

The Story of Puerto Rican Oppression and Resistance

The tradition of liberation theology has taught us that all theology is contextual and emerges from the experience of a specific community. Theology, as Gustavo Gutiérrez has asserted, is the second step; the first is one's life experience and praxis. The story of oppression and resistance of Puerto Rican people must be understood in the context of our sociohistorical experience of colonization, both on the island and in the continental US, as the foundation upon which a decolonial theology can be constructed. This chapter provides the backdrop, but it does so in a particular way: with the lens of history focused squarely on the relationship between Puerto Rico and the USA, a relationship of colonized and colonizer, of oppressed and oppressor, of non-power and super-power, of those silenced and those who speak.

In order to resist the silence itself and to legitimize the larger story, my own family/community story serves as a personal illustration of the communal context. Just as a story moves from particular terms to greater commonality as it progresses, so too will I delve more deeply into the lives of the particular people, including myself, as part of the overall process of breaking the silence, with freedom as its goal. I engage in this reflective and revealing process because all theology is both contextual and personal; the personal is political; and the political is communal/relational if it is to be authentically Puerto Rican.

I believe that the story of our people has a profound effect on our ability to do justice in the world. By telling our story, we realize our freedom and power that is part of the freedom and power of God within us.

This power frees and empowers us even more to tell the story and to hear the stories of others, which, in turn, unleashes the power of others and moves them into freedom through solidarity. The stories themselves confirm this same movement: in the face of oppression, captivity, and powerlessness, the whisper of freedom and power can be heard. Both story content and storytelling process illustrate our collective struggle against oppression, captivity, and powerlessness and lead us toward freedom and power, confirming a belief that freedom and power cannot be denied the Puerto Rican people, now or ever, because they reside within and are God-given.

The Puerto Rican, in relation to the United States,¹ constantly wrestles with forces of assimilation while maintaining a distinctive voice and perspective. This conflict, which manifests itself internally and externally, highlights the underlying issue at stake: How do we make peace with and create balance among the intertwined relationships that we Puerto Ricans embody so that we can live in freedom? The “triple consciousness”² as noted by Eldin Villafañe demonstrates that no matter what tactics are used to silence a segment of the Puerto Rican population, the desire to be heard is stronger than the effort imposed by those who benefit from our voicelessness.

I believe that Puerto Ricans will not be content with our story being ignored; the writers who address these conflicts in their stories affirm this.³ As part of the larger story, I now turn to the shadows of my own family and community story, reversing the hands of time to the bucolic hills of Puerto Rico when a world was turned upside down at the speed of a Pan Am flight, and the vibrant island green faded to a steely asphalt gray.

MY COMMUNITY/FAMILY STORY⁴

The story of my Puerto Rican community begins with my Puerto Rican family, which is extensive and diverse. My mother, Ana Julia Rodríguez, the sixth of eight children, came to New York City in the early 1950s at the age of ten or so. She, along with her younger siblings, Elsa and Gilberto, plus two older sisters to help care for them, Carmen Lucía and Ana Marta, had been living in their small mountain town of Barranquitas in central Puerto Rico with their father, Severiano Rodríguez. Their mother, Francisca Santos, along with two older sisters, Carmen Mónica and Rosa, had migrated to New York a few years earlier to find work

and save enough money to send for the others. They found piecework in Manhattan's garment district. In order to make more money, they would take home some of the pieces and work well into the night on their own sewing machines, only to return the completed pieces to the factory the next day.

My grandfather Severiano stayed behind in Puerto Rico performing odd carpentry jobs to support the children in his care. For more than three generations, his family had owned a large coffee plantation in the hills of Barranquitas but was forced to sell the majority of the land to a large and powerful US company after they were squeezed out of the coffee export market in the 1930s. Unable to work the land for sustenance, Severiano and his siblings, who had also sold their land holdings, were faced with the choice of moving out of the *campo* to live in either San Juan, the coastal capital city, or New York. Either way, they were forced to decide between finding sustainable work and leaving their home or remaining in place and starving.⁵

The Rodríguez family was finally reunited and settled in New York City in the early 1950s; at age ten, my mother and her siblings (at least the ones who were not working in the factory) entered the New York City school system without understanding or speaking much, if any, English. A shy, mild-mannered child, my mother was so devastated by the mocking and teasing she endured not only from the other children but also from the teacher as she attempted to speak English that for a year she became completely silent outside the home. She did not speak at all in the classroom until she had acquired enough English skills to escape the ridicule. But this period of having no voice, of being silenced, would be an experience that would remain with her for a very long time.

On my father's side of the family, another version of a similar story was taking place. On the southern part of the island, my grandmother, Monserrate Pagán, was preparing to leave San German and move to New York. It was the early 1930s and, as an unmarried woman in her late twenties, my grandmother was doing what few Puerto Rican women did at that time: make an independent move to live an independent life. But her motives went beyond feminist ideals; she was leaving the island, in part, to escape the racial discrimination that she encountered every day. While her older brother was lighter in complexion, defying their definite African ancestry, my grandmother's darker complexion and African features did not allow her to "pass." When this same brother married into the prominent Lugo family, Monserrate felt that she was not welcome.

She left so as not to make life more difficult for her brother, hoping to leave the racial oppression behind as well.

When she arrived in New York, she too found work in the garment factories and supported herself financially. She also met and fell in love with a man, Gregorio “Gollo” Delgado. It was only after she became pregnant in 1937 that she discovered the man she loved was actually married; his wife was waiting in Puerto Rico for her ticket to join him in New York. Now, as a single woman with a child out of wedlock, my grandmother was forced to leave her job,⁶ collect public assistance monies, and seek out the help of her younger unmarried brother and other relatives who had also relocated to New York. Her pride and determination compelled her to carve out the best life she could for her son who, despite her anger, hurt, and betrayal, she named after his father. She would never marry nor have any children other than my father. And for the rest of her life, she would never speak another word to the father of her child, even though they lived within a city block of each other, even though she lived in an apartment above his sister’s flower shop, and even though she watched her son play with his five half-siblings. That silence would be carried over to the next generation for whom the unspoken rule was clear: No one was to talk about my grandfather, know his whereabouts, or care about his life. His presence was erased from the picture; he was no longer part of the official family story.

100 YEARS OF SOLITUDE: THE STORY OF PUERTO RICAN OPPRESSION AND RESISTANCE

Prelude: A Snapshot of Puerto Rican Life Before 1898

The complex phenomena of religious, political, and economic experience in Puerto Rico is a necessary prelude to the story of US involvement in Puerto Rico because it forms at least part of the backdrop for the storytelling of Puerto Rican creative writers Esmeralda Santiago (1948–), Pedro Juan Soto (1928–2002), and Rosario Ferré (1938–2016), as well as the contextual foundation of their literature for theological development.

The specifics of Puerto Rican religious identity are an intricate mixture of Taíno and African spiritual/cosmological belief systems as well as Catholic Christianity of medieval Iberia.⁷ The spirituality of the people

whom the conquistadors encountered on the island of Boriquen (Land of the Brave Lord)—Puerto Rico's indigenous name prior to Spanish colonization⁸—was a spirituality of the cosmos in which all the cycles of nature were woven into the everyday lives of the people.⁹

The impact of the Spanish colonial conquest on this cosmological order was immense. Forceful conversion became necessary in order for the Taínos to accept a civilized and cultured life necessary for true Christian existence, marked by Catholic theology and economic prosperity.¹⁰ Those who were responsible for imposing this new order of church/state were burdened by the following theo-political questions on the nature of humanity relevant for Puerto Ricans today:

Is humanity one or diverse? Are some human beings superior in intelligence and prudence, and do they therefore have a right to special privileges and unique responsibilities? Is the domination of some nations by others justified because of natural or historical inequalities? Do valuable mineral resources belong to the inhabitants of the territory where they are, or to whoever can invest in their development?¹¹

At the time of the conquest and immediately following it, a clear link between the evangelization of the native population and the capital enrichment of the Spaniards existed. Rivera-Pagán outlines these events in detail and comes to the conclusion that some, such as Bartolome de las Casas, were forging a theology of liberation and regarded as sinful the conquistadors' violent attempts to evangelize the native people.¹² Despite such prophetic voices against the inhumane powers of church and state in the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries, four hundred years of exclusive Iberian Catholicism endured, shaped by the actions of the conquistadors.

