



Brazil's Living Museum: Race, Reform, and Tradition in Bahia

Anadelia A. Romo

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Brazil's northeastern state of Bahia has built its economy around attracting international tourists to what is billed as the locus of Afro-Brazilian culture and the epicenter of Brazilian racial harmony. Yet this inclusive ideal has a complicated past. Chronicling the discourse among intellectuals and state officials during the period from the abolition of slavery in 1888 to the start of Brazil's military regime in 1964, Anadelia Romo uncovers how the state's nonwhite majority moved from being a source of embarrassment to being a critical component of Bahia's identity.

Romo examines ideas of race in key cultural and public arenas through a close analysis of medical science, the arts, education, and the social sciences. As she argues, although Bahian racial thought came to embrace elements of Afro-Brazilian culture, the presentation of Bahia as a "living museum" threatened by social change portrayed Afro-Bahian culture and modernity as necessarily at odds. Romo's finely tuned account complicates our understanding of Brazilian racial ideology and enriches our knowledge of the constructions of race across Latin America and the larger African diaspora.



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