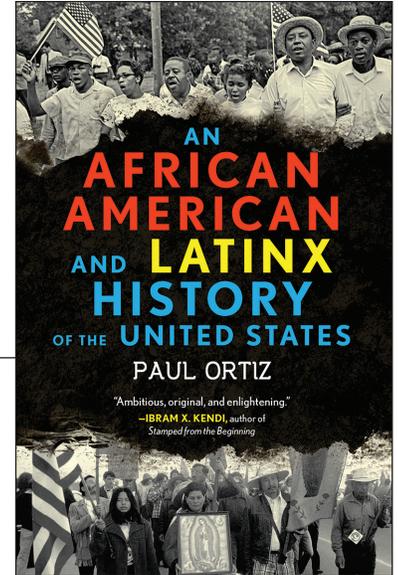


# An African American and Latinx History of the United States

by Paul Ortiz

Winner of the PEN Oakland/Josephine Miles Literary Award  
Beacon Press | Paperback | 978-0-8070-0593-4 | 296 pages | \$16.00

Also available in e-book format



“A challenging and necessary approach to understanding our history. A must-read for those who want a deeper perspective than is offered in the traditional history textbook.” —*Library Journal*

“An *African American and Latinx History of the United States* is a curriculum as much as it is an ongoing story of liberation.” —*Los Angeles Review of Books*

## • about the book •

Spanning more than two hundred years, *An African American and Latinx History of the United States* is a revolutionary, politically charged narrative history, arguing that the “Global South” was crucial to the development of America as we know it. Scholar and activist Paul Ortiz challenges the notion of westward progress as exalted by widely taught formulations like “manifest destiny” and “Jacksonian democracy,” and shows how placing African American, Latinx, and Indigenous voices unapologetically front and center transforms U.S. history into one of the working class organizing against imperialism.

Drawing on rich narratives and primary source documents, Ortiz links racial segregation in the Southwest and the rise and violent fall of a powerful tradition of Mexican labor organizing in the twentieth century, to May 1, 2006, known as International Workers’ Day, when migrant laborers—Chicana/os, Afrocubanos, and immigrants from every continent on earth—united in resistance on the first “Day Without Immigrants.” As African American civil rights activists fought Jim Crow laws and Mexican labor organizers warred against the suffocating grip of capitalism, Black and Spanish-language newspapers, abolitionists, and Latin American revolutionaries coalesced around movements built between people from the United States and people from Central America and the Caribbean. In stark contrast to the resurgence of “America First” rhetoric, Black and Latinx intellectuals and organizers today have historically urged the United States to build bridges of solidarity with the nations of the Americas.

Incisive and timely, this bottom-up history, told from the interconnected vantage points of Latinx and African Americans, reveals the radically different ways that people of the diaspora have addressed issues still plaguing the United States today, and it offers a way forward in the continued struggle for universal civil rights.

### — about the author

Paul Ortiz is an associate professor of history and the director of the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program at the University of Florida. He is the author of *Emancipation Betrayed: The Hidden History of Black Organizing and White Violence from Reconstruction to the Bloody Election of 1920* and coeditor of the oral history *Remembering Jim Crow: African Americans Tell About Life in the Segregated South*. He lives in Gainesville, Florida.

### — note to the teacher

At the beginning of *An African American and Latinx History of the United States*, Paul Ortiz states the driving goal for his book: “I wrote this book because as a scholar I wanted to ensure that no Latinx or Black children ever again have to be ashamed of who they are and of where they come from. Collectively speaking, African Americans and Latinx people have nothing to apologize for. Every democratic right we enjoy is an achievement that our ancestors fought, suffered, and died for.” While teaching African American and Latinx students, he came to realize how much of U.S. history has been revised or ignored in school curriculum. He believes that African American and Latinx history has been greatly neglected because it casts a negative light on some historical events and contradicts “the republic’s most sacred myths.” When writing his book, he attempted to show a different perspective on U.S. history—one not as convenient or pleasant as most traditional U.S. history narratives, but one no less worthy of representation.

In this book, Ortiz studies events that took place beginning in the 1770s through the present day. He examines the role that African American and Latinx citizens have had in shaping the United States, and he highlights the sacrifices they have made in order to earn their rights in a country which often viewed them with fear, suspicion, or outright hostility. He also looks at events around the world which influenced U.S. political strategies, race relations, and economic practices. He particularly focuses on the Central and South American countries that were directly affected by U.S. policies regarding slavery, industry, property, and voting rights. By describing these countries’ experiences working with the United States and each other, he demonstrates how nations can influence each other for better or worse.

