



Join us **Thursday, November 18** for our Atlantic
History Talk with
Pablo Miguel Sierra Silva.

RSVP

Thursday, November 18, 2021
12:30 - 2:00 pm

Performing Refugees: Asylum, Blackness, and Piracy in Santo Domingo/Saint-Domingue, 1675-1700.

The May 1683 raid on the port of Veracruz forever altered the course of Black history in Mexico, Saint-Domingue, and Santo Domingo. In the months that followed, no less than 1,400 people of African descent were taken from Veracruz by a buccaneer fleet and violently dispersed throughout the Atlantic seaboard. Yet, the experiences of those free and enslaved captives have been largely forgotten in favor of narratives on the next pirate attack and subsequent acts of retaliation. This paper asks us to center the documented (and perhaps, the undocumented) experiences of captives-turned-refugees on the rugged borderlands of Hispaniola instead. In particular, I focus on the legal strategies and cultural scripts that African-descended people performed when presented before Spanish authorities in Santo Domingo. How did afrodescendiente refugees frame their lifestories and to what end? If permanence in, or departure from, Santo Domingo depended on a persuasive narrative, what rhetorical strategies do we detect in these depositions? Finally, how do refugee thoughts, actions, and motivations alter our perception of Mexico, the Caribbean, and African diaspora?



A proud graduate of UCLA, **Pablo Miguel Sierra Silva** is Associate Professor of History and Director of Undergraduate Studies at the University of Rochester. He specializes in the history of the African diaspora to Latin America and the Caribbean. His first book, *Urban Slavery in Colonial Mexico* (Cambridge University Press, 2018) is a history of enslaved Africans, Asians, and their families in the city of Puebla during the long seventeenth century. His current research project, *In the Wake of the Raid: Piracy, Blackness and the 1683 Attack on Veracruz*, examines Black social networks in Mexico's main port prior to, during, and after Lorencillo's raid. By focusing on the movements and motivations of the kidnapped afrodescendiente population, the project entwines and complicates the Black history of colonial Mexico, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and South Carolina.

The Atlantic History Group generates innovative scholarship on the relations linking Africa, Europe and the Americas by investigating the expansion of markets during the slave trade; the production of literary texts and forms of historical memory; the politics of religious dissent and conversion; the growth of colonial science and cartography; Native American ethnogenesis; the rise of abolitionist and Pan-African ideologies; and the dynamics of race, gender and creolization throughout the Atlantic world.

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