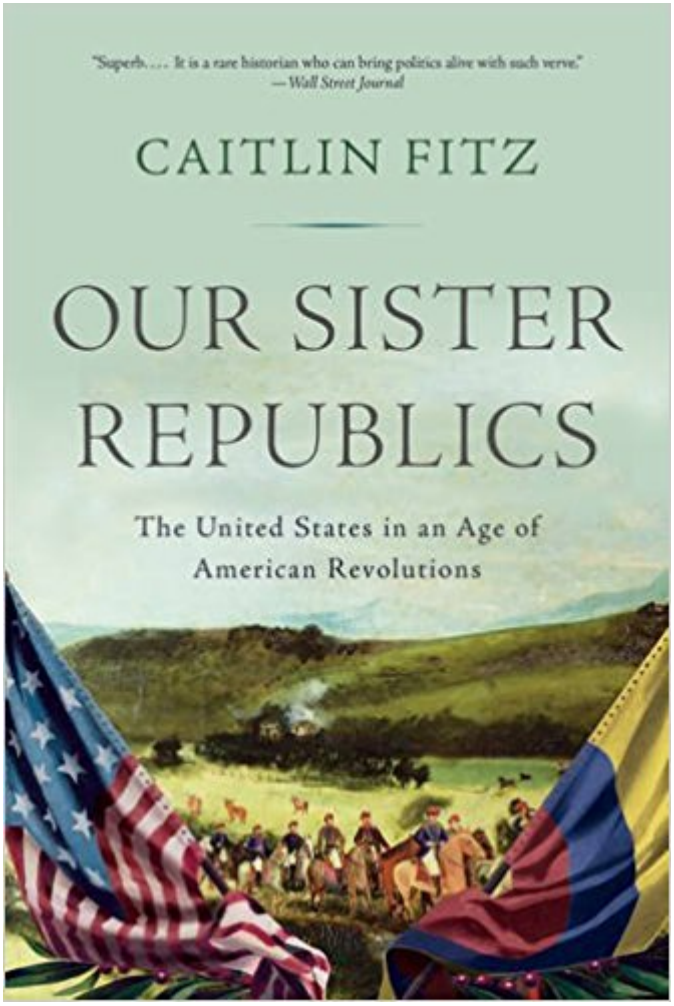
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Our Sister Republics: The United States In An Age Of American Revolutions



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Synopsis

A major new interpretation recasts U.S. history between revolution and civil war, exposing a dramatic reversal in sympathy toward Latin American revolutions. In the early nineteenth century, the United States turned its idealistic gaze southward, imagining a legacy of revolution and republicanism it hoped would dominate the American hemisphere. From pulsing port cities to Midwestern farms and southern plantations, an adolescent nation hailed Latin AmericaÃ¢â ¬â„¢s independence movements as glorious tropical reprises of 1776. Even as Latin Americans were gradually ending slavery, U.S. observers remained energized by the belief that their founding ideals were triumphing over European tyranny among their Ã¢â ¬Å“sister republics.Ã¢â ¬Â• But as slavery became a violently divisive issue at home, goodwill toward antislavery revolutionaries waned. By the nationÃ¢â ¬â„¢s fiftieth anniversary, republican efforts abroad had become a scaffold upon which many in the United States erected an ideology of white U.S. exceptionalism that would haunt the geopolitical landscape for generations. Marshaling groundbreaking research in four languages, Caitlin Fitz defines this hugely significant, previously unacknowledged turning point in U.S. history. 8 pages of illustrations

