

Abstract

Rebecca J. Scott, “Constraints on Coercion: Labor and Citizenship in Postemancipation Cuba and Louisiana.”

This essay draws on evidence from Cuba and Louisiana during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to address the question: What features of post-slavery society could operate as constraints on coercion? It examines two interlinked elements of activist thinking in the post-slavery period: the defense of “public rights” and the attack on “caste legislation.” By examining the mobilization of the *Plessy* challenge in Louisiana, and the struggle for equal political representation in Cuba, it argues that formal rights of this kind were of direct relevance to plantation laborers, as well as to the educated activists with whom these campaigns are usually associated.

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