

**Alberto Peña Rodríguez.**

***News on the American Dream.***

**Translated by Serena J. Rivera with Glória de Sá.**

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Alberto Peña Rodríguez's study on the Portuguese American press is an important contribution to the growing field of Portuguese American studies, particularly for those who pursue a nuanced historical understanding of the Portuguese American community.

The detail given on the Portuguese American press by Peña Rodríguez sometimes comes with surprising findings, such as the first Portuguese American newspaper appearing in Erie, Pennsylvania. The Portuguese American press studied is that produced by immigrants originating mainly from the Azores and mainland Portugal, although there is both a brief look at the *Jornal Português* in California, whose longest editor was of Brazilian origins, and comments on how certain Portuguese American newspapers in New England have begun to include other Portuguese language communities. There is also a brief look, in Chapter 3, at the Portuguese American newspapers published in Hawaii.

Previous studies on the Portuguese American press examined specific areas. Peña Rodríguez's study provides a breadth of scope that is at once a detailed survey of the Portuguese American press landscape since 1877, and a longitudinal study of important Portuguese American newspapers, and the important figures involved, in the East and West Coasts of the United States. The painstaking archival research that the author performed to produce this study comes through in every chapter. There is also an evident amount of detective work involved in this study, as can be seen in the appendices and the bibliography, the latter organized by topic, which Peña Rodríguez generously shares so as to facilitate the access to information for anyone who wants to follow up or build upon the findings of his study. The most valuable information contained in these appendices is where to access the newspaper sources Peña Rodríguez consulted. The information contained in the endnotes and the beautiful illustrations that accompany the text in the chapters are also worthy of praise. In the endnotes, we can also see the

careful work that has gone into translating this study, and the care that Tagus Press has placed in the publication.

Although there is a degree of repetition of certain ideas and conclusions from the introduction on, the intention is perhaps to facilitate the reader's dipping into individual chapters rather than the whole book. The central arguments of the study center around the idea of how the Portuguese American press was an outlet that allowed individuals to pursue their American Dream, showing the philanthropical aspect behind the publication of newspapers and the people who brought them about. Peña Rodríguez shows how the press promoted the development of a Portuguese American community through, to take an example among the many given, asking readers to support Portuguese American businesses. The study also shows how Portuguese American newspapers provided training grounds for future generations of journalists and of Portuguese American newspapers. The detailed examples provided demonstrate how Portuguese American newspapers acted as support networks that navigated the different needs of the newly-arrived immigrants as well as the long-time settled immigrants and their descendants. For example, the importance of education imparted by the Portuguese American press is shown not just in how they taught the readers about the American experience, but also about pride of origins. The study does not cover, however, some of the reactions of the Portuguese American community to how they were viewed, such as the reaction to the publication of Taft's study on child mortality in the New England mills in the late 1920s, or the Big Dan case in the 1980s.

To briefly summarise Peña Rodríguez's study, it is composed of five chapters, an introduction, a conclusion, three appendices and a bibliography organised into six areas or topics. The first chapter sets the scene for understanding how the ethnic press operates in the United States before specifically examining the Portuguese American press. Care is taken to give details of the Portuguese American communities, noting the historical factors that affected these newspaper publications. Details are also given on how rivalries between notable members of the community, some of which politically motivated, were aired in the newspapers. The second chapter looks in more detail at the content within the Portuguese American newspapers published, noting instances where newspapers reported, and formed opinions for the readership, on local and international current affairs that affected the Portuguese American community. By focusing on case studies of Portuguese American editors, this chapter

examines the struggles faced by the editors and publishers in reaching readers and being economically viable; in their pursuit of a public form of expression for the Portuguese American community; in the editors' individual pursuit of community leadership; and, finally, in reporting the truth even in the face of pressure and censorship from the Estado Novo. Chapter three provides a historical study of the first years of the Portuguese American press, until 1929, examining not only the different newspapers that emerged, but also sketching an idea of the contents covered, and how the political landscape at home and in Portugal was reflected in this content, even in the public debate that was reflected in their pages. Chapter four carries on the themes in the previous chapter, this time examining the period from 1930 to 2015 at the same time as it examines how the Portuguese American press expands to different states, following the migration patterns of the community. Chapter five is a case study chapter which examines the history and importance of four Portuguese American newspapers: the *Diário de Notícias* in New Bedford, Massachusetts, which was the basis of Rui Antunes Correia's MA thesis; the *Jornal Português* in Oakland and then San Pablo, California; the *Luso Americano* in New Jersey; and, finally, *The Portuguese Times* in New Bedford and its television channel. The conclusion of this study returns to the idea of how the Portuguese American press acted as a conduit for information about Portugal and the US as well as created a space for the community to be, to feel itself as a Portuguese American community, even as this community has integrated within the wider ethnic mosaic in the US.

The final section in Chapter 5 is worth noting. This section examines how the Carnation Revolution was reported on by *The Portuguese Times*, and includes how the readers used *The Portuguese Times* to air their views and reactions to events in Portugal, and how, later, the newspaper and the community then mobilized US political figures in support of the newly-formed Portuguese democratic government. In so doing, this section provides a different image of the Portuguese American community from its portrayal as conservative and pro-fascist in the Lisbon press.

The study is a very good resource for scholars interested in the ethnic press, for those interested in seeing what the historical debates and preoccupations of the Portuguese American community were, and even for those of us who want a fuller picture of the Portuguese American community from its origins to the present day. Peña Rodríguez's study shows that the Portuguese American community was actively participating in public debates, commenting on current

affairs, and visible and vocal from the outset. The study also shows that the Portuguese American press, like the community, has adjusted and adapted to internal and external factors to provide a service, and be of service, to the community it writes for, and about.

CARMEN RAMOS VILLAR is Senior Lecturer in Hispanic Studies at the University of Sheffield (UK).