Manoucheka Celeste

Race, Gender, and Citizenship in the African Diaspora: Travelling Blackness. London: Routledge, 2016. xvi + 156 pp. (Cloth US\$155.00)

Race, Gender, and Citizenship in the African Diaspora is at once a concise study of media representations of immigrants and a window into the immigration process to the United States for Cubans and Haitians. Manoucheka Celeste uses a wide variety of sources, from photographs and news articles to biographies of popular cultural figures—singers, performers, and politicians who left the Caribbean and made lives for themselves in the United States. Although some of the issues and profiles she includes have previously been treated in newspaper and academic articles, her work brings them all together under one overarching argument, a synthesizing approach that makes the book ideal for classroom use.

Media manipulation and the use of “alternative facts” have become all too familiar during the Trump era. Celeste provides a timely reminder of previous examples of government propaganda seeping into news stories about both Haitian and Cuban immigrants, drawing on articles from the *New York Times* over a ten-year period (1994–2004) because of that newspaper’s influence and national audience. The overall message, she shows, was that Haitians were depicted as flooding into the United States while the Cubans were fleeing oppression under communism. Her argument has two focuses: the Elián González case and the allegations that poor Haitians brought AIDS to the United States. Perhaps unsurprisingly, her work makes clear that U.S. media stories fully supported U.S. government positions on both matters.

Celeste argues that Cold War competition with Communism continues to influence U.S. policy toward Cuba today, helping to explain some of the marked differences between the country’s reception of Haitians and Cubans as immigrants, and blames racial antipathy among Americans toward Haitians. The racial issue, she proposes, does far more to explain the different immigrant experiences of the two Caribbean neighbors than even the vestiges of Cold War thinking. Using press photographs and their captions, she demonstrates how words and pictures often worked in tandem to the detriment of migrating Haitians. Her clear step-by-step explanation of how she produced this analysis is a model for students and scholars alike who may wish to emulate this study through an interrogation of the media messages that bombard us every day. It would be instructive to apply her methodology to an inquiry into the British or American press, for example exploring the way they framed the Syrian refugee crisis in Europe. Discussions like these shed important light on how we under-

stand immigrants and/or refugees and their reception in the United States and Europe.

Celeste focuses on popular cultural figures Celia Cruz, Wyclef Jean, and Gloria Estefan, portraying them as singers who have negotiated media representations of themselves and their countries of birth. Each one uses music for political and social justice goals; Celeste interrogates their lyrics and performances to demonstrate their individual activism. Going beyond an analysis of their professional and life stories, she also makes an effort to gauge audience reactions by conducting interviews with their fans. While methodically sound, her presentation of these interviews as summaries rather than full transcripts diminishes their evidentiary power and limits their use for future scholars and students.

In a more historically revealing profile, Celeste devotes an entire chapter to Mia Love, the first Haitian-American congresswoman. She argues that Love, who represents a primarily white middle-class Mormon-dominated Republican district of Utah, uses her Haitian background to give herself authority to speak about U.S. immigration policies. At the same time, she downplays or even denies aspects of her family's immigration story to fit into the Republican position favoring limits on immigration. Celeste uses blogs, news articles, social media, and Congresswoman Love's own press releases to scrutinize the way she positions herself as a black Republican woman of immigrant parents who openly opposes racial and immigrant reforms. While this investigation into Love's apparent cognitive dissonance is refreshing, it is also a bitter reminder that our political system cannot escape identity-politics arguments, even as one side denies that the arguments exist.

How do we move beyond the problems that this book has so thoroughly detailed? How can these media images be combatted and blackness destigmatized? Celeste offers an important prescription: studies of comparative black immigrant experiences in an international perspective that go beyond the U.S. scholars in history have begun this work and are examining these questions in Africa, Haiti, and Latin America. Let's hope their work continues to reach wider audiences and inspires more scholars like Celeste to study modern examples.

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