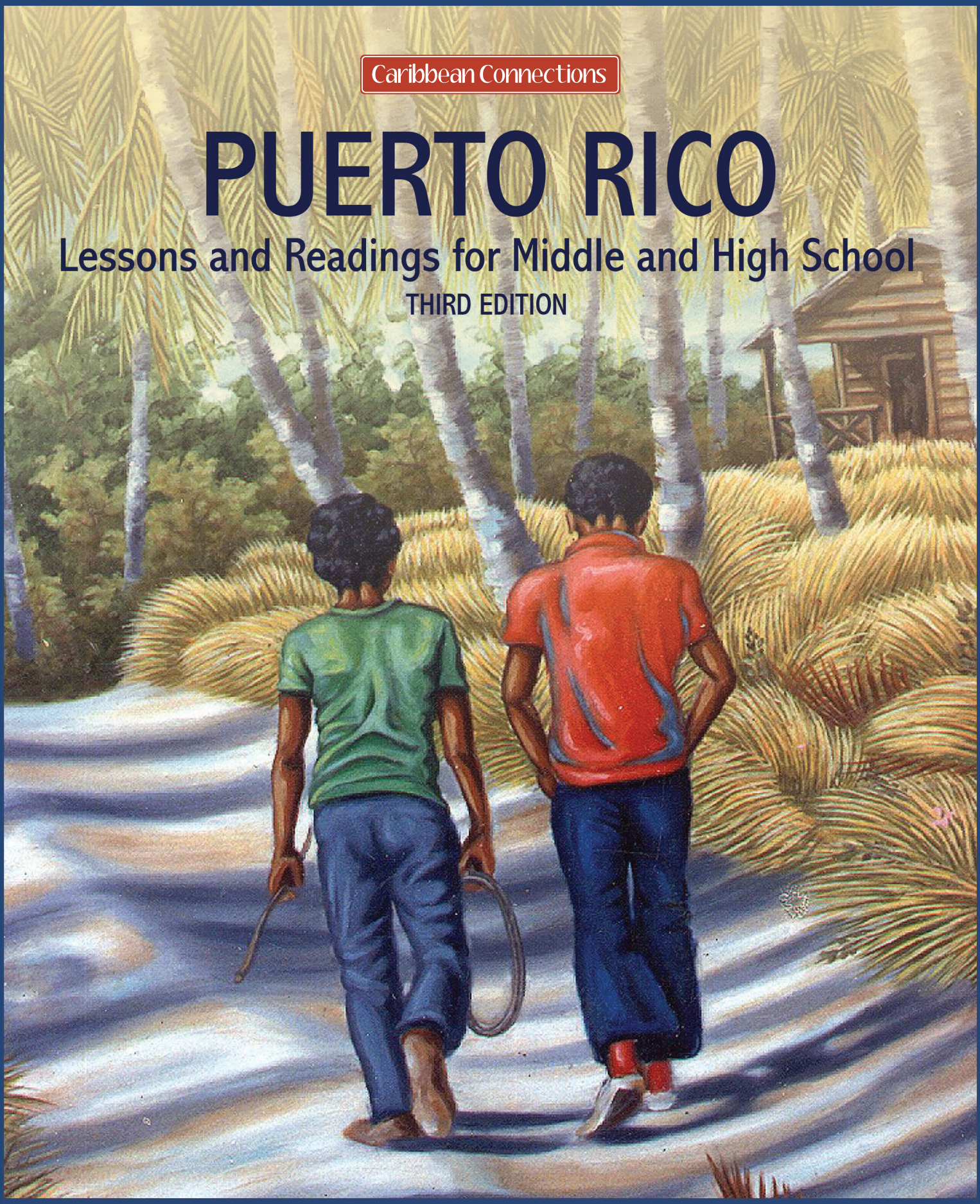
Caribbean Connections

PUERTO RICO

Lessons and Readings for Middle and High School

THIRD EDITION



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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Caribbean Connections: Puerto Rico/edited by Naomi Ayala, Rashida Welbeck, and Lynora Williams

ISBN: 978-1-878554-07-9
Library of Congress Control Number: 2017960452

Printed and bound in the United States of America

Editor Marilisa Jiménez García
Book Designer Mykella Palmer-McCalla

Cover art by Samuel Lind. See bio on page 180.

Caribbean Connections: Puerto Rico

Edited by Marilisa Jiménez García

Teaching for Change
Washington, D.C.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

2006

Generous contributions of time and creativity from a host of educators, writers, artists, researchers and activists have brought forth this edition of *Caribbean Connections: Puerto Rico* 15 years after its initial publication. In particular, Teaching for Change would like to thank the more than 30 authors, artists, and filmmakers who graciously permitted their work to be included in this guide. In addition, this edition could not have been reissued without the diligent efforts of Bev-Freda Jackson, who served as permissions editor and photo researcher, and Kathleen Suarez Reyes and Luis Valentine, educators who reviewed the material and provided helpful suggestions about its classroom use.

We gratefully acknowledge those who brought the first edition of *Caribbean Connections: Puerto Rico* to fruition, including Catherine Sunshine, editor; Ecumenical Program on Central America and the Caribbean (EPICA), copublisher, and the project's financial supporters: D.C. Community Humanities Council; CarEth Foundation, and the Anita L. Mishler Education Fund.

For help with images, we also appreciate contributions and assistance from Nicole Abbruzzese, Pablo Delano, Kathy Gannett, Samuel Lind, Alexis Ortiz, Sami Miranda, and Charlene Rivera.

2020

I wish to thank Teaching for Change for inviting me to collaborate in the updating of this edition, and for their support of social justice education on Puerto Rico and Latinx communities. Also, Rosalie Reyes, Fayette Colon, and Deborah Menkart for their feedback on materials and supporting teachers and students. I also wholeheartedly thank the team of contributors of new materials for this 2020 edition including Alicia Lopez, Ricardo Gabriel, William Garcia, and Sujei Lugo. Ricardo Gabriel, in particular, was very helpful in terms of feedback on earlier versions of this project and lessons. — Marilisa Jiménez García

FOREWORD

On the Importance of Puerto Rican Studies in Middle and High School, Post-Hurricane

Ricardo Gabriel

This new edition to *Caribbean Connections: Puerto Rico* could not come at a better or more urgent time. The year 2019 will mark the 50th anniversary of the student uprising which desegregated the City University of New York (CUNY)—the largest urban university system in the United States. In 1968, the student population at two of CUNY's flagship campuses, Brooklyn College and City College, were 96% and 91% white, respectively (Biondi 2012). The student movement demanded that, as a public institution, CUNY should be more reflective of the New York City public school population; the majority of which was comprised of Black and Puerto Rican students (*New York Times*, 1967). The movement, which included building takeovers and militant student strikes, was led by a coalition of Black, Puerto Rican, and radical white student organizations. These students, with strong community support, forced the CUNY administration to implement an "open admissions" policy that guaranteed a seat for every New York City high school graduate. The movement also led to the creation of Black and Puerto Rican studies departments and programs at CUNY and other universities across the Northeast.

Puerto Rican studies was created as an interdisciplinary field dedicated to the study and critical analysis of the Puerto Rican experience in the United States and in the Puerto Rican archipelago. Students and faculty aimed to develop a more emancipatory curriculum that would expose and counter the racist ideas about Puerto Ricans that were dominant at the time, in both academic and mainstream discourses. Puerto Rican studies emerged as a corrective to racist historiographies and narratives that are used to justify U.S. colonialism and which depict Puerto Ricans as passive, culturally deficient, and incapable of governing themselves.

They also sought to develop pedagogies that would lead students on a path towards self-knowledge and critical consciousness and inspire them to work towards social justice. For example, in a working paper titled, "New Knowledge, New Practice: Puerto Rican Studies," Frank Bonilla and Emilio González acknowledge that "Puerto Rican Studies programs were born out of conflict" and that they continued to be "centers of energy, ferment, and transformation," where Puerto Rican students, faculty, and administrators worked together to stabilize these programs while continuing "to play key roles in the development of other struggles in the community" (1973:228). Bonilla, González, and other faculty appreciated students "as engines of energy and insight" and valued collective decision-making and "the engagement of community people in the planning and development of programs" (ibid.)

In this way, the original impetus and vision for Puerto Rican studies extended well beyond the university. The goal was to use the resources of the university to improve the political, economic, and socio-cultural condition of Puerto Ricans in the Diaspora and in the Caribbean. Puerto Rican studies was founded on the principle of self-determination and is inherently anti-colonial. The movement for Puerto Rican studies, therefore, was both a pedagogical and a political project; one that is still very relevant today.

This updated edition is timely and important for another, more obvious reason. Puerto Rico is in the midst of a major economic crisis and is still

recovering from the disastrous effects of Hurricane Maria, which hit Puerto Rico on September 20, 2017. Consequently, Puerto Rico is experiencing a mass exodus unlike anything we have seen since the post-World War II "Great Migration" of the 1940s and 1950s. By the one year anniversary of the hurricane, approximately 160,000 people left Puerto Rico for the U.S., according to data from the Center for Puerto Rican Studies (Hinojosa and Meléndez 2018). Many of the newly displaced are school-age children. The devastating category five hurricane only intensified an economic crisis and an increase in outmigration that had been underway for at least a decade (Krogstad 2016). In fact, this major recession hit Puerto Rico in 2006, the year in which the first edition of *Caribbean Connections: Puerto Rico* was released.

While an explanation of the economic crisis is beyond the scope of this essay, it is important to note that the crisis has been seized upon by "vulture" hedge funds and disaster capitalists in order to push through an extreme neoliberal austerity program that includes closing and privatizing hundreds of public schools, as well as plans to privatize the electric company, water systems, parks, and other public services. People are migrating in search of jobs, healthcare, and education. The thousands of deaths and the tens of thousands of people fleeing the island(s) in the wake of Hurricane Maria are not the result of a "natural disaster." They are the result of economic policies that have left Puerto Rican infrastructure and society extremely vulnerable to the effects of human-induced climate change.

It is the hope that this new guide will help educators and students make sense of the current situation and inspire action. The new "mini-lessons" included in this edition provide readings, instructions for in-class activities, and discussion questions that can be used in a wide variety of classroom settings and can even be adapted for high school and college classes.

A crucial part of making sense of the current situation is to realize that this is only the latest stage in the ongoing crisis that is U.S. colonialism. As with the earlier mass migration of the post-World War II era, this 21st-century migration is the result of an oppressive political and economic system that consistently puts the interests of U.S. and local economic elites over the needs of the Puerto Rican people. As award-winning journalist Naomi Klein illustrates in her book, *The Battle for Paradise: Puerto Rico Takes on the Disaster Capitalists*, colonialism can be understood as "a multilayered system of explicit and implicit controls designed to strip colonized peoples of their culture, confidence, and power" (2018:28). This is why Puerto Rican studies was, and remains, so important. It can be a vital tool against the psychological assaults of colonialism. It can help students gain the knowledge, confidence, and consciousness needed to use their power.

Although Puerto Rican studies programs exist mainly in institutions of higher education, the demand for socially relevant and culturally sustaining curriculum actually originated with educators and community leaders at the K-12 level (Nieto 2000). Renowned education scholar, Sonia Nieto, describes how during the 1950s and 1960s, Puerto Rican educators and community activists started to challenge assumptions and assimilationist policies that characterized Puerto Rican children as "culturally deprived" and "began to make demands for programs such as bilingual education, ethnic studies, and cross-cultural education because a new paradigm of cultural and linguistic inclusion was beginning to form" (2000:16).

Organizations such as ASPIRA and United Bronx Parents (UBP) condemned the New York City school system for failing Puerto Rican children and advocated for "a new form of instruction, one that addressed their particular linguistic and cultural needs" (De Jesús and Pérez 2009:9). This guide is making an important contribution to addressing the needs of pre-existing and newer Puerto Rican student populations and bringing Puerto Rican studies back into elementary, middle, and high school classrooms.

The Importance of Puerto Rican Studies Today

There are currently at least two major situations that educators, school workers, and education scholars must address with regard to Puerto Rican students in U.S. schools today. The first is the pre-existing and ongoing crisis facing U.S.-born, second-to-fourth generation Puerto Rican migrants. This population continues to battle high dropout/pushout rates, low levels of academic attainment, alienating curriculum, poverty, and institutional racism. The second situation refers to the more recent and ongoing waves

of displaced Puerto Rican students and their families. The educational needs of both groups certainly overlap, but are not identical. Puerto Rican studies and other forms of socially relevant and culturally sustaining pedagogy can be a bridge; addressing the needs of older and newer communities and creating awareness and understanding between them and other marginalized student groups.

The five themes in this book: history and geography; identity; government, economy, and civic life; land and environment; and culture and traditions, are good starting places for educating students of all backgrounds about Puerto Rico. It is a well-rounded introduction with an emphasis on literature and the arts that pushes back against Eurocentric and colonial narratives.

Unfortunately, racist tropes continue to be used against Puerto Ricans to this day, as when President Donald Trump said that Puerto Ricans "want everything to be done for them" amid his administration's negligent and incompetent response to the humanitarian disaster that unfolded after Hurricane Maria.

A critical approach to teaching about Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans can help new migrants and all other students better understand the current crisis and see through the stereotypes and myths perpetuated by those in power. It can help them become more knowledgeable about the United States' role in the Caribbean and its relationship to Puerto Rico. Puerto Ricans' long history of community activism and many contributions should also be studied and celebrated. This history is not just for or about Puerto Ricans. It is about the larger struggle for human emancipation and decolonization and should, therefore, be of interest to all social justice educators.

Conclusion

Fifty years after the founding and institutionalization of the field of Puerto Rican studies, the need for transdisciplinary and critical approaches to the study of the Puerto Rican experience, both in the Diaspora and in the archipelago, and at every level of education, is truly greater than ever. The stakes are high. But we, as educators, can do our part by providing students of all backgrounds with a critical perspective on the United States' colonial domination over Puerto Rico and, just as importantly, teaching students about Puerto Rican *resistance* and the ongoing grassroots struggles for dignity, economic justice, food sovereignty, environmental and climate justice, and self-determination.

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Introduction

Marilisa Jiménez García

En Julio del 2019—todo cambió. For 12 days, Puerto Ricans from every political party took to the streets through the archipelago calling for the resignation of Governor Ricardo Rosselló. Published by the Centro de Periodismo Investigativo, a series of chats between himself and major figures in his cabinet—riddled with abusive language about Puerto Rico's most vulnerable communities and underlining fraud of federal recovery funds—exposed a chain of corruption. Other members of the Rosselló administration including the Secretary of Education, Julia Keleher, and Secretary of Health, Ángela Ávila-Marrero, were also arrested in early July 2019 for charges of federal fraud. Keleher's policies for privatization led to the closing of over 40 percent of Puerto Rico's schools.

On July 24, 2019, Puerto Rican's protesting in front of governor's mansion, and throughout the world, rejoiced at Rosselló's announcement of his resignation. This was also the eve of the anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Puerto Rico, the Cerro Maravilla murders, and Puerto Rican Constitution. Rosselló is the first governor to resign in Puerto Rico's history of elected officials, and he did so under the cries of a Puerto Rican people who demanded government accountability and self-determination, among other things. Months later, on January 7, 2020, the south of Puerto Rico was rocked by a 6.4 earthquake, and ongoing aftershocks felt throughout the archipelago. Houses, schools, and landmarks collapsed. Many Puerto Ricans in the South continue sleeping in the streets for fear of houses collapsing and schools remain closed — many schools unable to house students safely. The very foundations of the Puerto Rican nation continue to shake as the people once again take to the streets demanding the canceling of the odious public debt, government accountability, the possible resignation of now Governor Wanda Vasquez, and new political solutions for Puerto Rico. It is in this context that I write the introduction to the third edition of *Caribbean Connections: Puerto Rico*.

I first learned about Teaching for Change's *Caribbean Connections: Puerto Rico* at the Free Minds, Free People (FMFP) conference in Baltimore

in June 2016. I was looking for curriculum resources available for K-12 teachers on Latinx Studies and specifically Puerto Rico. As a researcher and teacher grounded in Puerto Rican Studies, I often find myself having to explain the history of Puerto Rico to colleagues in the various institutions where I have taught. Even after attending a Master's program, I never read a book by a Puerto Rican author until I began my doctoral program. At the University of Florida in 2009, I began my work on Puerto Rican literature for youth as a way of looking at how our histories were told through children's and young adult texts, given the lack of instruction on U.S. colonialism and imperialism in the U.S. public school system. In turn, I was also interested in how we told our stories, subverting the tropes and stereotypes prevalent in dominant culture. After meeting Deborah Menkart at the Teaching for Change resource table at FMFP, we began a conversation about the resources Teaching for Change had available for classroom teachers on Puerto Rico.

I began to think about the possibilities for expanding on an existing project which required

updating—the past edition of this book. The first resource which came out of that meeting was the 2017 list of book recommendations titled, "Puerto Rican Children's Literature for Social Justice: A Bibliography for Educators," which was published on the in early September 2017. Little did anyone know that by late September 2017, Puerto Rico would suffer the aftermath of two Hurricanes, Irma and Maria. The list was shared by educators in this context, and I began receiving emails from educators and authors thanking me for sharing this work at such a critical moment. I also began looking for a group of scholars which could speak to the current issues in the field of Puerto Rican Studies as it intersects with K-12 instruction through critical essays and lessons.

As Ricardo Gabriel writes in his foreword, oftentimes, in our theorizing in academia, we forget the important roots of ethnic studies in the K-12 classroom. Moreover, I would also say academics outside of those in education, often neglect the intellectual space of K-12 classrooms—the exchange between teachers and students and the role of young people in creating their own curriculum materials and pedagogies—as ground zero for the formation and sustaining of social movements. In 1983, Asela Rodríguez de Laguna wrote in her preface to *Literature and Society of the Puerto Rican People: A Syllabus for Secondary School* that "very little has been done to create a strong curriculum in Puerto Rican literature at the high school level… Most efforts, however, have been limited to the social sciences, not the humanities. And while Puerto Rican history and culture have been relegated to schools with Bilingual Programs, specifically at the elementary level, Puerto Rican literature has been neglected at both the elementary and secondary level" (iii).

In the 21st century, the struggle to holistically include Puerto Rican stories and epistemologies in K-12 classrooms persists. Data and demographics remain important, but we need stories and faces to go with the numbers. One takeaway from the controversy over the death toll, which I emphasized in my panel participation at the 2018 Education Anew conference in San Juan on school privatization and disaster capitalization, is that Puerto Rican lives are not seen as *counting* dead or alive. This edition aims to give practical tools and classroom solutions for K-12 instructors, specifically middle and high school, as a way of putting theory to practice. Yet, we emphasize stories—stories from our classrooms, stories from those in Puerto Rico and those in the diaspora, stories from our young people. Wherever possible we have also drawn from our work with students.

The 2020 edition has been updated to reflect events in the recent decade, including economic and environmental, such as government bankruptcy in 2016, the appointment of Congressionally-appointed Federal Oversight Board, and the aftermath of Hurricanes Irma and Maria, and where possible, the recent earthquakes.

This new edition contains current readings and series of lessons created by educators on topics encompassing Puerto Rican history, environment, and conceptions of race. The idea of creating a group of lessons on Puerto Rico and social justice, which I affectionately refer to as "mini-lessons," was inspired by my research on Ernesto Galarza's creation of Mini-Libros. Galarza created a collection of books for young people written as a response to teacher demand for more resources for Chicano students in the late 1940s, during the early Chicano movement.

Like the mini-libros, the lessons are meant to provide accessible and critical classroom solutions for teachers working with students on Puerto Rican history and culture. Where possible, the lessons ask students to engage with contemporary popular culture and media as a means of working with history and critical theory on issues pertaining to Puerto Rico and its past and present diasporas.

How can we use our teaching to build bridges which help support and sustain social justice movements in Puerto Rico and its diaspora? How can we teach about U.S. colonialism and its continued influence on our communities and stories? Moreover, how can we teach about the history of Puerto Ricans "outside the textbook"? The third edition, including lessons and readings, was guided by certain criteria which I have gathered from years of research on Puerto Rican youth literature and culture. Stories and storytelling in Puerto Rican traditions often undergird a strong desire to foster critical literacy and activities—an understanding that so much more exists outside of the text. For example, some stories might lead us to question whose stories and bodies are left out of traditional history and literature. Through learning from the intellectual and creative lives of Puerto Rican authors and storytellers such as Pura Belpré and Nicholasa Mohr, I have gathered certain guiding principles for choosing texts

Mural damaged by Hurricane Maria in Cataño, Puerto Rico near Horace Mann school, where author Marilisa Jimenez started kindergarten in 1985. Her mother taught at the school, which is now closed, for 30 years.

and classroom materials to "Teach Puerto Rico." The principles also reflect the work of gathering anti-racist, anti-sexist, and anti-imperialist materials which might appear in both U.S. and Puerto Rican traditions. Though these principles are not meant to be a formula or monolith, teaching Puerto Rico involves:

- Teaching collective and community histories as opposed to individual heroism—even more important in the context of the current people's movement which ousted the governor and continues fighting against austerity measures and colonial corruption.
- Breaking stagnant stereotypes (even folkloric) and essentialist identity paradigms.
- Choosing narratives with self-determined characters.
- Centering Afro and Indigenous Boricua histories.
- Teaching intellectual histories through stories that emphasize the intellectual contributions of Puerto Rican people.
- Centering environmental issues and struggles as affecting everyday aspects of life
- Teaching stories that focus on Puerto Rico today, so students grapple with living histories and literacies growing up in our communities today. For example, educators can teach all the different "texts" Puerto Rican's used to protest during the Summer of 2019, from trap to horseback riding to dance, each physical and written demonstration speaks to how today's critical literacies are elevated by our communities who are choosing texts and materials that don't talk down to our young people. Indeed, choosing texts that show the political, social, cultural, and intellectual engagement and influence of young people

The materials in *Caribbean Connections: Puerto Rico* are principally designed for use by students in grades 9-12, but many can be used by students in lower grades, as well as by students in the college or community college setting. We are interested in building a strong pipeline of educational justice from K-12 into higher education. This new edition also adds the elements of lessons from educators working in the field.

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Overview

The materials in *Caribbean Connections: Puerto Rico* are principally designed for use by students in grades 9–12, but many can be used by students in lower grades as well as by students in the college or community college setting. This third edition addresses the devastation caused by Hurricanes Maria and Irma, along with resources for teaching about hurricane recovery and environmental literacy.

Teachers can use these pieces to help students know more of Puerto Rico than the idyllic vacation pictures in magazines or in their personal photo collections. Most people from the mainland U.S. see Puerto Rico as a country of radiant beaches and summer fun. Yet while the economic circumstances of this small island have improved over the years and many Puerto Ricans live in prosperity, poverty has not left and environmental hazards abound.

Despite such challenges, Puerto Rican children revel in the joys of *Las navidades*, the Christmas season; their *papis* and *mamis* weather the ardors of working life; their grandparents savor their return to home towns in retirement years. Teaching for Change proudly offers these Puerto Rico stories—of cigarmakers and seamstresses, wise children and fighting grandmothers, environmentalists and musicia and musicians—as a springboard to discovery and understanding.

The sections include:

Part One: History and Geography provides a brief history of the island and a chronology of some of its watershed events.

Part Two: Identity gathers commentary in the form of memoir, poetry and fiction on the innumerable ways in which Puerto Ricans identify as Boricuas.

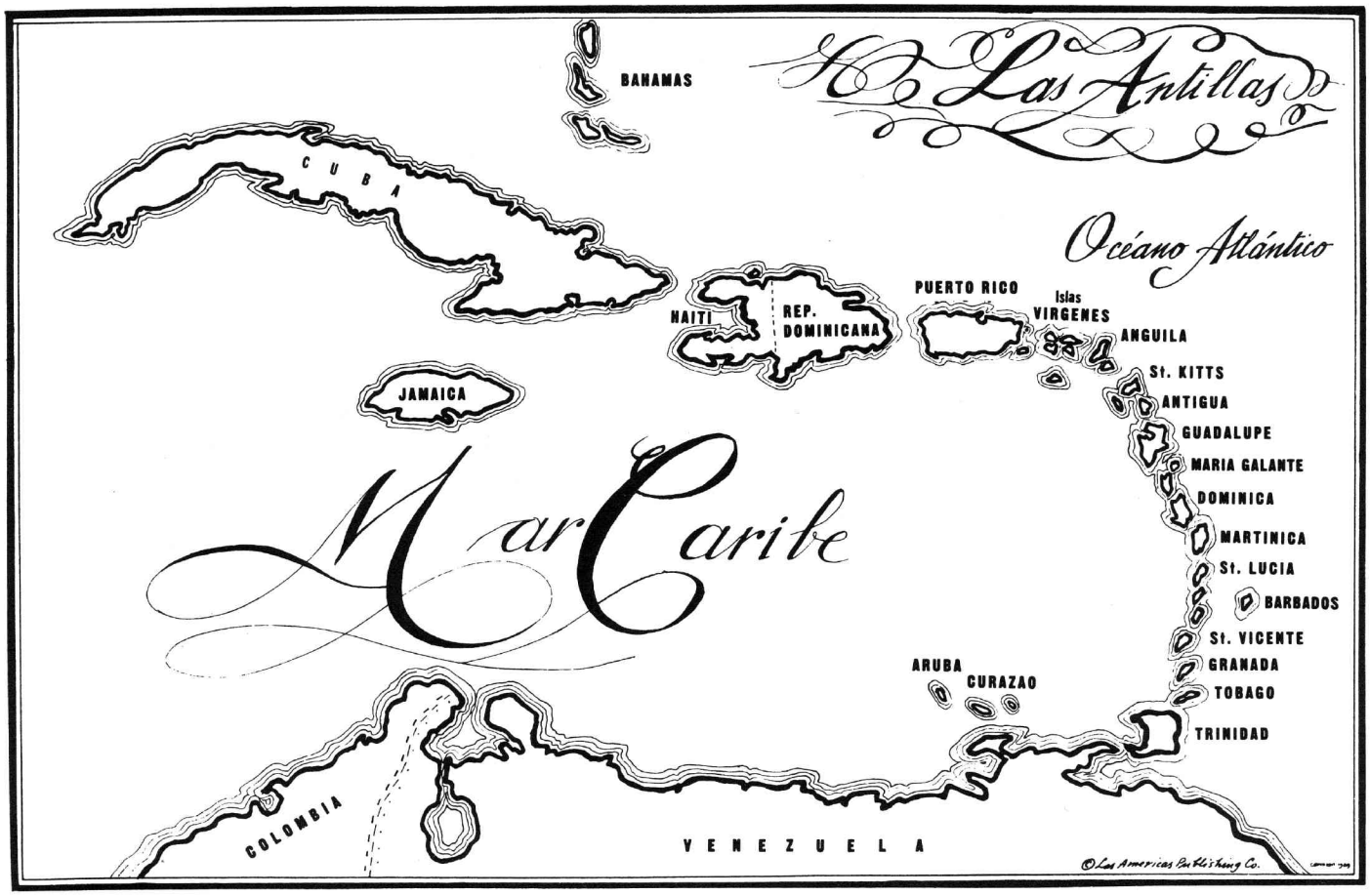
Part Three: Government, Economy and Civic Life includes essays on the three predominant points of view regarding Puerto Rico's unique status in relationship to the U.S. and on which status—independence, commonwealth or statehood—can best serve the interests of Puerto Rican people. This section also includes a short story by one of Puerto Rico's most revered authors exploring the real-life experience of Puerto Ricans in the U.S. military.

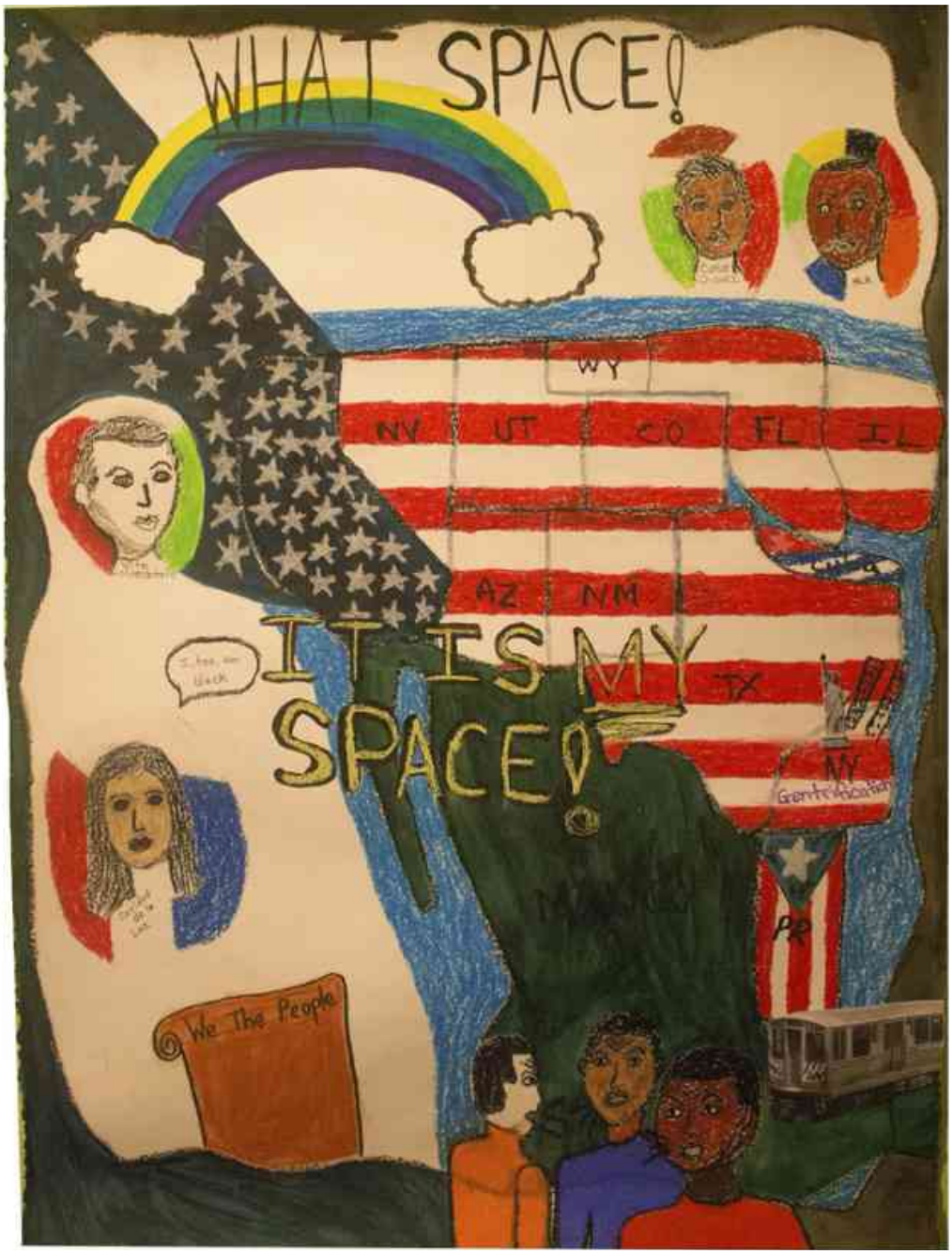
Part Four: Land and Environment includes eyewitness accounts of efforts to protect Puerto Rico from environmental degradation, especially the years-long struggle over Vieques, where the current challenge is to remove the hazards from the land that many believe have contributed to elevated rates of cancer and other illnesses among Vieques residents.

Part Five: Culture and Traditions offers small examples of the country's musical traditions, holiday celebrations, folk traditions, and sports. Included are art teacher Patty Bode's reflections on teaching art to students in a way that defies a narrow, static, or exotic vision of another peoples' artistic traditions.

Part Six: Addendum points to sources for books for further reading and offers a bio of the cover artist, editor, and contributing authors.

Part 1:
History and Geography





Drawing by Anacelis Martinez, a graduate of Hunter College, on gentrification in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, for author's course in Puerto Rican/Latino Students in U.S. Schools.

Introduction

History and Geography

In 1868, a group Antillean revolutionary leaders and community members practiced solidarity across national lines which emphasized common interests in ridding Haiti, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic of Spanish colonialism. Oppressions inherent in colonialism included slavery and anti-Black and anti-poor policies. Poor farm workers in Puerto Rico erupted into rebellion, raising what came to be known as the cry of Lares. Ramón Emeterio Betances, an eloquent physician and independence movement leader, spearheaded this seminal event in Puerto Rican history. Yet, Puerto Ricans have continued community movements and organizing against injustice to this day.

Most recently, community victories and organizing against oppression have manifested in the summer of 2019's various manifestations which led to the resignation of Governor Ricardo Rossello for corruption and mocking women, LGBTQ communties, and Maria's dead. This is the latest in a long line of contemporary movements ousting the military out of Vieques, demanding an audit of the public debt, and fair and community empowered political and economic transitions after Hurricanes Irma and Maria. Along with the Puerto Rican diaspora's solidarity with Puerto Rico in U.S. communities such as Orlando, Miami, Philadelphia, Chicago, Hartford, Holyoke, and New York. Stories of the struggle over military use of Vieques, the public debt, and a just transition after Hurricane Maria are among the many accounts of resistance, survivance, and creative production that can be found in this collection.

After the summer of 2019, the call "Somos Más y No Tenemos Miedo/ We are More and We are not Afraid" running down the streets of San Juan, goes down in history as a cry of a people fed up with government corruption in light of one of the most devastating natural disasters in modern history. Moreover, the current people's movement in Puerto Rico continues forward undergirded by demands made by communities for, among other things, the removal of the federally appointed financial oversight board. Social justice educators need to note that the struggle in Puerto Rico did not end with Governor Rossello's resignation.

Finding critical histories for young people in Puerto Rico might be difficult to do as school texts often contain assimilationist histories which uphold U.S. colonialism and censure decolonial movements. Yet, the young people at the forefront of the current people's movement which ousted Governor Rossello have underlined the importance of knowing revolutionary histories, particularly civics education, including the Puerto Rican Constitution which make neoliberal policies such as charter schools illegal for example. Teaching decolonial history is at the forefront in Puerto Rico's current history. For example, how would we teach Boricua history if we began from the perspective of indigenous peoples? A new addition to this section comes through Alicia Lopez's lesson on a critical perspective on the Tainos on how to "flip the script" in your classroom on traditional approaches to Columbus Day (Indigenous Peoples Day).

Puerto Rico at a Glance

Government And Politics

Official Name: *Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico* (Spanish) - Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

Political Status: Territorial possession of the U.S. officially recognized as a freely associated state.

Form of Government: A local self-governing territory under Article 4, Section 3 of the U.S. Constitution. It is divided into executive, legislative and judicial branches. U.S. federal government agencies implement federal laws and programs in Puerto Rico in the same manner as the 50 states. A nonvoting resident commissioner represents Puerto Rico in the U.S. House of Representatives. General elections are held every four years.

Political Parties: The pro-commonwealth Popular Democratic Party (PPD) and the pro-statehood New Progressive Party (PNP) have alternated the governorship since 1968. The Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP) has never won a gubernatorial election and received about 4 percent of the vote in 1996 and 2000. The smaller Puerto Rican Socialist Party (PSP) enjoyed its greatest strength in the 1970s.

Flag: Five horizontal bands of red alternating with white; a blue triangle based on the hoist side bears a large, white, five-pointed star in the center. The design, developed in the 1890s, was based on the flag of Cuba. The red stripes stand for the blood of the brave warriors. The white stripes stand for victory and peace after obtaining independence. The blue triangle stands for the sky and coastal waters. The white star symbolizes the beautiful land.

Geography

Location: Located between the Caribbean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean, east of the Dominican Republic and west of the Virgin Islands.

Area: 3,515 square miles.

Climate: Tropical marine with regular temperature (80°F), warm and sunny throughout most of the year. In the interior high grounds, the temperature fluctuates between 73°F and 78°F. The winds, which blow from the east, moderate the heat. The north coast gets twice as much rain as the south coast. The dry season is from December to March. Dozens of hurricanes have been recorded in the island's history. San Ciriaco, which struck on August 8, 1899, killed 3,400 people.

Capital: San Juan, which has nearly 400,000 residents.

Second Largest City: Bayamón (2016)

People and Society

Total Population: 3,411,000 residents (2016 estimate).

Life expectancy at birth: The female expectancy is 83 years of age and the male expectancy is 76 years of age. (2015)

Religions: Roman Catholic, 85 percent; Protestant denominations and other, 15 percent.

Languages: Spanish, English.

Currency: U.S. dollar.

A Brief History of Puerto Rico

Johnny Irizarry, Maria Mills-Torres,
Marta Moreno Vega, and Anita Rivera

Puerto Rico is a mountainous tropical archipelago in the Caribbean that measures 3,423 square miles. Its western neighbors include the Dominican Republic and Haiti (two countries that share a single island), Cuba and Jamaica; to the east, the U.S. Virgin Islands and the lower Antilles. South America lies to the south and the U.S. mainland to the north.

Puerto Rico has large modern cities and small country towns. Population centers include the main island of Puerto Rico and two smaller islands, Culebra and Vieques. Puerto Rico's current population is nearly 4 million people. There are 3.4 million Puerto Ricans living on the U.S. mainland. Puerto Ricans are the second largest Latino group in the U.S. Spanish is the language spoken on the island, with English taught as a second language in the schools.

An Arawak cemi of carved stone.

The Puerto Rican people reflect the varied physical and cultural heritage of the different groups that have mixed together to create the island's population: the original indigenous inhabitants, Taínos, Europeans (mainly from Spain) and Africans. As a result, Puerto Ricans range across the full spectrum of skin colors. Race relations in the Puerto Rican experience differ from those in the U.S.

Native Inhabitants and Spanish Colonization

The original name of the island, given by the indigenous Taíno people, was *Borikén*, which means "land of the brave people." Today, Puerto Ricans often refer to the island as Borínquen. The Taínos, whose ancestors lived as long ago as 4000 BC and who were closely tied to the Arawak peoples who lived further south, were an agricultural people with highly developed political, social, religious and cultural beliefs and practices.

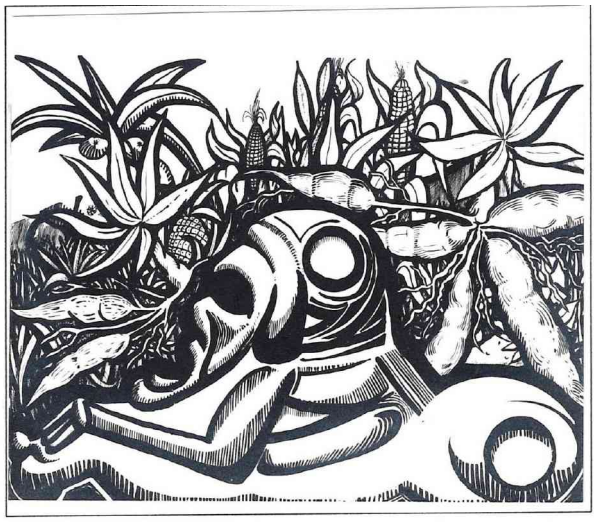
In 1493, on his second voyage to the Americas, Christopher Columbus claimed *Borínquen* for Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand of Spain. He originally called the island San Juan Bautista. The island's name was later changed to Puerto Rico, which means "rich port."

Almost immediately after the arrival of the Spanish, the Taínos rebelled against colonization. Caciques, or chiefs, led revolts against the invading Spaniards. Famous legends and historical documents from the Spanish tell stories of this resistance, led by famous caciques such as Urayoan and Agüeybana (see The Death of Salcedo). Even before the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors, Urayoan had warned his people of the coming devastation. Legend tells that he had a vision of the coming of white-skinned men riding animals (horses) that would bring great destruction to his people. He was one of the first *caciques* to call his people to rebellion and to spread the word to other *caciques* to resist.

Many Taínos escaped from the oppression of the Spanish by fleeing to other Caribbean islands, where they joined the Caribs (the native inhabitants of the lower Antillean Islands) in resisting Spanish colonization. Within 60 years, most of the Taíno people had been killed in war against the Spanish invaders, through the devastation of slavery in gold mines and plantations, and by diseases carried to the island by Europeans. Despite the near-decimation of the Taíno people, their influence lives on as a permanent physical and cultural element of Puerto Rico's life and people. For example, many Taíno-Arawak words passed into Spanish (and, in some cases, from there into English), such as *huracán* (hurricane) and *hamaca* (hammock). Taíno musical instruments, such as *maracas* and the *güiro* (an instrument made from gourds), continue to play a key role in Puerto Rican musical forms.

Image from *Puerto Rico: The Flame of Resistance.*

Dr. Ramón Emeterio Betances



Artist's conception of the Arawak, supreme diety Yacju Bagua Morocoti, god of earth, cassava and the sea.
Artist: Gilberto Hernández Ortega

Once most of the Taínos died, the Spanish began enslaving Africans to fill their desire for profit. African slavery was a major engine of the Puerto Rican economy from 1508 to March 22, 1873, when it was finally abolished.

Puerto Rico's African Heritage

Some scholars, notably Ivan Van Sertima in the book *They Came Before Columbus*, believe that there is evidence of an African presence in the Americas prior to the Spanish arrival in the late fifteenth century. Archeological studies have discovered what may be African artifacts and human skeletons in parts of Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean that predate the Europeans by at least 2,000 years. For example, evidence of exchanges between the great Olmec culture of Mexico and the Nubian-Kemetic cultures of Africa during the period 1450-800 BC has been found in La Venta and Palenque in Mexico.

Between 1310 and 1491 Mandingo merchant explorers from Africa made more than 50 trips to various Caribbean and Central and South American points.

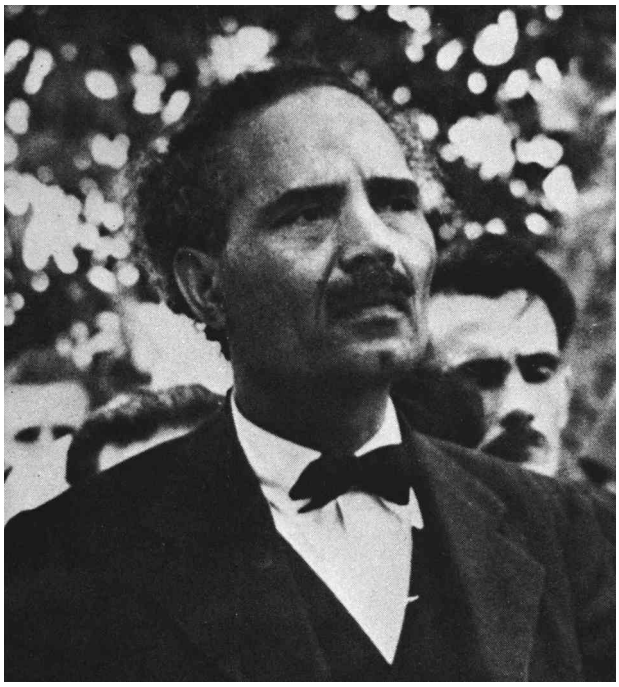
In addition, the Spanish were deeply influenced by African culture. The Moors of North Africa had a permanent impact on the development of Spanish history, art and culture through their occupation of Spanish territory, which lasted approximately 800 years. Free Africans, known as *libertos*, originally traveled with the Spanish conquistadors to the Americas. A *liberto* was a man or woman of African origin who came to settle in Puerto Rico from Spain. Two examples are:

Juan Garrido, who accompanied Juan Ponce de León (the first governor of Puerto Rico assigned by the Spanish crown) in exploring the coast of Florida in 1506. Garrido is also known for bringing the first wheat and other new vegetable seeds to the Americas.

Francisco Gallego, the first Spanish entrepreneur of African origin in Puerto Rico.

Enslaved Africans were sold to the Spanish by Portuguese slavers working from ports in central-west Africa. African slaves were brought first to the Caribbean islands and from there to other parts of the Americas. The entire Western Hemisphere, including the Caribbean, has a common African ancestry, originating from central-west Africa. Historians estimate that anywhere from 15-50 million Africans were taken from Africa between 1482 and 1888. Extreme physical abuse and hunger experienced in the Middle Passage across the Atlantic often killed up to a third of the enslaved Africans.

As early as 1514, enslaved Taínos and Africans in Puerto Rico joined forces in revolt against slavery. By 1848 more than 20 revolts had occurred. *Cimarrones* (fugitive slaves) planned individual escapes and collective revolts. Many *cimarrones* would escape to the remote mountains of the island or even other Caribbean or Central or South American lands, where they formed free communities. Some of their descendants survive to this day, especially along the Atlantic Coast of Central and South America. Many



Pedro Albizu Campos

others were killed in heroic attempts to obtain their freedom.

Throughout the 365 years of slavery in Puerto Rico, there was also a large population of free Puerto Ricans of African descent. In addition to revolting or escaping, slaves could also negotiate to buy their freedom and that of their families. Most free Puerto Ricans of African descent, as well as mulattos, people of mixed African and European descent, and *mestizos*, people of mixed Native and European descent, worked in a variety of occupations, such as agriculture or domestic labor, or as artisans, merchants or ship hands. Many continued the struggle against slavery and racism, becoming abolitionists and freedom fighters. People of African descent have made pronounced contributions to Puerto Rico's historical, social, intellectual, artistic and cultural development.

African influence may also be traced in many words from African languages that have become a permanent part of Puerto Rican Spanish (and, in some cases, English): *mangó* (mango), *candungo* (storage pot), *mofongo* (a plantain dish), *mondongo* (a stew), *guineo* (banana), or *chevere* (good!). Puerto Rican musical instruments such as la clave (also known as *par de palos* or "two sticks"), drums with stretched animal skin such as bongos or congas, and Puerto Rican music-dance forms such as *la bomba* or *la plena* are likewise rooted in Africa. Puerto Rican cuisine also has a strong African influence.

Puerto Rico After 1898

By the nineteenth century, Puerto Ricans were a distinct people, aspiring to achieve independence from Spanish rule and establish their own nation. On September 23, 1868, independence fighters struck out in the *Grito de Lares* (Cry of Lares) and declared a democratic republic. Although this uprising was not successful for long, it did win a series of concessions, including a process for achieving full independence from Spain. On July 17, 1898, an independent government was officially installed in Puerto Rico. A week later, however, the island was invaded by U.S. forces. After 400 years of Spanish domination, the island was now under the control of the U.S. The short-lived independence was won against the backdrop of the Spanish-American war, a conflict in which the U.S. contributed to the ouster of Spain from its colonies of Puerto Rico, Cuba and the Philippines but which set the stage for contentious relations between the U.S. and all three countries for more than a century.

By the time of this pivotal war, Puerto Rico's indigenous, Spanish and African roots had blended into the island's unique political, social, religious and cultural life. Much of what we know today as Puerto Rican culture had been forged by the end of the nineteenth century. Puerto Rico's artistic and cultural traditions, literature, music and visual arts are recognized internationally and have made pronounced contributions to the development of artistic expression—in Latin America, among Latinos in the U.S. and internationally.

Religion, especially the Catholic Church, has also played a major role in Puerto Rican history, especially in political, social and cultural traditions. As throughout the hemisphere, the impact of the church has been complex. For the conquistadors, forcible conversion to Christianity served as a justification for the enslavement of the Taínos and Africans. As the centuries passed, however, the Puerto Rican people shaped religion into one of their central modes of cultural expression and, at times, resistance.

A new colonial era began in 1898. Puerto Rico was now ruled as a possession of the U.S. Conflict between the people and their new rulers emerged first over language. Illiteracy was widespread at that time, affecting 85 percent of the population, and the U.S. expected no resistance from the Puerto Ricans

Albizu Campos speaks to sugar workers during a strike in 1934.

when it imposed English-only laws on the island. Puerto Rican intellectuals and *independentistas* (people who fight for Puerto Rican independence) resisted the replacement of the Spanish language with English. From 1898 until the establishment of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico in 1952, U.S. governors maintained some type of English-only law over Puerto Rico. In 1952, Spanish once again became the official language of Puerto Rico—although the use of English continues to be required in some educational, governmental and judicial functions.

In 1917 President Woodrow Wilson signed the Jones Act, which made Puerto Ricans citizens of the U.S. Those who chose to reject U.S. citizenship would become exiles in their own homeland. Others left the island as a rejection of U.S. domination. U.S. citizenship, extended in the midst of World War I, brought with it the imposition of military service on Puerto Ricans.

Since that time, hundreds of thousands of Puerto Ricans from both the island and the U.S. have served in the U.S. military, first through the draft and now as volunteers. In many cases Puerto Ricans have been overrepresented in the military and have borne a disproportionate share of casualties—as well as facing racial, ethnic and language discrimination.

On July 25, 1952, in commemoration of the date of the U.S. invasion of Puerto Rico in 1898, a Puerto

Source: Robert Liu-Trujillo

Rican constitution was adopted establishing the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. The U.S. Congress had conferred commonwealth status on Puerto Rico in July 1950; now it was also enshrined in Puerto Rican law. The Popular Democratic Party continued to govern until 1968, when a growing movement favoring statehood for Puerto Rico won the governor's post.

To this day, Puerto Rico remains a territorial possession of the U.S. Puerto Rico is subject to the

judicial and legal system of the U.S., and U.S. federal agencies implement federal laws and programs in Puerto Rico.

Despite their U.S. citizenship, Puerto Ricans still have a somewhat unique legal status—neither fully independent nor fully a part of the U.S. For example, Puerto Ricans on the island cannot vote for the president of the U.S., but Puerto Ricans residing in the U.S. mainland can. Puerto Ricans on the island are exempt from federal taxes, but have a system of local taxes very similar to that of the U.S. mainland. A nonvoting "resident commissioner" represents Puerto Rico in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Twentieth-Century Nationalist Movements

From 1898 until 1947 the U.S. government ran Puerto Rico's military and civil political administrations. In 1948, for the first time, the U.S. allowed Puerto Ricans to elect their own governor. They voted in Luis Muñoz Marín (1898-1980). Muñoz Marín, who served as governor until 1965, originally believed in independence for Puerto Rico. He later led his party (the Popular Democratic Party, founded in 1938), in establishing Puerto Rico as a Free Associated State. They chose as their party emblem the profile of a Puerto Rican *jíbaro* (peasant) wearing a pava (straw hat). Under the emblem they placed the slogan *Pan, Tierra y Libertad* (Bread, Land, and Liberty).

After abandoning his pro-independence stance, Muñoz Marín met with opposition from the nationalist movement, led by Pedro Albizu Campos (1891-1965). Albizu Campos joined the Nationalist Party in 1924, two years after its founding, and became its president in 1930. In 1937 the Puerto Rican police opened fire on a peaceful protest march by the Nationalist Party in the city of Ponce. Twenty people were killed that day and 100 wounded in what became known as the Ponce Massacre. Authorities jailed thousands of independence sympathizers during a 1950 Nationalist uprising, in which more than 30 people were killed, including five Nationalist participants who attempted to assassinate Muñoz Marín.

Shortly thereafter, two Nationalists brought the issue of Puerto Rican independence to world attention when they assaulted Blair House, the temporary residence of President Harry Truman in Washington, D.C. (The White House was under renovation at the time.) Then on March 1, 1954, Lolita Lebrón and three other Nationalists opened fire on the U.S. House of Representatives, demanding independence for Puerto Rico. Five U.S. congressmen were wounded in that attack and the Nationalists were sentenced to 56 years in prison. President Jimmy Carter pardoned Lebrón and the other Nationalists in 1979. When they returned to Puerto Rico, they were met by hundreds of thousands of cheering *Boricuas*.

The Nationalist Party was not the only pro-independence organization. The Puerto Rican Independence Party was founded in 1946. The Movement for Independence (MPI) organized later; in 1971, this group changed its name to the Puerto Rican Socialist Party.

A major scandal regarding police surveillance broke in Puerto Rico in the late 1980s, revealing that Puerto Rican and U.S. law enforcement agencies had been working together since the 1930s to maintain files on as many as 75,000 Puerto Rican activists on the island and the U.S. mainland. The governments targeted not only *independentistas* but also unions, religious and cultural groups, women's groups, teachers and others, subjecting many activists to blacklisting and other forms of harassment. Revelations about this surveillance continue until the present.

Armed actions in support of Puerto Rican independence continued through the 1980s; independence activists remain in jail in the U.S., convicted of acts of "sedition," including bombings and the possession of firearms.

The U.S. in Puerto Rico

Under U.S. rule, Puerto Rico has become one of the most militarized territories in the world. Citing Puerto Rico's strategic location in the Caribbean and the need for "national security," the U.S. has built military bases throughout the island. Militarization has greatly affected the lives of Puerto Ricans. For example, since the 1940s the Puerto Rican island of Vieques has been at the center of a political controversy between the people of Puerto Rico and the U.S. armed forces. In the early 1940s the U.S. Navy seized two-thirds of the land in Vieques to be used for U.S. military purposes. The island's population dropped from 10,000 to 7,000. Many people from Vieques

Relatives of Nationalists killed in the Ponce massacre in front of Nationalist Party headquarters. Machine gun bullet holes in the wall. By Edwin Rosskam. Source: Library of Congress

The Ponce massacre occurred Palm Sunday, March 21, 1937, when a peaceful march in Ponce, Puerto Rico, turned into a bloody police slaughter, killing 19 Puerto Ricans and wounding over 200 others. The march had been organized by the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party to commemorate the ending of slavery in Puerto Rico and to protest the imprisonment, by the U.S. government, of Nationalist leader Pedro Albizu Campos on alleged sedition charges. The bloodshed began when the Insular Police fired on the marchers. The Insular Police, a force somewhat resembling the National Guard, was under the direct military command of the U.S.-appointed governor of Puerto Rico, General Blanton Winship. The Ponce Massacre is considered a defining event in Puerto Rico's history.

and the main island of Puerto Rico resisted this takeover of their lands by the U.S. Navy through political action. In 1978, for example, a group of fishing communities organized a protest by taking forty small fishing boats into the middle of the Navy's weapons-testing exercises. The Navy exercises were killing the fish, which local people depended on to survive. Protest actions continue; by 2003, the Navy had been forced to abandon its Vieques base. Many Puerto Ricans have been arrested for such acts of resistance.