Since this book includes excerpts from pro-slavery and pro-segregation documents and speeches, there are several instances of terms of derision in this book. In the Author’s Note of the book, Ortiz explains that he is using these terms in order to present an accurate picture of the viewpoints held towards people from the African American and Latinx communities, not because he supports their usage. There are also instances in the book where different groups use such terms to self-identify. When the students are introduced to the book, they should be warned that it includes politically charged language, as well as racial slurs. These are included in order to give readers a clearer picture of the sentiments held by people at various times in the United States.

Supporting the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in Reading Informational Texts, Writing, and Speaking and Listening for high school curricula, *An African American and Latinx History of the United States* is an appropriate choice for grades 11–12 in Language Arts, American History, Cultural Studies, and Social Studies classes. At the college level, this book is well suited for use in American or Central American History courses, as well as Sociology courses on race in America, Latino/a Studies courses, Chicano/a Studies courses, African American Studies courses, and Labor Studies courses.

In the following “Examining Content using Common Core State Standards” section of this guide, activities and discussion prompts that encourage critical analysis of *An African American and Latinx History of the United States* have been provided for use in the classroom. They are organized based on the Common Core standards they support. These classroom activities and discussion prompts are designed to encourage students’ thoughtful analysis and interaction with the text.

For a complete listing of Common Core State Standards, go to:  
[www.corestandards.org/read-the-standards](http://www.corestandards.org/read-the-standards).

### — pre-reading activities

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.7**

**Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.**

Ortiz makes the case in his book that the United States has built its own mythology about its origins, and has intentionally altered perceptions of its early history in order to bolster patriotism and relieve guilt over its actions towards minority groups such as African Americans and Native Americans. As an introduction to the topic of altered history, watch the video by *The Atlantic*, “Myths from American History Class,” found at: [tiny.cc/HistoryMyth](http://tiny.cc/HistoryMyth). According to the video, what are some events that have been altered in order to present a more positive view of the United States? What are the downsides to editing history? Why are many Americans now revising their perspective on U.S. history and adopting a more internationally minded viewpoint of historical events?

In the book’s introduction, Ortiz argues that the United States is suffering from “historical amnesia.” He makes the case that the United States has intentionally avoided examining historical events that do not match the country’s dominant cultural narrative. As an introduction to the book, relate any information you have learned, either from your school textbook or other sources, about the following events in U.S. history: Manifest Destiny, Westward Expansion, the Annexation of Florida and California, the Haitian Revolution, the Civil War Reconstruction, and the Cuban Revolution.

Organize the information you know about these events. What was their impact on U.S. history? What role did people from the African American and Latinx communities play in these events? Why are some people’s roles in history awarded more importance in classrooms, museums, and textbooks than others? What role does the dominant culture play in influencing how historical events are presented to future generations?

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.4**

**Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term or terms over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines *faction* in Federalist No. 10).**

Throughout his book, Ortiz uses the phrases *emancipatory internationalism*, *racial capitalism*, and *American exceptionalism* to describe different mindsets that have guided policies on race, government, and human rights throughout history. What might Ortiz mean by *emancipatory internationalism*, *racial capitalism*, and *American exceptionalism*? Examine these phrases in context, and explain the impact each one has on Ortiz's claims.

- examining content using common core state standards
- ELA standards: reading informational text: grades 11 & 12
- key ideas and details

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.1**

**Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.**

In Chapter Two, Ortiz describes John Quincy Adams' perspective on the Latin American wars for independence:

"John Quincy Adams's rationale for waging war to protect the United States from the dangers of 'South American Liberty' reveals much about race and the political ideology of the United States. Adams's denigration of the Mexican War of Independence demonstrates that a central motivation for the US imperial expansion into the West - the concept of manifest destiny - was that it would preempt the threat of revolt in the United States and keep the institution of slavery intact. At the same time, Adams disparaged Mexicans as inferior - he could not accept that they were capable of waging a genuine war of independence... Adams racialized people in Mexico and Latin America in ways that would haunt their descendants in the United States well into the twenty-first century. Jose Morelos's vision of a 'beautiful bond' between Mexico and the United States was doomed by the imperatives of racial capitalism."