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Customer Reviews

Ã¢â ¬Å“[Fitz] is a deft guide to this reinterpretation of early American history, a time when Ã¢â ¬Ëœearlier rhetoric of inalienable rights and self-evident truths was increasingly challenged by assertions of white superiority and U.S. exceptionalismÃ¢â ¬â„¢Ã¢â ¬Â¦ Fitz shows that history is

not always written by wars, treaties, and administrative actions; often, the people take the lead.Ã¢â ¬Â• - Kirkus ReviewsÃ¢â ¬Å“This study, based on strong academic foundations and written in captivating and elegant prose, is an impressive achievement that suggests intriguing origins of American exceptionalism.Ã¢â ¬Â• - Publishers WeeklyÃ¢â ¬Å“Caitlin FitzÃ¢â ¬â„¢s thrilling investigation is as notable for its readability as for the broad significance of its claims. Fitz introduces us to a United States where South American independence movements were embraced by a surprisingly wide range of U.S. residents, where hemispheric fellowship trumped racism, and both black and white children were named Bolivar. Much like the newspaper editors quoted within its pages, Our Sister Republics provides Ã¢â ¬Ëœan alternative picture of who we might have been, and just maybe, whom we might become.Ã¢â ¬â„¢Ã¢â ¬Â• - Amy Greenberg, author of A Wicked War: Polk, Clay, Lincoln, and the 1846 U.S. Invasion of MexicoÃ¢â ¬Å“During the latter half of the Age of Revolution (1775-1825) many South American peoples threw off their colonial ties to Spain and Portugal and declared their independence. Residents of the United States hailed the birth of these nations and named towns and sons after Simon Bolivar. In this original and stimulating book, Caitlin Fitz shows how these ovations turned sour for many slave-state citizens when the new republics south of the border abolished slaveryÃ¢â ¬â ¢one more example of the increasingly divisive politics of slavery in North America.Ã¢â ¬Â• - James M. McPherson, author of The War That Shaped a Nation: Why the Civil War Still MattersÃ¢â ¬Å“Caitlin FitzÃ¢â ¬â„¢s Our Sister RepublicsÃ Â is a tremendous accomplishment. FitzÃ¢â ¬â„¢s bold and convincing argument removes the early history of the United States from its provincial cloister, revealing the transnational origins of American Exceptionalism, the ways in which the United StatesÃ¢â ¬â„¢ sense of its republican uniqueness was formed, since its very inception, in engagement with Spanish and Portuguese America. A timely, compelling, and important book.Ã¢â ¬Â• - Greg Grandin, author of The Empire of NecessityÃ¢â ¬Å“Caitlin Fitz shows that U.S. observersÃ¢â ¬â„¢ attitude toward their fellow American Revolutionaries south of the Rio Grande was, above all, narcissistic. Her fast-paced narrative goes a long way toward explaining why, by the mid-20th century, the AmericasÃ¢â ¬â„¢ first independent republic became the worldÃ¢â ¬â„¢s leading suppressor of anti-colonial revolts.Ã¢â ¬Â• - Woody Holton, author of Unruly Americans and the Origins of the Constitution, Unruly Americans and the Origins of the ConstitutionÃ¢â ¬Å“Caitlin Fitz has written an eloquent account of how public opinion in the United States welcomed the revolutions of the South American republics, and how the United States became the first country in the world to recognize their independence. She vividly describes the individual experiences of men and women, whites and blacks, politicians, intellectuals, and just plain folk.Ã¢â ¬Â• - Daniel Walker Howe, Pulitzer

Prize-winning author of What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848Ã¢â ¬Å“In a rip-roaring narrative, Caitlin Fitz tells the stunning story of camaraderie across the Americas in an era of revolutions. She shows that people of the United States took a generous, if self-congratulatory, delight in republican brotherhood in what was truly a revolutionary age, as well as how this shared idealism was forgotten in subsequent decades of division and nationalism.Ã¢â ¬Â• - Kathleen DuVal, author of Independence Lost: Lives on the Edge of the American RevolutionÃ¢â ¬Å“Readable and groundbreaking, this work will be cited by scholars and enjoyed by general readers for years to come.Ã¢â ¬Â• - Michael Rodriguez, Library JournalÃ¢â ¬Å“Superb. . . . As instructive as Ms. FitzÃ¢â ¬â„¢s narrative is, it is also a pleasure to read. She has a gift for the sparkling phrase that both enchants and illuminates. . . . It is a rare historian who can bring politics alive with such verve.Ã¢â ¬Â• - Fergus M. Bordewich, Wall Street JournalÃ¢â ¬Å“FitzÃ¢â ¬â„¢s elegantly written history tells an early American story of reverse racial progress.Ã¢â ¬Â• - Robinson Meyer, Atlantic

Caitlin Fitz lives in Evanston, Illinois, where she is assistant professor of history at Northwestern University. She has received numerous honors, including a Fulbright Fellowship, an Andrew Mellon Fellowship, and Yale UniversityÃ¢â ¬â„¢s Egleston Historical Prize.

