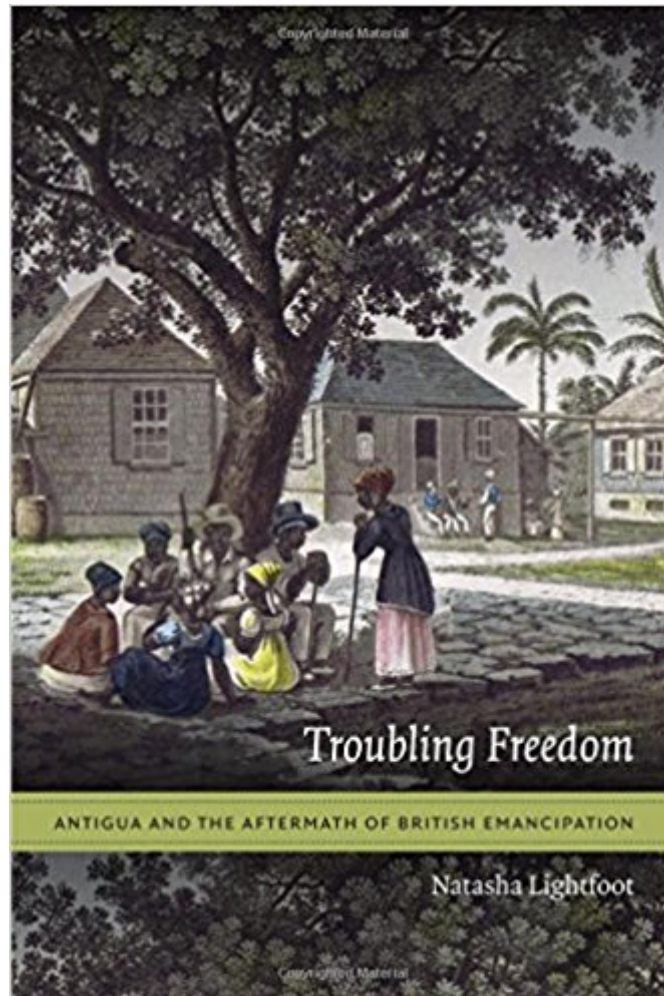


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Troubling Freedom: Antigua And The Aftermath Of British Emancipation



Synopsis

In 1834 Antigua became the only British colony in the Caribbean to move directly from slavery to full emancipation. Immediate freedom, however, did not live up to its promise, as it did not guarantee any level of stability or autonomy, and the implementation of new forms of coercion and control made it, in many ways, indistinguishable from slavery. In *Troubling Freedom* Natasha Lightfoot tells the story of how Antigua's newly freed black working people struggled to realize freedom in their everyday lives, prior to and in the decades following emancipation. She presents freedpeople's efforts to form an efficient workforce, acquire property, secure housing, worship, and build independent communities in response to elite prescriptions for acceptable behavior and oppression. Despite its continued efforts, Antigua's black population failed to convince whites that its members were worthy of full economic and political inclusion. By highlighting the diverse ways freedpeople defined and created freedom through quotidian acts of survival and occasional uprisings, Lightfoot complicates conceptions of freedom and the general narrative that landlessness was the primary constraint for newly emancipated slaves in the Caribbean. ã

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Customer Reviews

"In this carefully crafted, researched, and argued book of social history, Natasha Lightfoot probes the multilayered processes and problems of freedom in Antigua mainly through the voices, motivations, and experiences of the colony's former slaves who struggled against persistent influences of slavery, colonialism, and capitalism, to give their own meanings to real freedom. *Troubling Freedom* makes a strong contribution to continuing debates about the political/ideological

consciousness and agency of former slaves in the Americas in their demands and strivings for full realization of what they thought freedom should be." (David Barry Gaspar, author of *Bondmen and Rebels: A Study of Master-Slave Relations in Antigua*) "By tracing the development of Antigua in the post-emancipation period, Lightfoot has produced a work that will interest scholars who study conceptions of freedom, working-class solidarity, labor, Antigua, and the wider Caribbean. Recommended." (J. Rankin Choice 2016-09-01) "Lightfoot's *Troubling Freedom* sheds light on how freedpeople in Antigua negotiated the terms of their labor and the conditions of their freedom in Antigua....The book also illustrates that space and spatial relations were at the heart of Antiguan struggle for freedom after emancipation: between Antigua and Barbuda, the city and the country, the free villages and estates." (Kaneesha Cherelle Parsard *American Quarterly* 2016-12-19) "Instead of a narrative of valiant and unified subaltern struggle, a moral tale of progress and expanding unproblematic liberation, Lightfoot offers a more complex and ambivalent history of freedom, which contains not only hope and solidarity, but also internecine conflicts and violence. For this very reason, this is an important and insightful history that deserves to be read." (Henrique Espada *Lima Canadian Journal of History* 2017-08-01)

Natasha Lightfoot is Associate Professor of History at Columbia University.

Lightfoot's analysis of Antigua's history of slave emancipation joins a wide body of work examining African-descended people's efforts to make their visions of freedom real. Across the Americas, these freedom struggles were met by systematic efforts to deny freedpeople opportunities to control their own destinies and partake in the varied joys of free life. Antigua's black working men and women continued to fight for the right to property, housing, and to live as they saw fit, even resorting to strikes and uprisings to achieve those results. *Troubling Freedom* is an important contribution to our understandings of what freedom meant to ex-slaves throughout the Americas.

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