The Spanish missionary clergy molded this exclusive Iberian Catholicism, but their presence did not sustain the faith of the populace. In fact, the distance of the Catholic Church, geographically and otherwise, and the absence of permanent clergy in the central rural areas of Puerto Rico's mountain interior, "led to the evolution of an unorthodox, Creole Catholicism,"¹³ characterized by popular religious devotion to the saints, recitation of the rosary, an oral tradition of the biblical stories, as well as an integration with and interdependence upon the cycles of the natural world in an agriculturally based social system. Still, the influence of the Spanish Catholic Church in shaping Puerto Rican

society cannot be underestimated. With little, if any, competition from outside cultural or intellectual influences, the Catholic Church in Puerto Rico molded both social institutions and popular attitudes, characterized by a complete deference to a “fundamentally authoritative society,”¹⁴ sheltered from the exterior world by an insular colonial government; and sheltered from the interior by a lack of access, infrastructure, and communication among the populace, particularly the peasants living in the mountainous interior of the island.¹⁵

The agricultural system sustained by these peasants of the interior was the basis for the Puerto Rican economy during the period of Spanish colonization. As a Spanish colonial outpost, Puerto Rico’s economy was in an unhealthy state by the early 1800s given the numerous trade restrictions imposed upon it by Spain that limited any production that would compete with products from Spain itself. Prohibitions and heavy taxes were levied on both land and production, further limiting the economy’s growth. In fact, the island was seen primarily as a strategic geographic location and a provider of certain export commodities, namely sugar and coffee. Very little, if any, profit was reinvested in the island, except in areas where it bolstered the domestic market supply of goods necessary for the production of the export industries. After over 250 years of Spanish rule, the island had no real infrastructure or industry. Besides, Spain had larger and more profitable ventures elsewhere such as in South America, Mexico, and Cuba.¹⁶ From an economic perspective, Puerto Rico cost Spain more than it produced in goods and services.¹⁷

However, Spain was not about to relinquish its hold on Puerto Rico so easily, for what it lacked in economic value it made up by being a strategic military gateway to Central and South America as well as the Gulf region, indeed to the entire Caribbean basin.¹⁸ Puerto Rico was for Spain, “a strategic outpost of empire—the cockpit...of the Hispanic Caribbean defense system—so that its civilian aspect was altogether subordinated to its military significance.”¹⁹

Four main factors mitigated the emergence of a national movement for sovereignty as had begun in other Spanish colonies. First, the majority of the elite of the island, in professional and administrative positions, remained loyal to the Spanish monarchy. Those of the elite class who were willing to entertain the possibility of independence were aware that they had to mobilize the masses for a successful campaign. The apathy of the masses toward the political status of the island, combined with the fear instilled in the elite class by exiled elites from other French and

Spanish colonies that had experienced violent rebellion, was yet a second factor against the effort to break from Spain. The formidable presence of Spanish troops on the island was a third factor in deterring an independence movement. While the military had maintained a presence in Puerto Rico since the beginning of the colonial period, it increased dramatically after 1810 with their defeat on the mainland colonies; they were redeployed in greater numbers on the island as an effort to maintain a stronghold after numerous failures. The increased presence of the military served to tighten the colonial noose around the island; for if Spain were to loosen its ties in San Juan and Havana, it would in a sense be admitting that it was no longer a great empire with an even greater spirit and vocation for colonization.²⁰ Finally, the elite class was reluctant to begin a radical movement toward sovereignty since Spain was gesturing toward greater autonomy for the island in the form of increased participation in the island's governance structure as well as in the Spanish Cortes, the legislative assembly of Spain at the time. The elite were not willing to jeopardize their potential to be more heavily involved in the colony's political future.²¹

The authorities of the Catholic Church in Puerto Rico were also unwilling to jeopardize their standing by promoting any dissent among the masses against the Spanish crown, upon which it was financially dependent. While there were a small number of priests who tried to bring the concerns of the Puerto Rican people to the island administrators, the Catholic Church as an institution was less concerned with the needs of the people and more focused on maintaining its position of power and privilege. The economic and political security of the Spanish bishops, then, required an unwavering loyalty to the monarchy. To this end, the bishops propagated a message of passivity and silent acceptance of Spanish rule, bolstered by a doctrine of God's providence for the Puerto Rican people.

Despite the unchanged status of the Catholic Church on the island, many other changes were occurring in the three latter decades of the nineteenth century, clearing the path for heightened United States' interest in Puerto Rico and its eventual occupation in 1898. First, the Puerto Rican economy was shifting from subsistence crops to more commercial crops concentrated on coffee, sugar, and tobacco, in this order of importance. Puerto Rico's agricultural economy had improved somewhat as a result of eased restrictions from Spain; it still consisted mainly of small farming of minor, yet diversified, crops.²² In contrast to the larger

plantations of Cuba, these farms cultivated vegetables, particularly root vegetables, and kept livestock including cattle, horses, pigs, fowl, sheep, and goats.²³ Despite such expansion, only twenty-one percent of the arable land of the island was being cultivated by the year 1898, the consequent mass poverty a fact not lost on the American invaders.

Second, with economic growth, albeit modest, came an increase in the level of discontent with the colonial status of Puerto Rico among the intellectual and professional elite. Because they witnessed the actual improvement of quality of life on the island through increased trade with countries other than Spain, including the USA, these elites realized that their colonial overlord was stifling the island's potential for greater growth and progress. Murmurs of political autonomy began to be heard, particularly among those who would benefit economically from severed ties, including the industrial and entrepreneurial classes. By contrast, those in positions made more secure by Spanish monarchical rule, including political officials, military, and clergy, opposed any change to the island's colonial status. Spaniards themselves usually held these positions, not Puerto Rican-born *criollos*.²⁴

Luís Muñoz Rivera and José Celso Barbosa were two such proponents of Puerto Rican autonomy from Spain. Autonomy, in their view, did not mean complete severance from Spain; in an autonomous relationship, Puerto Rico would be granted greater powers of self-governance in the administration of the island, and participation in the Spanish Cortes. There were contemporaries of Rivera and Barbosa for whom autonomy served only as a gateway to complete independence; Román Baldorioty de Castro, Rosendo Matienzo Cintrón, and José de Diego represented such a perspective.²⁵ For others, such as Eugenio María de Hostos and Ramón Emeterio Betances,²⁶ complete and immediate independence was the only viable option for Puerto Rico.

Betances was a key figure in the independence movement though he had been expelled from the island as a result of his anti-slavery and pro-independence stance. While exiled in New York, Santo Domingo, and St. Thomas, he organized the Puerto Rican Revolutionary Committee, gathering like-minded persons to the cause of Puerto Rican sovereignty. With the help of others including military personnel and small farmers, he succeeded in organizing a group of several hundred men who successfully occupied the town of Lares on September 23, 1868. The revolutionaries declared the Republic of Puerto Rico on that site and established a temporary system of self-government. However, as units

pushed forward to gain more control, the Spanish military squelched the resistance. Known as *El Grito de Lares*, and considered by some as “the most serious challenge to Spanish domination in Puerto Rico,”²⁷ this event came to symbolize both the seemingly insurmountable power of colonialism as well as the indomitable spirit of Puerto Rican resistance and self-determination. While some historians have termed Lares “an amateur-like skirmish” without lasting consequence,²⁸ it has become for many Puerto Ricans more than a symbol of “the continuing struggle for Puerto Rican self-determination, identity, and nationalism.”²⁹

