workers in the island’s sugar industry.⁶¹ The sugar companies began importing West Indians in the 1910s in part as a means of defeating those efforts, but Cuban activists responded by including West Indians in their organizing campaigns. The result was the creation in 1932 of a thoroughly integrated national sugar workers’ union that explicitly called for racial equality in hiring. The sugar workers in turn formed part of a larger National Confederation of Labor, closely tied to the Communist party, in both of which organizations Afro-Cuban members and activists like Jesús Menéndez, Lázaro Peña, and Blas Roca played prominent roles. The Confederation seconded the sugar workers’ call for racial equality in hiring and, in a particularly courageous and controversial move, opposed the government’s forcible repatriation of West Indian and Spanish immigrants during the Depression.⁶²

In searching for explanations for this tendency toward cross-racial organization, it is tempting to argue that it was not Latin American workers who were unusual, but rather workers in the United States and South Africa. The Latin American experience seems to bear out Marxist (and, for that matter, liberal developmentalist) predictions that industrialization and proletarianization will tend to break down racial and ethnic identities and replace them with class-based identities and solidarities. Yet we know that this did not happen in multiracial societies where industrialization and economic development were comparable to, or more advanced than, Latin America; nor, as we have just seen, did economic growth tend to reduce racial divisions and conflicts among Latin American workers.⁶³ Race remained absolutely central to public thought and discourse during the export years, and the intense competition among workers for jobs and livelihood continued to be defined in racial and ethnic terms. Far from dissolving racial divisions and conflicts, the experiences of the export years probably worked to aggravate them.

This makes all the more striking the record of Latin American labor movements in working to oppose and overcome those divisions. Doubtless

part of the explanation for that tendency can be found in the political ideologies dominant among the region's activists. Anarchist, socialist, and communist organizers consistently called for cross-racial solidarity in confronting employers and the state; communist organizers were especially persistent in pursuing that goal.⁶⁴ But again, we may note that similar ideologies were invoked in the United States and South Africa, without producing the same effect; and while Latin American organizers called for pan-racialism, their rhetoric and practices were not always free of the racist stereotypes and assumptions that circulated throughout the Atlantic world.⁶⁵

In the end, the most likely explanation for the multiracial character of the region's labor movements is, I believe, the multiracial character of its labor history. Throughout the colonial period and into the nineteenth century—indeed, in most of the region, into the twentieth century and down to the present—Latin American labor forces were racially mixed and majority nonwhite. Slavery, forced Indian labor, and the racial laws of the “caste regime” imposed a structure of racial hierarchy on the region's workforces during the colonial period and left a strong legacy of white racial superiority.⁶⁶ But particularly in Spanish America, the process of independence in the early 1800s broke the legal structure of white supremacy and challenged its ideological structure. Independence could not have been won without support from black soldiers and officers; the price of that support was the overturning of colonial racial legislation and its replacement with republican laws and ideologies that explicitly rejected racial inequality. As a result, nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Latin America never experienced the *herrenvolk*, whites-only democracies of the United States and South Africa. When elites sought to limit popular political participation, as they did throughout the export period, they did so using class-based criteria—for example, restricting suffrage to those who met income or literacy requirements—or through generalized fraud, rather than through racial exclusion.

In such a setting in which nonwhites represented the majority of national labor forces (and even oligarchical elites were forced to accept the principle of juridical racial equality), it is difficult to imagine the conditions under which labor movements could have adopted approaches based on racial exclusion or white supremacy. And in fact, with the exception of Central America, there is no evidence that white workers in the region, either immigrant or native-born, ever considered pushing for racial preferences. Rather, the tendency in labor congresses, the labor press, and organizing practices was exactly the contrary: a consistent effort to promote working-class unity across racial and ethnic lines.

