

BOOK REVIEW

Indigeneity and Criminality in the Américas

Floralinda Boj Lopez

Multiple Injustices: Indigenous Women, Law, and Political Struggle in Latin America.
By R. Aída Hernández Castillo. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2016. Pp. 328.
\$55.00 (cloth).

Multiple Injustices: Indigenous Women, Law, and Political Struggle in Latin America is a substantial contribution on behalf of scholar R. Aída Hernández Castillo. With over twenty-five years of scholar activist experiences that have ranged from national convenings, international tribunals, work with NGOs, and university based research, Hernández Castillo delivers a thorough analysis of how Indigenous women in Latin America have used discourses on gender and feminism, law, and social movements in ways that make sense to their notions and visions of communal justice.

Hernández Castillo weaves theories such as Kimberlé Crenshaw's conceptualization of intersectionality with that of Indigenous scholars such as Aura Cumes, whose scholarship is mainly available in Spanish. Her ability to traverse the language barriers of the predominantly Spanish-speaking world of Latin America and the predominantly English-speaking world of the United States and Canada deepens the intellectual genealogies she is able to connect. While she covers a lot of ground in new and old theories of identity, social movements, feminism, and legality, she consistently returns to the ways in which indigenous women activate discourses and mechanisms to their own interests. Hernández Castillo demonstrates that the political genealogies of Indigenous women-led movements should be contextualized

in their own complex histories. The three fundamental interventions of her book are the following: 1) how indigenous women adapt discourses of gender-based rights to fit communal notions of justice and tradition, 2) how they contextualize and shift the meaning of legality, and 3) how the state has switched from incorporation through neoliberal multiculturalism to a system of criminalizing Indigenous and poor women.

The introduction of the book lays out a framework that builds on research conducted on social movements, Indigenous women, state violence, and juridical systems in the Américas by specifically looking at the cases of Mexico, Guatemala, and Colombia. Hernández Castillo's commitment to genuinely learning from Indigenous women is apparent in how she is able to contest academic theories about Indigenous movements, critiquing the generalization that these movements rely on oversimplified, essentialized, identity politics. Instead, she consistently reiterates that Indigenous women remake and shift state-based definitions or structures as they need to. In addition, she also notes that Indigenous women do not wholly accept Indigenous *usos y costumbres* (customary or Indigenous law) and, instead, hold traditional practices accountable for the everyday well-being of Indigenous women.

The chapter on methodology is instrumental to any scholar concerned with the intersection of social justice and research. Here, Hernández Castillo unpacks the scholarly tensions about scholar activism expressed by contemporaries like Charles Hale and Shannon Speed back to scholarly interventions made in the 1970s to demonstrate that these discussions are not completely new. She does, however, acknowledge that each iteration sharpens how we discuss the possibilities and limitations of working with Indigenous people as meaningful collaborators. Of particular interest to scholars concerned about social justice methods will be her appendices, which

include the “Official Expertise Anthropological Report” that was part of the international tribunal in defense of two Indigenous women who had been sexually assaulted in Mexico (chapter four). Another appendix also includes the demographics of the women in prison that she discusses in chapter five and some of their written work.

One of the more pressing contributions is how Hernández Castillo traces the move away from neoliberal multiculturalism—which has dominated academic discourse on indigenous movements in Latin America since the end of the twentieth century—to one that uses the penal systems to criminalize Indigenous and poor women. Drawing on current academic conversations around mass incarceration in the United States and how it functions as a tool for profit and repression, Hernández Castillo critically applies that analysis in the geopolitical locations of Latin America. The author discusses the ways movements and scholars have utilized Indigenous law as a site of contesting Western legal systems, as well as how they have moved to international forums when necessary.

She balances her analysis of these strategies with a final chapter on how Mexico has developed a penal system that uses violence and poverty to extend the exploitation of poor and Indigenous women. Through her exploration of what investors have termed “labor therapy”—or the use of cheap inmate labor whose earnings are used to offset the costs of their incarceration, provide money to their families, and accrue money to be granted when they are released—she is able to analyze how neoliberal multiculturalism has given way to criminalization and incarceration. In what is the most evocative chapter of the book, the author deftly analyzes the life histories collected from women prisoners to link racialized and gendered violence alongside economic exclusion

in the narco-state of Mexico. While the majority of this chapter focuses on the violence the prisoners face as Indigenous and poor women, she also includes that a group of women have also formed a publishing collective in which they write, design, and bind books about their stories. This balance is representative of the author's consistent reminder that while Indigenous women and poor women are constantly victimized, they are also not just victims.

If there is a weakness in the text, it is that it covers a tremendous amount of geographic, historic, and intellectual ground. The book's first three chapters each cover all three countries. And while the author draws linkages between these three countries, it can feel disjointed at times to move so quickly from one country to the next within a chapter. At times, even the subsections that focus on a particular national context also review multiple case studies, giving the effect that you are reading three different books all in the same text.

Overall, the book is an important contribution that will continue to help scholars bridge academic frameworks from Latin America with those in the United States in ways that still acknowledge the specificity of particular countries and more importantly the complexity with which Indigenous women organize and move through the systems meant to govern them. This text can be used in graduate and undergraduate courses focused on Latin America, criminal justice, social movements, or Indigenous peoples of the Americas.