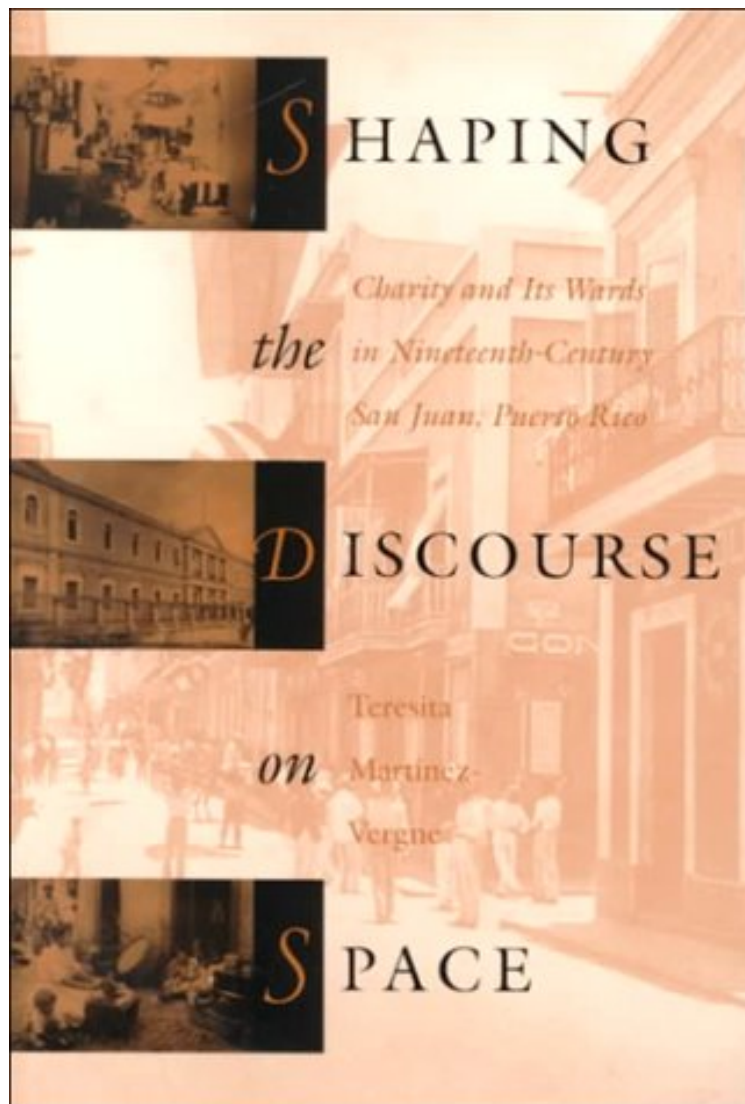


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Shaping the Discourse on Space: Charity and Its Wards in Nineteenth-Century San Juan, Puerto Rico

Teresita Martnez-Vergne

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Teresita Martnez-Vergne : Shaping the Discourse on Space: Charity and Its Wards in Nineteenth-Century San Juan, Puerto Rico before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Shaping the Discourse on Space: Charity and Its Wards in Nineteenth-Century San Juan, Puerto Rico:

As an inchoate middle class emerged in Puerto Rico in the early nineteenth century, its members sought to control not only public space, but also the people, activities, and even attitudes that filled it. Their instruments were the San Juan town council and the Casa de Beneficencia, a state-run charitable establishment charged with responsibility for the poor. In this book, Teresita Martnez-Vergne explores how municipal officials and the Casa de Beneficencia shaped the discourse on public and private space and thereby marginalized the worthy poor and vagrants, "liberated" Africans, indigent and unruly women, and destitute children. Drawing on extensive and innovative archival research, she shows that the men who comprised the San Juan ayuntamiento and the board of charity regulated the public discourse on topics such as education, religious orthodoxy, hygiene, and family life, thereby establishing norms for "correct" social behavior and chastising the "deviant" lifestyles of the working poor. This research clarifies the ways in which San Juan's middle class defined itself in the midst of rapid social and economic change. It also offers new insights into notions of citizenship and the process of nation-building in the Caribbean.

About the Author Teresita Martnez-Vergne taught at several universities and worked to increase access to higher education for at-risk youth. She died in 2013.