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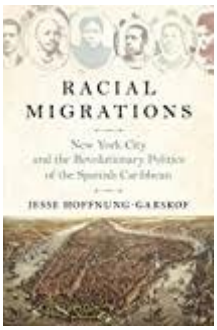
Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof. *Racial Migrations: New York City and the Revolutionary Politics of the Spanish Caribbean.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021. Illustrations. xv + 369 pp. $24.95, paper, ISBN 978-0-691-21837-3.



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The transnational dimensions of Cuba's nineteenth-century wars for independence are well documented: José Martí's journey from Cuba to New York and Florida, the important role of Cuban- and Spanish-born anarchists in the Florida Straits who advocated for a working-class dimension to the struggle, the roles of people like Ramón Emeterio Betances chairing the Paris-based section of the 1890s independence movement, and more. In these stories, historians have come to understand how men and women waged a "nationalist" anticolonial struggle across the Caribbean, Europe, and the United States. In short, Cuba's wars for independence—especially the last one from 1895 to 1898—were transnational affairs. Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof's *Racial Migrations: New York City and the Revolutionary Politics of the Spanish Caribbean* expertly reminds us of this by adding new understandings of how Cuban and Puerto Rican migrants of African descent used their experiences on the islands and in Florida to shape a multi-class, multiracial, multi-color anticolonial movement in New York by the 1890s.

Hoffnung-Garskof takes readers on a deep dive into the biographies of numerous activists, such as Cuba's Rafael Serra, Puerto Rico's Geronimo Bonilla, and several others. The author illustrates how these Afro-Caribbean individuals' experiences with race, color, and class shaped their lives on the islands; how being migrant workers in the multilingual, multiracial cigar factories of the American South shaped their understanding of race, color, and class in the United States; and then how these combined experiences merged with a new racial and ethnic dynamic in New York City where they often worked for white Cubans, rolled cigars with working-class Cubans and Puerto Ricans, lived in African American neighborhoods, and ultimately met and worked with Martí. One can think of this dense but readily accessible book as a "family tree" of the Cuban independence movement. This is no small feat. Transnational histories often employ biographical approaches, but often these are episodic, limited stories of men and women whose lives historians try to piece together based on limited fragments. *Racial Migra-*

tions, though, reads like a genealogy of revolution as the author traces the lives and influences of Afro-Caribbean radicals beyond the episodic, mini memoirs and into a real understanding of the racial politics shaping our protagonists on every phase of their transnational wanderings. In the author's skillful hands, we see these people's origins, roles as migrants, and roles as settlers shaping their radicalism at each new step.

Chapter 1 examines the complex racial, color, and class dynamics of the late nineteenth-century Caribbean. Cuba and Puerto Rico were shaped by the slow demise of slavery, emergence of liberalism, and working-class education in cigar factories. In this atmosphere, workers slowly became authors and intellectuals. When they arrived in New York City, they founded La Liga as a mutual aid space for artisans to become professionals, intellectuals, and political actors. Chapter 2 takes us back to mid-nineteenth-century Cuba and Puerto Rico to see the early roots of La Liga's founders. When these people moved to Key West to work in cigar factories, they encountered the anarchist push for multiracial, multi-ethnic labor organizations but also encountered post-Civil War segregation in the US South. By chapter 3, our racial migrants arrive in New York and find yet another understanding of how race and class function. This is a brilliant chapter that explores how Cuban and Puerto Rican migrants of African descent formed a community in New York that was shaped by numerous factors: the white, nationalist Cuban elite for whom many migrants worked, African American co-workers, the transplanting of radical working-class ideologies into small artisan shops dominated by Cuban and Puerto Rican workers of every color, the polyglot world of lunchtime cafes and restaurants, and the largely African American neighborhoods where our migrants settled. Here, Afro-Caribbean, pro-independence militants forged a transracial, multi-class community that became La Liga—a place where migrants and their friends, especially people of color, could be educated and recreate. Martí and his allies came to see La Liga as the "model of social interaction that should be adopted by the revolutionary movement as a whole" (p. 96). Chapters 4 and 5 delve into the struggles to forge this community into a viable political movement for independence. Such a movement had to navigate numerous strategies and goals for what a post-Spanish Cuba would look like. By 1891, Martí was associating with La Liga. As a result, La Liga men and women shaped Martí's approach to the struggle as much as the reverse, and Afro-Cuban and Afro-Puerto Rican workers became a fervent component of Martí's Cuban Revolutionary Party. Chapter 6 explores the evolution of the Cuban Revolutionary Party after Spaniards killed Martí in 1895.

Racial Migrations complicates and enriches our understanding of how racial experiences, racial and class politics, and transnational organizing shaped the 1890s struggle for Cuban independence. As the author concludes, Spain's defeat "was crafted by a generation of politicians and intellectuals who intervened in the Cuban struggle and shaped the politics of the Republic of Cuba from their unique vantage point as black and brown migrants in the greater Caribbean, and settlers in the tenements of Gilded Age New York" (p. 267). Though shaped by their race- and class-based experiences, these men and women nonetheless chose to pursue a nationalist agenda and thus to follow Martí's "of all and for the good of all" position rather than argue for and pursue largely racial goals for a post-Spanish era.

Hoffnung-Garskof's *Racial Migrations* is a landmark work. True, the book provides new insights into lesser-known pro-independence radicals. In and of itself, that makes the work worthy. Yet it is the author's methodology that shines. Any good transnational history should delve into archives stretched far and wide. Hoffnung-Garskof's has done just that, working in national, regional, municipal, and church archival collections across Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the United States. Beyond this, it is the author's ability to

chart new approaches to transnational history and the role of biography in that methodology that may be the book's most lasting contribution. Certainly, island-based men and women in Cuba's independence movement fought heroically for the anticolonial cause, but that cause relied heavily on transnational support, especially in the United States. The author uncovers the personal histories of key figures in what would become the multiracial, working-class dimension of this movement abroad. Through this biographical approach, we come to understand how these people's migratory trajectory was shaped with each stop in their journeys, so that the people they came to be and the politics they came to espouse in New York were the transnational creations of their origins and migrations. Just as the author writes that La Liga became a model for how to organize the independence movement, future historians will look at *Racial Migrations* as a model to do transnational history.