



## Synopsis

While the rise and abolition of slavery and ongoing race relations are central themes of the history of the United States, the African diaspora actually had a far greater impact on Latin and Central America. More than ten times as many Africans came to Spanish and Portuguese America as the United States. In this, the first history of the African diaspora in Latin America from emancipation to the present, George Reid Andrews deftly synthesizes the history of people of African descent in every Latin American country from Mexico and the Caribbean to Argentina. He examines how African peoples and their descendants made their way from slavery to freedom and how they helped shape and responded to political, economic, and cultural changes in their societies. Individually and collectively they pursued the goals of freedom, equality, and citizenship through military service, political parties, civic organizations, labor unions, religious activity, and other avenues. Spanning two centuries, this tour de force should be read by anyone interested in Latin American history, the history of slavery, and the African diaspora, as well as the future of Latin America.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

From the first page of the Introduction George Reid Andrews sets the tone of his latest work, Afro-Latin America: 1800 - 2000. The book looks at the Latin-American world focusing on the mostly overlooked fact that the African population south of Central and South America far exceeded in numbers its North American counterparts. "During the period of slavery," Andrews writes, "ten times as many Africans came to Spanish and Portuguese America (5.7 million) as to the United States

(560,000). By the end of the 1900s, Afro-Latin Americans outnumbered Afro-North Americans by three to one...[making it] obvious that we need histories of Latin America's Diaspora comparable to those of the United State's African Diaspora. This book is an effort to provide such a history." Andrews then continues to expound on the problem of "how...do we know who in Latin America is of African ancestry and who is not?" Explaining the problems previous historians and social scientists have had with relative terms such as "black," or "brown." For the purposes of his book, Andrews simply states that for his study, "any individual described...as black...or brown, or mulatto will be considered...to be of known African ancestry." The book is divided into six chapters, beginning with a section of Maps before the Introduction and ending with Population Counts, a Glossary, End Notes and a detailed Bibliography. Each chapter covers a specific topic and time period, and is presented in a straightforward narrative format. The first chapter presents an overview of Afro-Latin America in 1800.

One of the best sources of information on the anthropology in the region, Afro-Latin America 1800-2000 is a well written and detailed account of the experience, and influence, the African people have had in the former Spanish and Portuguese colonies. While Americans can often explain the course of African-American History in the United States, the experience of Africans in Latin America is often a mystery if not all together unheard of. An irony considering that this region now has the highest population of Africans outside of Africa itself. The strengths of the book are found in chapters 1, which covers the early days of slavery, and chapters 4 and 5 where Andrews explains how the African population experienced both a "whitening" and a "blackening" in terms of trying to understand and create an identity that was both acceptable to themselves and to the greater Caucasian and mixed population around them. The problem of course was where the lines could be drawn considering that unlike with the American experience where a dividing line could be easily found, the Afro-Latin slave existence was one of complexity in that slaves and free men and women could be seen at various different class and political levels in the region. The mixtures of Europeans, Native Americans, and Africans, giving birth to creation of a multiracial people, only made the issue more difficult. Blacks would find that they were discriminated against by those of mixed blood who themselves would also be discriminated against by those who were more European in their heritage. If anything, the question of whether or not "race" is a social or biological concept becomes more difficult to answer for those who support the latter in that the region has seen the greatest racial mixture in recent centuries.

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