Beginning in the 1950s, the governments of both Puerto Rico and the U.S. promoted a 50-year development strategy for the island known as Operation Bootstrap. Officials hoped to transform the island from an agricultural society to an industrial one. Tax exemptions prompted more than 100 of the 500 largest U.S. corporations to set up operations in Puerto Rico with the promise of employment for thousands of Puerto Ricans that never materialized. As a result of this rapid industrialization, Puerto Rican agriculture has been greatly weakened and the island has stopped growing its own food. Today, 85 percent of what Puerto Ricans eat is imported, mostly from the U.S.

Industrialization has brought benefits but also costs: the dramatic growth of industry in Puerto Rico and the influx of petrochemical plants in the 1970s have greatly increased environmental pollution in the island. Operation Bootstrap provoked the movement of huge numbers of Puerto Ricans from rural to urban areas as they searched for work. It also created an enormous migration of Puerto Ricans to the U.S.: more than 40 percent of the Puerto Rican population now lives on the U.S. mainland.

Pharmaceutical and medical research interests used Puerto Rican women to test population control methods and policies. Beginning in the 1950s, large numbers of Puerto Rican women working in factories were sterilized against their knowledge or consent. Women factory workers were given time off to attend appointments in on-site clinics. Social workers would visit their homes to follow up on women who had missed an appointment. By 1974, 35 percent of Puerto Rican women of child-bearing age—some 200,000 women—were permanently sterilized. By 1980, Puerto Rico had the highest per-capita rate of sterilization among women in the world. From the 1950s through 1980, Puerto Rico was used as a testing ground for birth control pills while they were under development. The pharmaceutical companies tested pills 20 times stronger than the ones used today on Puerto Rican women living in housing projects, and the first known woman to die from these contraceptives was a Puerto Rican woman.

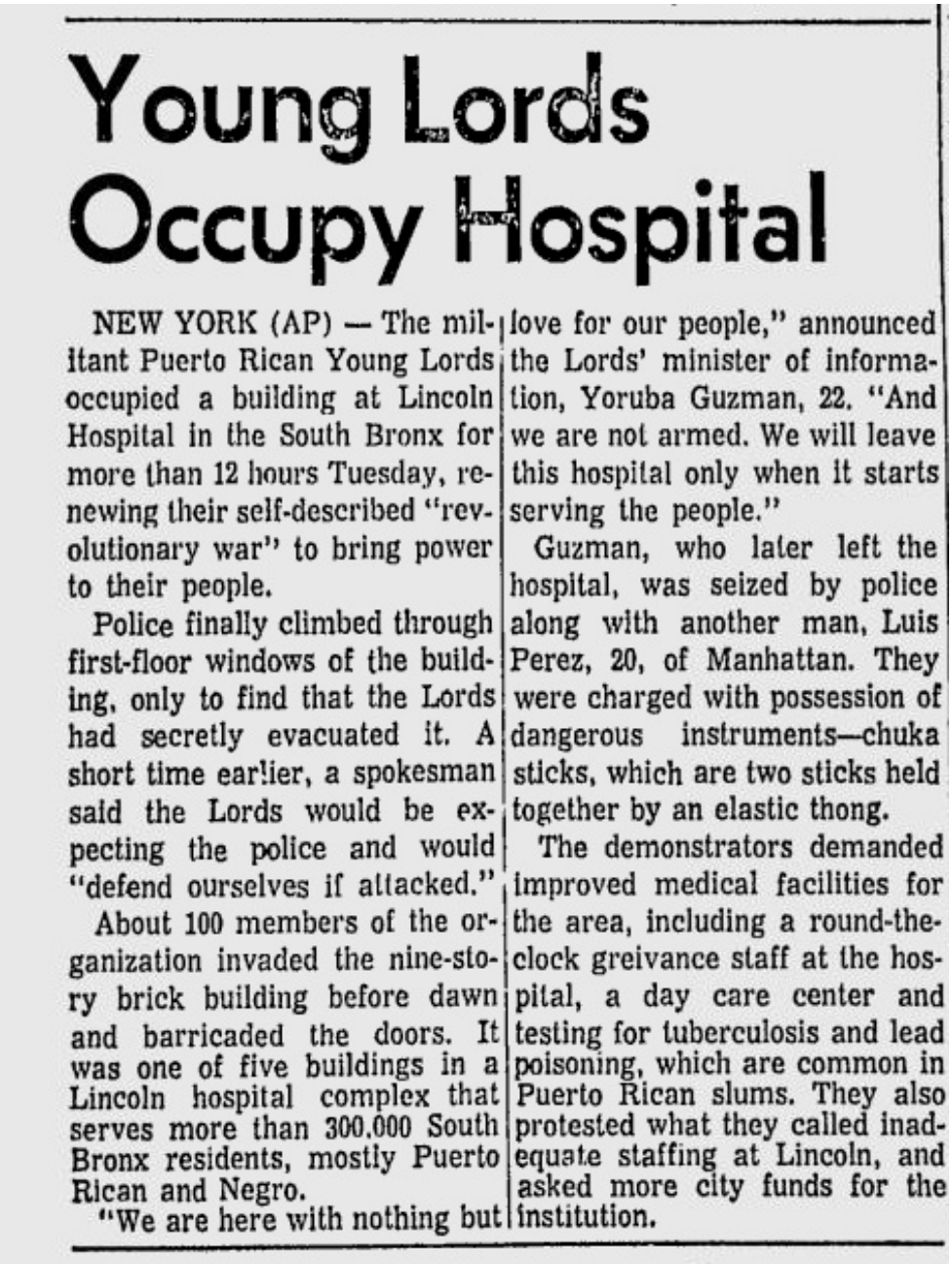
Migration: Puerto Ricans in the United States

Puerto Ricans started coming to the U.S. more than a century and a half ago. Their numbers increased after 1898. A massive wave of migration to the mainland U.S. began after World War II, as farmworkers came to work in the produce farms of the East Coast while other migrants traveled to the urban areas of the East and Midwest to work in factories. Many U.S. farms and companies recruited workers to work as far away as Hawai'i.

In legal terms, Puerto Ricans are not considered immigrants, because they are U.S. citizens. Nonetheless, their motives for coming to the U.S. mainland resemble those of most immigrant groups: pursuit of the "American Dream" and a better social and economic situation for themselves and their families. From the 1940s to the 1960s the labor force participation rate of Puerto Ricans was among the highest of any group in the U.S. In those days there was a great demand for factory workers and semi-skilled labor in the U.S. Puerto Ricans were known for their expertise in making cigars, and many came to the U.S. to work in the tobacco industry.

Puerto Rican migrants faced social, educational, housing and employment discrimination. They also confronted difficulties rooted in language differences. Thousands of Puerto Rican workers, especially women factory workers, were paid lower wages than those paid to white workers. Discrimination came from all directions, including, initially, exclusion and unequal treatment from labor unions.

As U.S. industry has restructured, increasing its use of automation and transferring many jobs to lower-wage areas of the world, the demand for semi-skilled labor has collapsed in U.S. urban areas, where most of the Puerto Rican population resides. As a result, Puerto Rican communities are facing a situation of extreme unemployment and under-employment, leading to ever-deepening poverty. Puerto Ricans have the lowest median income and highest poverty rate of all Latino groups in the U.S. The



Young Lords Occupy Hospital

NEW YORK (AP) — The militant Puerto Rican Young Lords occupied a building at Lincoln Hospital in the South Bronx for more than 12 hours Tuesday, renewing their self-described "revolutionary war" to bring power to their people.

Police finally climbed through first-floor windows of the building, only to find that the Lords had secretly evacuated it. A short time earlier, a spokesman said the Lords would be expecting the police and would "defend ourselves if attacked."

About 100 members of the organization invaded the nine-story brick building before dawn and barricaded the doors. It was one of five buildings in a Lincoln hospital complex that serves more than 300,000 South Bronx residents, mostly Puerto Rican and Negro.

"We are here with nothing but love for our people," announced the Lords' minister of information, Yoruba Guzman, 22. "And we are not armed. We will leave this hospital only when it starts serving the people."

Guzman, who later left the hospital, was seized by police along with another man, Luis Perez, 20, of Manhattan. They were charged with possession of dangerous instruments—chuka sticks, which are two sticks held together by an elastic thong.

The demonstrators demanded improved medical facilities for the area, including a round-the-clock greivance staff at the hospital, a day care center and testing for tuberculosis and lead poisoning, which are common in Puerto Rican slums. They also protested what they called inadequate staffing at Lincoln, and asked more city funds for the institution.

Source: Bronx Museum

In the early morning hours of July 14, 1970, the Young Lords occupied Lincoln Hospital's major administrative building in response to the city's indifference to the health needs of Puerto Ricans and African Americans in the South Bronx and the deplorable conditions of health care delivery at Lincoln Hospital. The Young Lords actions at Lincoln were an extension of the group's activism around issues of public health in East Harlem. Their heath activism included the Garbage Offensive, which protested irregular sanitation services; the launch of breakfast programs for poor children; the Lead Offensive, during which they conducted door-to-door medical home visits in collaboration with progressive nurses, medical technicians and doctors to test local children for lead poisoning and adults for tuberculosis; and the takeover of a city operated Tuberculosis truck.

consequences of such difficult conditions are manifested in high dropout rates among students, a high number of single-parent households, lack of access to health care, including treatment for addiction to alcohol and illicit drugs, and other challenges to social and family life.

Historically, many Puerto Ricans have responded to their problems by organizing to build community-based support institutions, including religious, advocacy and political organizations. Numerous Puerto Rican support institutions have been established to further the search for democratic rights; to improve the delivery of social services, and to promote cultural, spiritual, educational and economic development for the Puerto Rican community.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the Young Lords emerged as one of the best-known Puerto Rican social justice organizations. Young Puerto Ricans living in Chicago and in *El Barrio* (East Harlem in New York City) emerged as community political leaders. Their models were the Black Panther Party and the independence movement in Puerto Rico. The Young Lords organized community protest actions and took over institutions such as churches, hospitals and public service vehicles to dramatize their demand for human and civil rights and improved health, child care and other social services. The Young Lords organized in other cities with high concentrations of Puerto Ricans, including Chicago, Philadelphia, and Hartford, Connecticut. They organized their communities around political and social issues affecting their lives in the U.S. and over the political status of Puerto Rico. Their attention to this latter issue continued a tradition dating back to the efforts of Puerto Rican exiles in the late 1800s.

The Future

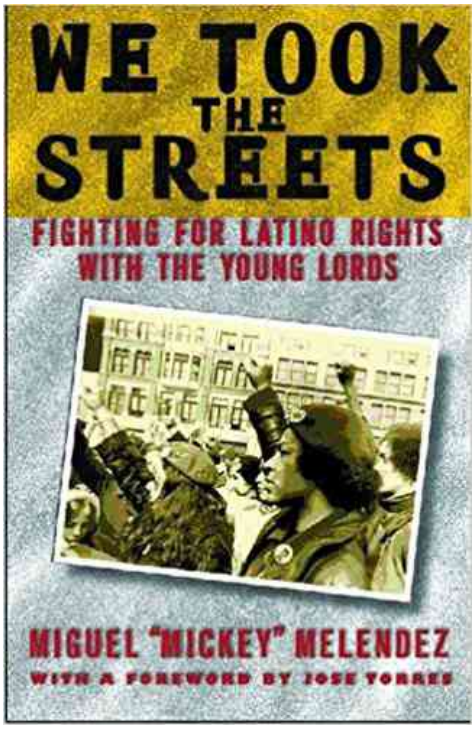
The political status of Puerto Rico continues to be a burning issue for all Puerto Ricans. The three options are:

Commonwealth: the current status, established in 1952.

Statehood: Puerto Rico would become a state of the U.S.

Independence: Puerto Rico would become an independent sovereign nation, in control of its own affairs.

Beginning in 1946, the United Nations (UN) Decolonization Committee required the U.S. to report to it on a regular basis on the political, social and economic status of Puerto Rico. After the establishment of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico in 1952, the UN declared that Puerto Rico had reached a new constitutional status and decided that it would no longer require such reports. In the 1960s, as a result of continued pressure from the Puerto Rican independence movement, the UN decided to reopen discussions on the political status of Puerto Rico.



We Took the Streets: Fighting for Latino Rights with the Young Lords

In 1967, Puerto Ricans held a plebiscite (referendum) on the issue of political status. The majority of the people voted for the continuation of the commonwealth status. In a 1993 plebiscite 46 percent of the people voted in favor of statehood, 49 percent voted to continue the commonwealth status and 4 percent voted for independence. A year later, the Puerto Rican legislature requested that the U.S. Congress define the necessary steps to resolve the future political status of Puerto Rico. Although Representative Don Young (R-Alaska) introduced a bill in the U.S. House of Representatives (H.R.856) to bring the U.S. closer to a national discussion of the future status of Puerto Rico, this dialogue has seen little movement.

Despite the many challenges Puerto Ricans face today, they continue to play a significant role in the

politics and government of the U.S. and to bring a wealth of contributions to all aspects of the economic, political, social, professional, intellectual, artistic and cultural life of the U.S.

Excerpted from *Resistance in Paradise: Rethinking 100 Years of U.S. Involvement in the Caribbean and the Pacific* edited by Deborah Wei and Rachael Kamel. Philadelphia: AFSC, 1998. Reprinted by permission of American Friends Service Committee.

Important Dates in Puerto Rican History

Pre-1492
Island is a homeland of the Taínos, a native people with links to the southern Arawak peoples of South America. They call the island Borikén.

1493
November 19—Christopher Columbus lands on the island of Borikén on his second voyage to the Western Hemisphere, claiming the island for Spain.

1508
Spanish colonization begins.

1511
The Taínos revolt against Spaniards with no success. Ponce de León orders 6,000 shot; survivors flee to mountains or leave the island.

1513
Spaniards begin massive forced transport of enslaved Africans to the island.

1854
Vieques annexed to Puerto Rico.

1865
Cuban and Puerto Ricans living in New York City form Republican Society to agitate for independence from Spain.

1868
El Grito de Lares Rebellion, demanding Puerto Rico's independence from Spain.

1873
Slavery abolished in Puerto Rico.

1898
U.S. troops invade Puerto Rico during Spanish-American War. Spain cedes Puerto Rico to U.S. under Treaty of Paris.

1899
August 8—San Ciriaco hurricane.

1900
U.S. Congress passes Foraker Act, establishing a U.S.-controlled civilian government.

1917
Puerto Ricans made U.S. citizens under the Jones Act.

1922
Nationalist Party founded, demanding Puerto Rico's independence from the U.S.

1930s
Thousands of Vieques residents migrate to Saint Croix (U.S. Virgin Islands) in search of work in the wake of the closure of sugar mills.

1937
March 21—Ponce Massacre unfolds when 20 are killed, 100 injured after police fire on a peaceful Nationalist Party protest.

1938
Luis Muñoz Marín founds the Popular Democratic Party.

1940s
U.S. Navy expropriates 26,000 acres (72 percent) of Vieques territory for maneuvers, bombing practice and storage of military explosives. The economic crisis deepens and the last sugar mill, Playa Grande, is forced to close.

1946
Puerto Rican Independence Party founded.

1947
U.S. Department of the Interior plan to forcibly relocate Vieques's entire population to St. Croix is defeated by policymakers.

Operation Bootstrap industrialization plan begins, prompting mass emigration to the U.S.

1948

Luis Muñoz Marín becomes first elected governor of Puerto Rico.

1950

Nationalist uprising. Thousands of independence sympathizers are jailed.

1952

Commonwealth status implemented.

1967

New Progressive Party founded, advocating U.S. statehood for Puerto Rico.

1972

United Nations Decolonization Committee declares Puerto Rico a U.S. colony and demands self-determination for the island.

1973

U.S. Congress recommends that U.S. Navy leave Vieques.

1980

U.S. Congress recommends that U.S. Navy leave Vieques.

1987

Puerto Rican population living in the U.S. reaches 2.5 million.

1989

Governor asks U.S. Congress for a plebiscite on the island's future status.

1991

In an island-wide vote, Puerto Ricans reject an amendment that would have "reviewed" their commonwealth status.

Puerto Rico declares Spanish its only official language.

1998 December 13—Voters reject choices in non-binding referendum on political status by choosing "none of the above."

1996

Phasing out of Federal Tax law 936 which gave U.S. businesses tax incentives for working in Puerto Rico.

1999

April 19—Civilian accidentally killed by U.S. military forces during a training exercise on Vieques.

September 11—Eleven pro-independence Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN) members responsible for bombings in the New York and Chicago in the 1970s and 1980s are released from federal prisons after accepting a controversial clemency offer from President Bill Clinton; five others refuse the clemency and remain jailed.

2000

November 7—Sila M. Calderón elected Puerto Rico's first female governor.

2003

U.S. government announces that it will no longer use Vieques as a site for military exercises. Additional dates to bring the timeline to the present will be added soon.

2010

Student Strikes at the University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras call attention to the continual disparities, including tuition hikes. The strikes draw national attention, particularly due to police violence against the student body.

2015

Governor Alejandro Padilla officially declares the Puerto Rican government bankrupt. As a U.S. colony, Puerto Rico does not have the ability to declare bankruptcy in the same way a U.S. state or city would.

2016

After attention drawn by Puerto Rican policy makers and organizations, Congress appoints a body of economic officials in charge of managing the Puerto Rican public debt. The body is called Puerto Rico Oversight Management and Economic Stability (PROMESA). Many grassroots activists protest PROMESA arguing that it continues a history of colonial restraints.

2017

In September 2017, Hurricanes Irma and Maria leave an aftermath of natural and manmade

disasters. Policy makers and activists clash about the political and economic choices for "reimagining" Puerto Rico.

2019

In July 2019, Puerto Rican's protest in the streets for 11 days and successfully call for the resignation of Governor Ricardo Rossello (PNP). Activists had been calling for accountability regarding the public debt and federal funds after Hurricane Maria, and protesting privatization of schools and labor contracts in Puerto Rico for years. The leaked Telegram Chat in which Governor Rossello and members of his cabinet mock women, feminists, LGBTQ communities, and even Hurricane Maria's dead, ignited a series of PR wide protests and marches, joined by artists, authors, athletes, and educators, unprecedented people's unity and power Puerto Rico's history.

2020

Starting on December 28, 2019, Puerto Rico, particularly its southern and southwest areas, begin experiencing earthquake activity. On January 7, 2020 Puerto Rico experienced a 6.4 earthquake which damages homes, schools, and landmarks, particularly in the southern areas. Once again since Hurricane Maria, Puerto Rico's power grid collapses. Immediately, Puerto Ricans begin looking for ways to aid hurting communities, including building tent cities and holding cultural and education activities outdoors. On January 18, a group of Puerto Rican ciudadanos in Ponce find a warehouse full of stocked supplies left over from Hurricane Maria which was never distributed by local government. Indignation against the local and federal government is renewed in protest movements calling into question government corruption and accountability. 2020 is an election year in Puerto Rico in which for the first time the political party Victoria Ciudadana will participate.

Teaching About the Taínos, Columbus, and Indigenous Peoples' Day in a Middle School English Language Learners Classroom

Alicia Lopez

"Who knows who Christopher Columbus was?" I ask my students a few weeks before what is now Indigenous Peoples' Day in our town.

Blank stares. Students often have pockets of knowledge that will contribute to lessons, but sometimes we have to push them to get at that knowledge.

I try again, "Cristobal Colon? Cristoforo Colombo? Cristóvão Colón?"

That works better. Junior, a student from Cape Verde, responds with "Marinheiro!"

"Yes, he was a sailor. What else do you know about him?"

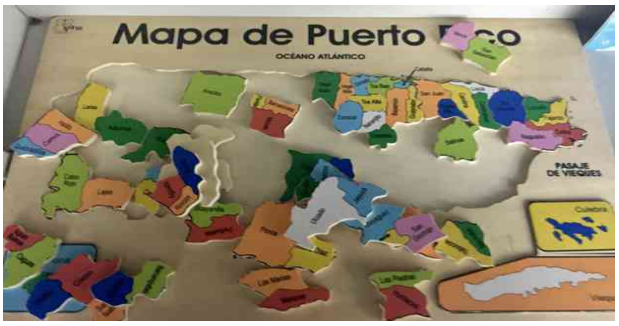
I begin to fill out the K-W-L (know, want to know, learned) chart that I am modeling on the whiteboard for the students and indicate that they should do the same. When I originally taught this lesson, it had not occurred to me that my students wouldn't know Christopher Columbus by his Americanized name.

After a few minutes, I ask the students, "What about the Taíno people? Who were they?"

Maricela's hands shoot up. "The people who live in Puerto Rico antes!" Being Puerto Rican, she has heard and learned about the Taínos, whereas the other students in my class have no idea. "Muy bien, Maricela. Antes is 'before' in English. Let's add Maricela's information to the 'know' column."

I tell the students, "The Taínos were the people who lived on the island of Puerto Rico before anyone from Europe came. There were indigenous people, *gente indigena*, all over North and South America, for thousands of years. Do you know anything else about the Taínos, Maricela?"

Most typical readings about the conquest of the Americas in social studies textbooks begin with the actual conquest itself as if history did not exist before the conquest happened.



In my unit, the narrative is flipped; it begins with a description of Taíno life on the island of Boriken, the Taíno name for Puerto Rico.

After we complete the K-W-L chart, I present the students with some of the relevant vocabulary.

"First, I want everyone to translate the word in the left column to your language," and I show them what I mean by translating the word "indigenous" to "indigena." This way, my students see that "indigenous" is a cognate (for most of them), and the students who have more academic literacy can draw on their backgrounds.

"In the third column, you should draw or cut and paste a picture of what the word is." This helps the students have a concrete image related to the word. At my school, all students have Chromebooks, so we have the option of doing this electronically or on paper.

After spending a class or so on vocabulary, I have my students read aloud together.

First, they read about the Taínos, the largest indigenous group on the Caribbean islands. The text describes their housing, agriculture, sports, language, and more. The second reading describes the arrival of Columbus and his use of violence against

the Taínos in his pursuit of profit and domination.

As we read, Monica blurts out, "So Columbus was bad?"

"Well, Monica," I say, "it is more complicated than good and bad. Let's keep reading and as you learn more, you can decide how you feel about Columbus."

I think about my town, and how several years ago, first the schools and then the town officially changed Columbus Day to Indigenous People's Day. Cities and towns across the United States are following suit. Thus, it is essential to teach the history of indigenous people in the Americas so that students can understand the reasons behind this change. In addition, as more Puerto Ricans are arriving on the U.S. mainland as environmental refugees in the wake of Hurricane Maria in 2017, there is an urgency for teachers to educate themselves and their students about Puerto Rico and its complex history of colonization. Teachers can use this lesson about Taínos and Columbus as a way to approach these topics and to affirm the identities and history of our students with Caribbean heritage.

As my students continue reading, highlighting and making comments, I feel confident they are getting a more modern and socially aware view of the Caribbean islands before and after the conquest.

Instructions and Handouts

Estimated time for the entire lesson: 4 one hour classes for beginning ELL students at the grade 7-8 level.

Prior Knowledge Activities

Prior knowledge questions activate students' background knowledge and recognize that students have information to contribute. Some students will say, "I don't know anything about the Taínos," but with some prompting and probing questions, they can often come up with something. Teachers can choose to either ask questions orally of the students, have students write the answers to the questions below, or complete a K-W-L chart. Teachers can ask questions such as:

Who are the Taínos? Where did they live?

What do you know about indigenous people in America?

What do you know about Columbus' voyage to America?

After teaching this lesson a few times, I also realized that it goes much more smoothly if students have a basic understanding of world geography. This is not always the case, though, in particular when there are Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE) in the class.

Active Reading Instructions

Often, there are a few stronger or more daring readers even if they are beginners. This is a great way to practice oral skills. Along the way, we stop often, checking in for comprehension. While time-consuming, English Learners at this level benefit from this sort of reading more than from reading silently. Students who are stronger readers and more advanced beginners can usually tackle the longer paragraphs, while students who are still true beginners can take on smaller parts with help.

"Students, remember to 'talk to the text' as we read!! Use your colored highlighters or pens to underline, circle, ask questions, draw pictures, and define words you don't understand." I model the technique, which I use often, on the overhead projector.

This strategy is commonly known as active reading or annotation. I model the technique by projecting the text onto the whiteboard and asking the students what they think we should highlight, circle, and underline. At times, the words I chose to preteach are not the same ones the students have trouble understanding; Google images come in very handy for this, and I do a quick search to show the students an image that will help them understand.

Readings

- Reading #1: The Taíno people of Boriken (PDF)
- Reading #2: The Arrival of Columbus (PDF)

Questions for Discussion and Comprehension

These questions serve to gauge the students' understanding of the readings and to get them to think more deeply and critically about the Taínos

and the arrival of Columbus. Teachers can modify the questions depending on their students' English level and grade.

1. What was the purpose of Columbus' voyage?
2. What was the outcome of Columbus' voyage?
3. How was Columbus' voyage an example of "Movement"?
4. What changed after Columbus arrived?
5. In the U.S., there is a holiday celebrating Columbus called Columbus Day. Some places are changing the name to Indigenous Peoples' Day. Discuss with your classmates. Do you think the name of the holiday should be changed, or not? Why?

Follow-up Activity

This activity is designed to prompt students to think about different viewpoints while starting to develop their academic language. Teachers can modify the activity depending on their student groups. Even beginner ELL students can understand most of the images and make some comments about them.

- Double-entry Journal: Should we celebrate Columbus Day? (PDF)

Sources and Additional Resources

Rethinking Columbus: The Next 500 Years, which includes "The Taínos: 'Men of the Good,'" by José Barriero; a critical reading activity of Columbus's diary on his first contact with Indigenous people; a timeline of Spain, Columbus, and Taínos with teaching ideas; and an adaptation from the writings of Bartolomé de las Casas on the first Spanish priest to denounce the Spanish brutality in Hispaniola.

A Young People's History of the United States by Howard Zinn

Teaching Tolerance

"Indigenous Cuba: Hidden in Plain Sight" by José Barreiro for the *Magazine of the National Museum of the American Indian*

Whose History Matters? Students Can Name Columbus, But Most Have Never Heard of the Taíno People by Bill Bigelow for the Zinn Education Project.

The Death of Salcedo

The story of the death of Salcedo is one of the most widely known in Puerto Rico.

The Borínquen chiefs had gathered to discuss the bad treatment they received at the hands of the Spaniards. Agüeybana, the head chief of Borínquen and friend of the Spaniards, had died. His nephew, Guaybana, had taken his place. Guaybana began the discussion like this:

"Brothers, the time has come to fight. We welcomed the white men as friends, and they make us into slaves. It is time to regain our freedom."

"I understand your attitude, Guaybana. But you must learn to accept your destiny. We must respect the gods. We must accept what they want for us."

"I would rather die than be a slave, Mabodamaca. You may be right, but I cannot and will not accept this situation. We must fight, even if it's against the gods!"

"That's the way to talk, Guarionex!" answered Guaybana. "Besides, who says they're gods? They themselves never said it. We say it and they don't deny it. It's to their advantage. That way they enslave us easily. True, we've never seen them die, but they've only been among us three years."

"They have assured me that they are immortal. And we know that their great Yucaju had a son who had supposedly died, but he came back to life after three days. He was a god of love; he loved even his enemies. How different from them! You know how they stole my property."

"We all understand your anger, Mabó. We are all suffering," answered Guaybana.

"Yes, I was the first to show their chief that yellow metal they covet, and for which they make us suffer so much," said Chief Guaraca bitterly.

The old chief Urayoán listened without saying a word. He did not share in the violent attitude of some nor the resignation of others. When he finally did speak, he did so calmly but firmly.

"There is one thing I don't understand about that great *bohique* they call Jesus. If they themselves are gods—if they are immortal—why do they so admire another one that is no greater than they? Could it be they adore that son of the great Yucajú precisely because he is the only one that is truly immortal? He could conquer death, but they cannot. We must be certain. I don't know how yet, but when the opportunity arises, I promise to find out if they are immortal, and I will let you know."

* * *

Diego Salcedo walked through the western forests of Borínquen. He roamed the lands of the old chief Urayoán. The old chief had given him some of his men to serve as guides and to carry his personal belongings. In this way Salcedo could accomplish his mission easily. As he walked, he thought about several things: the temperament of the Indians, so docile and humble, who accepted the Spaniards as their masters. In effect, they believed they were gods. The very idea flattered Salcedo. He smiled. Then he thought about the Indian girls, with their sweet voices, their beautiful suntanned bodies and that long silky hair. For a while he could forget about the haughty women of Spain.

They arrived at the bank of a river. The river was not very big, but there was no place to cross. The docile, helpful Indians offered a solution. Two of them offered to carry Salcedo. After all, that is how a god should be treated. Salcedo beamed with satisfaction as the Indians locked their arms to form a seat. When they got to the middle of the river, something happened that put an end to Salcedo's pleasant thoughts. The Indians overturned him and held him underwater. He could not breathe. He was drowning!

When he stopped struggling, the Indians held him underwater a while longer. Then they dragged him to the bank. They were frightened at what they had done. The white god would surely punish them now. They propped him up, and one of the Indians begged his forgiveness: "Oh great white god, forgive us. We are poor mortals who don't understand your greatness."

The great white god did not answer.

He did not show signs of life. But they had to be absolutely certain. What if he rose from the dead after three days, like the great *bohique?* The Indians set out to wait. They waited three days and three nights.

But Salcedo never did show signs of life. Quite the contrary; from the state the body was in, it was easy to tell that the great white god was absolutely dead.

"They are men. They are not gods," declared one of the Indians. And during the night, the bonfires in the mountains proclaimed the news.

"The Death of Salcedo" appears in history books and the famous playwright, René Marqués, uses it in his story Tres hombres junto al río. From *Stories from Puerto Rico*, edited by Robert L. Muckley and Adela Martínez-Santiago (McGraw-Hill Companies, 1999). Used by permission of McGraw-Hill Companies.

La muerte de Salcedo

El relato de la muerte de Salcedo es uno de los más conocidos de la historia de Puerto Rico. Se encuentra en todos los textos de historia y el famoso autor y dramaturgo, René Marqués, lo usa como tema en su cuento, "Tres hombres junto al río".

Los caciques de Borinquén estaban reunidos. Venían a discutir el mal trato que recibían los indios de los españoles. Agüeybana, el cacique principal de Boriquén y amigo de los españoles, había muerto. Su sobrino Guaybana había heredado su lugar. Guaybana inició la reunión hablando así:

– Hermano, es hora de pelear. Recibimos a los hombres blancos como amigos y ellos nos hacen asclavos. Es hora de recobrar nuestra libertad.

– Comprendo su actitud, Guaybana. Pero usted tiene que aprender a aceptar el destino. Hay que respetar a los dioses.1 Tenemos que aceptar lo que ellos quieren para nosotros.

– Prefiero morir antes que aceptar la esclavitud, Mabodamaca. Es posible que usted tenga razón. Pero yo no puedo ni quiero aceptar esta situación. ¡Luchemos, aunque sea contra los dioses!

– ¡Así se habla, Guarionex!—contestó Guaybana—. Y al fin, ¿quién dice que son dioses? Ellos mismos nunca lo dijeron. Nosotros lo decimos y ellos no lo niegan. Así les conviene. Así nos hacen esclavos más fácilmente. Es cierto que no los vemos morir, pero solo llevan tres años entre nosotros.

– Ellos me aseguran a mí que son inmortales. Y sabemos que creen que el gran Yucajú2 de ellos tenía un hijo que pareció morir, pero a los tres días volvió a vivir. Un dios de amor, que amaba hasta a sus enemigos. ¡Qué distinto de ellos! Ya saben ustedes cómo me quitaron mis propiedades.

– Todos comprendemos su enojo, Mabó. Pero todos estamos sufriendo—contestó Guaybana.

– Sí, creo que fui yo el primero en mostrarle al jefe de ellos ese metal amarillo que quieren tanto, y por el cual nos hacen tanto sufrir—dijo con amargura el cacique Guaraca.

El Viejo cacique Urayoán escuchaba sin hablar. No compartía ni la actitud violenta de unos ni la resignación de otros. Cuando por fin se puso a hablar, era con calma pero con firmeza.

– Hay una cosa que no entiendo en cuanto a este gran bohique3 que llaman Jesús, y me parece curioso. Si ellos mismos son dioses, si son inmortales, ¿por qué admiran tanto a otro que entonces no es más que ellos? ¿O será que ellos adoran a este hijo del gran Yucajú precisamente porque él es el único que es realmente inmortal? Él puede vencer la muerte, pero ellos no. Pero debemos estar seguros. No sé cómo todavía, pero cuando llegue el momento oportuno, haré la prueba, y les avisaré el resultado.

* * *

Diego Salcedo caminaba por los bosques del oeste de Boriquén. Caminaba por las tierras del viejo cacique Urayoán. El viejo cacique le había dado algunos de sus hombres para servirle de guías y para cargar sus efectos. Así Salcedo podía cumplir su misión más fácilmente. Mientras caminaba, pensaba en varias cosas: en el carácter de los indios, tan mansos y tan humildes, que aceptaban a los españoles como sus amos. En fin, los creían dioses. A Salcedo le halagaba la idea de ser un dios. Sonreía pensándolo. Luego se puso a pensar en las muchachas indias, con sus voces tan dulces, sus hermosos cuerpos bronceados y ese pelo negro tan fino y sedoso. Podían hacerlo olvidar por un tiempo a las altivas mozas de España.

Llegaron a la orilla de un río. No era muy grande el río pero no pudo encontrarse un sitio llano para cruzar. Pero los mansos y serviciales indios tuvieron una solución. Dos de ellos ofrecieron cargarlo. En fin, así debía tratarse a un dios, reflexionaba Salcedo con satisfacción en tanto que los indios le improvisaban un asiento con sus brazos. Pero al llegar a mitad del río, pasó algo que puso fin a las reflexiones amenas de Salcedo. Los indios lo volcaron y lo sujetaron debajo del agua. No podía respirar. ¡Se ahogaba!

Después que dejó de luchar, los indios todavía lo sostuvieron debajo del agua un buen rato. Luego lo llevaron a la orilla. Estaban asustados de lo que habían hecho. El dios blanco seguramente iba a castigarlos severamente. Lo sentaron en la orilla, y uno de los indios comenzó a pedirle perdón. –Oh, gran dios blanco, perdónenos. Somos pobres mortales que no comprendemos su grandeza.

El gran dios blanco no contestó nada.

Era cierto que no daba muestras de vida. Pero tenían que estar seguros. ¿Y si volvía a la vida después de tres días, como el gran bohique? Así los indios se pusieron a esperar. Esperaron tres días y tres noches.

Pero Salcedo todavía no daba muestras de vida. Por el contrario, se veía por el estado del cuerpo que el gran dios blanco estaba bien muerto.

– Son hombres; no son dioses—se limitó a decir uno de los indios. Y por la noche, las hogueras en las montañas proclamaban la noticia.

Carabali

The Taínos escaped from forced labor imposed upon them by the Spaniards, or they died trying. To replace these Indians, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, enslaved Africans were introduced in Puerto Rico. The slave trade was a lucrative business for more than two centuries, and there were enslaved Africans in Puerto Rico for more than 300 years. Slaves harvested sugar cane, the country's principal agricultural product. Finally, on March 22, 1873, slavery was abolished. For this reason, March 22 has been declared an official holiday in Puerto Rico.

Evidence shows that laws were severe during the slavery era, not only with regard to people who were enslaved, but with free men also. Even they enjoyed few rights. One of the most famous legends of Coll y Toste, which serves as the basis for the following story, tells how one of those enslaved refused to accept his fate.

The workers of the San Blas hacienda, situated in the valley among the mountains south of Arecibo, were excited. Carabalí, the rebellious slave, had escaped for the third time.

"Prepare the dogs and the men we need to start the hunt immediately," said the foreman to the overseer. "We've got to kill that black man! His death will serve as a warning to the rest of them!"

So early one clear morning, the men and the dogs of the great San Blas hacienda set out to hunt the man who preferred to die a free man than live as a slave. Meanwhile, in a cave high in the mountains, Carabalí awaited his pursuers. He had escaped the previous night: a cold, foggy, rainy night. With great difficulty, he had climbed the mountain and had reached a cave he was familiar with from a previous escape. Exhausted, he had fallen asleep as soon as he entered the cave. But he knew his pursuers would be there soon, and he was up early, preparing his defense.

With a machete that he had stolen from the hacienda, he cut a bunch of branches to cover the entrance to the cave. Then he built a barricade with them, leaving only a small hole for air and light to pass through. Eating wild fruits, he sat down to wait for his pursuers. He didn't have to wait long. The barking of the dogs told him they were drawing near.

The barking could be heard closer. Suddenly he realized that one of the dogs was already at the mouth of the cave. The dog began to dig and soon opened a bigger hole where he could fit one leg and his whole head. Carabalí hit him hard with his machete, cutting his head off. Then he proceeded to repair the barricade. He was able to kill two more dogs this way. But with the third one, he missed, and the wounded dog ran away, barking, toward the men who were already near the cave.

The men shot their guns, and Carabalí was forced to seek refuge deep within the cave. Arriving at the mouth of the cave, the men tore down the barricade, allowing the dogs to enter and attack the fugitive all at once. Since they couldn't see inside the cave, the men waited outside for the dogs to grab the unfortunate slave. Carabalí, determined to fight until his strength gave out, retreated, defending himself with his machete. Suddenly he felt the earth give way under his feet, and he fell into a deep hole. The dogs barked, frustrated, at the edge of the abyss. Feeling their way along, the men entered the cave to find out what had happened. Believing Carabalí dead, they left, taking with them the dogs that had survived the blows of the African.

But luck, so adverse at times, now smiled upon Carabalí. He had landed in the soft mud of an underground stream and was not hurt. He could see another entrance to the cave, from which the stream trickled out. Without having to look very hard, he found his machete. When he found his way, he discovered that the stream emerged on the other side of the mountain toward the land of another hacienda called San Antonio.

Ravaged by hunger, Carabalí descended toward the San Antonio property to steal some food. With time, he found other escaped slaves, whom he gathered in a troop, and showed them the secret of the cave. They worked to build a better hiding place. They also carved a secret path in stone, which led to

a higher part of the cave, where Carabalí had originally entered. From there they could go down to the property of San Blas.

From that moment on, Carabalí's troop limited its raids to the property belonging to San Blas. The cattle disappeared, the fowl disappeared and one day a foreman was found dead. In vain, soldiers were sent to the cave; no one could uncover Carabalí's secret.

They only found bones; the bones of the animals that Carabalí and his men had eaten. To make matters seem more important, they said that human bones were found there also. They soon began to call the place the Cave of the Dead. With that name, the cave began to inspire fear and superstition.

Unable to provide a logical explanation for what had happened, the people created a supernatural explanation. They said it had to do with the condemned soul of Carabalí, together with a group of evil spirits that came out to take revenge on the owners and foremen of San Blas.

Carabalí himself never did anything to correct this wrong impression.

He believed it was fitting that the white men sometimes were victims of their own superstitions.

From *Stories from Puerto Rico*, edited by Robert L. Muckley and Adela Martínez-Santiago (McGraw-Hill Companies, 1999). Used by permission of McGraw-Hill Companies.

Carabalí

Ya sabemos que los indios se escaparon del trabajo forzado impuesto por los españoles o murieron como resultado del mismo. Para suplir a estos indios, a principios del siglo XVI, empezaron a introducirse en Puerto Rico esclavos negros. La trata de esclavos fue un lucrativo negocio por más de dos siglos y hubo esclavos negros en Puerto Rico durante más de 300 años. Se utilizaron mucho en el cultivo de la caña de azúcar, el principal producto agrícola del país. Por fin, el 22 de marzo de 1873, se abolió la esclavitud. El 22 de marzo se celebra en Puerto Rico como fiesta oficial con este motivo.

Hay evidencia de que la ley fue muy severa durante la época de la esclavitud, no sólo con los negros esclavos, sino también con los libertados. Aun éstos gozaron de pocos derechos.Una de las leyendas más famosas de Coll y Toste, la cual nos ha servido de base para el siguiente relato, cuenta cómo uno de estos esclavos no quiso aceptar su destino.

Los trabajadores de la hacienda San Blas, situada en un valle entre las montañas al sur de Arecibo, estaban alborotados. Carabalí, el esclavo rebelde, se había escapado por tercera vez. —Aliste a los perros y a los hombres que necesitemos para la persecución inmediatamente—le dijo el mayoral al capataz—. ¡Hay que matar a ese negro! ¡Su muerte servirá de escarmiento a los demás!

Así, temprano por la mañana de un día claro, hombres y perros de la gran hacienda San Blas se pusieron en camino para perseguir al hombre que prefería morir libre que vivir esclavo. Y en ese mismo momento, en una cueva en lo alto de las montañas, Carabalí esperaba a sus perseguidores. Se había escapado la noche anterior, una noche fría de neblina y lluvia. Con grandes dificultades, había subido una montaña y había llegado a una cueva que conocía por una escapada anterior. Rendido de cansancio, había dormido al llegar a la cueva. Como sabía que no tardarían en llegar sus perseguidores, se había levantado temprano para preparar su defensa.

Con un machete que había robado de la hacienda, cortó una cantidad de ramos para tapar la entrada de la cueva. Después construyó con éstos una barricada, dejando tan sólo un pequeño hueco por donde entraban luz y aire. Y comiendo frutas silvestres, se sentó a esperar a los perseguidores. No tuvo que esperar mucho. Pronto los ladridos de los perros le avisaron que se acercaban.

Los ladridos se oían más cerca. De repente se dio cuenta de que uno de los perros ya estaba a la entrada de la cueva. El perro se puso a escarbar y pronto abrío un hueco más grande por donde pudo meter una pata y toda la cabeza. Carabalí le descargó un tremendo machetazo que le cercenó el cuello, y después volvió a arreglar la barricada. De la misma manera pudo matar dos perros más. Pero con el tercero erró el golpe y el perro, herido, corrió ladrando hasta los hombres que ya estaban cerca de la cueva.

Los hombres dispararon sus fusiles, obligando a Carabalí a refugiarse en el interior de la cueva. Y al llegar a la entrada de la cueva, deshicieron la barricada permitiendo entrar a los perros y atacar en tropel al fugitivo. Como no podían ver dentro de la cueva, los hombres esperaron fuera a que los perros agarraran al infortunado esclavo. Carabalí, resuelto a luchar hasta agotar sus fuerzas, retrocedía defendiéndose a machetazos. Pero de repente sintió que le faltaba tierra bajo sus pies y se cayó en un profundo abismo. Los perros ladraban frustrados al borde del abismo. A tientas, entraron los hombres en la cueva para averiguar lo que había pasado. Luego, creyendo muerto a Carabalí, se fueron, llevándose a los perros que habían sobrevivido los machetazos del africano.

Mas la suerte, tan adversa a veces, ahora le sonreía. Se había caído en un fango blando dentro de un arroyo subterráneo y no estaba herido. Pudo ver otra entrada de la cueva por donde salía el agua del arroyo. Y sin buscar mucho, recuperó su machete. Al orientarse, se dio cuenta de que el arroyo salía por otro lado de la montaña hacia los terrenos de otra hacienda llamada San Antonio.

Acosado por el hambre, Carabalí bajaba por los terrenos del San Antonio para robar comida. Con

el tiempo encontraba a otros esclavos desertores a quienes reunió en una cuadrilla, enseñándoles el secreto de la cueva. Éstos trabajaron para arreglar mejor su escondite. También tallaron en la piedra una subida secreta que conducía a la parte superior de la cueva donde originalmente había entrado Carabalí, y desde donde se podía bajar a los terrenos del San Blas.

Desde aquel momento la cuadrilla de Carabalí prácticamente limitó sus incursiones a los terrenos de la hacienda San Blas. Desapareció el ganado, desaparecieron las aves, y un día se encontró muerto a un capataz. En vano se mandaron soldados a la cueva; no descubrieron el secreto de Carabalí.

Sólo encontraron huesos; los huesos de animales que Carabalí y los suyos habían comido. Pero para dar más importancia al asunto, contaban que había allí huesos humanos también. Pronto empezaba a llamarse la Cueva de los Muertos. Y con tal nombre, la cueva empezó a inspirar un miedo supersticioso.

Sin poder encontrar una explicación natural a lo que pasaba, la gente creó una explicación sobrenatural. Decían que se trataba del alma en pena de Carabalí junto con un grupo de espíritus malignos que salían a vengarse de los dueños y capataces del San Blas.

Carabalí mismo nunca hizo nada para corregir esta impresión equivocada.

Creía que convenía que los blancos fuesen a veces víctimas de sus propias supersticiones.

Part 2:
Identity

Source: Marco Esparza

Source: Robert Liu-Trujillo

Introduction

Identity

What does it mean to be Puerto Rican?

Though Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens, they are a people with a culture and history distinct from other "Americans." They hold a deep pride in their unique racial and ethnic heritage, cultural traditions, and individual and collective achievements. They vigorously debate their political relationship to the U.S.

"Puerto Rico is its people. Puerto Rico is our customs. Puerto Rico is the way we greet each other," one resident told sociologist Nancy Morris, who studied Puerto Rican identity and included her findings in her book *Puerto Rico: Culture, Politics and Identity*. Another said, "I feel very proud to be Puerto Rican. I think my island is the most beautiful island in the world."

Descended from the Taíno peoples, who thrived and cultivated the Caribbean islands before the arrival of Europeans, from enslaved Africans who were brought to the region for their labor, skills, and knowledge and from Spaniards and other Europeans who came to America in pursuit of land and riches, the nearly 4 million Puerto Ricans connect with one another and with others in a way that reflects those unique heritages. Robert Santiago writes about this multicultural heritage in *Black and Latino*. To honor their Taíno roots, many Puerto Ricans call themselves Boricua, derived from the Taíno name of the island, "land of the brave people."

Puerto Ricans also celebrate the particular imprint they have made on the Spanish language. "The way we talk—we have our own tone of voice, our own way of talking that distinguishes us even among Latin Americans. You can take a Cuban, a Dominican and you can tell if there's a Puerto Rican among them. That is identity. You don't have to say

'I'm Puerto Rican' to distinguish yourself," one person told Morris.

Many Puerto Ricans embrace their past as country people—sometimes with romanticized nostalgia—by remembering the resourceful, impoverished Puerto Rican peasant from the mountains, known as a *jíbaro*. Sometimes, it's not a compliment to call someone a *jíbaro*. But everyone knows who a *jíbaro* is, even though development and industrialization have caused the jíbaro population to dwindle.

At the same time, the urbanization brought on by generations of city living—both in Puerto Rico and on the mainland—have infused Puerto Rican identity with other strains of life, such as the Nuyorican culture of New York City. Puerto Ricans residing on the mainland have made enormous contributions to U.S. society—enriching cultural and intellectual life, professional activities and labor organizing. While the largest concentration settled in New York City, others were drawn to Florida, Chicago, the mid-size cities of New England, Hawai'i and many other parts of the U.S. Hundreds of thousands of Puerto Ricans have come to the mainland for more than a century, bringing their numbers to more than 2.5 million today.

Some arrived, like Lucila Padrón, Dolores Juarbe, Eva Monge, Gloria Maldonado and Santos and María Rivera, in search of economic well-being, often because they could not earn a sufficient living at home. Others, like Arturo Alfonso Schomburg, sought educational opportunities. Some came for both work and learning.

Here we learn of the passion and dedication of Schomburg, who founded one of the nation's premier archives of the black experience, the Schomburg Library in Harlem, and of the challenges faced by workers who came to work in the cigar-making and garment industries.

Straddling the influences of the island and the mainland is an essential aspect of Puerto Rican contemporary existence, as we learn in *Quinceañera*. Puerto Ricans frequently travel back and forth, and these days, many Puerto Rican senior citizens choose to return to the island where they were born, or perhaps only where their parents were born, to enjoy their retirement on "*La Isla*." Such a joyful return is chronicled in *My Old San Juan*, which describes the impending departure of the Riveras as they pack their belongings to go back to the island they love after decades of raising their children and contributing their labor in Chicago.

The readings and lessons we have chosen in this section resist the traditional approach to Puerto Rico as a racial democracy of mixed indigenous, African, and Spanish descendents. Yet, often AfroBoricua histories are relegated to the periphery in young people's classroom materials. New in this addition is a lesson by William Garcia on the importance of culturally-relevant books for AfroBoricua young readers through his discussion of author-illustrator, Eric Velasquez's work. We are also pleased to include two poems from Carole Boston Weatherford and Eric Velasquez's award-winning picture book *Schomburg: The Man Who Built a Library* (Candlewick Press). New in this section is also a sample of student work which decenters traditional approaches to the writing about Puerto Ricanness. For example, Wilberto Sicard's poem "Open Letter to Allentown" describes the landscape of a small Pennsylvania town rather than New York or Puerto Rico, two places often seen as central to Puerto Rican experiences. Meanwhile Paige Pagan's piece "Bronx Lexicon" doesn't even mention Puerto Rico or dwell on any particular geographic location other than her choice of title. Instead, her piece asks us to stop and listen to her words—words that she uses skillfully to order her reality.

Eric Velasquez: An Afro-Puerto Rican Illustrator of Our Times

William Garcia-Medina

Growing up as an Afro-Latino in Puerto Rico, I don't have a childhood memory of having books by authors of color or with characters of color. I could not understand that Black Puerto Ricanness in Puerto Rico had meaning and its own unique experience. I was too young to have a lens for understanding the underrepresentation of Black childhood in Puerto Rico. In the alternative high school I attended, one teacher introduced us to Piri Thomas's *Down These Means Streets* (1967), but it was lost on me. I didn't have the language to understand Piri's experience, nor do I remember my teacher explaining to us the importance of Piri being Puerto Rican and his experiences with racism. The only kind of Blackness I knew as fact was Black American. Like me, many youths get to high school and find that the boundaries between Blackness and Latinidad have already been demarcated by their own experiences in their families, communities, and society.

When I began my bachelor's degree at the University of Puerto Rico, I could not ignore the racial hierarchies that were blatantly visible before me: The students and professors were predominantly white and came from middle-class backgrounds, whereas the community that the university was located in was predominantly working-class with a significant number of Black residents. How could I, a Black Puerto Rican from a transnational experience, not notice this before? Was it perhaps the looks I would get when I would enter the campus on my mountain bike wearing a du rag and fitted New York Yankees cap, or was it my code-switching from English to Spanish to Spanglish? Or was it my dark skin, tattoos, and refusal to filter my thoughts that seemed to pose a threatening otherness? With this informed curiosity, I started reading more about Black American experiences with fervor and relating to these experiences while living and working in Puerto Rico and being at the university.

When the chance came up to take a weeklong seminar with Juan Flores, I took it. I could not lose out on the opportunity to be part of a conversation on the Puerto Rican diaspora from another fellow New Yorker. Little did I know, that Flores along

This is a picture of Eric Velasquez with his parents from his website.

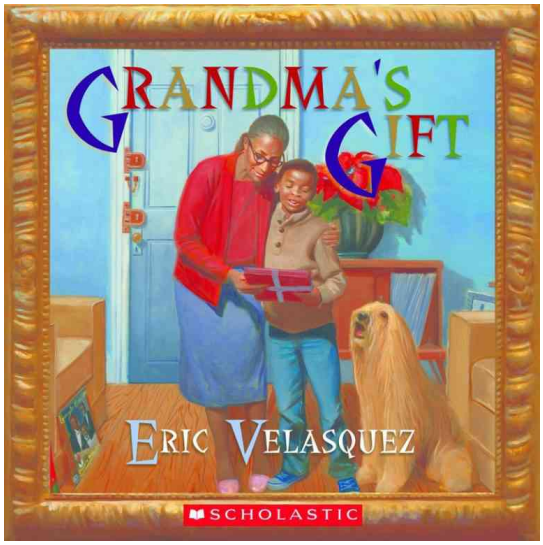
with Miriam Jiménez-Román would introduce me to their latest publication *The Afro-Latin@ Reader* (2009) where I would find out about Arturo Alfonso Schomburg, the term "Afro-Latino," and that my experiences had a name. "Afro-Latino," that was me. "Afro-Latino," that was Schomburg — a pioneer and bibliophile of Black culture during the Harlem Renaissance. "Afro-Latino" — why didn't I have this knowledge or representation before? Why did it take The *Afro-Latin@ Reader* to put Schomburg in the forefront? These rich topics should be taught at the K–12 level rather than waiting until college.

As an educator, I have hope that my story will not repeat itself for future generations. Writers and illustrators like Afro-Puerto Rican Eric Velasquez are changing the landscape for our Afro-Latino children and youth. Velasquez is considered one of the most successful and distinguished Afro-Latino book illustrators. In making the decision to write and illustrate, he explains that he wanted to see himself and other children of African descent represented.

Velasquez states,

> Consistently not seeing myself represented in the reading material was a big turnoff. Worse was the fact that the few times I did see people of color in any books, they were usually portrayed as slaves drawn as caricatures. All of the children in my elementary school were African American or Latino. Our textbooks were filled with all types of stories-some had an urban setting, however the images consisted of an all-white cast. Oddly enough, some of the children from Latin America identified with the white characters in the stories (especially with the abridged version of *Huckleberry Finn*). Not only did it inspire them to read the stories but especially if the character was doing something cool, they would show off and say "That's me," even though the character in the book at times was blonde. If you were a child of African descent and attempted to do the same ("That's me" bit) the other children would ridicule and torment you with "That is not you, you are Black!" Why did they take such joy in reminding me that I could not engage in the same fantasy as they did…I would often think: One day I am going to create a story and it is going to reflect my world, my neighborhood, my parents, my friends, and my people ("Interview with Eric Velasquez" 2014).