It is important to note that the slave population in the other Spanish colonies of Cuba and Santo Domingo connected the gain of independence and sovereignty with the struggle for emancipation, as with the revolutionaries in Puerto Rico such as Betances. The abolition of slavery and the rhetoric of independence went hand in hand given the large African slave populations on these islands, which were heavy sugar and cotton producing economies. Such was not the case in Puerto Rico; in fact, slaves represented only 5% of the total population in 1872. This relatively small population faced the presence of a substantial military, which had relocated to Puerto Rico after its numerous defeats in other Spanish territories; such a presence would have made insurrection by a small number of slaves virtually impossible. In addition, the island’s economy did not necessitate the importation of more slaves since an abundance of free non-black labor already existed on the island. After making the case to the Spanish monarchy, which had by this time witnessed the violent insurrections in Cuba and Santo Domingo and feared the same in Puerto Rico, the island succeeded in abolishing slavery in 1873, not by having to fight for it but by decree.³⁰

It was also by decree that Puerto Ricans gained a modicum of autonomy from Spain in 1897; this charter granted (1) political and civil rights to Spanish citizens on the island; (2) an electoral system, allowing for self-government on the island and representation in the Spanish Cortes; and (3) an autonomous regime which would lead to complete sovereignty.³¹ There were some among the Puerto Rican liberal elite who anticipated complete independence as the next logical step in the autonomic governmental experiment; given the fact that Spain was in the midst of a major war effort, many believed that such sovereignty would be granted in the face of more pressing conflicts. What the Puerto Ricans did not anticipate was the complete overruling of all that had been

gained when General Sampson and his troops marched onto the island's shore on that fateful July day in 1898.

ACT I: UNITED STATES POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC HEGEMONY CIRCA 1898

The year 1898 marked a major turning point for the Puerto Rican people who had, by this time, made Catholicism their own by imbuing it with Taíno and African influences and those of the natural world around them. The invasion of the USA at the end of the Spanish–American War gave Puerto Rico a new colonial overlord replacing Catholic Spain. But while Spain saw no conflict of interest in a Catholic state, and indeed had strongly underlined it, the United States was vehemently opposed, at least outwardly, to such religious collusion, except when it applied to US Protestant denominations. Catholic missionaries, priests, and religious were forced to leave, and Catholic hospitals, schools, etc., were taken over by US authorities.³²

Protestant denominations saw the acquisition of Puerto Rico as a prime opportunity to move into a territory that had been inaccessible for four hundred years. Missionary accounts of the time speak of the US entry into the island as a “saving grace,” an opportunity for the Protestant denominations to bring the true gospel to a people for whom religion was dead.³³ To these missionaries, the Catholic Church under the Spanish crown had done a great spiritual disservice to the people, depriving them of knowledge of the Gospel through the Bible and tolerating superstitions. Therefore, the missionaries and church leaders did not admonish the United States’ political and economic actions as oppressive. On the contrary, they heralded them for allowing an opportunity to bring more into the Christian fold and educate Puerto Ricans with the true Christianity as opposed to the “obscurantist” nature of Catholicism to which they had been exclusively exposed.

The Christian mosaic on the island of Puerto Rico was further elaborated by the introduction of the Pentecostal missionary movement. It was the only missionary effort that was initiated indigenously; that is, a native Puerto Rican migrant worker Juan L. Lugo, converted in 1912 on the island of Hawaii where he had migrated for agricultural work, brought it to Puerto Rico. Lugo came to Puerto Rico as an ordained minister of the Assemblies of God and began his ministry in Ponce in

1916. However, Catholic and Protestant officials alike attacked this new “spirit filled” ministry as a threat to Catholic ecclesial authority and Protestant biblical tradition.³⁴ Yet, the predominantly poor Puerto Ricans who were attracted to Pentecostalism brought with them Puerto Rican spiritism and African traditional religion which continued to exist in its own right as an undercurrent within and despite Catholic and Protestant missionary efforts.³⁵

The invasion of Puerto Rico by the USA in 1898 dealt a serious economic blow to the island as well. The USA was quick to establish complete and absolute control, militarily and economically. While superficially economic conditions seemed to improve, in fact the new economic and political policies fostered growing dependence on the United States and less self-sufficiency for the island. The doctrine of “manifest destiny” coupled with the Monroe Doctrine had dire consequences for the economic condition of the island.³⁶ The agricultural economy shifted from subsistence to commercial farming with the large plantation model as central. Sugar became the monopoly crop with United States multinationals maintaining majority ownership of sugar plantations. Because land that had previously been used for subsistence crops was now used for sugar production, the island began to import more and export fewer subsistence goods, and this increase in imports and therefore US tariffs drained the island financially.³⁷ Those who had previously owned their own land for subsistence farming were forced to sell it and become wage laborers; there was more land available than people to work the land.

The production of coffee suffered greatly at the hands of the USA as well. After 1898, the lucrative export of Puerto Rican coffee to Spain and Portugal was severed. Without a market in which to sell their crop, coffee growers began to lose money. The Puerto Rican monetary unit was devalued at the same time, making it difficult for coffee growers to secure any financial assistance (loans) to tide them over. This situation forced them to buy into a “deal” to sell off their land and/or switch to sugar cane production, which had a great market for export in the United States. One cannot tell the story of the emergence of sugar on the island without telling the parallel story of the decline of coffee.³⁸

While the Depression of the 1930s had a tremendous impact on the native inhabitants of the island with unemployment at 60%,³⁹ the United States (via corporations or government) controlled 44% of all cultivated land, 60% of all banks and 100% of the sea lines/waterway access by 1930.⁴⁰ By the year 1940, the majority of the land on the island was

owned or managed by absentee landlords who reaped the profits but did not reinvest in the island, except for what was absolutely necessary for the continuation of profitability. The island's infrastructure began to improve to support the commercial farming efforts, leading to more roads built and utilities available even in remote locations. Whereas in 1898 the United States described Puerto Rico as underdeveloped and backward, it has been described, after four decades of US economic intervention, as "mis-developed and stagnant."⁴¹

The US invasion of Puerto Rico had a significant impact on the political landscape of the island. In the years leading up to the Spanish-American War, the island's advocates for independence had secured an audience in the Spanish monarchy, namely through Sagasta who, after the assassination of Prime Minister Cánovas del Castillo, became the leading political figure in Spain and one who had the power to grant Puerto Rico its autonomy, which he did in 1897.⁴² Once the island became a possession of the United States, however, all former agreements/treaties with Spain were deemed null and void. Those who had fought so hard for the ultimate goal of independence saw their efforts come to naught.⁴³

The imposition of colonial rule was solidified by the United States through the enactment of two significant pieces of legislation, which continue to affect political policy in Puerto Rico to this day. The Foraker Act of 1900 granted the residents of Puerto Rico subordination to the rule of the US military and resident governor, all appointed by the executive branch of the US government.⁴⁴ The Jones-Shaforth Act of 1917 granted the residents official US citizenship; yet this citizenship does not include representation in the Congress nor does it permit Puerto Ricans to vote in the general election for President of the USA—though it did allow the US government to draft Puerto Ricans to fight under the US flag during World War I. The role of the governor was a new appointment under the US regime and one assigned by the president. The governor, at this early stage of the colony, was not a native son or daughter.⁴⁵ In addition, English was instituted as the official language of the island as well as the primary medium of instruction in all schools.⁴⁶

The US invasion of Puerto Rico had a significant impact on the social fabric of the island. With the commencement of large capital business ventures, many Puerto Ricans who were accustomed to working only for subsistence and necessity were required to work for excess and profit in

order to be considered a “good worker.” Thus, the system of capitalism instituted on the island brought with it a moral judgment about labor: If you work only for what you need, you are considered lazy and lacking in initiative; if you work for more than what is needed, you are considered entrepreneurial, the latter being more desirable.⁴⁷ Since many families were forced to sell their land holdings, the concentration of jobs shifted from the rural to the urban areas, usually in the coastal region. Families were either separated in order to find work, or were relocated altogether. In both cases, this led to a breakdown in the communal bonds of the rural community.⁴⁸

Resisting US Hegemony: 1898–1945

The period following the US invasion of Puerto Rico was met with resistance commensurate with the levels of political, economic, social, and religious upheaval. Pedro Albizu Campos, a Harvard educated lawyer who became the President of the Nationalist Party of Puerto Rico in 1930, was a significant figure in this period; he became increasingly insistent upon sovereignty as time progressed.⁴⁹ His contemporary and friend, José de Diego, was also a strong nationalist whose poetry reflected his unbending vision of independence for Puerto Rico. Both were radicals in the political sense, yet coupled with a conservative Catholicism that lent itself to a strong anti-American sentiment.⁵⁰ De Diego’s poetry, for example, is laden with religious motifs that graphically invoke the death and resurrection of Jesus.⁵¹

