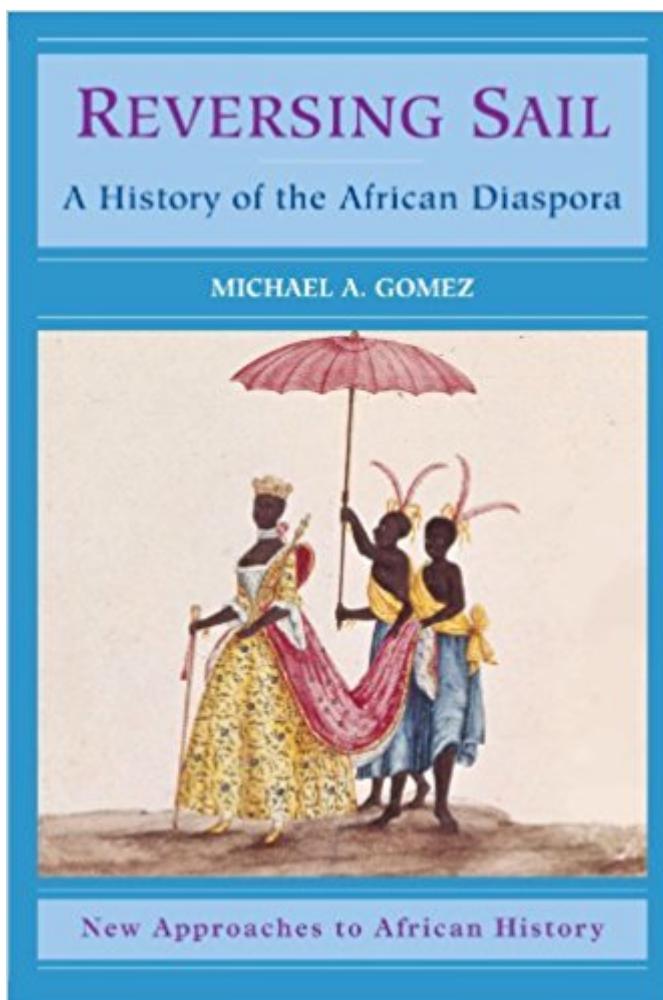


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Reversing Sail: A History Of The African Diaspora (New Approaches To African History)



Synopsis

The experiences of Africans in the Old World--the Mediterranean and Islamic worlds, is followed by their movement into the New, where their plight in lands claimed by Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, French and English colonial powers is analyzed from enslavement through the Cold War. Particular attention is paid to the everyday lives of the working classes and their cultural development. Their exploits, challenges, and struggles are covered over a broad time frame that links as well as differentiates past and present circumstances.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"An outstanding synthesis of the history of the African diaspora. Well conceived, argued, and written in an engaging style, Reversing Sail will be indispensable in courses on the peoples of Africa and its diaspora. Specialists, students, and the general reader will find this book intellectually stimulating and enlightening." - Colin Palmer, Dodge Professor of History, Princeton University "With commanding scholarship both broad and deep, and with a style that is at once engaging and impeccable in its judgment, Michael Gomez's Reversing Sail fulfills a long-standing need for a synoptic history of the African Diaspora. Synthesizing the best of classical and contemporary scholarship, Gomez provides a powerful interpretive framework that situates and links the African Diaspora at every step with the movement of world history. Reversing Sail is much more than a textbook, but it is also one that will challenge and inspire teachers and students by the new standard set by what is a landmark work." - Robert A. Hill, Professor of History and Editor-in-Chief, The

Marcus Garvey and UNIA Papers, UCLA"..."a tour de force of decades of scholarship on the African Diaspora... an accessible, though current and sophisticated text summarizing the historical concept of the African Diaspora...." - H-Atlantic , Jeffrey A. Fortin, History Department, University of New Hampshire"This volume is an excellent addition to the rapidly growing number of books on the African Diaspora and a fine introductory text that will be greatly appreciated by students new to the field." - Larry Hudson, University of Rochester"One of the text's greatest strengths is that it shows that the people affected by the African Diaspora were not passive participants. Rather they actively responded to their changing situation and worked hard to protect themselves, their families, and their friends in the new circumstances in which they found themselves. This becomes even more evident as Gomez explores the development of race within the second section of the work and how race redefined the place of Africans within the developing Atlantic world. As an undergraduate text, the work serves an important role in that it provides a general history while raising questions that a class could explore and debate." - Ty M. Reese, Department of History, University of North Dakota, H-NET

This book examines the global unfolding of the African Diaspora, the migrations and dispersals of people of African, from antiquity to the modern period. Their exploits, challenges, and struggles are discussed over a wide expanse of time in ways that link as well as differentiate past and present circumstances. The experiences of Africans in the Old World, in the Mediterranean and Islamic worlds, is followed by their movement into the New, where their plight in lands claimed by Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, French and English colonial powers is analyzed from enslavement through the Cold War. While appropriate mention is made of persons of renown, particular attention is paid to the everyday lives of working class people and their cultural efflorescence. The book also attempts to explain contemporary plights and struggles through the lens of history.

Excellent telling of a fascinating time in history.

Again Gomez has written a deep focus on African and African American culture. this book is on my get-to list as soon as possible.