Illustrated books are important tools that allow students to see themselves, their experiences, and have a way of naming those marginalized experiences. From a pedagogical perspective, the fact that Velasquez has collaborated with Black American writers shows us how to think about social justice in ways that represent our shared histories and cultural production. Illustrated books like those about Roberto Clemente, Celia Cruz, and Junot Diaz's fictional character "Lola" allow children not only to see similar faces, but similar experiences of Afro-Latino childhood and community. Too often, Afro-Latino youth see and read experiences that do not fully encapsulate their everyday life — meaning that because of this, they understand their life, identity, and community to be wrong or uncommon. Eric refused to accept this and found inspiration from within his community.



As a young boy, Eric constantly kept himself busy by doodling and drawing, these becoming the building blocks of his future passion. Eric's inspiration for drawing was encouraged by his mother, while his fascination with music stemmed from his grandmother, fueling his desire to further a career in the arts years later. As the son of Afro-Puerto Rican parents, born in Spanish Harlem, his dual heritage of being a New Yorker and Puerto Rican gave Eric a unique cultural perspective. Eric was fortunate to attend the High School of Art and Design and later earned his BFA from the School of Visual Arts in 1983. After graduation, Eric became a freelance artist, trying to make a living out of his passion. With much success, Eric completed over 300 book jackets and interior illustrations. Some of his works include, but are not limited to, Beverly Naidoo's award winning *Journey to the Jo'Burg*, *Chain of Fire*; the complete series of *Encyclopedia Brown*; the complete series of *The Ghost Writers*; *The Apple Classics* series; and the cover of the 1999 Coretta Scott King award winner *Jazmin's Notebook* by Nikki Grimes.

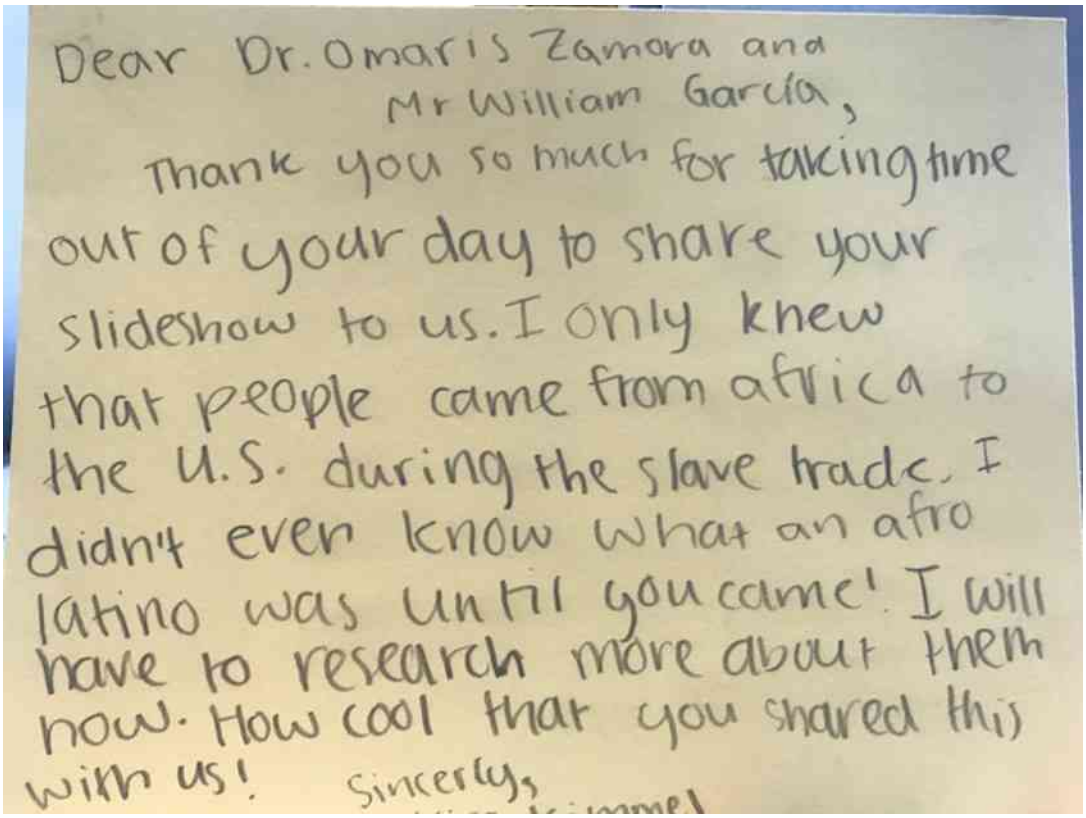
Velasquez has been spearheading a distinctive approach to Black and Latino children's literature that tends to the erasure of Afro-Puerto Ricans. Afro-Puerto Ricans in history have been primarily erased due to a nationalizing of Puerto Rican history that only acknowledges Blackness as part of the history of slavery in the Caribbean. For further reading on the subject, read the work of scholars, Isar Godreau, Zaire Dinzey-Flores, Hilda Llorens, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, among others.

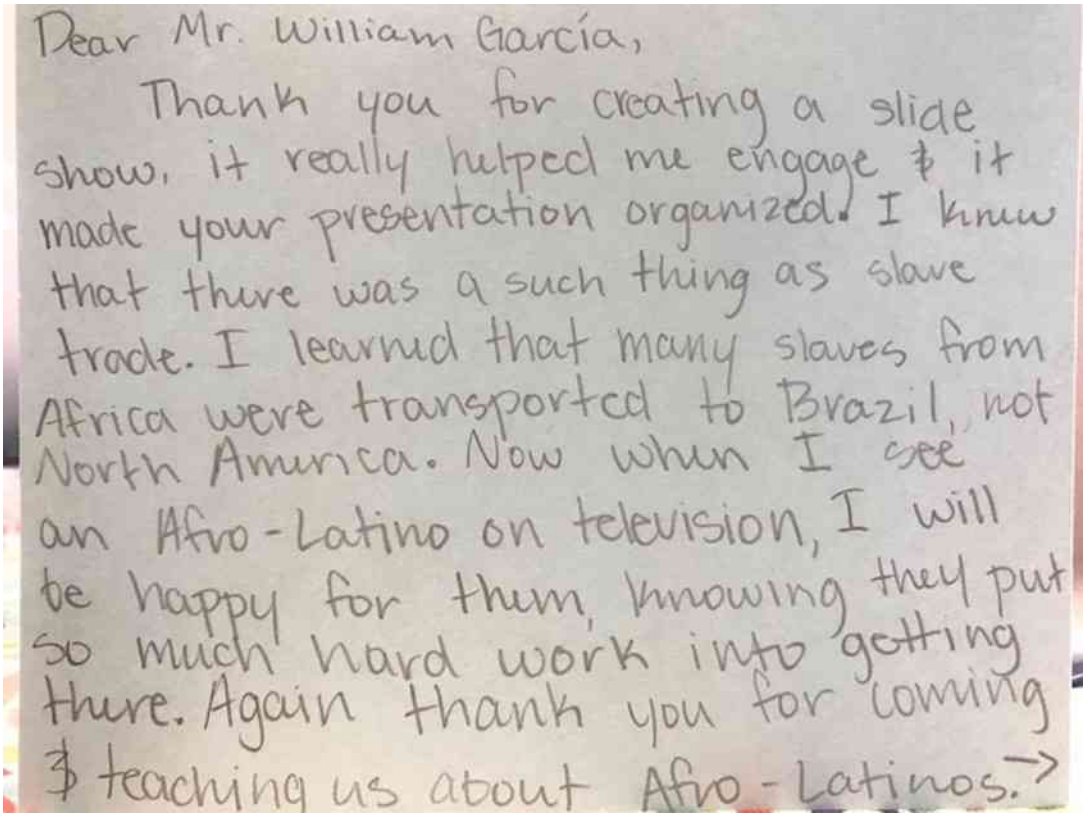
Latino picture books tend not to use Black characters and vice versa. However, Velasquez has been one of the illustrators to change that to show many different black and Latino immigrants in the same story. Having grown up in Spanish Harlem, Eric writes and illustrates books based on his life growing up. Some examples of these works include *Grandma's Records* (2004), *Grandma's Gift* (2013), and *Looking for Bongo* (2017). In these books, the main character is a Latino of African descent. It reminds Velasquez of how he grew up — every day being around Afro-Latinos and other Black immigrants. The characters are a representation of the African diaspora. In *Grandma's Gift*, Velasquez narrates a story inspired by his experience as a child with his grandmother. An Afro-Puerto Rican boy called Eric, like the author, is celebrating the Christmas holiday with his grandma by making *pasteles*, a Puerto Rican savory dish made of green plantains and various root vegetables.

"All the vendors knew that Grandma would buy only the best ingredients for her famous pasteles," said Eric.

Because the pasteles dish has many African influences, Velasquez hints at how Afro-Caribbean traditions are passed from generation to generation, or from his grandmother to him, the grandson. What is interesting about Velasquez's writing style is the way in which he introduces topics about race, racism, and Afro-Caribbean culture in ways that are easier for us to understand. For a sample lesson plan using *Grandma's Gift*, check out Brian Kelley's curriculum. Velasquez's illustrated books can be used in the beginning of any Afro-Latino curriculum, thereby underscoring contemporary Black migrations to the United States. In Kansas, myself and Dr. Omaris Zamora, an Afro-Latina professor of Afro-Caribbean literature and cultural studies at the University of Kansas, led a workshop on the slave trade in the Americas by highlighting slave rebellions and Afro-Latino migrations to the United States. The students were blown away, as you can see from a few of their notes to us (below).

Being able to show them Velasquez's books made an impression, as well as puzzling them with questions: "How come I didn't know about this before?" There is a clear need and want by young people of color to see themselves in public school curriculum much sooner than even 7th grade. By creating and


Dear Dr. Omaris Zamora and
Mr William Garcia,
Thank you so much for taking time
out of your day to share your
slideshow to us. I only knew
that people came from africa to
the U.S. during the slave trade. I
didn't ever know what an afro
latino was until you came! I will
have to research more about them
now. How cool that you shared this
with us! Sincerly,



illustrating Black American and Afro-Latino illustrated books, Velasquez proves that one can represent both groups. For example, his picture books *Escape: A Story of the Underground Railroad* by Sharon Shavers Gale, *Jesse Owens: The Fastest Man Alive* by Carole Boston Weatherford, *Champion: The Story of Muhammad Ali* by Jim Haskins, and *The Sound that Jazz Makes* by Carole Boston Weatherford demonstrate his passion for representing various Black cultures and identities.

The number of Afro-Latino children's book writers is small, and stories surrounding Afro-Latino experiences are also uncommon. His recent success with the picture book *Schomburg: The Man Who Built a Library*, written by Carole Boston Weatherford, has opened a new chapter in Afro-Latino education in the United States and changing stories about immigration and multiple narratives. I met Eric Velasquez for the first time in 2016, while I was a student at Teachers College-Columbia University. I had the pleasure to speak to him after his fantastic presentation. He was humble, charismatic, constantly smiling, and authentically listening to others. Being around him made me feel a sense of good-heartedness coming from him. I told him that I wished there were more Afro-Latino artists and he nodded in agreement. Eric's books are the ones I feel were missing from my time in school as a young person. Velasquez signed my copy of the picture book *Grandma's Gift*, in which he wrote: 'Remember to always share the gift!' Eric lives and works in Hartsdale, New York.

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Schomburg: The Man Who Built a Library

Here are two excerpts from the excellent children's book, *Schomburg: The Man Who Built a Library* by Carole Boston Weatherford and illustrated by Eric Velasquez (2017).

Fifth Grade

Arturo Schomburg was born with a sense of wonder.
As a boy in Puerto Rico, he shadowed tabaqueros, cigar workers.

These men pooled money to pay el lector
to read aloud in the factory:
Newspapers, novels, speeches, and politics.
Arturo took in the scent of cured tobacco
and the sound of the reader's voice.
Thus, Arturo not only learned his ABC's
but also to love the written word.

So when his fifth-grade teacher
told him that Africa's sons and daughters
had no history, no heroes worth noting,
did the twinkle leave Arturo's eyes?
Did he slouch his shoulders, hand his head low,
and look to the ground rather than to the horizon?

No. His people must have contributed something over the centuries, history that teachers did not teach.
Until they did, schoolchildren like Arturo
would not learn of their own heritage,
ignorance shackling them like chains.
After that teacher dismissed his people's past,
did the twinkle leave Arturo's eyes
like a candle blown in the dark?
No, the twinkle never left. It grew into a spark.

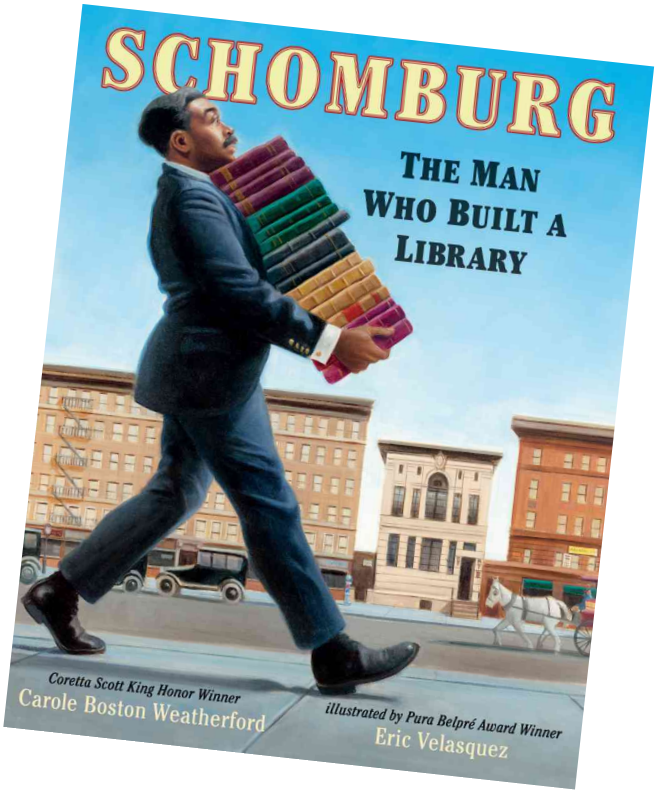
Genius

Where is or historian to give us our side, Arturo asked,
to teach our people our own history?
Afro-Puerto Rican/afroborinqueño, born in 1874,
Young Arturo Schomburg began a lifelong quest.
Still a boy, he took on the mantle of historian
Because he had know, had to know the truth.
In a history club, he noticed that the white youth-seemed prouder of their heritage than the black members.
Arturo read everything he could about his people.
But he did not hurry. He let facts simmer.
True scholarship requires time and calm effort, he figured.
Nothing worthwhile is done in haste.
After all, there were ages to transverse.
Lost for hours in books, Arturo was transportedby Benjamin Banneker's almanac to early America.

Arturo studied all he could
about this self-taught inventor,
astronomer, and draftsman. He beamed as he read
that Banneker accurately plotted a solar eclipse.
Arturo could almost hear the tick-tock
of Banneker's handcrafted wooden clock—
the first built in the New World.
Arturo imagined Banneker counting off minutes,
racing time to redraft plans from memory
for the streets of Washington, D.C.,

after French architect Pierre L'Enfant walked off
and carted his papers with him to Europe.
Banneker reproduced them in only two days.
The nation's capital. In two days. By heart.
Tick-tock, tick-tock.

Where were the monuments to this genius?



Black and Latino

Roberto Santiago

"There is no way that you can be black and Puerto Rican at the same time."

What? Despite the many times I've heard this over the years, that statement still perplexes me. I am both and always have been. My color is a blend of my mother's rich, dark tone and my father's white complexion. As they were both Puerto Rican, I spoke Spanish before English, but I am totally bilingual. My life has been shaped by my black and Latino heritages, and despite other people's confusion, I don't feel I have to choose one or the other. To do so would be to deny a part of myself. There has not been a moment in my life when I did not know that I looked black—and I never thought that others did not see it, too.

But growing up in East Harlem, I was also aware that I did not "act black," according to the African American boys on the block. My lighter-skinned Puerto Rican friends were less of a help in this department. "You're not black," they would whine, shaking their heads. "You're a Boricua; *you* ain't no *moreno* [black]." If that was true, why did my mirror defy the rules of logic? And most of all, why did I feel that there was some serious unknown force trying to make me choose sides?

Acting black. Looking black. Being a real black. This debate among us is almost a parody. The fact is that I am black, so why do I need to prove it? The island of Puerto Rico is only a stone's throw away from Haiti and no fooling, if you climb a palm tree, you can see Jamaica bobbing on the Atlantic. The slave trade ran through the Caribbean basin, and virtually all Puerto Rican citizens have some African blood in their veins. My grandparents on my mother's side were the classic *negro como carbón* (black as carbon) people, but despite the fact that they were as dark as can be, they are officially not considered black. There is an explanation for this, but not one that makes much sense, or difference, to a working-class kid from Harlem.

Puerto Ricans identify themselves as Hispanics—part of a worldwide race that originated from eons of white Spanish conquests—a mixture of white, African and *Indio* blood which, categorically, is apart from black. In other words, the culture is the predominant and determinant factor. But there are frustrations in being caught in a duo culture, where your skin color does not necessarily dictate what you are. When I read Piri Thomas's searing autobiography *Down These Mean Streets* in my early teens, I saw that he couldn't figure out other people's attitudes toward his blackness either.

Piri Thomas by Máximo Colón, 1972
(©Máximo Colón, NPG, acquisition made possible by the Latino Initiatives Pool, Smithsonian Latino Center)

My first encounter with this attitude about the race thing rode on horseback. I had just turned six years old and ran toward the bridle path in [New York's] Central Park as I saw two horses about to trot past. "Yea! Horsie! Yea!" I yelled. Then I noticed one figure on horseback. She was white, and she shouted, "Shut up, you f—g nigger! Shut up!" She pulled back on the reins and twisted the horse in my direction. I

can still feel the spray of gravel that the horse kicked at my chest. And suddenly she was gone. I looked back and, in the distance, saw my parents playing Whiffle Ball with my sister. They seemed miles away.

They still don't know about this incident. But I told my Aunt Aurelia almost immediately. She explained what the words meant and why they were said. Ever since then I have been able to express my anger appropriately through words or action in similar situations. Self-preservation, ego and pride forbid me from ever ignoring, much less forgetting, a slur. Aunt Aurelia became, unintentionally, my source for answers I needed about color and race. I never sought her out. She just seemed to appear at my home during the points in my childhood when I most needed her for solace.

"Puerto Ricans are different from American blacks," she told me once. "There is no racism between what you call white and black. Nobody even considers the marriages interracial." She then pointed out the difference in color between my father and mother. "You never noticed that," she said, "because you were not raised with that hang-up."

Aunt Aurelia passed away before I could follow up on her observation. But she had made an important point. It's why I never liked the attitude that says I should be exclusive to one race. My behavior toward this race thing pegged me as an iconoclast of sorts. Children from mixed marriages, from my experience, also share this attitude. If I have to bear the label of iconoclast because the world wants people to be in set categories and I don't want to, then I will.

Vocabulary

Indio: Indian

iconoclast: a person who challenges traditional or popular ideas or institutions

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Excerpted from *Boricuas: Influential Puerto Rican Writings* (New York: One World/Ballantine, 1995). Used by permission of Roberto Santiago.

Arturo Alfonso: Our Forgotten Scholar

Epifanio Castillo Jr. and Valerie Sandoval Mwalilino

Abridged from "Arturo Alfonso Schomburg: Our Forgotten Scholar," by Epifanio Castillo Jr. and Valerie Sandoval in Nuestro, May 1978 and from *The Legacy of Arthur Alfonso Schomburg: A Celebration of the Past, A Vision for the Future* by Victoria Ortiz (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library).

With a few exceptions, the Puerto Ricans who came to New York City before 1898 are a forgotten group. That is a pity. It should be a well-known fact that many Puerto Ricans migrated to the city before their island was annexed by the U.S. as a "booty of war," and that several of them made important contributions to their adopted nation. One such early settler was Arturo Alfonso Schomburg, a historian and scholar who became so eminent in other fields that his Latino heritage has been all but ignored.

His name still blazes, of course, among U.S. Blacks. Schomburg was an opponent of discrimination throughout his long, eventful life. He avoided militancy, preferring to marshal historical facts to his cause. As a result of his work, Blacks found old precedents in their fight against prejudice and new pride in their heritage.

Schomburg also ranks as the greatest collector of books on Black culture. The Schomburg Center for Research at the New York Public Library, which he founded, now contains more than 5 million items on the subject. His strictly Latino activities were less extensive and less well known. But the fact is that Arturo Schomburg was always vitally interested in Latinos, their freedom and well-being.

The seed which was to flourish throughout Schomburg's life was planted in his mind while he was still in Puerto Rico. It seems that one of his teachers stated that the Negro had never accomplished anything in the past and probably never would in the future. Schomburg was so outraged by this racist attack that he set out to disprove it by finding significant works by Black Puerto Ricans. What he was looking for, he said, were the contributions of the "Colored Races" to the development of Western civilization. That became his lifelong search.

Arturo Alfonso Schomburg

The young scholar accumulated quite a collection of books and pamphlets about the African experience in Puerto Rico. Whenever he heard a slur, such as the one his teacher made, Schomburg could easily rebut it by bringing up any number of examples, including those of José Campeche, the artist whose portraits caused a major sensation in Italian art circles, and Rafael Cordero, the impoverished cigarmaker who was also one of Puerto Rico's pioneer educators. Schomburg not only intended to combat racial discrimination wherever he found it but also to

build pride in his people. The writer Floyd J. Calvin put it this way: "When his white associates began to tell of what history white Puerto Ricans had made, [Schomburg] could talk equally freely of the history Black Puerto Ricans had made."

There is no record of the Latino's feelings on arriving in New York in 1891. Surely he must have been aghast at the racial prejudice he encountered. For this was a time when racism was perhaps at its most stark in the U.S. Blacks—and Black Latinos—were not supposed to have an equal chance to succeed, especially in intellectual realms. Arturo Alfonso Schomburg, of course, already had proof that they could succeed.

His was not an easy path. For his first five years in New York, young Arturo studied law at the offices of Pryor, Mellias and Harris. Unhappy with the practice of law, he joined the Bankers Trust Co. Beginning in the page and messenger department, he worked his way up until, when he retired from the bank, he had become the head of the mailing division in the Latin American department. That was the highest position that any Black could achieve in those days.

On the other hand, Schomburg's rather undemanding job allowed him to travel and search for materials to add to his ever-growing collection. One ironic story concerns a trip Schomburg took to the deep South. Denied hotel accommodations because of his color, he promptly sued—and won because he spoke fluent Spanish. According to one of his sons, the authorities decided that "Negroes in the South were Negroes, but if a Negro was a Puerto Rican, he wasn't a Negro." Schomburg often identified himself as "a Puerto Rican of African descent," though never to escape narrow definitions of Negritude. He was simply proud of his past.

A quiet, serene man, he seldom spoke unless he felt that he had something worth saying. As a result, he was greatly esteemed by his peers. The honors flooded in. This is not the place to report them all, but a short list would include Schomburg's presidency of the American Negro Academy at Howard University, a stint at Fisk University and his time as curator of the collection which bears his name; he also founded the Negro Society for Historical Research. Schomburg died in 1938.

In Praise of Negro Books

"I am here with a sincere desire to awaken the sensibilities, to kindle the dormant fibers in the soul, and to fire racial patriotism by the study of Negro books. There have been written many histories of our people in slavery, peace and war, each one serving a purpose. These books have been useful to disseminate the fragmentary knowledge to localities, where the spark of learning has awakened the soul to thirst for more and better food. These [books] have been our landmarks, our rock of ages, let us place around them the inspiring love so that the scholars of today...will be spurred to do things by which we will be remembered, and in the coming days will be heralded for racial identity, racial preservation and racial unity. We need in the coming dawn [someone] who will give us the background for our future; give us, with trenchant pen, the story of our forefathers and let our soul and body brighten the chasm that separates us."

Arturo Alfonso Schomburg, July 1913[1]

Vocabulary

Latino: Latin American; Spanish-speaking; Hispanic

Negritude: cultural/literary movement stressing the dignity and worth of the African heritage

1 Abridged from a fragment of a speech made by Schomburg at Cheney Institute in Pennsylvania

Child of the Americas

Aurora Levins Morales

I am a child of the Americas,
a light-skinned *mestiza* of the Caribbean
a child of many diaspora, born into this continent at a cross-
roads.I am a U.S. Puerto Rican Jew,
a product of the ghettos of New York I have never known
An immigrant and the daughter and granddaughter of immi-
grants.
I speak English with passion: it's the tongue of my consciousness,
a flashing knife blade of crystal, my tool, my craft.

I am Caribeña, island grown. Spanish is in my flesh,
ripples from my tongue, lodges in my hips:
the language of garlic and mangos,
the singing in my poetry, the flying gestures of my hands.
I am of Latinoamerica, rooted in the history of my continent:
I speak from that body.

I am not african. Africa is in me, but I cannot return.
I am not taína. Taíno is in me, but there is no way back.
I am not european. Europe lives in me, but I have no home there.

I am new. History made me. My first language was spanglish.
I was born at the crossroads
and I am whole.

Borincan Lament

Translated by T. Crowder & J.A. Sepulveda

Lamento Borincano, the most popular composition of one of Puerto Rico's best known songwriters, Rafael Hernandez, has been recorded by many artists. Popular vocalists such as Marc Anthony and La India perform this song.

Out he goes, crazy with elation,
with his produce for the city.
He carries in his thought
a world full of happiness.
He thinks of easing the condition of his home,
which is his only dream.

Happy the little farmer goes,
thinking this, saying this, singing this
along the road:
"If I sell all this load, dear God,
I'm going to buy a dress for my old woman."

And happy his mare also goes, sensing
that this singing is a hymn of gaiety,
and like this they are surprised by
daylight
and arrive at the city's market.

The whole morning passes without
anyone who wants to buy his load.
All, all is deserted,
the town is dead from need.
They hear laments everywhere,
from their poor Borínquen.

And sadly the little farmer goes,
thinking this, saying this, singing this
along the road:
"What will become of my children,
dear God,
what will become of my country and my
home?"

Borínquen, land of Eden
the one that in his poems the great Gautier
called "The Pearl of the Seas,"
now that you are dying with your sorrows,
let me, too, sing to you.
Me, too.

This translation appears on *Puli Toro Sings Favorite Hispanic Songs 'Alma Hispana'* Folkways Records Album FW 8730, 1985. Used by permission of Folkways Records.

To hear Lamento Borincano and other music by Rafael Hernandez: Musica de Rafael Hernandez, Kubaney, 1990

Lamento Borincano

Rafael Hernandez

Sale loco de contento con su cargamento
para la ciudad - ¡ay! para la ciudad.
Lleva en su pensamiento
todo un mundo lleno de felicidad - ¡ay! de felicidad.
Piensa remediar la situación
del hogar que es toda su ilusión - ¡sí!

Y alegre, el jíbarito va,
pensando así,
diciendo así,
cantando así por el camino.
Si yo vendo la carga mi Dios querido,
un traje a mi viejita voy a comprar.

Y alegre, también su yegua va,
al presentir, que aquél cantar
es todo un himno de alegría.
Y en eso le sorprende la luz del día,
y llegan al mercado de la ciudad.

Pasa la mañana entera
sin que nadie pueda su carga comprar,
su carga comprar.
Todo, todo está desierto
el pueblo está muerto de necesidad,
de necesidad.

Se oye este lamento por doquier,
en mi desdichada Borínquen—sí.

Y triste, el jíbarito va,
pensando así,
diciendo así,
llorando así por el camino.
¡Qué será de Borínquen mi Dios querido!
¡Qué será de mis hijos y de mi hogar!

Borínquen,
la tierra del Edén
la que al cantar el gran Gautier
llamó la Perla de los Mares.
Ahora que tú te mueres con tus cantares,
déjame que te cante yo también.
Yo también.

Our Mother's Struggle Has Shown Us the Way

Rina Benmayor, Ana Juarbe, and Blanca Vázquez Erazo

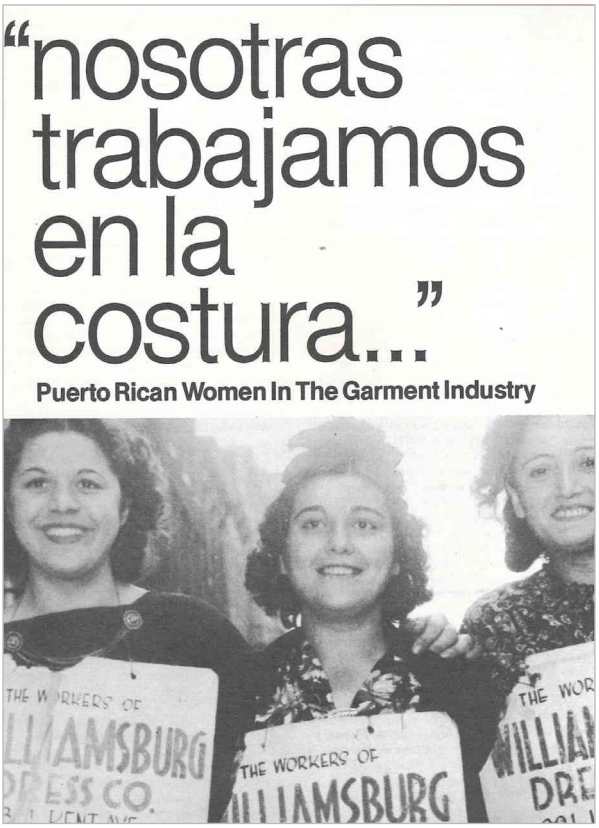
Abridged from the radio documentary "Nosotras Trabajamos en la Costura/ Puerto Rican Women in the Garment Industry," produced by Rina Benmayor, Ana Juarbe, Kimberly Safford and Blanca Vázquez (Center for Puerto Rican Studies/Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, Hunter College, 1985).

Our mothers and grandmothers were among the thousands of Puerto Rican women who spent their working lives as seamstresses in the garment factories of New York City.

When Puerto Rico became a colony of the U.S. in 1898, American clothing manufacturers didn't waste much time. By 1915, they had set up a whole needlework industry on the island. There they could escape from the unions and make bigger profits by using the labor of women and children.

Decades ago, Lucila Padrón and her sisters started working at home in Puerto Rico. Local contractors would distribute bundles of fabric already cut and ready to be sewn to women all across the island. The women would return the finished products beautifully sewn and embroidered, all by hand. Then the work was shipped to New York and sold in exclusive department stores like Wanamaker's or B. Altman's. Lucila was a teenager when she came to New York in 1927. She wanted to continue her education, but instead she had to support herself and then her own family. Like Lucila, many of our grandparents migrated to New York during these early years looking for work. Some had been driven off the land by American sugar monopolies. Cigarmakers, carpenters and other skilled workers came too.

Luisa López came as a child in 1923 on the steamship *Coamo*. By 1930 there were over 50,000 Puerto Ricans in the U.S. Men, women and entire families came. The journey took five days by boat, and most people settled in East Harlem, or along the Brooklyn waterfront. This was our mothers' generation. Our



parents settled with family or friends, in furnished rooms or tenement apartments, in East Harlem, the Lower East Side, or the South Bronx.

Sewing meant economic survival for many Puerto Rican families. During the Depression, Luisa and her sister went to work in garment factories. Puerto Rican women were the newcomers, competing for jobs with Italian and Jewish women. By 1937, the International Ladies Garment Workers

1 ILGWU is now part of the union UNITE HERE

Source: The FSA Collection at the Library of Congress

Union (ILGWU)[1] had more than 2,000 Puerto Rican members. Ironically, just a few years later in the early 1940s, Luisa lost her union job, in a way that forecast what would happen to thousands of garment workers in the 1970s and 1980s.

In the 1950s, the garment industry in New York was booming. Puerto Rican women were hired by the thousands as sewing machine operators, one of the lowest paying jobs in the trade. Although many of our mothers were already experienced needleworkers, by this time the garment industry no longer needed such fine skills. Clothing production was changing. Seamstresses used to make whole garments, but now, women were sewing only sections in assembly line fashion. Section work allowed New York garment manufacturers to increase production. And this new, cheap labor pool meant they could also increase their profits. Thousands of Puerto Rican and Black women became low paid, unskilled section workers—easily exploited, and easily replaced. Because wages were so low, women like María Rodríguez often brought home extra work, even though home work was illegal. Many women, like Dolores Juarbe, found themselves working in sweatshops—small, nonunion operations in firetrap buildings that violated minimum wage laws and paid no overtime, sick leave or vacation.

Many Puerto Rican women looked for union shops where they expected to get protection, benefits and higher wages. During the 1950s, labor unions were stepping up their organizing, and many of our mothers and grandmothers led that effort. Some became union chairladies and organizers, and sometimes the chairlady had the power to stop the shop. Eva Monge shut down her housecoat factory to support a dressmakers' strike.

By the 1960s Puerto Rican women made up over 25 percent of New York sewing machine operators. The rank and file of the garment unions was now overwhelmingly Puerto Rican and Black. But despite their numbers and their histories of activism, few Black or Puerto Rican women found themselves in positions of power. For decades, the top union leaders had been conservative white men. Gloria Maldonado, a business agent for ILGWU Local 22 89 1, was an exception.

During the 1950s and 1960s, our mothers' work gave our families some economic stability. But then, things began to change. Over the last 30 years, well over 200,000 garment jobs have left New York City alone. And so operators have dwindled to a bare minimum in factories like Juanita Rodríguez's, where older, higher paid workers are the first to go. After World War II, U.S. manufacturers were offered big tax breaks to set up factories in Puerto Rico. This was part of Operation Bootstrap, the plan to industrialize the island. But these new factories, many of them garment and light industry, never provided enough jobs.

As they learned with the Puerto Rican model in the 1930s and again in the 1950s, clothing manufacturers

Artist: Manuel Otero

A U.S.-run clothing factroy in Puerto Rico in the 1950s.

find it even more profitable today to set up shops in Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. By the mid-1980s, garments were being cut in New York, sewn in Taiwan, Korea or Mexico, finished in Puerto Rico and sent back to New York for distribution. An operator in Haiti was paid 21 cents an hour, for what in New York cost over $3.00.

At the same time, thousands of poor women are migrating to the U.S., hoping to escape poverty and often, political repression in their countries. They become cheap labor in factories and sweatshops. Many are undocumented and live in fear of deportation. Juanita Rodríguez was horrified by an Immigration and Naturalization Service raid on her factory in Brooklyn.

While manufacturers take their capital abroad, our mothers face widespread layoffs, which often deprive them of their pensions. After years at the machines, many of our mothers suffer back and leg pains, or they are crippled by arthritis.

These are the women who raised us. They were not only our mothers and grandmothers, but our cousins, aunts, neighbors, friends. They went to the factories early in the morning and sat in front of those machines day after day. They confronted the difficulties of migration, poverty, low pay, discrimination and unstable jobs. In spite of that, they raised us and kept our families together. They fought for our education, organized in the communities and on the job, and they gave us a legacy of struggle.

Lucila Padrón

I was born in Ponce, Puerto Rico. That's where I was raised and went to school. I started doing needlework when I was a little girl, in order to help my parents, because we were poor. After the housework and school, instead of playing, we had to sew. It was a sacrifice.

Our work was really something to see. It was all done by hand—no machines. Tracing, embroidering, assembling, all of it by hand. And do you know what they paid us? For all that intricate work? Later on, when I came to New York, I saw the clothes we made selling in Wanamaker's on 14th Street. Here, those robes or dresses sold for $100 or more. There, they used to pay us for one of those dresses, with all that embroidery—three dollars. So, to earn 10 or 12 dollars a week, we had to work day and night.

When I came to New York, I had a hard time at first, because I couldn't find a sewing job. I used to walk back and forth, across Manhattan, from shop to shop, from one end of the island to the other, until I finally found a job as a seamstress. I worked in garment factories for 30 years, working so I could get where I am now and give my children an education. And I'm very proud of that.

Luisa López

My mother and father came to get us at the boat

[when I arrived in New York], and when I came into the apartment I found my brother at a machine, sewing. What was he doing? Coffee bags. Everybody used to help my mother; that machine was going on all day long. I was sewing, my sister was sewing, my brother was sewing, everybody to help out.

I was working in a shop called Elfran's Dress Company, in El Barrio, on 104th Street. The Italian girls, they wanted to sit down, and the rest of the girls refused to work, because they didn't want to work with Puerto Ricans. When I saw that, I went to the union, and I spoke to the manager, and I told him what had happened. This manager over here was Italian, he was an old time socialist, the most wonderful person you ever came to know. His name was Joe Piscatello. He called everybody to the union. And I explained to him, you know, I'm more an American citizen than some of these people are, that don't even know how to speak English. He gave them hell! He gave them hell! So we all went back to work.

[Our boss] opened up five shops in Puerto Rico, that's how come I lost my job. We belonged to the union over here, he had to pay us higher wages. While in Puerto Rico at that time, he could pay 15 and 20 cents an hour.

Section work is sewing zippers, or collars. When I first came to this country, I was sewing the whole garment. But later, I found section work. Because working sections, you can make a lot more money. And I was fast.

The boss let me take bundles home, and I used to do it at night. I'd work two hours, three hours to make a little more money. And some times weekends I used to take it, and Victor used to help me. I'd teach my husband how to do it, so he used to help me to do the bundles also. So then, I'd make about $35, sometimes $38.

Dolores Juarbe

There was not any union [in the shop where I worked]. In that shop you had to sew, as fast as you could. And everyone smoked. The shop was in a basement. Once in a while the fire department would pay a little visit. The boss told us to stop smoking, that the fire department was on the way. The alerter heard that they were coming, you know, she used to pay them off. So then, they could knock real loud on the door: bam bam bam! And all the cigarettes would disappear.

I did not like the boss. The boss could not keep his hands off the girls. He was always walking in and touching them and squeezing them. So one day, he came to me, and like he tried to feel me up, and I told him, "Listen," I said. "I don't like you. I don't like this job, I don't like the way you treat the girls. So you can keep it!" I got ready to leave.

"Oh, don't go, don't go."

"Oh no," I said. "You are a pig!"

Eva Monge

The dresses were going on strike. The boss right away stopped the housecoats and gave us dresses. The first day, I said, "All right, but…" I noticed that the strike kept on. So, on the second day I said, "Mrs. Corey, every girl on this shop is going to finish the bundle that they're doing. They're not going to make no more dresses." You know, that boss went to the dressing room and she cried! But it was from anger. She knew that she was wrong—she was breaking the strike.

Gloria Maldonado

I'm the only woman here. The only woman officer, and the only Hispanic business agent. The manager is Puerto Rican, but I'm the only woman. So I'm Puerto Rican, I'm a woman and I'm black. I've got three affirmative action points (laughs).

Some of these countries, they do a lot of needlework. And capital people, they saw the advantage of making good money, at the expense of other people's misery. And at the expense of our people working here. Big firms started going out, and little by little they started expanding, expanding, until before we knew it…It used to be maybe two, three garments out of ten that were imported. Now it's five or six out of ten. The shops are not the ones that are running away, it's the manufacturers. For instance, our Joe Namath, you know, big shot [former National Football League player] Joe Namath, has a line of men's clothes. Where is he getting it done? China. The thing is, that even though they're made there for less money, it's not sold here for less money like years back.

People are just not making it. The small shops are closing up, and that's where it affects our people, our generation of Puerto Rican women who are not old

enough to retire, but have put in 20, 30 years. They stay with this one little shop because it was like a family. All of a sudden, the man has to close because there is no work .

Juanita Erazo

My friend María, she's been working for [the same boss] for 29 years, just like me. She was the first one he laid off. That's how he discriminates! He gets rid of the one who earns more money, and those are the older and more experienced operators. The boss just spent three weeks in Taiwan, and he came back loaded down. The factory is four stories high, and practically all the floors are filled with that imported work. What he wants to do is turn the factory into a shipping department, and get rid of the operators altogether. Because the work comes already finished, and ready to sell.

In the factory there are Dominicans, Ecuadorians, Colombians and Haitians. The last time Immigration raided, they took everyone away. They took Puerto Ricans away too. They handcuffed them, they filled two buses up with people. Then, after they left, the boss went looking around, and there were people hiding in boxes!

Vocabulary

business agent: a full-time paid union official who takes care of the daily responsibilities of the union, handling grievances and enforcing collective bargaining agreements

East Harlem: one of the oldest Puerto Rican settlements in New York City

El Barrio: East Harlem

Immigration: Immigration and Naturalization Service of the U.S. government (now part of the Department of Homeland Security)

needlework: sewing and embroidering by hand

sit down: a form of labor protest in which workers "sit down" and refuse to work

undocumented: without legal documents proving one's right to be in the U.S.

Quinceañera

Judith Ortíz Cofer

Pregunta: ¿Qué debe hacer una muchacha para que los jóvenes anden detrás de ella?

Respuesta: Irse delante de ellos.

Question: What should a girl do if she wants young guys to walk behind her?

Answer: Go ahead of them.

—Puerto Rican riddle

I was 15 years old when I went to Puerto Rico as a child for the last time. The next time I would visit the island would be as a young bride years later. That last summer that I was a part of my mother's matriarchal tribe I learned a few things about what it meant to become a woman in Puerto Rico.

As a young child, my grandmother's house had seemed a labyrinth of wonders, with its haphazard collection of rooms, few doors that locked, and the constant bustle of aunts, uncles, and cousins. At 15, resentful of having once again been yanked from my environment of Paterson, New Jersey—which I thought I was beginning to conquer with my growing mastery of its rules—I felt smothered by the familial press of Mamá's house. It was a place where a demand for privacy was considered rude, where people asked where you were going if you tried to walk out of a room, where an adolescent girl was watched every minute by the women who acted as if you carried some kind of time bomb in your body that might go off at any minute; and, worse, they constantly warned you about your behavior around men: don't cross your legs like that when a man is in the room, don't walk around in your pajamas, never interrupt their conversations. It did not matter that the men were my uncles, my cousins, and my brother. Somehow my body with its new contours and new biological powers had changed everything: half of the world had now become a threat, or felt threatened by its potential for disaster.

The devastation caused by female bodies was evident everywhere to me that summer. One of my uncles, recently married, still lived at Mamá's with his pregnant bride who had to be treated with maddening delicacy. She demanded odd things to eat, which everyone scrambled to get, lest she crossed into a difficult childbirth. She cried for no reason, took naps in the middle of the day, and everyone tip-toed around her talking in whispers. It was obvious to me that she was having the time of her life, taking advantage of a perfectly normal pregnancy to act like an invalid. I learned from my mother when I complained to her in private, that it was the right of a woman to demand attention when expecting her first child—life would get hard enough later.

Across the street lived a less fortunate new mother. Nora was a few months older than me. I remembered her from school in past months that I had spent at Mamá's. She always seemed more mature than the other girls, and no wonder. She had a whole troop of younger brothers and sisters at home that she had to mind while her mother worked the late shift in a factory. I heard that she had dropped out of high school in her freshman year, running off with a man twice her age. He never married her, and she returned home pregnant and looking worn-out and spiritless.

I often sat on the porch at Mamá's house that summer to get away from the chaos inside, and I would see Nora emerge from her house once in a while. She usually carried her child on her hip as she swept with one hand, or as she worked on a vegetable garden. Could she have been only 16? Her body was bloated in an unhealthy way, her movements were slow, as if she had no energy or no will. I was repelled by her appearance and her lethargy. I felt inexplicable anger when I saw her.

Every day Mamá would rise at five to work around the house. She had done housework since she could walk, and like an automaton programmed for life, she followed a routine of labor and self-sacrifice into her old age. Despite being the dominant character in her household—every practical decision made by any of her eight children and husband had to be approved by her—she believes to this day that a woman's life is redeemed mainly by work: hands busy all the time, doing, doing, doing for others. Mamá gave herself and others little time for leisure. Only small children were exempt from duties. They were the only ones

allowed to waste time—everyone else had to be busy while in her presence. This work ethic applied specially to me, since in her eyes I was a *quinceañera*, a 15-year-old trainee for the demands of womanhood and marriage.

It was not that Mamá endorsed marriage as the only choice for women; it was just all she had been brought up to expect for herself, her daughters, and now, her granddaughters. If you did not get married, you became a nun, or you entered "*la vida*" as a prostitute. Of course there were some professions a woman could practice—nurse, teacher—until you found a man to marry. The worse fate was to end up alone (by that she meant no more children, rather than no man) in your old age. Mamá had never been alone in her life. Even now, as an old woman, she fills her house with great-grandchildren whenever possible. Solitude means the denial of life to her.

And so the summer of my fifteenth year in Puerto Rico I resisted learning to cook, claiming to get dizzy in the heat of the kitchen. Luckily there were so many cooks available in the house that I was not missed, only scorned.

I still took pleasure in listening to the women talk about their lives, and I still relished and memorized Mamá's *cuentos*, but by then I was beginning to recognize the subtext of sexual innuendo, to detect the sarcasm and to find the hidden clues to their true feelings of frustrations in their marriages and in their narrowly circumscribed lives as women in Puerto Rico.

That summer I was courted and serenaded in a style that has, I think, practically gone out of fashion. It was 1967 and the rest of the world seemed to be plunging headlong into the future. Still, in this *pueblo* the young men would fill their pockets with nickels so that when their favorite girls passed by the centrally located bodega, they could play them love songs on the juke box. Each couple knew after many repetitions which was "their song." Unescorted or in the company of her friends, the girl was informed by custom to act aloof, not to look directly at the boy, who would usually stand just outside the door of the establishment. If he were shy, he would gaze intently at his beloved; if brave, he would sing along with the record, often to the vast amusement and loud comments of the other males within the store. It was an exciting ritual of courtship, both elegant and brazen, that I had no preparation for, since the Paterson version of the piropo, the hoots, hisses, and street-poetry that Latinos subject women to, was radically different from this dramatic, romantic wooing carried on without awkwardness and surprisingly accepted by the adults as part of the burden of having teenage children.

The deal was, I finally figured out, that no direct communication was to take place between the girl and the boy unless the romance was serious; if so, the boy had to ask permission of the girl's parents to visit her, and to escort her (in groups only) to dances, etc. This rule was, of course, violated by the couples as often as possible.

I learned the do's and don'ts of the game from direct observation. Though I had few close friends in town, I did have an uncle who was only six months older than me and an aunt, his sister, who was a senior in high school—both of them in love that year. I was used by both of them as a buffer and an excuse to see their love-objects. I remember one week when my uncle offered to teach me how to ride a bicycle. Everyone was surprised at the offer since his favorite activity was *béisbol* and he was hardly ever at home. My mother accepted the offer and one day we took off through town with me as passenger and him pedaling furiously. When we reached the countryside he stopped to catch his breath and to explain to me that we would be picking up people along the way for a picnic by the river. He instructed me that when we next stopped in front of a house, I was to go to the door and ask for Carolina. He would stay out of sight. It did not take me long to understand his plan. I was his cover. He had an assignation with his girlfriend who would not be let out of the house for a boy, but if I pretended to be her schoolmate, she might be.

It was a fun day as other couples joined us and I got a lot of attention from a Black boy named Wilson who, like me, was covering for his sister and her guy. On the way home my uncle felt duty-bound to give me a lesson on the bicycle. Unfortunately, I lost control of it at the top of a hill and plunged right into a thicket with him running behind me, yelling at me to use my brakes—in my panic I had forgotten that they were located on the handlebar. The bicycle was scratched and bent and I got bumps and bruises which I was not able to hide for long from my vigilant mother.

There were no more bicycle trips for me after that incident, but bicycles continued to play a big part in

my coming of age that summer.

The boys of the *pueblo* used their bicycles like their North American counterparts used their sports cars. They raced them past the girls they were pursuing; they performed tricks of bravura and recklessness on them, but mostly they rode them up and down the street past the house of their chosen women in hopes of a glimpse or a cautious wave. This happened usually at dusk, after dinner, when the sweaty games of baseball were over, a man's full day behind them; after the bath had washed away the dust of the playing field and the cologne and the Brillcream had been lavishly applied.

At Mamá's house, the adults practiced patience as my young uncle and aunt and I monopolized the bathrooms and the dressers for a couple of hours. My young uncle would then mount his slightly scarred vehicle and ride off to "see his woman," who would be doing just what my young aunt and I were preparing to do: getting all dolled-up just to sit on the porch, hoping that the others would stay in the living room and watch the *novelas*. It was almost a sure thing that they would, since the Puerto Rican soap operas are habit-forming for both men and women. Unlike the daytime soaps of the U.S., the *novelas* are intense miniseries that carry a highly dramatic love story, replete with betrayals, broken hearts, rebellious children, long-suffering mothers and gallant fathers, to a predictable, but splendidly happy ending. They are episodic in formula: to miss a night's installment is like failing to sit at your sick child's bedside or being late for your daughter's wedding. The characters in these *novelas* become part of daily conversations. On some occasions I had trouble keeping the characters Mamá spoke about with great feeling separated in my mind from relatives I barely knew.

But real love was more important than the travails of the star-crossed lovers of *novelas*, although the contrast between the actors' passionate encounters and lyrical dialogues and the silent circling of our young men in their bicycles seem almost absurd in recollection. But the thrill of seeing the one you longed for appear at the end of the street could not be matched by any televised melodrama.

My aunt's *novio* was about to get serious. He too was entering his last year of high school. Soon he would be a working man. He was going to learn to drive a truck. He was taking shop at school. His plan was to get a job as a long-distance driver and

Photo of author, Judith Ortíz Cofer.

mechanic for an American business. Then he would ask her to marry him. They both knew this, yet they were enjoying the last days of their innocent courtship. She was radiant, and she clutched my hand tightly on the darkened porch as she saw him ride past slowly, lingering, almost stopping on his polished bike. It was erotic, this meeting of the eyes, the graceful sway of the young man on his machine. I pressed her hand back. I knew what she was feeling. Soon my two champions would be performing their acrobatic dances for me too.

Yes, I had two admirers: one Black, one white, both handsome. Wilson, whom I had met on my ill-fated excursion with my uncle, had been playing songs for me at the bodega. They were usually about hopeless love, since I was an "Americanita," not only pale-skinned, but a resident of the North. I would be flying away in a few months. He played "Paloma Blanca" for me and any other song that mentioned the word "white" or had the theme of abandonment. He was a beautiful ebony-skinned *muchacho* whose charm was well-known throughout the town. He was attractive even to older women, a fact that

made my mother wary. She warned me that Wilson was "too mature," *muy maduro*, for his age. She did not-say much more than, "Don't encourage him too much." At first, having been exposed to the hostilities between Blacks and Puerto Ricans in Pater-son, I thought that she might be acting out of prejudice because of his color, but soon I realized that race had nothing to do with her concern; she had just heard that Wilson was rapidly developing a reputation as a womanizer, and she was afraid that he would violate the limits of propriety if I gave him the chance.

I was almost tempted to do so, spurred on by her words of caution, but I had developed a crush on Angel Ramón, the other boy. He had curly hair, green eyes and a shy smile. He said nothing, played no records for me at the bodega, but with his intense gaze he commanded me to love him. I broke the rules of propriety with him at the first opportunity and that ended the idyll.

One afternoon I was alone on the porch, my aunt having gone to some affair or other with my mother and Mamá. I do not remember who else was at home, but no one was watching me. I waited until Angel Ramón had locked his eyes with mine and I took a chance. I rose from my chair and motioned him to follow me to Mamá's backyard garden. Looking startled, he maneuvered his bicycle into the drive. It was almost dark and what we were doing was very dangerous. I waited, heart pounding behind the house, against a cool cement wall. When I saw him around the corner, I led him by the hand into the shadows. I then turned my face up for a kiss. I closed my eyes and felt his breath, and the cool sweat of the hand I was still holding, but when I offered my lips for a kiss, he pulled away and was gone.

Angel Ramón disappeared from my neighborhood after my bold act. I was crushed, but could not tell anyone for fear of being punished. Even my aunt would not approve of such brazenness on my part. I prayed that Angel Ramón would not spread the story around and humiliate me. Later I realized that he could not say anything either: his manhood was at stake, he had refused a woman's favors, although it was only a kiss I had offered. The other boys would surely subject him to vicious harassment for his cowardice if they found out. I had made an awful mistake, broken the rules of the game, and frightened away my gentle admirer. How far this reckless act of mine set that boy back with women, I do not know; luckily for me, the summer was coming to a close and I could go back to cooler climes—to less passion and more logic.

Back in the city, as I dealt with the daily struggle of love and life—American style—I sometimes thought about the leisure of romance in the tropics; the sensuousness of allowing your heart to set its rhythms at its own pace; how love can be allowed to flower like a well-tended rose bush. It was a lyrical time. But I have not forgotten Nora either, or how dead her eyes looked, as if she had no vision of the future. The baby riding in her hip could now have children of her own, and Nora, if she lived past her 30th birthday, will be carrying her grandchildren. I still think about her when I think of my summer as a *quinceañera* and the many directions a woman's life can take, with the word "love" as the only marker to be seen at the crossroads.

Vocabulary

assignation: secret meeting

climes: climates

béisbol: baseball

bodega: corner store

Brillcream: a brand of hair ointment

cuentos: stories

muchacho: boy

novela: soap opera

novio: boyfriend

piropo: flirtatious compliment or cat call

pueblo: small town

quinceañera: a 15-year-old girl whose transition into adulthood is often marked by a special ceremony or gathering

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Reprinted from *Silent Dancing: A Partial Remembrance of a Puerto Rican Childhood* (Houston: Arte Público Press-University of Houston, 1990). Used by permission from Arte Público Press.

A Warrior Am I

Sandra García Rivera

Excerpt.

Coming from the heart to start...

