

## LIBERAL CULTURAL PROGRAMS IN COLOMBIA

*A Fervent Crusade for the National Soul: Cultural Politics in Colombia, 1930–1946.* By Catalina Muñoz-Rojas. Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2022. Pp. 204. Illustrations. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$95.00 cloth; \$45.00 e-book.  
doi:10.1017/tam.2022.137

Catalina Muñoz's book is a comprehensive and detailed history of the efforts of the Liberal governments that ruled Colombia from 1930 to 1946 to shape—and control—the inclusion of a growing and increasingly contentious mass of citizens into the political process through the implementation of cultural programs. The book analyzes the discourses and policies crafted by Liberal intellectuals who occupied positions at the Ministry of Education, as well as the responses to these policies by Conservative critics and the general population.

Opening with a rich historiography on cultural politics in Latin America, Muñoz locates the realm of “culture” at the heart of the process of state formation at a critical moment—the interwar period—when world economic crisis and war had shifted Latin American elites' attention to their own societies, a nationalist cultural revival, in the search for new definitions of what it meant to be modern and prosperous. More importantly, as Muñoz's analysis emphasizes, this highlighted a contradiction inherent to the Liberal cultural project: it was a project aimed at integrating Colombians into one nation, while maintaining social hierarchies of class, race, regional origin, and gender.

The book is organized into four chapters, each focusing on a cultural program: music, theater and film, hygiene, and the *indigenista* movement. The chapters, which could be read as separate essays, tell the breadth and reach of the Liberal cultural project, demonstrating how it constituted an all-encompassing project of state- and nation- formation. Muñoz shows how these cultural programs were based on notions of the *pueblo* and their cultural practices and their capacity to transform their material conditions, all of which reified the Liberal elite's rule. Specific programs were devoted to promoting music education, forming popular music ensembles and choirs, organizing public conferences and concerts at Bogotá's main theaters (once places accessible only to the elites), screening educational films for children and the youth, advancing hygiene campaigns, and disseminating knowledge about the indigenous past through the study of anthropology and archeology.

By examining these programs as a battlefield for citizenship and democracy, Muñoz makes important contributions to the history of Colombia during this period. First, although acknowledging the continuities that the Liberal cultural programs carried over from Conservative rule, Muñoz's narrative suggests that the rise of the Liberals ultimately did produce a radical political transformation that opened up popular participation and notions of what was public and who had access to it. This transformation, one could argue, was pushed by the party bases (letters from neighborhood committees and municipal assemblies, for instance, abound among the rich archival materials), which were diverse and very active, as would become evident with the rise of *gaitanismo*.

Second, Muñoz shows that Colombian intellectuals were also part of the nationalist trend that characterized Latin American cultural production at the time, a trend that was previously considered a consequence of the Mexican Revolution or the populist politics of countries like Argentina or Brazil. In this way, she paves the way to explore not only how Colombians read and listened to other Latin American intellectuals, but also how Colombians were read and listened to in other parts of the region.

Finally, Muñoz's narrative recounts the ins and outs of the functioning of the cultural programs, shedding light on yet another contradiction of national programs in Colombia, namely that policies designed in Bogotá were spatially limited as their implementation ran into multiple obstacles, from political neglect to budget constraints, at the municipal and regional levels. All in all, Muñoz offers a compelling argument for the comprehensive political and social change that the Liberals spearheaded in this period and the important role that education and culture played in materializing these changes.

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## TRANSNATIONAL SOLIDARITY AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

*South-South Solidarity and the Latin American Left*. By Jessica Stites Mor. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2022. Pp. 266. Abbreviations. Illustrations. Notes. Bibliography. \$79.95 cloth.  
 doi:10.1017/tam.2022.138

This book offers major contributions to several interconnected fields, most prominently Latin American history, transnational history, social movement studies, and solidarity studies. Decades in development, the project began as an idea Stites Mor had as an undergraduate student. It evolved through graduate studies and several monographs and collaborative projects before taking full shape during years of archival research. Indeed, Stites Mor's extensive research serves as a model of best practices for transnational historical methods: she delved into physical and digital collections in at least a dozen cities around the world. Notably, most of these cities are in the Global South, including Buenos Aires, Cape Town, Havana, Jerusalem, Johannesburg, Mexico City, and Tel Aviv.

Stites Mor's close attention to primary and secondary sources from multiple regions and in multiple languages allows her to expand existing notions and theories of solidarity movements. For instance, she posits that Latin American revolutionary states have been key players in building and maintaining solidarity both within their nations' borders and beyond, linking to other spaces in the Global South. The first half of the book develops this claim through case studies in Mexico and Cuba. Stites Mor first traces how, in the decades following the Mexican Revolution, Mexican state leaders welcomed exiles from