

Edwards and Edward Long. In particular, he rejects Long's racist profiling of enslaved Africans in general and his butchered reconstruction of the Jamaican revolt. Brown asserts that Long is an "unreliable guide" who "offers an erroneous chronology of events" (160), set down only when "Long sat down a decade later in London to reconstruct the sequence" (162). These are serious charges, substantiated by Brown's careful reading, not only of the work of Edwards and Long but also of primary sources created by other colonists functioning at different levels, both in Jamaica and in the mother country, including the diary of Thomas Thistlewood. Brown also consulted a host of primary and secondary sources covering the wider Caribbean, the Americas, Africa, and Europe.

This text is a welcome addition to the growing body of publications on enslaved resistance and revolt in the Caribbean. It leads the way in advancing the thesis that an enslaved revolt was not simply a parochial event between white enslavers and enslaved Africans. It was integral to the wider context of European colonialism in the Caribbean.

University of the West Indies–St. Augustine
Saint Augustine, Tunapuna-Piarco, Trinidad and Tobago
gelien.matthews@sta.uwi.edu

GELIEN MATTHEWS

COMPARATIVE LEGAL HISTORY OF SLAVERY

Becoming Free, Becoming Black: Race, Freedom and Law in Cuba, Virginia, and Louisiana.

By Alejandro de la Fuente and Ariela J. Gross. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020. Pp. 281. \$24.95 cloth.

doi:10.1017/tam.2020.117

This book combines broad historical synthesis with painstaking archival research and skillful interpretation of primary sources. The authors shed light on the role of law in structuring the worlds of bondage, freedom, and race in three quite different American slave societies.

Fuente and Gross organize the volume into five chapters that take the reader from the introduction of slavery in the seventeenth century to the mature systems of slavery that had developed in each of three venues by 1860. Each chapter offers a three-way comparison of the three societies. The role that law was to play in Cuba was clearest from the start. Cuba, which remained a Spanish colony until the end of the nineteenth century, was governed by the law of Spain and the manumission-friendly legal doctrine found in the thirteenth-century reception of Roman law *Las Siete Partidas*. Although Spain and local Cuban authorities would adopt later codes governing the lives of masters, slaves, and free people of color, those subsequent expressions of the law were still anchored in the receptivity toward manumission that had existed in metropolitan Spain before the Columbian voyages to the Americas.

Virginia and Louisiana were more complex. At the beginnings of their nations' explorations of the Americas, neither English nor French law recognized slavery. The legal framework for reducing some human beings to the status of property and the idea of apportioning legal rights and disabilities based on the not very clear concept of race had to be developed in English and French colonies with little recent history as a guide. With French, Spanish, French again, and ultimately US governance, Louisiana's law of race and slavery was even more complex, with mixtures of French and Spanish civil law and, later, Anglo-American common law, or common law notions, all playing a part.

A special strength of the authors is their ability to remind the reader of the behavioral complexity underlying legal doctrine. The basic outline of the direction of law is familiar. Virginia began with no legal recognition of slavery or racial disability. Yet, by the end of the seventeenth century, slavery and the link between African ancestry and enslaved status were clearly established. Despite some antislavery stirrings after the American Revolution, Virginia law became both pro-slavery and hostile to a free Negro presence in the decades preceding the Civil War. Louisiana, despite inheriting some of the acceptance of manumission and the notion of free people of color found in French and particularly Spanish law, became, under US rule, increasingly hostile to manumission and the possibility of free Afro-American citizenship. Despite the relatively liberal legal regime prescribed by Spanish law, Cuba developed increasingly restrictive local codes limiting the rights of free Afro-Cubans. These new restrictions in part reflected the increased racial tensions brought about by the boom in the Caribbean island's sugar economy and the increase there in the African slave trade in the nineteenth century.

Yet, as the authors remind us, the law's movement toward greater support for slavery and racial restriction does not tell the whole story. Slaves and free people of color sought to use the law and the courts to vindicate their claims of freedom and sometimes their claims to rights and citizenship. It is in this discussion that Fuente and Gross are at their best. Their archival research and consequent ability to present the human stories of subordinated peoples who sought, sometimes successfully, to carve out free space in often legally hostile slave regimes give us a rich comparative past. It is one that recognizes the understanding of the law and the resultant strategies for freedom and rights engaged in by people of African descent in often hostile environments. These individual cases also add to the complexity of our comparative considerations by showing us powerful actors, jurists and others who exercised their offices with both greater and lesser consideration for justice than the letter of the law demanded. This work is a valuable contribution to the comparative legal history of slavery in the Americas.

George Washington University
Washington, D.C.
bcottrol@law.gwu.edu

ROBERT J. COTTROL