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**PAUL ORTIZ, *AN AFRICAN AMERICAN AND LATINX HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES*, BOSTON 2018, PP. 298.**

The determination to fight the slave republic and create culture of anti-imperialism, anti-racism and anti-subjugation is an achievement of the African Americans, Native Americans, and other groups; it requires a re-envisioning of United States history. Paul Ortiz makes an attempt to look at the history of African Americans and Latinx in the United States holistically.

Paul Ortiz was born in 1964. Growing up with his white stepfather, he witnessed racism and subjugation first hand, even at home. His intellectual interests are in University teaching, community organizing and social history. Paul Ortiz is an experienced historian who as a graduate student had already taught separate courses in Africa American and Latinx studies. His inspiration includes; to ensure that no Latinx or Black children ever again have to be ashamed of who they are and of where they come from. Growing up; he realized that the roles, struggles and the contributions of Latinx and African ancestors that added to the development of America institutions and culture was not included in the curriculum. Therefore, he sort to bring to a better understanding and/or the true history of America. His service in the United State Special Forces in Central America as a paratrooper and radio operator in combat zone made him learn that the edifying story he had learned about his nation (The United States) as a guardian and promoter of democracy was false. It took him many

more years to explain what was wrong with that history, and how a new and more accurate story might be told.

*An African American and Latinx History of the United States*, which received the 2018 PEN Oakland-Josephine Miles Award for Literary Excellence, is a historical book published by Beacon Press in 2018. It enlightens, covering the struggles of the African Americans and Latin Americans. The book was written to re-envision the American History. It challenges the interpretation of American history that has been learned to change when cues are taken from organizers and movements.

African Americans and Latinx were considered to have very little difference in the USA, having been paired in derision in the discourse of the post-civil rights era. The book portrays black and brown skinned groups to have shared similar experiences in the United States. Latinx covers the genders of Latin Americans living in the United States.

The book draws from the voices and experiences of people from the African and Latinx Diasporas in the Americas to offer a new interpretation of United States history from the American Revolution to the present.

Changing the narrative of American history, Frederick Douglass, an abolitionist, dared to place slavery and imperialism at the center of the United States' development when addressing an audience of northerners in 1862. He was of the opinion that the civil war had been ushered in by decades of settler colonialism, corruption and the promotion of slavery by the United States, and therefore needed to surrender the image of itself as an exceptional icon of liberty, surrender the sense of having an exceptional history that the US had managed to avoid the problems other nations faced, and their sense of innocence. He also reminded the audience that their pursuit of profits at the expense of human rights had had lasting consequences.

Ortiz observed that the role played by the black and brown skinned ancestors were not revealed and gave an instance of how immigrants from the global south (referring to Latin America, the Caribbean, and Africa) have brought ideas to the United States that rejuvenated US political culture. A typical example was that Latin America practically invented social democracy (first formed in Mexico, then disseminated throughout Latin America): The right to organize, the right to education, the right to health care. Those rights later found their way to the United Nations' Declaration on Human Rights as modern social democracy, and yet Latin America never gets credited for it. Adding to achievement in Latin America, Mexico led in abolition of slave trade and considered slavery as a palpable violation of the principle of a free republic.

African Americans have been faced with the challenge that see Africans as nothing but slaves saved by a white man and had contributed nothing to the United States. But blacks have had great struggles in the United States such that the struggles have created a new synthesis of the US history. The radical ideas of Frederick Douglass and others were generated in social movements where people came together to learn how to overturn slavery and other forms of domination. Placing these struggles at the heart of the historical narrative allows to re-envision a vibrant past that shines a path for every individual who yearns for a more democratic future.

Although merchants wanted Baltimore to be the breeding ground for making profit through slavery; African Americans and their allies were determined to transform the city into a center of anti-slavery resistance. If cities such as Baltimore were conduits for slavery and racial capitalism, then the African Americans were out to transform their neighborhoods into communities of struggle. The free black community in Baltimore built cultures of resistance by organizing churches, schools, and fraternal organizations for their survival. Well into the twenty-first century, archeologists continued to discover hidden tunnels, camouflaged cisterns, and secret compartments in church basements that harbored fugitive slaves.