Thus, when Colombian elites attempted to use racial stereotyping and divisions against labor movements in that country, workers responded by embracing those stereotypes and turning them to their own advantage. In 1933, at the height of the Depression, a slate of union members was elected

to the town council of Manizales. The newspapers made no mention of their having been Afro-Colombian; given the racial composition of the region, they were most likely a racially mixed group of mestizos, whites, and blacks. Nevertheless, local elites responded to their election by ridiculing them as “the Council of Blacks,” a racialized reference to their lower-class origins. Rather than rejecting the label, the councilmen promptly adopted it as their collective motto, using it in alternation with the class-based “Sons of the Workshops and the Fields.” This incident then repeated itself at the national level in the 1940s, when populist presidential candidate Jorge Gaitán was scornfully dismissed by his opponents as “el negro Gaitán”—a label that, like the councilmen of Manizales, he embraced in his speeches and posters as a sign of his working-class origins.⁶⁷

The cross-racial mobilization of the export years became a hallmark of the labor-based populist movements that took power in much of the region in the 1940s and 1950s, and the blackness that had long been synonymous with lower- and working-class status in Latin America remained so. In one sense this reflected a positive achievement—the rejection by the region’s workers of formal segregation or institutionalized racial preferences in employment. But while workers rejected white supremacy in theory, many of them lived a modified form of it in practice. Neither the mobilizations of the export years nor postwar populism proved able to overturn prevailing structures of class and racial privilege in the region. During the postwar years, the children and grandchildren of white workers favored in employment during the first half of the century made their way upward into the expanding middle class, while their black counterparts remained overwhelmingly proletarian and overwhelmingly poor, further strengthening the association between nonwhite racial status and working-class social status.⁶⁸ Far from undoing this legacy of the colonial period, the export years reaffirmed it.

Conclusion

Black peasants’ and workers’ hard bargaining with employers in the years following emancipation, and their determination not to submit to forms of labor discipline reminiscent in any way of slavery, drove employers to strike back in two ways that profoundly shaped the history of the export years. The first was the dispossession of black and other peasants from the land; the second was state-sponsored racialized migration programs. Both responses undercut the bargaining position of Afro–Latin-American workers, and both varied in intensity in relation to local economies’ level of participation in the export boom.

In the primary centers of export production, black dispossession from the land proceeded rapidly and was virtually complete by the end of the export period. In secondary areas, it proceeded more gradually, extending well into the second half of the 1900s. Whatever the pace, it had the effect

of driving former peasants into the wage-labor force, at first in the countryside and increasingly, as the century wore on, in the cities.

Like rates of land dispossession, levels of immigration also corresponded to local economies' participation in world markets. Scientific racism posited that white workers produced high rates of growth and output. But in Latin America, the causal relationship was more nearly the opposite: Regions with resource and capital endowments capable of generating high levels of productivity were those most likely to attract white migration. White immigrants did not bring growth. Rather, export-based growth brought white immigrants, who then enjoyed privileged access to the jobs and opportunities produced by the boom.

Growth brought black immigrants as well, but only to those countries where they were allowed to enter. Restrictions on black immigration were relaxed only in countries in which demand for labor badly exceeded local supply. Even in the face of such demand, local elites never fully accepted black immigrants, who were most actively pursued not by native employers but by US-owned firms concerned primarily with productivity and indifferent to the goal of "improving" the racial composition of the region.

Racialized migration heightened tensions among work forces in the export centers. This posed a formidable obstacle to labor mobilization, but an obstacle to which local workers and activists responded with a surprising—given the racial doctrines and tensions of the day—spirit of racial inclusion and egalitarianism. While cross-racial mobilization was the exception rather than the rule in the United States during this period, the reverse was true in Latin America, and to this day levels of racial coexistence and equality are far higher in the region's poor and working classes than among middle classes and the elites.⁶⁹

Still, the damage had been done. Differential patterns of export-based growth, combined with the racial doctrines of the export years, led to radically different levels of opportunity for white and nonwhite upward mobility in the region. With few exceptions, black workers were diverted from the most desirable lands, jobs, and opportunities of the export zones. Where they retained access to land and work, it was in less dynamic and productive regions or occupations. The result may be seen in higher rates of black impoverishment during the export years and into the second half of the 1900s, and in notable underrepresentation of Afro-Latin-Americans in the middle class.