Keeping it real,
How does Vieques make me feel?
The question stirs in my mind over and over again.
Why so difficult take the cause to the pen?
A New York City light-skinned female Porto Rock
How can I compare Vieques to my block?

My struggle is in the hood.

Yet I battle with these words for fear of being misunderstood.
See, it's not guilt I'm feeling
Let's get that clear,
It's just the plight is abstract unless I give it a face here.

Puerto Rico,
A nation un-free to actively pursue its own sovereignty?
That affects me directly
And causes deep reflection, introspectively.

But I refuse to speak the rhetoric,
That's not my way.
I write from the heart,
Poetic interplay.
A synthesis of experience, observation,
Relation, and conversation.
I stand to let down an entire island nation
By perpetrating ill truth without contemplation.

A question I ask,
Reflecting on present and past,
Do I have the right to say
I am a warrior today?

Am I a Warrior
When I read my poems,
Whatever theme they may be,
Representing Boricuas through the expression of creativity;
As I lead workshops for women liberating pain through the word
Am I making a statement that the U.S. presence in Vieques is absurd?

When I protest my lover's cocaine affliction,
His multiple lover addiction,
Resist the legacy of female submission,
Am I a warrior fighting against colonial tradition?

"A Warrior," of me would they say
If I, like the goddess Atabey,
Birthed a nation of queens to lead the way?

Or
When I choose NOT to birth,
Giving up my body so another spirit can run the Earth,
Am I a warrior then?

I help families raise healthy children,
Confess life lessons in the hope that youth resist oppression;
Am I a warrior then by profession?

Am I a warrior
when I call you out for throwing trash on the street?
When you can't keep this city neat
My sidewalk replete with garbage under my feet.
Am I talking pristine?
NO.
Just keep it clean, yo!
Me and millions of others call these streets our home
So please, get over yourself
'cause you aint alone.

…

When I question, "In God We Trust,"
'Cause it keeps masses passive,
Am I fighting for the souls lost in the Middle Passage.
A Warrior, then, am I?

Vieques, Chicago, Manhattan, San Juan,
Oakland, San Francisco, Miami, The Bronx
Boricuas Somos
Orgullosos de ser
The same *bandera Puertorriqueña*
Through our *patria* we are led.

…

Had I been born on the moon Boricua I'd still be,
But Washington Heights is the town of my nativity.
Now transformed to "Hudson Heights"
Gentrification is our plight.
Not much difference in oppressors
Rich white investors.
The Navy and Precinct 34

Both kick residents to the floor.
Whether it's the beach or the street,
Brutality and intimidation make the point concrete,
The colonization has not stopped.
Today we are warriors for Vieques on OUR BLOCK.

Give thanks for the right to sit home in peace.
I listen for news on the prisoners' UNCONDITIONAL release,
My freedom they protect,
Political repression they reflect.
Not take them for granted,
Respects I pay
That there are 15 who gave 20
So I can call myself BORICUA today.

The revolution will be televised on cable TV,
But think twice before you become a "star" revolutionary,
Picking up a rifle to express your solidarity PUBLICLY.
I guarantee the FBI will follow to boot,
They'll snap a picture, size you up, for your very own gray prison suit,
Keeping Mumia locked up 'til the firing squad yells, "SHOOT!!!"

So, if there is anyone out there who relates to me,
Then you know we've got plenty of work here in our community.
We walk free to struggle
To fight another day,
Raise our children,
Walk to church,
Collectively pray,
And when we are done
Away from the HYPE, alone,
To not forget "the struggle"
Begins at home.

In the Shade of the Níspero Tree

Carmen T. Bernier-Grand

Mami gave me the light pink envelope to open because it said: "*Senorita Teresa Giraux y familia*." Caramba, that sure made me feel special!

Inside was my teacher's wedding invitation. The card had two beautiful pink hearts overlapping each other. I opened it and read it slowly, because even though I was at the beginning of fourth grade, I couldn't read fast. But I read it at least seven times.

Sr. y Sra. Calixto Bocachica

y

Sr. y Sra. José Miranda

tienen el placer de invitarles a la boda

de sus hijos

Isabel

y

Carlos

Sabado, 7 de octubre de 1961

8:00 PM

Catedral de Nuestra Señora de la Guadalupe

Ponce, Puerto Rico

Mami and Papi read it over my shoulders.

"How special!" Papi said, touching my cheek with the back of his hand.

"I'd better get busy," Mami turned around and headed toward the sewing room. "You'll need a new dress for that wedding."

Mami wanted me to be well dressed for every occasion. Sometimes I liked it; other times I didn't. When Ana wore those cute outfits she bought at Felipe García, I wanted to buy them too. Mami always said no. Too cheap! But when I visited Ana, I wore her clothes and she wore mine. We were the same size. Still, Mami made beautiful dresses, and I wanted to wear a new one to Miss Bocachica's wedding.

Papi followed Mami to the sewing room, but I stayed in the hallway, opening and closing the overlapping hearts. I read the wedding date one more time and checked it with the calendar by the phone. I counted the days to the wedding. Three weeks! Too long to wait.

I picked up the phone to call Ana and see if she'd received an invitation too. Miss Bocachica had called Mami earlier in the week to say that she was inviting Ana and me and our families to her wedding, but that she couldn't invite the whole class and their families. So she wanted us to keep the invitation a secret.

Ana's phone rang and rang. Nobody answered it. I hung up and read her phone number written on the wall. Yes, I'd dialed the right number, 2342. The 3 looked like an E because I'd written it in first grade when I used to write the three backward.

I dialed once more and counted the rings. Twenty-five of them. I hung up and waited, closing and opening the invitation. I was about to dial again when I saw Mami half closing the sewing-room door, which meant that she and Papi wanted to talk about something they didn't want me to hear.

I tiptoed to the door and peeked through the opening. Mami had her back to me—her long, black, straight hair clasped as always with a metal barrette. She unfolded a large piece of lilac taffeta, and my heart filled with envy. That fabric wasn't for my dress; it was for a dress for a girl who went to La Academia de Niñas.

"I don't get it, Dolores." Papi threw his hands up. "I just don't understand why you insist on taking Teresa out of Rafael Cordero School when she's doing fine there."

My stomach coiled up, then sprung down into the hollow, dark space in my belly. I liked Cordero and didn't want to go anywhere else.

I moved closer.

"Listen, Ramón," Mami said, pinning a pattern to the fabric. "This is our daughter's future. And let me say it one more time in case you didn't hear it before. Doña Carlota says La Academia is giving half scholarships for people like us this year."

"For people like us!" Papi yelled. "See how those people speak?"

"Ramón, those were not exactly her words."

"But that's the way those snobs speak."

Doña Carlota was the mother of the girl Mami

had been sewing the dress for. I hadn't met them, but they were of *la sociedad*, high-society people.

For a moment, I thought of myself as an Academia girl with a freshly pressed uniform, my hair styled just right, an expensive watch on my wrist.

Mami tapped the scissors on the table, shaking my thoughts away. "You need to leave your prejudices behind, Ramón. Think about your daughter's future."

Papi glanced toward the door. I pressed my back against the wall for him not to see me. "I *am* thinking about my daughter's future, and I know that at Cordero she's getting an excellent education. Come on, Dolores, you cannot ask for a better teacher than Isabel Bocachica."

"Ramón, be realistic. Isabel is marrying a soldier. Who knows! She might move."

I shook my head. The thought of Miss Bocachica moving hadn't crossed my mind. I didn't think she could do that, not after being our teacher for almost four years—five for Ana and the others because they went to kindergarten, and I didn't.

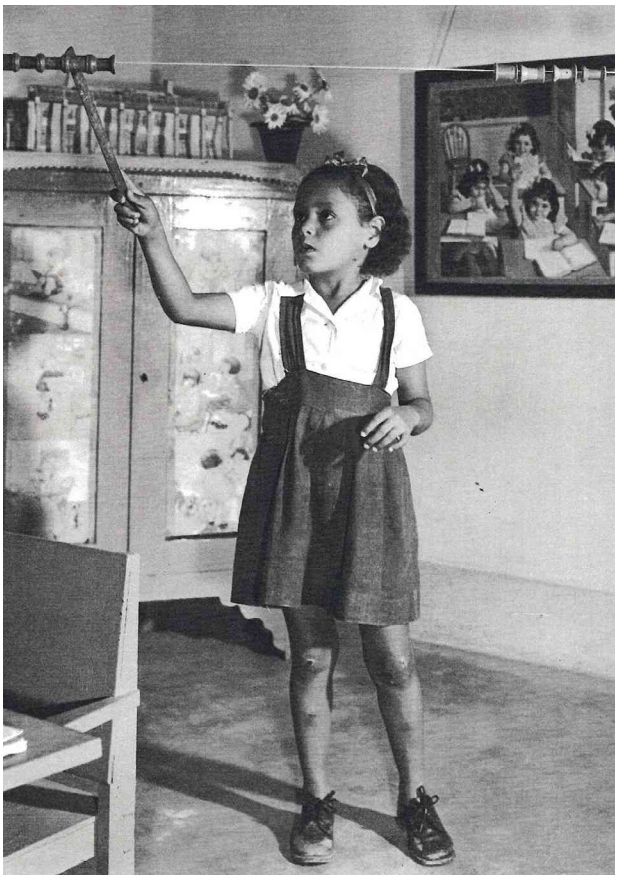
I tried to listen to Papi and Mami, but a car with a loudspeaker advertising La Gloria shoe store was passing by slowly.

"TUS PIES EN LA TIERRA
TUS ZAPATOS EN LA GLORIA"

"KEEP YOUR FEET ON THE GROUND
BUY YOUR SHOES FROM LA GLORIA"

I sat on the floor remembering how Mami had told me she wanted to send me to La Academia in kindergarten. We couldn't afford it, and kindergarten wasn't a requirement, so I stayed home that year. From first grade on, children had to be in school. When first grade came, Mami tried again to enroll me in La Academia. Still, we couldn't afford it, and I ended up at Cordero.

Now I laughed, because I'd cried on my first day at Cordero. I had cried because Mami had cried, maybe because she hadn't wanted me to go to Cordero. That first day, it got to be hard for her and me to pull away from each other. After she'd finally left, Miss Bocachica held my hand with her soft, brown hand and sat me on the piano bench while she played and sang "*Muñequita linda*," a song about a doll with golden hair, pearly teeth and ruby lips. She sang the song to me, the only blonde in the whole class.



Source: General Archives of the
Institute of Puerto Rican Culture in San Juan

I cried throughout the song while the other children, sitting on the floor, stared at me. A girl with long, curly ponytails like black poodle ears stood up and offered me a handkerchief embroidered with Little Red Riding Hood and the wolf. It was so pretty that I didn't use it. When I tried to return it, she said, "Keep it."

That girl was Ana. That same day she called me "Tere," and we became best friends.

- - -

The car with the loudspeaker finally moved on, and I heard Papi say, "Come on, Dolores, Teresa isn't like those Academia girls."

"I don't get it. Why can't she be like Ana, for example?"

"Ana is a very nice girl, but let's face it, Ramón. Ana can never be of *la sociedad*."

"Of *la sociedad*, as in high society?" Papi said jokingly. "Or of *la sociedad*, as in dirt?"

"Ramón, that's not funny!"

Source: *Puerto Rico Mio*

"Sorry," Papi went on. "But we're not of high society either, and I'm glad we aren't."

I knew that to be in *la sociedad* we had to have a lot of money. Other than that, I didn't know what else it took to be in it. Mami had said it as if it was a good thing to be, a very important thing to be.

I wondered why Ana could never be of la sociedad. Her parents didn't have much money. We had more than they did, but not much. Yet Mami seemed to think that we could be in high society, and Ana couldn't. It was as if something was wrong Ana. But what could that be?

"Ramón," Mami said. "I just want Teresa to have the opportunities I once had."

"Well, I don't. I prefer to see her growing up among simple people like the ones who go to Cordero."

"¡*Ajá!*" Mami threw the scissors on the table and placed her hands on her hips. "And how would you feel if she marries one of those boys?"

"Ha! And you tell me that I have prejudices! Dolores, we'd be lucky if Teresa marries one of those boys.

I stood up and leaned over to see Papi. He took a comb out of his coveralls pocket and began to comb his blondish hair. It wasn't any longer than the hair on his arms, so he didn't have to comb it. But he combed it a lot when he was upset.

I saw no reason for them to be upset. I knew Mami was worried just because I'd told her about my school friend Cesar and me. We'd curled *gongolí* worms around our fingers and said to each other "I do," We were just playing. But when I told Mami, she frowned and asked if we'd kissed. I told her that we didn't, and she sighed.

"Anyway, Dolores, Teresa is way too young for us be thinking about her getting married."

"She is too young to get married, but she is not young to start getting acquainted with high-society people."

"'There you go again!"

"Ramón, I just want the best for Teresa."

"The best doesn't have to be La Academia, and I can't afford it anyway."

"But there are half scholarships, and Doña Carlota says –"

Papi plunked his hands on his head. "Doña Carlota says, Doña Carlota says –"

Mami raised her voice. "Doña Carlota says that if I do a good job with this dress, she'll hire me to make her girl's carnival gown, and I can always sew for more people."

"Crazy. Sew. Sew. Day and night." Papi's voice was really loud.

I felt like running into my closet and hiding there until they calmed down. But they were talking about me. I stayed, watching Papi take deep breaths and stare out toward the Sol de Borínquen, the bakery across the street. Don Felipe was baking *mallorcas*, over there, and the sweet smell of those bread rolls came in through the window.

Papi moved away from the window. "We should ask Teresa which school she wants to go to."

I gulped and pressed my back against the wall. I could have run to my bedroom without being seen, but I stayed there, waiting for them to come for me. When they didn't, I peeked in again.

Mami picked up the scissors. Then she looked toward the door—right at me.

I walked into the room, embarrassed because they'd caught me eavesdropping. But they didn't seem to care.

"Teresa," Papi asked, "how would you like to go to La Academia de Niñas?"

I had no idea what to say. I wanted to know what it was like inside La Academia, and how it felt to be friends with those girls. But if I went there, I wouldn't see Ana as much.

"Can Ana go to La Academia too?"

No," Mami snickered. "Of course not."

"Why not? Is it because she can never be a high-society girl?"

Papi looked at Mami, and Mami lowered her eyes the same way I did when I knew I did something wrong.

"'Teresa," Papi said, after staring at Mami for a while, "why don't you think about what school you want to go to? You don't have to tell us tonight or tomorrow. Take your time."

I wanted to say that I'd decided already, that if Ana couldn't go to La Academia, I didn't want to go either. But Mami jumped in. "Not too much time. La Academia started two weeks ago, and I don't want her to be behind."

She placed her hand on Papi's shoulder. "Ramón, don't worry about the money. I've saved fifty dollars for some of the books and our share of the registration fee and the first month's tuition."

Papi shook his head. "Those people have money printed on their eyes."

I tried to imagine that—dollar signs popping out of people's eyeballs.

Papi kissed us and went back downstairs to his auto repair shop. I left after he did to call Ana, thinking that if I could find out what it really took to be in high-society, we could both learn to be that way and we could go to La Academia together.

But Ana didn't answer the phone.

The Puerto Rican Coquí

El Boricua

Tahino hieroglyph of the coqui

Puerto Ricans love their *coquí* and have written poems, stories and aguinaldos about these tiny tree frogs. Although this creature, just one inch long, can be found in habitats other than in Puerto Rico, it is the island's most recognizable symbol, beloved by Puerto Ricans as distinctly theirs. Representations of *coquí* are found in many Puerto Rican Taíno pictographs and pottery, and the frog generated numerous Taíno myths.

Coquíes have a unique high-pitched chirp audible from far away. The male species *Puerto Rican coquí* sings "ko-kee, ko-kee, ko-kee" at dusk and changes to "ko-kee-kee-kee, ko-kee-kee-kee, ko-kee-kee-kee" at dawn to attract mates. The little amphibians serenade islanders to sleep and sing all night, climbing to the tops of trees in search of insects. There they remain until dawn, when they change their song and jump down, nesting until the evening. In Puerto Rico all of these little frogs are called coquí even though only two of the species, the *coquí común* and the *coquí de la montaña* or *coquí puertorriqueño*, actually sing ''ko-kee." Although they are translucent, some *coquíes* look green, some brown and some yellowish.

Puerto Rican *coquíes* have relatives all over Latin America. The *coquí* genus is found in all the Caribbean Islands and in Central and South America. But the only ones that make the sound ''ko-kee" are Puerto Rican. Puerto Rico is home to 16 *coquí* species, all of which have padded discs—not webs—at the end of their toes to help them climb. They are known scientifically as Eleutherodactylus. In Hawaii, where they were accidentally introduced, *coquíes* are widely considered a noisy nuisance and have been the target of campaigns to reduce their population.

The *coquíes*, unlike most other frogs, are born as minute frogs, and not as tadpoles. The male *coquí* sings and watches over the eggs, which hatch in 28 days, and guards the fully formed newborns until they leave the nest after five days. Light from the moon and from streetlights suppresses the *coquí* population. Deforestation by humans has destroyed much of the beloved frog's habitat. Two species—*coquí dorado and coquí palmeado*—have become extinct. Others, such as the *coquí caoba* and the *coquí de Eneida*, are endangered species.

Vocabulary

aguinaldo: Puerto Rican folkloric music often associated with Christmas

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Adapted from the online magazine *El Boricua*
http://www.elboricua.com/coqui.html.
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In My Old San Juan

Jeff Kunerth

The front yard is sprinkled with plastic-foam packing peanuts. Cardboard boxes and barrels are stacked by the front window of the duplex in south Orlando, Florida. The moving van arrives Thursday.

Santos and María Rivera are going home.

The Riveras have lived stateside for most of their lives, raised their children here, but it was never home. Home is Puerto Rico.

"I left young and spent my life away from my country, and now I'm going back," said María Rivera, 61. "When you leave your family and the country that you love, you feel so happy going back."

Now retired, Rivera and her husband are joining the reverse migration of older Puerto Ricans back to the island.

In the 1990s, there was a net migration of 51,000 Puerto Ricans older than 44 from the States to Puerto Rico—up from a net return migration of 30,000 in the 1980s, according to the latest census estimates.

The return to the island of middle-aged and older Puerto Ricans runs counter to the out-migration of young people from the island that has been going on for more than 70 years. Younger Puerto Ricans tend to move to the U.S. for employment. Their elders return for family and a lifelong loyalty to the island.

"Most studies have found that whereas Puerto Ricans move to the mainland primarily for economic reasons, they return to the island primarily for cultural and social ones," said Jorge Duany, professor of anthropology at the University of Puerto Rico in San Juan.

'Looking for Better Work'

The Riveras were part of the out-migration of young people when they moved to Chicago in the early 1960s. Neither could speak English. The only person they knew in Chicago was María's brother.

"We were looking for better work or a better life," María said. "When you're young, you're not afraid of anything. Everything is beautiful."

They found work, but they also found a harsh climate and homesickness in Chicago. The couple returned to Puerto Rico in 1969 but moved back to Chicago in 1973 at the insistence of their children, who missed the city and their friends. María then worked for 16 years in a hearing-aid factory. Santos spent 17 with a company that makes boxes.

"Hijos" by Samuel Lind.

Last year, the couple moved to Orlando to care for María's mother, who subsequently died of lung cancer. A few months ago, the couple decided to move back to Puerto Rico. No longer working, they decided they had no reason to stay in the States.

"I came here only for work," said Santos Rivera, 63. "I don't want to exchange my beautiful country for anything."

Marisa Medina, office manager with Pan American Express moving company in Orlando, said her business averages about 30 Puerto Ricans a week moving into the Orlando area and about 15 a week moving back to Puerto Rico.

Circular Migration

The fact that Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens who can travel between the island and the mainland without passports contributes to the "circular migration" of Puerto Ricans to and from the U.S. It also eases the transition back to the island when Puerto Ricans reach retirement age.

"The circulation of large numbers of Puerto Ricans back and forth regardless of age facilitates the possibility of returning to the island in retirement age," said Félix Matos-Rodríguez, director of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College in New York City. "The ties are not broken."

For some Puerto Ricans, moving back to the island is an obligation, a pledge to the people and the place they left behind.

"It's a duty, a historic duty to move back to where you come from," said Gilberto Gerena Valentín, 84, who left Puerto Rico at age 18 and moved back at 67.

When leaving Puerto Rico, many carry with them a tune inside their heads that lasts as long as they remain in the U.S., Valentín said: "There is a song called 'In My Old San Juan' that is almost like a national anthem for those who migrate."

The song, a ballad that speaks of longing for the island left behind, is María Rivera's favorite.

"I love that song," she said. "When I hear that song, oh, my, sometimes tears come."

So for many, the return in old age to Puerto Rico is the completion of a dream, living out the song of their lives.

"You have people who had that dream from day one," Matos-Rodríguez said. "No matter how well it went for them, no matter how successful they were, the plan was always to go back. They never felt quite at home."

'No Dogs, No Cats, No Puerto Ricans'

Many Puerto Ricans never feel completely at home in the U.S. because of the prejudice and discrimination that exists toward Latinos, said Valentín, a former New York labor organizer who moved to the mainland in 1937.

"There is nothing idyllic about going to a country that rejects you," said Valentín, who served on the New York City Council and the city's human rights commission. "Many employers do not want employees who cannot speak English. You want to come back to where you are not discriminated against."

In the 1970s, María Rivera encountered signs on apartment buildings in Chicago that said, "No cats, no dogs, no Puerto Ricans." The feeling of being unwanted never completely disappeared.

"It makes you feel like you are nothing," Rivera said.

But in Puerto Rico, she will be back among her brethren, submerged once again in the sounds, sights and smells of her homeland. Among her desires: fresh—not frozen—banana leaves for the traditional Puerto Rican Christmas dish, or *comida de Navidad*.

In moving back to Puerto Rico, she is returning to a sister, two brothers, cousins, aunts and uncles. But she is leaving behind a sister in Orlando and three adult children in Chicago.

Yet in doing so, she is opening the door for her children to a land, an island, they know only from vacations and holiday visits. Her 30-year-old son, Orlando, has spent his life in Chicago, but sees himself following his mother back to Puerto Rico.

"My son, he tells me, 'You complete my dream. I am living in Chicago, but I belong to Puerto Rico,' " Rivera said. "When he retires, he's going to Puerto Rico to live."

This article was first published as "*Return to Puerto Rico Completes Cycle of Life*" (© 2002 Orlando Sentinel). Reprinted by permission of the *Orlando Sentinel*.

En la calle San Sebastián

Martín Espada

Viejo San Juan, Puerto Rico, 1998

Here in a bar on the street of the saint
en la calle San Sebastián,
a dancer in white with a red red scarf
en la calle San Sebastián,
calls to the gods who were freed by slaves
en la calle San Sebastián,
and his bronze face is a lantern of sweat
en la calle San Sebastián,
and hands smack congas like flies in the field
en la calle San Sebastián,
and remember the beat of packing crates
en la calle San Sebastián,
from the days when overseers banished the drum
en la calle San Sebastián,
and trumpets screech like parrots of gold
en la calle San Sebastián,
trumpets that herald the end of the war
en la calle San Sebastián,
as soldiers toss rifles on cobblestone
en la calle San Sebastián,
and the saint himself snaps an arrow in half
en la calle San Sebastián,
then lost grandfathers and fathers appear
en la calle San Sebastián,
fingers tugging my steel-wool beard
en la calle San Sebastián,
whispering *your beard is gray*
en la calle San Sebastián,
spilling their rum across the table
en la calle San Sebastián,
till cousins lead them away to bed
en la calle San Sebastián,
and the dancer in white with a face of bronze
en la calle San Sebastián,
shakes rain from his hair like the god of storms
en la calle San Sebastián,
and sings for the blood that drums in the chest
en la calle San Sebastián,
and praises the blood that beats in the hands
en la calle San Sebastián,
en la calle San Sebastián.

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Alabanza: New and Selected Poems, 1982-2002

Open Letter to Allentown

Wilberto Sicard

Student poem on Puerto Rican identity. Creative work as a response to critical readings on Puerto Rican writers, including Miguel Algarin's "Lower East Side Poem" and Esmeralda Santiago's "When I Was Puerto Rican."

Allentown I keep coming back since the day I left you
As a young boy I hoped I would fly far away and never return
But there is no other place for me to call home
Here, I am constantly greeted by the familiar phrase: "Dios to bendiga"
& the people gather outside on sun-filled days
Talking loudly over steaming pots of arroz con habichuelas
Oh how I've tried to forget you
Last summer I got into a car & drove into the oblivion of darkness
I travelled until the sound of waves crashed into my ears
I was a fool to believe that this distance could ever help me make sense
Of the senseless thoughts that creep into my mind
When the stars disappear & the sun refuses to appear
So I came back as I've done since the day I left you
Allentown when will you stop the color war?
I came of age running through your broken streets
Every street corner loomed with the good & the bad
The 50 cent limbers & the drug dealers
Everything seemed solvable if I could just run fast enough
I would be able to defeat the entire block in a race
I could avoid death when it struck at night
But that is not what our neighbors believed
Those from your spotless neighborhoods found a different answer
If the police arrested enough people
Then they thought our neighborhoods would look like theirs
But you & I both know that where I'm from
The streets were always meant to be cracked
And you still let them move on with their plan

They built glistening new buildings and pushed out our abuelos
They increased security measures to ensure their safety
Meanwhile you stood by & watched
This time I didn't run next to my friends in the bliss of youth
I ran from the devastation of a silent battle against my people
Until I found myself in the tattered streets of an unnamed city
The people here screamed in agony
As their neighbors crushed their homes with 50-foot bulldozers
It was too painful

So I came back as I've done since the day I left you
Allentown no one ever escapes your crushing embrace
The graveyard of shattered dreams & lost lives
Grows with the passing of each year

I have watched friends lose their lives
In the firefights of your heart
I have witnessed people leave school
Swallowed by the jaws of poverty
I could no longer risk my own life

So I packed my bags
& went in search of a way to finally escape
But I ended up on the wrong planet
I was among aliens who laughed at the way I walked
To them my words came out too mangled up
My very presence exclaimed "DIFFERENT"
So I came back as I've done since the day I left you
Allentown this time I don't think I'll leave
Instead I will inhale your scent
& get drunk off of the blaring sounds of salsa
Emanating from your soft voice
I will stumble toward 7th street
Guided only by scenes
Of glimmering lights & nocturnal hustling
At the PPL Building I will stop
Beginning the long ascent

Toward the blinking crown of your highest point
When I reach the peak
These eyes will take in your entirety —
A sea of hope
Finally the thoughts in my head will make sense
My people will dance freely in the streets
Our homes will survive forever
Then I will finally settle
In the only home I will ever know

The Bronx Lexicon

Paige Pagan

Student poem on Puerto Rican identity. Creative work as a response to critical readings on Puerto Rican writers, including Miguel Algarin's "Lower East Side Poem" and Esmeralda Santiago's "When I Was Puerto Rican."

My words are heavy, carrying
a necessary sternness
from witnessing the stop and frisk of a hooded teenage boy

that wasn't warranted, his rejection leading to force.
The police forget that my brothers are innocent until proven guilty.

Everything I say is loud
in an effort to resist the teachers
telling Malik he's never going to make it
because of the lifestyle he chose, as if he wanted
his mother to get beat every night by his doped up father
and the responsibility of the bills falling on him alone.

I say ain't instead of not,
and nothing in place of anything because
the girl who uses proper English
makes those around her feel like she's better than them
when slang is her mother tongue
and she can never forget that the streets raised her.

Half of my language is profanity because
section 8 is frozen and food stamps are being cut,
so homes become shelters where your roommates
are drug dealers and hitmen,
not because they're bad people,
but because they're desperate to do anything to survive.

Some of my words are mispronounced because
all my teachers are immigrants
who will never be American enough.
They thought they would be achieving the American Dream,
not chasing the facade of one.

I may not enunciate my words enough.
They all come out rushed because I was told
action is better than words, so when I babysit
my cousin alone and hear gunshots outside
the barred project windows, I shout a quick warning
and run to get my uncle's gun,
hidden behind the radiator
that never heats in the winter.

Part 3:
Government, Economy, and Civic Life

Introduction

Government, Economy, and Civic Life

The third edition provides context and resources for educators regarding the economic policies which led to the current economic decline such as the phasing out of Section 936 in the mid 1990s which gave U.S. companies incentives for investing in Puerto Rico. We also provide readings which give context for the economic policies, associated with the public debt and the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, of what Naomi Klein terms disaster capitalism.

For example, P.R.O.M.E.S.A or the Puerto Rican Oversight, Management and Economic Stability Act was a 2016 act of Congress, signed into law by President Barack Obama which appointed a federal oversight board to manage the debt. More recently, a Black Puerto Rican flag has been used by Puerto Ricans to note resistance against austerity measures and U.S. complacency in providing aid after the hurricanes.

Some believe that government bankruptcy of Puerto Rico in its commonwealth status has made the road to decolonialize Puerto Rico inevitable, while some argue this must mean independence others believe it should result in statehood. Currently, there is also a call for a new party called Movimento Victoria Ciudadana which began out of calls to audit the public debt, among other issues.

An Island Weary of Outside Experiments

Naomi Klein

Source: Rosa Colon Guerra. From "A Broken P.R.O.M.E.S.A."

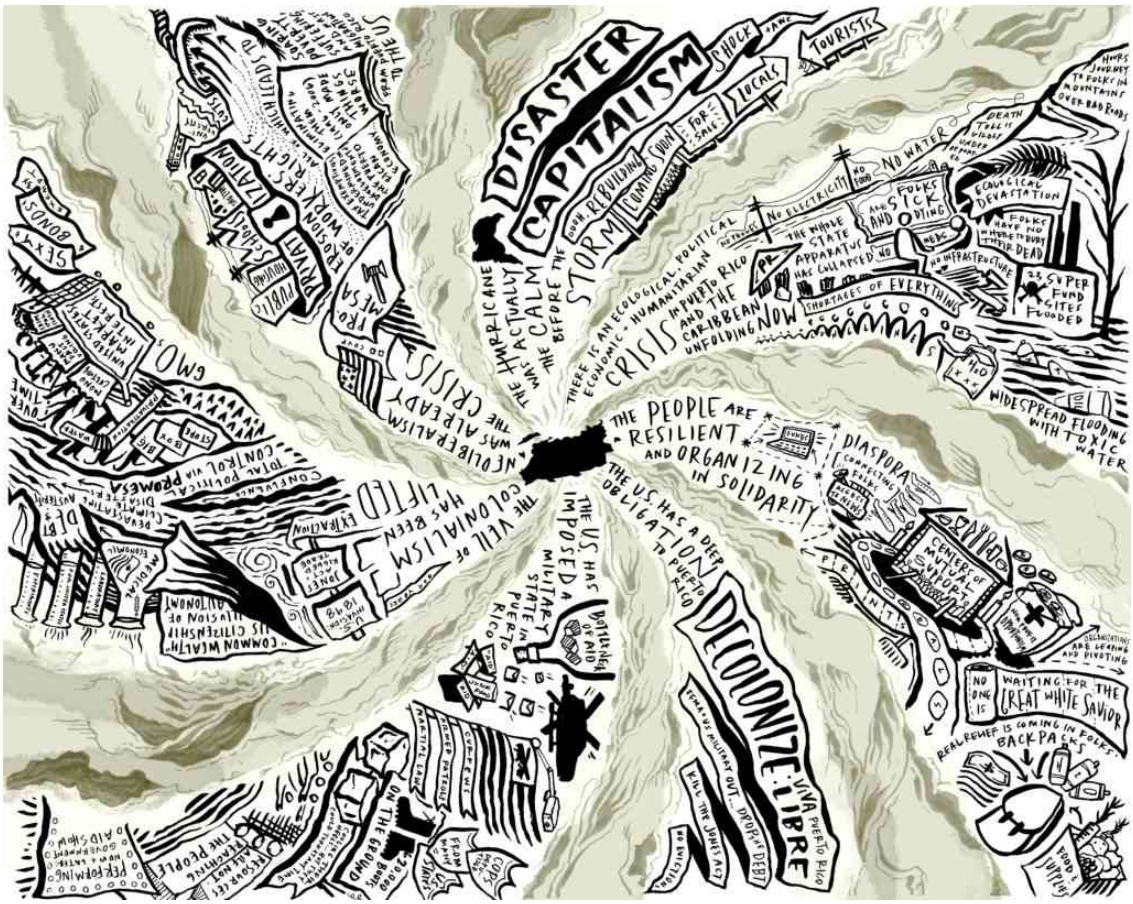
The dream of the blank canvas, a safe place to test one's boldest ideas, has a long and bitter history in Puerto Rico. Throughout its long colonial history, the archipelago has continuously served as a living laboratory for prototypes that would later be exported around the globe. There were the notorious experiments in population control that, by the mid-1960s, resulted in the coercive sterilization of more than one-third of Puerto Rican women. Many dangerous drugs have been tested in Puerto Rico over the years, including a high-risk version of the birth control pill containing a dosage of hormones four times greater than the version that ultimately entered the U.S. market.

Vieques — more than two-thirds of which used to be a U.S. Navy facility where Marines practiced ground warfare and completed their gun training — was a testing ground for everything from Agent Orange to depleted uranium to napalm. To this day, agribusiness giants like Monsanto and Syngenta use the southern coast of Puerto Rico as a sprawling testing ground for thousands of trials of genetically modified seeds, mostly corn and soy.

Many Puerto Rican economists also make a compelling case that the island invented the whole model of the special economic zone. In the '50s and '60s, well before the free-trade era swept the globe, U.S. manufacturers took advantage of Puerto Rico's low-wage workforce and special tax exemptions to relocate light manufacturing to the island, effectively road testing the model of offshored labor and maquiladora-style factories while still technically staying within the U.S. borders.

The list could go on and on. The appeal of Puerto Rico for these experiments was a combination of the geographical control offered by an island and straight-up racism. Juan E. Rosario, a longtime community organizer and environmentalist who told me that his own mother was a Thalidomide test subject, put it like this: "It's an island, isolated, with a lot of non-valuable people. Expendable people. For many years, we have been used as guinea pigs for U.S. experiments."

These experiments have left indelible scars on Puerto Rico's land and people. They are visible in the shells of factories that were abandoned when U.S.



Storm, by Agitarte.

manufacturers got access to even cheaper wages and laxer regulations in Mexico and then China after the North American Free Trade Agreement was signed and the World Trade Organization was created. The scars are etched too in the explosive materials, uncleaned munitions, and diverse cocktail of military pollutants that will take decades to flush from Vieques's ecosystem, as well as in the small island's ongoing health crisis. And they are there in the swatch of land all over the archipelago. That are so contaminated that the Environmental Protection Agency has classified 18 of them as Superfund sites, with all the local health impacts that shadow such toxicity.

The deepest scars may be even harder to see. Colonialism itself is a social experiment, a multilayered system of explicit and implicit controls designed to strip colonized peoples of their culture, confidence, and power. With tools ranging from the brute military and police aggression used to put down strikes and rebellions, to a law that once banned the Puerto Rican flag, to the dictates handed down today by the unelected fiscal control board, residents of these islands have been living under that web of controls for centuries.

On my first day on the island, at a meeting of trade union leaders at the University of Puerto Rico, Rosario spoke passionately about the psychological impact of this unending experiment. He said that at such a high-stakes moment — when so many outsiders are descending wielding their own plans and their own big dreams—"we need to know where are we heading. We need to know where is our ultimate goal. We need to know what paradise looks like." And not the kind of paradise that "performs" for currency traders with a surfing hobby, but that actually works for the majority of Puerto Ricans.

The problem, he went on, is that "people in Puerto Rico are very fearful of thinking about the Big Thing. We are not supposed to be dreaming; we are not supposed to be thinking about even governing ourselves. We don't have that tradition of looking at the big picture." This, he said, is colonialism's most bitter legacy.

The belittling message at the core of the colonial experiment has been reinforced in countless ways by the official responses (and nonresponses)

to Hurricane Maria. Time after humiliating time, Puerto Ricans have been sent that familiar message about their relative worth and ultimate disposability. And nothing has done more to confirm this status than the fact that no level of government has seen fit to count the dead in any kind of credible way, as if lost Puerto Rican lives are of so little consequence that there is no need to document their mass extinguishment. As of this writing, the official count of how many people died as a result of Hurricane Maria remains at 64, though a thorough investigation by Puerto Rico's Center for Investigative Journalism and the New York Times put the real number at well over 1,000. Puerto Rico's governor has announced that an independent probe will re-examine the official numbers.

But there is a flipside to these painful revelations. Puerto Ricans now know, beyond any shadow of a doubt, that there is no government that has their interests at heart, not in the governor's mansion, not on the unelected fiscal control board (which many Puerto Ricans welcomed at first, convinced it would root out corruption), and certainly not in Washington, where the current president's idea of aid and comfort was to hurl paper towels into a crowd. That means that if there is to be a grand new experiment in Puerto Rico, one genuinely in the interest of its people, then Puerto Ricans themselves will have to be the ones to dream it up and fight for it—"from the bottom to the top," as Casa Pueblo founder Alexis Massol-González told me.

He is convinced that his people are up to the task. And ironically, this is in part thanks to Maria. Precisely because the official response to the hurricane has been so lacking, Puerto Ricans on the island and in the diaspora have been forced to organize themselves on a stunning scale. Casa Pueblo is just one example among many. With next to no resources, communities have set up massive communal kitchens, raised large sums of money, coordinated and distributed supplies, cleared streets, and rebuilt schools. In some communities, they have even gotten the electricity reconnected with the help of retired electrical workers.

They shouldn't have had to do all this. Puerto Ricans pay taxes — the IRS collects some $3.5 billion from the island annually — to help fund FEMA and the military, which are supposed to protect U.S. citizens during states of emergency. But one result of being forced to save themselves is that many communities have discovered a depth of strength and capacity they did not know they possessed.

Now this confidence is rapidly spilling over into the political arena and with it, an appetite among a growing number of Puerto Rican groups and individuals to do precisely what Juan E. Rosario said has been so difficult in the past: come up with their own big ideas, their own dreams of an island paradise that performs for them.

Overview of Puerto Rico's Political Status Question

From World War I, in which 140,000 Puerto Rican soldiers fought, to the war in Iraq, Puerto Rico has contributed a disproportionate share of men and women to the armed services. This participation in the U.S. military is perhaps the most stark manifestation of the unique relationship between the government of Puerto Rico and the government of the U.S. Under the current arrangement, Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens. As such, they serve in the U.S. military but do not pay federal income taxes.

This relationship profoundly influences the economic, political and civic life of Puerto Rico. It has prompted ongoing struggles about the island's status, with numerous referendums and forums taking up the question of whether Puerto Ricans should live as a commonwealth of the U.S., a state or an independent country.

Life under the Foraker Act, passed by the U.S. Congress in 1900, set the tone for the political relationship between Puerto Rico and the U.S. Under this law, Congress decreed that Puerto Ricans were not citizens of the U.S. but that they were subject to its laws. The act gave the Puerto Rican people no opportunity to decide for themselves. The Jones Act of 1917 shifted the earlier relationship somewhat by extending citizenship to Puerto Ricans.

Puerto Rico's history in the century of U.S. sovereignty has been characterized by persistent resistance to Americanization," sociologist Nancy Morris wrote in her 1995 book *Puerto Rico: Culture, Politics and Identity*.

Leaders of political parties favoring independence or some form of autonomy have vigilantly demonstrated their unwillingness to acquiesce to the island's becoming essentially American in its language and customs.

Many have dedicated their lives to the struggle to maintain Puerto Rico's identity. Puerto Rican patriots such as Pedro Albizu Campos, an early member of the Nationalist Party in the 1930s, waged fierce battles for Puerto Rican independence. In 1937, in Puerto Rico's second largest city, Ponce, 20 people were killed, 100 injured and thousands jailed when police fired on an unarmed Nationalist Party demonstration.

In the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, nationalist sentiment continued to grow, finding its expression in the mobilizing efforts of a wide range of organizations and, occasionally, in armed activities, such as the attack of four Nationalist Party members on the U.S. Congress in 1954.

Puerto Rico's unique status comes into play in virtually every sphere, from the special privileges that U.S. corporations have in Puerto Rico, to the huge presence of the U.S. military, a presence that sparked a ferocious struggle on the island of Vieques.

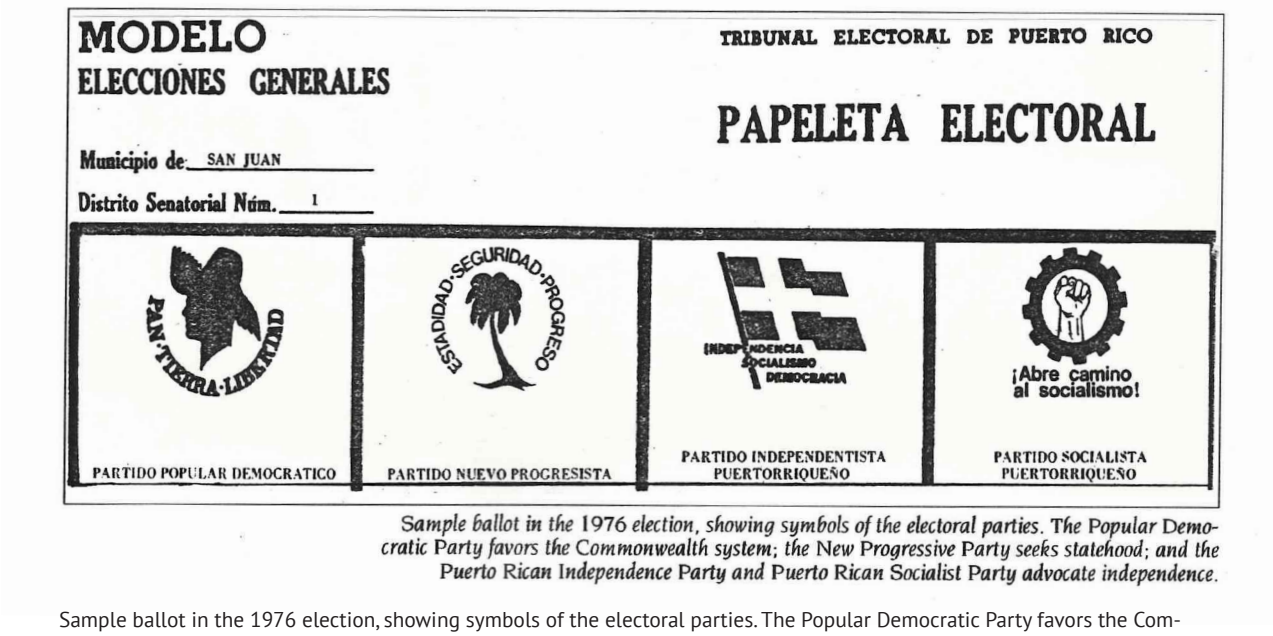
Here, three political leaders express their views about the question of status, and we learn of the painful cost of military service for the island's residents.

Overview of Puerto Rico's Political Status Question

Colonialism Denies Our Rights

Manuel Rodríguez Orellana

Manuel Rodríguez Orellana is the Puerto Rican Independence Party's secretary for North American relations.



Sample ballot in the 1976 election, showing symbols of the electoral parties. The Popular Democratic Party favors the Commonwealth system; the New Progressive Party seeks statehood; and the Puerto Rican Independence Party and Puerto Rican Socialist Party advocate independence.

Sample ballot in the 1976 election, showing symbols of the electoral parties. The Popular Democratic Party favors the Commonwealth system; the New Progressive Party seeks statehood; and the Puerto Rican Independence Party and the Puerto Rican Socialist Party advocate independence.

When I was a child, my grandmother taught me a proverb commonly used in Puerto Rico: *Cada cual en su casa, y Dios en la de todos*. Roughly translated, it means, "each person should mind her own house, while God tends to all." As I grew up, I found its great wisdom helped me to get along with relatives, friends and neighbors. Today, it also provides the best common sense reason for Puerto Rico's national independence.

Americans should particularly understand how history, geography, language and race blend peoples from various origins and cultures into a distinct national existence. As a result of a unique 400-year-old historical experience, Puerto Rico was a nation already when the U.S. invaded and took over in 1898.

The Taíno Indians, dwindled in numbers after their brutal enslavement by the Spanish conquerors, mixed with the Spanish *criollos* and the African slaves. Later, immigrants from other places in South America and Europe also blended with immigrants from North America and the Middle East into a distinct Spanish-speaking, Latin American nation of the Caribbean.

Recently, one of my doctors, a native of Italy married to an American woman, showed me a school composition by his daughter, born in Humacao, Puerto Rico, only 12 years ago. She beautifully expressed her love for Puerto Rico and identified herself as Puerto Rican. Thus, our nationality keeps on course even after ridiculous U.S. attempts at Americanization.

The natural political condition for people of diverse nationalities is juridical sovereignty. Puerto Rico's unnatural condition as a nation—governed by laws it does not make, by rulers it does not elect, and butchered in wars it does not declare—is the result of the U.S. invasion more than a century ago. Puerto Rico's condition is called colonialism, and its remedy is decolonization.

In a world populated by nearly 200 independent nations, Puerto Rico's colonial status, whether called a territory, a commonwealth or even a federated state, would still be an historical anachronism. Moreover, the domination of human beings by others raises moral questions, such as those settled in the U.S. with the abolition of slavery. Colonialism constitutes a denial of fundamental human rights. Most arguments advanced against Puerto Rico's inalienable right to independence are remnants of the Cold War. In the past decade, smaller and poorer nations have fared economically much better than Puerto Rico, while Puerto Rico has not surpassed anyone's economic development. But the U.S. war industry has acted against democracy to persecute and discriminate against those in Puerto Rico who, like the American patriots who fought against England in 1776, opposed colonialism.

Without the tools of national sovereignty in today's interdependent, global markets, Puerto Rico can only look toward a future of economic isolation, stagnation and greater dependency on federal transfer payments under an outdated military policy that only views the island as a strategic outpost.

Vocabulary

juridical sovereignty: government legally free from external control

colonialism: exploitation by a stronger country of weaker one; the use of the weaker country's resources to strengthen and enrich the stronger country

anachronism: something that belongs to another time

Overview of Puerto Rico's Political Status Question

Commonwealth, A Middle Ground

Sila M. Calderón

Sila M. Calderón was the governor of Puerto Rico from 2001 to 2005.
She was the first woman to serve in this position.

For half a century, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico has continuously opened new doors of freedom, self-government, prosperity and increasing self-confidence for Puerto Ricans. It has helped to liberate the creative capacities of our people, providing a solid social, political and economic platform from which to leap forward collectively into the future.

Commonwealth has been a vehicle for allowing our distinct national identity and cultural personality to flourish, while retaining the U.S. citizenship we treasure.

It has provided the necessary space for a people with a different background, history and language to maintain their allegiance to the U.S. and to the ideals of freedom and democracy that it represents, while remaining autonomous in order to decide our own internal affairs.

It represents a middle course between the extremes of total assimilation through statehood and separation through independence.

Commonwealth has been a powerful tool for economic development, as well, granting us the fiscal autonomy that allows us to collect our own revenues and set our own fiscal policies, fully devoting the taxes collected from our people to addressing our own special needs, which are different from the rest of the nation. The benefits of that fiscal autonomy far outweigh the fact that we do not vote for president and have no voting representation in Congress. It is based on that fiscal autonomy, which entails the island's exemption from federal taxation, that Puerto Rico's tax-incentive laws have allowed us to attract industrial investment.

Since commonwealth was established, the island's economy has developed dramatically, raising per-capita income from $374 dollars per year (in present dollars) in 1952 to $9,870 dollars per year now [in 2002]. Economically, commonwealth has been good for both Puerto Rico and the U.S. It has allowed a small island with only 3.9 million people to become the 10th largest purchaser of U.S. goods in the world. Socially and culturally, commonwealth has allowed for significant results. Life expectancy was raised to the levels of the advanced nations. Thousands of families were able to achieve their dream of home ownership. Educational opportunities have been so broadened that many U.S. firms and city governments recruit our graduates.

Commonwealth has also opened new opportunities for cultural expression. Many of our artists, singers, musicians and actors have become world known. I remain firmly convinced that the way for Puerto Rico to best respond to the need for promoting further economic development and social justice is through commonwealth.

While reconciliation must be at the very heart of any successful approach to the Puerto Rican status issue, commonwealth must strengthen and evolve to continue to play its role as the common-ground solution favored by the majority of Puerto Ricans.

Puerto Rico needs to be economically as strong and self-sufficient as it can be. This requires freeing it from some federal policies that are good for the 50 states, but that have an undesirable impact upon the island.

Strengthening commonwealth, solidifying its legal bases, promoting it further as a middle road to freedom, is, moreover, a two-way street. I proposed establishing a means for achieving consensus among the three factions as to the process to be used with Congress for a revision of our commonwealth status. That is our responsibility. But the U.S. also has a responsibility: to respond, to be sensitive to the continuing needs of our people, to establish a meaningful dialogue through which the needed adjustments can be devised.

Vocabulary

autonomous: existing as an independent entity

fiscal: involving financial matters

consensus: agreement of the majority in sentiment or belief

Overview of Puerto Rico's Political Status Question

Statehood Would Mean a Better Future

Carlos I. Pesquera

Carlos I. Pesquera was president of the New Progressive Party.

The migration of Puerto Ricans to [Florida] has made many [Americans] aware of Puerto Rico's status conundrum: whether it is, or should become, part of the U.S. or an independent country.

To be sure, Puerto Rico fits with none of the scenarios. It is not foreign, because Congress reigns supreme over its territory and inhabitants. It is not part of the American homeland, because Congress has not incorporated to its national territory an Enchanted Island of the Caribbean over which the American flag has flown for more than a century. Hence, Puerto Rico lives in a limbo technically labeled an "unincorporated territory"—or worse, a "possession," a terminology reminiscent of the "separate-but-equal" mentality of the Supreme Court at the turn of the 20th century.

Under such status, all federal laws apply to Puerto Rico, even when its inhabitants have no votes in Congress. Puerto Ricans living on the island are sent into battle by a commander in chief for whom they do not vote. And Puerto Ricans are processed in courts and by judges in whose creation or appointment they do not have a say. Puerto Rico cannot even choose its ultimate status. Only Congress can decide that. Hence, we call the political status of the island, simply, colonial. Puerto Ricans, on the other hand, are American citizens, proud to share their nation with the full array of ethnic groups united under Old Glory. In 1917, Congress made people born on the island members of the American body politic. Since then, Puerto Ricans have been proud, productive and brave Americans. As such, we have contributed to the defense, development and well-being of our nation. Not all Puerto Ricans, however, are allowed to enjoy their citizenship to its fullest. Those who live in Florida and the other states are equal under the law with all their fellow citizens.

However, it is a sad fact that Puerto Ricans living on the island cannot participate fully in our American society, with complete rights and duties. Even more sadly, for decades Congress has ignored our petition to be formally consulted regarding our preferences among congressionally defined options for our future. In such a contest, statehood would enjoy a handsome majority. Colonialism and congressional neglect have led some Puerto Ricans, such as those who defend the other status formulas, to reject our natural aspiration to enjoy the fullness of our rights and duties by becoming a state. Some of these people would, just as any confused or abandoned kid, reject the possibility of becoming an integral member of the family. America must be great and united in celebration of diversity. That is our nature and our strength. It is my commitment that the American flags that now fly over Puerto Rico will never be lowered to cede this American territory to any other government, either existing or to be created. To be a Puerto Rican, in Orlando or in San Juan, is nothing but to be a proud American of a particular ethnic extraction. The sooner Congress initiates the territory of Puerto Rico on the road to statehood, the sooner a better future will be coming to us all. The current status empowers the island and the people.

Vocabulary

conundrum: a difficult problem; a brain-teaser

Excerpted from 'One Island, Three Views: A Case for Statehood, for Commonwealth, for Sovereignty' in the *Orlando Sentinel*, July 21, 2002. Used by permission of the *Orlando Sentinel*.

The Economy of Puerto Rico

Tourists shopping.

Freeways crisscross the capital, their familiar green-and-white signs provided by the U.S. Federal Highway Administration. A giant shopping mall, Plaza de las Américas, beckons the consumer with an array of goods. Afterwards, shoppers can stop in at Dunkin' Donuts, Pizza Hut or McDonald's for a snack.

Although the Puerto Rican economy, with 2,300 industrial plants, is stronger than the economies of its Caribbean neighbor countries and consumption of products made in the U.S. is high, hardship abounds.

Before the 20th century, sugar and coffee were among Puerto Rico's most important products. But in 1899, the devastating Hurricane San Ciriaco, one of the most ferocious hurricanes in history, killed 3,400 people. This disaster destroyed acres of farmland, including most of the coffee plantations, after raining for 28 days straight. San Ciriaco left in its wake enormous and long-lasting economic and social upheaval. After that, sugar cane production increased, largely as the result of the increased U.S. presence on the island after the 1898 invasion. Tobacco production grew as well. In 1940, agriculture accounted for 31 percent of Puerto Rico's economy. But by 1972, it accounted for only 4 percent.

This dramatic economic shift is one legacy of Operation Bootstrap, a massive program first implemented in Puerto Rico in 1948 to industrialize and urbanize the island by utilizing low wages and tax concessions to promote investment. Investors in Puerto Rico were granted 10- to 30-year tax exemptions; those from the U.S. were also not required to pay income tax on their earnings. For the next 20 years, the economy boomed, but the many concessions offered to outside investors meant that many, if not most, ordinary Puerto Ricans could not reap the benefits of this economic transformation. In a 10-year period, unemployment skyrocketed, setting the stage for accelerated immigration of Puerto Ricans to the U.S. The process of centralizing industry in urban areas and diminishing the importance of agriculture led to massive departures of Puerto Ricans from the countryside and the collapse of the home sewing and sugar cane industries. Operation Bootstrap promoted rapid migration; after 1945, over a million Puerto Ricans, including many women, immigrated to the U.S.