The quest for sovereignty and self-determination, although thwarted at the onset of US occupation, did not falter or despair. Resistance took on a number of different shapes, some subtle and others overt. In their unique way, the *jibaros* of the interior resisted a change in their way of life and community customs by refusing to sell and/or leave their land until it was absolutely necessary.⁵² While “English” was the language required in the schools, Spanish was maintained in all other matters and certainly within the home.⁵³

The decade of the 1930s witnessed the pinnacle of violent opposition to the colonial empire, as Puerto Rico was dealt a heavy economic blow with the onset of the Depression period, hastened by Hurricane *San Felipe* in 1928, with levels of unemployment reaching over 60% in some areas. The dire economic situation was a catalyst for resistance among the poor working classes. Those who had previously understood work as

necessary for subsistence were now required to look upon work in terms of capital (i.e., making more than what is needed in order to sell for profit). Many resisted the abusive and exploitative practices of the plantation overlords by creating secret labor associations.⁵⁴ Labor workers in the sugar industry who had made connections with the US labor movement (e.g., the AFL) began to strike; these actions gained momentum across the island in 1933 when sugar cane workers went on strike and brought “King Sugar” to a halt.⁵⁵

It is not difficult to see how tensions must have run very high during this period; the economic pressure led to a boiling over of anger, resentment, and reactionary militancy. In 1935, the University of Puerto Rico was the site for the killings of nationalist militants by the US-controlled police force. In retaliation for these killings, in 1936 Nationalist militants assassinated the chief of police, Col. Francis Riggs. While not directly responsible for the assassination, the Nationalist leader, Albizu Campos, and others, were arrested, tried, and sentenced to federal prison in Georgia. The following year, a Palm Sunday demonstration of Puerto Rican pride and independence in the city of Ponce was the site of what has come to be known as “the Ponce massacre”; the police opened fire on a peaceful Nationalist organized parade, killing twenty and injuring over 200 Puerto Ricans. In 1938, the Nationalists attempted to avenge this massacre by making an assassination attempt on the life of Governor Winship. The decade of the 1930s was a bloody one, indeed.⁵⁶

Those with the strongest fervor for independence tended to come from regions in Puerto Rico that were directly and adversely affected by the rise of the sugar cane industry, namely the central cordillera and western area of the island. These were the coffee producing regions that were forced to make way for the sugar industry’s monopoly. As a result of having lost land and all means of subsistence, these were also the regions from which the greatest numbers of migrants to the continental United States originated, bringing with them the same disdain for the sugar monopoly that had displaced them as well as a passion for self-determination.⁵⁷

From a political perspective, resistance took a number of different forms during this time, ranging from diplomatic negotiations to outright violence. A more organized opposition to US domination was beginning to take shape at this time. Rosendo Matienzo Cintrón founded the Puerto Rican Independence Party in 1912. In 1930, Pedro Albizu

Campos was elected President of the pro-independence Nationalist Party. At the same time, Luís Muñoz Marín, who would later become the proponent of a “middle ground” resolution, was studying and living in the USA where the political ideas of the liberal left were encountering Muñoz Marín’s national pride and independent spirit. We now know that his shift toward a more “middle ground” resolution had less to do with learning the master’s tools to construct a uniquely Puerto Rican democratic ideal, and more to do with fear and extortion asserted by the colonial overlord.⁵⁸ Albizu Campos, on the other hand, did not believe that the tools forged by a colonial master could ever serve any purpose other than domination and exploitation.⁵⁹

From a religious perspective, this period saw the carving up of the island by various mainstream Protestant groups who were eager to bring Christianity to a people who were perceived as having “no religion whatsoever.” While the Protestant missionaries provided the Puerto Ricans with services to which they previously had limited or no access, the people did not throw out their Catholic faith in exchange for Protestant education, hospitals, food pantries, etc. They may have become Presbyterian, Methodist, or Baptist on paper in order to obtain certain services, but they remained Catholic in belief and ritual practice. The preeminence of Marian devotion through the rosary is an example of a popular religious practice that survived the shift to Protestantism.⁶⁰

Showing a resistance to Protestantism was a *de facto* affirmation of Puerto Rican identity over and against US Americanization through the Protestant churches, for the new colonizer believed that, to become a good American, the Puerto Rican had to strip away all vestiges of the Spanish legacy, including Catholicism. What the Protestant Americans failed to understand was that the Catholicism they encountered in Puerto Rico was more indigenously Puerto Rican than Spaniard, as it had been infused over four hundred years with Taíno and African belief systems, as well as influence from the Canary Islands.⁶¹

The resistance to religious imposition was deeply connected to the Puerto Rican’s efforts to resist the ensuing social upheaval. As stated earlier, the shift from diversified subsistence farming to mono-crop plantation was a major upheaval in Puerto Rican life, which led to inter-island migration from rural to urban areas. As much as they possibly could, the Puerto Rican hill dwellers, or “*jibaros*,” tried to maintain their way of life, characterized by a connection with the land, acquiring that which is needed for sustenance and no more, and a love of aesthetics and the

beauty of “la naturaleza.” They rejected the US American corporate work ethic of profit accumulation and, as a result, were seen as lazy and non-entrepreneurial in spirit. Such a perception has led to literature on the “docility” and “passivity” of Puerto Ricans, and their being labeled as indifferent and even apathetic to matters of political import.⁶² Yet one can also understand such docility and passivity as a form of resistance to the American way of life, which was seen to value frenetic activity, aggression, and disrespect.⁶³ Here was a more subtle yet powerful rejection of the American mode of progress, a lack of which the Americans believed Puerto Rico had suffered under the rule of Spain, and which they were eager to increase in the next three decades.

ACT II: OPERATION BOOTSTRAP AND THE “EXODUS EFFECT”

Puerto Ricans transported much of this experience and history to the shores of the USA during the Great Puerto Rican Migration⁶⁴ of 1946–1964. During this eighteen-year period, over six hundred thousand (614,940) Puerto Ricans migrated to the USA, compared to less than one hundred thousand (97,129) in the years 1900–1945.⁶⁵ The migrants came mostly from the interior hill country where independent religious traditions (ones that were not dependent on ecclesial authority or rites) were vibrant. These periods of mass migration permanently transformed the Catholic, Protestant, and Pentecostal churches in the United States, particularly in the Northeast where many settled. For Catholic Puerto Ricans arriving in New York City, the basement church phenomenon developed to incorporate Puerto Ricans into already existing parishes without “disturbing” the established organization, liturgy, societies, etc.⁶⁶ These parishioners were relegated to the status of second-class citizens, a distinction that was merely carried over from the general society; Puerto Ricans were thus forced to make a way for themselves with little aid or welcome. Like the Catholic Church, so too the Protestant churches failed similarly to minister adequately to the influx of Puerto Ricans. Pentecostal churches fared somewhat better since they were established within smaller community pockets around a charismatic minister. They were less dependent on established institutions and were thus more autonomous and indigenous to Puerto Ricans.⁶⁷

The imposition of the federally mandated “Operation Bootstrap” program was the primary catalyst for this exodus of Puerto Ricans from the island. This program aimed to industrialize the island and had significant

political, economic, and social consequences. The political party that proved to be the support structure for the program was the PPD (*Partido Popular Democrático* or Popular Democratic Party), led by Lu  s Mu  oz Mar  n. The general popularity of Mu  oz Mar  n and his ideas for maintaining an autonomous yet dependent relationship with the USA, took even stronger hold. Many considered it to be the party of progress, for it pushed the industrial and manufacturing sectors to take advantage of the federally granted subsidies and tax relief to do business on the island.⁶⁸

