Postcolonial histories have long emphasized the darker side of narratives of historical progress, especially their role in underwriting global and racial hierarchies. Concepts like primitiveness, backwardness, and underdevelopment not only racialized and gendered peoples and regions but also ranked them on a seemingly naturalized timeline – their “present” is our “past” – and reframed the politics of capitalist expansion and colonization as an orderly, natural process of evolution toward modernity. *Our Time Is Now* reveals that modernity particularly appealed to those excluded from power, precisely because of its aspirational and future orientation. In the process, marginalized peoples creatively imagined diverse political futures that redefined the racialized and temporal terms of modernity. Employing a critical reading of a wide variety of previously untapped sources, Julie Gibbings demonstrates how the struggle between indigenous people and settlers to manage contested ideas of time and history as well as practices of modern politics, economics, and social norms were central to the rise of coffee capitalism in Guatemala and to twentieth-century populist dictatorship and revolution.

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Our Time Is Now

Race and Modernity in Postcolonial Guatemala

JULIE GIBBINGS

University of Edinburgh
To the Guatemalans who have consistently imagined that a different, more inclusive world is possible
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