

or monster?,” and the word “torturer,” reasserts the very representations of Cambodia that Hinton is at pains to critique. In Cambodia’s biggest academic bookstore, English-language book covers are littered with images of mass, anonymous, uncremated human remains, or other shocking and garish photographs, colors and titles. While Hinton’s book only edges this sensationalist field, it’s hard not to see an insensitive marketing ploy, and an indictment, dare I say it, on us.

References

- Chandler, David (2000) *Voices from S-21: Terror and History in Pol Pot’s Secret Prison*. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press.
- Ghodsee, Kristen (2017) *Red Hangover: Legacies of Twentieth-Century Communism*. Durham: Duke Univ. Press.

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Becoming Black Political Subjects: Movements and Ethno-Racial Rights in Colombia and Brazil. By Tianna S. Paschel. Princeton, NJ, and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2016.

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Since the 1980s, broad social, political, and legal changes have reshaped law, politics, and policy in Latin America, as affirmative action and multiculturalism laws seeking to elevate the status of Black and Indigenous Latin Americans have been implemented in the region. Tianna S. Paschel’s book, *Becoming Black Political Subjects*, challenges scholars who argue these outcomes simply reflect a regional “multicultural turn.” Instead, Paschel focuses on the domestic movements that successfully pressed for these legal changes despite lacking the resources and political conditions often associated with successful social movements.

Paschel’s selection of Colombia and Brazil as cases for comparing Black political mobilization is well founded—Brazil has the largest, and Colombia the third-largest, Black population in Latin America. Both countries have formidable Black social movements that are comprised of smaller, often regional, organizations. Despite these similarities, these movements’ outcomes have been notably different. In Colombia, Black

rights were achieved largely for rural-dwelling Black Colombians residing along the Pacific coast of the country (despite most Black Colombians residing in urban areas). In Brazil, rights were granted to urban-dwelling Blacks seeking racial equality in higher education. Paschel's aim is to answer three main questions regarding these cases: How did Black social movements gain traction after over a century of nationalism rooted in *mestizaje*, or "race-mixing?" Why did Colombia and Brazil witness such different outcomes in their pursuit of Black rights? And what are the prospects for claims-making given the approach and implementation of ethno-racial reforms in either country?

Paschel argues these Black social movements took advantage of openings in domestic politics while deploying international human rights discourse to reach their aims. Yet, in each case, national cultural understandings of race influenced the form and targets of proposed ethno-racial reforms. Theoretically, Paschel draws on Bourdieu's concept of *fields* to posit that an alignment in political fields facilitated these movements' success. She argues that Black Colombians gained rights during a "multicultural field alignment" in the 1980s and 1990s. During this period, domestic politics framed race as equivalent to "culture" or "ethnicity." In contrast, Black Brazilians achieved recognition during a "racial equality political alignment" in the 2000s and 2010s. Domestic politics during this period framed the Black struggle as one for racial equality, rather than the right to cultural difference. Through both periods, Black social movement actors capitalized on international human rights discourses to bolster their claims against the state.

The wide array of data that Paschel analyzes enables her to examine multiple ways that law and mobilization intersect in Colombia and Brazil. The book begins with a historical overview of Latin American nationalism and its long embrace of *mestizaje* as an organizing concept. It then describes the rise of Black social mobilization in Colombia and Brazil. Using archival materials from constitutional court proceedings and ethno-racial legislations, Chapters four and five examine the conditions that spurred constitutional reforms in either country, which resulted in land rights for rural Blacks in Colombia and territorial rights for Brazilian *quilombos*, as well as the implementation of affirmative action policies across Brazil in the 2000s. The subsequent two chapters use ethnographic field notes and interview data to provide an on-the-ground look at how Black social movements have confronted the Colombian and Brazilian state over the past 10 years. The book concludes with a discussion of prospects for Black claims-making given how these ethno-racial reforms have been implemented.

The book's sociolegal contributions are most evident in the fourth and fifth chapters, where Paschel examines the constitutional processes leading to Black territorial rights in either country and the shift from multiculturalism to racial equality as an organizing principle.

These portions will be of special interest to those working in Latin American law or constitutional law more generally. The book also does an excellent job of engaging international human rights legislation and, what Paschel calls, the “global ethno-racial field,” as it was strategically deployed by movement actors to achieve their goals.

One limitation of the book is precisely what makes it impressive—its ambitious research design. This ambitious design produces well-supported, rich comparative analysis, requiring readers’ attention. Its sheer scope, however, may result in readers missing some of the author’s subtle arguments. The breadth of literature Paschel tackles makes some of her arguments diffuse. For example, Paschel begins to engage the topic of Black consciousness by distinguishing between those organizing *while Black* and those organizing *as Blacks*, noting that Black consciousness was present, though secondary, to those organizing *while Black* (e.g., Colombians who organized as Black workers or Black peasants). In the case of Colombia, Paschel explains the role of constitutional law in shaping Black consciousness, stating that, “The constitutional reform process catalyzed the ethnicization of black identity not only in the eyes of the Colombian state but also within the movement” (71). This important role of state reforms is underdeveloped in the introduction, though, begging the question, was Black consciousness primarily state-driven, given each country’s particular brand of nationalism? Or, was it shaped more by Black movement actors? By the conclusion, Paschel provides a semi-definitive answer, “. . .The politicization of blackness among the masses in Colombia and Brazil. . .may be best understood as a consequence of these reforms rather than their cause” (222). Developing this important contribution at the front end of the book would have allowed readers to parse the role of the state versus that of Black movement actors in shaping Blackness in either country.

In sum, *Becoming Black Political Subjects* succeeds in bringing issues of race in Latin America into the purview of sociolegal scholars. By engaging enduring questions about Blackness in Latin American politics, social movement organizing, and legal contestations, Paschel models how sociolegal scholars can provide a nuanced portrait of racial and ethnic struggles without resorting to oversimplifications. Race scholars will be impressed by Paschel’s nonessentialist theorizing of Blackness, as well as the much-needed comparative and transnational analysis of Blackness outside of the United States. In addition, *Becoming Black Political Subjects* would be of interest to Latin Americanists, social movement scholars, political scientists, and sociologists.

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