Berman Santana, Déborah
Reseña de "San Fernando de la Carolina: identidades y representaciones" de Fernando Picó
The City University of New York
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Mexicans and other Latinos in Hawaii. She claims that Puerto Ricans in Hawaii will not disappear nor, however, will they witness a complete revitalization of their community either. Instead, Iris López concludes that they are choosing more traditions and customs from several ethnic groups while expanding the meaning of Puerto Rican identity. As in other parts of the country, she sees Puerto Ricans in Hawaii in transition as they create new sociocultural, linguistic, and political definitions of Puerto Rican and Latino identity.

Another matter examined on a local level, but that is important for Puerto Ricans everywhere on the mainland, is the increasingly diverse Latino population in the United States. This situation creates new opportunities and challenges. In their respective research on Puerto Rican communities in Philadelphia and Boston, Félix Matos and Víctor Vásquez consider the impact this phenomenon has had on Puerto Rican politics. In his work, Víctor Vásquez observes how the growing number of Dominicans, Colombians, Mexicans, and other Hispanic groups in Philadelphia provides the framework for political work across national lines that could well serve the interests of all Latinos in the city. Yet the new Latino diversity can also lead to strained intergroup relations. In Boston, Félix Matos notes how, in the context of the Latinization of the city, some Puerto Ricans wish to maintain separate Puerto Rican political organizations out of fear in other communities as well, namely, class divisions within the community.

He notes the presence of a large and influential Puerto Rican professional and upper-middle-class population in Boston. While the contributions of this class to the political, economic, and cultural life of the community are acknowledged and appreciated by many, others raise concerns about the momentary presence of members of this class in the community and their “hierarchical and messianic approaches to collaboration.” In her essay, Maura I. Toro-Morn explores gender as well as class relations in the migration and settlement of Puerto Ricans in Chicago. Gender issues, another important topic taken up in this anthology, are of great significance and need to be studied in all Puerto Rican communities in America.

Puerto Rican migration to the United States has a long history. In her contribution to this collection, Carmen Teresa Whalen explains that this migration has taken place within the framework of U.S. colonialism in Puerto Rico. She points out how American policies and economic investments on the island negatively impacted on the Puerto Rican economy and its workers while providing U.S. employers on the mainland with the benefits of low wage workers unrestricted by immigration barriers. Colonialism also framed the second class citizenship status Puerto Ricans in the U.S. have endured. Yet Puerto Ricans migrants in search of a better life did not passively accept
1820 into hilly Trujillo Alto and riverine Trujillo Bajo (p. 38).

As in other books Picó often frames his discussion of documents within regional and historical contexts. For example, Puerto Rico experienced significant white immigration during the early nineteenth century. Many of these new immigrants—including non-Spaniards—were attracted by offers of title to large extensions of land, in exchange for investment of capital and experience in the sugarcane industry. Liberalization of Spanish trade policy to allow direct trade with countries other than Spain, plus the 1815 Cédula de Gracias allowing non-Spanish whites to immigrate to Spanish colonies, took advantage of the Haitian revolution and subsequent removal of its sugar from the world market, as well as the ongoing independence revolutions throughout Latin America (p. 36).

The municipio of Trujillo Bajo comprised territory through which the Río Grande de Loíza flows as it descends from the mountains, but before it reaches the sea. The seat of municipal government was located east and south of the river; that area’s residents were mostly Puerto Rican-born criollos who owned small farms specializing in products such as coffee, and slavery was uncommon. By contrast, the northern and western banks featured large extensions of territory planted with sugar cane, owned largely by a small number of wealthy, often immigrant entrepreneurs, many of whom lived in San Juan.

Heavy, based on agricultural production. On the other hand, upland criollos resented the influence of rich absentee foreigners on the other side of the river. These and other tensions helped lead to Carolina’s founding in 1857. This chapter in particular would have benefited greatly by including maps to help the reader locate particular places and understand the territory’s evolving relationships with San Juan and surrounding regions.

Chapter Two tells the story of Carolina from its founding until the US invasion in 1898. Interestingly, in its earliest years Carolina’s mayor was appointed by the governor; thus from the start the interests of San Juan-based landowners and the central government heavily influenced local politics, a situation that locals have struggled against ever since.

From the beginning of its existence Carolina’s population was overwhelmingly of color. The census of 1858 (p. 52) makes it clear that most of Trujillo Bajo’s white population—already the minority—remained with that municipio when Carolina separated. Nearly all of the enslaved population ended up in Carolina; it was a sugar-dependent municipio, dominated by a small white elite—many of whom were not residents—yet comprised mainly people of African descent with a legacy of enslavement and resistance. Even after slavery was abolished in 1873, Carolina’s population of color increased, particularly due to immigration of sugar cane workers from the Eastern Caribbean (pp. 62–3), illustrated by “typical
numbers of women accepting sewing piecework and a rise in property-related crime, to increased labor and socialist activism and even support for the Nationalist Party (although Carolina never was a leading center for the latter).

Another feature of the era was the development of “public” recreation spaces on former ranches, known as “country clubs” but restricted to the San Juan elite and some privileged members of the local middle class; by contrast, the poor majority had to be content with the riverbanks as recreational spaces, one more manifestation of Carolina’s profoundly classist social relations (p. 143). Finally, during the Second World War, Puerto Rican government planners began considering San Juan and its municipal neighbors as a single regional urban entity. In 1950 Carolina became the third municipio to have a zoning plan, preceded only by San Juan and Río Piedras (p. 145). Construction of the international airport in the coastal wetlands of Isla Verde (once part of Cangrejos Arriba) heralded tremendous changes for Carolina’s future.

Chapter Five recounts Carolina’s transition to modern urban suburb from the 1950s to 1980. The new airport helped initiate Puerto Rico’s conversion into a major tourist destination, while the creeping advance of high rise beachfront condominiums and luxury hotels eventually eliminated the nostalgic Isla Verde of deserted beaches and informal eating and dancing establishments so loved by the locals (p. 161). The rest of lands under control of Puerto Rico’s Land Authority; in Carolina the most famous was Villa Justicia, home to more than 1,300 families who the government never managed to dislodge (p. 173).

Chapter Six brings Carolina up to the present as the reinvented “Land of Giants.” The 1980 Census revealed not only that Carolina had become the island’s third largest city, but that most of its residents had been born elsewhere, thus illustrating the impact of urbanization on the city’s development. Carolina had left its rural past, yet “it must be asked where it was going” (p. 180). Local leaders faced the dilemma of satisfying the need, for example, of easier access to jobs — often in San Juan — while at the same time creating a sense of identity among a population without historical ties to the place. The municipio’s long-term plan for using historical figures, sports, and public works to encourage this Carolinan identity is noted but not fully analyzed. There are also brief references to women’s and senior citizen’s concerns, as well as the serious issue of crime and juvenile delinquency. The final chapter — more of an epilogue — enumerates some of the most recent statistics. Picó concludes by categorizing Carolina not as a “Land of Giants” but of “mills”: a city of workers, whose daily milling supplies the energy upon which society is based.

Picó’s previous histories of particular communities are known for emphasizing the common people: working class, marginalized, non-white. Although he