What explanation does Ortiz give for John Quincy Adams' refusal to support the Latin American struggle for independence? Based on the tone used in his writing, what is Ortiz's perspective on this decision? Why does Ortiz believe that Adams's actions had lasting effects on the U.S. approach to Mexicans and Latin Americans? How does this exemplify the idea of racial capitalism?

## classroom activity

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.2**

**Determine two or more central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to provide a complex analysis; provide an objective summary of the text.**

In Chapter Five, Ortiz describes how the United States has offered to help other nations establish democratic governments in the past, but then in return exploited those countries for its own benefit. What impact did receiving aid from the United States have on countries like Cuba, Haiti, and Mexico? What motivated the United States to assist these countries? What was the dominant perspective towards the people of the Global South in the United States? Explain the perspective of those receiving aid. What were their expectations, and how did those expectations shape or alter their response to the United States?

## classroom activity

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.3**

**Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.**

To gain a better understanding of the differences between the Haitian, Mexican, and American Revolutions, create timelines of the events leading up to and during the Haitian and Mexican Revolutions. Use timelines to discuss the similarities and differences between the Haitian Revolution and other movements for independence, such as the American Revolution and the Mexican War of Independence.

After the students have examined the different timelines, discuss the role of class struggle in U.S. history by answering the following questions as a class:

1. What are some of the ways in which Americans have sought to control and take advantage of indigenous people?
2. What methods have been used to justify the oppression of people based on race and cultural background? Are any of these techniques still used today? In what ways are American exceptionalism and racial capitalism reflected in these practices?
3. Did the British perspective of imperialism significantly influence early American politics? Why or why not?
4. What are the primary motivations behind imperialism and emancipatory internationalism? Are these two ideals locked in permanent opposition against each other, or can they be balanced?

## classroom activity

Chapters Four and Five address the Reconstruction after the Civil War, the Cuban Solidarity Movement, and the connections that helped unite Black abolitionists and Cuban revolutionaries. Even as the abolitionists were fighting for equal rights in the United States, they also expended considerable energy and resources in support of Cuba's independence. Despite their efforts, Cuba was unable to secure its freedom.

In Chapter Seven, Ortiz examines the motivations behind the Act of Chapultepec, which created at an Inter-American Conference of Foreign Ministers in order to limit persecution of minority groups and establish a multinational stance of zero tolerance towards discrimination. In this way, the act bolstered emancipatory internationalism while condemning some of the most harmful practices of imperialism.

In class, discuss the following questions: Based on the information provided in Chapter Four, Global Visions of Reconstruction, why did the movement to support Cuban independence ultimately fail? In what way did this reflect the U.S. response to the Mexican Revolution?

What were the primary goals of the Cuban Solidarity Movement and the Act of Chapultepec? What elements did both movements have in common? In what ways is the Act of Chapultepec an exemplar of the main ideas espoused by emancipatory internationalism? Compare the reactions to the Cuban Solidarity Movement and the Act of Chapultepec. What are the key similarities and differences? How did this act shape U.S. as well as international perception of minorities?

### — craft and structure

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.6**

**Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness or beauty of the text.**

Break the students into small groups. Have them read the following quote by Frederick Douglass in Chapter Two:

“You know as well as I do, that Faneuil Hall has resounded with echoing applause of a denunciation of the Mexican war, as a murderous war - as a war against the free states - as a war against freedom, against the Negro, and against the interests of workingmen of this country - and as a means of extending that great evil and damning curse, negro slavery. Why may not the oppressed say, when the oppressor is dead, either by disease or by the hand of the foeman on the battlefield, that there is one the less of his oppressors left on earth? For my part, I would not care if, to-morrow, I should hear of the death of every man engaged in that bloody war in Mexico, and that every man had met the fate he went there to perpetrate upon unoffending Mexicans.”

In a small group, discuss the following questions: Is Frederick Douglass primarily appealing to logos, ethos, or pathos in the above quote? What other rhetorical devices does he use in his argument? Examine the chapter and make a list of sociopolitical factors that influenced Douglass' stance regarding the Mexican war. How did his background and experiences contribute to his opinions about the war?

Next, have the students choose a political speech from the past five years about America's relationship with Mexico or America's involvement in Venezuela. After studying the speech, they should identify some of the current sociopolitical factors influencing the author's stance. Did the author support or warn against the U.S. involvement in international affairs? What devices did he or she use to convince the audience? How do you think the author's background and experiences contributed to his or her opinions?

Finally, they should compare the overall cultural environment in Chapter 2 with the current environment now. Is America more involved in Central and South American conflicts, or less? They should support their answers with information from Chapter 2, as well as other academic sources.