I thought her work was thoroughly enjoyable. What she said was easy to follow, embracive of many nuances in how Americans' perception of Latin America and themselves changed and well supported by evidence. would personally say that the changes in Americans language about themselves that she describes happened sooner than the time frame that her work spans, but this is still very worthwhile to read.

Excellent scholarship. Professor Fitz' reportage of early US and South American sentiment was a fascinating.

This book is a joy to read. The writing is crisp and engaging and the historical research and depth is compelling and impressive. I was shocked to learn about these global relationships between the U.S. and Latin America two hundred years ago and found the authorÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s investigation of this relationship to be nuanced and interesting. This is also a quick read because it so engrossing.

In Our Sister Republics, Caitlin Fitz examines shifting U.S. attitudes toward Latin America over the course of the first quarter of the nineteenth century. United States perspectives toward Latin America can be divided into roughly three phases, the latter two take up most of the book: pre-c.1810, c.1810-mid 1820s, and from the mid-1820s to beyond the scope of the book. The first phase is marked by the general lack of knowledge people in the United States had about Latin America. This was pre-Latin American Revolutions. What little people in the United States knew of Latin America largely conformed to the ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã ËœBlack Legend,ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ notions of Spanish Catholic cruelty in the Americas over many centuries. With the beginnings of independence movements throughout Spanish America in the 1810s, people in the United States tended to be more sympathetic. There were notable exceptions. The New England Federalists were more tepid in their support, if they were supportive at all, in part because they traded with Spain. In this second phase, dominated by sympathy and support for Latin American independence, agents from Latin America came to the United States to flatter their hosts and try to get arms and diplomatic recognition for emerging governments to the south. Advocates for Latin American independence invoked the universalist values enshrined in the Declaration of Independence, linking these new wars of independence as an expansion of U.S. political values. Indeed, many in the United States who supported these independence movements did so because it made the United States the successful model for representative democracy. Thomas Jefferson would later proclaim the United States as an ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã ËœEmpire for LibertyÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ as a contrast to the expanding British Empire. The most important Latin American figure featured in this book in terms of legacy is Simon Bolivar. BolivarÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s significance lies with the conflicting views of the latter two phases of the United StatesÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ views of Latin America. Bolivar ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Ëœthe LiberatorÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ appealed to people, especially those living on the frontier, as a symbol independence from European monarchical oppression. Bolivar the abolitionist appealed to abolitionists in the United States. The issue of slavery is one of the most prominent in the text. Early on, people in the United States did not view Latin American Independence from the perspective of slavery. The one key exception to this was Haiti. Fitz depicts abolitionism during the 1810s and 1820s as more of a spectrum with Haiti on the radical abolitionist end and the United States on the other. Spanish America, she asserts was viewed as being in the middle. This moderate abolitionism was made all the more tolerable because it was part of a larger story: people in the United States saw as the triumph of the principles of 1776. Simon Bolivar himself had to rely on support from Haiti at one point. When newspapers in the United States reported on this, they emphasized it as a necessary part of the greater anti-colonial struggle.As the issue of slavery became more divisive,