This lack of black upward mobility was in part the result of black struggles to avoid proletarianization, which made many employers view Afro-Latin-Americans as problematic and unattractive workers. In fostering such negative images of black workers, those struggles may have had the unintended consequence of consigning future generations of Afro-Latin-Americans to permanent proletarian status. But one cannot assign blame for black workers' impoverishment without taking into account the experience of slavery, which hardened their bargaining demands, and the

doctrines and ideologies which led employers to view those demands not through the lens of class but rather through the lens of race. Black workers during the export years struggled, not just against economic and political forces beyond their control, but against ideological forces—and the historical experience of the slave past. It was hardly surprising that the struggle proved unequal, both during the export years and after.

NOTES

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1. Emília Viotti da Costa, “Brazilian Workers Rediscovered,” *International Labor and Working-Class History* 22 (1982):33.

2. On this period, see Hobart Spalding, *Organized Labor in Latin America* (New York, 1977), 1–93; Julio Godio, *Historia del movimiento obrero latinoamericano*, vols. 1, 2 (Mexico, 1980, 1983); Pablo González Casanova, ed., *Historia del movimiento obrero en América Latina*, 5 vols. (Mexico, 1984, 1985); Charles Bergquist, *Labor in Latin America: Comparative Essays on Chile, Argentina, Venezuela, and Colombia* (Stanford, 1986).

3. On the boom itself, see Roberto Cortés-Conde and Shane Hunt, eds., *The Latin American Economies: Growth and the Export Sector, 1880–1930* (New York, 1985); Victor Bulmer-Thomas, *The Economic History of Latin America since Independence* (Cambridge, 1994), 46–193. On the processes of class and state formation that it set in motion, see Bergquist, *Labor in Latin America*; Tulio Halperín Donghi, *The Contemporary History of Latin America* (Durham, 1993), 158–208; Ruth Berins Collier and David Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena: Critical Junctures, the Labor Movement, and Regime Dynamics in Latin America* (Princeton, 1991).

4. “[R]ace’ [was] an idea which penetrated the ideology of the period almost as deeply as ‘progress’”: Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire, 1875–1914* (New York, 1987), 32. On the rise of segregation and apartheid, see Stanley Greenberg, *Race and State in Capitalist Development: Comparative Perspectives* (New Haven, 1980); John W. Cell, *The Highest Stage of White Supremacy: The Origins of Segregation in South Africa and the American South* (Cambridge, 1982); Anthony W. Marx, “Race-Making and the Nation-State,” *World Politics* 48 (1996):180–208.

5. John V. Lombardi, *The Decline and Abolition of Negro Slavery in Venezuela, 1820–1854* (Westport, 1971), 46.

6. Carlos Aguirre, *Agentes de su propia libertad: Los esclavos de Lima y la desintegración de la esclavitud, 1821–1854* (Lima, 1993), 120–25, 276–84; Peter Blanchard, *Slavery and Abolition in Early Republican Peru* (Wilmington, 1992), 95–125.

7. Quoted in Claudia María Correa González, “Integración socio-económica del manumiso caucano” (trabajo de grado, Universidad de los Andes, Bogotá, 1987), 235; see also Michael Taussig, *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America* (Chapel Hill, 1980), 49–69.

8. Mateo Mina [Michael Taussig], *Esclavitud y libertad en el Valle del Río Cauca* (Bogotá, 1975), 62.

9. See the essays in Carlos Aguirre and Charles Walker, eds., *Bandoleros, abigeos y montoneros: Criminalidad y violencia en el Perú, siglos XVIII–XX* (Lima, 1990).

10. Carlos Eduardo Jaramillo, *Los guerrilleros del novecientos: La fiesta liberal* (Bogotá, 1991).

11. Julie Franks, “The *Gavilleros* of the East: Social Banditry as Political Practice in the Dominican Sugar Region, 1900–1924,” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 8 (1995):158–81.

