

Cuban Privilege: The Making of Immigrant Inequality in America

Friday, May 13, 2022 | 12:00PM - 1:30PM Pacific Time

Will be held via Zoom (This Event May Be Recorded)



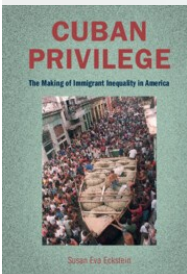
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Susan Eckstein is a Professor in the Pardee School of Global Studies and the Sociology Department at Boston University. She has written numerous books and articles on Mexican urban poor, political-economic developments in Cuba, Cuban immigrants, immigration policy, impacts of Latin American revolutions, and has edited books on Latin American social movements and social rights, and on immigrant impacts in their homelands.



Discussant: [César Ayala](#)

César Ayala is a Professor of Sociology at UC Los Angeles. His major interests are in Comparative Historical Sociology, Economy and Society, Sociology of Latin America and the Caribbean. He is currently working on two projects. The first is a book, jointly with Prof. Laird Bergad of CUNY, entitled, "Colonialism, Free Trade, and Agrarian Social Structure in Puerto Rico: 1898-1940." and the working title of the second project is: "The Bordering of America: Mexicans, Filipinos, and Puerto Ricans in the U.S. Political Economy after the Wars of 1848 and 1898."



On May 1, 2006 approximately three-fourths of a million unauthorized immigrants across America courageously absented themselves from their jobs to participate in "The Day without Immigrants," to demonstrate how important they were to the economy. They hoped thereby to gain legal rights to live and work in the U.S. Cubans did not participate in the job walk-out. Why? They will be shown to have enjoyed unique immigration entitlements, even when arriving without authorization. My talk, based on my recently published book *Cuban Privilege*, describes the array of unique entitlements initially granted Cubans for foreign policy gain: to delegitimize Cuba's Communist revolution and to demonstrate Cubans' preference for capitalism and democracy amidst the Cold War. However, in a "path dependent" manner Washington granted Cubans additional entitlements over the years, including in the post-Cold War, to address problems earlier entitlements generated or left unresolved and new problems that arose, and to respond to pressure from Cuban immigrant beneficiaries of earlier entitlements who sought the continued privileging of "their people." Domestic politics replaced foreign policy as the driver of Cuban privileging. Presidents found retracting entitlements too politically costly. President Obama finally withdrew some of the entitlements as he left office, after which President Trump aggressively turned on Cubans in outsourcing and offshoring immigration control and subjecting Cubans for the first time to detention and deportation. Yet, with the help of earlier Cuban immigrants, under the Biden administration Cubans continue to immigrate without authorization and secure rights to work and citizenship denied other unauthorized immigrants. I conclude by highlighting how Washington's immigration policy can be improved and made more equitable for all immigrants.

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