



Afro-Paradise: Blackness, Violence, and Performance in Brazil

Christen A. Smith

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Tourists exult in Bahia, Brazil as a tropical paradise infused with the black population's one-of-a-kind vitality. But the alluring images of smiling black faces and dancing black bodies masks an ugly reality of anti-black authoritarian violence.

Christen A. Smith argues that the dialectic of glorified representations of black bodies and subsequent state repression reinforces Brazil's racially hierarchal society. Interpreting the violence as both institutional and performative, Smith follows a grassroots movement and social protest theater troupe in their campaigns against racial violence. As Smith reveals, economies of black pain and suffering form the backdrop for the staged, scripted, and choreographed afro-paradise that dazzles visitors. The work of grassroots organizers exposes this relationship, exploding illusions and asking unwelcome questions about the impact of state violence performed against the still-marginalized mass of Afro-Brazilians.

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