The type of overwhelming struggle and maltreatment on African slaves forced some to take the risk of escaping. The African Slaves' act of insurgencies by risking to escape from their masters was indeed a great risk and could only take bravery to do so; knowing that severe punishment, and often death, was a virtual certainty for an unsuccessful escape. Some who successfully escaped went with the British and some to Native Americans.

After the war between Great Britain and the United States, Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson, two former patriot leaders, sought out to recapture former slaves who had escaped with Britain's Royal Navy. They had the constitutional backing (under Article IV Section 2) which provided for the return of fugitive slaves. Congress also passed the Naturalization Act of 1790, which restricted naturalization process towards citizenship in the United States to "any alien, being a free white person".

John Adams created a rigid framework for United States of American exceptionalism by arguing that the black people of the Western Hemisphere did not have the capacity for self-rule given what had happened in Haiti after their liberation.

Similarly to Latin America, John Quincy Adams' rationale for waging war to protect the United States from the dangers of South American Liberty was not just that he believed the Mexican War of Independence would preempt the

threat of revolt in the United States and keep the institution of slavery intact, but also he could not accept that they (Mexicans) were capable of waging a genuine war of independence, labelling Mexicans as inferior. He also invoked the specter of race on Cuba which led to the foreclosure of possible cooperation with the independence movements in Latin America and the Caribbean to expand the frontiers of slavery and racial capitalism.

While the nation believes that there is steady progress, the progress narrative does not square with the facts. As Martin Luther King Jr. observed of most white people in the nation: "They believe that American society is essentially hospitable to fair play and to steady growth towards a middle-class utopia embodying racial harmony. But unfortunately, this is a fantasy of self-deception and comfortable vanity. Overwhelming America is still struggling with irresolution and contradictions". Backing this statement by Kings Jr., Paul Ortiz wrote, "The United States has persisted in creating economic, legal, and political barriers to full citizenship for much of the nation's workforce". In America, the greater or less degree of whiteness of skin decides the rank which man occupies in society.

According to Ortiz, the constitution and the Naturalization Act marginalized people of color for generations to come. The racialization and denial of citizenship to entire classes of workers became the blunt instrument that employers used to keep wages low in numerous occupations identified with undesirable African American and later immigrant labor. The Naturalization Act worked to exclude nonwhite people from the benefits of citizenship even and entrenched racism as the philosophy of westward expansion.

As a nation, the United States thrived with slave labor and imperialism (superiority and oppression over black skinned and Latinx, as well as centuries of exploitation in the USA) which created a black-white economic and social divide and cemented through years of servitude and subjugation. African Americans had to fight the established system of racism, and imperialism with every weapon at their disposal to change the course of the American Revolution away from slavery and toward freedom for all.

Lumen Haynes was a free Black man, soldier, and a progeny of a Black father and white mother. He became a foe of slavery and opened his challenge to the continental congress. He opined that all men are created equal, endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights; life, liberty and pursuit for happiness.

Contrast to the gospel of liberty, John Adams justified his argument that Black people lack the capacity for self-rule. He depicted the Haitian masses as ignorant, "Did they not immediately fall into the power of Aristocrats of their own color? Are they more free? Do they live better?" He went on to associate democracy with

whiteness and tyranny with blackness. African Americans, by contrast, lifted up the Haitian Revolution as a great moment in world history to learn from.

Similarly, Jose Morelo's efforts to recruit President James Madison to support the Mexican War of Independence represented a moment of unparalleled opportunity for the United States to place itself on the side of liberty for all not just in its rhetoric, but in its actions. John Adams capitalized on the synergy but for a different course: To preempt revolt against slavery in the United States, contain revolt against slavery, as well as down grade the Mexicans as inferior, unbleached to engage in successful war against the Spanish colonialism. Again, Adams invoked the specter of race to argue that Cubans were incapable of fighting a genuine war of independence.

African Americans as well as Latinx struggled and engaged in freedom fight against racism, imperialism, subjugation and other forms of 'real Americans' oppression. The Black and Latinx groups have contributed in the History of the United States by organizing and forming strong resistance against all forms of oppression and building communities of struggle for a liberal United States of present day.