While some of the tax agreements are being phased out, the legacy of the industrialization plan continues to include high unemployment, widespread pollution and decline of agriculture, so that 90 percent of the food eaten by Puerto Ricans—virtually everything except dairy products—must be imported.

Pharmaceutical manufacturing is at the heart of the Puerto Rican economy; the island produces 17 percent of all the pharmaceuticals in the world. The related industries of biotechnology and the manufacture of medical devices are also important. One-fourth of the pharmaceutical products (measured by their dollar value) manufactured by U.S. corporations are made in Puerto Rico. Sixteen of the 20 top-selling pharmaceutical drugs are made in Puerto Rico. This has lead to widespread use of the Puerto Rican people as "testers" for new drugs; most notoriously, thousands of Puerto Rican women were used as subjects in trials of birth control pills when they were first manufactured in the 1960s. Some women suffered long-lasting side effects as a result of this experimentation.

Tourism in Puerto Rico is not as significant as in other Caribbean islands, but many economic and political leaders would like for tourism to become a more substantial part of the island's economy. Some 6 percent of the gross domestic product comes from tourism. Expanding tourism will pose many challenges to the island, as it requires a careful balance act. Successful tourism involves protection of local ecosystems, establishment of fair wages and working conditions for employees and development of infrastructures, such as roads and hotels, that attract traditional tourists.

The U.S. government considers Puerto Rico to be an important cog in its commercial strategy. "Puerto Rico is our bridge to the Americas, and our futures are tied," said Under Secretary of Commerce for International Trade Grant Aldonas in 2003. For Puerto Rican workers and farmers, however, these ties can be seen as a mixed blessing.

Source: *Puerto Rico: The Flame of Resistance*

Vocabulary

biotechnology: The use of living things in industry, the environment, medicine and agriculture. Biotechnology is used in the production of foods and medicines, the reduction of wastes and the creation of renewable energy sources

tax concession: An agreement with a government that allows an individual or company not to pay some or all of its taxes

A Lead Box That Couldn't Be Opened

José Luis González

Source: Borinqueneers Congressional Gold Medal Alliance

This happened two years ago, when they brought back the remains of Moncho Ramírez, who died in Korea. Well now, this business about "the remains of Moncho Ramírez" is a figure of speech, because nobody ever found out what was really inside that lead box that couldn't be opened; and that was what drove Doña Milla, Moncho's mother, nearly out of her head, because she wanted to see her son before they buried him. But it would be better to start the story from the beginning.

Six months after they sent Moncho Ramírez to Korea, Doña Milla received a letter from the government saying that Moncho was on the list of those missing in action. Doña Milla had a neighbor read the letter to her because it came from the U.S. and was written in English. When Doña Milla found out what the letter said she locked herself in her two rooms and spent three days weeping. She wouldn't open the door for anyone, not even the neighbors who came to bring her *guarapillos*.

There was a lot of talk in the *ranchón* about the disappearance of Moncho Ramírez. At the beginning, some of us thought that surely Moncho had gotten lost in some forest and would reappear one day. Others said that at best, the Koreans had taken him prisoner and would release him after the war was over. In the evenings after supper, we men would gather on the porch of the *ranchón* and discuss these two possibilities, so that we began referring to ourselves as "the lost ones" and "the prisoners" according to which theory we supported. Now that it's all just a memory, I ask myself how many of us thought, without saying it, that Moncho was neither lost in a forest nor a war prisoner, but was actually dead. I thought it many times, but never said anything, and it seems to me now that it was like that for everyone. Because it's not good to give someone up for dead–much less a close friend like Moncho Ramírez, who was born in that very *ranchón*, before you know for sure. Besides, how were we going to have our evening discussions

on the porch if there weren't different opinions?

Two months after that first letter, another arrived. This second letter, which the neighbor also read to Doña Milla because it was in English like the first, said that Moncho Ramírez had appeared. Or rather, what was left of Moncho Ramírez. We learned this from the screams that Doña Milla let out as soon as she realized what the letter said. That afternoon the whole *ranchón* crowded into Doña Milla's two rooms. I don't know how we managed to fit but every one of us was there, and we were quite a few. The women had to put Doña Milla to bed, even though it wasn't night, because she was driving herself nearly crazy with screaming, looking at the portrait of Moncho in his military uniform posed between an American flag and an eagle with a bunch of arrows in its talons. We men drifted out to the porch little by little, but that night there was no discussion because we all knew Moncho was dead and it was impossible to imagine anything else.

Three months later they brought the lead box that couldn't be opened. Four soldiers of the military police armed with rifles and wearing white gloves brought it in an army truck, with no notice beforehand. The four soldiers were commanded by a lieutenant who didn't carry a rifle but had a .45 in his belt. He got out of the truck first. He paused in the middle of the street, hands on hips and legs apart, looking at the facade of the *ranchón* the way one man looks at another when he's about to ask for an explanation for some offense. Afterwards he turned his head and said to those in the truck: "Yes, it's here. Come on." The four soldiers got out of the truck, two of them carrying the box, which wasn't the size of a coffin but smaller, and which was covered with an American flag.

The lieutenant had to ask a group of neighbors standing on the sidewalk which was the room of the Ramírez widow. (You know how these ranchones are in Puerta de Tierra: 15 or 20 doors, each of them to one dwelling; and most of them without a number or anything to indicate who lives there.) The neighbors not only informed the lieutenant that Doña Milla's door was the fourth one to the left, but also followed the five soldiers into the *ranchón* without taking their eyes off that box covered with the American flag. The lieutenant, visibly bothered by this accompaniment, knocked on the door with a white-gloved hand. Doña Milla opened the door and the officer asked her:

"Are you Señora Emilia, widow of Ramírez?"

Doña Milla did not answer right away. She looked first at the lieutenant, then at the four soldiers, at the neighbors, and at the box.

"Ah?" she said, as if she hadn't heard the officer's question.

"*Señora*, you are Doña Emilia, widow of Ramírez?"

Doña Milla looked again at the box covered with the flag. She lifted a hand, pointed, and asked in a faint voice:

"What is that?"

The lieutenant replied with a touch of impatience:

"Señora, you are…? "

"What is that, ah?" Doña Milla asked again, in that tremulous tone of voice with which women always anticipate the confirmation of a disaster. "Tell me! What is it?"

The lieutenant turned and looked at the neighbors. He read in each pair of eyes the same question. He turned back to the woman, cleared his throat, and said finally:

"*Señora*… " he began again. "Your son, Corporal Ramón Ramírez."

After these words he said others, but no one heard them because Doña Milla had already begun to emit screams, tremendous screams which seemed like they would tear her throat apart.

What happened then was so confused that I, standing in the group of neighbors behind the soldiers, cannot remember it precisely. Someone gave a strong push and within a few seconds we were all inside Doña Milla's rooms. A woman shouted for *agua de azahar* while trying to prevent Doña Milla from clawing her face with her fingernails. The lieutenant began saying "Calm! Calm!" but no one paid any attention to him. Neighbors kept arriving, drawn by the tumult, until it was impossible to move inside the apartment. Several women finally managed to take Doña Milla into the bedroom. They had her drink *agua de azahar* and put her to bed. We men were left alone in the outer room. The lieutenant addressed us with a forced smile:

"Well, boys…You were friends of Corporal Ramírez, isn't that so?"

No one answered. The lieutenant went on:

About the artist: Puerto Rico-born Néstor Otero is a visual artist who lives and works in New York City.

"Well, boys. Since the women are calming down, you can help me, right? Put that little table in the middle of the room for me. We'll put the box there to watch over it."

One of us spoke for the first time. It was old Sotero Valle, who had worked on the docks with the late Artemio Ramírez, Doña Milla's husband. He pointed to the box covered with the American flag and asked the lieutenant:

"In there, in there?"

"Yes sir," said the lieutenant. "That box contains the remains of Corporal Ramírez. You knew Corporal Ramírez?"

"He was my godson," answered Sotero Valle, very quietly, as if afraid he wouldn't be able to finish the sentence.

"Corporal Ramírez died fulfilling his duty," said the lieutenant, and no one spoke again.

This was around 5 o'clock in the afternoon. That evening, the people couldn't even fit into the apartment: they came from all over the neighborhood, filled the porch and spilled out onto the sidewalk. Those of us inside drank coffee which a neighbor woman brought from time to time. People brought chairs from other apartments, but most of those present remained standing; we took up less space that way. The women remained closed in the bedroom with Doña Milla. One of them would come out every so often to ask for something—water, alcohol, coffee—and would tell us:

"She's calmer now. I think she'll be able to come out in a short while."

The four soldiers kept guard, rifles on their shoulders, two on each side of the little table which held the box covered with the flag. The lieutenant had posted himself at the foot of the table, with his back to the table and the four soldiers, his feet slightly apart and hands behind his back. When the coffee first arrived, someone offered him a cup, but he didn't accept. He said he could not interrupt the watch.

Old Sotero wasn't drinking coffee either. He had seated himself at the beginning facing the table and had spoken to no one during the whole time. And during the whole time he hadn't stopped staring at the box. His gaze was strange: he seemed to look without seeing. Suddenly, as they were serving coffee for the fourth time, he got up from the chair and placed himself in front of the lieutenant.

"Look," he said without looking at him, his eyes still fixed on the box. "You say my godson Ramón Ramírez is in this box?"

"Yes sir," answered the officer.

"But, but, in such a small box?"

The lieutenant explained, with some difficulty:

"Well, look, these are just the remains of Corporal Ramírez."

"You mean that's all they found?"

"Only the remains, yes sir. Undoubtedly he had been dead for some time. That happens in war, see?"

The old man said nothing more. Still standing, he looked a few moments more at the box; then returned to his seat.

A few minutes later the door of the bedroom opened and Doña Milla came out, supported on the arms of two women. She was pale and disheveled, but her face reflected a great serenity. She walked slowly, still supported by the two women, until she came face to face with the lieutenant and said to him: "*Señor*, please be so kind as to tell us how to open the box."

The lieutenant looked at her surprised.

"*Señora,* this box can't be opened. It's sealed."

Doña Milla seemed not to understand right away. She widened her eyes and stared at the officer, until he felt constrained to repeat:

"The box is sealed, *señora*. It can't be opened."

The woman slowly shook her head from side to side. "But I want to see my son. I want to see my son, do you understand? I can't let him be buried without seeing him for the last time."

The lieutenant looked then at us; his look pleaded for understanding, but nobody said a word. Doña Milla took a step toward the box, delicately pulled back a corner of the flag, and tapped lightly.

"*Señor*" she said to the officer, without looking at him, "this box isn't made of wood. What is it made of, *señor?*"

"It's lead, *señora*. They make them like that to withstand the sea voyage from Korea."

"Lead?" murmured Doña Milla without taking her eyes off the box. "And it can't be opened?"

The lieutenant, looking at us again, repeated, "They make them like that to withstand the sea voy–"

But he couldn't finish; he was interrupted by the terrible screams of Doña Milla, screams which made me feel as though someone had suddenly punched me in the stomach:

"*Moncho! Moncho, my son, nobody is going to bury you without me seeing you! Nobody, my son, nobody!*"

Once again it's difficult for me to say exactly what happened: Doña Milla's cries produced great confusion. The two women who supported her tried to get her away from the box, but she frustrated their efforts by going limp and collapsing on the floor. Some of the men stepped forward to intervene. I didn't; I was already feeling that sensation in the pit of my stomach. Old Sotero was one of those who went to help Doña Emilia, and I sat down in his chair. No, I'm not ashamed to say it, I either had to sit down or else leave the room. I don't know if such a thing has ever happened to you. It wasn't fear, because there was no danger to me at that moment. But my stomach was clenched hard like a fist, and my legs felt as if suddenly they had turned into jelly. If that has ever happened to one of you, you'll know what I mean. If not, well, if not, I hope it never does. Or at least that it happens where no one can see you.

I sat down. I sat down and, in the midst of the terrible confusion that surrounded me, thought about Moncho as I had never in my life thought about him before. Doña Milla had cried herself hoarse, as they led her slowly toward the bedroom, and I thought about Moncho, about Moncho who was born in this same *ranchón* where I was born, about Moncho who was the only one not to cry when they took us to school for the first time, about Moncho who swam farther than anyone when we went to the beach behind the Capitolio, about Moncho who had always been fourth batter when we played baseball on Isla Grande, before they built the air base there. Doña Milla continued crying that they couldn't bury her son until she had seen him for the last time. But the box was made of lead and couldn't be opened.

They buried Moncho Ramírez the next day. A detachment of soldiers fired in the air when the remains of Moncho—or whatever it was inside the box—descended into the deep, damp hole that was his tomb. Doña Milla kneeled on the ground throughout the ceremony.

All this happened two years ago. It didn't occur to me to tell the story until now. Most likely someone will ask why. I will say that this morning the letter-carrier came to the *ranchón*. I didn't have to ask anyone's help to read what he brought me, because I know my little bit of English. It was my notice to report for military service.

Vocabulary

agua de azahar: drink made from flowers of the orange or lemon tree

Capitolio: the Capitol building in San Juan where the Puerto Rican assembly meets

Doña: title of respect for a married or older woman

guarapillo: a medicinal tea

Isla Grande: an area of San Juan

Moncho: nickname for Ramón

Puerta de Tierra: working-class section of San Juan

ranchón: long, low building resembling a barracks, with a number of apartments side by side

señor: sir or Mr.

señora: Madam, Mrs., or Ms.

widow of Ramírez: In Spanish-speaking countries, after a woman's husband dies, she uses "widow of" (la viuda de) with his last name.

Translated by Catherine Sunshine from *Una caja de plomo que no se podía abrir*. Used by permission of José Luis González.

The Rise and Fall of Section 936: Historical Context and Possible Consequences for Migration

Sherrie L. Baver

Section 936 refers to the "Overseas Possessions Corporation" legislation, amended in 1976, of the Federal Tax Code.' This legislation was at the heart of the incentives package that promoted the island's manufacturing sector after World War II. As Rivera-Batiz and Santiago point out in their work, section 936 represented the third stage of industrial policymaking on the island over the last Half Century. Coupled with local tax incentives, this 936 modification of the Internal Revenue Code represented a generous federal tax incentive. It continued the practice of permitting companies to repatriate profits nearly tax free, and it also allowed income generated from their investments in Puerto Rico (for a minimum of six months) to be repatriated to their US-based parent firms tax free. It encouraged the appearance of knowledge intensive industries on the island (e.g., electronics and pharmaceuticals), which could assign various royalties to their Puerto Rican subsidiaries and gain major tax benefits to boot. It also encouraged a rapid growth of the financial system on the island.

These "936 funds," or corporate investment monies deposited in Puerto Rican banks, became a major source of funding for commercial loans, mortgages, and government loans in Puerto Rico. Through the Federal government's Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) of 1982, 936 funds also became a low-cost loan source for commercial development activities in other countries in the region.

Congress began the phase out of Section 936 in 1996, and some analysts in Puerto Rico and the United States predicted a major out-migration from the island, but to date this has not occurred. Yet an emigration may still occur as tax exemption ends completely in 2006. Given more than 100 years of US-Puerto Rican relations, and given that such a centennial demands an analysis of the various aspects of this tie, we shall examine the history of the island's economic policies and consequences for migration over the decades.

A Brief Overview of Puerto Rican Migration to the Mainland

Although Section 936 became US law and a Puerto Rican investment incentive only in 1976, US investment on the island and migration to the mainland have been significant factors in Puerto Rican history since the beginning of the twentieth century. A sizable body of literature links migration to the States with economic conditions, although specific economic incentives do not necessarily play a part on the island or the mainland (Iglesias 1964; Sanchez-Korrol 1994; Haslip-Viera 1996; Sanabria 1996). None of these pieces systematically examines the theoretical debate on causes of migration, but it seems likely that these authors would reject a simple "push-pull" analysis or a straightforward link between island and mainland economic conditions. These authors implicitly support a nuanced, socio-historical approach to analyzing migration; their research focuses not only on economic underpinnings but also focuses on microstructures. In other words, while the scholars' efforts consider economic factors in migrations, the phenomenon is also viewed as socially embedded in migrant networks (see Portes and Rumbaut 1990: 231).

The first migrants to the States, especially those who made their way to New York between 1900 and 1940, were 'los pioneros,' or the pioneers. They constructed the social networks that facilitated the massive migration following the end of the Second World War. Continue reading online.

Part 4:
Land and Environment

Source: Kathy Gannett

Introduction

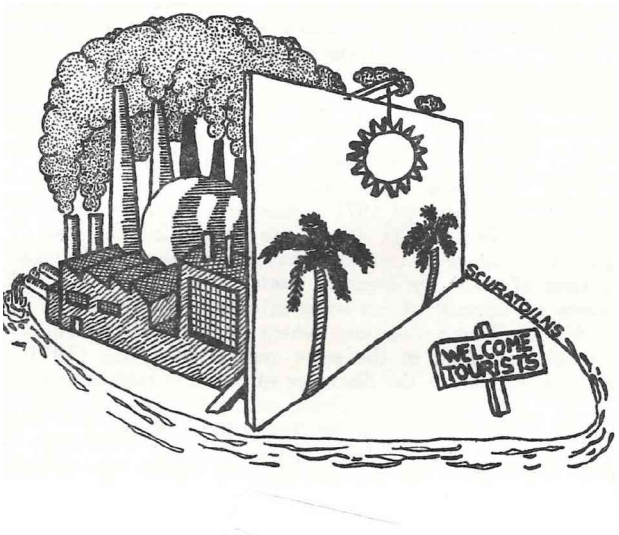
Land and Environment

Puerto Rico's lush environment is not only a source of great pride and joy for the island's residents, but also has produced fruit, vegetables, fish, dairy products and meat. Two major developments in the second half of the 20th century had a profound impact on the richness and beauty of Puerto Rico's agricultural land, rainforests and coastal bounty. Rapid urbanization and industrialization have led to pollution and displacement; the use of the land for military exercises has contributed to the lodging of live ammunition in the soil and poisons in the water.

Teachers should note that while Puerto Rico's beauty is often presented as a source of pride, this imagery has also been used by assimilationists as kind of politically neutral attraction for tourism and commerce. However, the political and social events after Hurricanes Irma and Maria and the recent earthquakes have made it almost impossible for those talking about Puerto Rico's land, vegetation, and waters as void of political, cultural, and social consequences. Moreover, community members and activists underline how inseparable environmental justice is to social justice, and the health of communities of color, as a whole. Also to note, when looking for materials on Puerto Rico, look for books which depict the industrial and city life of many Puerto Rican's, as stories of idealized rurality undermine the experiences of many young Boricuas.

On the island of Vieques, a decades-long struggle to end target practice and military exercises by the U.S. Navy has consumed many Puerto Ricans and their supporters around the world. Puerto Ricans have poured enormous effort into the movement to reclaim Vieques, making this struggle the most consuming focal point of Puerto Ricans' commitment to protect their land. Many of the writings in this section reflect the importance of this fight.

"The success of our military forces around the world depends on regular access to our national training facilities at Vieques Island and other sites…," argued Admiral Jay Johnson, chief of naval operations, and Marine Corps General James Jones, in 1999. But after years of asserting that the use of



Vieques was vital to U.S. national security, the military relented in 2003 and departed from the affected area. This major development has prompted communities to turn their attention to getting the proper clean-up of the lands and improved health services for area residents who appear to suffer from elevated rates of cancer.

Vieques is not the only location that needs cleanup. Along the Puerto Rico's north coast, chemical and pharmaceutical plants owned by U.S. companies spew toxic wastes into the ocean. In the south, oil refineries and petrochemical plants darken the air with soot. Twelve percent of all illegal toxic waste dumps in the U.S. are in Puerto Rico, an island less than half the size of Massachusetts.

Federal environmental laws apply to Puerto Rico, but enforcement is weak. Indeed, freedom to pollute is a major attraction for foreign companies in Puerto Rico. When criticisms are raised, U.S. and Puerto Rican officials point out that the Puerto Rican economy depends on foreign investment.

Pollution and other environmental problems have sometimes caused Puerto Ricans to lose their jobs and to become sick. The island's fishing industry has been nearly destroyed. In "Doña Licha's Island," writer Alfredo López depicts the impact of pollution on a fishing community.

Another major impact has been on public health. Purita Gil Pérez lives near the town of Manatí on the island's north coast. The DuPont company manufactured chemicals in a large factory complex outside Manatí, piping wastes into a treatment plant. Residents of the area experienced respiratory ailments which they attributed to waste leaking from the pipes.

In the mid-1980s, residents unsuccessfully opposed the building of an herbicide plant. Gil Pérez talks about their experience. Environmental pollution remains a central concern that will have a significant impact on Puerto Rico's future.

This new edition focuses on environmental issues and activism beyond Vieques and into more recent issues related to hurricane recovery. New lessons by Marilisa Jiménez García and Sujei Lugo Vásquez provide educators with critical perspectives and tools for talking about "rebuilding Puerto Rico" fundraising and activism and environmental literacy. These are issues which were at the forefront of the recent #RickyRenuncia protests and controversy. Not everyone who is championing fundraising and projects in Puerto Rico centers community values or empowers communities to retain wealth, food security and climate justice, energy and environment solutions, and economic opportunities in Puerto Rico. Even popular voices, such as Lin-Manuel Miranda, need to be shared in classrooms with a critical perspective and in conversation with economic and climate justice movements in Puerto Rico and the diaspora.

The new reading included here is the excellent picture book by Laura Rexach Olivencia and Mya Pagan, *Por Ahí Viene El Huracán*, the story of a young Boricua writing about the everyday experiences of her community in the days before and after Hurricane Maria. The text is in Spanish. This story was also one of books read during the "bedtime stories" protest on July 23, 2019. After police told protestors that the Puerto Rican Constitution "duerme/slept" after 11 PM canceling their rights to protest after that hour, creative and clever protesters, including children's authors, came up with the idea to read bedtime stories to the Constitution since it was about to go to "sleep." *Por Ahí Viene El Huracán* was heard on the streets of San Juan, in front of the governor's mansion, as part of a campaign to oust government corruption and awaken a new Puerto Rico.

Teaching About Hurricane Maria Recovery: From Hamilton to Grassroots Activist Organizations

Marilisa Jiménez García

Teaching about Puerto Rico counters the historical erasure that exists regarding the United States and its relationship to its colonies. The aftermath of Hurricanes Irma and Maria in September 2017 and current earthquake activity in Puerto Rico, once again, underlines public ignorance about how 21st-century colonialism impacts disaster relief. For example, teachers might need to explain to well-meaning students organizing a supplies drive after the hurricanes and/or earthquakes why it is best to give to on-the-ground organizations in Puerto Rico rather than government agencies or even celebrity-led foundations. Or how the Jones Act prevents Puerto Rico from receiving aid from countries outside the United States. Our classrooms provide important spaces for discussing how a just recovery is possible in the context of disaster capitalism, the public economic debt, the devastation of Hurricane Maria, and the continued vulnerability caused by the 2020 earthquakes.

This mini-lesson underlines a critical approach toward Lin-Manuel Miranda's popular musical *Hamilton* (2015) and the *Hamilton Mixtape* (2016) as a way of teaching on current activist movements for Puerto Rican recovery. Specifically, this lesson seeks to amplify voices in these movements that do not get as much attention as Miranda. This lesson encourages students to think with and against the musical in terms of how Miranda's work is shaping the discourse on Puerto Rican activism, particularly recovery post-hurricane Maria.

The first part focuses on using lyrics from the musical to draw students into larger themes about writing, resilience, surviving disaster, and migrating to the U.S. The second juxtaposes Miranda's position as an activist post-Maria with the work of grassroots activists, asking students to think about the kind of political and social issues at stake in the recovery process. I have taught this material in a course for college freshmen; however, for middle to high school students, whom I have also taught, I would adapt it by adjusting the readings or breaking up the work over more days.

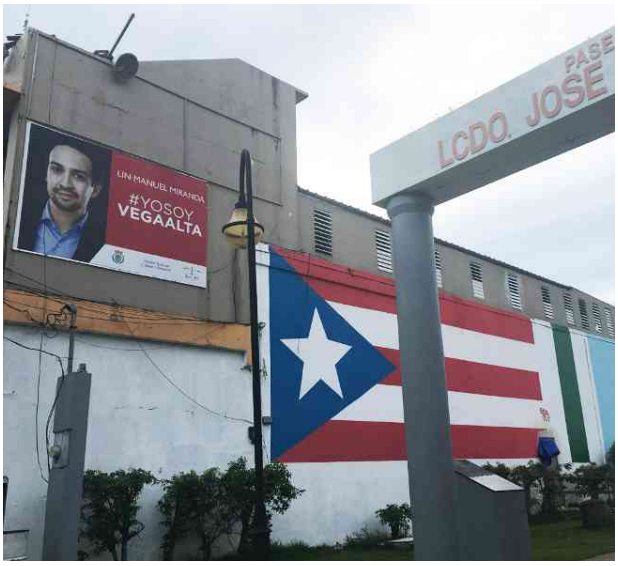


Photo of Lin-Manuel Miranda banner, as part of #YoSoyVegaalta campaign, taken by Marilisa of square in Vega Alta, Puerto Rico, the town where Marilisa's father and many family members are from.

Since its premiere in 2015, *Hamilton* has been used by K-12 and higher-ed instructors for various subjects, however, Miranda's history and identity often gets erased in conversations about the musical. Indeed, the histories of U.S intervention, and specifics of Latinx community struggles are often ignored by U.S. popular culture. Does it matter that the most celebrated musical of the 21st century was written by a Puerto Rican? What does it mean that in 2020, the same teens and parents (predominantly white) rapping *Hamilton* lyrics don't know or care that Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens? Or how that citizenship came about? How has Miranda elevated the conversation about social justice with regard to Puerto Rico? How does his position on Puerto Rican recovery differ from other activists in Puerto Rico and the diaspora?

Miranda's position as a Puerto Rican playwright

invites educators to consider how *Hamilton* is in conversation with Latinx literature, culture, politics and activism, and Puerto Rican and Nuyorican literature and poetry — more specifically, of previous generations. Actually, one of the reasons I use *Hamilton* in the classroom is to problematize its content and to get students thinking about Latinx and Puerto Rican literature and poetry, including Nuyorican poets such as Sandra Maria Esteves, Miguel Algarín, and Pedro Pietri.

I teach an introduction course to Latinx literature and culture at a predominately white institution and wanted to create a course to lead students to see how Puerto Rican, and Latinx culture more broadly, was part of their everyday life. However, I also wanted to disrupt mythologies in both U.S. and Latinx history. For example, I encourage students to consider how some of our national and cultural heroes, such as Jose Martí, could still exhibit sexist and racist attitudes even as they inspire self-determination. Students also consider how Latinx pop culture icons such as Miranda and Residente from Calle 13 differ in terms of the political solutions they champion, and how they connect to the larger landscape of Latinx history, literature, art, and activism.

On our first day of class, I ask students to introduce themselves and describe what they hope to get out of the course. Most of my white students say that they took the course because they saw *Hamilton* in the course description. Students of color tend to comment they took the class because they wanted the opportunity to study more about their culture in a classroom setting. It is always interesting to hear how some of my white students talk about seeing the stage production, while much my first-generation students of color had only heard the songs on Spotify and YouTube. "I am a huge fan of hip-hop. I know the lyrics of some of the songs by heart," a white student told me as he sat eagerly looking through the syllabus the first day. The same student later looked at me in disbelief when he read Miranda's *New York Times* op-ed on the Puerto Rican economic crisis. "I guess I never thought of him as a Latino. I thought he was just Alexander Hamilton, you know?"

This comment really helped me, as a teacher, see the disconnect between some of the social justice issues many have praised the musical for, and the way audiences read the bodies and voices performing on stage and on the YouTube-Sphere. I knew *Hamilton* had garnered fans from all walks of life, but it's largely white, affluent audience of Broadway-goers also tend to keep Miranda's perhaps more revolutionary critiques of the U.S. under the radar, for example, few take into account the musical's tendency to attribute U.S. foundational history and achievement directly to the labor and creativity of people of color.

Similarly, some of my students of color had also never thought of how *Hamilton*, and Miranda, more specifically, makes connections between the "founding fathers" and immigrants. However, students of color commented on how they felt at odds with the immense popularity of Miranda and the musical, and with how few working-class and communities of color could afford a ticket. In my first class session using these materials last year, when we did an observation and annotation of the musical's lyrics (see below), students of color were the most critical of Miranda's lyrics.

One student said, "I think this was clearly written for a mainstream audience and not for Latinxs. When he says the whole 'in New York you can be a new man,' he makes it seem like you just have to come here and work hard and anything is possible. That's the American Dream. And that is not true for everybody." My follow-up question was, "So how can we compare Miranda's lyrics here to the ways other Latinxs describe their relationship to work? For example, when we read Pedro Pietri's 'Puerto Rican Obituary,' and the way he pictures the American Dream. Keep your eyes open to the way other authors describe the relationship to labor and work."

In 2016, I taught *Hamilton* in the context of the Puerto Rican economic crisis, while in 2017, I did so in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria. When I surveyed students in my course in 2016 about Miranda's ethnic identity, most replied that they thought he was "Latino." In 2017, more of my students were specifically identifying Miranda as "Puerto Rican," something I attribute to Miranda's prominence in mainstream media as a voice for Puerto Rican struggles after Hurricane Maria. I led students to consider Miranda's celebration as an activist in mainstream media and to remember that just because someone is the most prominent doesn't mean that they are necessarily representing the totality of a cause.

I start our first session on Miranda by playing a news clip (such as "'Hamilton' creator Lin-Manuel Miranda takes on new role as activist for Puerto

Rico") of Miranda speaking about his role as activist and then have students listen to the tracks and annotate the lyrics. Or alternatively, depending on how students respond to the topic, I have students listen, annotate, and discuss the tracks first and then assign one of Miranda's op-eds (see below in Activities) as a reading for homework with a prompt asking them to think about how he connects the musical to his personal activism.

In our class time talking about Miranda's activism, I ask students, "How are his perspectives seen as perhaps more status quo than other activist circles?" The musical's ability to center people of color while also maintaining a certain status quo is something critical educators should wrestle with, and in turn, students. *Hamilton* provides opportunities for me, as an educator, to discuss who and what gets left out of U.S. history. For example, *Hamilton* presents a watered-down history of U.S. slavery, including Alexander Hamilton himself, who owned enslaved people. The musical also leaves out the history of indigenous peoples during the early republic. I would suggest reading critiques of *Hamilton* such as Dr. Debbie Reese's thread on Twitter.

Also, see Dr. Adrienne Keene's post on the absence of Native Americans in the stage production in *Native Appropriations* (April 5, 2016), "Where are the Natives in Hamilton?"

Students, particularly my students of color, were keen to point out that though actors of color are prominently displayed on the stage, the voices of people of color during the U.S. revolutionary era are almost nonexistent. They felt that the *Hamilton Mixtape* — a compilation album produced by Miranda a year after the original *Hamilton* soundtrack with collaborations with some of the most respected contemporary rappers — contained a much edgier critique of U.S. imperialism. Yet, when we used online platforms such as YouTube to listen to the original and mixtape tracks, students quickly noted that the mixtape had considerably less playbacks and Likes than the original.

One student noted, "I guess we can see which version most people hear. Even if the mixtape has these other voices, not as many people get to hear it." One of my students, after hearing "The Immigrants Track" on *Mixtape*, and specifically Residente's solo, said that if Miranda had included the mixtape lyrics in the stage version, white Broadway-goers might have been less tolerant of the show and of the rap music in the score. "I feel like the *Mixtape* is more him (Miranda), and the Broadway version is who he thinks he needs to be to be accepted."

In this section, I model how to use popular music in the classroom to discuss Puerto Rico. Depending on audience, some recently arrived students from Puerto Rico may not be as familiar with *Hamilton* and Miranda as those in continental U.S. I recommend also sampling songs from artists in Puerto Rico such as Rafael Hernandez (e.g., "Preciosa" which emphasize the importance of pride without cultural and national markers) or Calle 13 (e.g. "Los Hijos del Cañavaral" and or "The Immigrants Track" from *The Hamilton Mixtape* in which Residente of Calle 13 has a solo).

Materials

For this first part of the lesson, you will need to play for students two tracks and print the lyrics for students to annotate. The tracks are "Hurricane" from *Hamilton* and "I Wrote My Way Out" from the *Hamilton Mixtape*. They contain themes about writing, surviving disaster, resilience, and migration. The lyrics took on new meaning after students had seen the effects of Hurricane Maria and Irma on the island and its people.

- "Hurricane," from the original *Hamilton* soundtrack.
- "I Wrote My Way Out," from the Hamilton Mixtape, featuring Nas and Lin-Manuel Miranda.

Open up for discussion

The discussion should ground students in why they are studying *Hamilton* in class and preview some of the ideas about Miranda's connection to Puerto Rico and his developing role as activist. One of the main ideas, in terms of both songs, however, for students to think about the role of writing as outlet for expression, but also the way both tracks discuss writing as means of creating "a way out." We spend a lot of time in my classroom talking about what that "way out" is — from a means to expressing frustration and injustice to a means of creating opportunities and resources. Perhaps, have students watch the news clips on the aftermath of Hurricane

Maria and the recovery effort. Lead students in a preliminary discussion their responses to the footage and their knowledge of Puerto Rico and its current environmental crisis.

For younger students, it is appropriate to allow them to discuss their feelings of sadness, anger, and even indifference. Ask students if they have heard of Lin-Manuel Miranda and *Hamilton* or *The Hamilton Mixtape*. A simple question such as, "What does his position as a Puerto Rican mean for his career and writing?" accompanied by a visual, for example, of Miranda marching in the Unity March in Washington, might serve as an ideal link to discuss Miranda as Puerto Rican writer.

Allow students to discuss their thoughts about Miranda as Puerto Rican. As Latinx. Some might say they knew he was, and that he is doing great things for Puerto Rico. Some might roll their eyes, indicating they have since moved on to other icons and lyrics. Some of my Puerto Rican students, in particular, knew some of the lyrics by heart. Yet, I found that because Miranda plays such an icon of "American" culture (Alexander Hamilton), some students have a hard time coding him as a person of color while playing the role.

1. **Play track for students**: Before playing, tell students to follow along on the lyric printout and make annotations on references to images of hurricanes, writing, and migration.

2. **Annotate**: As students note references to the theme of "hurricanes," they can consider how it used as a metaphor and/or symbol for a larger societal and cultural issues. Another possibility is to have students consider what voices (e.g. ethnic, racial, cultural) are magnified in this track rather than in the traditional "Hurricane" song. In terms of musical style, student could annotate the different styles of hip-hop utilized in each song and why?

3. **Discuss**: Students can break up into groups and compare their annotations with group member for about 10 minutes. Have one student in each group list the group's observations on a sheet of paper that you can collect at the end of the period.

4. **Collaborate**: As the instructor, make a table on the board in which you note the observations students make about the hurricane metaphor, the differences between "Hurricane" and "I Wrote My Way Out," and the difference in hip-hop styles. Ask each group to voice their observations as you write them on the board.

5. **Write**: For homework, give students the choice of one of the following discussion questions in a response journal.

6. **Possible Discussion Questions Using Hamilton***:*

    - How does the original soundtrack version of "Hurricane" compare and contrast with "I Wrote My Way Out" in terms of imagery, lyrics, tone, and plot?

    - Which voices in terms of U.S. history (people of color, working class, youth, etc.) are emphasized in "Hurricane" versus "I Wrote My Way Out"?

    - How does "Hurricane" describe the effects and aftermath of a hurricane (tone, point-of-view, rap style, etc.) compared to "I Wrote My Way Out"?

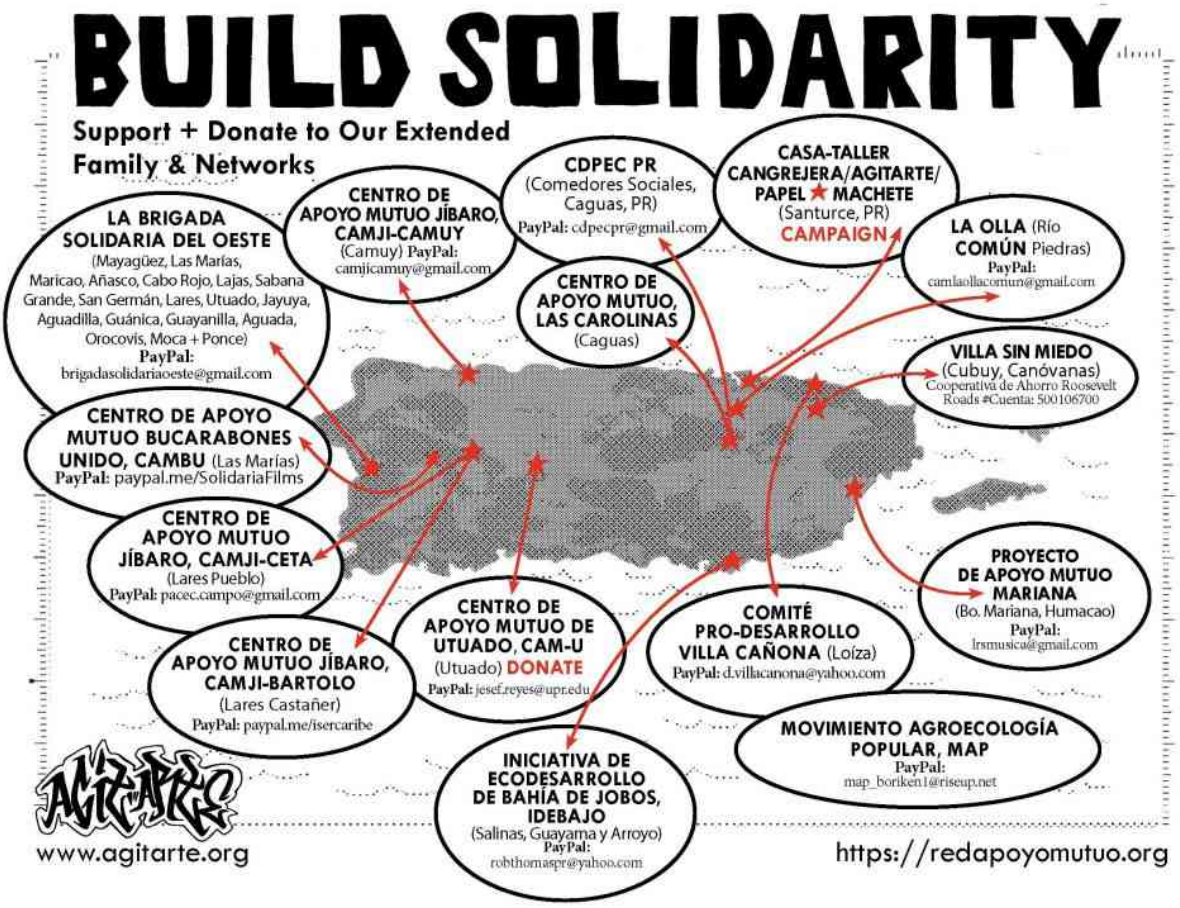
    - What does each song say about writing? What do these songs tell us about how we can use writing to transform circumstances? How might this compare to other writers of color and Puerto Rican artists?

Writing Assignments

Students might write a comparison and contrast response paper on the differences and similarities of the lyrics.

Students might construct their own poetry and/or song in response to Miranda and Nas's lyrics, or write a comparison and contrast essay using one of the prompt discussion questions above.

Student Projects: While none of my students ended up choosing Miranda as a subject of their final



An infographic created by agitate highlighting organizations supporting the decolonization of Puerto Rico.

research project, the work students did thinking about the roots of hip-hop in Latinx culture inspired one student to write a series of poems based on the lives of Selena Quintanilla and Tupac Shakur and another student worked on the role of Puerto Rican artists in American rap. One student wrote a story and poem about being Nuyorican — the poem is included at the end of this lesson.

Discerning Different Voices in Hurricane Recovery Activism:

For this second part of the lesson, we focus more on hurricane recovery activism and humanitarian aid. I want students to consider how "recovery" projects were or were not connected to root cases that make Puerto Rico vulnerable, particularly with regard to U.S. colonialism, and legislation such as the Jones Act, which made it impossible to receive supply ships apart from the United States. I use Lin-Manuel Miranda and *Hamilton's* visibility in the news and pop culture as a means of examining issues about Puerto Rico that may not be as visible for students. Listening to the tracks brought up students ideas about how Miranda was using his position to fundraise for the recovery process.

After Hurricane Maria, many of my students told me that they felt powerless in terms of how to support Puerto Rico's recovery. Many students expressed suspicion about fundraising efforts, saying, "That money never goes to the people." We spent time as a class thinking about what organizations seemed the best for sending donations, whether monetary or material. In class, students would Google campaign efforts on their phones (the one time I approved of cell phone use in class) and found Lin-Manuel Miranda's posts directing people to the Hispanic Federation. I asked them questions like, "Do you think an organization on the island is more trustworthy than one here? Do any of these organizations seem to have a political slant, particularly in terms of Puerto Rico's status? How do we know?" For example, students found out that Unidos for Puerto Rico was founded by Beatriz Rossello, the First Lady of

Puerto Rico. Some students felt the organization was more trusted because of Rossello's presence; others felt that it was suspicious, asking, "So, where does the money end up? In the government?" Given the events of the summer of 2019 and the recent earthquakes, students' initial suspicions about where the aid collected by partisan politicians ended up were spot on.

An organization I respect that works with visual art, agitate, created a helpful infographic highlighting organizations supporting the decolonization of Puerto Rico. Some of these on-the-ground organizations continue accepting donations for the recent earthquakes.

In the days after Hurricane Maria, grassroots organizations became more visible online with campaigns and hashtags such as #PRontheMap and #JustRecovery, underlining the value of social media as opposed to mainstream television in representing diverse voices. One of the main differences between grassroots organizations and the Hispanic Federation, the organization Miranda recommended for donations, was that the grassroots took issue with root causes of colonialism that made Puerto Rico vulnerable to environmental disaster and unfair economic policies. Students, for example, found information on activist Rosa Clemente and asked me if I had seen her comments on how certain celebrities were hurting efforts in ways that didn't support a sustainable recovery.

As an instructor, you could decide to use Clemente's comments on the Unity March as a means of introducing work from other activists into the discussion. In my classroom, some students expressed that if someone as popular and visible as Miranda were not discussing Puerto Rican hurricane recovery, then perhaps no one would care. For example, only a few of my students of color had even heard of Sonia Sotomayor, the first Latina (and Puerto Rican) Supreme Court Justice, appointed by Barack Obama in 2010. This led us to discuss how Puerto Rican lives are valued in American culture: As cultural performers, perhaps, but not political agents?

How does what Miranda recommended help/hurt a just version of recovery — one in which wealth is not extracted from Puerto Rico? At the same time, if Miranda wasn't using his platform as a gifted playwright and artist to draw attention to Puerto Rico, would anyone even listen? Miranda's role as political activist for Puerto Rico has evolved over the past year and a half given his role in advocating for the island in regard to the economic crisis and now Hurricane Maria. In particular, Miranda has drawn clear parallels to his role as Hamilton, the Caribbean immigrant who helps build the U.S. and his position as a Puerto Rican man. After working with the lyrics and listening to tracks, students can read pieces such as:

- "Give Puerto Rico Its Chance to Thrive" by Lin-Manuel Miranda, Op-ed in The New York Times
- "'Hamilton' creator Lin-Manuel Miranda takes on new role as activist for Puerto Rico" via PBS.
- "This is what Puerto Ricans need from the government. Right now." by Lin-Manuel Miranda, Op-ed in *Washington Post* (Dec. 13, 2017).

Discussion

Teachers might ask students to consider how Miranda draws parallels between himself and the character of Hamilton in the *New York Times* op-ed. What are the benefits/problems with Miranda, as a Puerto Rican, comparing himself to Alexander Hamilton? How might this change students' reading of the musical?

Research

Some of my students found grassroots organizations online and shared them with me and other students. However, after spending some time talking about Miranda's work, I have spent a bit more time with students outlining some of the barriers in terms of recovery. For example, most of my students, even those from Puerto Rico, had never heard of the Jones Act, which allows Puerto Rico to only trade with the U.S. and limits the relief they can receive from other nations, even in the event of a disaster. Have students look up social media hashtags such as #PRontheMap and #JustRecovery. I recommend the web resource PR on the Map, which features clips and stories from grassroots journalists and activists documenting the recovery process on the island. Also, have students research local Puerto Rican grassroots organizations on the island, such as Casa Pueblo and Brigada

Solideridad del Oeste, and report their observations. Students can compare celebrity organizations such as Ricky Martin Foundation, Unidos por Puerto Rico, and Hispanic Federation with the platforms of other organizations.

In-Class Group Work: Ask students to circle key words that seem to be repeated in the organizations' materials and websites (e.g. solidarity, self-determination). What do these terms mean and how are they tied to political platforms? Do those discussing "recovery" and "rebuilding" resist colonialism? Do they support privatization and other policies associated with disaster capitalism? How do organizations advocate for creating sustainable economies and environments that generate opportunities and wealth in Puerto Rico for working-class Puerto Ricans?

In my classes, I projected the demands below on a whiteboard and scrolled through the site, asking students to raise their hands if they saw a key word, image, or phrase that they found meaningful. For example, many students noted the black Puerto Rican flag as a sign of protest. We took time to think about the meaning of the words and how they shape discourse on recovery. For example, the OurPowerPRNYC graphic was created by the grassroots organization Uprose, based in New York, which details particular demands in terms of a program for Puerto Rico's recovery. Consider teaching the graphic and having students research the consequences of U.S. policy like the Jones Act. Also, you might ask students to consider how we might problematize Miranda's political organizing in terms of other activists on the island and the diaspora in the movement for Puerto Rico.

Actionable Work

After students have done this research, you might approach school administration and see if there is a way that students and teachers can organize a donation drive for organizations students vetted online. It's a tangible way for students to make a contribution to the recovery effort. Offer students extra credit for writing a story in the school newspaper in which they highlight reputable organizations supporting social justice in Puerto Rico. Or write the story together as a class. Consider using the graphic by AgitArte.

Students can be inspired by Miranda's tremendous work while remaining critical and placing him in conversation with the struggles of Puerto Rican communities, and other communities of color, as a way of discerning the different voices that are currently speaking up for Puerto Rico.

"Hurricane"

[HAMILTON]

In the eye of a hurricane
There is quiet

For just a moment
A yellow sky

When I was 17 a hurricane
Destroyed my town
I didn't drown
I couldn't seem to die

I wrote my way out
Wrote everything down far as I could see
I wrote my way out
I looked up and the town had its eyes on me

They passed a plate around
Total strangers
Moved to kindness by my story
Raised enough for me to book passage on a
Ship that was New York bound…

I wrote my way out of hell
I wrote my way to revolution
I was louder than the crack in the bell
I wrote Eliza love letters until she fell
I wrote about The Constitution and defended it well

And in the face of ignorance and resistance
I wrote financial systems into existence
And when my prayers to God were met with
indifference
I picked up a pen, I wrote my own deliverance

In the eye of a hurricane
There is quiet
For just a moment
A yellow sky

I was 12 when my mother died
She was holding me
We were sick and she was holding me

I couldn't seem to die

[BURR]

Wait for it, wait for it, wait for it…

[BURR AND ENSEMBLE]

Wait for it, wait for it, wait for it…
Wait for it, wait for it, wait for it, wait…

[HAMILTON]

I'll write my way out…
Write ev'rything down, far as I can see…
I'll write my way out…
Overwhelm them with honesty

[WASHINGTON/ELIZA/ANGELICA/MARIA]

History has its eyes on you

[HAMILTON]

This is the eye of the hurricane, this is the only
Way I can protect my legacy…

[COMPANY (EXCEPT HAMILTON)]

Wait for it, wait for it, wait for it, wait…

"I Wrote My Way Out"

[Hook: Aloe Blacc and Lin-Manuel Miranda]

I wrote my way out
When the world turned its back on me
I was up against the wall
I had no foundation
No friends and no family to catch my fall
Running on empty, with nothing left in me but doubt
I picked up a pen
And wrote my way out (I wrote my way out)

[Verse 1: Nas]

I picked up the pen like Hamilton
Street analyst, now I write words that try to channel 'em
No political power, just lyrical power
Sittin' on a crate on a corner, sippin' for hours
Schemin' on a come up, from evenin' to sun up
My man awaitin' trial, misdemeanors we younger
Courtroom prejudice, insufficient evidence
Jailhouse lawyers, these images still relevant
Flickerin' lights inside my project hall
Sickenin', the mice crawl all night long
And '87 Reaganism, many pages I've written on
Writin' songs about rights and wrongs and bails bonds
Master bedroom, bigger than the crib that I was raised at
I'm the architect like I wrote the code to Waze app
I'm driven, black Elohim from the streets of Queens
The definition of what It Was Written means
Know what I mean?

[Hook: Aloe Blacc and Lin-Manuel Miranda]

I wrote my way out
When the world turned its back on me
I was up against the wall
I had no foundation
No friends and no family to catch my fall
Running on empty, there was nothing left in me but doubt
I picked up a pen
And I wrote my way out (I wrote my way out)

[Verse 2: Dave East]

I really wrote my way up out of 6E
Develop relationships with fiends, I know they miss me

Before the MetroCards, it was tokens, I did the 10-speed
Never had wrote a rhyme in my life, what was a 16?
At 16, arrested in housin', trips to the mountains
Came right back, trappin' off couches, watchin' for mouses
Only tools we was posed with, had a spot, smoke lit
The hate is just confusion, pay attention how them jokes switch
Diadora was my favorite, the Mark Buchanans
Mama couldn't afford them, I learned everythin' on the border
That's a big 8, Clicquot parties with private dancers with no mixtape
Bumble Bee Tuna, now we could get steak
I persevered, composition, I kept it close
Competition near, I'm a Spartan without the spear
Three hundred rhymes, it was written before I wrote it
Opportunity knockin', might miss it, that window closin'
This poetry in motion, I'm a poet

[Hook: Aloe Blacc and Lin-Manuel Miranda]

I wrote my way out
When the world turned its back on me
I was up against the wall
I had no foundation
No friends and no family to catch my fall
Running on empty, there was nothing left in me but doubt
I picked up a pen
And I wrote my way out (I wrote my way out)

[Verse 3: Lin-Manuel Miranda]

High speed, dubbin' these rhymes in my dual cassette deck
Runnin' out of time like I'm Jonathan Larson's rent check
My mind is where the wild things are, Maurice Sendak
In withdrawal, I want it all, please give me that pen back
Y'all, I caught my first beatin' from the other kids when I was caught readin'
"Oh, you think you smart? Blah! Start bleedin'"
My pops tried in vain to get me to fight back
Sister tapped my brains, said, pssh, you'll get 'em right back
Oversensitive, defenseless, I made sense of it, I pencil in
The lengths to which I'd go to learn my strengths and knock 'em senseless
These sentences are endless, so what if they leave me friendless?
Damn, you got no chill, fuckin' right I'm relentless
I know Abuela's never really gonna win the lottery
So it's up to me to draw blood with this pen, hit an artery
This Puerto Rican's brains are leakin' through the speakers
And if he can be the shinin' beacon this side of the G.W.B and
Shine a light when it's gray out

[Bridge: Aloe Blacc and Lin-Manuel Miranda]

I wrote my way out
Oh, I was born in the eye of a storm
No lovin' arms to keep me warm
This hurricane in my brain is the burden I bear
I can do without, I'm here (I'm here)
Cause I wrote my way out

[Outro: Nas, Dave East, Lin-Manuel Miranda]

I picked up the pen like Hamilton
I wrote my way out of the projects
Wrote-wrote my way out of the projects
Picked up the pen like Hamilton
I wrote my way out of the
Wrote-wrote my way out of the projects
I wrote my way out
Picked up the pen like Hamilton
I wrote my way out of the

[Spoken: Nas & Lin-Manuel Miranda]

(I wrote my way out)

Really, I saw like a hole in the rap game
so if I wanted to put my little two cents in the game, then it would be from a different perspective

(I wrote my way out)

I thought that I would represent for my neighborhood and tell their story, be their voice, in a way that nobody has done it
Tell the real story

Student Poem

Me
Dancing, a beautiful flower
in a whirlwind I scatter my petals.
I am graceful
I am proud

To call myself a Puertorriqueña
it's an honor.

Living live,
born in a city that never sleeps
I know the turns and how to get lost —
and that's hard to learn, not an easy get.

To call myself American,
I should be happy to do.

Like a trapeze artist,
I must learn to balance
not to fall
Be careful of where my feet step

To call myself…
What can I call myself?

In between
Not fully here
but not fully there
I'm everywhere I want to be

Puerto Rican, American, Nuyorican,
any way you put it, I am still me.

Mirianna Torres, Hunter College, December 2015

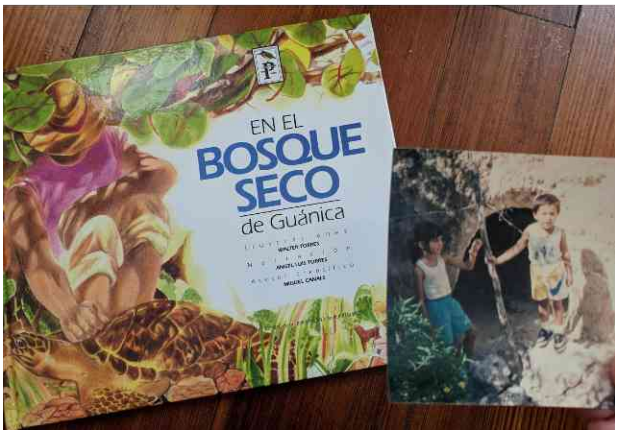
Puerto Rican Children's Literature and Environmental Literacy: Working with Children and Moving Towards a Sustainable Future

Sujei Lugo Vázquez

I remember a childhood of family weekends traveling around and across the island, visiting plazas, parks, natural reserves, going to festivals, and stopping at local businesses. Through our car windows, we could see the different ecological systems that filled Puerto Rico and were taught and reminded to love our land, our flora and fauna. It amazed me how on a small island we could see rain forests, dry forests, coral reefs, mangroves, caves, sandy beaches, rocky shores, mogotes, all in a two- or three-hour car trip. In the north of the island we could stop by the Cavernas de Camuy and admire our unique caves and subterranean rivers that also contain a rich Taíno Indian history. In the south we could go from the Bosque Seco de Guánica and its dry soil, cactus, and limestone caves to La Parguera's bioluminescent bay, one of the unique places in the world with marvelous tiny creatures that light up the water during the night.

