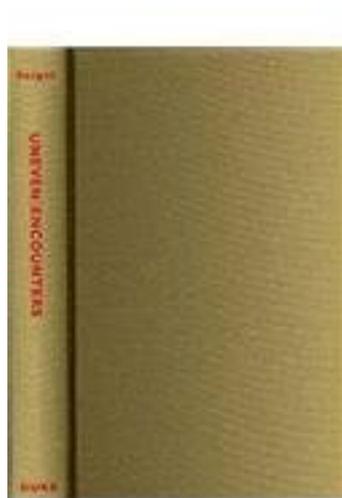


Uneven Encounters



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出版者:

出版时间:2009-3

装帧:

isbn:9780822344261

In "Uneven Encounters", Micol Seigel chronicles the exchange of popular culture between Brazil and the United States in the years between the World Wars, and she demonstrates how that exchange affected ideas of race and nation in both countries. From Americans interpreting advertisements for Brazilian coffee or dancing the Brazilian maxixe, to Rio musicians embracing the 'foreign' qualities of jazz, Seigel traces a lively, cultural back-and-forth. Along the way, she shows how race and nation are constructed together, by both non-elites and elites, and gleaned from global cultural and intellectual currents as well as local, regional, and national ones. Seigel explores the circulation of images of Brazilian coffee and of maxixe in the United States during the period just after the imperial expansions of the early twentieth century. Exoticist interpretations structured North Americans' paradoxical sense of self as productive 'consumer citizens'. Some people, however, could not simply assume the privileges of citizenship. In their struggles against racism, Afro-descended citizens living in the cities of Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo, New York, and Chicago encountered images

and notions of each other, and found them useful. Seigel introduces readers to cosmopolitan Afro-Brazilians and African Americans who rarely travelled far but who absorbed ideas from abroad nonetheless. African American vaudeville artists saw the utility of pretending to 'be' Brazilian to cross the colour line on stage. Putting on 'nation drag', they passed not from one race to another but out of familiar racial categories entirely. Afro-Brazilian journalists reported intensively on foreign, particularly North American, news and eventually entered into conversation with the U.S. black press in a collaborative but still conflictual dialogue. Seigel suggests that projects comparing U.S. and Brazilian racial identities as two distinct constructions are misconceived. Racial formations transcend national borders; attempts to understand them must do the same.

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