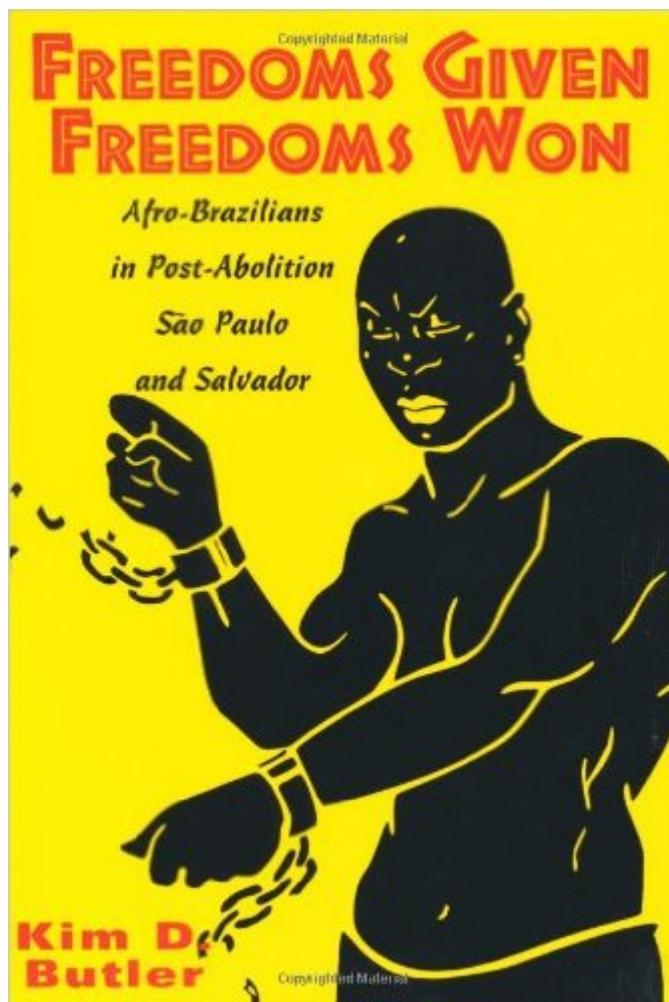


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Freedoms Given, Freedoms Won: Afro-Brazilians In Post-Abolition SÃ£o Paolo And Salvador



Synopsis

Freedoms Given, Freedoms Won explores the ways Afro-Brazilians in two major cities adapted to the new conditions of life after the abolition of slavery and how they confronted limitations placed on their new freedom. The book sets forth new ways of understanding why the abolition of slavery did not yield equitable fruits of citizenship, not only in Brazil, but throughout the Americas and the Caribbean. Afro-Brazilians in São Paulo and Salvador lived out their new freedom in ways that raise issues common to the entire Afro-Atlantic diaspora. In São Paulo, they initiated a vocal struggle for inclusion in the creation of the nation's first black civil rights organization and political party, and they appropriated a discriminatory identity that isolated blacks. In contrast, African identity prevailed over black identity in Salvador, where social protest was oriented toward protecting the right of cultural pluralism. Of all the eras and issues studied in Afro-Brazilian history, post-abolition social and political action has been the most neglected. Butler provides many details of this period for the first time in English and supplements published sources with original oral histories, Afro-Brazilian newspapers, and new state archival documents currently being catalogued in Bahia. Freedoms Given, Freedoms Won sets the Afro-Brazilian experience in a national context as well as situating it within the Afro-Atlantic diaspora through a series of explicit parallels, particularly with Cuba and Jamaica.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Following the dissolution of slavery in nineteenth-century Brazil, large numbers of nonwhites struggled for the fruits of freedom within a finite space. That space, dominated by a decidedly

smaller but powerful white elite, dictated the parameters and definitions of the so-called "high brow" culture. Due in large part to mid-century developments in transportation (the railroad in particular), Brazil began to mature rapidly as it linked to the wider transatlantic economy. Accompanied by increasing demands on African slave imports and a newer coffee-based export economy, Brazilian elites loudly rallied around the theme of progress. For Africans and their descendants, abolition initially brought great promise, Kim Butler argues in 'Freedoms Given, Freedoms Won,' but subsequently struggled for a share of that ill-defined freedom well into the twentieth-century and beyond. For Butler, Associate Professor of History and Chair of the Africana Studies Program at Rutgers University, the rather complicated meaning of freedom itself is at issue. Africans and Afro-Brazilians believed that the end of slavery meant fuller participation in Brazilian society at the social, cultural, economic, and political levels. Psychologically, she argues, the failure of such notions was a devastating and bitter pill to swallow for many. Butler discovered that blacks responded largely within three strategic avenues: integrationism, alternative integrationism, or separatism. Stated briefly, in the first case blacks could culturally assimilate to the dominant strata in hopes of improved social mobility and patronage networks.

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