12. Catherine LeGrand, *Frontier Expansion and Peasant Protest in Colombia, 1830–1936* (Albuquerque, 1986), 33–61; Bruce Calder, *The Impact of Intervention: The Dominican Republic during the U.S. Occupation of 1916–1924* (Austin, 1984), 102–10. On similar dispossessions of mestizo peasants in Venezuela, see Doug Yarrington, “Public Land Settlement, Privatization, and Peasant Protest in Duaca, Venezuela, 1870–1936,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 74 (1994):33–61.

13. Nina de Friedemann, "'Troncos' among Black Miners in Colombia," in *Miners and Mining in the Americas*, ed. Thomas Greaves and William Culver (Manchester, 1985); Nina de Friedemann and Jaime Arocha, *De sol a sol: Génesis, transformación y presencia de los negros en Colombia* (Bogotá, 1986), 231–300.

14. Correa González, "Integración socio-económica," 126; on this period more generally, see 153–90.

15. "The human body in the Pacific littoral is continuously beset by debilitating deadly forces which cause oozing sores, infected sputum, vile colored stools, and pain. A restricted life cycle, and late maturity are an expected part of the human condition." Norman Whitten, *Black Frontiersmen: A South American Case* (New York, 1974), 28.

16. Peter Wade, *Blackness and Race Mixture: The Dynamics of Racial Identity in Colombia* (Baltimore, 1993), 137. Foreign companies launched a second and more effective offensive in the region in the late 1900s, at which point black communal land claims became an issue of national importance, addressed in the Colombian Constitution of 1991. See Jaime Arocha, "Los negros y la nueva constitución colombiana de 1991," *América Negra* (Bogotá) 3 (1992):39–54; Wade, *Blackness and Race Mixture*, 351–57.

17. Hebe Maria Mattos de Castro, *Das cores do silêncio: Os significados da liberdade no sudeste escravista—Brasil século XIX* (Rio de Janeiro, 1995), 348, 343–50 passim.

18. Rebecca J. Scott, "Defining the Boundaries of Freedom in the World of Cane: Cuba, Brazil, and Louisiana after Emancipation," *American Historical Review* 99 (1994):92–93, 96–98; Nancy Scheper-Hughes, *Death Without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil* (Berkeley, 1993), 43–49.

19. In addition to the Brazilian northeast, see the case of Colombia's Cauca Valley, where Afro-Colombian tenants continued to work on the sugar plantations until the 1960s and 1970s, when a revived sugar industry removed them from the land and converted them into wage laborers, with the same devastating consequences—widespread unemployment and malnutrition—as in Brazil. Friedemann and Arocha, *De sol a sol*, 208–25; Taussig, *Devil and Commodity Fetishism*, 82–92.

20. Rebecca J. Scott, *Slave Emancipation in Cuba: The Transition to Free Labor, 1860–1899* (Princeton, 1985).

21. Scott, *Slave Emancipation*, 240–42; Laird W. Bergad, *Cuban Rural Society in the Nineteenth Century: The Social and Economic History of Monoculture in Matanzas* (Princeton, 1990), 285. Black tenant farmers, who had cultivated twelve percent of the island's arable land in 1899, farmed only four percent of national farmland in 1931, a decline of two-thirds. During the same period the proportion of farmland cultivated by Afro-Cubans who owned their land held steady at four percent. Alejandro de la Fuente, "'With All and For All': Race, Inequality, and Politics in Cuba, 1900–1930" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1986), 117.

22. Louis A. Pérez, "Politics, Peasants, and People of Color: The 1912 'Race War' in Cuba Reconsidered," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 66 (1986):509–39; also on the Race War, see Aline Helg, *Our Rightful Share: The Afro-Cuban Struggle for Equality, 1886–1912* (Chapel Hill, 1995), 193–226.

23. Castro, *Cores do silêncio*, 327–42; Stanley J. Stein, *Vassouras: A Brazilian Coffee County, 1850–1900*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, 1985), 271–88. Many of the workers in Rio de Janeiro's turn-of-the-century textile factories were in-migrants from the older coffee zones of the Paraíba Valley seeking work in the city. Eileen Keremetsis, "The Early Industrial Worker in Rio de Janeiro, 1870–1930" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1982), 62.