### —• classroom activity

Paul Ortiz's goal when writing *An African American and Latinx History of the United States* was to represent a neglected perspective on American history. He wished to inform his readers about events and societal factors that are often ignored by historians and textbooks. To what extent did Ortiz present a clear account of these neglected historical events in order to thoroughly explain the motivations driving these events? What are some of the ways in which Ortiz successfully presents a balanced account of U.S. history? What are some of the ways in which Ortiz fails to present a balanced account of U.S. history? In what way does Ortiz use the rhetoric of Douglass, Adams, and Garnet to further his own claims and rhetoric? How do these writers use rhetorical appeals to strengthen their respective positions? Based on the evidence that you've discussed, how supported is Ortiz's analysis of American history?

In class, have the students compare the events presented in the text with how history is portrayed in traditional U.S. history curriculum. Which historical events did Ortiz decide to emphasize in his book? Why did he choose to focus on these events, and how did they contribute to his argument? What events are given more attention in traditional history textbooks? Why does U.S. history curriculum choose to focus on these events over others?

### —• integration of knowledge and ideas

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.7**

**Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.**

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.8**

**Delineate and evaluate the reasoning in seminal U.S. texts, including the application of constitutional principles and use of legal reasoning (e.g., in U.S. Supreme Court majority opinions and dissents) and the premises, purposes, and arguments in works of public advocacy (e.g., *The Federalist*, presidential addresses).**

At the beginning of Chapter Six, Ortiz lists twelve notable class conflicts that took place in America between 1877 and 1919: The 1877 railway strike; the 1885 massacre at Rock Springs, Wyoming; the Haymarket Square riot in 1886; the Thibodaux massacre in 1887; the 1890 Apalachicola general strike; the Homestead lockout in 1892; the Pullman strike in 1894; the Colorado labor wars in 1903 and 1904; the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire; the 1914 Ludlow Massacre; the Everett Massacre of 1916; and the Elaine Massacre of 1919.

Working with a partner, choose one of these twelve conflicts and then find three sources of information about their chosen conflict. Identify different kinds of sources, such as news articles, personal accounts, biographies, research papers, and documentaries. Compare and contrast the accounts, and then answer the following questions: How do they differ? What elements are the same? What societal elements or points of view might have contributed to the authors emphasizing some aspects of the events while minimizing others?

After presenting their respective conflicts, discuss what motivations the conflicts had in common. Did any of them share the same kinds of inciting factors which in turn sparked off the later conflicts (worker strikes, decreased wages, dangerous working conditions, etc.)?

### — classroom activity

Throughout *An African American and Latinx History of the United States*, Ortiz highlights the role of various newspapers in influencing public opinion, spreading information, and advocating social involvement in pressing issues. In order to better understand the role of the press in promoting public advocacy through history, compare the following articles about the press' coverage of the Haitian Revolution, the Civil War, and the Civil Rights Movement:

“News From the Haitian Revolution,” *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, [tiny.cc/HaitianRev](https://tiny.cc/HaitianRev)

“How Newspapers Reported the Civil War,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, [tiny.cc/CivilWarReport](https://tiny.cc/CivilWarReport)

“A Grim Court Plucks Jim Crow’s Feathers,” *The Washington World*, [tiny.cc/CivilRightsNews](https://tiny.cc/CivilRightsNews)

Discuss the following questions: How did these different newspapers seek to influence their readers? What methods did they use to advocate a specific position or line of action? How did the press' methods and rhetoric change with the passage of time?

### — research to build and present knowledge

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1.B**

**Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience’s knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases.**

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.2.B**

**Develop the topic thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience’s knowledge of the topic.**

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.7**

**Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.**

In Chapter One, Ortiz writes about how the Founding Fathers removed some elements of British rule, such as their taxation of civilians without fair representation in Parliament, but decided to keep the establishment of slavery: “They drew on the ideas of the political theorist John Locke and other Enlightenment philosophers to construct rationales for racial slavery, the expropriation of Native lands, and control of the continent’s unruly masses, disdainfully referred to by elites as ‘the people out of doors.’”

Study the main ideas presented in John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* and extrapolate how they could have been used to justify slavery and racism in the United States. Discuss the main principles of the Enlightenment movement, and answer the following questions in the form of a journal prompt: What are the key ideas that the Founding Fathers took away from Enlightenment philosophers like John Locke? How did they use these ideas in order to rationalize their policies regarding Native Americans, African Americans, and Mexicans? What rebuttals does Ortiz offer to these rationalizations in his book?

