

A History of Barbados: From Amerindian Settlement to Nation-State. By HILARY BECKLES. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990. Photographs. Maps. Charts. Tables. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xvi, 224 pp. Cloth, \$37.50. Paper, \$16.95.

The first written history of Barbados, by Richard Ligon in 1657, was completed only 30 years after the English settled the island. Several islandwide overviews have been written since. Yet despite these early surveys and the great volume of current historical writing, which includes Barbados' pivotal role in what has come to be known as the south Atlantic system, Hilary Beckles' book is the first comprehensive history of the island ever written by a professional historian.

Beckles, a reader in history at the University of the West Indies in Barbados, sees his book's overarching theme as the "persistent struggle for social equality" among those inhabiting Barbados during its two centuries of slavery and beyond. More generally, he has attempted to address "the collective historical experience of all the island's inhabitants" in such a way that it will appeal to specialists (the references are minimal but very useful) and at the same time be accessible to teachers, students, and the general public (pp. xiv–xv). He has succeeded admirably in producing a clear, competent, and comprehensive social history of Barbados, incorporating much information into a relatively short book while avoiding facile oversimplification.

Beckles is best known for his work on slavery and the very early period of white indenture in Barbados. And though these topics are covered—as one would expect—very well, the book is strongest in dealing with the twentieth century. The emergence of black labor organizations, the social and political aspirations of a black and brown middle class, the economic self-interest of a local white elite, the constraints imposed by the British Colonial Office, and the pan-Caribbean perspective all represented interests that occasionally collided on the way to political independence in 1966. In the quarter-century since, most of these enduring rivalries have continued to animate Barbados' economy and society. Yet the island state has realized a remarkably high living standard while avoiding, through accommodation and compromise, internal political ruptures. Beckles' fine book provides a perceptive and exceptionally evenhanded portrayal of these accomplishments.

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The Hour of the Poor, the Hour of Women: Salvadoran Women Speak. By RENNY GOLDEN. New York: Crossroad, 1991. Photographs. Map. Notes. Glossary. Index. 207 pp. Cloth. \$19.95.

Renny Golden's book, like the earlier works of Elisabeth Burgos on Guatemala's Rigoberta Menchu and Medea Benjamin on Honduras' Elvia Alvarado, has the purpose of rescuing the voices of those traditionally silenced by history. Focusing her attention on the women of the war zones of El Salvador, Golden places them