Economic power coalesced in the hands of the US capitalists who, once again, were able to partner with the island's governance to bring about rapid change and growth. Seen as positive progress by many, Mu  oz Mar  n's PPD gained almost universal acceptance and support; all other dissenting or critical voices were seen as radical and anti-American, extended to mean anti-Puerto Rican, which could lead to imprisonment. The convergence of the PPD and Operation Bootstrap, at least from 1945 to 1968, solidified "autonomy," now known as free associated state status. Given the overwhelming popularity of the PPD, and Mu  oz Mar  n as the party's main figure, the economic endeavors initiated by the USA were launched without much political opposition or impediment. The economic effect of Operation Bootstrap was extensive in scope. While the early decades of the twentieth century in Puerto Rico were marked by the shift from subsistence to commercial agriculture (with sugar as the monocrop), the Bootstrap period was marked by the shift from commercial agriculture to commercial industry, with light manufacturing as its mainstay.⁶⁹

Thanks to tax incentives, subsidies, and low wage labor, manufacturers flocked to the island to set up shop. Puerto Rico proved a more desirable and lucrative environment than other "developing" countries since it was still under the jurisdiction of the USA and businesses did not have to contend with the laws and restrictions of foreign sovereign nations. The low-skilled, barely educated labor force was adequate for the types of manufacturing companies that relocated there. Yet, the supply did not meet the demand for jobs, and this contributed to the mass migration to the US at the onset of Operation Bootstrap. With such an exodus, the island became segmented into the low-skilled labor force and the highly educated governing elite, with little to no population in the middle, creating a tremendous gap between the upper and lower economic classes.⁷⁰

While one-third of the population remained in the rural areas of the island, these people were the recipients of only one-sixth of the job

market. As large agricultural companies bought out the land from the USA, the average rural peasant once again could not provide for his family and thus was forced to become an urban dweller, either on the island (San Juan, Ponce, Mayaguez) or in the continental US (predominantly New York, Chicago, Boston).⁷¹ Unfortunately, only a small percentage of the capital profits made in those initial years of the Bootstrap program filtered their way back into the island's infrastructure. As an incentive to these companies, the federal government supported the efforts to build up the island's roadways, utilities, and other necessary infrastructure; this came at a price, which the Puerto Rican local governance structure had to manage in the form of debt repayment, which continues to choke the island to this day.

The island's reliance on US capital was not the only area of dependence. The manufacturing companies produced items for export and not consumption by the Puerto Rican people. In addition, the Puerto Rican people, influenced by marketing efforts of US companies, were beginning to consume items that were not being produced on the island. For example, canned foods from the States were now replacing homegrown staples from the island; it was more prestigious to have items from the States, since it indicated a person's ability to afford the more expensive goods.⁷²

Operation Bootstrap altered the social life of the Puerto Rican people as well. In addition to the preference for imported foods, other US American products and customs were beginning to take root on the island. The role of women in the household and beyond began to shift as more women joined the manufacturing workforce. This also led to an increase in family planning and birth control, which is a distinct—albeit related—issue to that of forced sterilization of Puerto Rican women.⁷³ Puerto Rican women began to feel the impact of a clash in values once they entered the workplace: the place of employment required the women to work on an equal footing as men, and yet the home environment still demanded the same level of time, commitment, and energy (with children, household chores, cooking, etc.) as before.⁷⁴

At the onset of Operation Bootstrap, Muñoz Marín was able to secure another “victory” which reflected the desire, under the banner of autonomy, to maintain and nurture Puerto Rican customs, traditions, and norms: Spanish was re-instituted as the official language of the island. In a parallel effort to the economic nature of Operation Bootstrap, “Operation Serenity” was Muñoz Marín's effort to push the importance

of maintaining a distinct Puerto Rican culture and way of life in the midst of the growing US American influence.⁷⁵

This period of 1945–1968 can be characterized as one that both created and solidified the island’s economic dependency, political ambiguity, and social uncertainty. While it marked the introduction of the first indigenous governor (as opposed to a US American politician planted on the island to govern), this period solidified the policy of US domination over the island.⁷⁶ The island shifted from an agricultural to an industrial economy, which led to cultural loss and distortion through the mass migration of peasants within the island itself and away from the island to find sustainable employment. Operation Bootstrap created a situation in which two parallel Puerto Ricos began to develop: the rural Puerto Rico with little change in the day-to-day lifestyle, and the urban Puerto Rico with greater and greater dependence on and influence from the USA. Industrialization brought with it the rise of the cement industry from which the industrialist Luís Ferré, and subsequently his daughter Rosario, emerged. The notion of the Bootstrap begs the question, “Who’s pulling up whom, whose foot is in the boot, and is the ‘sole’ of the boot coming loose at the seams in the process?”⁷⁷

Resisting Operation Bootstrap: 1946–1968

Ongoing resistance to US occupation as well as the institution of “free associated state” status marked the years 1946–1968. Others saw this political status as a form of resistance to statehood, which would be the ultimate surrender of language, culture, and Puerto Rican identity. Through the institution of “free associated state” status, Spanish was restored as the official language of the island, and cultural activities that were distinctly Puerto Rican were encouraged by its supporters.⁷⁸ This new experimental status was not enough to keep Puerto Ricans from leaving their island home, however. The mass exodus was a means of protest and resistance, in my view, to the economic conditions created on the island.

Pedro Albizu Campos continued to raise concerns regarding the island’s neo-colonial status, but began to see the futility of any amiable discussion with the USA to alter the course of Puerto Rico’s sovereign future. Still, he maintained pressure on his people regarding independence and continued his activity in association with the Nationalist Party after his release from prison in 1947. Members of Muñoz Marín’s PPD

formed the Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP) when they realized he had abandoned the vision of independence after supporting it for over two decades and instead “advocated” for the commonwealth.⁷⁹

Many in political and non-political circles alike met the economic, political, and social erosion of Puerto Rican nationhood with anger and frustration. The desperate time called for desperate measures to maintain attention and focus on the plight of Puerto Ricans. One such demonstration of desperation was the Nationalists’ futile attempt on the US government as a form of revolutionary defiance. In 1954, Lolita Lebrón led a group of Puerto Rican nationalists to the halls of the US Congress where she opened fire on the House of Representatives. Lebrón and the others were jailed; they were pardoned and released twenty-five years later by the Carter Administration.⁸⁰

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Fuerza Armada de Liberación Nacional (FALN), described by US authorities as a terrorist organization, organized activities to keep the issue of Puerto Rico’s independence alive and well in the streets.⁸¹ However, since their tactics involved bombs and other forms of ammunition directed at strategic governmental sites, the FALN gained neither positive attention for the plight of Puerto Ricans in the USA nor support for the cause of anti-colonialism for the island of Puerto Rico.

In 1968, the political landscape changed with the election of millionaire industrialist Luís Ferré as the governor of the island. A man who had made his fortune in the cement industry creating the roads and infrastructure of the island to support the growing manufacturing and industrial sectors, Ferré was a proponent of statehood and his political party, the PNP (Partido Nuevo Progresista or New Progressive Party), overtook the decades of uncontested rule by the PPD.⁸² In the midst of this seemingly two-party landscape, the hope of independence never waned; yet it did not gain widespread appeal from the majority of Puerto Ricans at this time.⁸³

ACT III: BARRIO AS THE EPICENTER OF CURRENT STATUS

In general, the migration experience, which has continued to the present in a more “revolving door” fashion,⁸⁴ exacerbated feelings of “otherness,” extreme isolation and social distance politically, ecclesiastically and socially. The US city environment itself was a culture shock since many migrants came from the rural *campos* of Puerto Rico. They were

scattered all over the metropolitan areas of the Northeast to pocket neighborhoods. While from the outside these pockets may be regarded as communities, they lacked the ease of relationship typical of rural Puerto Rico, relationships more difficult to maintain in the stressful environment of crowded tenement houses or low income high rises of the barrios.⁸⁵ The barrio experience followed on the heels of the migration; it is an experience that has marked the existence of a majority of Puerto Ricans on the US mainland and on the island, and one which continues to plague our community with poverty, illiteracy, poor health and housing, substance abuse and violence.⁸⁶ This barrio existence has won Puerto Ricans the unique distinction of being named the “exception” to the growing socioeconomic success rate among Hispanics in the United States.⁸⁷

