Victor Andres Triay, *The Mariel Boatlift: A Cuban-American Journey*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2019. xi + 234 (Cloth US\$ 24.95)

The 1980 Mariel boatlift, in which 125,000 refugees migrated to the United States fleeing oppression from Castro's regime, was one of the most significant refugee crises and Cuban migration events of the twentieth century. Victor Andres Triay's book is timely not only because its publication coincides with the fortieth anniversary of the boatlift, but also because the United States once again faces a refugee crisis on its southern border. Triay has collected oral histories of Marielitos in order to combat the negative stereotypes that clung to this group for many years, adding to the work of Mariel researchers such as José García (*Voices from Mariel* [2018]). He presents the stories of 33 individuals in order to give voice to the "historically underemphasized majority" of Marielitos who became American citizens, adapted to American life, contributed positively to their communities, and did not commit crimes (p. xvi). The individuals represented in this book see themselves as the embodiment of the American Dream: fleeing oppression from their homeland, they came to the United States in search of a better life, and through hard work, they and their children achieved enormous financial, cultural, and political success. These stories are useful to students, scholars, and policymakers alike.

The book explores the historical background leading up to the Mariel boatlift, the events at the Peruvian embassy, experiences of refugees at processing centers in Cuba, the dangerous voyage across the Florida Straits, and the resettlement of refugees in the United States. In each chapter, Triay couples the historical and political background with edited narrative histories recounted by the refugees themselves.

The extensive political and historical context, particularly U.S. and Cuban government perspectives juxtaposed with the experiences of those directly affected by them, makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the decisions made by both Fidel Castro and Jimmy Carter with respect to the Marielitos. Chapter 5, for example, addresses the unwillingness of the U.S. government to grant refugee status to Marielitos in order to avoid providing the same status to Haitian refugees, which resulted in the indefinite incarceration of hundreds of Marielitos (disproportionately Afro-Cuban) in federal prisons for minor offenses. The historical section of each chapter draws from a variety of well-known scholarly sources (including Alex Larzelere's *Castro's Ploy—America's Dilemma*, 1988 and David Engstrom's *Presidential Decision-making Adrift*, 1997) and is meticulously referenced, but it is the oral histories that ultimately drive home the personal costs to the refugees of the actions of Castro and the Carter administration.

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In Mariel scholarship, very little work has been done on the experiences of Afro-Cuban Marielitos, and Triay addresses this by including an Afro-Cuban interviewee's powerful heartbreaking story. Still, the fact that there is only one Afro-Cuban story in this book highlights the extreme need for researchers to engage in further research and collection of oral histories from Afro-Cuban Marielitos. Additionally, the division of the book into chapters based on stages of the Mariel journey means that in several instances an individual's story is split up over several chapters. This prevents readers from following an individual refugee's story uninterrupted, as they can do, for example, in García's *Voices from Mariel*. But by centering each chapter on a specific stage of the journey, Triay is able to provide deeper historical and political context for the stories as readers move through the book, and humanizes the scholarly history very effectively.

The highlight of the book is Chapter 6, which recounts what happened after Mariel to the individuals whose stories appear in the book. This is an uplifting testimony to the tenacity and dedication of the Marielitos. But while Triay could have ended on Chapter 6's high note, he instead concluded with an epilogue again emphasizing that the picture was not rosy for all Marielitos. A tiny percentage of them did commit major crimes, hundreds were incarcerated for decades, and most faced heavy discrimination in the United States due to racism and cultural nativism. Still, the epilogue also highlights how remarkable the successes of the majority have been, in spite of these obstacles. As the United States again faces a large influx of refugees from its southern border, with negative stereotyping by the media and politicians, Triay's book, and the voices it preserves, constitutes an important contribution, reminding readers of what refugees have most often achieved: despite oppression from their own governments, starvation, dehydration, a dangerous sea voyage, and extreme culture shock or even indefinite incarceration in the United States, Marielitos overwhelmingly became successful Americans who contribute positively to their communities and their country.

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