

camp, in order to present their timeless nature. In all, this is a fun book, full of interesting insights and probing questions from a well-respected and practiced expert in the field.

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ERIKA DENISE EDWARDS, *Hiding in Plain Sight: Black Women, the Law, and the Making of a White Argentine Republic*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2020.

The last decades have seen a boom in the study of Afro-Latin American history. Scholars have explored varied forms of Black agency in the region, from religious to legal strategies, expanding the field beyond its previous focus on slavery. Edwards's book constitutes an important contribution to the study of the intersection of law, gender, and race in Latin America. Her study is the first to look at this intersection in Córdoba, Argentina. It thus decenters the study of Blackness in the River Plate region from Buenos Aires and Montevideo. It is also among the first to look at this intersection, especially with respect to Blackness, during the crucial period in which the newly independent Latin American nations were taking shape. For these reasons and many others, the book has been well received and should be required reading for anyone interested in understanding Latin America. The book, however, is not without its limitations. For one, it is short. Whether this results from a focus on a relatively small city might be a legitimate question to pose. But, as small rural towns are seldom the object of due attention from scholars, the focus on Córdoba is laudable.

The book is made up of six short chapters, an introduction, and a conclusion. It also includes a very useful glossary for those that are new to the field. The introduction takes as its starting point the question of Black invisibility in Argentina. (It thus starts from George Reid Andrews's arguments about the dynamic of Black in/visibility in Latin America (as developed in, among others, *Afro-Latin America: Black Lives, 1600-2000* [Harvard University Press, 2016]). Edwards, however, identifies this invisibility as resulting not only from statecraft, but also from Blacks' own pursuit of whiteness. This is what is at the heart of Edwards's study: how *cordobesas* of African descent contributed to the formation of white Argentina and to their own invisibility by categorizing themselves and their offspring as white. Edwards thus re-periodizes these trends in Latin America. Where scholars have focused on twentieth-century campaigns of whitening (*blanqueamiento*) to try to understand why so many Latin Americans that present as Black do not identify as such, Edwards shows

that these trends have origins in the colonial period. Their *longue durée* underscores their adaptability, as Edwards's own book shows. Yet this claim and periodization are not without controversy.

In Chapters 1 and 2, Edwards offers an overview of the development of the racial hierarchy that placed Black and Indigenous people at the bottom of colonial society. But the chapters also show how Black and Indigenous actors, especially women, defied and challenged colonial racialized social structures. She thus adds to the work of other scholars, like Rachel Sarah O'Toole (*Bound Lives: Africans, Indians, and the Making of Race in Colonial Peru* [University of Illinois Press, 2012]), who have long argued that we should not only think of the history of Latin America's racial becoming from above, but also from below. In other words, Edwards's work is an invitation to consider how racialized populations engaged with and challenged Iberian racial ideology. Edwards's study is a first such in-depth look at this response from below. It thus yields many important insights for understanding how Afro-Latin American women, especially Black women, navigated Spanish America's racial regimes. It also looks at claims of whiteness made by Black subjects—a controversial claim, as other studies of this racial negotiation highlight religion and birthplace as the sites from which early modern Blacks challenged their racial categorization and enslavement (e.g., Chloe Ireton, “‘They Are Blacks of the Caste of Black Christians’: Old Christian Black Blood in the Sixteenth- and Early Seventeenth-Century Iberian Atlantic” [*Hispanic American Historical Review*, 97:4 (2017): 579-612]). But studies of the claims to Indigenous blood that Blacks make to challenge their racial categorization or enslavement—against which Edwards does not compare her evidence—also exist (e.g., Robert C. Schwaller, *Géneros de Gente in Early Colonial Mexico* [Oklahoma University Press, 2016]).

In Chapters 3 and 4, Edwards examines how relations with prominent Spanish men, such as colonial officials and merchants, gave Black women access to the privileges otherwise exclusively associated with whiteness. Chapter 3 looks at this through extralegal relationships, while Chapter 4 looks at Black-white marriages. Edwards thus does for Córdoba what has been shown in other cases where Black women used Black-white relations to their advantage. A significant particularity of the Spanish empire was the possibility of Black-white marriages, and their use for social ascendancy. While other scholars have shown that Black women in colonial Latin America had been able to achieve economic power on their own (e.g., Tamara J. Walker, *Exquisite Slaves: Race, Clothing, and Status in Colonial Lima* [Cambridge University Press, 2017]; Danielle Terrazas-Williams, *The Capital of Free Women: Race, Legitimacy, and Liberty in Colonial Mexico* [Yale University Press, 2022]), Edwards underscores how marriages could be used to gain access to white privilege—a possibility

that had only appeared in fiction until recent scholarship began to cast light on the phenomenon (besides Edwards's book, see Jessica Marie Johnson, *Wicked Flesh: Black Women, Intimacy, and Freedom in the Atlantic World* [University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020]). It was more common to see representations of extra-legal relations as a means toward Black female social ascendancy, as in the case of Xica da Silva (Júnia Ferreira Furtado, *Chica da Silva: A Brazilian Slave of the Eighteenth Century* [Cambridge University Press, 2008]). Edwards foregrounds a different story, one where Black female social ascendancy could be achieved through more acceptable means: lawful marriage.

In Chapters 5 and 6, where she looks at motherhood, Edwards moves to the republican period. Chapter 5 specifically focuses on how Black women fought threats of enslavement by claiming Indigenous ancestry. Edwards thus underscores a practice that was widespread throughout the Americas: people with Black ancestry claiming that they had native blood when their freedom was threatened. Chapter 6 discusses the role Black mothers played in grooming their children for white citizenship. These two chapters are where the book brings out new research. Here Edwards shows how Black women were instrumental in rearing their children for inclusion in a society that only recognized whiteness as legitimate belonging. The book thus traces a long cycle of Black women negotiating a place for themselves and for their children in Latin American society. By focusing on Cordoba, Edwards shows how this phenomenon played out in a small rural town as it grew into Argentina's second largest city. And we are left wondering if such moves would have worked in Buenos Aires. I believe that Edwards's own book and other studies suggest that they might have.

Edwards's book is beautifully written and not long-winded. The author's gift for synthesis is to be envied. This makes the book an enjoyable read for scholars, students, and non-academic readers alike. As I said at the outset, it should be required reading for anyone who wishes to understand Latin America, and especially how women of African descent used the law to their advantage as they engaged with the rise of white supremacy in Argentina. However, although the book's main claim can result controversial to some, attention needs to be paid to what the evidence bears out. Here, Edwards's book could have gone deeper into the sources and laid out the evidence with greater detail. Her book nonetheless remains an essential inaugural study into this question, one which can help rethink strategies and the history of self-whitening in the region and beyond. The book has resonated with readers because it speaks to an enduring legacy and practice in Latin America.

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