López-Pumarejo, Tomás
Reseña de “Tuning Out Blackness: Race and Nation in the History of Puerto Rican Television” de Yeidy M. Rivero
The City University of New York
New York, Estados Unidos

Available in: http://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=37718215
NOTES

Tuning Out Blackness: Race and Nation in the History of Puerto Rican Television

By Yeidy M. Rivero


REVIEWER: TOMÁS LÓPEZ-PUMAREJO, The City University of New York—Brooklyn College

In Tuning Out Blackness, Yeidy Rivero examines the history of Puerto Rican television from a revealing angle. She contends that for many years local broadcasting companies, contrary to the crucial role of Cubans in its development. The book covers approximately five decades, running from the 1940s to the 1990s. In her account of this era, Rivero shows how the Puerto Rican small screen
changed the status quo. In the early 1980s, cable television had already attracted the Island’s upper middle class to U.S. English-medium networks. This defection of a crucial market segment caused most local producers to shift programming toward the lower middle class, which nevertheless was the majority. A Catholic-led public outcry, however, denounced the new shows’ vulgarity and had an impact on commercial sponsorship and ultimately on program content. This conservative backlash, in other words, started to impinge on the autonomy of the local channels. With the arrival of Univision, the ability to define content declined even more seriously.

Like most countries, Puerto Rico borrowed broadcast formats from the U.S. and created their own homegrown versions. It digested trends and events in these formats, however, in a manner that did not significantly destabilize the local “cultural economy.” For example, the media dealt with the Civil Rights movement’s militancy against anti-black racism and with the protests of local actors who denounced the exclusion of blacks from the TV industry, as if they were alien or exceptional to the mongrel-but-white great Puerto Rican family (la gran familia puertorriqueña). Despite this ability to fashion their own programming, what the author calls the “glocal” was never absent. By this she means not only the predictable adaptations of foreign formats and program elements but also unusual and ephemeral phenomena like the 1973 "missing link" in this area of television history (the Federal Communication Commission regulates Puerto Rican television despite the Colonial Experience: Future Portugal’s colonial experience under Spain and the United States, followed by vodka). Despite this ability to fashion their own programming, what the author calls the "glocal" was never absent. By this she means not only the predictable adaptations of foreign formats and program elements but also unusual and ephemeral phenomena like the 1973...