### classroom activity

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.8**

**Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.**

Chapter Three follows the fight against slavery in the United States. Addressing the efforts of abolitionists and slaves alike, the historian C.L.R. James writes, "The agitation of the abolitionists, the sensational escapes by the Underground Railway, the ferment among the Negroes, all helped to focus public attention on slavery." Review effective research techniques such as the ability to conduct focused searches online and evaluate sources. Next, find two articles or speeches which were used to increase the public's attention on the issue of slavery.

Work in small groups to evaluate the sources for accuracy, detail, and relevance to the topic of slavery. Select a single article or speech to present to the class. Summarize the sources, identify key quotes, and explain ways in which the speech or article was used to gather more support for the emancipation movement.

### classroom activity

Chapter Eight addresses the many faces of inequality in the modern United States, such as unbalanced conviction rates and lack of funding for urban schools, where many of the students are from African American and Latinx communities. Select a news article written in the last month that includes an instance of inequality, discrimination, or prejudice. In a two- to three-page paper, summarize the news article, explain why it is an example of inequality in the United States, and compare it to the examples of prejudice and discrimination presented in Ortiz's book. Has the movement of emancipatory internationalism had an effect on modern attitudes towards minorities? In what ways do the attitudes of imperialism and nationalism influence behavior today? Comparing contemporary events to those described in the first seven chapters of Ortiz's book, what progress has been made in the United States towards supporting international cooperation and solidarity?

## resources

*Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Frederick Douglass*

([tiny.cc/Douglass](https://www.tiny.cc/Douglass)): A firsthand account of slavery in the South. Douglass' memoir provides an intimate look at slavery in the United States and demonstrates the various obstacles facing African Americans in their fight for equality.

"The Use of Dubious Science to Defend Racism is as Old as the Founding Fathers," Aaron Hanlan ([tiny.cc/Founding](https://www.tiny.cc/Founding)): Aaron Hanlan's article on scientific racism addresses the ties between the Founding Fathers, the Enlightenment, and racism.

"John Locke and the Myth of Race in America: Demythologizing the Paradoxes of the Enlightenment as Visited in the Present," Theresa Richardson ([tiny.cc/LockeMyth](https://www.tiny.cc/LockeMyth)): This article examines how John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* influenced American politics and race relations.

"Haitian Revolution," Crash Course ([tiny.cc/Haitian](https://www.tiny.cc/Haitian)): This video by Crash Course summarizes the main events of the Haitian Revolution and examines the economic and political factors which drove the revolution.

"The Changing Definition of African-American," Ira Berlin ([tiny.cc/ChangingDefinition](https://www.tiny.cc/ChangingDefinition)): This article for the *Smithsonian* describes the evolution of the African American identity throughout U.S. history, with particular focus on the shift in population statistics and its effect on the African American culture.

"The Brutal History of Anti-Latino Discrimination in America," Erin Blakemore ([tiny.cc/LatinoHistory](https://www.tiny.cc/LatinoHistory)): This article examines a series of discriminatory actions and policies towards Latino citizens in United States from the 1800s to 2016.

"The Mexican Revolution, 1910-1946," Jürgen Buchenau ([tiny.cc/MexicoRevolution](https://www.tiny.cc/MexicoRevolution)): This article for *Oxford University Press* offers an overview of the main events in the Mexican Revolution. It also describes the motivations of the primary individuals involved in the revolution.

## other works of interest

*The New Jim Crow*, Michelle Alexander

*Beyond Freedom: Disrupting the History of Emancipation*, David W. Blight and Jim Downs

*A Hidden History of the Cuban Revolution: How the Working Class Shaped the Guerrillas' Victory*, Stephen Cushion

*Florida's Negro War: Black Seminoles and the Second Seminole War 1835-1842*, Anthony E. Dixon

*Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, Laurent Dubois

*Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s Through the 1980s*, Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer

*The Mexican Wars for Independence: A History*, Timothy J. Henderson

*Selected Writings (Penguin Classics)*, Jose Marti and Esther Allen

*Villa and Zapata: A History of the Mexican Revolution*, Frank McLynn

*His Promised Land: The Autobiography of John P. Parker, Former Slave and Conductor on the Underground Railroad*, John P. Parker

*The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*, Isabel Wilkerson

## — about this guide's writers

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