24. Of 36,600 owners of agricultural enterprises in São Paulo in 1940, only 2,000 were Afro-Brazilian. Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, *Recenseamento geral de 1940. Censo demográfico: Estado de São Paulo* (Rio de Janeiro, 1950), 24. On the formation of the rural middle class, see Thomas Holloway, *Immigrants on the Land: Coffee and Society in São Paulo, 1886–1934* (Chapel Hill, 1980), 139–66; on racial preferences in plantation employment, see Warren Dean, *Rio Claro: A Brazilian Plantation System, 1820–1920* (Stanford, 1976), 152–74 passim; Paula Beiguelman, *Formação do povo no complexo cafeeiro*, 2nd ed. (São Paulo, 1977).

25. Walter Nugent, *Crossings: The Great Transatlantic Migrations, 1870–1914* (Bloomington, 1992); Nicolás Sánchez-Albornoz, *The Population of Latin America: A History* (Berkeley, 1974), 146–67; Magnus Mörner, *Adventurers and Proletarians: The Story of Migrants in Latin America* (Pittsburgh, 1985), 47–66.

26. On the racial doctrines of the period, see Thomas Skidmore, *Black into White: Race*

and Nationality in Brazilian Thought, 2nd ed. (Durham, 1993); Winthrop Wright, *Café con Leche: Race, Class, and National Image in Venezuela* (Austin, 1990); Richard Graham, ed., *The Idea of Race in Latin America, 1870–1940* (Austin, 1990).

27. Thomas W. Merrick and Douglas H. Graham, *População e desenvolvimento econômico no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro, 1979), 123; Sánchez-Albornoz, *Population of Latin America*, 167.

28. George Reid Andrews, *The Afro-Argentines of Buenos Aires, 1800–1900* (Buenos Aires, 1980), 180–88.

29. Florestan Fernandes, *A integração do negro na sociedade de classes*, vol. 1 (São Paulo, 1978), 60–97; George Reid Andrews, *Blacks and Whites in São Paulo, Brazil, 1888–1988* (Madison, 1991), 66–71.

30. Susan Stokes, “Etnicidad y clase social: Los afro-peruanos de Lima, 1900–1930,” in *Lima obrera, 1900–1930*, ed. Steve Stein, vol. 2 (Lima, 1987), 197–99.

31. Sam Adamo, “The Broken Promise: Race, Health, and Justice in Rio de Janeiro, 1890–1940” (Ph.D. diss., University of New Mexico, 1983), 50–79; Keremetsis, “Early Industrial Worker,” 62, 84, 116. At the height of immigration, in 1920, Afro-Brazilians outnumbered immigrants in the city, 372,000 to 239,000. Adamo, “Broken Promise,” 6, 15.

32. On the tobacco industry, see Jean Stubbs, *Tobacco on the Periphery: A Case Study in Cuban Labour History, 1860–1958* (Cambridge, 1985), 70, 79–80; Efrén Córdova, *Clase trabajadora y movimiento sindical en Cuba, 1819–1959* (Miami, 1995), 69, 92.

33. Quoted in de la Fuente, “‘With All and for All,’” 131; see chap. 2 of that dissertation. See also Jordi Maluquer de Motes, *Nación e inmigración: Los españoles en Cuba (ss. XIX y XX)* (Colombes, Spain, 1992), 141–45.

34. As late as the 1970s and 1980s, Afro–Latin–American workers retained strong memories of slavery and a burning determination to avoid anything resembling it. Residents of a black village in São Paulo state described wage employment on nearby plantations as “like slavery that is coming back again. You won’t believe it, but the elders used to tell us how slavery once was obligatory. Not today. Slavery is coming back again, but not for everyone, only for those who give themselves over it.” Renato Queiroz, *Caipiras negros no Vale do Ribeira* (São Paulo, 1983), 81. See also Taussig, *Devil and Commodity Fetishism*, 67–68, 93; Philippe Bourgois, *Ethnicity at Work: Divided Labor on a Central American Banana Plantation* (Baltimore, 1989), 84.

