

Guantánamo

A Working Class History between Empire and Revolution

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Base workers on the US naval base in Guantánamo Bay (GTMO) were key historical actors who lived on the front lines of US imperialism and the Cold War. My research integrates diplomatic and social history to provide a textured, “bottom-up” analysis of US international relations. Disputes over hiring practices, wages, and labor law often encapsulated the contradictions of US foreign policy and military occupation. Moreover, base workers set limits to US military control, forcing GTMO to acknowledge local cultural norms and legal frameworks. After the fallout of the Cuban revolution, many Cuban workers had to choose between “Cuba” and “the base,” and the accountability and daily exchange with Cuba ceased. The history of the base workers in Guantánamo Bay encapsulates older, neocolonial models of US military power and foreshadows a new relationship between the US military, labor, and empire.

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