Data obtained from the US Census Bureau bear out the facts of this “barrio” existence. In 1997, Puerto Ricans (who are US citizens by birth, since 1917) were 10% of the Hispanic population in the USA and 9.2% of the population in 2010,⁸⁸ yet represented 34.2% of Hispanics living below the poverty line (1997). While this figure dropped to 26.1% in 2002, and to 25.6% in 2011, it is still one of the highest percentages of poverty among Hispanics in the USA (second only to Dominicans at 26.3%) and at least twice the rate of poverty among non-Hispanic whites.⁸⁹ The majority of the Puerto Rican population in the States lives in the Northeast (72% as of 2010)⁹⁰; while this part of USA is known as the financial capital of the world, the median household income was only 39,039 dollars in 2008⁹¹; this does not represent significant progress from the annual income of Puerto Ricans in the United States of 29,196 dollars in 2001.⁹² Single mothers as heads of household represent over one-half of the Puerto Rican family structure (53.9% in 1997). This may account for the high rate of children living in poverty within the Puerto Rican community which was 49.5% in 1997, over four times the rate of non-Hispanic whites (11.4%). While this rate dropped to 33.3% in 2000, it is still the highest poverty rate of children among Hispanics in general.⁹³

The point here is that if one lumps the numbers of all Hispanics together, one loses sight of the dire situation of the majority of Puerto Ricans in the USA. We must also remember that all Puerto Ricans are US citizens, and the majority are not recent “migrants” to the United States, which often accounts for the lower socio-economic status of communities transitioning to a new environment. The argument for the benefits of the

current relationship between Puerto Rico and the USA seems to lose its relevance when one analyzes the economic data. This begs the question, “Who has truly benefited from this colonial relationship?”

Despite all of the economic advances of industrialization on the island of Puerto Rico, it seems as though many who live there as well as those of the Diaspora community continue to struggle desperately for survival. The promise of the American Dream has been overshadowed by the nightmare of violence, drug abuse, poverty, unemployment, gang warfare, welfare dependency, and disease (in particular AIDS, diabetes, asthma, high blood pressure, and obesity). All of the data point to the increase rather than a decrease of these factors in our community over time. Indeed as David Perez, member of the Young Lords Party, once said, “Puerto Ricans came to this country hoping to get a decent job and to provide for their families; but it didn’t take long to find out that the American dream that was publicized so nicely on our island turned out to be the amerikkkan nightmare.”⁹⁴

From a political perspective, the barrio existence of the majority of our people has had significant implications. In many ways, the voices of our people are not heard in the halls of government, as is the case with any community living in poverty. The daily preoccupation with survival, with just getting by, does not allow the time, energy, and resources necessary to fight battles on the many fronts where battles are raging: for the quality and availability of education, housing, and other community services (e.g., medical, child care, employment, etc.). Those voices which, by incredible force and sacrifice, make it to the level of being heard to advocate for the needs of the people, are often repressed, silenced and/or demonized, as was the case with the Young Lords Party,⁹⁵ so that the people who would benefit most from such activism are led to distrust even their own (as with the case of Nydia Velázquez who ran for, and won, a seat in Congress in 1992 out of Brooklyn).⁹⁶ With limited access to appropriate political resources to enact significant changes, the barrio existence is perpetuated from one generation to the next. The community voices of protest, often emerging from poets, musicians, and writers, are no less than political forces rivaling those in the halls of government.⁹⁷ And while the barrio has made an incredible photo opportunity for many a political candidate, and even a Roman Catholic Pontiff,⁹⁸ it is still at the bottom of the priority list for our government, and Puerto Ricans continue to suffer because of such neglect.

The barrio existence for the majority of Puerto Ricans centers on the economic factors which led so many to leave Puerto Rico in the

first place, as well as the cycles of dependence that make it so difficult to break free from poverty. The greatest number of Puerto Ricans left the island at a time of a major shift from agriculture to industry. Unlike other migrations, however, Puerto Ricans came to New York at a time when the city was experiencing a major shift of its own from being a manufacturing dominant economy to becoming a service/technology dominant economy.⁹⁹ The unique quality of the Puerto Rican migration experience was due, in large measure, to the economic conditions that greeted this community in a manner unlike that of any other immigrant group coming to New York.¹⁰⁰

As a result, the low-skilled labor force, which expected to find menial labor in the city's sweatshops, was flooding a market that was in decline; this forced a large percentage of the community to live in the most poverty stricken areas for lack of any other options. This did not bode well for the subsequent generation of Puerto Ricans who were limited, by their location, to an inferior education, thus creating more of a cycle of dependency with higher drop-out rates and teenage pregnancies than their white contemporaries.

In addition to the economic difficulties encountered in New York City at the time, the federal government's policies did little to alleviate the situation. The decades of the 1970s (particularly the latter half) and 1980s witnessed cutbacks in the Food Stamp and other social assistance programs. This had a significant impact on the Puerto Rican community who, as a result of high unemployment, depend heavily on such support. The data indicate that Puerto Ricans are in a worse economic state now than we were twenty years ago.¹⁰¹

Life in the barrio was a far cry from the social fabric of the community in the rural mountains of Puerto Rico. If the culture shock of the urban environment were not enough, the Puerto Ricans who now called the barrio their home had to make a way of life in unfamiliar surroundings without the traditions and support systems from home. For the youth, the gang life and culture forged a new family bond. With both parents needing to work, children learned the ways of the street sooner than they learned the ways of math. The gap between the younger street-wise and the older homegrown generations became wider and wider until the family life and the street life were at odds with each other. The harshness of the environment has taken its toll on the Puerto Rican community; with no other outlet for the anger, frustration, and depression, people have lashed out within the community in the form of gang violence, drug trade activity, and abuse.

The religious traditions and support structures of the island were also difficult to maintain and perpetuate given the new environment, and seemingly useless as an effective response to a younger generation in crisis. The religious expression of the parent's generation was not easily transferred to the youth in this new environment with so many competing temptations and lures. The Cursillo Movement within the Catholic Church was an attempt to maintain the Puerto Rican population within the Catholic fold, while honoring the need for more vibrant religious expression, and with more lay leadership in the absence of Spanish-speaking clergy. In addition to the dearth of Spanish-speaking clergy, there were even fewer who overtly advocated for Puerto Ricans in the Archdiocese of New York at the time of their greatest influx. The mainstream churches, both Catholic and Protestant, did not welcome the Puerto Rican community. This led to a rise in Pentecostalism, which was able to fill the spiritual void of the community's pastoral care needs, and the physical void of not having a mainstream church within the barrio community. Life in the barrio also witnessed the rise in the influence of Santería and Espiritismo.¹⁰²

Resisting the Barrio: 1968–2004

Yet, there are signs of incredible resilience, hope, and life within our Puerto Rican community despite such conditions. From a political perspective, resistance in the barrio has taken the form of the various organizations that have pushed the concerns of the Puerto Rican community to the forefront. These include the Puerto Rican Socialist Party, El Comité–MINP (Puerto Rican National Left Movement), Puerto Rican Student Union, Movement for National Liberation (MLN), Armed Forces for National Liberation (FALN), the Nationalist Party, and the Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP). The Young Lords Party, while purported to be a gang in the most negative sense by governmental authorities, served to consolidate power and resistance in the hands of youth who wished to make a difference in the lives of their people.¹⁰³

By the late 1960s, almost all of these groups employed some form of Marxist analysis in their strategy and ideology. From an economic perspective, the resistance at this time took the form of involvement in the

labor movement and strikes; many of these organizations were actively involved in efforts to improve the economic and social conditions facing Puerto Ricans in the barrio, such as the Garbage Offensive and the Lincoln Hospital Offensive, both initiated by The Young Lords Party.¹⁰⁴ It was also marked by the increased involvement of women in both the workforce and the movement for labor justice and anti-poverty efforts. One of the greatest and most significant accomplishments of these groups was that, through the combination of community activism and an anti-colonial bent, they were able to avoid the annexation of Puerto Rico to the USA (i.e., statehood), which, in their view, would have been the ultimate defeat.¹⁰⁵

In addition, the cultural institutions that developed during this time, such as the Nuyorican Poets' Café and the Museo del Barrio, continued to preserve and nurture the cultural expressions of Puerto Ricans in the New York area and which can be understood as a form of resistance to an environment that was hostile to them.¹⁰⁶ Even in the midst of the English dominant USA, the Spanish language continues to be spoken and taught to our children. The poets and writers of the barrio era speak to the horrific conditions in which Puerto Ricans live, and yet point to a vision of greater quality of life for the community. The newspapers/media that developed gave a voice to the people to confront the daily onslaught of negative forces, and were effective in pushing certain issues to the forefront.¹⁰⁷

These aspects of our lives which continue in the midst of the devastating social ills can be understood as an effort of resistance: of resisting despair and depression, of resisting a loss of faith, of resisting the impulse for destruction and responding with creation and hope and life. It was a clear indication that, for the Puerto Rican community in the USA, the issues of racism and discrimination could not be severed from the issue of freedom; to face one meant having to battle the other.