Through my eyes and my family's stories and conversations, I was also reminded, visually and historically, of illegal landfills, toxic waste, and pollution by chemical and pharmaceutical plants owned by U.S. companies; the presence of the U.S. Navy on the island of Vieques; coal ash deposits; and the impact of fast-growing housing development and industrialization to our land and coast. Histories of colonization, human disasters, and natural disasters had all affected and damaged the Puerto Rican environment, ecosystems, and communities.

Hurricane María initiated new and much-needed conversations between my family and Puerto Rican communities in the island and the diaspora about natural resources, food sovereignty, alternative energy systems, public and community education, and sustainability. It uncovered environmental injustices and revealed to me and many other Puerto Ricans the island's ecological crisis, as well as the environmental and colonial limitations regarding land control and ownership, political and economic power, and sustainability. On the other hand, this natural disaster also revealed the power of community building and support, intergenerational and diaspora solidarity, self-organized efforts and initiatives, and the potential to transform the island's present and future with decolonial practices, social justice, and education.



My brother Pedro and me in front of a limestone cave in the Bosque Seco de Guánica and a book that I wished I had when I was young to enhance my knowledge about this ecological system.

Children didn't shy away from post-María rebuilding efforts and were part of environmental, psychological, recreational, and educational activities, efforts, and support. In a picture shared by Twitter user @RubieMariela three days after Hurricane María, we clearly see children in Caguas, Puerto Rico, doing their part and playing an active role in cleaning and rebuilding their community.

They were eyewitnesses to a natural phenomenon that impacted their lives, their family, their routines, their communities, their environment, and their sense of "normalcy." A fellow Puerto Rican school librarian told me about the effect that the hurricane

had in his students: "Their houses got flooded and many lost their roofs and windows. Some students lost family members, grandparents, and uncles." Educators, families, activists, and community leaders across the island, created and took over spaces, developed projects and encouraged children to participate and play active roles in emotional and self-reflecting activities, art and creative writing projects, activism and environmental justice initiatives, and literacy projects that intersect social justice, children's literature, and storytelling. I had the opportunity to collaborate and chat with several of these local educators, sharing their work and words in a piece for *School Library Journal*.

My family, loved ones, and friends all live in Puerto Rico. My recent move to the United States to study and work strengthened my connection with my people and their efforts to rebuilding and organize communities towards a sustainable, decolonial, and transformative future for Puerto Rico. As a children's librarian, educator, and activist, I understand the role inclusive children's literature can play in empowering them to reflect and critique issues and experiences, to develop critical skills, and to envision and take action. I decided to collaborate with educators and support their work and efforts focused on youth activism, art therapy, environmental justice, and literacy. Book drives were an essential part of our efforts to acquire children's books to support these initiatives as well as children's recreational, educational, and informational needs. Although I was the main organizer of the book drive and in charge of the selection process, I asked children, educators, and communities the types of books, genres, themes, languages, and format they desired and needed. Centering children and the book readers in book drives is intrinsic to inclusive, social justice-oriented literacy projects that shy away from imperial and outsiders' takes. In addition to their petitions, titles that were culturally, historically, and socially specific to Puerto Rico were added to the book drive, as well as children's books written and illustrated by Puerto Ricans.

Puerto Rican children's literature can be a channel to learning and exploring Puerto Rican social, political, cultural, and environmental history. Hurricane María opened up possibilities for rethinking and reimagining a different environmental and sustainable future for Puerto Rico. Working with children and engaging them in critical analysis of

I visited Camp Tabonuco in Jayuya to drop by some books and art materials. Here is el nieto de Don Cheo, who works with his grandfather in the finca and likes to read books about nature and animals that are part of his environment.

environmental issues is intrinsic for this "natural consciousness" and applying an environmental literacy lens to Puerto Rican children's literature can lead the way for educators and children towards this path.

Introducing children to environmental literacy is critical to meeting current and emerging environmental changes and injustices. As conversations and teachings around race and social justice issues with children, environmental literacy must be taught at an early age and play a critical role in shaping long-term and lifelong knowledge, values, and behavior towards the environmental and human interactions. Environmental literacy is a learning process in which children make connections between humans, communities, and the natural world; learn and develop a sense of respect and caring for the environment; and intersect critical thinking with environmental and human social action. Some of the goals of environmental literacy are to develop critical decision-making, equitable opportunities, activism, and

Huerto Huelga, elementary school students and future university students, and their desire to go to a public university in Puerto Rico.

sustainability, making environmental education "a deliberative political act" (Cole, 2007). Given that the impact of natural disasters on Puerto Rico is enhanced by centuries of Spanish and U.S. colonization, industrialization, and human disasters, engaging children in environmental literacy is inherently a culturally specific political act and educators need to provide and develop tools for children to position this environmental teaching and learning in a Puerto Rican context.

Scaffolding is essential in social justice education. Teaching and learning environmental literacy must follow a progressive understanding of human and natural worlds in order to be effective. I modified and expanded Bastile and White's (2000) four critical environmental literacy components into a Puerto Rican political and environmental context for educators who want to incorporate environmental literacy into their curriculum.

For the development of a Puerto Rican environmental literacy lens, educators must learn and teach:

1. The history of colonization, exploitation of natural resources, and impact of the introduction of nonnative species.
2. Puerto Rico's various and unique ecological systems.
3. Puerto Rican endemic flora, fauna, and endangered species.
4. The impact of economic and political decisions and natural and human disasters to the environment.
5. Love and respect for Puerto Rican land, air and water environments, and its history and culture.
6. The process of assessing, critiquing, and acting on current environmental injustice practices.
7. The process of planning, organizing, and working towards a sustainable future for Puerto Rico

From my experience working with children in Puerto Rico and in United States, including them into local social justice-oriented activities gives them a sense of pride, a sense of belonging and knowing, that they have a voice and are contributors of a bigger picture that impacts their communities. Back

in 2010, when I was working as a school librarian at the University of Puerto Rico (UPR) Elementary Laboratory School, it was a year of the Huelga UPR 2010 where students and workers went to strike for 80 days in protest of budget cuts, privatization, and tuition hike. Students from the elementary school and local children participated in rallies, march, and protests and expressed their voice and concern on an issue that pertains to them as well. Once the school was opened again, teachers created activities of "the future they envisioned" where students wrote their dreams and even created a school garden emulating the Huerto Huelga created at the UPR.

Children's literature serves as a medium to connect metaphors of the book stories with current social, cultural, and political situations children experience in their communities and surroundings. During my years at the elementary school, 3rd-graders read Toyita: aventuras de una hormiga by Puerto Rican author (and former educator at our school) Isabel Freire de Matos and illustrated by Sofía Sáez Matos. The picture book tells the story of Toyita, an adventurous ant who likes to travel and in one of her trips, makes a stop an island full of ants. Throughout the story, students learned about the life cycle of ants, their body parts, and the different roles they play in the ant colony. The tale provided a science-based reading and an introspection of the ups and downs of life in a "colony" and the importance of community work to thrive.

Revisiting *Toyita* and positioning it in a post-María context, educators can juxtapose Toyita's tale with activism, collective efforts, and roles we can all play to the benefit of the whole community and toward a sustainable future for Puerto Rico. A school project with 3rd graders can be developed with the following activities and questions.

Project: Toyita Comes Back to a Post-María Puerto Rico

Book: *Toyita: aventuras de una hormiga* by Isabel Freire de Matos; illustrated by Sofía Sáez Matos

Grade: 3rd

Activity:

1. Identify the different types of ants, their characteristics and roles.
2. Create a map of the different Puerto Rican ecosystems:
    a. Which ones work better as a living environment for an ant colony?
    b. Which ones work better as a living and environmentally responsible place for humans?
3. Identify and describe different community efforts developed after Hurricane María
    a. Name and purpose of community efforts.
    b. Location and description of the environment.
4. Of the different roles ants play in their community:
    a. How can we emulate those roles in our Puerto Rican community?
    b. Differences and similarities between ants and the different community efforts?
5. Ants are hard-working social insects, and although they can cause damage, they provide benefits to our soil. They are also good at:
    a. Building structures.
    b. Dividing the work and running a

society.

c. Sending messages.

d. Surviving. What advice would Toyita have to the Puerto Rican community in the different areas mentioned above after the impact of natural and human-led disasters?

Environmental-focused activities are no different and educators can help develop observational and research skills, the ability to think critically about impact and change, and the notion of environmental change and long-term commitment towards sustainability. Several activities and exercises can be tied to environmental literacy using Puerto Rican children's literature.

Educators can use as a guide the following activities and questions and adapt them accordingly to their environmental curriculum objectives and goals.

1. What do we know about Puerto Rico's history and ecological systems? What have we learned about it?

2. Go around your neighborhood and take pictures or draw what you see. What works or what's wrong in terms of human-nature relations? How it can improve environmentally? How our ideas and plans can be adapted into a post-María Puerto Rico context?

3. Learn about Puerto Rico's endangered species and explore ways to help and encourage people and communities to protect their lives and ecosystems.

4. There was a massive food shortage after Hurricane María, how Puerto Ricans (on the island and the diaspora) got together to adapt and work around this issue? What can we learn about food rights? Create a community garden with children, featuring vegetables and other eating plants.

5. Identify figures, corporations, and politicians playing key roles in environmental injustices and write letters and petitions to them.

A bibliography of suggested Puerto Rican children's literature titles that can be included into classrooms, libraries, and community spaces is appended below. A series of selection criteria were considered to include book titles that are relevant, inclusive, accurate, and representative of Puerto Rico. The selection criteria include: books written and illustrated by Puerto Ricans; books that are racially inclusive and that neither romanticize nor whitewash our Taíno, Spanish, and African ancestry and history; books that are well researched and that provide additional information about environmental issues; illustrations that portray our rich and heterogeneous environments, landscapes, and regions of the island; books that provide a child's perspective and an insider's voice.

With Puerto Rican children's books illustrator Nívea Ortiz Montañez (left) during National Library Week at the University of Puerto Rico Elementary Laboratory School. The week was dedicated to her, with students creating murals about her books. The 3rd graders also had the opportunity to go on a field trip to the Cavernas of Camuy, the inspiration for *En las Cavernas de Camuy: Terón y su maravilloso mundo subterráneo,* which she illustrated.)

Educators and children can apply and develop an environmental literacy lens using these books and work together to recognize and amplify collaborations to work towards a sustainable future for Puerto Rico.

Puerto Rican Children's Literature For Environmental Literacy Bibliography

***¡Achú, achú, Pirulo!* by Pamy Rojas; illustrated by Christibiri López (Cuentos Verdes, 2017)**

The story of a manatee that goes to a dolphin doctor because it was ill and injured by a boat. It discusses how trash, toxic waste, and water transportation affects the underwater fauna. It raises "natural consciousness" and present environmental injustices.

***Ala y trino: pájaros de Puerto Rico para colorear* by Ester Feliciano Mendoza; illustrated by Félix Rodríguez Báez (Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 2007)**

A coloring book of Puerto Rican birds, with each drawing being accompanied by a poem. The text is descriptive about the flora and fauna found in Puerto Rico.

***El árbol de juguetes* by Myriam Yagnam Lara; illustrated by María Antonia Ordóñez (Ediciones Huracán, 2002)**

The story of an algarrobo tree who dreams of growing golden fruits like the mango tree. The tree interacts with different endemic animals and plants of Puerto Rico, to later learn that its fruits can be used as a toy for Puerto Rican children, juego de gallitos.

***Los colores de mi isla* by Editorial El Antillano; illustrated by Rosa Colón. (Editorial El Antillano, 2015)**

A concept board book written for "los boricuas de aquí y pa' los de allá." Simple text that uses different colors to name and show Puerto Rican ecological systems, animals, food, and cultural traditions.

***En el Bosque Seco de Guánica* by Ángel Luis Torres; illustrated by Walter Torres (Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1994)**

A book that, through long texts, includes important and specific facts about the flora and fauna that lives in Guánica's dry forest. It incorporates facts about the importance of the Bosque Seco to Puerto Rico's ecological systems, the human impact to the ecosystem, and a bibliography.

***El huerto de mi casa* by Tere Marichal-Lugo (Colección Pachamama, 2013)**

Lola is amazed at how her family transformed their home backyard into a fructiferous community garden. Vivid illustrations showcase the process of gardening, composting, and bringing vegetables and food to our tables.

***En la Bahía de Jobos: Celita y el mangle zapatero* by Ana Lydia Vega; illustrated by Yolanda Pastrana Fuentes (Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1998)**

A Puerto Rican girl living in New York, spends her summer vacation in Puerto Rico and goes fishing with her grandfather at Bahía de Jobos. The book provides information about the different types of mangroves and natural beings that are part of this ecosystem. It incorporates the history, work, and brutality faced by enslaved Africans in Puerto Rico. A glossary and additional information about mangroves is appended.

***En las Cavernas de Camuy: Terón y su maravilloso mundo subterráneo* by Wenceslao Serra Deliz; illustrated by Nívea Ortiz Montañez (Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 2001)**

A picture book that intersperses the fictionalized story of two friends learning about the wonders of the Camuy caves with facts and a bibliography about this ecosystem. It briefly includes Taíno connection with Puerto Rican caves and scientific terms.

***Mi isla y yo: la naturaleza de Puerto Rico/My Island and I: The Nature of Puerto Rico* by Alfonso Silva Lee; illustrated by Alexis Lago (Pangaea, 2002)**

A book that describes how nature works and evolves, and how the origins of the island of Puerto Rico. Flora, fauna, fungi, and human presence are discussed, as well as how this all works together, the circle of life. A story to make the reader feel part of Puerto Rico's natural history.

***Mi mar y yo: el mundo azul de Puerto Rico* by Alfonso Silva Lee; illustrated by Alexis Lago (Ediciones Callejón, 2005)**

A story about how the ocean and sea surrounding Puerto Rico came to be. It discusses in detail the different ecological systems surrounding Puerto Rico's water and its flora and fauna. It also incorporates human and natural disasters that impacts these ecosystems, such as toxic waste, pesticides, sewage water, and hurricanes.

***¿Quién soy? by Isabel Freire de Matos; illustrated* by Olimpia Anibaldi Sáez (Ediciones Cocolí, 2017)**

The story follows the transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly, and how the animal stops by different plants, fruits, and vegetables found in Puerto Rico. It discusses the relation of flora as food, but also as home to other animals.

***Sueño en El Yunque by Graciela Rodríguez Martinó*; illustrated by Anaida Hernández (Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1993)**

A book that narrates the story of Hurricane Hugo's impact to El Yunque National Forest. Puerto Rican rivers, mountains, and endemic plants are mentioned. It also includes information about tropical rainforests, El Yunque, and hurricanes.

***Toyita: aventuras de una hormiga* by Isabel Freire de Matos; illustrated by Sofía Sáez Matos (Ediciones Cocolí, 2006)**

Toyita is an adventurous ant who likes to travel and arrives at an island full of ants. The ant learns about different types of ants and the roles they play in the ant colony. A tale to introspect the ups and downs of life in a "colony" and community work to thrive as a collective.

***¡Viva la tortuga!* by Georgina Lázaro León; illustrated by Walter Torres (Ediciones Santillana, 2004)**

A picture book in verse about the life cycle of sea turtles, mainly the carey de concha. It includes information about why they do specific things and why humans need to take care of sea turtles.

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Por Ahí Viene El Huracán

Laura Rexach Olivencia
Ilustraciones de Mya Pagán

Por Ahí Viene El Huracán was one of the picture books read during the July 2019 uprising in the streets of San Juan to oust Governor Rossello. When the police in Puerto Rico said that protesters' right to protest ended at 11 pm because the Puerto Rican Constitution slept, protesters including children's authors held an event to read the Constitution "bedtime" stories.

One of them was this story of the everyday occurrences of a young girl who happens to live in Puerto Rico when Hurricane Maria hits. Rexach Olivencia gives us the perspective of what life was like for children a few days before the hurricane and then in the days after.

This book deals with the trauma of losing loved ones to displacement and communities organizing to clean roads and maintain food security. The book is a winner for its centering of Puerto Rican people, as opposed to just focusing on the loss of flora and fauna or damage to buildings. And for its honesty and heart while staying clear of pity and sentimentality.

Here are excerpts from the book.

P. 4 – 6

18 de septiembre de 2017

Isa espera a su mamá a la hora de la salida de la escuela. Tiene prisa por llegar al fresco de su casa y contarle a Mau de su día.

En el salón, los compañeros de primer grado andaban emocionadísimos porque mañana no habrá clases. Llevan más de una semana hablando de huracanes y lo más que le llama la atención a Isa es su forma circular, que le recuerda la de un torbellino. Ahora ve torbellinos en todas partes. Hasta en la bañera, cuando los restos del agua bajan por el boquete negro del desagüe con su GRLOP GRLOP GRLOP.

Una vez llega a su casa, a Isa le encanta sentarse en la vieja mecedora del balcón con Mau acurrucado a sus pies. EL CRIC CRAC CRIC CRAC CRIC CRAC de la vieja mecedora siempre le llena a Isa el corazón de paz.

—Parece que este huracán sí que viene, Mau. Está

todo el mundo preocupado. El último no vino. Pero dicen que este sí que viene. ¡Tenemos que estar preparados, Mau! —declara Isa firmemente.

Hoy no se escucha el familiar SUISHHHH SUISHHHH SUISHHHH de la brisa entre las hojas.

El día siguiente es un frenesí de actividad. Mamá y papá no fueron a trabajar. EL CAN CAN CAN del martillo no cesa durante todo el día.

—Bueno, Mau, mamá dice que debemos poner a salvo nuestras cosas más preciadas — afirma Isa según ella y Mau hacen inventario de su habitacíon. Ya tienan dos cajas plásticas llenas de sus cuentos y juguetes favoritos.

—Esta machila es muy importante, Mau. En ella tenemos dos botellas de agua, tres meriendas, dos latas de tu comida preferida, una linterna y baterías. Creo que con eso estamos listos — decide Isa.

P. 26 – 27

Al final del sexto día de estar atrapados, Isa y Mau ven soldados por primera vez en sus vidas. Se había escuchado un grito de alegría en la madrugada.

—¡Han venido a sacar los escombros, Mau! —le cuenta Isa emocionada.

—Papá dice que hay un grupo de soldados y gente de otros barrios que han venido a ayudarnos. ¡Vamos, Mau! —lo apresura Isa para no perderse nada.

Entre todos, al fin logran abrir paso al monte. ¡Son libres! Es la primera vez desde el huracán que Isa siente verdadera alegría.

Cuando finalmente logran bajar al pueblo, las filas indias rodean a Isa como orugas de colores. Fila para la comida, fila para el agua, fila para la gasoline, fila para la farmacia. ¡Cuántas odiosas filas!

—Mamá me dice que no sea tan impaciente — le cuenta Isa a Mau. —Pero yo no sé qué quiere decir eso. Excepto cuando mamá me dice que no le ¡haga perder la paciencia! Pero, Mau, ¿para dónde se va la paciencia cuando se pierde? —Mau observa a Isa con sus ojos grandes.

P. 28 – 29

Una tarde durante el mes de octubre, al llegar de

Laura Rexach Olivencia, the book's author, at a protest.

hacer las diligencias del día con su Papá, Isa ve a Nico a lo lejos y sale corriendo a saludarlo.

—¿Qué te pasa, Nico? —interroga Isa al ver la cara triste de su amigo.

—Mis papás dicen que nos tenemos que mudar — le contesta Nico. Al niño le bajan lágrimas por los cachetes. El huracán rompío con sus vientos las ventanas de su casa y todas sus cosas se mojaron. Lo han perdido todo.

En su casa, Isa le cuenta lo sucedido a papá. —¡Es culpa de ese huracán! Si no hubiese arruinado la casa de Nico, él y su familia no se tendrían que ir — suelta Isa con enojo. Pero Papá le aclara que no es culpa del huracán.

—La naturaleza funciona así, mi Isa. Por eso es tan importante cuidarla y conocerla bien. Es una fuerza a la vez hermosa y terrible.

Esa frase se queda pegada por siempre en el corazón de Isa.

The Bees Are Back!

Carmelo Ruíz-Marrero

Many people believe that the government of Puerto Rico is doing little to protect the environment, especially its forests and other green areas. But people throughout Puerto Rico are taking matters into their own hands to create community forests of their own. Two of the most successful examples of these grassroots initiatives are the People's Forest and the Corretjer Forest.

The People's Forest, in the mountain town of Adjuntas, is run by Casa Pueblo, a grassroots organization born of the successful struggle against strip mining that lasted from the 1960s to the early 1990s. After a citizens' campaign, more than 700 acres of the area slated for the mining was declared a state forest in 1996. Now called the People's Forest, it is run by Casa Pueblo in a one-of-kind arrangement with the Puerto Rico Natural Resources Department.

The facilities include hiking paths, recreational areas designed by Adjuntas schoolchildren and a natural auditorium carved out of the side of a mountain. The forest also boasts an agroforestry project where children and adults plant trees, including rare, endangered and forgotten species, as well as fruit trees.

In 2002, Casa Pueblo Director Alexis Massol-González received the prestigious Goldman Environmental Prize. The Goldman Prize is awarded annually to six people from around the world and includes $125,000. When he was notified by telephone he did not believe it at first.

"I had never heard of the Goldman Prize, so I thought it was a joke," he recalls with a laugh. "I told them that I don't work for money or awards, and they told me, 'That's why you earned it.'" The award greatly increased Casa Pueblo's local and international prestige and profile and it has since formed conservation partnerships with the University of Puerto Rico and the Smithsonian Institution.

Scientists from the Smithsonian have held workshops at the People's Forest to teach Casa Pueblo volunteers, local environmentalists and graduate biology students how to monitor wildlife, carry out biodiversity surveys and to use new technologies like global positioning systems (GPS) and geographic information systems (GIS) in their conservation work. Activists complain that the government has failed to live up to its commitments to help manage the forest, but that does not discourage Massol-González.

Casa Pueblo Director Alexis Massol-González.
Source: Goldman Environmental Prize

"There is no room for pessimism or cynicism in Casa Pueblo," he says. "We are people of hope, because through our activism we have learned that Puerto Rico's problems can be solved."

Northeast of Adjuntas is the rural town of Ciales, home to a community forest named after one of Puerto Rico's most renowned poets: Juan Antonio Corretjer, who died in 1985. The forest is located at one of the most picturesque areas of the Encantado River, one of Corretjer's favorite sources of solace and inspiration.

Towards the end of his life the poet voiced concern about the destruction of Ciales's forests and their replacement by pesticide-intensive

monoculture plantations. In the 1980s, coffee grower Tato Rodríguez, a friend of Corretjer, began having second thoughts about using pesticides." Bird populations dwindled because of deforestation and chemical use," said Rodríguez." Later the butterflies disappeared, and I even saw lizards die because of insecticides."

Guided by Corretjer's poetry as well as by concepts of ecological agriculture and environmental protection, Rodríguez and volunteers of the Casa Corretjer Cultural Center founded the 160-acre Corretjer Forest. The area is an abandoned, weed-infested coffee farm that is being slowly cleared and repopulated with trees mentioned in Corretjer's poems, as well as numerous endemic species.

"We plant trees that provide lumber and also trees that give fruit," says Rodríguez. The custodians want to create a complex, healthy and productive ecosystem that will provide jobs and food, and serve as a resource for ecotourism. Since starting the reforestation project and ending pesticide use in the Corretjer, long-gone birds and insect pollinators have started to return.

"Even the bees are back!" said Rodríguez. "The *sanpedritos*, which are like miniature parrots and only live in caves, had left for the mountains. But since we stopped using agrochemicals, they're back. And we're also beginning to hear owls at night again."

The Corretjer Forest has a strong educational component. Since 2002, hundreds of school students from across Puerto Rico have visited, to learn both about ecology and Corretjer's poetry. And all of its trees are planted by children.

"We prepared educational modules inspired by Corretjer and the landscape that motivated him to write poems," said Casa Corretjer volunteer Marta Nuñez. She emphasizes the cultural importance of this ecological project. "We are retaking the folklore that we are losing and [that] is not taught in schools. It is beautiful to see first grade boys and girls, the tenderness with which they plant trees and touch their roots."

Vocabulary

ecotourism: tourism designed to contribute to the protection of the environment or at least minimize damage to it, often involving travel to areas of natural interest in developing countries or participation in environmental projects

monoculture: cultivation of a single species or agricultural product, a practice often criticized as damaging to the environment

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Doña Licha's Island

Alfredo López

The struggle against the injustice of colonialism continues in contemporary Puerto Rico, as exemplified by the summer of 2019 protests. Mural of the 2019 protests by S. Urbain in Santurce, San Juan. Source: Marilisa Jiménez-García

Doña Licha suspected that the devil brought the waves of fish to her island in 1974.

Each day, Licha would stuff a shopping bag with canvas cloth and walk the four winding miles down her hill and up the road to the beach where the palm trees arch stiffly out of the sand and the small stores sell fresh fish and vegetables to the people in cars from the nearby highway.

There she would watch as dawn's light uncovered the water line and the bodies of fish appeared, oily and decomposed from the heat of the water. As the tide receded, more fish appeared. They came up by the thousands that year: black, mouths frozen open, scales covered with oil.

"I thought it was a curse from the devil," Doña Licha laughed, her smooth face opening to show a full mouth of white teeth. "I just stood on the shore with my three children who have families of their own and who all fish with me and we just watched the fish on the sand. It looked like a plague on my life. I cried for days. I thought we were finished. For us, fish are life. I can feel when they are biting. My heart beats faster. It's like some communication with them."

Leticia Roman, Doña Licha, remembers when the people of her area on the outskirts of Ponce, Puerto Rico's southern metropolis, walked to the shores, their pails filled with the day's shining wet catch.

"The people would come around noon. We would be back already. We would go out about five o'clock in the morning in our boats, hundreds of boats covering the water like crabs on a beach. That was before the factories came."

When she said these things Doña Licha was 60 years old—an artifact of Puerto Rico's economic past, a fisherwoman who still worked at the trade which had been her family's for centuries and has run in the blood of the people of Ponce since Puerto Rico was a Spanish colony.

"My grandfather owned the largest boat in this town. It was made of wood he himself had cut as a young man. Then, you cut wood at your own risk from the trees, because the Spanish were still here and they took all the good wood to make boats themselves.

"We have black skin. We have slave blood, and

even in the early 1800s when my grandfather was still a boy, there was no law against killing a slave [descendant]. Making a boat, if you were black, was a crime. But he made his boat and went to fish.

"I never knew that kind of pain because, when the Americans came here, things became a lot better. I never knew the Spanish, only the American soldiers who would come here to take fish from us."

Licha said these things one day in 1975. As she spoke, she scaled a fish and, without pausing, tossed it naked into a tub of ice, picked up a thick branch with the toes of one foot, and wiped the scales off her thick, sharp knife. The entire process took a half minute. After checking the blade for sharpness and adjusting the kerchief on her head, she began scaling another fish.

"The Americans always wanted the head cut off," she laughed. "It was so stupid. I would scale them well but they were boys who didn't eat much fish." She shook her head. "Such a big country and they know nothing." How much did people pay for the fish?

"Two cents, sometimes three. The people paid that," she said looking up briefly. "The Americans didn't pay anything then." But two or three cents went quite a way back then and, while the fish were plentiful, shimmering in the clear blue waters off the coast of the island, the *pescadores* lived well. Their "industry" was Puerto Rico's most important.

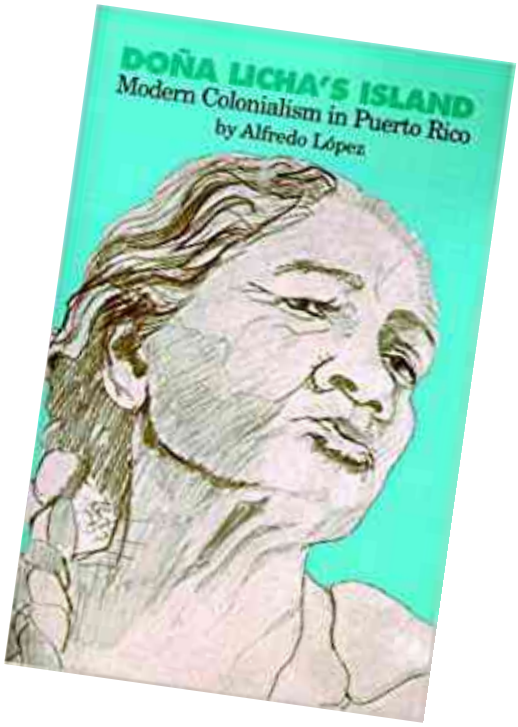
"All the islands live from fish," Licha said. "Island, water, fish ... obviously."

Those days are gone.

"They came with their factories," she said, waving a hand toward the giant petrochemical plants in Guayanilla 10 miles away. "They came to commit barbarities on the fish. They made jobs for some but they made the water too hot, the air became thick with the black smoke and the smell, the fish couldn't breathe ... they couldn't live in the hot water. Then it started, the waves of fish."

"At least there are families with men still here. The men could go to work in the factories but my man is dead. I am old and I know nothing else but catching and cleaning fish. What do I know of oil? I thought, how will I live?"

Even though her catch has been cut down to less than a fourth of what it was, yielding her about $12



a day, Doña Licha has learned how to live—she pays no rent, still living in the concrete house her father built about three-quarters of a mile up a hill outside San German, off the road which the military used to make its way around the island long ago. The house is typical of Puerto Rico's architecture, developed to cut material and labor expenses to a minimum. Her living room, the first room one encounters after walking through the always open door, is small with two steel, glassless, shuttered windows looking out onto the road. Licha keeps her color television, her most prized possession, in that room. It's always shiny and on it rest the family pictures and a drawing of the Sacred Heart which she won, two decades ago, in a church raffle. The room includes cheaply made mahogany veneered furniture, with orange patterned material protected by plastic covers. The smell of food drifts in from the kitchen, which is next to the living room, and boasts most of the modern appliances, including stove and refrigerator, but no washing machine—Licha washes her clothes in a large washbasin.

Toward the back of the room, in an inconspicuous place almost invisible in the candle light, there is a picture of a young man, still probably a teenager with a shy smile on his face. He wears a U.S. Army uniform and has written "to my beloved mother, your blessings are appreciated." The picture is framed in purple cloth. Licha Roman lost her youngest son

when the Army called him to fight in Korea. She was over forty when he died. "Sometimes I think that it was unfair for him to go. You see it all: they take my fish as they took my son. You ask why I am bitter?"

So each month, Doña Licha walks down the two-mile winding path from her cement home, off the area's main dirt road, to the *bodega* of Silverio Ramírez Acosta. Don Silverio is a creature of habit; the *plátanos* he sells must hang from wire hangers the same way, over the same window of his store, all the time. The cans of beans and pigeon peas, which come all the way from the Goya factory in New Jersey, always occupy the same shelves. He himself has been sitting on the same wooden milk crate outside the *bodega* for as long as anyone in the area can remember. And his response to Licha's monthly visit is always the same. He sends his grandson, who helps at the store when not in school, to get his car keys and as Licha approaches, he politely rises, removing the hat from his balding brown head, and offers the keys.

"Take my car if you're going to the city," he urges.

"No. It's all right," she protests, "I can walk."

"No, no," he almost shouts, "No woman could walk to Ponce from here. Please, take my car."

After a bit more resistance, Doña Licha nods. She takes the keys and drives the Ford seven miles into Ponce, where she will stand in line with 50 or 60 other people and wait for her food stamps.

The lines wind through the government offices, snakes of sweaty, impatient people waiting to buy the key to their survival. A family of four can earn up to $300 in food stamps each month; when there's little to start with, every bit counts. With that money, Leticia Roman can go to the *colmado* in her area and walk along the aisles that are lined with cans and bags of products made in the U.S., picking and choosing what she likes.

She buys 10-pound bags of rice, which the store owner helps carry to the car. She purchases 20 cans of different varieties of beans, and meat, sauces, spices and, finally, an assortment of vegetables. Her purchases fill eight or nine bags, which she piles in the back seat of the car, careful to put the four dozen eggs, shipped that morning from the U.S., on top.

When everything is packed away, she skillfully pulls out the food stamps which correspond to the numbers on the adding machine and smiles.

"I don't like to take anything from anyone," Licha says, as she leaves the store. "Especially the Americans. They send the food stamps and we eat from them." She shakes her head faintly. "But if it weren't for their factories and that smoke, I would be living from my boat and fish. So I suppose they owe me this." She shrugs. "Anyway, they benefit from the smoke; I benefit from the stamps. We end up even. That's the American way of doing things."

Vocabulary

bodega: small grocery store

colmado: grocery store

don: title of respect for a man

doña: title of respect for a married or older woman

pescadores: fishermen

plátano: vegetable resembling a large banana (plantain)

Abridged from *Doña Licha's Island: Modern Colonialism in Puerto Rico* (Boston: South End Press, 1987).
Used by permission of South End Press.

Purita Gil Pérez Fights for Clean Air

Purita Gil Pérez

I've been living in this community for about 12 years. At the moment, I'm living on a street right across from the pipes that lead from the DuPont factory to the waste treatment plant in Barceloneta. All of us who live in this area are suffering lung problems, breathing problems, allergies and itchy eyes.

It appears that there are leaks. Sometimes you can tell there's been a leak because of the bad odor. This happens mainly at night. It seems that the gas escapes from the joints in the pipes, or from the drain.

A number of communities close to the DuPont factory are affected. Cantito, where I live, is the community farthest from the factory, but nearest to the piping.

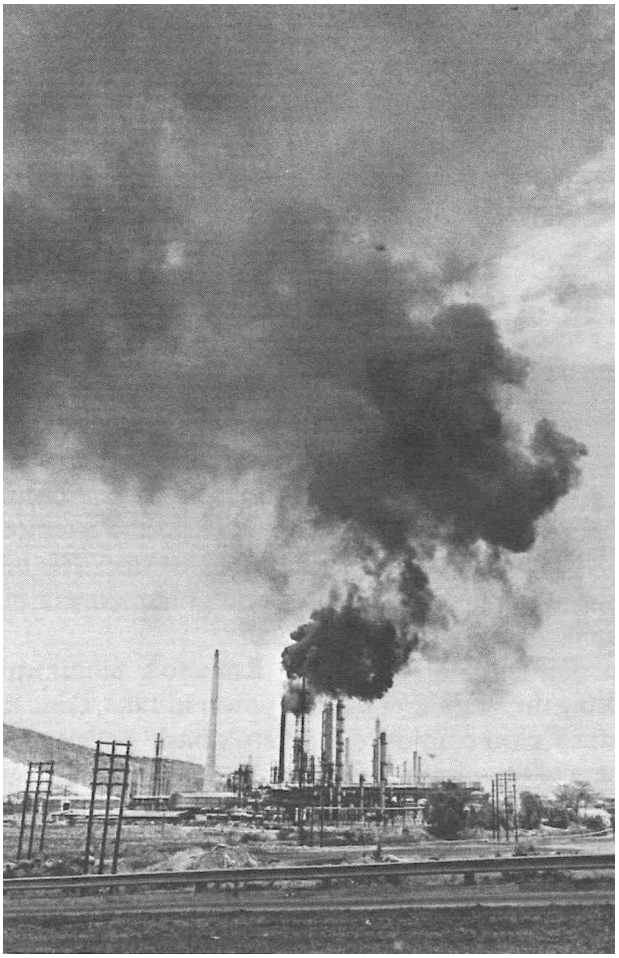
Of course, it's not DuPont alone. This north coast area is completely contaminated, it's overloaded with toxic wastes from all the pharmaceutical plants in the area. We oppose the manufacture of herbicide here for precisely that reason, because we are already so affected and can't stand more toxic waste in the air.

First of all, there is the danger of leaks. The manufacture of herbicide uses a substance which specialists have told us is highly toxic, caustic. It's first-cousin to the substance that escaped from the plant in Bhopal, India. Once it leaks out, it would produce vomiting and coughing, with a corrosive effect on the lungs. It could cause death.

The plant would also affect the water around Manatí. The company wants to use an additional 100,000 gallons of water per day from the Tortuguera Lagoon. This will lower the water level of the lagoon so that salty ocean water flows in, changing the ecological balance.

The people in Barceloneta are firmly opposed to receiving more liquid waste, because the waste treatment plant there is obsolete and already overloaded.

First, the mayor got together with some of his cronies and formed a committee to stop DuPont. It was basically a form of extortion, to get DuPont to give money to the town. As soon as DuPont offered them



Air pollution from a south coast oil refinery.

$250,000 as payment for certain licenses, the mayor's group disbanded.

Some members of the group got angry about this sellout. Others in the community were furious too, so we formed a new group known as the Manatí Environmental Committee. The committee visited families, gave out information, and spoke out against DuPont and the mayor. It gained members and broad sympathy, and managed to arrange for public hearings to be held.

More than 1,300 people came to the hearings, including representatives from DuPont, from the government's Environmental Quality Board, and

members of the community. The DuPont representatives were very arrogant. Once they had given their speech—in which they said the company has plants in the U.S. and Australia and has never had any problems—they refused to listen to any of us. They got up one by one, without even saying goodnight, and left the room.

We're trying to raise the awareness of the community. We have working with us an allergist, Dr. Figueroa, who treated me when I suffered a respiratory arrest due to the gas leaks. He's amazed at how his office is always full of people suffering from respiratory ailments. In May we organized a talk in which he told us about the health dangers of pollution.

The committee has done these things with very little money. You can't compare us with DuPont, which is spending tens of thousands of dollars on advertising. They've had to spend a fortune to convince the people of Manatí and of Puerto Rico that they are keeping the water clean and that they provide a lot of jobs, which isn't true.

Only four or five people in this community work for DuPont. There's a false idea that we should tolerate the pollution of all these factories because "this is progress." It's not so. The factories which locate in Puerto Rico cause a lot of toxic pollution but they employ very few people.

The government believes that DuPont will bring jobs to the community, but we do not. This kind of work is highly technical. We predict that they won't employ anyone from our community, since most people here don't have technical training. But we're the ones running the health risk.

We're not opposed to progress. We want DuPont, which has already spent so much on advertising, to send technicians who can find out what is happening. If they really care about the community, they should carry out an investigation into how our health is, how the pipes are and the whole situation.

I got involved because I've got a social conscience. In 1976 I took part in a campaign to stop DuPont from dumping toxic waste in the Manatí River. The fish in the river were dying, the fishermen protested and we supported them. We held public hearings and pickets, but we didn't win.

I supported the fishermen because it seemed to me unjust that they were taking away the means of making a living from these humble people. Now I'm getting involved in this fight, first of all because I'm sick myself, secondly because when I go to the clinic I see sick children who can't breathe. I'm also worried about the possibility of a major escape of gas, as has happened elsewhere in Puerto Rico recently.

I believe we're doing something good. I hope our struggle won't be in vain, that we'll some day have better air for our lungs, so we can breathe freely. It will be a victory for poor people, for those whose voices are not heard.

Vocabulary

Barceloneta: industrial town on Puerto Rico's north coast

herbicide: chemical used to kill vegetation

pharmaceutical plants: factories manufacturing drugs for medical use

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Catherine Sunshine conducted this interview with Purita Gil Pérez for De Prisa (National Ecumenical Movement of Puerto Rico, August 1986). Used by permission of Catherine Sunshine.

Ocean Venture

Naomi Ayala

The latest round of exercises…involving 20,500 American troops plus British, Dutch and French forces. Residents say napalm is also being dropped. Thousands of square miles of uncongested air space and ocean around Vieques are the only areas that, the Navy said, "allow all warfare components to train together in a realistic, integrated scenario."

– New York Times, May 1993

Because the ocean's a pregnancy of man-made blasts
and a mouth, a red mouth
from that blue, blue umbilical center
flings dead fish like spears

because a crop of sleeping hand grenades maim
hands that wrestled the sacrifice of cane
tobacco leaf and coffee

shrinking 500 years of indigenous memory
into a crown of spiny blooms at the brow—

fishing people now take to sea
in tiny boats to swallow lightning.

Men with souls like polished machine guns
move in at suppertime
set up training camps, bomb storehouses
all the way from forever into now

drive their gleaming future
like broken bottles into sea-womb and swollen earth.

Because, in the hills as on the coast
beneath a quickening of jet sorties
jíbaro dreams rise through blood song—

and two stones spark a flame
and the crickets are rebellious
and the birds know
and the sea knows
and cows stir in the pastures with knowing
and the bones of the dead sing—

songs of iron-will drive love into the coastline
through 500 years and one hundred other more
through rapid fire greed—

love that will swallow lightening
only to cough up winged fists
restore the dead to the living
fish to water, lightening to sky.

Community Fights for Its Land

Katherine T. McCaffrey

Source: Kathy Gannett

The marshals came in the early morning darkness, wearing bullet-proof vests and black helmets, heavily armed with automatic weaponry. They handcuffed teachers, fishermen, housewives, politicians, artists and Catholic priests. For more than a year, demonstrators had lived in tents and little wooden houses on the bombing range. They blocked the gates to the Navy base with church pews and held nightly prayer vigils by candlelight. They covered the chain-link fence to the base with white ribbons, a petition for peace and an end to the bombing. They set up makeshift kitchens under burlap tarps and dished out rice and beans for hundreds of visitors who came to support the effort. For more than a year, demonstrators halted military maneuvers on this small, uninhabited island, blocking the planet's most powerful armed forces.

Zoraída López, a 60-year-old island resident, was one of those taken into custody that morning. She recalled the moment when the SWAT teams descended upon elderly demonstrators who had been camped out through the night at the entrance to the base: "We were a group of mature people who were willing, anxious, to make a real international statement about the feeling of the people, *ni una bomba más* [not one more bomb], and we'll be elegant about it, we will be clear. I didn't go out there to be arrested; I went out there to be with the people…. All of a sudden they came down with bulletproof vests, gas masks, plastic shields at their faces and armed to the teeth. And we were out there singing religious hymns together, 'God is watching over us.' This was a question of human dignity."

In the summer of 2000, a wall of armed Puerto Rican policemen in bullet-proof vests guarded the entrance to the base. They were large and muscular, wearing black glasses and iron expressions. The chain-link fence demarcating the base's entrance had been moved forward 50 feet to the edge of the street. The protest camp had relocated across the street from the base, a shell of the vibrant city that was dismantled earlier that May morning. But every Saturday night the protest still came to life in a lively picket outside the gates to Camp García. Women with curlers in their hair and old men with canes circled and danced a musical picket to the beat of *plena*, chanting, "*que se vaya la marina*," we want the Navy out of Vieques.

Although Vieques Island is the site of one of the Navy's key military installations in the Western Hemisphere, it is simultaneously the home of nearly 10,000 American citizens. The Navy asserts that the Vieques installation plays a crucial role in naval training and national defense. The civilian community of Vieques argues that the military control of land and live-fire exercises have caused severe ecological destruction, cancer and other health problems, and overwhelming social and economic crises.

This community struggle is also a more fundamental story of power and resistance, of ordinary people in conflict with global forces. The story of Vieques is one of a people struggling to maintain a viable community where they can work, live and raise children. This most basic story is at the heart of a more complicated tale involving the strategic requirements of the most powerful military in the world and the colonial relationship between the U.S. and Puerto Rico.

In Vieques, the Navy rehearses amphibious landing exercises, parachute drops and submarine maneuvers. It conducts artillery and small arms firing, naval gunfire support and missile shoots. The Navy bombs the island from air, land and sea. Vieques is the Navy's declared "university of the sea," a small island target range situated next to 195,000 square miles of ocean and airspace controlled by the military for so-called integrated training scenarios. Vieques, the Navy claims, provides a unique venue for the realistic training of U.S. troops, one of the few places where different naval units on the East Coast can come together to prepare for combat.

Furthermore, the Navy argues that Vieques is crucial not only to the battle readiness of its Atlantic Fleet but to the training of U.S., NATO, South American and Caribbean allied forces. Thousands of U.S. and allied troops invade Vieques during large-scale maneuvers, or "war games." Since 1992 alone, the U.S. military has rehearsed interventions in the Balkans, Haiti, Iraq and Somalia in Vieques. The training of military forces on Vieques, the Navy asserts, is essential to protect U.S. interests, meet national security commitments, and ensure the readiness and safety of military personnel. The Navy argues that the island is crucial to national defense.

Source: Kathy Gannett

Recent Conflict

During the 1990s the long-running dispute between the Navy and the community continued to simmer. This "cold peace" finally ended near the decade's conclusion. In April 1999 a Navy jet on a training mission mistakenly dropped its load of 500-pound bombs not on the intended target range but on the military observation post one mile away. The explosions injured one guard and killed a civilian employee of the base, David Sanes Rodríguez.

Outrage over the death of Sanes reignited the decades-long conflict. Protestors occupied a military target range littered with live ordnance and built little wooden houses on hills pierced with missiles. They slept in hammocks strung from the barrel of a battered tank and ferried food back and forth in small, weathered fishing boats. They staked Puerto Rican flags in the muddy craters left by bombs and covered an entire hillside with white crosses, naming the hill Monte David (Mount David), after David Sanes. The white crosses symbolized all those Viequenses who have died of cancer—poisoned, people here believe, by air, land and water contaminated by decades of bombing.

The death of Sanes spurred a wider mobilization that led tens of thousands of Puerto Ricans to march in the streets of San Juan, Puerto Rico's capital city, demanding a halt to military training exercises in Vieques. Puerto Ricans across the U.S. organized rallies and marches to stop the bombing of Vieques. The nonviolent resistance movement has drawn

the support of prominent Puerto Rican celebrities, artists and U.S. politicians as well as Nobel Peace Prize winners Rigoberta Menchú and the Dalai Lama. Vieques has been the focus of international solidarity efforts from Seoul, Korea, to Okinawa, Japan, to India and Europe. Hundreds of protestors have been arrested for acts of civil disobedience on the island. Prominent U.S. political figures such as Congressman Luis Gutiérrez, environmental lawyer Robert Kennedy, Jr. and New York political activist Reverend Al Sharpton have been jailed for trespassing on federal land during demonstrations on Vieques. Protests temporarily halted all military activity at this central training facility for over a year and continue to disrupt naval training exercises.

Questions of National Sovereignty

The conflict in Vieques ultimately raises issues of national sovereignty. Who exercises supreme authority over Vieques Island?

Vieques is the poorest municipality in Puerto Rico, with 73 percent of the population living below the poverty line. It has the highest rates of unemployment, with almost half the adult population without work (U.S. Census 1990). It has among the highest infant mortality rates in Puerto Rico and a growing rate of cancer and other health problems that the residents believe are caused by weapons testing. This socioeconomic crisis is the result of the military presence on the island and is at the heart of civilian grievances against the Navy.

Vieques is officially part of the Roosevelt Roads Naval Station, centered near Ceiba, Puerto Rico, which the Navy asserts is a major economic force in eastern Puerto Rico. But few, if any, of those benefits are experienced in Vieques. In Puerto Rico, the base supports a resident population of 3000 military personnel and their families and offers a variety of amenities and services. Vieques, however, is separated from eastern Puerto Rico by six miles of sea. The base, the PX, the sailors and military families are across the water. Vieques hosts only a skeleton crew. Once envisioned as an integral part of a major naval station, Vieques became more useful to the Navy as an empty piece of land on which to rehearse maneuvers, store weapons and test bombs.

Residents have long complained that the Navy consumes much of the island's land and productive potential, yet offers them few work or economic benefits in return. The land the Navy possesses in Vieques, roughly 23,000 acres, makes Roosevelt Roads, in physical size, the largest military installation in the world. Most of the Vieques installation, however, is miles and miles of rolling, scrub-covered hills and empty beaches. On the western side of the island, dozens of magazines are cut into the rock and horses graze quiet fields. On the eastern side, empty barracks and old sugar cane warehouses sit in tangled acres of spiky mesquite, guarded by a pack of feral dogs. Until recently, the borders between Navy and civilian territories were defined by a series of roadblocks and wooden gates, and a security guard slumped in a chair. Vieques, which the Navy contends is its strategic keystone and crown jewel in the Caribbean, appears as an abandoned no-man's land.

Vieques's slow pace, rural charm and physical beauty intensify residents' attachment to it. Although many Viequenses leave the island to look for work, education and opportunity, they return to the island in their golden years, buying public taxis with money earned in northern factories or building dream houses of cement and erecting large satellite dishes. Some maintain plots of land with half-built homes, preserving a stake in the island for when they return.

Underneath the surface beauty is tension and chaos. The island has developed without a plan. Large swaths of brush-covered land are grazed by a few cattle while families live piled up on top of one another in densely settled neighborhoods. Houses are half-built, half-painted, half-paid for, the legacy of living without title. They sprout like mushrooms on the hills with little consideration for the delivery of municipal services like electricity and water. Roads follow the houses in a twisting, winding maze. Vieques is an island awash with the empty shells of abandoned factories that have closed shop for more profitable shores. An exclusive luxury resort is dubiously planned between an airport and sewage treatment plant on land originally intended for agricultural rehabilitation. Federal grants are seized like apples from a tree for piecemeal construction projects; the laying of cement is presented as a panacea for joblessness and poverty.

While for decades residents clamored for access to land and economic development, since the late 1980s concern has focused on the health effects of the military presence. A 1988 study documented

high concentrations of explosives in the drinking water, presumably an airborne byproduct of weapons testing. The Puerto Rican Department of Health documents a rising cancer rate. Local studies point to toxic levels of heavy metals in residents' hair. Such concerns have taken center stage in residents' opposition to the military presence.

The community struggle between Vieques and the Navy ultimately raises important questions about the relationship between the military and civil society. The struggle to halt live bombing exercises on this small island inhabited by U.S. citizens has gained widespread popular support not only in Puerto Rico but throughout mainstream U.S. society and the international community. Of central importance are the cleanup of the range and the designation of land use in order to guarantee Viequenses a future on the island.

Vocabulary

amphibious: moving on land and sea

magazines: stocks of ammunition

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization, a military alliance of North American and European countries

plena: Puerto Rican song style that often incorporates the telling of a news event or community story

PX: store on a military base for servicepeople and their families

Viequenses: residents of Vieques

Vieques: Victories and Challenges

Fellowship of Reconciliation Task Force on Latin America and the Caribbean

This account of the departure of the Navy from Vieques is adapted from two reports in *Puerto Rico Update*, published by the Fellowship of Reconciliation Task Force on Latin America and the Caribbean (June 2003 and August 2003).

Source: Kathy Gannett

On May 1, 2003, the Navy officially closed and left the bombing range in Vieques. It turned over 14,500 acres of land on the eastern side of the island to the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) of the U.S. Department of the Interior. Navy Secretary Gordon England certified that alternative methods and sites in Florida, North Carolina and at sea would replace the bombing range in Vieques, used by the Navy for more than 60 years for training and weapons tests.

The Navy's departure is testament to the effectiveness of widespread nonviolent protest, including civil disobedience resulting in jail time by more than 1,000 Puerto Ricans and their supporters.

"We have been successful in completing our training on the island only because of extremely aggressive and costly multiagency security actions," wrote Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Vernon Clark in a letter accompanying the certification. "The level of protests, attempted incurions, and isolated successful incursions generally remains high when battle group training occurs on the island."

Viequenses and supporters celebrated the closure of the range in emotional ceremonies.

"I am absolutely content, and from this happiness I am getting energy for what's ahead," said Mario Rodríguez Valledor, a leader of Todo Puerto Rico con Vieques, an island-wide coalition. Carlos "Prieto" Ventura, a fisherman whose father died of cancer, said that the triumph of Vieques "dignifies all the struggles" carried out against military bases in other parts of the world.

Some people took hammers to Navy property abandoned on the range on May 1, and eight of them later were prosecuted for these acts and sentenced to up to five years in prison.

The struggle for environmental cleanup and to gain use of the lands occupied by the Navy will be difficult. Governor of Puerto Rico Sila Calderón requested the placement of Vieques and the neighboring island of Culebra—used by the Navy for bombing practice until 1975 - on the Superfund National Priorities List, known as the NPL. The federal government's approval of Vieques for the NPL in August 2004 will make the Environmental Protection Agency the regulatory authority over the cleanup process.

But by requiring the 900-acre impact area to be managed as a "wilderness area" and the remaining lands to be run as a wildlife refuge, Congress undermined environmental cleanup, since cleanup is normally determined by the intensity of civilian uses planned for the land. Further, the Navy claims that dangerous levels of heavy metals found in Vieques soils are not produced by military contamination but are naturally occurring "background levels," for which the Navy would not be responsible. Comparable Caribbean islands, however, do not have such levels of heavy metals. The Navy has

Source: Kathy Gannett

programmed $125 million to environmental studies and cleanup in all of Vieques until completion over a number of years. That is much less than costs for cleanup of other ranges, such as Kaho'olawe in Hawai'i, where even $40 million a year over 10 years did not meet cleanup goals. Vieques residents and their supporters will need to change these limits in order to ensure a cleanup that protects and restores the island's health and environment.

While the Navy has left Vieques, the contamination that it caused in the island's environment continues to affect the health and well being of its in habitants. A study conducted by the Puerto Rican Department of Health in 1999 shows that the cancer rate of Vieques is 26.9 percent higher than that of the main island in Puerto Rico. For the people of Vieques, cancer is not simply a statistic; it is a very real part of their everyday lives. Women, often responsible for taking care of many of their family's daily needs, suffer a particularly difficult hardship when they or someone in their family have cancer. Many women in the community have shown determination in raising awareness about the struggle against cancer in Vieques.

