



# **Modern Blackness: Nationalism, Globalization, and the Politics of Culture in Jamaica (Latin America Otherwise)**

*Deborah A. Thomas*

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*Modern Blackness* is a rich ethnographic exploration of Jamaican identity in the late twentieth century and early twenty-first. Analyzing nationalism, popular culture, and political economy in relation to one another, Deborah A. Thomas illuminates an ongoing struggle in Jamaica between the values associated with the postcolonial state and those generated in and through popular culture. Following independence in 1962, cultural and political policies in Jamaica were geared toward the development of a multiracial creole nationalism reflected in the country's motto: "Out of many, one people." As Thomas shows, by the late 1990s, creole nationalism was superseded by "modern blackness"—an urban blackness rooted in youth culture and influenced by African American popular culture. Expressions of blackness that had been marginalized in national cultural policy became paramount in contemporary understandings of what it was to be Jamaican.

Thomas combines historical research with fieldwork she conducted in Jamaica between 1993 and 2003. Drawing on her research in a rural hillside community just outside Kingston, she looks at how Jamaicans interpreted and reproduced or transformed on the local level nationalist policies and popular ideologies about progress. With detailed descriptions of daily life in Jamaica set against a backdrop of postcolonial nation-building and neoliberal globalization, *Modern Blackness* is an important examination of the competing identities that mobilize Jamaicans locally and represent them internationally.

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