Although the image of the tough "Nuyorican" has emerged from this period as a caricature of the abrasive urban Puerto Rican with a fierce attitude, this persona can also be seen as a form of resistance to the stereotype of Puerto Rican docility and passivity, embodied as the person allowing others to control him/her with little, if any, reaction. The Nuyorican persona instilled fear and intimidation (e.g., the biker type, bad boys) as a defense against the sense of powerlessness in the face of the looming power of the USA.¹⁰⁸

“NUEVO DESPERTAR”¹⁰⁹: 2005 TO THE PRESENT

Puerto Ricans are confronting the barrio existence that has remained at the center of our experience in the new millennium with a renewed fervor. “Nuevo Despertar” or new awakening was a phrase used to refer to the late 1960s when the US Puerto Rican community, spurned by a number of national and international events/movements, began to assert its voice and radicalism on the state-side front in solidarity with the island community. I use it here to make the point that, with the new millennium, Puerto Ricans are, once again, being shaken up from their slumber in order to confront the new conditions with which we are now faced.

While the barrio existence of our community continues to be a pressing concern, we have witnessed a number of victories that provide opportunities for hope and change. The 1980s and 1990s witnessed the emergence and growth of Puerto Rican studies programs at a number of colleges and universities in the New York area, such as those at Brooklyn College, Hunter College, and Fordham University. These programs have sparked the consciousness of a new generation who are, indeed for the first time for many, learning the history and struggle that I have presented here.¹¹⁰

Raised consciousness has also led to movement building in the 2000s. In media, publications like *La Respuesta* have arisen as a site of meaning-making for Puerto Ricans in the United States Diaspora.¹¹¹ On and off the island, individuals came together to organize and fight for the freedom of Puerto Rican political prisoner Oscar López Rivera who spent over three decades in jail under “seditious conspiracy” charges for his organizing around Puerto Rican independence.¹¹² Artists like Calle 13 have used music and art to raise consciousness around the issues plaguing Puerto Ricans and their connection to the rest of Latin America and the world. And surely with the rise of a new diaspora in places like Florida we are sure to see a new movement once more—particularly with the impetus of Puerto Rico’s present debt crisis.¹¹³ This “nuevo despertar” of Puerto Rican consciousness has gained traction within the international human rights community as well. According to its report, “The Negative Impact of US Foreign Policy on Human Rights in Colombia, Haiti and Puerto Rico,” the Human Rights Council recommended that the USA cease its colonial relationship with Puerto Rico and remove all vestiges of its colonial legacy.¹¹⁴

The story of oppression, resistance and new awakening calls all Puerto Ricans to remember the shared history of who we are, how we suffer, and the direction of our hope. In doing so, others can participate in solidarity toward the transformation of a community in crisis. Such is the purpose of the stories that I present in following chapters. The stories of Esmeralda Santiago, Pedro Juan Soto, and Rosario Ferré emerge out of this history of Puerto Rican oppression and resistance, and yet are not bound by it. Their stories suggest something beyond the history where dreams of the imagination create a prophetic vision of freedom from colonization for our people.

NOTES

1. According to the 1997 Population Survey of the Census Bureau, 58% of Puerto Ricans living in the continental United States reside in the Northeast region of the country. As of 2010, however, “about two-fifths (41%) of the Puerto Rican population lived in two states, New York (1.1 million) and Florida (848,000)” (Ennis, Sharon R., Merarys Ríos-Vargas, and Nora G. Albert, *The Hispanic Population: 2010* [United States: US Census Bureau, 2011], 8). While this population shift, particularly to Florida, has continued up to the present, the northeast focus of this piece remains pertinent to telling the Puerto Rican story on the island and in the Diaspora.
2. Eldin Villafañe, *The Liberating Spirit: Toward an Hispanic American Pentecostal Social Ethic* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 23.
3. Both Ferré and Santiago structure their respective narratives around the various dualisms which characterize Puerto Rican experience: industrial vs. agricultural (Ferré), island vs mainland (Santiago), fact vs. fiction (Ferré), child vs. adult (Santiago). These dualisms parallel the relationship between Puerto Rico and the US in varying degrees, thus making the categories essential to both the history and the stories.
4. My telling of my family story is based on the stories I heard as a child from my mother and father, my aunts and uncles, my grandmothers and grandfathers. I do not purport that they are “fact” in the sense that the stories have been corroborated by others. Rather, they serve as “truth” by the fact that they held meaning and power within the family, and were passed on to me, some willingly and others reluctantly, some intentionally and others unintentionally.
5. Not all of the siblings sold their land; to this day, there are members of my extended family who own significant acreage in Barranquitas. The percentage of this remaining land to what was originally owned is unknown.

6. After developing diabetes, she had to leave work. It is unclear to the family exactly when her diabetes affected her health to the point that she stopped working.
7. At a basic level, the religiosity of the Taínos and the slaves imported from the African continent shared a common sense of the connection among the many “worlds” we inhabit: natural, spirit, material. This was then syncretized with Roman Catholic Christianity of Spain, shaped by the Reformation and Counter-Reformation of the sixteenth century.
8. The island’s name has also been spelled Borikén and Borinquen; see Darrel Wanzer-Serrano, *The New York Young Lords and the Struggle for Liberation* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2015), 31–32.
9. See Antonio M. Stevens-Arroyo, *Cave of the Jagua: The Mythological World of the Taínos* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1988); and Sadi Orsini Luiggi, *Canto al cemi: leyendas y mitos taínos* (San Juan, PR: Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, 1974).
10. Luís N. Rivera-Pagán, *A Violent Evangelism: The Political and Religious Conquest of the Americas* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 220–221.
11. Ibid., 201.
12. Ibid., 244. De las Casas still believed in a vision of a Christian world but one which would be achieved by free will rather than force (234). De las Casas ironically sought indigenous liberation in order to oppose “civilizing” African slaves (see Jackson, John P. and Nadine M. Weidman, *Race, Racism and Science: Social Impact and Interaction* [New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006], 20–21).
13. Kal Wagenheim, “Puerto Rico: A Profile,” in *The Puerto Rican Experience*. Francesco Cordasco and Eugene Bucchioni, eds. (Totowa, NJ: Littlefield, Adams and Co., 1973), 98.
14. Gordon K. Lewis, *Puerto Rico: Freedom and Power in the Caribbean* (New York, NY: Monthly Review Press, 1963), 59.
15. Ibid., 56–58.
16. Adalberto López, “The Evolution of a Colony: Puerto Rico in the 16th, 17th and 18th Centuries,” in *The Puerto Ricans: their history, culture and society*, Adalberto López, ed. (Rochester, VT: Schenkman Books, 1980), 27. This entire chapter provides an excellent background of the economic, political, military, and religious influences on Puerto Rico during this period.
17. Arturo Morales Carrión, *Puerto Rico: A Political and Cultural History* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton and Company, 1983), 80.
18. Ibid., 28.
19. Lewis, *Puerto Rico*, 47.
20. Ibid., 49.

