

Beto Ávila y el venezolano Chico Carrasquel abrieron el camino para que se afirmara el orgullo latino de superestrellas como Roberto Clemente, Orlando Cepeda y Juan Marichal.

Félix Julio Alfonso López

Oficina del Historiador de la Ciudad de La Habana

PATRICIA ALVARENGA VENUTOLO: *De Vecinos a Ciudadanos: movimientos comunales y luchas cívicas en la historia contemporánea de Costa Rica*. Heredia, Costa Rica: EUNA, 2005.

Patricia Alvarenga Venutolo, a historian at the National University in Heredia, Costa Rica, has written an engaging narrative about some of the highlights of communal protest in contemporary Costa Rica. By communal, she means “socially diverse groups of individuals who organize to protest concrete issues,” as distinct from class-based movements (p. 1). Her main conclusion is that conflicts over the rates and quality of public services can lead to the formation of protest movements that state officials may be reluctant to deal with, but with which they ultimately do negotiate agreements.

De Vecinos a Ciudadanos feels more like a collection of articles than a systematic monograph about social protest. The first of the six chapters provides the background for the “Progressive Councils,” local self-help organizations that were often at the root of the protest movements that Alvarenga Venutolo explores in her book. Chapter two examines the role that women members of the Popular Vanguard Party (PVP), the country’s communist party, played in the construction of feminine civic identity in the country. The third chapter analyzes the role of communal protest over water and electric tariffs in the 1950s and 1960s, while the fourth focuses on the middle-class protest movements against the centralization of water services in Cartago in 1962. This is the only episode that ended in government repression of street protesters (thankfully, without loss of life) and, as Alvarenga Venutolo points out, discredited President Francisco J. Orlich’s government (1962-66). The fifth chapter traces social opposition to increased electricity rates in 1983 that brought to a standstill a state hungry for revenue in the aftermath of the 1982 debt default. The last chapter explores the citizens’ movement to prevent the liberalization of the state’s telecommunications monopoly in 2000. With the exception of the water protests in Cartago, each of these incidents ended with the government’s acquiescence to the principal demands of the protesters.

It is hard to judge how representative these episodes are, whether of protest movements or, more generally, of the culture of political demands in Costa Rica. Alvarenga Venutolo provides no timeline for these protests, and her newspaper research and half a dozen interviews cover less than half of the years between 1950 and 2000. The reader, therefore, has no way of knowing whether these were the most important episodes worthy of study in order to understand why citizen complaints sometimes generate collective action or speculate about the relationship between street and electoral politics. Some quantification of the incidence and duration of communal protest would have gone a long way toward addressing these central issues. Moreover, quantification of political protest, a standard procedure among students of collective action, would have enabled the author to present the Costa Rican case in a comparative historical perspective.

De Vecinos a Ciudadanos nonetheless draws two overarching conclusions about collective action and democratic politics. First, that each of these movements came about as a result of citizens' dissatisfaction with the behavior of bureaucratic agencies or elected officials. And secondly, that these organizations disappeared soon after achieving their objectives. Though leftist parties and movements sought to work with communal groups in order to build more long-term political projects, protests about public policy never sparked the formation of anti-establishment political movements or parties. Citizens made concrete demands of the state. To the extent that the state addresses their complaints, groups come and go in what is a fluid and democratic political setting.

Alvarenga Venutolo's book will be of most interest to those seeking to understand the role of social movements in post-World War II Costa Rica. *De Vecinos a Ciudadanos* identifies topics that warrant systematic analysis, and will help us to understand the political impact of protest movements in one of the developing world's oldest democracies.

Fabrice Lehoucq

University of North Carolina, Greensboro

MILAGROS PEÑA: *Latina Activists across Borders. Women's Grassroots Organizing in Mexico and Texas*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2007.

La importancia del surgimiento de los llamados *movimientos de mujeres de base* para el desarrollo del movimiento feminista y de los derechos humanos a lo largo de los cinco continentes ha sido puesta de relieve por historiadoras tan importantes como Temma Kaplan, a partir de su libro *Crazy for Democracy, Women in Grassroots Movements*. La aplicación de los conceptos de *conciencia femenina* y de *intereses prácticos de género* ha permitido comprender la forma