I enjoyed this book since it offers an abundance of significant assets for a more indepth investigation of the African diaspora. I recommend it.

good book if you are looking for facts not interpretations

Professor Gomez has written a rather concise but scholarly general overview of the history of the African Diaspora. For three years I have been teaching a course in the Afr. and Afr. Amer. Studies department at the University of Memphis which is designed to introduce the student to the concept and early history of the Diaspora. I had also been assiduously searching for a quality, cost efficient text which could serve as a compliment to my notes. I think that I have found it in this work.

Excellent resource to teach high school and up the various locations African peoples have lived and continue to live today. Though languages vary and cultural habits, the basis for African heritage still remains well rooted in ancient African traditions.

This book has a statement in its epilogue that is among the best I've ever seen as a match between the subject matter and the purpose of the book itself - Michael A. Gomez writes of the growth of reconnection between Africa proper and those scattered around the world, stating that, 'Given the ongoing impoverishment of many in Africa and the Diaspora, such interrelationships require deeper and more practical meaning if they are to play a significant role in ending the despair. The incredible beauty and creativity of the African Diaspora, combined with its unbelievable suffering and disadvantage, are contradictions awaiting resolution.' Gomez is a professor of history at NYU, a university that offers degree programmes in the study of the African Diaspora. Gomez remarks on the value of the interactions with people at the university in his acknowledgements - it is in the storytelling and conversations that many subjects such as this one come to greater life and clarity. Gomez writes that the story of the African Diaspora is unlike any other in the history of the world, full of contradiction and ambiguity, but nonetheless sharing a pedigree as ancient as almost any other continuing society in the world. Gomez makes the distinction between the study of the African Diaspora and the study of African Americans in two ways: first, it looks to see the influence of and influences on African-descended persons in different ways in new non-African environments and cultures; and second, it makes comparisons and examines relationships between these communities in geographically separated or distinct ways. It is not tied to the American nation-state, or any other particular nation-state or continent, but looks at persons of African descent outside Africa on a global scale. There are shared features, however, that many of these communities share beyond their point of origin. Many of the communities find an experience of enslavement, a struggle to maintain traditional African culture, struggles against discrimination, and continuing identification

with Africa as common bonds. Gomez divides the book into two sections, the 'old world' and the 'new world'. Old world topics include the ancient cultures in and around Africa (Egypt, Nubia, Greece and Rome), biblical themes and influences (and the broader context of Judeo-Christian history in African Diaspora themes), and Islamic cultural influences. The role of Africans in each of these histories and traditions is varied and significant; some myths are laid to rest here (the Islamic cultures practiced slavery as did the Western cultures, and in some places continue to have race-relation issues that stem from economic and cultural disadvantages coming out of this period much as the Western world has had), and points of difficulty in understanding and researching are identified (the lack of primary sources, sustained communities preserving histories, etc. means that much has been lost). With regard to the new world, the history begins with the transatlantic slave trade, particularly the Middle Passage. Slavery was not a monolithic institution, and slavery was practiced differently in different parts of the new world. Thus, the response of the African descendants and the dominant culture vary from place to place; Gomez looks at slavery experience from colony to colony as well as from general regional perspectives. South America, Central America, the Caribbean, and North America all had different purposes and different treatment toward slaves. Again, Gomez lays certain myths to rest: 'Although there were 8 million white Southerners in 1860, only 384,884 were slaveholders. This would suggest that the vast majority of whites had no relationship to slavery, had no vested interest in it, but just the opposite was true.' The dominant culture needed the institution of slavery, even if it was only a minority of members of that culture who actually owned the slaves. Gomez also looks at the emancipation processes of the slaves beyond the North American perspective, showing the different ways in which the struggle for freedom and the achievement of the same manifested in different countries. For example, Haiti's Revolution in the late eighteenth century is shown to be both 'crowning achievement' and an ironic catalyst for worsening slavery conditions elsewhere. The aftermath continues to be felt to this day, as 'those who struggled so valiantly against tyranny have only met with a U.S.-led policy of ostracism and indifference every since.' Gomez also highlights the experience in Cuba, distinct from many other experiences in the Americas, as a place where the post-slavery situation did not automatically become a place of racial tension and prejudice. Gomez' final two chapters show the reconnection and movement of people back toward their history, culture and identity, while still remaining, as members of the Diaspora, outside of their ancestral homeland. Communities reconnected with Africa as well as connected for the first time with each other; people of African descent all over the world had the freedom and resources, however limited, to make their own connections on a global scale. This includes but is not limited to political, social, and artistic

connections - in areas such as sports and music, there is substantial success across such international boundaries. Gomez ends each chapter with a narrative bibliography for further readings and research. Gomez states specifically that his intention is not to be exhaustive or comprehensive, but rather to give an introduction into the various places, times, events and persons connected with the broad topic of the African Diaspora. In this regard, Gomez succeeds. The text is interesting and accessible, giving sufficient detail without becoming tedious but also not lacking information or leaving things unaccounted for, save when the primary source material simply is not available (as is the case frequently, and this is part of the issue that Gomez highlights throughout the text). The index is useful, and there are a few maps and pictures scattered throughout the book. I might wish for one bibliography listing in the back for ease of reference, and footnoting through the text for further identification of sources, but these are minor quibbles given the scope and purpose of the book.

Reversing sail: A history Of The African Diaspora, by Michael A. Gomez, knocks it out of the ball park; with this highly engaging, well researched, & wonderfully written book. He leaves no thread untied, in bringing together the history of the African Diaspora; and his scholarship is beyond reproach. He unites the African Diaspora in a insightful, "Holistic" way, better than any book on the subject I have read so far, I defiantly, highly, recommened this wonderful book !

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