Edgardo Meléndez, *Patria: Puerto Rican Revolutionary Exiles in Nineteenth Century New York*. New York: Centro Press, 2019. xv + 308 pp. (Paper US\$ 24.95)

Twenty-five years ago, historian and political scientist Edgardo Meléndez produced a compilation of articles that he had painstakingly transcribed from microfiche images of the newspaper *Patria*. That newspaper, the propaganda arm of José Martí's Cuban Revolutionary Party in New York from 1892 to 1898, was a classic source for the study of Cuban nationalism. Meléndez brilliantly transformed it into a tool for understanding the early history of Puerto Rican migration to the city. Now he and a team of students in the translation program at the University of Puerto Rico have produced a fine English translation of the articles, published as *Patria: Puerto Rican Revolutionary Exiles in Nineteenth Century New York*.

The first part of the book consists of four interpretive chapters. In order, they trace the theme of Cuban-Puerto Rican solidarity in the writings of José Martí and the Puerto Rican intellectual Eugenio María de Hostos, outline the various ways that Puerto Rican topics appeared in the newspaper, present a socioeconomic analysis of ties between the Spanish-speaking Caribbean and New York, and draw on reporting in *Patria* to create a sketch of late-nineteenth-century Latina/o settlement.

The translated documents, including writings by Martí about Puerto Rico and a fascinating set of articles by Puerto Rican authors, comprise the second part of the book. Sotero Figueroa, the Puerto Rican typesetter and publisher who physically produced *Patria*, collaborated closely with Martí on its content. In reprinted speeches, manifestoes, polemics, and historical essays, Figueroa, the poet Francisco Gonzalo Marín, and the publisher Antonio Vélez Alvarado carefully laid out their reasons for breaking with the Autonomista Party in Puerto Rico. Likewise, they explained their decision to join the Cuban Revolutionary Party. While they relied heavily on abstractions such as *patria* and *pueblo*, they instantiated these concepts with a detailed account of liberal politics in Puerto Rico over the previous two decades, seeking to construct a usable past for the nation that centered on the abolition of slavery, popular suffrage, and the end of aristocratic and caste-based privileges (Documents 30–44).

These writings also provide a window into complexities of the nationalist coalition that Puerto Ricans helped to build in New York. Figueroa and Marín were Afrodescendant and of working-class origins. They emerged as important figures in the effort to mobilize working-class support for Martí and to counterbalance the influence of wealthier, more conservative party factions. Figueroa summed up his position in a speech to the assembled party: "In the great uprisings for justice, leaders do not emerge from the affluent class, which finds itself

perfectly sated by the established order, but from the suffering masses and the dispossessed, who carry inspiration in their minds, torment in their hearts, and truth on their lips" (Document #8, p. 105).

The economic depression of 1893 severely tested Martí's strategy of relying on popular support, however. Marín and a group of working-class, Afrodescendant Cuban and Puerto Rican party militants published a statement in *Patria* announcing their successful negotiation with party leaders to guarantee assistance to the unemployed rank and file. The party had relied on precisely this group for its fundraising but was now pressed to serve as a broker for transfers from wealthier compatriots (Document # 53).

In the issue that acknowledged Martí's death, in 1895, Figueroa's eulogy had pride of place on the front page (Document #57), the first salvo in the ensuing battle over how Martí should be remembered. Figueroa, Marín, and their supporters and allies portrayed Martí as an instinctive democrat whose deepest commitments had been to working people and people of African descent. Soon, however, men less committed to popular democratic politics and Puerto Rican independence took over leadership in the movement. Figueroa and Marín (and their closest Cuban allies) lost their privileged place in the pages of *Patria* and coverage of Puerto Rico all but vanished. They and their working-class comrades did not, however, break with the Cuban leadership, although many wealthier Puerto Rican exiles did.

The volume is not without flaws. Meléndez occasionally suggests that the fact that Martí wrote in praise of particular individuals or ideas is evidence of their historical importance and, circularly, of Martí's prescience. The framing chapters are lively and generative, but one notes the absence of newer bibliography, including the work of Ada Ferrer, Marial Iglesias Utset, Lillian Guerra, Laura Lomas, Lisandro Pérez, and Nancy Raquel Mirabal. This may explain, as well, the relative lack of attention to questions of race and gender. Those critiques aside, the book is a major contribution. It brings an important primary resource within reach of nonspecialists and, most importantly, English-dominant high school and university students.

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