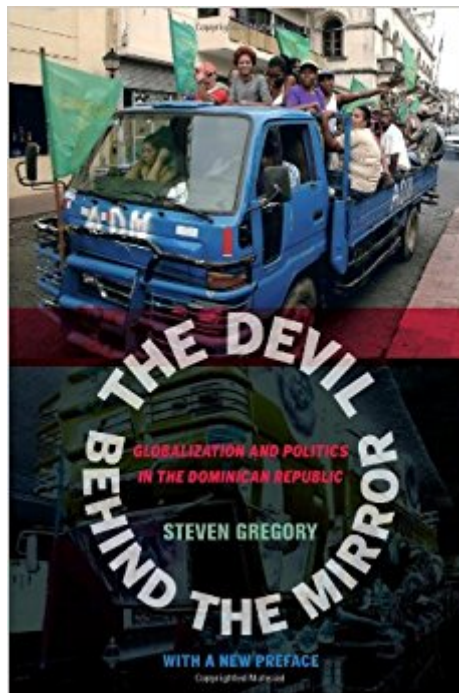




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The Devil Behind The Mirror: Globalization And Politics In The Dominican Republic



Synopsis

In *The Devil behind the Mirror*, Steven Gregory provides a compelling and intimate account of the impact that transnational processes associated with globalization are having on the lives and livelihoods of people in the Dominican Republic. Grounded in ethnographic fieldwork conducted in the adjacent towns of Boca Chica and Andrács, Gregory's study deftly demonstrates how transnational flows of capital, culture, and people are mediated by contextually specific power relations, politics, and history. He explores such topics as the informal economy, the making of a telenova, sex tourism, and racism and discrimination against Haitians, who occupy the lowest rung on the Dominican economic ladder. Innovative, beautifully written, and now updated with a new preface, *The Devil behind the Mirror* masterfully situates the analysis of global economic change in everyday lives.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I just spent a short time with a Church mission in a small Dominican community. So much of this study rings true, from injuries in motor scooter/car accidents, hair braiding, punitive power blackouts, and the constant concern about getting enough money to live on. On the plus side he also show the engaging personalities of so many people and their ability to live in a civil fashion despite the poverty. My one criticism might be the abstract terminology that the author uses to link the events and people he observes to world systems theory. It does not quite work and gets in the way of an

otherwise excellent characterization of Dominican society. Given the paucity of authentic studies of Dominican society, it is fortunate that we have this work to enhance our understanding.

I have been living in Santo Domingo for a little over a year and found this book extremely helpful in providing insights into the lives of the working poor in the Dominican Republic. It goes a long way in dispelling myths and stereotypes that are so easily fabricated by ignorance, prejudice and fear. Everyone knows that the Haitians occupy a narrowly defined place in Dominican society and Steven Gregory does a good job explaining in cultural and historical terms why this is so. Also particularly interesting was the discussion about Dominican women's place in society and the extremely complex and shifting nature of their struggle for survival and identity. I agree with another reviewer here that the author relies too heavily on esoteric academic language. In his efforts to place the Dominican experience in a global framework, his analyses tend to resemble an anthropological PhD. dissertation instead of a book aimed at a wider audience. Not being an anthropologist nor being very familiar with the language of "Globalization Theory", I found myself having to reread whole paragraphs two and three times to understand what he was saying. Despite this challenge, I highly recommend the book for those interested in the subject who have the wherewithal to wade through some difficult passages.

Gregory did a fine job demonstrating how globalization influences the daily lives of Dominicans. He seemed to critique neo-liberalism by highlighting displaced citizens and how they must cope. But while I am no apologist for capitalism, one thing crossed my mind...this could be helping the Dominicans it displaced. For instance, he mentions how the local sugar plant closed and now there are hundreds of underemployed workers. He said they are now forced to open shops like salons and bars in order to survive. While this may have less state-guaranteed benefits and pay, it creates an entrepreneur spirit which ultimately creates more small business and wealth. So in that regard, it seemed un-balanced. Also I couldn't help but wonder how in-depth the ethnography was. It read to me shallow...like skimming the surface of situations. His friend towards the end of the book who died of AIDS. Gregory was never able to explore the circumstances that created this event. Did the informal economy of prostitution, drugs, etc...place this person into an environment which forced many Dominicans to face: The sacrificing of personal safety for the benefit or desires of tourists? To me, something truly revealing could have been uncovered by a deeper penetration of this man's life. Overall, I gained insights from the book. It was interesting and educational to see how the dynamics of globalization are affecting the lives of Dominicans (and everyone throughout the world).

There is little doubt that any person who reads Gregory's book will gain valuable insights. My only critic is that it seems to scratch the surface of how globalization really affects the lives of the people it taunts to benefit.

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