



Jessica Lynn Graham. *Shifting the Meaning of Democracy: Race, Politics, and Culture in the United States and Brazil.* Oakland: University of California Press, 2019. 391 pp. \$29.95, paper, ISBN 978-0-520-29376-2.

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An original and compelling book, *Shifting the Meaning of Democracy: Racial Inclusion as a Strategy in Brazil and the United States* explores the emergence of nationalist discourses that included racial pluralism in both Brazil and the United States between 1930 and 1945. Graham delves into each country's racial narratives and the role they played in the nations' alliance during the Good Neighbor Policy and World War II. Her major and groundbreaking contribution to the scholarship on race and nation is her approach to the multiple ways racially inclusive narratives complicated and modified notions of democracy.

Her novel argument is constructed around two connected and mutually influencing cases in a way that reflects the best of the transnational turn, and it will alter the way historians of both Brazil and the US think about the relationship between race and democracy. The complexity and multilayered argument of the book and her remarkable degree of familiarity with primary and secondary sources on both countries will appeal to scholars and students of US history, Brazilian history, transnational history, the history of race, and World War II history.

The author develops four categories to better examine the plurality of voices and positions toward notions of racial democracy, and these categories are crucial to the way she has constructed

her argument. In the introduction, Graham openly avoids normative definitions of what democracy is or should be, showing the 1920s as a period of a major shift in racial activism and consciousness. The Brazilian Black press in particular challenged current notions of democracy that overtly ignored the roles of Black people in the nation's history. In the same vein, Black people in the post-WWI United States questioned the absence of the racial query in international and domestic affairs. The social transformations of the decade were a distinct manifestation of the demarginalization of Black culture and the incorporation of racial issues in the discussion about the meaning of democracy in the following decade.

In the first chapters, Graham outlines how communists, anticommunists, and fascists advanced narratives shaping notions of racial democracy, simultaneously challenging the meaning of democracy. The author analyzes how the Comintern created a racially conscious political agenda that generated awareness of racial injustice worldwide. In both countries, Communist Parties became part of an interracial movement that fought racial injustice. Race became a staple entangled with ideas of political, social, and economic democracy. The author does a great job analyzing how the Comintern navigated the complexities of competing discourses on race in both countries forward-

ded by several groups. Organizations such as the NAACP, Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association, the Pan African Congress, Black churches, and the Brazilian Black Front, among others, were characterized by the communists as bourgeois and counterrevolutionary and a threat to the communist political agenda. The author highlights the routes of solidarity this approach stimulated. The Scottsboro Nine and Luís Carlos Prestes's political trajectory were portrayed in the press as examples of communism and international anti-racial struggle, becoming "causes célèbres and opportunities to portray communist racial democracy as integral to a powerful international movement" (p. 68).

Both states made significant efforts to incorporate racially inclusive rhetoric while simultaneously dissuading Blacks from embracing communism. These governments advanced their agendas and public discourses on anticommunist and racially inclusive frameworks. The author analyzes the roles of key figures in this process, from Republican Hamilton Fish to socialist Philip A. Randolph to Democrat Martin Dies in the US, and from Isaltino Veiga dos Santos to Getúlio Vargas's propaganda machine in Brazil as key players in the construction of an anticommunist speech that still kept racial democracy as a persuasive element.

Chapter 3 highlights fascists as key interlocutors in the definition of democracy and the role of racial issues in their narratives. American Lawrence Dennis (a Black man passing as white) and Brazilian Black activist and journalist José Correia Leite condemned Hitler's "racial imperialism" (p. 106) and were vocal about the threat racism represented as a factor to erode the nations' power during the war. One of the main achievements in this chapter is the author's understanding of these right-wing positions as mostly a criticism of liberal notions of democracy.

Chapter 4 analyzes official cultural policies advanced in both countries. The author highlights the

role of white mediators in both Getúlio Vargas's campaign on *brasilidade* (that nationalized Samba and other Black artistic expressions) and Roosevelt's Federal One project. These projects promoting Black art and entertainment were restricted as they "minimized demarginalization's economic and racial political advantage" (p. 138).

The last three chapters focus mostly on policies to alleviate racial inequality. In that regard, chapter 5 shows how the concrete realities of the war pushed both Getúlio Vargas's and Roosevelt's regimes to address racial inequality and advance racial policies. Both regimes had pressing concerns about their nations' reputations regarding racial exclusion and participated in debates that were already extending worldwide.

Chapter 6 explores the partnership between Brazil and the United States to advance a propaganda program that dealt with internal "Axis populations" shaping their racially inclusive narratives. The author analyzes the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (OCIAA) and its relationship with the Brazilian Department of Press and Propaganda and how that partnership influenced in the making of cultural artifacts that circulated in both countries.

Finally, chapter 7 shows the consequences of the war within both countries. Brazilian and US antiracism activists demanded equal rights, taking advantage of the antiracist wave of the postwar period. Even with an expanding civil rights movement in the United States, the results were meager. In Brazil in particular, state initiatives of racial democracy were timid and even the 1951 legislation that made racist practices a criminal offense (Lei Afonso Arinos) was seldom enforced.

This is a remarkable work of historical scholarship that will have a profound impact on discussions of race and democracy in Brazil, the United States, and elsewhere. The range of materials examined—the press, government policies, intellectual production, music and film, legal statutes—is very impressive. But even more significant is the

extraction of highly original insights from the materials examined. Graham's book is remarkable and it will attract a very large readership.

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