35. On outmigration by Europeans, see Mörner, *Adventurers and Proletarians*, 67–69.

36. David Rock, *Argentina, 1516–1987: From Spanish Colonization to Alfonsín* (Berkeley, 1987), 175; Warren Dean, *The Industrialization of São Paulo, 1880–1945* (Austin, 1969), 49–66; Córdova, *Clase trabajadora*, 93.

37. Sánchez-Albornoz, *Population of Latin America*, 167; Wright, *Café con Leche*, 77; Michael L. Conniff, *Black Labor on a White Canal: Panama, 1904–1981* (Pittsburgh, 1985), 29.

38. Skidmore, *Black into White*, 137, 192–200; Teresa Meade and Gregory Alonso Pirio, “In Search of the Afro-American ‘Eldorado’: Attempts by North American Blacks to Enter Brazil in the 1920s,” *Luso-Brazilian Review* 25 (Summer 1988): 85–110; Susan Berglund, “Las bases sociales y económicas de las leyes de inmigración venezolanas, 1831–1935,” *Boletín de la Academia Nacional de Historia* 65 (October–December 1982): 951–61.

39. De la Fuente, “‘With All and For All,’” 44–102.

40. David McCullough, *The Path Between the Seas: The Creation of the Panama Canal, 1870–1914* (New York, 1977), 559.

41. Aviva Chomsky, *West Indian Workers and the United Fruit Company in Costa Rica, 1870–1940* (Baton Rouge, 1996), 44–47.

42. Conniff, *Black Labor*, 31–36; Bourgois, *Ethnicity at Work*, 86–88.

43. Conniff, *Black Labor*, 61–63, 88. On similar strategies among West Indian workers for US oil companies in Venezuela during this period, see Bergquist, *Labor in Latin America*, 218.

44. Bourgois, *Ethnicity at Work*, 66–84. During the 1980s a second wave of plant disease devastated the cacao groves planted by many of the black smallholders, leading to the closing of many of their farms and a sharp decline in black landholding in the region. See Paula Palmer, “Wa’apin man”: *La historia de la costa talamanca de Costa Rica* (San José, 1986), 281–83; Trevor W. Purcell, *Banana Fallout: Class, Color, and Culture among West Indians in Costa Rica* (Los Angeles, 1993), 57–58.

45. On West Indian upward mobility in Venezuela and the Dominican Republic, see

Angelina Pollak-Eltz, *La negritud en Venezuela* (Caracas, 1991), 80–85; Lauren Derby, “Haitians, Magic, and Money: Raza and Society in the Haitian-Dominican Borderlands, 1900 to 1937,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 36 (1994): 516–17.

46. Bergquist, *Labor in Latin America*.

47. See *Ibid.*, 11; Spalding, *Organized Labor*, 14–15; Godio, *Historia del movimiento obrero*, vol. 1, 92–100.

48. Maria Lúcia Cairá Gitahy, *Ventos do mar: Trabalhadores do porto, movimento operário e cultura urbana em Santos, 1899–1914* (São Paulo, 1992); Sheldon Maram, *Anarquistas, imigrantes e o movimento operário brasileiro, 1890–1920* (Rio de Janeiro, 1978), 32; Andrews, *Blacks and Whites*, 282.

49. Rafael López Valdés, “La sociedad secreta ‘Abakuá’ en un grupo de obreros portuarios,” *Etnología y Folklore* (Havana) 2 (1966):21–22.

50. Bourgois, *Ethnicity at Work*, 55–65; Chomsky, *West Indian Workers*, 147–72, 209–51.

51. Sidney Chalhoub, *Trabalho, lar e botequim: O cotidiano dos trabalhadores no Rio de Janeiro da Belle Époque* (São Paulo, 1986), 58–88, 101–11.

52. June Hahner, *Poverty and Politics: The Urban Poor in Brazil, 1870–1920* (Albuquerque, 1986), 150; Keremetsis, “Early Industrial Worker,” 99–100; Boris Fausto, *Trabalho urbano e conflito social, 1890–1920* (São Paulo, 1977), 33–36; Chalhoub, *Trabalho, lar e botequim*, 108–9.

