Bonnie A. Lucero, *A Cuban City, Segregated: Race and Urbanization in the Nineteenth Century*

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In recent decades the notion of the city as the pre-eminent space of civilisation and progress has been parsed through any number of theoretical lenses – imperial, colonial, ideological, hegemonic, national come to mind. Yet most of these have focused on major cities: national capitals, economic juggernauts and colonial centres. In scholarship on the spatial dimensions of nineteenth-century Cuba, spatial studies have concentrated on two distinct zones: plantations and the burgeoning cities of Havana and, to a much lesser extent, Santiago de Cuba. Focused on the city of Cienfuegos in central Cuba, Bonnie A. Lucero's recent contribution to the field *A Cuban City, Segregated: Race and Urbanization in the Nineteenth Century* is one of a handful of recent scholarly works that concentrates on race and urban planning beyond the metropolis.

In her study, Lucero consistently foregrounds the role played by Afro-Cuban women as property owners and agents of economic and social power. This intersectional feminist methodology is highly compatible with Lucero's deep archival research. Lucero's close reading of archival documents allows her to trace property ownership and property rentals by Afro-Cubans, especially Afro-Cuban women, over the course of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth, including the generational vicissitudes of property management and inheritance.

Whether enacted by explicit design or by tacit acknowledgement, racial policy and practice in Cuba were rarely uncontested. In Chapter 1 Lucero looks at how patterns of official racial discrimination and unofficial accommodation intrinsic to the foundation to Cienfuegos (or Jagua, as it was known at the time) impacted Afro-Cuban residents as they established a foothold in the nascent city. By contrast to the ancient (by Cuban standards) city of Trinidad, or the power centre of Havana, Cienfuegos was a 'new', 'planned' community, founded in 1817, chartered in 1820 – a significant time period in the Atlantic world in which the Haitian revolution (1791–1804) and the abolition of slavery by the Spanish legislature (1811) occurred, both of which affected the formation of the new city. Cienfuegos was chartered with a racialised (and racist) covenant, founded to attract white European settlement. In part as a reaction to the success of the Black revolution in Haiti and the white flight that ensued, the ideal of whiteness was never achieved: in fact, enslaved and free Africans and creoles of African descent were among the first residents of the new city. Thus, rather than a social practice of exclusion reified over decades or even centuries of custom, the city was racially exclusive by design

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and decree. Nevertheless, from its inception Afro-Cubans lived in both the city centre and the outskirts.

Gradually, racialised neighbourhoods emerged. Chapter 2 traces the coalescence of distinctly Afro-Cuban neighbourhoods and the struggle to build generational wealth. To constrain and dispossess this population, mechanisms like building restrictions, zoning and taxation were applied, albeit inconsistently and often punitively. The need for such policies was justified through a campaign aimed at reinforcing white Cuban fears of Afro-Cubans – fears exacerbated by the abolition of slavery in Cuba itself in 1886 (i.e. 50 years after abolition by the Spanish legislature) and the growing Afro-Cuban population. But even as Cienfuegos was chartered to provide whites with a sense of control over the social order, the presence and activism of abolitionists was robust and in its first two decades the ingress of white colonists languished.

Over the course of the nineteenth century Afro-Cubans acquired and lost property through property transfers, purchases and sales. Chapter 4 documents real estate transactions prompted by zoning policies and requirements that were designed to disenfranchise Black property owners and re-establish whiteness in the urban centre. These issues are clearly seen in Lucero's discussion of two predominantly Black central neighbourhoods, Mercado and Paradero, in the 1890s. Mercado was primarily middle class, while Paradero was a poor and working-class neighbourhood home to diverse populations of immigrants, including Middle Easterners, Chinese and Southern Europeans in addition to Afro-Cubans. Although economically, socially, and to some extent racially distinct from one another, each of these neighbourhoods experienced different forms of exclusion, in local policy (significantly, in opposition to national laws outlawing racial discrimination) and practice.

After the Cuban War of Independence in 1898, US occupying forces endorsed white privilege on the one hand and democratic process on the other. Chapter 5 parses these apparent inconsistencies and shows how they established protocols – practices of racial exclusion and the rhetoric of national inclusion – that endured well into the twentieth century. In the Conclusion, Lucero assesses the discourse relating to Cienfuegos from abroad, reiterating its reputation as the most rational, modern and enlightened city in Cuba. Cienfuegos was laid out in conformity with the Spanish colonial grid pattern, featuring long straight avenues, clearly demarcated neighbourhoods, construction codes that yielded an aesthetically consistent built environment that contributed to its reputation as a modern city. In its public image, it remained a shining example of rational design and civic pride into the twentieth century; this image rendered invisible the Afro-Cuban population of the city and disavowed the systemic disenfranchisement and tireless subversion of legal protection to which Afro-Cubans were subjected. Lucero carefully unpacks Cienfuegos' image of aspirational rationality and modernity in urban planning and design, revealing how this goal was achieved, to the limited extent that it was, at the expense of its citizens of colour.

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