There is still a long fight ahead to clean up the land and to get Vieques cancer patients the services they need. Jenny Alejandro, breast cancer survivor of seven years, knows that it will take the effort of the entire community.

"Vieques has to speak out. People have to know how people here have cancer, and how we have struggled."

Vocabulary

Superfund: A federal program established in 1980 to locate, investigate and clean up the country's worst uncontrolled or abandoned hazardous waste sites, such as abandoned warehouses and landfills.

Viequenses: residents of Vieques

Part 5:
Culture and Traditions

Art by Samuel Miranda.

Introduction

Culture and Traditions

When sociologist Nancy Morris asked Puerto Ricans what makes them Puerto Rican, a wealth of pride in the island's culture—its food, holidays, art, music, literature—poured forth.

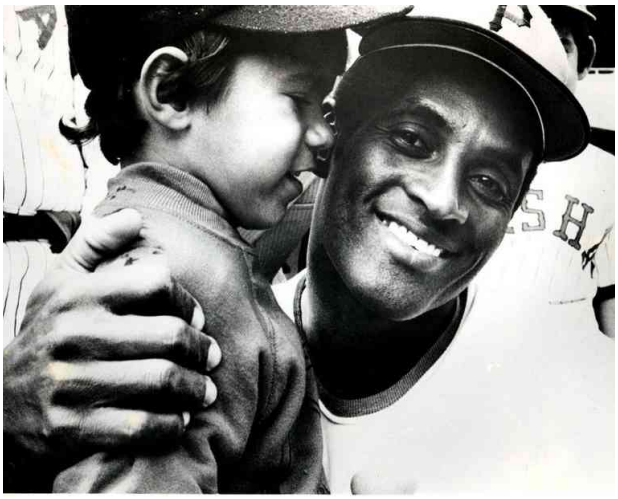
"If you ask any Puerto Rican from here 'what do you like most?' he'll tell you that it's rice and beans," one person said. "This identifies us. I don't know if that is because it's good—and to me it's good—or if it's because being a country that has been rising up from poverty, rice and beans are the cheapest. But what's clear is that even after having emerged from that extreme poverty, in the best restaurants you can always get rice and beans. Upon returning from being away from Puerto Rico for a while, one of the first things that a Puerto Rican says is 'I'm dying to eat rice and beans.'"

"We have produced so many painters, so many singers, so many sculptors, intellectuals, essayists, philosophers," said another. "There is rich cultural and intellectual production here. And it keeps growing."

These art forms often celebrate the roots of Puerto Rico's heritage in Taíno, African and European cultures. They spring from unique Puerto Rican experiences of work and celebration.

Bernardo Vega, for instance, came to the U.S. from Puerto Rico in 1916, leaving the island of his birth for the first time ever. He traveled alone by boat, ready to make a new life in New York. Vega joined a growing community of Puerto Ricans in New York City. He had worked as a cigarmaker in Puerto Rico from an early age, and in New York he again found work in a cigar factory. Among the tobacco workers, a unique culture of learning and work flourished.

Art by Samuel Miranda.



Roberto Clemente

Holidays and celebrations, such as carnivals featuring the Vejigante, provide other opportunities for joy and pride. New York City's annual Puerto Rican Day parade is among the largest parades in the U.S.

"One of our characteristics is the religious celebration of Christmas," Morris was told. "We celebrate it very differently than other countries. The tradition of the Three Kings, although it is foreign, has become ours. The Puerto Rican peasant carved the images of the Three Kings in wood but he didn't put them on camels, he put them on horses. It's different, you see? He gave it characteristics from here—ours."

Musicianship ranges from the nineteenth century *danza* and the beloved compositions of Rafael Hernández to the contemporary pop of Ricky Martin and hip-hop originated La India. A fertile exchange has lifted jazz with Puerto Rican flavors and filled Puerto Rican forms with jazz, exemplified today in the sounds of so many musicians such as Jerry Gónzalez.

Few Puerto Rican celebrities are as well known as Roberto Clemente, revered as much for his generous spirit and Puerto Rican pride as for his immense skill on the baseball field. Many outstanding athletes preceded Clemente, and hundreds have followed, including major league baseball's 2003 National League Championship Most Valuable Player Ivan "Pudge" Rodríguez.

This new edition contains a portion of Marilisa Jiménez García's article on the legacy and work of Pura Belpré, the first Puerto Rican/Latina librarian in the New York Library system. Belpré work ties together the importance of storytelling, counter-storytelling, and public literacies and pedagogies in Puerto Rican traditions.

Storytelling Without a Storybook: Lighting the Candle, Breaking the Rules, and the Politics of Space on the Children's Bookshelf

Marilisa Jiménez García

Pura Belpré © Robert Liu-Trujillo

Pura Belpré was a storyteller, librarian, and folklorist. She was also the first Latina librarian at the New York Public Library, arriving in the 1920s from Puerto Rico. Pura Belpré's own story of how she outwitted the story-hour criteria at the NYPL offers us insight into the kind of tools and roles she might have hoped children would practice. The role she perhaps enjoyed inhabiting the most was that of storyteller. Again, without romanticizing orality as somehow superior to literature, scholars should consider what this performance-based role says about Belpré rather than just seeing her as a folklorist/author. Belpré first lit the storyteller's candle, a NYPL-wide tradition at the time, at the 135th Street Branch within the context of the Harlem Renaissance. I consider Belpré's candle lighting at the 135th Street Branch a symbolic ritual that signaled the birth of Puerto Rican narratives within the United States. The candle symbolizes the beginning of a literary tradition that from the beginning reflects a commitment to the idea of literature even as it resists the literary establishment and dominant language. Belpré's candle lighting also underlines some presumptions about the role of storytellers in an urban metropolis. As a role, the

storyteller highlights the tensions between orality and textuality, between rural and industrial life. In Belpré's case, we see how she inhabits this role as a means of challenging notions of child literacy (e.g., NYPL storytelling required a published text) and even history. Belpré's duties as librarian (shelving books, translating for patrons, etc.) placed her on the frontlines of the emerging colonia, an ideal location for surveying the lack of Puerto Rican and other Latino/a literary representations. Again, she possibly encountered texts such as *Greater America* (1900) or *The Motor Girls on Water's Blue* (1915), both of which represent the Island as a U.S. commodity. Given her outrage over "racist" illustrations appearing in an edition of one of her Juan Bobo publications, Belpré likely experienced a similar outrage while viewing the demeaning portrayals of Puerto Ricans in such U.S. children's texts.

Belpré's desire to tell children stories at the NYPL, however, and her ability "to do it were two different things," as she explained in an oral history interview: "[I]n the New York Public Library no one tells a story unless the book from where the story comes is on the table with your flowers and your wishing candle…the children look for it" (Lopez n.d.). The library's preference for storybook-telling clearly promoted its mission as a text borrowing institution, but also, as Nuñez writes, downplayed any other forms of literacy outside of published texts. Actually, the NYPL considered storytelling so integral to their mission that the area had a separate director, Mary Gould Davis, also an instructor in the New York Public Library School. In 1925, Belpré enrolled in Davis's storytelling course, which taught principles of storytelling and writing for children. The class led Belpré, as a prospective storyteller, through an almost audition-like process, requiring her to lead a story-hour observed by Davis. In her "Folklore of the Puerto Rican Child" speech, Belpré explains that she originally wanted to use a "Puerto Rican folktale" as her selection for this observation; however, she "did not have a book to place on the table along with the bowl of flowers and the wishing candle" (Belpré n.d.: 2). Instead, Belpré performed a tale from Anna Cogswell Tyler's *Twenty-Four Unusual Tales for Boys and Girls* (1921). Although Belpré does not disclose the tale she read by Tyler, also a NYPL librarian and storyteller, the book features a collection of European and "American Indian" folklore. Belpré might have chosen Tyler's volume as a "safe" text since Tyler's preface concurs with the NYPL's preference for written folklore. Tyler's preface suggests that the NYPL believed written texts allowed children outside the library the enjoyment of the same stories presented at story-hours and provided non-NYPL storytellers with the texts as resources for other community story-hours. Tangible books offered accessibility and preservation beyond the children's room; however, this notion competes with the belief in oral culture that proliferation of culture depends on interpersonal relationships or "word of mouth." Belpré's own career, in a sense, proves that cultural and literary legacies occur without immediate access to a writer's publications: Belpré's children's books have been out-of-print for over thirty-years, yet she established an undeniable, continued literary legacy within the greater Puerto Rican community and beyond. The 1996 founding of the American Library Association's Pura Belpré Medal for Best Latino Children's Literature occurred without extensive scholarship on Belpré's merits as a writer and with little to no distribution of her writing.

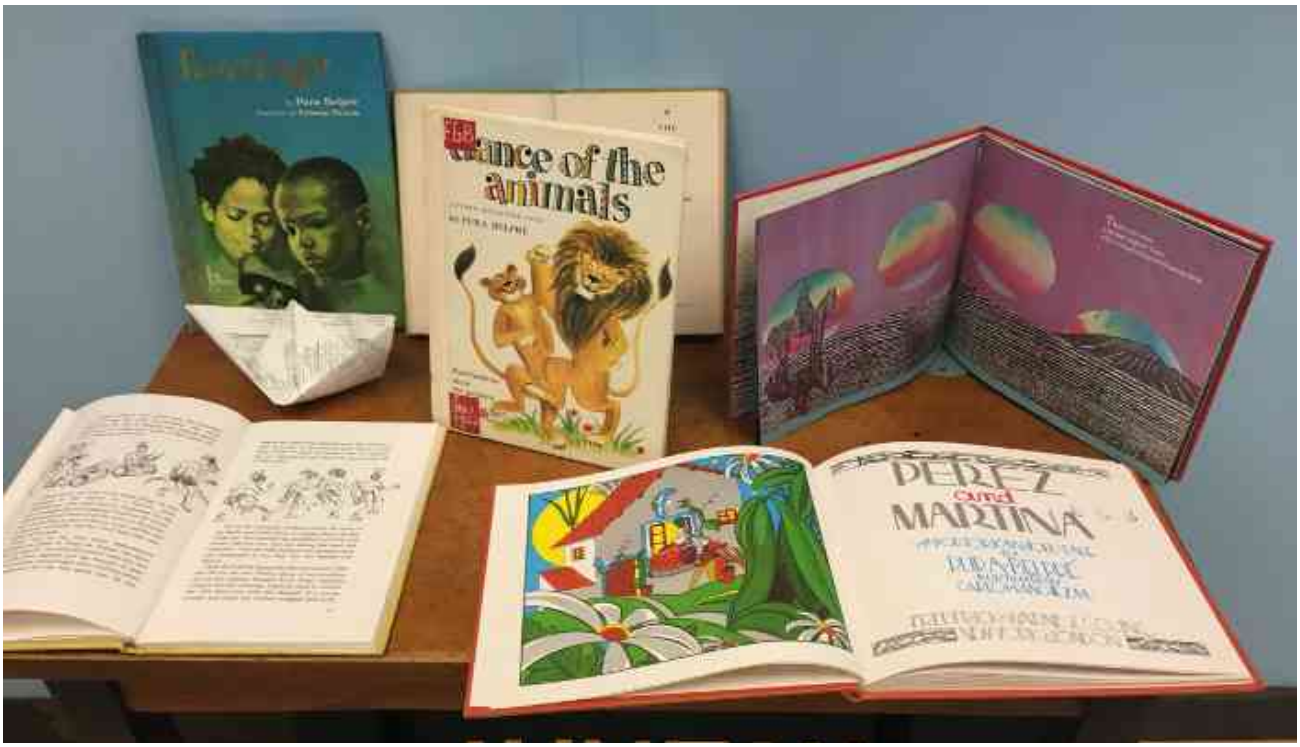
Belpré's own career, in a sense, proves that cultural and literary legacies occur without immediate access to a writer's publications: Belpré's children's books have been out-of- print for over thirty-years, yet she established an undeniable, continued literary legacy within the greater Puerto Rican community and beyond.

Though she ultimately became a published author, Belpré's legacy testifies to an impression made on literary history without books. Indeed, an archive photo reveals an older Belpré in full form: her hands up, the storybook shut on her lap, and surrounded by an audience of mesmerized black, white, and Latino/a children (Pura Belpré Papers). Sánchez-González identifies "paperlessness" as "the narrative predicament of the Puerto Rican diaspora." She writes that "while [scholars] revel in rescuing paperwork, we must realize that what literacy and papers signify cannot and should not stand in for people themselves" (2001: 8). Belpré's story emphasizes the inability of texts to supplement speech acts and the predicament of accounting for literary activity that, without a traditional text, seems unaccountable. Her insistence on performing unpublished tales also highlights her belief that Puerto Rican culture would persist even without textual evidence or any official recognition. In "Folklore de El Niño Puertorriqueño," a speech for Spanish-speaking audiences, Belpré includes a brief

history on the persistence of uniquely Puerto Rican folklore despite more than 300 years of Spanish rule. She emphasizes that the Island possessed no printing presses during the majority of Spain's colonial reign, and yet "el pueblo" (the people) managed to preserve a unique folklore generationally through oral tradition. Belpré, interestingly, does not include this example within her translation of this speech for English audiences; this implies she reserved this subversive critique on colonialism for Spanish-speakers. Actually, her props and speeches do not always allow us to know when Spanish or English was introduced or how; something that I believe also needs further critical attention. Belpré implies that, even if U.S. presses never acknowledge Puerto Rican culture, the culture will continue thriving as it did under similar colonial conditions. Belpré emphasizes storytelling as a subversive activity that de-centers narrative histories. The storyteller professes the dangerous (for children's education purposes) admission that stories are not fixed, but belong to a community and could change depending on the person retelling it. As Belpré emphasized during another lecture, "[S] torytelling is a living art, and each teller embellishes, polishes and recreates as she goes along without losing the thematic value" (3). No one, in a sense, could claim a story as his or her own. The storyteller as a kind of "artisan" was free to leave his/her handprints on a story as evidence of the version's originality and, by consequence, its subjectivity. Although literary texts are idealized in terms of preservation, the storyteller's role is perceived as existing outside the literary establishment by empowering el pueblo with a sense of authorship.

Anne Carroll Moore's philosophy for librarianship and storytelling presented Belpré with a model for resisting dominant ideologies, including U.S. nationalism and child education. Throughout her essays, Belpré credits Moore, along with Rose and Gould, with a "vision" of the library and children's storytelling as a gateway into U.S. culture. In "New York Public Library and Folklore," Belpré carefully specified that this "vision" allowed "the convergence, and mutual respect for the two cultures" (Belpré n.d.: 1). Librarianship, as Belpré learned, could provide a community with forms of resisting assimilation and prejudice. Belpré received extensive training, including an internship organized by Moore that developed "interbranch familiarity" and a required written research paper (Eddy 2006: 45). She learned Moore's criteria for selecting the "best books" for children: creative, imaginative texts promoting internationalism as opposed to informational or moralizing literature. Ideal books included fairytales and folklore that introduced children to world cultures. Moore's book selection and institution of a NYPL-wide storytelling program opposed several children's education trends during the 1920s, such as post-World War I U.S. nationalism and the scientific, psychology- centered "child guidance" movement. Moore avidly refused scientific approaches to children and their literature, claiming instead that fairytales, folklore, and poetry nurtured the child's humanity along with their "intellectual honesty and spiritual clarity" (quoted in Eddy 2006: 114). Through the proper literature, the child learned to approach society as a member of a global community. The female librarian, possessing a "natural," as opposed to scientific, knowledge of children, nurtured a wonder and love for reading in children. Moore's preference for storytelling and folklore as naturalistic remnants of the past, as Jacqueline Eddy writes, suggests a "critique of modernity" (2006: 92). NYPL storytellers literally drew the curtains on the outside world. By lighting the candle, a symbol of antiquity and imagination, the storyteller defied the structured, utilitarian "school room" (quoted in Dain 2006: 70).

Through Moore, Belpré could also learn that NYPL children's room activities and philosophies had an influence beyond Fifth Avenue, particularly with regard to the preservation of children's folklore. Moore's promotion of internationalism through children's books sparked publishers' interests in international children's books during the 1920s, a trend Belpré possibly benefited from given that *Perez and Martina* was published close to this time, possibly because Frederick Warne & Co, acquaintances of Moore, saw the Puerto Rican folktale as a contribution to international children's literature (Eddy 2006: 92). Moore's influence created opportunities for Belpré, within and outside the children's room, for counteracting the lack of Puerto Rican-authored narratives. Given Moore's reverence for fairy tales and folklore at the NYPL, it is no surprise that Belpré's duties at the library included "reading" the fairy tale shelves (Belpré n.d.: 1). In Belpré, Rose gained a lively woman with trilingual skills (she also spoke French), an interest in children, and an unwritten archive of repertoires based on Puerto Rican folklore, a tradition Belpré always touted as combining



Pura Belpré's books on display at the University of Puerto Rico Library School's "Colleción Pura Belpré of children's literature," 2018. Source: Marilisa Jiménez-García

Spanish, Taíno, Indian, and African heritages. Such an archive, told and re-told, resurrected an Island of dreams.

Folktales and storytelling instilled heritage and ideals, and Belpré envisioned these practices as reinforcing this sacred tie to family, land, and nation in New York children. Belpré often prefaced her stories and speeches with a short illustration about folklore as instrumental to the Puerto Rican child's upbringing. As she writes in her preface to *The Tiger and the Rabbit:*

> Growing up on the island of Puerto Rico in an atmosphere of natural storytellers was fun: a father whose occupation took him all over the island; a grandmother whose stories always ended in a nonsense rhyme or song, setting feet to skip or dance; elder sisters who still remembered the tales told by their mother. . . . No one ever went to bed without a round of stories. (1944: x)

Within this picture of folklore and child-rearing, Belpré represents Puerto Rican culture as one in which the average person practically lives in verse. The people in this passage (much like Belpré also portrayed herself) possess an internal repertoire of stories. Her description also refutes notions of the Puerto Rican child as "culturally deprived," a common theme which, again, she may have encountered in U.S. children's texts. Belpré's strong associations with folklore, home, nation, and child-rearing may explain her feeling of "loss" upon noticing Puerto Rico's absence from the NYPL's fairy tale shelves: "I searched for some of the folktales I had heard at home. There was not even one. A sudden feeling of loss rose within me" (Belpré n.d.: 1). Belpré equates a sense of home with her ability to locate a place for her nation within the library, in this case, a space on the bookshelf. If, as Moore believed, folklore cultivated in children the notion of a global community, then shelf space could also signify representation and influence within that community. Absence signaled nonexistence. In the early 1920s, Belpré's search for Puerto Rico on the fairytale shelves, about thirty years into the Island's status as a U.S. colony, and five years after the U.S. made Puerto Ricans American citizens, revealed the Island's symbolic absence from the world.

The politics of space on the children's bookshelf is a theme that runs throughout the history of the Puerto Rican Diaspora, and reverberates when we consider the persistent absence of Latino/a characters

in children's books. Education scholars such as Sonia Nieto, Maria José Botelho and Martha Rudman, and Carmen Martínez- Roldán have written extensively about the lack of minorities, especially Puerto Rican and Latino/a characters, in children's books as well as the stereotypical representations of such characters. Some would say Latino/a characters are absent, others might say there are not enough books, while others would say there is little awareness of existing titles (Rich 2012: 1; Diaz 2013: 1). Regardless, educators and writers for generations have esteemed the children's bookshelf as an important place for negotiating national identity. The children's bookshelf is revered almost as kind of a miniature United Nations, a place where each country and people group should have its voice heard in a quest for sovereignty and peace. Belpré, as many still do, rationalized that no stories meant no history and, perhaps, no hope for the present or future. "To appreciate the present, one must have a knowledge of the past…to know where we go, we must know from where we came," she asserts in the essay "Folklore of the Puerto Rican Child" (n.d.: 1). Moreover, in tandem with her beliefs about child-rearing, in "New York Public Library and Folklore, Belpré cites "stories" and "poetry" as "natural" ways of "dreaming about the future." Dreams of the past and future were ceremonially sanctioned when children were invited to blow out the wishing candle at the end of the story-hour (n.d.: 1–2).

Belpré recalled her confrontation with Puerto Rico's apparent nonexistence as the inspiration for her literary intervention and preservation effort on behalf of Puerto Rican migrants. In the speech "Folklore of the Puerto Rican Child," she credits her concern with children as her strongest motivation: "I wished to preserve the folktales I knew for the Puerto Rican child in this new land. I knew that the knowledge of his folklore would develop a sense of pride and identification in him" (n.d.: 1). Here, Belpré refers to the Puerto Rican child as an exiled child, while still acknowledging that a new identity, apart from the Island, had been born. She wished to give this child tools for resisting humiliation and the dreaded Americanization (loss of Spanish language and Puerto Rican traditions). Belpré, on the verge of creating some of the first U.S. Puerto Rican narratives, decided that a revival of Island culture grounded this emerging identity. Although the Island had become a distant reality for Island-born patrons, and the States would serve as the birthplace for subsequent generations, Belpré's stories could cause the Island to be "born in [them]." As in her description of her family of storytellers, Belpré again suggests stories as satisfying an innate hunger for origin.

Several of the tales in her archives of repertoires offer children a model for overcoming dominant ideologies and oppression through the strength of *el pueblo. The Tiger and the Rabbit* (1944) and *Once in Puerto Rico* (1973) contain several tales that portray colonial oppression as a battle of wits more than a battle of force. The strength and dignity of a community could route the colonizer. The titular story from *The Tiger and the Rabbit* features a typical Latin American trickster tale:

> Long, long ago all the animals were friends and lived in peace with one another, except the Tiger. For the Tiger had promised himself to eat small animals, especially the Rabbit if he ever crossed his path.
>
> But the Rabbit was very clever and known for his quick wit. He knew that the Tiger wanted to eat him, and though he considered the beast stupid, clumsy, and a fool, he managed to keep away from his path and thus avoid trouble. But this was not always possible, since both of them liked to roam about. (1944: 1)

Within an allegory of colonial hierarchy, the Tiger represents the colonizer, the highest animal on the food chain who refuses to play nice. The Tiger's brute force and greed would seemingly overpower any "small animal," yet the narrator reveals the Tiger's faults from the perspective of the "very clever" and "quick witted" Rabbit. The Rabbit discerns "the beast's" intentions so as never to mistake the Tiger for a friend. The Rabbit's low opinion of this "fool" ("stupid and clumsy") never causes him to forget the Tiger is a threat. Interestingly, Belpré's description of the Tiger parallels with her rhetoric in "Library Work for Bilingual Children," when she describes the dominant group's view of the Puerto Rican child as "culturally deprived" (i.e., "those who lack the knowledge…and the respect"). "The Tiger and the Rabbit" describes a colonial relationship typical of Latin America and the Caribbean in which the colonizer and the colonized live in such close proximity ("both liked to roam about") that they are practically partners. When the Tiger threatens to eat the Rabbit, the

Rabbit convinces the Tiger that both need to defend themselves from a "terrible hurricane." The Tiger envies the Rabbit's small size and fears his own enormity will make it difficult to find shelter: "He shivered at the thought of the howling of the wind, the crashing of the trees, and the downpour of the rain" (2). The Tiger's fear of the storm suggests the colonizer's own displacement within a land not rightfully his. He must depend on the native Rabbit's hurricane survival skills. The Rabbit convinces the Tiger that his best option is to remain still while the Rabbit ties him (with the same cord the Tiger previously used as a threat) to a tamarind tree. The Rabbit essentially puts a leash on the colonizer, as the other small animals gather to poke fun at the harnessed beast.

The tale ends when, after a series of maneuvers tricking the Tiger, the Rabbit rides off on the Tiger's back in order to escape a pack of foxes. This action demonstrates the dysfunctional use and abuse within colonial relationships, such as using the colonizer's strength as protection against internal community injustices. The Rabbit always remains one step ahead of the Tiger. He must simply work around his threats. I would suggest that *Perez and Martina*, another example of Belpré's animal fables, also issues a similar warning to the colonizer. The genteel Perez eventually marries Martina, who is quite the cook, yet there is certainly no happy ending:

> [Perez] peeped in. "If it tastes as good as it looks," said Perez, "I am certainly going to have a great treat."
>
> He then stuck in his paw and tasted it. When he did so, he knew he had never tasted anything like that before.
>
> He peeped in again. Then he noticed a fat almond getting brown all over. "Oh, if I could only get it," said Perez.
>
> "One good pull and it will be mine". . . He gave it a good pull but unfortunately he lost his balance and fell into the kettle.
>
> He screamed and called for help. But who could help him? (1932: 44–50)

Sánchez-González reads Martina's kitchen antics and Perez's death at the end of the tale as sexual, implying his genteel, Spanish ways were no match for the too-hot, Islander Martina (2001: 90). However, as Perez's dainty, high-heeled feet hang out of the boiling kettle, as seen in Sánchez's illustrations, he also represents a sense of greed for the delights and riches of the Island, whether women, land, or other forms of "capital." This is a greed the narrator severely punishes. Also, like the Tiger who fears the oncoming hurricane in "The Tiger and the Rabbit," Perez the pure Spaniard, though somewhat celebrated, meets his tragic fate precisely because he is unaccustomed to native ways and a colonizer.

Other tales such as *Once in Puerto Rico's "Ivaiahoca"* (a Taíno legend) and "The Rogavita" (a Spanish legend) illustrate the community's strength to persuade the colonizer or route his attack. Again, such a tale encourages a child's identification with the indigenous Taíno race's struggle against Spanish colonialism. Ivaiahoca, a Taíno woman, pleads for her son's life when he is taken captive by the Spanish. Instead of the trickster tradition, Ivaiahoca's speech to General Salazar illustrates a kind of civil disobedience founded on sacrifice and empathy:

> Señor Salazar, I know you must have a mother. Because of her you can understand my suffering. My son is young and loves his liberty. He should live to enjoy it. I am old. If he were in captivity, my last remaining days would be in agony. But if I knew he was free, I could pass those days in peace, whatever tasks and trials might come to me. Take my life and my services for his liberty. Heaven will reward your good deed. (1973: 39)

Ivaiahoca wins her son's freedom through this speech. She then risks her life for General Salazar by delivering a letter to Juan Ponce de León. Her bravery leads to Salazar's praise of Ivaiahoca's "nobility" rather than deterring him from the war on the Taínos. Belpré's retelling of "The Rogativa" combines trickster and civil disobedience tactics. In the story, thousands of Puerto Ricans assemble in the streets, curiously enough with lighted candles to deter British fleets in San Juan Harbor, as Belpré narrates:

> The English spies on watch sent an urgent message to Abercrombie's headquarters. Great movement could be seen within the capital. They heard a loud ringing of bells and could see strange glimmering lights toward the west.
>
> "They must be getting reinforcements from the country," said the English general. (1973: 70)

The British interpret the lighted candles as symbols of conglomeration and resistance. The mass of people, each with a candle in hand, symbolizes the importance of each protester.

Perhaps in her own embodiment of "The Rogativa," Belpré outsmarted the NYPL's rules concerning published texts during her early career, earning her the right to tell her unpublished stories to children, lit candle in hand. Davis only gave the condition that she "[t]ell the children that they were the first children to hear the stories before they were in book form" (n.d.: 2). Nuñez writes that Davis's insistence that children understand that Belpré told unpublished stories contains a "humorous…ethnocentric assumption that children would expect to see a book when hearing a story" (2009: 70). Indeed, Davis' concern seems more for the children's comprehension of a kind of sanctioned literacy encompassed by published narratives.

Belpré's resurrection of Island culture underlined her belief that stories could provoke the Island's continual rebirth within the imagination of Puerto Rican children throughout Spanish Harlem.

Belpré's initial lighting of the candle, without a published text, began a Puerto Rican literary tradition within the U.S., a narrative characterized by a sense of existing outside established cultural, national, and racial boundaries. As a storyteller, already a subversive figure, Belpré transformed an U.S. tradition into an act of resistance. Just years after the U.S. invasion of Puerto Rico, Belpré persuaded U.S. society, represented by the NYPL staff, to acknowledge the birth of a new cultural identity within the United States. The candle's flame evidenced that, even without an official political or legal status as an independent nation, the Puerto Rican cultural nation had claimed a position within the global community represented on the children's bookshelf. This early stage of Belpré's career at the 135th Street Branch established within the NYPL and Harlem that a Puerto Rican identity within the U.S. existed. Belpré's resurrection of Island culture underlined her belief that stories could provoke the Island's continual rebirth within the imagination of Puerto Rican children throughout Spanish Harlem. Indeed, Belpré continued telling her unpublished tales outside the children's room "in English and Spanish, throughout the library system, as well as in schools and PTA meetings" (Belpré "Folklore" 2). As I explore in the next section, her storytelling contributed to a cohesive sense of Puerto Rican identity necessary for subsequent generations of Puerto Rican children "in this new land."

Read in full "Pura Belpré Lights the Storyteller's Candle: Reframing the Legacy of a Legend and What it Means for the Fields of Latino/a Studies and Children's Literature" by Marilisa Jiménez-García in *Centro Journal*, Volume xxvi, Number 1, Spring 2014. Reprinted here with permission of *Centro Journal*.

The Puerto Rican Vejigante

Patty Bode

Vejigantes on a street in Ponce.

"Can we make those?" my students called out as we studied the colorful Vejigante masks of Puerto Rico in a video.

"Yes, we can make these masks," I assured them. "Let's figure out what the Vejigante mask is all about. That will help us build our own mask interpretations."

For each slide that flashed on the screen, I asked my students, "What do you notice? What do you wonder?"

Jasmina jumped in, "I notice lots of spots. They painted them with spots, on every mask. I wonder why?"

"I see lots of horns, I notice they are scary," said Orlando.

"I notice that each mask is different; some look kinda the same, but they are all different," Richie adds.

"I see fangs, teeth, horns, big mouths and flared nostrils," Sarah said. "I wonder how they made so many teeth on that one?"

The Vejigante character from Puerto Rico is a crowd pleaser, both on the island during carnival, and here in Amherst, Massachusetts, in my middle-school art room. But most of my students have limited knowledge about Puerto Rico. Of the 700 students in this school only about 9 percent of my students identify as Latino or Hispanic, and most

The Vejigante

"The Vejigante (bay-he-GAHN-tay) is a fantastic, colorful character introduced into carnival celebrations hundreds of years ago. He is a classic example of the blending of African, Spanish, and Caribbean influences in Puerto Rican culture. The name Vejigante comes from the Spanish word for bladder, *vejiga*. The Vejigante inflates a dried cow's bladder and paints it to resemble a balloon. The Vejigante's costume is made from scraps of fabric and looks like a clown suit with a cape and bat wings under the arms. During the carnival celebrations in Loíza Aldea and Ponce, the Vejigantes roam the streets in groups and chase children with their *vejigas*. The Vejigante is such an old character that he is even mentioned in the classic novel *Don Quixote*, written in 1605."

— Edwin Fontánez,
The Vejigante and the Folk Festivals of Puerto Rico

Vejigantes puppet created by Sujei Lugo.

of those students who identify as such are Puerto Rican. The Puerto Rican community is one of the fastest growing of all the communities of color in this school district. Yet many students, from all cultural backgrounds in this school population, have not learned much about Puerto Rican art in the school setting.

Many students in the Puerto Rican community have grown up here in New England where the dominant culture in the schools has made Puerto Rico's rich history and culture invisible. Exploring the history, traditions and cross-cultural influences of the Vejigante mask provides a context for understanding the intersection of the African, European and indigenous Taíno cultures in the Caribbean. Art making in this context enhances a more comprehensive understanding of Puerto Rican arts, culture and history.

I began to develop a curriculum about the Vejigante years ago, but the more I worked on it, the more I began to question the image of Puerto Rico that my students were internalizing. In follow-up lessons, students in grades 1-7 would identify Puerto Rico as "the island where they make Vejigante masks!" Yes, that is true, but did they think that everyone on the island spent their time designing and wearing Vejigante masks? Did they understand the specificity of this folk character to certain traditions, regions and events? I do not want my students to assume that folk art existed on the island in a void without any previous historical context. I do not want to denigrate this beautiful tradition to the status of a mere "tourist curriculum" by exploiting the attractive color and character of the custom. And I wanted the students to understand the significance of the intersection of Spanish and African cultures in the endearing character of the Vejigante—so it was

Making Vejigante Masks in the Classroom

My students have met with success with the following possibilities. I have adapted these activities in K-12 art classrooms. I encourage teachers to consider which art activity is best suited to their classrooms, students, and supply budgets.

Papier mâché masks: The video/book set by Edwin Fontánez which is available directly from Exit Studio's Website (www.exitstudio.com) provides step-by-step instructions, and comes with a printed pattern for mask making with simple materials such as cardboard, newspaper and flour-and-water wheat paste. Students are encouraged to adapt their ideas from the pattern to produce their own unique mask.

Mini-masks: I have adapted the papier mâché pattern from the video to create mini-masks, which fit in the palm of one's hand. These small-scale masks have become more popular on the island for tourists and families who carry them to the mainland as a memento.

Ceramic clay figures: With a small amount of ceramic clay, a full-body figure of the Vejigante may be fashioned to emphasize the movement and the colorful costume of the character. Ceramic clay may also be used to make mini-masks mentioned above.

Cardboard with plaster heads: Create a drawing of the Vejigante's body with oak tag and fully color or paint, then add the head/mask which is a plaster form that we made in plastic molds (which were originally designed for candy eggs). The plaster may be colored with markers or painted, with paper horns glued on with craft glue.

Construction paper: Using brightly-colored construction paper of any size, students draw the full figure of the Vejigante and color them with oil pastels (Cray-Pas).

"Kids are rooted in a social reality and need to understand how a certain work is 'culturally specific' and study it in that context."

—Contemporary artist/educator Juan Sánchez
Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, CT

more than an appealing "exotic" character to replicate in art class.

Art in Context

The challenge was to teach about the masks in the historical and cultural context of folk arts, while keeping my art class active and hands-on. After we spent the first part of the class period studying the Vejigante masks through slides and video, I demonstrated how to begin making the mask.

As the students watched me shape the oak tag and listened to me explain skills in paper cutting, folding and scoring, I also talked with them about what they remembered from the video.

"Does anybody remember when and where the Vejigante masks are worn in Puerto Rico?" Some students responded with guesses, some with a clear memory of the video.

After a recent class session, I became confident that my students were very much aware that the Vejigante is an artifact of social context, when Alejandro and Sarah grabbed their masks and started chasing their classmates with loud scary roars. They were imitating the gestures we had read about and viewed on the video.

"Alejandro," I shouted over the roars, "you are dressed as a Vejigante, what time of year is it in Puerto Rico?"

"February, it is festival in this town!" he yelled.

"Sarah, where are you in Puerto Rico?"

"We're in Ponce, Ms. Bode, because my mask is made of papier mâché and it has fangs—it's not the coconut-shell-kind from Loíza!"

This classroom dialogue drew upon the work of Edwin Fontánez whose *Legend of the Vejigante* video and *The Vejigante and the Folk Festivals of Puerto Rico* book (Exit Studio, 1996) provide a sociohistorical context of the Vejigante tradition. By using his work in conjunction with the book *Vejigante/Masquerader* by Lulu Delacre (Scholastic, 1993), students learned about the towns of Ponce and Loíza Aldea, where the Vejigante tradition thrives.

The mask makers in the town of Loíza Aldea, whose population is predominantly Afro-Puerto Rican, carve the masks from coconut shells, a style derived directly from African traditions. The Loíza tradition has been upheld for generations by the mask makers of the Ayala family. Today in Loíza, Raul Ayala Carrasquillo carries on the mask making techniques he learned from his late father, Don Castor Ayala Fuentes. We compared these African-influenced coconut shell masks to the papier mâché masks in Ponce which are linked to the European tradition and usually painted with chromatic acrylic paints. The comparisons of the towns, the demographics of their populations, and their styles of mask-making reveal some of the social context of art making and illustrate Puerto Rico's history of race and class stratification. We extended our research about the town of Loíza to learn that this community has maintained African traditions over the years in many aspects of life such as cooking, language and religion. This leads us into a discussion of race and

Illustration by Edwin Fontánez

heightens awareness of the multiracial heritage of Puerto Rico.

A Nice Place to Take a Vacation

As I moved around the art room assisting with goopy glue strips of papier mâché and troubleshooting with attaching horns and fangs, I overheard some non-Puerto Rican students saying things like, "Puerto Rico is a nice place to take a vacation." I think to myself, while this may be true, if that is all they know about Puerto Rico, they're missing a lot.

This limited understanding of some of my students led me to underscore the value of folk arts, by placing them within the context of other art traditions. I firmly believe that folk arts play a critical role in the maintenance and nurturing of culture. I began to compare and to teach folk arts in the context of contemporary arts, to offer students a fuller picture of the arts of Puerto Rico. I wonder:

Do my students have a grasp on folk art as a tradition passed down through generations of families and communities?

Do they realize that there were multiple other realms of art created by artists at the universities, galleries and community art centers both on the island and the mainland?

Do they see this connection between Puerto Rican artists in New York and throughout the U.S. to artists on the island?

Are they viewing folk arts and the Vejigante as the only example of Puerto Rican artistic expression?

Throughout our days in the art room, as we worked on our masks, I tried to address these concerns. I showed slides of contemporary artwork such as Juan Sánchez's innovative imagery he labels "Ricanstructions" juxtaposed with slides of several Vejigante masks. Students asked questions about the Sánchez work:

"Why does he write about racism and injustice all over his artwork?"

"Why does he paint the U.S. flag in opposite colors?"

"Does he make Vejigante masks, too?"

I responded with some answers and with some questions: "No, he does not make Vejigante masks; he works more with painting and collage. Why do *you* think he writes about racism and injustice? Why do *you* think he paints the U.S. flag in opposite colors?"

"Maybe he thinks the U.S. is doing the opposite of what it promised.…Maybe he feels that racism is the opposite of the U.S.'s symbols," Aviva said. These insightful comments lead me to utilize examples from several other contemporary Puerto Rican artists such as Carlos Irizarry and Zoraída Martínez. These artists and images—along with my students' observations—set the stage for discussions on the role of race and class in the Puerto Rican community and the wider U.S. society and how it is expressed through art. I emphasized to my students that they, too, are contemporary artists, and I encouraged them to address their concerns about justice and injustice through their art.

When I discussed race and diversity, I emphasized the vibrant and resilient heritage of the Puerto Rican community, while simultaneously looking at the hard reality of marginalization of the culture in this country. U.S. business interests have wreaked havoc on the environment, language and livelihood of many Puerto Ricans throughout the twentieth century and to the present.


Vejigantes in a Ponce Street
Vejigantes en una calle en Ponce

Illustration by Edwin Fontanez

While my students are busily fashioning masks in my art room in Amherst, I read aloud current front-page news articles about the bombing practice on the island of Vieques in Puerto Rico, and the debate surrounding the U.S. military presence there. A deeper understanding of the Vejigante creates an avenue for understanding the political debates and the different perspectives of the Puerto Rican people surrounding these debates. I invited the students to voice their opinions on the military action around Vieques. We had such a lively discussion, we had to make a rule about "using words" and "no paint splashing" to emphasize one's opinion! We decided that when we were finished with our Vejigante masks we would each make a painting/collage inspired by the style of Juan Sánchez, in which we would articulate a social political passion of each student's choice. Since this art activity was open-ended, some students chose to stay with Puerto Rican themes and emphasized the Vieques-military debate. Others directed their creativity into a spectrum of social and political statements such as child labor in the globalized economy, U.S. consumption of fossil fuel and its global and environmental effects and capitalist control of artistic expression in the music and radio industry, among many others.

The evolution of my curriculum led me to realize that one art form is never enough to teach the entire history of a people. I am wary of the danger of using only one example such as the Vejigante to represent all of Puerto Rico's folk arts.

I am also cautious about trying to take on these tasks as a lone art teacher within the confines of the art room. As an art teacher, I do not want to participate in the "colonization" of any artworks or cultures. If Puerto Rico needs to be more visible and more contextualized in art class, then it needs to be so in the entire school curriculum. I certainly cannot accomplish this goal with one art unit, and I absolutely cannot do it alone. This is a complex endeavor.

Getting Help

I needed help. As I developed this unit over the years, I sought out discussions and collaborations with colleagues who teach social studies, language arts and world languages to integrate curriculum. I also met with parents, grandparents and community members in an effort to represent their voices in the curriculum. Some of these discussions were informal chats in the school hallway; others were organized community meetings. We integrated what we learned from these meetings into our art class. Each day, while students were developing their masks, I asked them what they knew about Puerto Rico. One day after watching a video in social studies, Alicia explained the debate over Puerto Rico's status as a commonwealth, a state or an independent country. Another day Isaiah retold a folktale he read in English class. I asked how this information has affected the art traditions, leading us back to our Vejigante study. I made a large chart paper list of what we know and another classroom list of our questions. This list helped me develop the curriculum and reminded us how much more there is to learn in art and other classes. In these discussions, many students turned and stared at the Puerto Rican students in the class. I wondered if they expected them to be experts on all aspects of Puerto Rican history. I realized this is another misconception I needed to address.

Not every Puerto Rican identifies with the tradition of the Vejigante or even knows about it. Puerto Rican students who have lived most of their lives here in the U.S. have very different experiences from those who have arrived recently from the island. Each community has unique experiences and each family develops its own perspective on those experiences. My classroom experience reflects this diversity: some Puerto Rican students had their first introduction to the Vejigante in my classroom, while others are the grandchildren of famous maskmakers on the island.

In the midst of this unit, some of my students reminded me: "That's not the Puerto Rico that I know." I responded, "Yes there are so many different communities and experiences in Puerto Rico! Tell me about the Puerto Rico that you know. Let's learn more about that." That is why I find it so valuable to draw on student knowledge and experience. When using one specific Puerto Rican art form, I find it essential to place that artwork in its location and history, to emphasize the diversity of the island and the arts it produces. I strive to keep in the foreground that no culture is a monolith, and that no single art form can adequately represent an entire culture. Especially because I am not Puerto Rican, I tell my students, "I am in the process of learning, researching and exploring, and I need your help." This helps to level the playing field for all students—Puerto Rican or not—to view each other as resources and to draw on the expertise of students and families as well

as academic resources.

Several years ago, when my students heard about a devastating hurricane in Puerto Rico, they were motivated to hold bake sales to assist in the relief effort. When they heard about the struggle with the military in Vieques, they were curious to hear more and to voice their opinions.

I use the study of the Vejigante mask in my art class to stimulate students' interest in Puerto Rican culture and to heighten their awareness of the politics surrounding Puerto Rico's history. I picture my curriculum as concentric circles, like a splash in a pond, with the study of a specific art form in the center, and the students' knowledge, my curiosity and the expertise of the community bubbling outward. In my struggle to contextualize this art activity, I have found students from all backgrounds in all grade levels hungry to learn more. Parents, grandparents, caregivers and community members are eager to share artifacts, stories and knowledge. This unit will continue to expand as long as my teaching career progresses.

"The Puerto Rican Vejigante" appeared originally as "The Importance of Teaching Art in Its Social and Cultural Context" in *Rethinking Schools*, Fall 2002. Used by permission of *Rethinking Schools*.

Customs and Traditions of the Tabaqueros

Bernardo Vega

Bernardo Vega was one of thousands of Puerto Ricans who brought their cigarmaking skills to the mainland. From their work sprang their own unique culture. Here, Vega reminisces about some of his experiences in New York City.

I hadn't the slightest idea what fate awaited me. First to disembark were the passengers traveling first class—businessmen, well-to-do-families, students. In second class, where I was, there were the emigrants, most of us *tabaqueros*, or cigarworkers. We all boarded the ferry that crossed from Staten Island to lower Manhattan. We sighed as we set foot on solid ground. There, gaping before us, were the jaws of the iron dragon: the immense New York metropolis.

All of us new arrivals were well dressed. I mean, we had on our Sunday best. I myself was wearing a navy blue woolen suit (or *flus* as they would say back home), a Borsalino hat made of Italian straw, black shoes with pointy toes, a white vest and a red tie. I would have been sporting a shiny wristwatch too, if a traveling companion hadn't warned me that in New York it was considered effeminate to wear things like that. So as soon as the city was in sight, and the boat was entering the harbor, I tossed my watch into the sea. And to think that it wasn't long before those wristwatches came into fashion and ended up being the rage!

***

One day my friend "El Salvaje" took me down to Fuentes & Co., a cigar factory located on Pearl Street, near Fulton Street, in lower Manhattan. I started work immediately, but within a week they had marked down the price of my make of cigar, and I quit.

A few days later I found work at another cigar factory, El Morito (The Little Moor), on 86th Street off Third Avenue, a few steps from where I was living. At that wonderful place I struck up friendships with

a lot of Cubans, Spaniards and some fellow countrymen, all of whom awakened in me an eagerness to study.

With workers of this caliber, El Morito seemed like a university. At the time the official reader was Fernando García. He would read to us for one hour in the morning and one in the afternoon. He dedicated the morning session to current news and events of the day, which he received from the latest wireless information bulletins.

The afternoon sessions were devoted to more substantial readings of a political and literary nature. A Committee on Reading suggested the books to be read, and their recommendations were voted on by all the workers in the shop. The readings alternated between works of philosophical, political, or scientific interest, and novels chosen from the writings of Zola, Dumas, Victor Hugo, Flaubert, Jules Verne, Pierre Loti, Vargas Vila, Pérez Galdos, Palacio Valdés, Dostoyevsky, Gogol, Gorky or Tolstoy. All these authors were well known to the cigarworkers at the time.

"There, gaping before us, were the jaws of the iron fragon: the immense New York metropolis." Artist: Manuel Otero.

It used to be that a factory reader would choose the texts himself, and they were mostly light reading, like the novels of Pérez Escrich, Luis Val and the like. But as they developed politically, the workers had more and more to say in the selection. Their preference for works of social theory won out. From then on the readings were most often from books by Gustave LeBon, Ludwig Buchner, Darwin, Marx, Engels, Bakunin. And let me tell you, I never knew a single *tabaquero* who fell asleep.

The institution of factory readings made the *tabaqueros* into the most enlightened sector of the working class. The practice began in the factories of Vitas & Co., in Bejucal, Cuba, around 1864. Of course there were readings before then, but they weren't daily. Emigrants to Key West and Tampa introduced the practice into the U.S. around 1869.

In Puerto Rico the practice spread with the development of cigar production, and it was Cubans and Puerto Ricans who brought it to New York. It is safe to say that there were no factories with Hispanic cigarworkers without a reader. Things were different in English speaking shops where, as far as I know, no such readings took place.

During the readings at El Morito and other factories, silence reigned supreme—it was almost like being in church. Whenever we got excited about a certain passage we showed our appreciation by tapping our tobacco cutters on the work tables. Our applause resounded from one end of the shop to the other. Especially when it came to polemical matters no one wanted to miss a word. Whenever someone on the other side of the room had trouble hearing, he would let it be known and the reader would raise his voice and repeat the whole passage in question.

At the end of each session there would be a discussion of what had been read. Conversation went from one table to another without our interrupting our work. Though nobody was formally leading the discussion, everyone took turns speaking. When some controversy remained unresolved and each side would stick to a point of view, one of the more educated workers would act as arbiter. And should dates or questions of fact provoke discussion, there was always someone who insisted on going to the *mataburros* or "donkey slayers"—that's what we called reference books.

But life among the *tabaqueros* was not all serious and sober. There was a lot of fun too, especially on the part of the Cuban comrades. Many were the times that, after a stormy discussion, someone would take his turn by telling a hilarious joke. Right away tempers would cool down and the whole shop would burst out laughing.

None of the factories was without its happy go lucky fellow who would spend the whole time cracking jokes. In El Morito our man of good cheer was a Cuban named Angelito, who was known for how little work he did. He would get to the shop in the morning, take his place at the worktable, roll a cigar, light it, and then go change his clothes. When he returned to the table he would take the cigar from his mouth and tell his first joke. The coworkers nearest him would laugh, and after every cigar he'd tell another joke. He would announce when he had made enough cigars to cover that day's rent. Then he'd set out to roll enough to take care of his expenses. Once this goal was reached, he wouldn't make one more cigar, but would leave his workplace, wash up, get dressed and head for the Broadway theaters.

Vocabulary

my make of cigar: cigar prices varied according to the "make"—the quality of the tobacco and the cigarmaker's reputation.

Abridged from: *Memoirs of Bernardo Vega*, edited by César Andreu Iglesias (Monthly Review Press, 1984). Translated by Juan Flores. Used by permission of Monthly Review Press.

Coca-Cola and Coco Frío

Martín Espada

On his first visit to Puerto Rico,
island of family folklore,
the fat boy wandered
from table to table
with his mouth open.
At every table, some great-aunt
would steer him with cool spotted hands
to a glass of Coca-Cola.
One even sang to him, in all the English
she could remember, a Coca-Cola jingle
from the forties. He drank obediently, though
he was bored with this potion, familiar
from soda fountains in Brooklyn.

Then, at a roadside stand off the beach, the fat boy
opened his mouth to coco frío, a coconut
chilled, then scalped by a machete
so that a straw could inhale the clear milk.
The boy tilted the green shell overhead
and drooled coconut milk down his chin;
suddenly, Puerto Rico was not Coca-Cola
or Brooklyn, and neither was he.

For years afterward, the boy marveled at an island
where the people drank Coca-Cola
and sang jingles from World War II
in a language they did not speak,
while so many coconuts in the trees
sagged heavy with milk, swollen
and unsuckled.

Dulce De Naranja

Aurora Levins Morales

In Puerto Rico, Las Navidades is a season, not a single day. Early in December, with the hurricane season safely over, the thick autumn rains withdraw and sun pours down on the island uninterrupted. This will be a problem by March, when the reservoirs empty and the shore of Lake Luchetti shows wider and wider rings of red mud, until the lake bottom curls up into little pancakes of baked clay and the skeletons of long-drowned houses are revealed. Then, people wait anxiously for rain, pray that the sweet white coffee blossoms of April don't wither on the branch. But during the Navidades, the sun shines on branches heavily laden with hard, green berries starting to ripen and turn red. Oranges glow on the trees, *aguinaldos* start to dominate the airwaves of Radio Café, and women start grating yucca and plantain for *pasteles* and feeling up the pigs and chickens, calculating the best moment for the slaughter.

It was 1962 or maybe 1965. Any of those years. Barrio Indiera Baja of Maricao and Barrio Rubias of Yauca are among the most remote inhabited places on the island, straddling the crest of the Cordillera Central among the mildewed ruins of old coffee plantations, houses and sheds left empty when the tide of international commerce withdrew. A century ago, Yauco and Maricao fought bitterly to annex this prime coffee-growing land at a time when Puerto Rican coffee was the best in the world. But Brazil flooded the market with cheaper, faster-growing varieties. There were hurricanes and invasions and the coffee region slid into decline.

In the 1960s of my childhood most people in Indiera still worked in coffee, but everyone was on food stamps except a handful of *hacendados* and young people who kept leaving for town jobs or for New York and Connecticut.

Those were the years of modernization. Something was always being built or inaugurated—dams, bridges, new roads, shopping centers and acres of housing developments. Helicopters crossed the mountains installing electrical poles in places too inaccessible for trucks (while keeping an eye out for illegal rum stills). During my entire childhood the *acueducto*, the promise of running water, inched its way toward us with much fanfare, and very little result. When the pipes were finally in place, the engineers discovered that there was rarely enough pressure to drive the water up the steep slopes north of the reservoir. About once a month the faucets,

left open all of the time, started to sputter. Someone called out "*Acueduuuuucto!*" and everyone ran to fill their buckets up before the pipes went dry again.

Navidades was the season for extravagance in the midst of hardship. Food was saved up and then lavishly spread on the table. New clothing was bought in town or made up by a neighbor, and furniture was brought home, to be paid off in installments once the harvest was in.

One of those years, Doña Gina's husband bought her an indoor stove with an oven, and all of the neighbors turned to see. They were going to roast the pig indoors! Not a whole pig, of course, but I was there watching when Don Lencho slashed the shaved skin and rubbed the wounds with handfuls of mashed garlic and fresh oregano, achiote oil and vinegar, black pepper and salt. Doña Gina was making *arroz con dulce*, tray after tray of cinnamon-scented rice pudding with coconut. The smells kept all the children circling around the kitchen like hungry sharks.

This was before every house big enough for a chair had sprouted a TV antenna. My brother and I went down to the Canabal house to watch occasional episodes of Bonanza dubbed into Spanish: I like to watch the lips move out of sync with the voice that said, "Vamonos, Hoss!" And by 1966 there would be a TV in the seventh-grade classroom of Arturo Lluberas Junior High, down near Yauco, where the older girls would crowd in to watch El Show del Mediodía. But in Indiera and Rubias nobody was hooked on TV Christmas specials yet, so when the season began, people still tuned up their *cuatros* and guitars, took down the *güiros* and maracas and started going house to house looking for free drinks. So while Don Lencho kept opening the oven to baste the pig, Chago and Nestor and Papo played *aguinaldos* and *plenas* and Carmencita improvised lyrics back and forth with Papo, each trying to top the other in witty commentary, the guests hooting and clapping when one or the other scored a hit. No one talked much about Cheito and Luis away in Vietnam, or Adita's fiancé running off with a pregnant high-school girl a week before the wedding or Don Tono coughing up blood all the time.

"*Gracias a Dios*," said Doña Gina, "*aquí estamos*."

During Navidades the cars of city relatives started showing up parked in the road next to the red and green Jeeps. My girlfriends had to stay close to home and wear starched dresses, and the boys looked unnaturally solemn in ironed white shirts, with their hair slicked down. Our relatives were mostly in New York, but sometimes a visitor came all the way, announced ahead of time by letter, or now and then, adventurous enough to try finding our farm with just a smattering of Spanish and a piece of paper with our names.

