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In *Working in the Magic City: Moral Economy in Early Twentieth-Century Miami*, Thomas A. Castillo reorients Miami history from leisure to labor. Since its incorporation in 1896, Miami has grown to become one of the largest urban economies in the United States, home to more than six million inhabitants. Because Miami was established under de jure Jim Crow segregation, its history of growth has been shaped by perceptions of race. But, as historian Barbara Fields famously asserts, race operates only on the level of appearances, while class discourse encompasses both appearances and objective realities. In a city defined by appearances, Castillo asks how class shaped early Miamians’ objective realities.

Castillo’s intervention considers the unique development of Miami’s economy in the early twentieth century. Unlike America’s large, well-studied industrial worksites—factories, mines, railroads—Miami’s economy was oriented around small, temporary, and seasonal worksites in the service and construction sectors. These “small worksites have mostly remained outside the scope of historical studies,” Castillo argues (p. 9). Certainly, other cities had restaurant and hotel workers, chauffeurs and taxi drivers, dry cleaners and salesclerks, construction workers and tradespeople, but unlike in any other metropolis at the time, these jobs represented nearly the entirety of Miami’s economy. If Miami’s urban economy, characterized by low-wage service work and seasonal precarity, is not an anomaly, but the very definition of capitalist modernity, then the implications of *Working in the Magic City* reach far beyond Miami itself.

Castillo’s close reading of historical newspapers reveals the subtle, muted expression of class conflict in Miami, couched in terms of “class-harmony discourse,” a theoretical framework that “challenges notions of US classlessness and broadens the boundaries of class conflict and class consciousness” (p. 6). It was through harmony discourse, Castillo argues, that workers expressed their demands for moral economy. Advertisements and images that depicted Miami as a leisureed paradise lured tourists and working people
alike to the growing city. Working in Miami became a means to remain and reside there, where the promise of natural beauty, recreation, and entertainment gave meaning to life “not solely defined by work” (p. 34). Thus, *Working in the Magic City* documents not only workers’ economic demands but also their “fight for humanity” (p. 9).

*Working in the Magic City* is roughly divided in half by the Great Hurricane of 1926. Before the hurricane, Miami was a growing city experiencing a speculative land boom. After the hurricane burst the land boom bubble, the endemic issues of a “seasonal economy” and “irregular work” were compounded by wage reductions and mass unemployment: the Great Depression arrived early in Miami (p. 99). Despite an economy seemingly buoyed by tourism throughout the Depression, working-class Miamians suffered from unemployment, crowding, eviction, and insufficient welfare programs, all while wealthy vacationers basked in the city’s lavish recreations and entertainments. In the city’s transition from boom to bust, the existing precarity of Miami’s working class deepened. Still, thanks to the foundation of community organizing laid by labor unions, Castillo shows, working-class Miamians ultimately united for common cause, even across divides of race, union membership, and employment status. The first three chapters illuminate the fissures of race and class, obfuscated by harmony discourse, that shaped Miami. Chapter 4 details the state-sanctioned exclusionary practices enacted during the Great Depression. The final three chapters rediscover the grassroots activist Perrine Palmer and the work of the Dade County Unemployment Citizens’ League (DCUCL).

In a city built for leisure, the discipline of the working class was as much a matter of economics as it was of appearances. Vagrancy laws and street taxes sought to discipline labor with arrest, forced labor, or expulsion from the county, subjecting unemployed craftsmen, Black residents, and “unsightly” white workers alike to harassment by city police (p. 20). Surveillance of the working class “existed from the earliest days” (p. 222). The practice of preemptively fingerprinting, photographing, and policing service workers expanded to include welfare recipients under the auspices of the New Deal. In “maintaining an idyllic landscape for tourists,” the city of Miami, Dade County, and the state of Florida went to great lengths to exclude “undesirables” (pp. 115, 149). The local “hobo express” removed the unemployed poor from view by arresting them and driving the police wagon to the county line, where sometimes yet another wagon awaited to further remove them from the environs of south Florida. And, convened in the years 1934-36, Florida’s “border patrol” disallowed “indigent non-resident[s]” from entering the state, resulting in “hobo jungles” along Florida’s borders with Georgia and Alabama; thousands were turned back (p. 117). *Working in the Magic City* reveals the objective reality behind appearances: without the freedom of movement, the security of home, and the dignity of labor, social harmony discourse only masks disorder.

*Working in the Magic City* is a significant contribution to the history of labor and capitalism in twentieth-century America. Moreover, scholars in other fields will appreciate significant findings throughout. The first half of the volume will appeal to scholars interested in the “perverse contortions” of race and class in the Jim Crow South (p. 35). The exclusionary practices of the “hobo express” and Florida border patrol detailed in chapter 4 are significant contributions to carceral studies. And the latter half of the volume complicates New Deal historiography with the discovery of a multifaceted, grassroots campaign for moral economy, unaffiliated with “anarchism, socialism, or communism” (p. 8).

Castillo punctures the spaces between vagrancy and vacation, transient and resident, service and survival. The strength of *Working in the Magic City* is its analysis of a seemingly innocuous emphasis in localization. “Home-labor protectionism”
was the harmonious discourse of “workers, businesses, and government leaders” who agreed that hiring Miami residents and consuming Miami products would bolster the local economy (pp. 110-11). But Castillo reveals the dark side of localism—racial segregation, class exclusion, and stigmatization of the unemployed—heretofore masked in the historical record by harmony discourse.

Castillo writes about women where he finds them, despite his source base of newspapers and government documents being written by men, for men, and about men. Occupational statistics, helpfully included as an appendix, attest to the thousands of working women in Miami. One woman, Amy Cook, did take the lead in the cost-of-living movement, rising to public office during World War I, but it was most often “men of the local [union] ... [who] insisted on improving the conditions for women” (p. 75). And when “rampant unemployment and an inadequate welfare system” threatened the very “survival” of unemployed Miamians, the DCUCL called for female teachers in two-income households to resign (p. 166). While the league’s embrace of “share-the work principles” embraced communitarian ideals, it also made gendered assumptions about the value of labor in dual-income households (p. 167). Women were often deployed as symbols of moral economy and family life, as when the local carpenters’ union built a parade float depicting their trade as “contributing to the well-being of society by doing the essential task of building homes for families” (p. 75). Still, perhaps a problem endemic to labor history, the sources for Working in the Magic City rarely penetrate the cloak of invisibility that surrounds gendered labor.

For tourists, the “magic” of Miami was indeed an illusion. The urban ills and annoyances from which vacationers fled also plagued Miami, but city leaders removed these unpleasant realities from view, using both spatial and temporal sleight of hand. Though workers’ demands for moral eco-
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