

OUR CARIBBEAN KIN: RACE AND GENDER IN THE NEOLIBERAL ANTILLES

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Our *Caribbean Kin* examines the Pan-Antillean and nationalist traditions underwriting contemporary processes of globalization in the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. The book asks: How have nationalist and Pan-Antilleanist political paradigms been mobilized in the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico to address colonial legacies? How have those paradigms both supported and challenged racial and gender subjection? How have transnational decolonial projects been co-opted and re-articulated by neoliberal agendas? Advocates of free trade policies suggest that the Antilles have moved to a new era of transnational kinship by representing Caribbean territories, and at times the United States and Europe, as neighbors that share intimate bonds in the global village. Globalization narratives suggest that there are mutual economic and social benefits for all nations involved in transnational neoliberal projects. However, restructuring programs characteristic of neoliberal development have required nations such as the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico to enact cuts in welfare, a deregulation of markets, subsidies for corporations, and the privatization of public services and natural resources. I demonstrate that neoliberal narratives of kinship among nations of the Caribbean, the United States, and Europe elide exploitative international socioeconomic dynamics. I argue that the lived realities of neoliberalism in the Caribbean are co-constituted by memories of decolonial Pan-Antillean projects, nationalist discourses on racial, ethnic, and gender difference, and the prescriptions of international financing institutions.

Through an interdisciplinary approach centered on literary and discursive analyses, *Our Caribbean Kin* engages in close readings of a variety of written and oral narratives, placing literature in dialogue with newspaper articles, cybernetic media, jokes, political writings, and sociological and ethnographic research. I examine the racial and gendered premises of political, economic, and cultural narratives of kinship within and between Antillean nations. The narratives examined illustrate how the racial and gendered assumptions of nineteenth and twentieth centuries Pan-Antillean and nationalist projects get re-articulated in the era of globalization.

"On Pan-Antilleanism," the first chapter of the book, questions how twentieth and twenty-first century development agencies, state officials, and scholars represent the Caribbean as a site that has experienced the liberatory potential of neoliberal globalization. Anoop Singh, director of the Western Hemisphere Department of the International Monetary Fund, has stated that: "In many respects, [the Caribbean] has been among the pioneers of globalization, with an intermingling of peoples from different parts of the world that began many centuries ago." Shalini Puri has questioned how such celebrations of Caribbean's racial and ethnic hybridities negate demands of social equality in the region. I expand on her research through the examination of Dominican Gregorio Luperón's and Puerto

Rican Ramón Emeterio Betances's advocacy for an Antillean Confederation in the nineteenth century. I argue that a political memory of anti-racist and Pan-Antillean projects naturalizes neoliberal calls to integrate the Caribbean; as a consequence, contemporary racial inequities are denied. Chapter 1 also suggests that advocates of regional integration must engage the heteropatriarchal conventions of regionalist projects that have sought to contain the political agency of women and discipline gender performance in order to sustain a Euro-Christian gender binary. I argue that Pan-Antilleanism in itself has never been an easy solution to the exclusionary mechanisms that tend to be associated with the nation-state.

The second chapter, "Nation-Building Literatures," engages the constitution of nationalist literary canons in the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico that imagined national families constituted through cultural whitening and heteronormative marriage in the mid-twentieth century. These literary traditions speak to the prevalence of nationalist paradigms in the Caribbean, instead of Pan-Antillean ones. I examine how intimacies between national subjects emerge as tropes in representations of decolonial alternatives. I explore how Caribbean writers Enrique Laguerre (*La Llamada*) and Ramón Marrero Arísty (*Over*) produced nationalist aesthetic traditions informed by patriarchal understandings of family and reproduction. The anti-imperialist component of Caribbean nationalisms articulated in the novels provides a possible political framework for the present and the future of the region. Nonetheless, uncritically relying on nationalism to configure an anti-globalization stance is a limited and dangerous approach. The chapter suggests that employing nationalist tropes to oppose neoliberalism may entail assuming its paternalistic attitudes toward those not representing progress due to their gender and racial minority status. Therefore, to critique globalization as imperialism from a nationalist framework is not sufficient. If the nation is to be at the center of anti-neoliberal projects, a questioning of its historical complicity with capital must be undertaken. For this reason, an examination of the inner contradictions within the novels explores how they themselves undo some of the racial-gender premises of nationalist politics in their representation of family units under siege by U.S. capitalist interests. Chapters 1 and 2 introduce the premises of Dominican and Puerto Rican nationalist and Pan-Antillean thought that permeate the neoliberal narratives discussed in chapters 3 and 4.

"Haitian-Dominican Relations," chapter 3, examines how Haitian-Dominican relations get represented in Dominican media, social science research, and literature after the implementation of neoliberal economic policies in the Dominican Republic from the 1980s through the early twenty-first century. I analyze newspaper articles found in *Listín Diario*, *Ahora*, and *AlterPresse*, publications by political figures and social scientists such as Ruben Silié, Carlos Segura, and Colette Lespinasse,



and the novels *Solo Falta que Llueva* by Santiago Estrella Veloz and *Let It Rain Coffee* by Angie Cruz. I trace tensions between state-sponsored narratives of Haitian-Dominican collaboration under the aegis of neoliberalism, anti-Haitian nationalist policies and media coverage, and transnational social movements critical of neoliberalism. I argue that racial-gender difference continues to inform representations of Haitian-Dominican relations in spite of an official multicultural discourse regarding ethnic difference; however, narratives of Haitian-Dominican relations are not always predetermined by anti-black racism, as Dominican responses to the 2009 earthquake in Haiti attest. Both nationalist and Pan-Antilleanist sentiments are at play in these narratives. Nationalist discourses on race, gender, and migration naturalize the marginalization of Haitian-descended people—as invaders, criminals, exploiting Dominican public services—while narratives of cross-border collaboration inform affirmations of solidarity between both countries.

The book's final chapter, "Dominican-Puerto Rican Relations," examines humoristic representations of Dominican migrants in Puerto Rico. Analyzing media, popular jokes, and fiction, I note that humor allows Puerto Ricans to manifest solidarity toward their Dominican neighbors and affirm their shared cultural heritage, while racializing them as blacker, less educated, and consequently less "developed" than Puerto Ricans. This chapter contends that notions of economic development are a proxy for racial and gender difference. Analyzing media, popular jokes, and the short stories "Retrato de un dominicano que pasó por puertorriqueño" by Magali García Ramis and "Encancaranublado" by Ana Lydia Vega, I complicate representations of an integrated Caribbean that has overcome its racial legacies. The case studies discussed in chapters 3 and 4 illustrate that in the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, whiteness is constructed as a phenotypical and cultural attribute associated with North-Atlantic notions of civilization and progress. References to educational standards, language use, gender and sexual practices, access to U.S. commodities, and citizenship status explain how Dominicans are at times imagined to be whiter than Haitians and other times represented as darker than Puerto Ricans.

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