53. Córdova, *Classe trabajadora*, 82–84, 92–95; Stubbs, *Tobacco on the Periphery*, 110–13.

54. Stubbs, *Tobacco on the Periphery*, 115 (emphasis in original).

55. Chomsky, *West Indian Workers*, 237, 235–38.

56. Elisavinda Echeverri-Gent, “Forgotten Workers: British West Indians and the Early Days of the Banana Industry in Costa Rica and Honduras,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 24 (1992):301–3.

57. Conniff, *Black Labor*, 84.

58. Thomas Fiehrer, “Political Violence in the Periphery: The Haitian Massacre of 1937,” *Race and Class* 32 (1990):1–20; Robin L.H. Derby and Richard Turits, “Historias de terror y los terrores de la historia: La masacre haitiana de 1937 en la República Dominicana,” *Estudios Sociales* 26 (1993):65–76. On ethnic tensions among native-born and West Indian workers in the Dominican Republic, see Roberto Cassá, *Movimiento obrero y lucha socialista en la República Dominicana (desde los orígenes hasta 1960)* (Santo Domingo, 1990), 61–68.

59. On the Rio unions, see Hahner, *Poverty and Politics*, 98–102, 105, 223–24; Fausto, *Trabalho urbano*, 41–60. On São Paulo, Andrews, *Blacks and Whites*, 60–66.

60. Quoted in Aviva Chomsky, “Race, Class, and Resistance: Afro-Cubans and West Indian Migrants after 1912,” paper presented at the Latin American Studies Association Congress, Washington, D.C., 1995, 24.

61. Scott, “Defining the Boundaries of Freedom,” 89.

62. Córdova, *Classe trabajadora*, 171–72, 187–88, 210; Barry Carr, “Identity, Class and Nation: West Indian Sugar Workers and Cuban Society, 1925–1934,” paper presented at the American Historical Association meeting, San Francisco, 1994, 21–36.

63. Greenberg, *Race and State in Capitalist Development*.

64. On Communist organizers in particular, see Bourgois, *Ethnicity at Work*, 59, 102–07; Chomsky, *West Indian Workers*, 239–53; Paul Nehru Tennassee, *Venezuela, los obreros petroleros y la lucha por la democracia* (Madrid and Caracas, 1979), 218–21; and sources cited in note 62.

65. In addition to examples cited earlier, see Andrews, *Blacks and Whites*, 64–65.

66. On the Caste Regime, see Leslie B. Rout, *The African Experience in Spanish America: 1502 to the Present Day* (Cambridge and New York, 1976), 126–61.

67. Gary Long, “‘The Dragon Finally Came’: Industrial Capitalism, Urban Artisans and the Liberal Party in Colombia, 1910–1948” (Ph.D. diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1995), 190–91; Herbert Braun, *The Assassination of Gaitán: Public Life and Urban Violence in Colombia* (Madison, 1985), 82–83.

68. On Afro-Latin American underrepresentation in the middle class, see Andrews, *Blacks and Whites*, 125–80; George Reid Andrews, “Racial Inequality in Brazil and the United States: A Statistical Comparison,” *Journal of Social History* 26 (1992):229–63; Wade, *Blackness and Race Mixture*; Ulises Graceras et al., *Informe preliminar sobre la situación de la comunidad negra en el Uruguay* (Montevideo, 1980). On the important exception of revol-

tionary Cuba, see Alejandro de la Fuente, "Race and Inequality in Cuba, 1899–1981," *Journal of Contemporary History* 25 (1995):131–68.

69. Several studies caution, however, that we should not underestimate levels of racism and prejudice among the region's workers. See, for example, Maria Suely Kofes de Almeida, "Entre nós, os pobres, eles, os negros" (dissertação de mestrado, Universidade Estadual de Campinas, 1976); Lourdes Serrano Peralta, "Estructura y relaciones raciales en un barrio popular: Mujer, instrucción, ocupación y color de la piel," paper presented at the Latin American Studies Association Congress, Washington, D.C., 1995; Joel Streicker, "Policing Boundaries: Race, Class, and Gender in Cartagena, Colombia," *American Ethnologist* 22 (1995):54–74.