



Unbecoming Blackness: The Diaspora Cultures of Afro-Cuban America (American Literatures Initiative)

Antonio Lopez

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2014 Runner-Up, MLA Prize in United States Latina and Latino and Chicana and Chicano Literary and Cultural Studies In Unbecoming Blackness, Antonio Lopez uncovers an important, otherwise unrecognized century-long archive of literature and performance that reveals Cuban America as a space of overlapping Cuban and African diasporic experiences. Lopez shows how Afro-Cuban writers and performers in the U.S. align Cuban black and mulatto identities, often subsumed in the mixed-race and postracial Cuban national imaginaries, with the material and symbolic blackness of African Americans and other Afro-Latinas/os. In the works of Alberto O'Farrill, Eusebia Cosme, Romulo Lachatanere, and others, Afro-Cubanness articulates the African diasporic experience in ways that deprive negro and mulato configurations of an exclusive link with Cuban nationalism. Instead, what is invoked is an 'unbecoming' relationship between Afro-Cubans in the U.S and their domestic black counterparts. The transformations in Cuban racial identity across the hemisphere, represented powerfully in the literary and performance cultures of Afro-Cubans in the U.S, provide the fullest account of a transnational Cuba, one in which the Cuban American emerges as Afro-Cuban-American, and the Latino as Afro-Latino.



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