

ROOSBELINDA CÁRDENAS. RAISING TWO FISTS: STRUGGLES FOR BLACK CITIZENSHIP IN MULTICULTURAL COLOMBIA. STANFORD: STANFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS 2023. 274 P. ISBN: 978-1503635807

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Raising two fists is the result of over 15 years of immersive ethnographic research with anti-racism activists in Colombia. Through her work, Roosbelinda Cárdenas offers a nuanced and comprehensive analysis of how some of the country's leading Afro-Colombian organizations have advocated for what she terms as 'Black Citizenship', highlighting their strategies, challenges, and successes in combating systemic racism and demanding rights to national inclusion.

The book is not only *about* activism but is in itself part of the author's political engagement within Colombian social movements. Cárdenas' work is both a tool for documenting Afro-Colombian activists' voices, and a means of amplifying and contributing to them. Through her critical engagement, she showcases an interesting example of engaged and collaborative anthropology, challenging colonial legacies embedded in academic practices, where research often serves only external audiences without contributing to the communities being studied.

Cárdenas delves into the limits and possibilities of the various political strategies that these activists have used in their struggles for justice, specifically, in demanding rights from the state through the language of multiculturalism. The book inserts itself into a broader Latin American scholarship that has delved into the issue of multiculturalism (Rivera Cusicanqui 2010), bringing meaningful ethnographic contributions to how it unfolds on the ground, and how it shapes people's identities and socialities.

The book's title, *Raising two fists*, refers to the dual strategy these activists adopt: both claiming full citizenship rights as members of a multicultural state, and seeking to strengthen diasporic solidarities amongst Black peoples. The author argues that such diasporic movements represent a way through which Afro-Colombians navigate and transcend the constraints of the state.

By bringing attention to 'beyond-the-state' political strategies, her own research serves as fuel to dream 'bigger dreams than state-sanctioned rights to difference' (60). Her exploration of what it means for Afro-Colombians to *vivir sabroso* (to live well) and to defend peace offers a transformative perspective on justice and well-being. For these activists, peace is not merely the cessation of declared war, but also the dismantling of structural inequalities that perpetuate black people's suffering and death. This broadened understanding of peace refers to what, in this book, is discussed as fostering politics of life, instead of politics of death.

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Whilst Cárdenas' focus on diasporic connections is compelling, her emphasis on its northward trends, giving special attention to Colombian ties with Black North American social movements, misses an opportunity to engage more directly with anti-racism struggles within the broader context of Latin America. Nevertheless, *Raising two fists* offers valuable insights into the potentials and limitations of fighting for Black citizenship beyond Colombia, contributing to a more solid understanding of multiculturalism across other Latin American contexts.

As Cárdenas discusses, the language of multiculturalism is intertwined with the politics of victimization of black people. She lays out a critical view, without falling into presumptuous academic cynicism that tends to dismiss how research collaborators evaluate their own struggles. Instead, the author engages with their perspectives thoughtfully, recognizing the agency and wisdom embedded in their actions, while critically analysing the broader structural and historical forces that shape their experiences.

For example, when analysing the inclusion of an 'ethnic chapter' in the peace accords between FARC and the Colombian state (which was meant to safeguard differential reparations towards Afro-Colombians and Indigenous populations affected by the conflict), Cárdenas calls attention to how this was a victory for Black movements in the country. However, it also consisted of an attempt to integrate Afro-Colombians into a national project, rather than actually changing it. Fundamentally, the book helps understanding what it means for black activists to play a political game ultimately defined by a state whose institutional apparatus is the same that commits genocide against them.

Furthermore, Cárdenas skilfully addresses the complexities of the Colombian context of long-term armed conflict, narco-traffic, enduring colonial legacies, and pervasive economic extractivism, showing how these intersect in producing dispossession and displacement of Afro-Colombians. And despite these themes' complexity, her writing remains accessible for those who wish to familiarize themselves with Colombia's more recent political history.

Although the author explicitly states that her objective is not to directly contribute to the extensive literature on war and violence in Colombia, her ethnographic findings bring interesting insights about this matter. For instance, how, amongst *campesinos*, participation in the illegal coca market could be understood as a strategy of survival in the face of the state's neglect, which resonates with other scholars (Ramírez de Jara 2001, Zapata, Herrera and Tapias 2023).

Campesinos' participation in networks of narco-traffic complicates the boundaries set between politics of life and politics of death and challenges the clear-cut distinction between 'us/afro-victimas' and 'them/guerrilla' often adopted by activists in their interactions with the state. The book could have further explored this matter, since it points to yet another risk of the politics of multiculturalism and victimization in Colombia, that consists of deepening the stigma of those involved in illegal activities and turning invisible the contexts of inequality in which violence and narco-traffic unfold. In this context, Black citizenship risks being only for those who manage to fit into the dominant language of victimization.

Finally, Cárdenas' engagement with Colombian scholarship deserves special mention. Unlike the prevalent tendency in Global North academia to overlook the contributions of local academics — treating field sites primarily as sources of data extraction rather than spaces of meaningful intellectual dialogue — Cárdenas recognizes and engages with reflections and discussions emerging from within Colombia. In doing so, the book not only enriches its own analysis but also contributes to dismantling academic hierarchies rooted in colonialism.

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