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For A Proper Home: Housing Rights in the Margins of Urban Chile, 1960–2010
by Edward Murphy (review)

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anniversary of the founding of the city of São Paulo. São Paulo was the dominant player in national politics from the 1890s to the 1920s, and the state's failed 1932 revolt attempted to challenge the rise of the centralizing regime of Getúlio Vargas fueled by *paulista* perceptions that São Paulo's interests were being sacrificed to those of national government and other states. The first half of the book carefully reconstructs the discourses surrounding the revolt; the second half uses the 1954 commemoration to unpack the discourses regarding the memory of the revolt and its meaning. Newspapers, magazines, the writings of diplomats and travelers, personal archives, photographs, and literature are just a few of the many sources that Weinstein explores in her wide-ranging examination of the many social and political groups involved.

Weinstein argues that “discourses of difference are generative of policies and decisions that consolidate and exacerbate regional inequalities” (2). The emergence and consolidation of a paulista identity that privileged the whiteness and modernity of the south had its flip side—the disparaging of blackness and backwardness in northeastern Brazil, the other major population center. Regional identities, she argues, emerged in concert with national identities in the twentieth century. São Paulo saw itself at the top of a national hierarchy. Weinstein argues, “National identities, in Brazil and elsewhere, will always be imagined through regional referents” (343).

The paulista identity that took shape during the 1930s (galvanized by the failed revolt) was built (ironically) on the image of the racially mixed colonial pathfinder/frontiersman (*bandeirante*). Despite lip service to racial mixture and harmony, paulista identity emphasized whitening and whiteness. As São Paulo urbanized and industrialized, regional identity became equated with progress and modernity, and an urban middle class. As Weinstein deftly shows, these images were complicated and often contradictory. The paulista woman, for example, was both modern and traditional, and São Paulo was both exceptional and exemplary.

The 1932 revolt crystallized São Paulo as the most successful, modern, and progressive region of Brazil. Even though the 1954 commemoration updated this imagery, it had become harder to make the claim that São Paulo's success was good for the nation, let alone representative of it. By the 1950s, the paulistas were imagining their state as the Brazil that had turned out right (*deu certo*). But a white, middle-class, industrial, and modern São Paulo seemed increasingly to be a regional exception rather than a national rule.

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For A Proper Home: Housing Rights in the Margins of Urban Chile, 1960–2010.
By Edward Murphy (Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015)
343 pp. \$27.95 paper \$27.95 e-book

For A Proper Home is a well-researched and thoroughly detailed account of the movements and programs for property and propriety (that is, dignified

housing) in Chile, or a nexus that Murphy calls “the urban politics of propriety” (5, 266). He walks readers through Chile’s tumultuous political history from the decades just before and immediately following the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet. Murphy shows that Chile’s government was always involved in the homeless movement, in one way or another (266). Under the Christian Democrats, the state attempted to co-opt and soften the radical goals of the movement. Although the Popular Unity government sought to advance these goals, its strict adherence to Marxist rhetoric alienated the “less law abiding” members of the marginalized communities. The Pinochet regime physically attacked and even eliminated the communities (166), while simultaneously calling upon the activists to use their homes to work “for the progress of the entire nation” (148). The post-Pinochet regimes used the housing movements and their own poverty programs to promote collaboration and unity rather than confrontation and discord. The housing movement was so significant that regardless of the regime in power, the state needed to interact with it. Indeed, housing provisions ultimately became a social service run by the state, largely through the efforts of homeless activists. In short, this movement demands deep scholarly inquiry, and a privileged place in Chile’s history.

For A Proper Home is the result of thirty months of research conducted between 1999 and 2011. In his archival work, Murphy “cast a wide net across the entirety of Santiago in housing and urbanism, with forays into the designs, consumptive practices, and neighborhood settings of homes” (11). He examined media accounts, plans, reports, debates, and legislative initiatives at all levels of government. He also analyzed letters, requests, and applications submitted by individual citizens and the organizations that represented them in their quest for legal recognition, infrastructure support, and housing development (11). These primary documents are particularly important in conveying the voices of the people involved, including those intent on co-opting, advancing, derailing, or eliminating the activists and their movement. Murphy also conducted ethnographic research and collected oral histories in four specific neighborhoods of historical importance (12). Despite his prolonged and extensive field work, however, he might have solicited more information from the people that he interviewed. The book certainly relies upon their stories, but more direct quotations would have allowed the activists to become their own spokespeople.

Murphy was clearly mindful regarding the significance of his research for posterity as he “prepared [his informants’] testimonials for the public record” (265). His careful approach to collecting and reporting the “data” reflects the sensitivity of scholarship in a nation where history was re-written, and archives (and archives to be) were literally destroyed, during decades of dictatorship.

Murphy employed interdisciplinary research methods to learn about the movement for dignified housing and to offer a sense of Chilean history and politics beyond a mere description of the activists and their movement. For example, we learn about Chile’s often contradictory relationship with neoliberalism, its evolving representation of poverty and

the poor, and the complicated nature of gender in its social and national politics.

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Unreasonable Histories: Nativism, Multiracial Lives, and the Genealogical Imagination in British Africa. By Christopher J. Lee (Durham, Duke University Press, 2014) 346 pp. \$94.95 cloth \$26.96 paper

In *Unreasonable Histories*, Lee challenges what he views as the excessive focus of African studies on communities that can be traced through time and used as the basis for nativist myth making. He studies instead a more fragmented and disparate group, namely, multiracial people between the 1910s and the 1960s in the British imperial territories that are now Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Malawi. The result is a rich and thought-provoking study that speaks beyond its immediate subject to raise issues about the boundaries of African studies and the ways in which archives are framed to promote particular epistemologies.

Terminology is problematical for Lee, given his commitment to breaking down essentialist categories. Lee rejects the dated terms *mixed race* or *mulatto* in favor of the more capacious *multiracial*, but all such descriptors tend to enshrine certain ideas about ethnicity. Be that as it may, in twentieth-century British Central Africa, racialized categories were crucial for the functioning of colonialism: Inhabitants were categorized as “native” or “non-native” and were subject to different legal regimes as a result (British common law or African customary law). “Multiracial” people, who usually had “African” mothers and fathers of South Asian or European descent, did not fit readily into these categories. Their histories might be seen as “unreasonable,” Lee claims, from a number of perspectives. Lee chose the term *unreasonable* carefully; it does considerable work in framing the project (19). In one sense, *unreasonable* refers to the difficulty of assembling evidence about an under-documented group. Lee uses this first sense to shape the opening section of the book, which he terms “histories without groups”; in this section, he examines historical beginnings in the 1910s and 1920s and explores fragmented archival evidence.

In the second sense, which frames the middle portion of the book, *unreasonable* refers to the disruption of assumptions and the thorny challenges posed by the very existence of a group of people who did not fit colonial typologies. In what sense were they “non-native” in colonial terms, with the attendant legal implications? Focusing on commissions and policy responses, the middle section of the book looks at colonial attempts to create categories and develop policy in response to the perceived problem of an impoverished community of partial European descent (because the nub of the “problem” seems to have been that this community was comprised of primarily the neglected or unrecognized