As racial divide has created social divide in the United State, so did it create barriers between the United States and her sister nations. Actually, in these days, we can see hostility between the US and her southern neighboring countries worsen. Although with good intentions to control illegal immigration, the notion of racism still lingers. Ortiz (2018) Black and Latinx intellectuals and organizers have historically urged the United States to build bridges of solidarity with the nations of the Americas. If the USA hopes to restore relevance and succeed to establish friendly relation or gain commercial growth and influence in Latin America, the US has to rightly and forever settle the race problem in the US.

While 'real Americans' continued their oppressions in a platter, the Africans and Latinx fought for an ideal society that would include to respect and protect their rights which many died for. An example as narrated by Paul Ortiz about Denmark Vesey, a free Black man, who helped to organize an insurrectionary plot in Charleston, South Carolina. The revolt was planned for July 14, 1822, Bastille Day. The liberated slaves planned to escape to Haiti after the uprising. City officials caught wind of the plan ahead of time, and executed Vesey as well as many alleged co-conspirators who had been members of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, which Vesey had helped to found. Chapter 13 and 14 of the book gave some instances of the state of terror slavery and re-enslavement inflicted in Blacks across the hemisphere.

According to one historian, in 1830, the aggregate value of United States slaves was about \$577million. The economic power value in 2014 dollars would

be \$9.84trillion (56% of 2014 GDP) such wealth created by the black slaves for US. Furthermore, approximately one million enslaved workers were shipped from cities such as Baltimore, Charleston, South Carolina and Washington DC, to the burgeoning plantations of the Deep South, which supplied the majority of the world's cotton to Great Britain, France and other rapidly industrializing nations. (Ortiz, 2018, p.12)

The patriot ruling class designed the United States' constitution to protect chattel bondage; two cited in the book were Article 1 section 9 and Article IV section 2. No wonder Hammond, the British envoy charged with establishing diplomatic relations between Great Britain and the United States, thought the US former patriot leaders were Tories at heart. Given that the Secretary of State, Thomas Jefferson, protested in congress over the British giving sanctuary to slaves belonging to citizens of the United States. The United State also attempted to negotiate a treaty with Mexico for the surrender of fugitive slaves as might seek refuge on the soil of Mexico. But the treaty was rejected by the Mexican congress, which denounced slavery as a palpable violation of the first principles of a free republic. (Ortiz, 2018, p.32)

“The negro role in the Revolution can best be understood by realizing that his major loyalty was not to a place nor to a people but to a principle”. As characterized by Benjamin Quarles for African American insurgencies.

John Adams realized how antislavery insurgencies was spreading and knew something would have to be done to limit the spread of liberty if they wanted to remain in slave trade. Ultimately, race and slave trade superseded all other considerations in Secretary Adams' diplomatic mind to the extent he got President James Madison to foreclose possible cooperation with the independence movements in Latin America and the Caribbean prior to his warning that there was much fear from Cuban independence, especially the possibility that a slave rebellion in Cuba could potentially destabilize slavery in the United States.

The United States of America is known for its ideas, but had thrived with slave labor and subjugation. The determination to fight the slave republic and create culture of anti-imperialism, anti-racism and anti-subjugation requires a re-envisioning of United States history. With all of the struggles and hard times the United States has endured, it is safe to say it has helped shape America. Although, predominately African and Latinx groups from across the hemisphere have struggled for an ideal society against tremendous obstacles. It will be fair to give credit to 'real Americans' who had shared the vision of the black and brown race and had fought for the same course, and probably died in the course of doing so. Rush Limbaugh offered a history lesson on slavery and

race on his radio show, “No other race has ever fought a war for the purpose of ending slavery, which we (Caucasians) did. Nearly 600,000 people killed in the Civil War. It’s preposterous that Caucasians are blamed for slavery when they’ve done more to end it than any other race, and within the bounds of the constitution to boot”.

This book has the substance of recording the active part Africans and Latinx played in the drama that brought to life the American nation. This book is recommended to historians who are yet to understand that the black and brown skinned Americans’ struggles for liberation was a major factor in the American Revolution and present day liberty.