attitudes in the United States moved away from earlier idealism and more toward caution. The most significant feature of this third phase, one in which people in the United States were less enthusiastic about Latin America, was slavery. Simon Bolivar was an abolitionist but even pro-slavery people in the United States admired him and sometimes named their children after him because they understood his views on slavery as peripheral to his fight for Latin American Independence. This changed over the course of the 1820s. This was the decade of the Missouri Compromise, the Monroe Doctrine, skepticism toward John Quincy AdamsÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ increasingly nationalistic politics, and race becoming a dominant political and diplomatic issue. By 1830, Bolivar died shortly after watching his political experiment of Gran Colombia fall apart. Unlike the many founders of the United States, Simon Bolivar favored centralized government rather than federalism.Throughout the text, Caitlin Fitz puts forth a strong case for ideological shifts in the United States with regard to universalism or skepticism toward government overreach particularly with regard to race as central to rapid rise and rapid decline in support of Latin American independence. FitzÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s project revolves around race. However, one is inclined to wonder whether religious differences played a more significant role than is depicted. Fitz alludes to Spanish Catholicism but this is not a factor explored in depth in any part of the text. The general impression of U.S. views of Latin America from the period c.1800-c.1825 is that religious differences were limited. Fitz mentions religion briefly in her analysis of the Panama Congress of 1826. This was devised as the first ever congress of American nations. When the Adams Administration was preparing to send a delegation, there was fierce opposition. Among the reasons for opponents to criticize the mission, Fitz mentions the Second Great Awakening and renewed evangelism. In this case, religion was invoked to discredit what opponents saw as an overly optimistic scheme. For example, Missouri senator Thomas Hart Benton considered the Panama mission to be a ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Ëœtouchy-feely Love-FeastÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ of the Methodist variety.Just as U.S. views on wars of independence in the hemisphere shifted over time, so they did geographically. The Haitian Revolution is the classic example which Fitz examines at some length. The racial perspective, which she identifies in U.S. attitudes toward Latin America from the 1820s, was already present in how people in the U.S. viewed Haiti. She notes that proximity and fear were key variables when it came to race and rebellion. Caitlin Fitz also notes how attitudes in the United States shifted with regard to different Latin American wars of independence. For example, Mexican independence interested people in the United States, particularly those who were settling on the frontier, because of the possibility of expansion. For the United States, MexicoÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s value was not necessarily in being a ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Ëœsister republicÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ like

BolivarÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s Gran Colombia. Fitz noted the large number of toasts to Latin American independence as well as the lack of attention given to Mexico. She notes that only four percent of toasts mentioned Mexico specifically.The title of the book, as well as one of the reasons many in the United States did not initially toast Mexico reveal another aspect of the book: types of government. Bolivar was committed to republican forms of government as was the United States. Mexico was a monarchy when it declared independence in 1821. Brazil was also a monarchy. The distinction between republic and monarchy was also invoked in the context of abolition by journalist Benjamin Lundy ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“having warned that the United States was the only American republic in which slavery was expanding rather than contracting, Lundy concluded that his country was embarrassingly similar to the slaveholding monarchy of Brazil. The United States and ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“Imperial Brazil,ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• he charged, were twin-monsters in slavery and crime.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•

A wonderful reminder that the United States once looked at our southern neighbors and felt brotherhood instead of the need to build walls. In these trying international times, it’s heartening to look back and reaffirm the fact that our nation was founded upon cosmopolitan principles, not isolationist ones. It’s ever important (perhaps even necessary) to look at ourselves in the mirror and remember who we were... and who we might still be.

A new angle on the development of political and race relations in the Americas. Today you can access information from surveys and social media about how regular people view Race and political events. That insight is usually missing from historical analysis, leaving readers with limited perspectives. This book provides great firsthand research on how regular people viewed race and Revolution across South American political history. The book is well written and informative.

We are told that this book began as a thesis paper. It shows and should have remained at the university. I was looking for real information about the relations between a nascent U.S. and South America and what do I get, an enumeration of the number of kids born in the U.S. their parent’s named Bolivar. This must be the weakest book of history that I have ever read, and I am now 61 years old.

This book is a true disappointment. I tried to find a thesis statement somewhere---what is this about? It just ran on and on about unknown Latin American people and there was no point. But got

a good deal when I took it to Half Price Books. Skip it, there is nothing here.

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