The neighbors grew their own *gandules* and *plantain*, but except for a few vegetables, we didn't farm our land. My father drove to San Juan every week to teach at the university and did most of our shopping there, at the Pueblo supermarket on the way out of town. Sometimes all those overflowing bags of groceries weighed on my conscience, especially when I went to the store with my best friend Tata, and waited while she asked Don Paco to put another meager pound of rice on their tab. My father was a biologist and commuter. This was how we got our frozen blintzes and English muffins, fancy cookies and date-nut bread.

But during Navidades it seemed, for a little while, as if everyone had enough. My father brought some Spanish *turrón*—sticky white nougat full of almonds, wrapped in thin edible layers of papery white stuff. The best kind is the hard *turrón* you have to break with a hammer. Then there were all the gooey, intensely sweet fruit pastes you ate with crumbly

Source: San Juan Marriott

white cheese. The dense, red-brown *guayaba*; golden mango; sugar-crusted, pale brown *batata*; and dazzling white coconut. And my favorite, *dulce de naranja*, a tantalizing mix of bitter orange and sugar, the alternating tastes always startling on the tongue. We didn't eat pork, but my father cooked canned corn beef with raisins and onions and was the best Jewish *tostón* maker in the world.

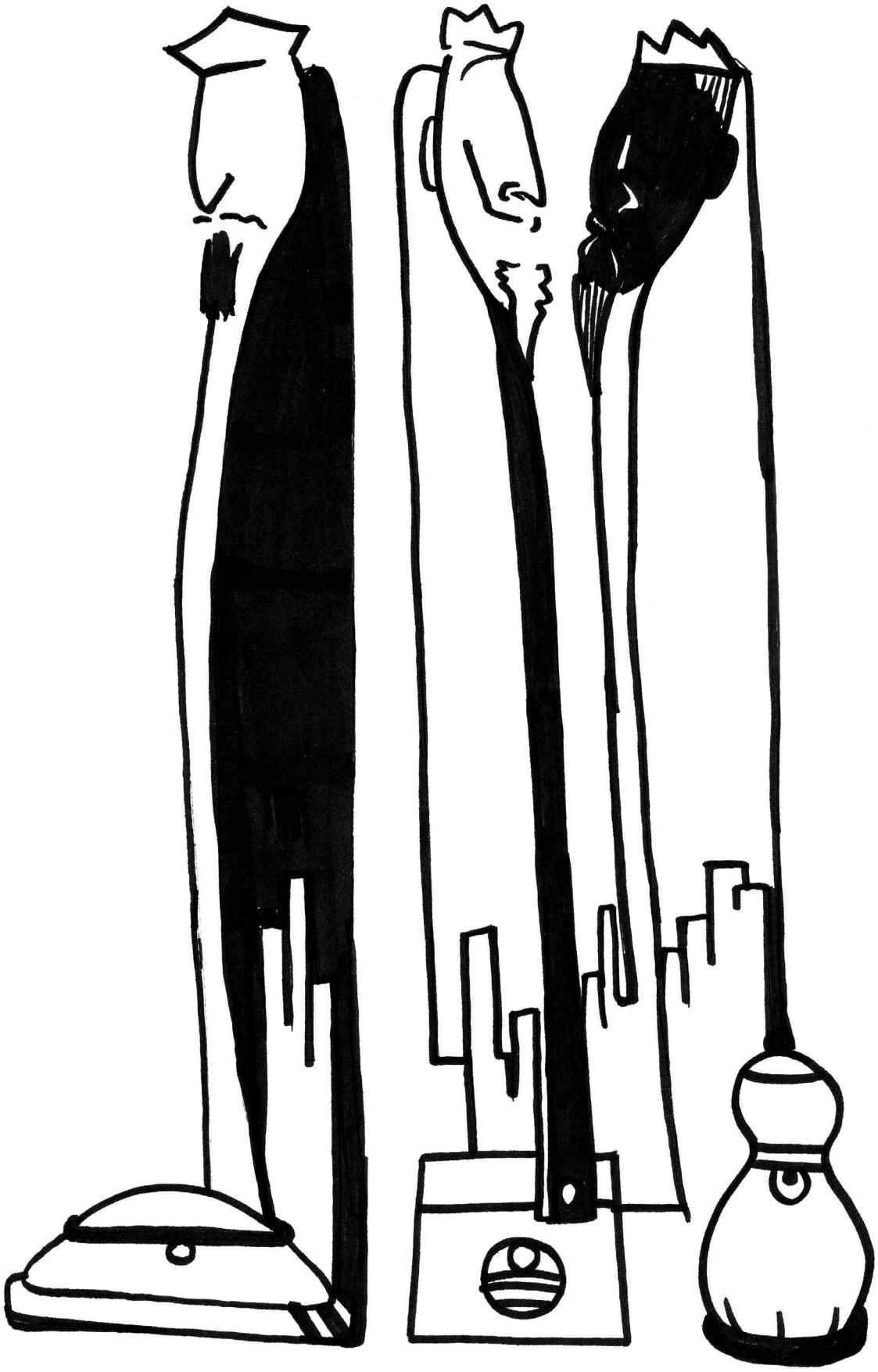
Christmas trees were still a strange gringo custom for most of our neighbors, but each year we picked something to decorate, this household of transplanted New Yorkers—my Puerto Rican mother, my Jewish father, and the two, then three of us, "*americanitos*" growing up like wild *guayabas* on an overgrown and half-abandoned coffee farm. One year we cut a miniature grove of bamboo and folded dozens of tiny origami cranes in gold and silver paper to hang on the branches. Another year it was the tightly rolled, flamed-red flowers of *señorita* with traditional, shiny Christmas balls glowing among the lush green foliage. Sometimes it was boughs of Australian pine hung with old ornaments we brought with us from New York in 1960, those pearly ones with the inverted cones carved into their sides like funnels of fluted, silver and gold light.

The only telephone was the one at the crossroads which rarely worked, so other than my father's weekly trip to San Juan, the mail was our only link with the world outside the barrio. Everyday during Las Navidades, when my brother and I would stop at the crossroads for the mail, there would be square envelopes in bright colors bringing Season's Greetings from faraway people we'd never met. But there were also packages. We had one serious sweet tooth on each side of the family. Each year my Jewish grandmother sent metal tins full of brightly wrapped toffee in iridescent paper that my brother and I saved for weeks. Every year my Puerto Rican grandfather sent boxes of Jordan almonds in sugary pastel colors and jumbo packages of Hershey's Kisses and Tootsie Rolls.

Of course this was also the season of rum, of careening Jeep-loads of festive people in constant motion up and down the narrow twisting roads of the mountains. You could hear the laughter and loud voices fade and blare as they wound in and out of the curves. All along the sides of the roads there were shrines—white crosses or painted rocks with artificial flowers and the dates of horrible accidents: head-on collisions when two Jeeps held onto the crown of the road too long; places where drivers mistook the direction of the next dark curve and rammed into a tree or plummeted, arching into the air and over the dizzying edge, to crash among the broken branches of citrus and *pomarrosa* and leaving a wake of destruction. Some of those ravines still held the rusted frames of old trucks and cars no one knew how to retrieve after the bodies were taken home for burial.

It was rum, the year my best friend's father died. Early Navidades, just coming into December, and parties already in full swing. Chiqui, Tata, Chinita and I spent a lot of time out in the road, while inside, women in black dresses prayed, cleaned and cooked. Every so often one of them would come out to the porch and call Tata and Chiqui, who were cousins, to get something from the store or go down the hill to the spring to fetch more buckets of water.

No one in Indiera was called by their real name. It was only in school when the teacher took attendance, that you found out all those Tatas, Titas, Papos and Juniors were named Milagros and Carmen María, José Luis and Dionisio. The few names people used became soft and blurred in our mouths, in the country-Puerto Rican Spanish inherited from Andalucian immigrants who had settled in those hills centuries ago and kept as far as they could from church and state alike. We mixed *yanqui* slang with the archaic accents of the sixteenth century, so that Ricardo became Hicaldo while Wilson turned into Guilsong. In the 1960s, every morning the radio still announced all the saints whose names could be given to children born that day, which is presumably how people ended up with names like Migdonio, Eduvigis and Idelgfonso.



Art by Samuel Miranda.

Anyway, Tata's father was dying of alcoholism, his liver finally surrendering to 40 years of heavy drinking and perhaps his heart collapsing under the weight of all the beatings and abuse he dished out to his wife and 14 children. Tata was his youngest child—10, scrawny, fast on her feet. Her city nieces and nephews were older, but in the solemn days of waiting for death, she played her status for all it was worth, scolding them for laughing or playing, reminding them that she was their aunt, and she must be respected. All day the women swept and washed and cooked and in the heat of the afternoon sat sipping coffee, talking softly on the porch.

In our classroom, where we also awaited news of the death, we were deep into the usual holiday rituals of public school. The girls cut out poinsettia flowers from red construction paper and the boys got to climb on chairs to help Meesee Torres hang garishly colored pictures of the Three Kings above the blackboard. We practiced singing "*Alegría, alegría, alegría*," and during Spanish class we read stories of miraculous generosity and goodwill.

Late one Tuesday afternoon after school, we heard the wailing break out across the road, and the entire next day Meesee Torres made us all line up and walk up the hill to Tata's house to pay our respects. We filed into their living room, past the open coffin and each of us placed a single flower in the vase Meesee had brought, then filed out again. What astonished me was how small Don Miguel looked, nested in white satin, just a little brown man without those bulging veins of rage at his temples and the heavy hands waiting to hit.

The next night the *velorio* began. The road was full of Jeeps and city cars, and more dressed-up relatives than ever before spilled out of the little house. For three days people ate and drank and prayed and partied, laughing and chatting, catching up on old gossip and rekindling ancient family arguments. Now and then someone would have to separate a couple of drunk men preparing to hit out with fists. Several of the women had *ataques*, falling to the ground and tearing their hair and clothing.

The first night of the *velorio* was the first night of Hanukkah that year. While Tata went to church with her mother to take part in rosaries and novenas and Catholic mysteries I knew nothing about, my family sat in the darkened living room of our house and lit the first candle on the menorah, the one that lights all the others. Gathered around that small glow, my father told the story of the Maccabees who fought off an invading empire, while across the road, Tata's family laughed together, making life better than death. I remember sitting around the candles, thinking of those ancient Jews hanging in for 30 years to take back their temple, what it took to not give up; and of all the women in the barrio raising children who sometimes die and you never knew who would make it and who wouldn't, of people setting off for home and maybe meeting death in another Jeep along the way. And in the middle of a bad year, a year of too much loss, there were still two big pots of *pasteles* and a house full of music and friends. Life, like the *acueducto*, seemed to be unpredictable, maddening and something startlingly abundant.

That night I lay awake for a long time in the dark, listening to life walking toward me. Luis would never come home from Vietnam or would come home crazy, but the war would end someday and most of us would grow up. My father would be fired from the university for protesting that war, and we would be propelled into a new life, but I would find lifelong friends and new visions for myself in an undreamed-of-city. Death and celebration, darkness and light, the miraculous star of the Three Kings and the miracle of a lamp burning for eight days on just a drop of oil. So much uncertainty and danger and so much stubborn faith. And somewhere out there in the dark, beyond the voices of Tata's family still murmuring across the road, the three wise mysterious travelers were already making their way to me, carrying something unknown, precious, strange.

Vocabulary

acueducto: aqueduct, or system for transporting water

aguinaldo: traditional Christmas tune, or carol

ataque anxiety attack: nervous breakdown

batata: sweet potato

cuatro: a guitar-like instrument with five sets of double strings made of steel

gandules also called gandures: pigeon peas

guayaba: guava (fruit)

güiro: percussion instrument made from a hollowed gourd, played by scraping a grooved side with a fork

hacendados: landed, property-owning

Navidades: Christmas

pasteles: traditional Christmas food, resembling Mexican tamales, made of ground tubers and bananas, usually stuffed with pork and wrapped in banana leaves and paper

plantain: tropical fruit that resembles a banana

plena: African-derived folk music that tells a story

pomarrosa: rose apple tree

señorita: a type of plant; also, "Miss"

tostón: slice of twice-fried plantain

velorio: a wake

yanqui: Spanglish for North American

Reprinted from *Las Christmas: Favorite Latino Authors Share Their Holiday Memories* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999) edited by Esmeralda Santiago and Joie Davidow. Used by permission of Vintage Books.

Bomba

Although *bomba* is a uniquely Puerto Rican form of music, *bomba* is not just music.

"*Bomba* is more like an event: it involves singing, dancing and music," says Héctor Lugo, a singer and percussionist who plays with a band based in San Francisco. *Bomba*, he says, "is a family of rhythms and dances."

Cover art by Samuel Lind.

Although critics are uncertain about the exact origin of the *bomba*, most agree that, like another important Puerto Rican musical form, the *plena*, its roots are in West Africa, and that it came to Puerto Rico with the Africans who were brought to the island as slaves. Some say that *bomba* was first developed at the end of the 17th century in Loíza, a Puerto Rican town with a strong African presence. The *bomba* flourished wherever the enslaved West Africans and their descendants lived and worked, particularly on the colonial plantations along the coastal plains.

Bomba's styles have different rhythms and often have names that reflect the music's African origins: *babú, belén, cunyá, yubá* and others. Other *bombas* are named for the dance they are associated with such as leró, or rose. This style goes with a dance in which the participants make a formation that symbolizes a rose.

Traditionally, *bomba's* words were improvised, often telling the story of community events. Often the song starts with a female solo voice called the *laina*. She sings a phrase that evokes a primitive call, and the chorus, supported by the percussionists, respond. Dancers are essential to this music. They take turns challenging the drums, using their movements to create a dialogue with the solo drummer. The drummers use a variety of drums, including the *buleador*, which has a low pitch, the *subidor*, with a high pitch, and the sticks called *cuá* or sometimes *fuá*. One of the singers, usually a female, plays a single maraca, the Puerto Rican shaking instrument.

Adapted from MusicofPuertoRico.com. Used by permission of MusicofPuertoRico.com.

Maracas


Vintage hand painted pair of maracas.

Maracas were created and first used by the native peoples of Puerto Rico, the Taínos, as a percussion musical instrument. A pair of these is used to create the unique sound so common in Latin American and Puerto Rican music.

Maracas are made from the fruit of the *higüera* tree so common throughout Puerto Rico. The fruit must be round and small. After taking out the pulp of the fruit through two holes that are bored through the dried shell, small pebbles are introduced into it. Then a handle is fitted to the dry fruit shell. Unequal amounts of pebbles are used in each pair of *maracas* to produce their distinctive sound.

In contemporary salsa music, the maracas have become one of the most important percussion instruments because they add a driving pulse. Perhaps their importance to salsa is like the role of the snare drum in pop and rock music.

Maracas are now often made of new materials, such as plastic, but are used the in same way, fulfill the same musical role in Latin bands and retain the same distinctive sound.

Danza

The *danza* is the musical genre of the New World that most resembles European classical music.

Danza is rich in melodic and harmonic content with a deep character. Some *danzas* are melancholic and romantic, like La Borinqueña, Puerto Rico's national anthem, composed by Felix Astol; with long phrases, rich harmonies and three or more clearly defined parts. Others are fast and lively: very short pieces of a playful character, such as "Sara," composed by Angel Mislán. Some are hard to classify in one or the other category, but all retain the essence that characterizes this musical genre.

Although *danzas* are mostly romantic, they are characterized by a very peculiar rhythmic accompaniment, played by the left hand when at the piano or by the *bombardino* or trombone in orchestras. The *danza* may be described as the waltz with the Afro-Caribbean beat. The festive *danzas* are not so faithful to a particular form, except for the fact that they have an introduction. After that, they may follow the form of the romantic *danza* or may have just two or three more parts without any particular organization. They are very rhythmic, lively and fast.

The origin of the *danza* is not clear, but most scholars agree that it began around 1840. During the first third of the 19th century the Spanish *contradanza* or counterdance was very popular in Puerto Rico. This was a very rigid dance with "figures," in which the dancers had to make specific movements according to the directions of the *bastonero*. The *bastonero* was a kind of director who decided how many couples would dance in each dance and the position of each dancer. The first dancer, who was usually one of the most expert, performed whichever complicated movements or "figures" he wanted and the other dancers had to imitate him on their turn. Many of these dances ended in fights or heated discussions when some of the dancers did not faithfully follow the leader's movements. The *bastonero* was suppressed from 1839 on and the change began to take place.

In the 1840s, Puerto Rico received many immigrants from Cuba who brought with them some new music. The *contradanza* was losing popularity, due to its rigidness, and a new dance began to displace it. This new music was called *habanera* (from the name of Cuba's capital city, La Habana). The *habanera* was danced by couples in a very free manner that the youth of that epoch liked a great deal. At the beginning, Cuban music was used but later, Puerto Rican composers began composing their own music and adding their variations and unique flavor.

Apparently, the original *danza* was unsophisticated and was rejected by some of the high-class people of that time (but not by the youth), perhaps because couples could get very close together and could talk privately with each other. Titles of some of the first danzas included "The Tail of the Pig," "Oh, I Want to Eat Pork Chops," and similar names. The governor, Juan de la Pezuela, tried unsuccessfully to prohibit danza.

Evolution of the music form continued, with important contributions made by Paris-educated Manuel G. Tavarez and his disciple, Juan Morel Campos. Campos composed more than 300 *danzas*, most of them masterpieces of an exquisite beauty. These songs mostly were inspired by women and romance; their titles reflected that evolution from the "pig" songs: "Margarita," "From Your Side to Paradise," "Laura y Georgina" (one of the most exquisite and popular and dedicated to the beautiful Capó sisters from Ponce), "My Sorrows" and so forth.

Of course, many other *danza* composers composed equally beautiful *danzas*, such as the classic "Violeta," written by modern composer Rafael Alers. The *danza* has ranged in style and over time but it forever endures in the heart and soul of Puerto Rico and its people.

Vocabulary

bombardino: a brass instrument similar to a tuba

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Bumbún and The Beginnings of La Plena

Juan Flores

The Puerto Rican *plena* arose at the beginning of this century in the sugar-growing areas along the southern coast of the island. Within a generation, it came to be recognized as the most authentic and representative music of the Puerto Rican people.

When *plena* was first emerging from its folk roots, the pioneer and king of *plena* was Joselino "Bumbún" Oppenheimer (1884-1929). The name Oppenheimer, an unlikely one for a Black Puerto Rican worker, was adopted from German immigrant plantation owners, and attests to his slave ancestry. The nickname "Bumbún" echoes the thudding beat of his *pandereta*, the tambourine-like hand drum used in *plena*.

Bumbún was a plowman. For years he drove oxen and tilled the fields of the huge sugar plantations outside his home city of Ponce. In the mornings he would leave La Joya del Castillo, the Ponce neighborhood where he lived, and be off along the paths and byways leading to the plantation. He hitched up the plow and prepared the oxen for the day's work. Then he was joined by the *cuarteros*, the young laborers who helped the plowman by walking ahead to keep the oxen moving and by clearing the furrows of stones and cane stubble. Bumbún's *cuarteros* were always in earshot, though, for they also served as his chorus. He sang to the beat of ox and mule hooves and the rhythmic thrust of the plow:

No canto porque me oigan

I don't sing because anyone listens

Ni porque mi dicha es buena

Nor because I have good luck

Yo canto por divertirme

I sing to entertain myself

Y darle alivio a mis penas.

And to ease my burdens.

Bumbún composed many plenas while tilling the fields of the Hacienda Estrella plantation. Patiently he would teach the choruses to his plowboys. They would repeat them in energetic response as Bumbún went on to sing the solo verses of his new song.

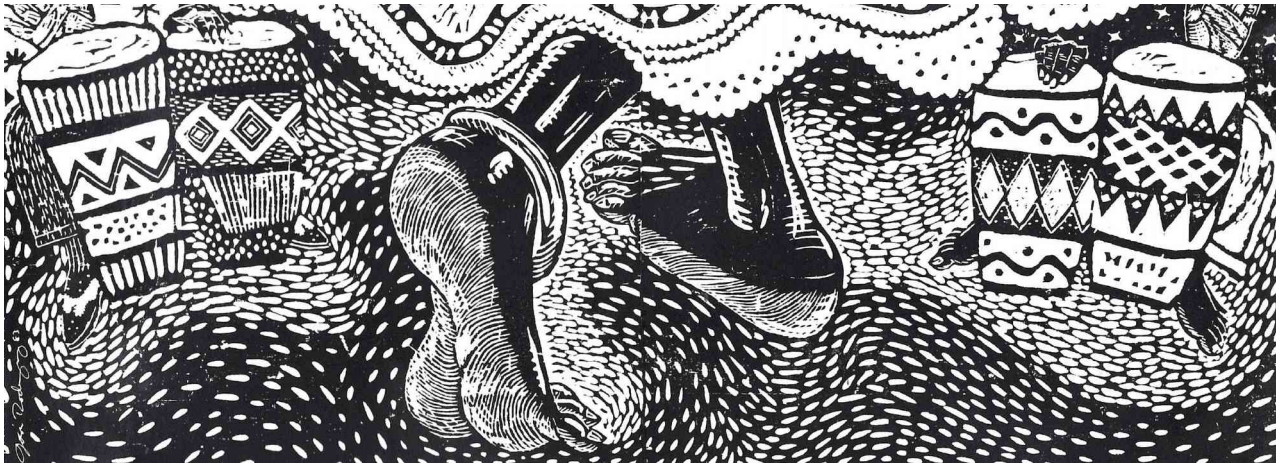
Joselino "Bumbún" Oppenheimer

After work, Bumbún would make his way home to La Joya del Castillo. There, at night, he would introduce his latest compositions to the many *pleneros* and fans who gathered in the small wooden houses and storefronts of the neighborhood. Bumbún led the first *plena* band and became the first professional plenero when he decided to set down his plow and dedicate full time and energy to music.

All the early *pleneros*, including Bumbún, were originally *bomberos*. The *plena's* most basic musical features come from the *bomba*. These blended with other types of Puerto Rican music, especially the *seis* and the *danza*, to form the *plena*.

Influences from other Caribbean cultures also played a role. After the abolition of slavery in the British colonies, many former slaves drifted to other islands in the region, looking for work. Families from the British Caribbean islands of Jamaica, Barbados, St. Kitts and Nevis, among others, came to Puerto Rico. Many settled in the sugar-growing areas around Ponce.

They brought with them musical styles which were different and exciting to the native *ponceños*. These new sounds fused with musical traditions native to Puerto Rico. The so-called "English" sound caught on in Ponce and helped spark the emergence of *plena*.



Woodcut by José Rodríguez.

In the early decades of the century, many former slaves, peasants and craftsmen were becoming wage laborers on large corporate plantations. Many *plenas* tell of strikes and other important events in workers' lives. Because of its working-class character and loud drum beat, the upper class initially scorned the *plena* as "primitive" and "vulgar noise."

Many workers migrated, and the *plena* took root in New York's Puerto Rican community by the late 1920s. As some of the best-known *pleneros* left, drawn by the lure of recording possibilities, New York City became the center for further development of the *plena*. The New York newspaper *El Nuevo Mundo* noted the music's popularity: "At night in our Latin neighborhood, oozing out of the cracks in the windows and blasting from the music stores, there is the sound of the Puerto Rican *plena*, which has taken over everywhere, from the poorest and filthiest tenements of East Harlem to the most comfortable middle-class apartments on the West Side."

As it achieved commercial success, the *plena* came to be accepted by all social classes in Puerto Rico as an authentic "national" music. But its humble beginnings should not be forgotten. When Bumbún Oppenheimer composed his songs while driving an ox-drawn plow across the canefields, rehearsing his verses with his chorus of plowboys, he established the roots of plena in the process of human labor. It was work and the life experiences of working people that gave birth to *plena*, and shape its development to the present day.

Vocabulary

Ponce: second-largest city in Puerto Rico, located in the south

pleneros: plena musicians

ponceños: inhabitants of Ponce

Adapted from "Bumbún and the Beginnings of la Plena," in *Centro*, Vol. II, No. 3 (Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, Hunter College). Used by permission of Juan Flores and Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños.

Plena is Work, Plena is Song

Below are reflections of pleneros who appear in the documentary film *Plena is Work, Plena is Song/Plena, Canto y Trabajo* by Susan Zeig and Pedro Rivera.

The Puerto Rican *plena* is all about life, see? Things that happen, incidents of all sorts: love, jail, prison, deception, rip-offs ... Whatever's going on gets into the *plena*.

They cut up Elena
They cut up Elena
They cut up Elena
And they took her
To the hospital!
Don't be afraid, dear one
I've come to tell you
They cut up Elena, mamá
I'll never forget her!

—Marcial Reyes

When a guy really liked a woman and wanted her to know, instead of just talking, he'd sing her a *plena*.

You say you don't love me
So much the better, I say
Less dogs! Less fleas!
So why offer your love?

—Papo Rivera

The rich people didn't want our music to become popular. But today, it travels all over the world.

The rich lived up above the poor neighborhoods. They knew they could get action, so they'd call the police and complain: 'Those black people down there are partying and dancing and we can't sleep! Do something about it!' Those rich people were used to violin music, so the 'tun, tun, tun' disturbed their ears! They had money so the police would come, beating people up and smashing their drums. Folks ended up with their heads bashed in, but they had to keep quiet or they'd be arrested for disturbing the peace.

—Rafael Cepeda

The San Juan docks were always full of action. The dockworkers had the best chance to unionize, so that's where Santiago Iglesias began organizing and helped them fight for better wages. They earned damn little—ten or fifteen *pesos*. The bosses treated workers like slaves. So they fought back. And the *pleneros* at Puerta de Tierra wrote a *plena* that went like this:

They're on strike
at Puerta de Tierra!
All the dockworkers have
stood up in protest!
Out come the scabs
all over the island.
The workers, all of them
have stood up in protest!
They're on strike
at Puerta de Tierra!
All the dockworkers have
stood up in protest.
Santiago Iglesias says
'Fight until we win!'
'Cause they're on strike
at Puerta de Tierra.
All the workers proclaim
they're out in protest!

—Rafael Cepeda

A people who speak, cry and suffer hardship, also find joy. We tie all these feelings into one, and that is how *plena* is formed.

—Rafael Cepeda

"As a kid I was too young to understand the *plena*. But I started going with my father to his gigs. We also played *plenas* at home every day. And he taught me the beat during his breaks, giving me the background to each song. I learned all I could and once I got the hang of it, I realized that plena would be my life too.

We've been working here for years. We lived here and helped build those buildings—the Banco Popular, Chase, Citibank, Banco Central, the federal

court [building] and the Free School of Music. We worked on those buildings for years. And now we're being kicked out, and it hurts.

The *plenero* has to be a voice of protest. He has to defend his people.

A lament I am singing
A sad lament in my voice.
I lament for my neighborhood
Now destroyed and gone."

—Papo Rivera

Vocabulary

pesos: Dollars

pleneros: plena musicians

scabs: Strikebreakers

Santiago Iglesias: noted Spanish trade union leader who organized in Puerto Rico in the early 20th century

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Used by permission of Pedro Rivera and Susan Zeig.

Plena is Work, Plena is Song/Plena, Canto y Trabajo is available from: The Cinema Guild Inc: www.cinemaguild.com. It is also available on loan from Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños: www.centropr.org

Plena, Canto y Trabajo

"O sea, la plena puertorriqueña es ... lo que ha pasado en la vida, me entiende? Hechos que pasaron, muchas formas, en el amor, en cárceles, presidio, desengaño, traición, robo ... Entonces, eso crea a la plena. Por

Cortaron a Elena
Cortaron a Elena
Y se la llevaron p'al hospital.
No te asustes, cosa buena
Porque te vengo yo a hablar.
Cortaron a Elena, mamá
No la puedo olvidar."

—Marcial Reyes, plenero

"Si había un crimen, si había una muchacha que se fue con el novio, si el marido peleaba con la mujer y le daba un pela—pues eso sucedía mucho—cualquier cosa que pasaba, pues le sacaban una plena."

—Antonia Vásquez, trabajadora

"Porque la plena son historias, son historias que no aparecen en los periódicos, que se ponen letras, melodías y se canta. Esa es la plena."

—Shorty Castro

"Sabes, eso era cuando a la persona le gustaba la tipa y quería decirle algo, o sea, quería hablar con ella, pero quería decirle algo cantando.

Tu dices que no me quieres
Yo digo mucho mejor
Menos perros, menos pulgas
Porque me brinde tu amor?"

—Papo Rivera, plenero

"La gente que tenía el dinero estaban en contra de que nuestra música, que hoy en día se pasea por todos los sitios, estuviera.

Pues ellos vivían en ciertos sitios donde más abajo vivían pobres. Y ellos por la tranquilidad que podían, ellos decían a la policía: "Vayan, que allá están bailando esta gente negra y no dejan dormir aquí a la gente!" Esa clase de personas que no están acostumbradas que a oir música de violin y de cosas, al sentir ese tún, tún, tún, tún, tún, tún, le molestaron. Y entonces ellos, como era gente pudiente, mandar a la policía ... por si la policía llegaba sin preguntar, pues caían a palos a la gente y muchos se iban al hospital con la cabeza rajada y tenían que quedarse callados porque si decían algo en seguida, pues, lo denunciaban por traición a la paz."

—Rafael Cepeda, plenero

"Pues resulta que en los muelles de Puerta de Tierra siempre hubo movimiento. Allí fue donde Santiago Iglesias Pantín principió a hacer el obrerismo en Puerto Rico. El trabajador de los muelles fue la persona más indicada para poder luchar para levantar su dinero, que ganar más dinero. Entonces él luchó para que ese trabajador se ganara más dinero para poder vivir. Porque ganaba muy poco, muy poco dinero, porque ellos al coger el trabajador y esclavizarlo pues le daban diez, quince o lo que fuera. Tenía que seguir luchando por eso. Entonces, hasta sacaron una plena en Puerto de Tierra, que decía:

Hay huelga
En Puerta de Tierra!
Por causa de los trabajadores
Están en protesta.
Y salen los rompehuelgas
De la isla entera.
Los trabajadores
Toditos están en protesta.
Hay huelga
En Puerta de Tierra!
Los trabajadores
Toditos están en protesta.
Si dice Santiago Iglesias
Hay que luchar.
Pero hay huelga
En Puerta de Tierra.

Y dicen los trabajadores
Toditos están en protesta!

—Rafael Cepeda, plenero

"El pueblo que habla y que sufre y que llora cuando pasa algo, pero que siempre tiene alegría ... Y el sufrimiento que ha pasado forma la alegría y entonces que se forma la plena."

—Rafael Cepeda, plenero

"Cuando yo estaba muy chiquito no entendía nada de la plena porque estaba un niño todavía. Entonces, empecé a salir con mi papá para arriba y para abajo, para ir a diferentes sitios a tocar plena. Pero en casa se tocaba plena todos los días. Mi papá siempre me explicó bien la plena. Me enseñaba a mí el golpe, y me decía el por qué de esta plena. Yo trataba de entender hasta que dí, y entonces yo supe que esa nota a mí me gustaba.

Nosotros hemos trabajado aquí muchos años. Nosotros hemos ayudado a construir esos edificios a pesar de que hemos vivido aquí—el Banco Popular, el Chase Manhattan, el Citibank, Banco Central, la Corte Federal, el Instituto Libre de Música. Trabajamos todos en esos edificios y por muchos años. Nos duele mucho tener que movernos pa' otro lado, ve?

El plenero tiene que ser protestante por su país, porque tiene que defender lo suyo entiende?

Lamento yo voy cantando
Lamento se oye mi voz
Lamento porque mi barrio
Ya desapareció.

—Papo Rivera, plenero

Salsa: The Past, Present and Future

U.S. postage stamp


Hector LaVoe mural


India (b. 1970 -) Linda Viera Caballero

Salsa has made Puerto Rico famous in the world of international music. Musicians and dancers throughout Latin America, North America, Africa, Asia and Europe love to swing to the sound of salsa.

Salsa today is really a broad term that refers to a vibrant and dynamic Puerto Rican dance music that blends African, Spanish, Cuban and Puerto Rican sounds, sometimes with jazzy arrangements. The music can be played fast or slow and mellow. The bands or orchestras combine tight ensemble work with inspiring solos, and they have a huge array of percussion instruments, including the *güiro*, *maracas, bongos, timbales, conga* drums, and *clave*. To add the *jíbaro* touch, a clanging cow bell is also needed. Of course, it also takes a bass, a horn section, a chorus and, a lead vocalist to give salsa the right sound.

Salsa is derived from a variety of musical influences, and throughout its development, has always continued to incorporate elements from other forms of music. Song styles that gave birth to salsa include the s*on montuno, danzon*, and *guaguanco*, but the main engine is the Cuban son. The salsa repertoire remains varied and includes the Puerto Rican *plena*, the Dominican *merengue*, jazz from the U.S., the Colombian *cumbia* and especially the *son*.

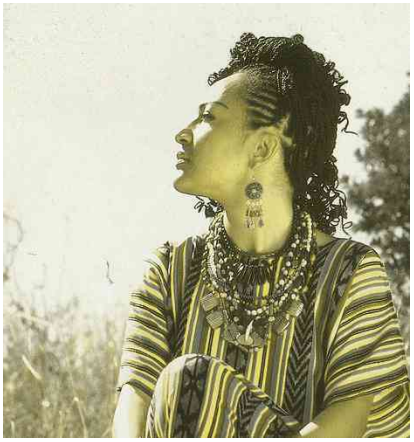
Roots and History of Salsa

By the 1930s, *son* and mambo had spread from Cuba to Puerto Rico where musicians incorporated the style with their own. As Cuban and Puerto Rican musicians emigrated to the U.S., especially New York, they took that style with them, forming Cuban/Puerto Rican *son conjuntos*. In the late 1930s, Arsenio Rodríguez (one of Cuba's greatest musicians and composers) began reconnecting *son* with its African roots. Through his many innovations in style and instrumentation, Rodríguez expanded the *son* sound to emphasize or reincorporate many of the African elements which many of the earlier son conjuntos had either omitted or simplified. He synthesized and maintained the integrity of African and Spanish elements.

His style became known as *son montuno* and formed the basis of the mambo craze in the 1940s, influencing Latin popular music in New York for years.

Most music critics claim that despite these musical roots, what we now recognize as salsa today originated in New York City nightclubs in the years following World War II. One critic has said that the music is what results when the sounds of big band jazz meet African-Caribbean rhythms. Others say that salsa is a combination of fast Latin music that

Tito Puente Salseros



Trina Medina

Willie Colón - Hecho En Puerto Rico Sony Music 1993

embraces the rumba, mambo, cha-cha-cha and merengue. Mambo, which is itself a fusion of big-band jazz and Afro-Cuban rhythms, has become the basic format for many New York salsa bands.

Another major component of salsa is the ritual music associated with the practice of *santería*, a traditional religion with African roots, including its use of *batá* drums. These are heard in Orquesta Harlow's "Silencio," on their *Salsa* album. Yoruba drums, melodies, and rhythms were also included into salsa, as in the music of Cuba's Irakere and Los Papines.

Finally, many stylistic features came from the Puerto Rican *bomba* and *plena* music genres. César Concepción orchestrated *plena* songs for many big bands in the 1940s, while Rafael Cortijo and Ismael Rivera reintroduced and popularized *bombas* and *plenas* in the 1950s. Recent albums also show the use of the *plena* rhythm, such as those of Willie Colón. Rafael Cortijo's "*Maquina de Tiempo*" contains musical styles from *plenas, bomba*, Puerto Rican *aguinaldos* and jazz.

Thus, new styles keep evolving from a constant process of fusion with cycles of revival and incorporation of folk traditions into the mainstream of popular Latin dance music.

The first great salsa musician was the late Tito Puente who, after a stint with the U.S. Navy, studied percussion at New York's Juilliard School of Music. He went on to organize his own band, Puente's Latin Jazz Ensemble, which was heard by audiences around the world. Puente died in 2002, leaving a rich musical legacy.

The Fania record company played an especially important role in the initial excitement and subsequent spread of salsa and in the huge success of the salsa band it formed and sponsored, the Fania All Stars. The All Stars included many of the founding figures of salsa: Larry Harlow, Johnny Pacheco, Ray Barretto, Roberto Roena, Willie Colón, Pete "El Conde" Rodríguez, Ismael Miranda and Héctor Lavoe. It can be said that the All Stars was a veritable foundry of salsa pioneers with a disproportionate influence over the salsa music that the public heard, and its spread worldwide.

Many women have emerged as talented contributors to the development of salsa. La India and Trina Medina are excellent examples.

Some interesting, perhaps disquieting, developments have recently emerged among salsa percussionists around the world. These musicians have been mixing rhythms and experimenting with instruments not traditionally associated with salsa music. Also, the latest Cuban influences have emerged as they have reentered the mainstream of music. They are contributing a new style of playing salsa that is different from the traditional Puerto Rican interpretation, which has been well defined and conserved for many years.

There can be no doubt that salsa music has made fans from all corners of the world. Salsa dance clubs have sprung up in cities as diverse and far from San Juan and New York, as Stockholm, Tokyo, Sydney, and Berlin. Salsa has become so widespread and popular around the world that salsa bands comprised entirely of talented musicians and vocalists that are not Puerto Rican or even Latin have emerged

everywhere. The Son Reinas, a Tokyo-based group of talented Japanese *salseras*, is an excellent example of these trends!

Some ask "who is the best?" today. No one quite agrees about who reigns above all others in salsa at the moment, but Willie Colón, El Gran Combo de Puerto Rico, and Héctor Lavoe are on everyone's list as the dominant names in salsa. Many others would argue that the best are from the latest generation; artists such as Gilberto Santa Rosa or Marc Anthony. The question is probably irrelevant to the enjoyment of the music, especially in view of so many talented practitioners. Hundreds of young *salseros* are waiting to take their throne as the popularity of the emerging salsa stars continues to climb.

Vocabulary

coro: song refrain

jíbaro: a Puerto Rican country person, or farmworker

salsera: female salsa player

salsero: male salsa player

Yoruba: West African ethnic group; also, their traditional religion, which continues to be practiced by some people throughout the African diaspora in the Americas

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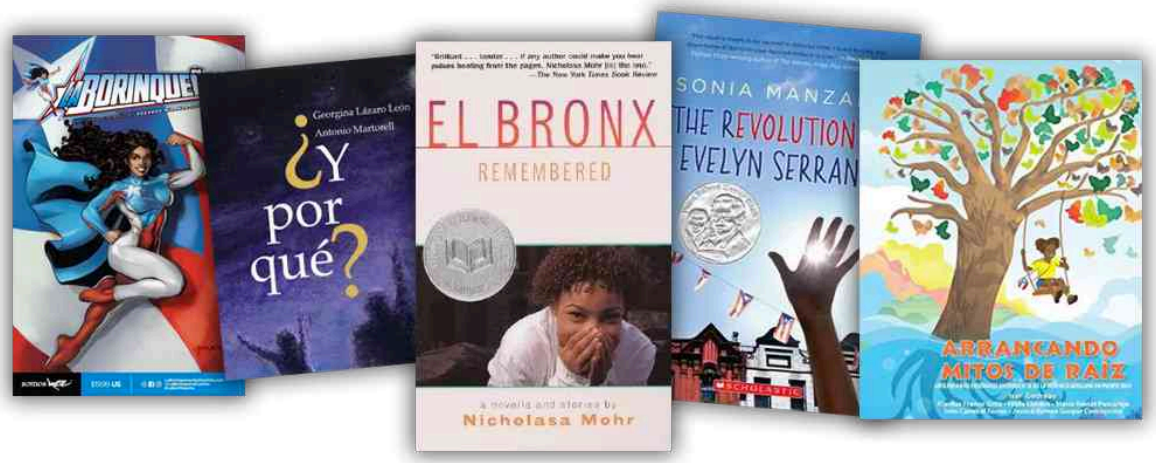
Part 6:
Addendum

Additional Resources

The books, films, and organizations listed on the links below are vital to understanding the history and contemporary reality of Puerto Rico. Rather than include them in the printed edition of *Caribbean Connections: Puerto Rico*, we provide the links below to allow for frequent updates and additions. These resources are an essential supplement to this publication.



Puerto Rican Children's Literature for Social Justice: A Bibliography for Educators

By Marilisa Jimenez Garcia

www.socialjusticebooks.org/puertorico

Books, Films, and Organizations

www.socialjusticebooks.org/booklists/puertorico

About the Cover Artist

A native of Loíza, Puerto Rico, Samuel Lind has been painting and sculpting for more than 25 years. Much of his work captures the African traditions in Puerto Rican culture and in the historically black town of Loíza in particular. His art is on display in El Museo de Nusetra Raiz Africana (Museum of Our African Roots) in Old San Juan. He has exhibited widely in Puerto Rico and internationally, including at El Museo del Barrio in New York City and Taller Puertorriqueño in Philadelphia.

Color prints (13" x 20") of the cover image, "De Jugar" are available for purchase. Contact Samuel Lind at loizano@caribe.net.

Editor

Marilisa Jiménez García is an interdisciplinary scholar specializing in Latino/a literature and culture. She is an assistant professor of English at Lehigh University and a member of the See What We See coalition. She has a Ph.D in English from the University of Florida and a M.A. in English and B.S. in Journalism from the University of Miami. She was born in Bayamon, Puerto Rico.

Marilisa's research on Latinx literature have appeared in *Latino Studies, CENTRO: A Journal of Puerto Rican Studies, The Lion and the Unicorn*, and *Children's Literature*. Her forthcoming book, *Side by Side: U.S. Empire, Puerto Rico and the Roots of American Youth Literature and Culture* (University Press of Mississippi) examines the history of colonialism in Puerto Rico through an analysis of youth literature and culture both in the archipelago and in the diaspora. Her dissertation on Puerto Rican children's literature won the 2012 Puerto Rican Studies Association. She is also a Cultivating New Voices Among Scholars of Color Fellowship recipient from the National Council for Teachers of English (NCTE).

Marilisa seeks to create pathways in her research between the multiple fields of Latinx Studies, Puerto Rican Studies, children's and young adult literature, comparative literature, and education. Her work with Teaching for Change seeks to bring together research and practical tools for classroom teachers advocating for social justice. She has worked as a classroom volunteer in Miami and New York City public schools and with The Children's Defense Fund Freedom School's book selection committee.

Editors of the 2016 edition were Naomi Ayala, Rashida Welbeck, Lynora Williams, and editor of the 1990 edition was Catherine Sunshine.

Advisors

The advisors for the 2006 edition were Patricia Bode, Monica Flores, Edwin Fontanez, Jason Irizarry, Julio Morales, Carmen Rolon, Catherine Sunshine, and Joshua Thomases. They provided extensive feedback throughout the production of the book.

Contributors

Here is background information about many of the authors and artists featured in this publication.

Naomi Ayala is a writer and educator who lives in Washington, D.C., and was raised in Puerto Rico. She is the author of *Wild Animals on the Moon and Other Poems* (Curbstone Press, 1997), *This Side of Early* (Curbstone, 2008), and *Calling Home: Praise Songs and Incantations* (Bilingual Press, 2013). She is a contributor to *Callaloo, The Village Voice, The Caribbean Writer, The Massachusetts Review, Red River Review, Potomac Review, Hanging Loose,* and *Terra Incognita*. She served on the board of Teaching for Change.

Rina Benmayor is professor emerita at California State University, Monterey Bay and former president of the International Oral History Association.

Carmen T. Bernier-Grand was a math instructor at the University of Puerto Rico before becoming an award-winning author of books for children and young adults.

Patty Bode is is Coordinator of Art Education at the Southern Connecticut State University. She is the co-author with Sonia Nieto of *Affirming Diversity: The Sociopolitical Context of Multicultural Education*. Read more.

Sila M. Calderón is the former governor of Puerto Rico.

Judith Ortiz Cofer (1952–2016) was the author of numerous books of poetry, fiction, and nonfiction, including the award-winning young adult book *An Island Like You: Stories of the Barrio*. Her work *The Latin Del* was nominated for a Pulitzer-Prize and combines multiple genres, including poetry, short fiction, and personal narrative. In 2010, Cofer was inducted into the Georgia Writers Hall of Fame.

Martín Espada is a poet, essayist, translator, editor, and attorney. He has published almost 20 books, most recently *Vivas to Those Who Have Failed*. A former tenant lawyer in Boston's Latino community, he is a professor of English at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst.

Edwin Fontánez, born in Bayamon, Puerto Rico, is an author, artist, producer, and founder of Exit Studio Publishing based in Virginia.

Juan Flores (1943-2014) was a professor of Social and Cultural Analysis at NYU. His books include *Salsa Rising: New York Latin Music of the Sixties Generation*. He was co-editor (with his wife Miriam Jiménez Román) of *The Afro-Latin@ Reader: History and Culture in the United States*. He was co-founder and chair of the afrolatin@ forum.

Ricardo Gabriel is a doctoral candidate in sociology at The Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY). His research interests include social movements; decolonial education; and issues of environmental and climate justice. His dissertation is on the movement for Puerto Rican Studies at CUNY from 1969 to the late 1970s and its connection to the larger struggle for Puerto Rican decolonization and self-determination.

Kathy Gannett is a long-time activist in Puerto Rico, where her protests, along with hundreds of others, helped shut down the Vieques bombing range in 2003. In Vieques, Boston, and Washington DC, she worked on tenants rights, civil rights, community control of development, support for crime victims and their families, and access to healthcare. In Vieques, she runs Casa de Kathy, a guest house for peace activists.

José Luis González (1926-1997), the author of "The Lead Box That Couldn't Be Opened" and many other short stories, is considered one of Puerto Rico's finest writers.

Johnny Irizarry is the director of the Center for Hispanic Excellence: La Casa Latina at the University of Pennsylvania.

Jeff Kunerth is on the faculty of Nicholson School of Communication, University of Central Florida. He worked for 41 years as a reporter for the *Orlando Sentinel*.

Alfredo López is an activist, writer, media producer, teacher, organizer, internet activist, and the co-director of May First/People Link. He is the author of many books and publications including *Doña Licha's Island: Modern Colonialism in Puerto Rico*.

Alicia Lopez is a middle school ELL teacher who has been in the classroom for 24 years (French, Spanish, ESL). She has also worked as an administrator and is currently a lecturer in Professional and Graduate Education program at Mount Holyoke College. She received her B.A. in French and Anthropology at

Wellesley College and her Master's in Bilingual, Multicultural and ESL Education at the University of Massachusetts. Alicia lives with her husband, three kids, two dogs and two cats in Amherst. She writes a blog about teaching, Maestra Teacher and recently published a book with Sonia Nieto called *Teaching, A Life's Work: A Mother-Daughter Dialogue* (Teachers College Press, 2019).

Samuel Lind is a painter and sculptor based in Loiza, Puerto Rico.

Robert Liu-Trujillo was born in Oakland, California and raised all across the Bay Area. He is the author and illustrator of Furqan's First Flat Top; a bilingual picture book about an Afro-Latino boy's first haircut, imagination, and the relationship between him and his father. Robert studied at Parsons Art and Design School in New York where he received a BFA in illustration. To date, he has illustrated several picture books, written two middle grade books, and is working on more. His book have been recognized by School Library Journal, NPR, Teaching for Change, Latinxs in Kid Lit, and Nerds of Color. Besides working in kids literature Robert has worked as a freelance illustrator for over 13 years and paints murals with the Trust Your Struggle Collective. He loves music, nerdy things, and can get along well with most people. He seeks fun, ice cream, and justice.He lives in Oakland with his wife, son, and daughter. His artwork can be found at robdontstop.com and his Etsy shop, "Art of Robert Liu-Trujillo."

William Garcia Medina is a Ph.D. student in the Department of American Studies at the University of Kansas. Garcia Medina's research currently focuses on Black ethnics and the construction and social reproduction of Black American racial identity discourse in the public humanities. In 2016, he earned an MA in Curriculum and Instruction from Teachers College–Columbia University in New York City with a focus on historical literacies in elementary schools. Garcia Medina also has an MA in history from the University of Puerto Rico-Recinto de Rio Piedras.

Katherine McCaffrey, author of *Military Power and Popular Protest: The U.S. Navy in Vieques, Puerto Rico*, teaches anthropology at Montclair State University in New Jersey.

María E. Mills-Torres was the multicultural curriculum and language specialist for Latino American Studies for the Philadelphia Public Schools. She serves on the board of Taller Puertorriqueño.

Samuel Miranda is an English teacher, poet, and artist in Washington, D.C. His most recent poetry collection is *Departure*.

Marta Moreno Vega is adjunct instructor at Tisch School of the Arts, New York University. She is the founder of the Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute (CCCADI). She is the editor of *Women Warriors of the Afro-Latina Diaspora.* She directed the documentary *When the Spirits Dance Mambo: Growing Up Nuyorican in El Barrio* (and the author of the book with the same name).

Aurora Levins Morales is a writer, artist, historian, teacher, and mentor. One of her books is *Remedios: Stories of Earth and Iron from the History of Puertorriqueños*. Learn more at AuroraLevinsMorales.com.

Manuel Rodriguez Orellana serves as the Puerto Rican Independence Party Secretary of North American Relations and is a former Senator for the Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño (PIP). He is a columnist for Puerto Rico's only English-language daily, *The San Juan Star*.

Néstor Otero, born in Puerto Rico, is a visual artist who lives and works in New York City.

Paige Pagan, a graduate of Lehigh University in English, is a Master's Student at Lehigh in English. She is interested in pursuing a career in children's and young adult literature publishing.

Carlos Pesquera is a retired politician, who was once Secretary of the Department of Transportation and Public Works of Puerto Rico. He is currently teaching at several Puerto Rican universities.

Anita Rivera teaches in the New York Public Schools.

Pedro Rivera co-produced the film *Plena is Work, Plena Is Song*, as well as co-directed *Manos a la Obra: The Story of Operation Bootstrap*. He has been an Artist-in-Residence at El Museo del Barrio in New York City.

Carmelo Ruíz-Marrero (1967-2016) was a staff writer of the weekly Claridad in San José, Puerto Rico and was the founder of the Puerto Rico Project on Biosafety. He wrote the book, *Balada Transgénica*, and was a research associate at the Institute for Social Ecology in Vermont.

Roberto Santiago, editor of *Boricuas: Influential Puerto Rican Writings* (1995). He is a former reporter at the *New York Daily News* and the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*. He has written for *Omni*, *Rolling Stone*, and *Essence*.

Wilberto Sicard, a graduate of Lehigh University in Africana Studies Class of 2020, is a law student at Yale Law School.

Catherine Sunshine of Washington, D.C., is an independent editor, translator, and editor of several editions in the *Caribbean Connections* series including the first edition of *Caribbean Connections: Puerto Rico* (1990) and *Caribbean Connections: Moving North* (2005).

Blanca Vázquez contributed to "Nosotras Trabajamos en La Costura," an oral history project at the Center for Puerto Rican Studies, Hunter College, CUNY.

Sujei Lugo Vázquez, a former elementary school librarian in Puerto Rico, is a children's librarian at the Boston Public Library. She holds an MLIS from the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus and is currently a doctoral candidate at Simmons University, focusing on race and children's librarianship. She is an active member of REFORMA (National Association to Promote Library & Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish Speaking), ALSC (Association for Library Service to Children), and the We Are Kid Lit Collective.

Susan Zeig co-produced the film *Plena is Work, Plena is Song*, as well as co-directed *Manos a la Obra: The Story of Operation Bootstrap*. She teaches film studies at Long Island University.

Donors

The 2020 edition was made possible by the editor and authors who contributed their work and time. In addition, we received donations for the design and dissemination of the book from the Rights and Opportunities Foundation, the Washington Teachers Union, Susan Sillins, Harriet McGuire, Enid Lee, and many other individuals.

Publisher

Teaching for Change provides teachers and parents with the tools to create schools where students learn to read, write and change the world.

By drawing direct connections to real world issues, Teaching for Change encourages teachers and students to question and re-think the world inside and outside their classrooms, build a more equitable, multicultural society, and become active global citizens. Our professional development, publications, and parent organizing programs serve as a lifeline for teachers, other school staff and parents. Our work is national with dedicated programs in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area and Mississippi.

Teacher Resources

Teaching for Change hosts professional development trainings, develops lessons, and curates resources to help classroom teachers supplement K-12 curriculum. Our areas of focus and projects to help students think outside the textbook include anti-bias education, the Zinn Education Project, civil rights teaching, teaching about Central America, and Teach the Beat: Go-Go.

Publications

Teaching for Change has developed our own widely acclaimed publications, *Beyond Heroes and Holidays*, *Putting the Movement Back into Civil Rights Teaching*, and the *Caribbean Connections* series. Our social justice books website features carefully selected booklists that highlight children's and YA titles by and about people of color as well as social justice themes. We also provide a platform for reviews of children's books from the See What We See coalition.

Parent Organizing

Teaching for Change's parent organizing program, Tellin' Stories, has developed a unique approach to building grassroots multiracial parent power in schools. Through relationship building, workshops, and grassroots organizing, we are redefining the vision of school communities by helping those who are traditionally excluded from the decision-making become involved as purposeful partners in the education process.

Websites

teachingforchange.org
civilrightsteaching.org
challengeislamophobia.org
socialjusticebooks.org
teachingcentralamerica.org
dcareaeducators4socialjustice.org
zinnedproject.org
teachthebeat.org

Although Puerto Rican studies programs exist mainly in institutions of higher education, the demand for socially relevant and culturally sustaining curriculum actually originated with educators and community leaders at the K-12 level . . . *Caribbean Connections: Puerto Rico* is making an important contribution to addressing the needs of pre-existing and newer Puerto Rican student populations and bringing Puerto Rican studies back into elementary, middle, and high school classrooms.

– Ricardo Gabriel

"Reading" graphic reprinted here with permission of Robert Liu-Trujillo.