New Perspectives on Afro-Latin American Politics

Ollie Johnson, African American Studies, Chair and Associate Professor

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This presentation highlights new scholarship on Afro-Latin American Politics. The recent passing of Fidel Castro and expected retirement of his brother Raul Castro have raised expectations that a new political opening may soon emerge in Cuba. The recent political coup in Brazil and the conviction of popular former president Luiz Ignacio Lula da Silva on corruption charges have created a much more pessimistic feeling regarding Brazilian politics. I will explore the prospects for increased Black activism in Cuba, Brazil, and throughout the region. Recent research suggests that there is an Afro-Cuban racial identity and consciousness that could be mobilized politically if the system allowed it. In Brazil, Black political activists and politicians have been central to the critique of the myth of racial democracy and the emergence of affirmative action and other policies of social inclusion. What do recent political developments in Latin American tell us about contemporary politics in Afro-Latin America?

Ollie A. Johnson III is Chair and Associate Professor in the Department of African American Studies at Wayne State University. Professor Johnson is currently preparing an edited volume for publication: The Routledge Handbook of Afro-Latin American Politics. Professor Johnson received his Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of California at Berkeley. His current research focuses on African American, Afro-Brazilian, and Afro-Latin American Politics. He is co-editor of two books, Race, Politics, and Education in Brazil: Affirmative Action in Higher Education (2015) and Black Political Organizations in the Post-Civil Rights Era (2002). He also authored Brazilian Party Politics and the Coup of 1964 (2001).

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