



Island People: The Caribbean and the World

Joshua Jelly-Schapiro

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A masterwork of travel literature: voyaging from Cuba to Jamaica, Puerto Rico to Trinidad, Haiti to Barbados, and islands in between, the author limns each culture, society, and politics, at the same time illuminating the islands' common heritage of the Caribbean's imagined exotic allure.

From the moment Columbus gazed out from the *Santa María*'s deck in 1492 at what he mistook for an island off Asia, the Caribbean has been subjected to fantasies projected from without by the West, and viewed as a place to be consumed. It stood at the center of the transatlantic slave trade for more than three hundred years. Its societies were shaped by mass migrations and forced labor from the sixteenth century onward, imposed by European or later, by American imperial masters. Scattered across a vast arc of islands and in some instances separated by the languages and cultures of their colonizers, the more than forty million Caribbean people today are countering their imperial history by shaping cultural conversation the world over: through literature, music, art, and religion in an era when cultures everywhere are contending with "rootlessness."

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