

*Roots of Resistance: A Story of Gender, Race, and Labor on the North Coast of Honduras.*

By SUYAPA G. PORTILLO VILLEDA. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2021.

Photographs. Plates. Maps. Table. Appendixes. Notes. Glossary. Bibliography.

Index. xxiv, 385 pp. Cloth, \$55.00.

Throughout the mid-twentieth century, the overweening role of US banana companies in Central America provoked the region's major reformist and revolutionary currents. The United Fruit Company (UFCO) and its chief competitor, Standard Fruit, brazenly flaunted national sovereignty, monopolized land, and brutally repressed workers to achieve their ends. Over the companies' scandalous historical record, 1954 stands out as particularly significant: in that year UFCO, through the US Central Intelligence Agency, engineered the removal of Guatemalan president Jacobo Arbenz, who had redistributed the company's unused land to workers and peasants. Next door, in Honduras, UFCO also found itself on the defensive, albeit with a remarkably different outcome. There, workers initiated a strike that quickly spread throughout the company's estates and then to dockworkers, Standard Fruit farms, and, via sympathy strikes, workplaces throughout the country. As a result, UFCO was forced for the first time to negotiate a union contract with its workers.

Historians have widely identified the ramifications of the Guatemalan coup in the country's ensuing decades of military dictatorships and scorched-earth counterinsurgency. In contrast, while the Honduran general strike has received considerable scholarly treatment (more so in Spanish than in English), until now it has been viewed as an aberration, disconnected from the country's prior and subsequent history. Suyapa G. Portillo Villeda's vivid retelling instead situates the strike in deep traditions of labor organizing, inspired in part by Arbenz's confrontation with UFCO across the border. Her account reveals how the nationwide strike exploded on the scene and how its legacy continues today, informing mass resistance since the 2009 coup d'état.

By 1954, frustration with UFCO's wages and dangerous working conditions had reached a boiling point along the country's northern coast. A single supervisor's belligerent ultimatum—that protesting workers accept UFCO's contract system or be fired—triggered the first strike vote on April 27. Within a week, as news of the vote traveled along company railroads and phone lines, 25,000 workers had put down their tools. The scale of the strike caught the company and the Honduran and US governments by surprise, but it was far from spontaneous. For years, the leftist Partido Democrático Revolucionario Hondureño (PDRH) had conducted perilous clandestine organizing in workers' barracks and on the margins of farms. Organizers engaged in grassroots education along Marxist principles, including demands for racial and gender equality, and cultivated ties with allies among teachers and other professionals. PDRH members dominated the first strike committee but were arrested as suspected communists and replaced by a second committee under Liberal Party leadership. Liberals acceded to Cold War pressures of the time, adopting anticommunist rhetoric while diluting the committee's antiracist and antisexist platform. After 69 days, strikers secured a contract for improved wages and conditions, though they did not secure the

enforcement mechanisms for equity demanded by the first committee. Their victory left in place stark divisions between men and women and between mestizos and Blacks that crosscut worker communities. Drawing extensively from workers' narratives and Honduran archival sources, Portillo Villeda brilliantly documents the organizing, Cold War persecutions, contradictions, and compromises omitted from extant accounts of the strike, both official and scholarly.

In 1954, UFCO directly employed few women except as telephone operators and nurses, yet its operations were deeply dependent on women's labor, mostly as cooks (*patronas*) in the private *comedores* that fed most workers. These cooks, as well as women who labored in brothels near banana farms, have been mostly silenced in previous scholarship. Portillo Villeda's intersectional retelling reveals patronas as key players in their own right, often sympathetic to strikers but also colluding with their partners (usually farm supervisors), who coerced workers to accept meal contracts with their wives. Workers so resented the practice that they listed its abolition among their 30 strike demands (Los 30 Puntos). Oppression in her nuanced account is highly ambivalent and contradictory, especially in matters of race. A tense dialectic of solidarity and antagonism animated male workers, drawn together by shared misery and a common code of masculinity yet divided by pernicious anti-Black attitudes and outbreaks of alcohol-fueled violence. That the strike took place at all, much less partially succeeded, in the face of deeply ingrained racism—to which most mestizo workers subscribed—is itself miraculous, a testament to the work of PDRH activists.

Portillo Villeda's history of the 1954 strike joins a vast literature on the role and legacy of the fruit companies that once regarded the countries of Central America as their fiefdoms. It is eminently readable, empathetic, and meticulously researched but also entirely original in its attention to the gendered and racialized dimensions of the strike. In sum, her book should become essential reading about the labor movement in Central America, proof that it is possible to say something truly new about an already well-trodden episode in the region's arduous history.

MARK MOBERG, University of South Alabama

DOI 10.1215/00182168-10025931

*Robachicos: Historia del secuestro infantil en México (1900–1960).*

By SUSANA SOSENSKI. Mexico City: Grano de Sal, 2021. Photographs. Figures.

Table. Notes. Bibliography. 277 pp. Paper, Mex\$330.00.

This heartfelt and disturbing book investigates the heinous crime of child abduction from 1900 through 1960 in Mexico City. Drawing on compelling analyses of newspapers, legislation, films, comic books, and juvenile court records in Mexico City, Susana Sosenski reveals the emotional and economic connotations of abducted children as cultural symbols and how the fears about child abduction shaped the parental experience and public perception of kidnapping. Child kidnappers, or *robachicos*, engaged in different (if occasionally overlapping) types of abduction or kidnapping (for example, ransom