21. López, "Birth of a Nation: Puerto Rico in the Nineteenth Century," in *The Puerto Ricans: their history, culture and society*, Adalberto López, ed. (Rochester, VT: Schenkman Books, 1980), 51–53.
22. *Ibid.*, 64.
23. Eric Williams, *From Columbus to Castro: The History of the Caribbean 1492–1969* (New York, NY: Random House, 1970), 291. Williams makes the argument that Puerto Rico was unique in the Caribbean at the time based on the fact that the percentage of slaves to the total population was around 5% in 1872; given its economy as a food producing agricultural system, slavery was not necessary as a "productive element" and should therefore be abolished. In contrast, the Cuban slave population in 1867 numbered approximately 24% of the total population, 290.
24. López, "Birth of a Nation," 75.
25. Both Matienzo Cintrón and de Diego broke with the policy of "autonomy as a first step" and advocated complete independence after the U.S. became the occupying colonial power in 1898. See López ("Birth of a Nation," 73–90) for a more detailed discussion of the debate, including the influence of other independence movements within the Spanish colonial empire taking place at the same time. For the purposes of this study, I have highlighted only the main points of the three political positions. I find it interesting, and not in the least coincidental, that the three positions argued in the nineteenth century (autonomy, stepping-stone autonomy and independence) are carried into the twentieth and beyond (status quo, statehood, independence) in relation to a different, nevertheless colonial, empire.
26. Betances was exiled for the majority of his adult life for his separatist views, but continued to work for Puerto Rican independence from exile until his death in Paris in 1899. In his last written piece, he voices his disillusionment with his Puerto Rican compatriots who, in his opinion, have let the perfect opportunity to assert their freedom slip away: "What are the Puerto Ricans doing? Why don't they take advantage of the blockade to rise up in a mass? It is essential that when the vanguards of the American army land they be received by Puerto Rican forces waving the flag of independence, and that it be the latter that give them their welcome," in López, "Birth of a Nation," 91. See also Iris Zavala's "Introduction" in *The Intellectual Roots of Independence: An Anthology of Puerto Rican Political Essays*, Iris M. Zavala and Rafael Rodríguez, eds. (New York, NY and London, UK: Monthly Review Press, 1980).
27. Morales Carrión, *Puerto Rico*, 111.
28. Lewis, *Puerto Rico*, 62–63.

29. Roberto Santiago, "Introduction," *Boricuas: Influential Puerto Rican Writings—an Anthology* (New York, NY: Random House Publishing Group, 1995), xviii.
30. Lewis, *Puerto Rico*, 58–59. The emancipation of slaves in the United States did not occur until 1863 with the Emancipation Proclamation, leading to the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865. Its provisions substituted the concept of "property" to that of "criminal" as a precondition of acceptable slavery.
31. For a complete description of the components and branches of the fledgling system, see Morales Carrión, *Puerto Rico*, 120–125.
32. Jerry Floyd Fenton, *Understanding the Religious Background of the Puerto Rican*, B.D. Thesis (Union Theological Seminary, 1964), 11–12.
33. Father Sherman, chaplain to the US American occupying army in Puerto Rico wrote, "Puerto Rico is a Catholic country without religion whatsoever....Religion is dead on the island." In this case, he seems to be equating institutional clerical presence with the viability of religion. In any case, such a sentiment fueled the Protestant missionary effort which considered the Catholic legacy superstitious, anti-social, undemocratic, crude and illiterate. See Arthur James, *Thirty Years in Porto Rico: A Record of the Progress since American Occupation* (San Juan: Porto Rico Progress, 1927) Chaps. 4 and 7; Clement Manly Morton, *Kingdom Building in Puerto Rico: A Story of Fifty Years of Christian Service* (Indianapolis, IN: United Christian Missionary Society, 1949).
34. As cited in Eldin Villafañe, *The Liberating Spirit*, 90–95.
35. See Fenton, *Understanding the Religious Background of the Puerto Rican*, 29–37 and 53–58.
36. The Monroe Doctrine, while understood, in origin, as "a prohibition of European imperialist adventure in the hemisphere became transformed...into a mandate for American imperialism," in Lewis, *Puerto Rico*, 82.
37. In *War Against All Puerto Ricans: Revolution and Terror in America's Colony*, Nelson A. Denis notes that the devaluation of the Spanish *peso* imposed by the American Colonial Bank in 1899 occurred virtually at the same time that Hurricane Ciriaco hit the island. This hurricane was one of the worst in the island's history creating a "perfect storm" for the economic degradation of Puerto Rico: with a devalued *peso* and devastated homes and lands, the Puerto Rican people fell into the hands of their new [economic] colonizer; (New York, NY: Nation Books, 2015), 25–31, especially 29.
38. Angel G. Quintero Rivera, "Background to the Emergence of Imperialist Capitalism in Puerto Rico," in *The Puerto Ricans: their history, culture and society*, Adalberto López ed. (Rochester, VT: Schenkman Books, 1980), 113–118.

39. Lewis, *Puerto Rico*, 88–93.
40. Zavala and Rodríguez, eds. “Historical Chronology” in *Intellectual Roots of Independence* (New York, NY and London, UK: Monthly Review Press, 1980), 6.
41. Morris Morley, “Dependence and Development in Puerto Rico,” in López, *The Puerto Ricans: their history, culture and society* (Rochester, VT: Schenkman Books, 1980), 171–177.
42. It should be noted that this autonomy was only a political reality for eight days. On July 17, 1898 Puerto Rico’s autonomous government came into power, but was quickly relinquished on July 25, 1898 when the United States invaded Puerto Rico’s shores.
43. Morales Carrión, *Puerto Rico*, 121–125. The manner in which the United States engaged Spanish land grants in Puerto Rico is reminiscent of their engagement with similar land grants across the now U.S.-Mexico border during the ratification of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo (see Daisy L. Machado., “The Historical Imagination and Latina/o Rights,” *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, Vol. 56. Nos. 1–2 (2002): 162–165, especially 164).
44. Lewis, *Puerto Rico*, 107–108, 111; Morales Carrión, *Puerto Rico*, 155–161.
45. Morales Carrión, *Puerto Rico*, 200–201; Lewis, *Puerto Rico*, 111; López, “The Evolution of a Colony,” 51, quoting Kal Wagenheim states, “[Puerto Ricans] automatically became United States citizens unless they signed a document refusing it. But this refusal deprived them of numerous civil rights, including the right to hold public office, and made them aliens in their own birthplace.”
46. EPICA Task Force, *Puerto Rico: A People Challenging Colonialism* (Washington, DC: Epica Task Force, 1976), 68–69; Morley, “Dependence and Development in Puerto Rico,” 173–174.
47. Max Weber’s classic *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. [Translated by Peter Baehr and Gordon C. Wells from the original German text, 1905 (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2002)] links the rise of industrial capitalism in the West to a particular Protestant theological understanding of human value related work. While many have critiqued his sociological theory, I believe his thesis continues to lend credibility to the existence of false and racially biased stereotypes regarding Puerto Ricans as lazy, docile and lacking of initiative.
48. Luís Nieves Falcón, “The Social Pathology of Dependence,” in *Puerto Rico: The Search for a National Policy*, Richard J. Bloomfield, ed. (Boulder, CO and London, UK: Westview Press, 1985), 51–56; Angel G. Quintero Rivera, “The Development of Social Classes and Political Conflicts in Puerto Rico,” in López, *The Puerto Ricans: their history, culture and society* (Rochester, VT: Schenkman Books, 1980), 214–215.

49. See his speech given before the Associated Press (1936), in Santiago, ed. *Boricuas*, p. 27–29; also Morales Carrión, *Puerto Rico*, 221–224, 234–236; Nelson A. Denis, *War Against All Puerto Ricans*, 109–131; and Laura Briggs *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science, and US Imperialism in Puerto Rico* [Berkley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2002], 74–81; all provide more background information on Albizu Campos.
50. See Alfredo Lopez, *The Puerto Rican Papers: Notes on the Re-emergence of a Nation* (Indianapolis, IN: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc.), 57–58.
51. See his poetry translated by Santiago in *Boricuas*, particularly “Hallelujahs” and “The Final Act.”
52. Alfredo Lopez outlines the drastic and devastating effects of the shift from a natural-agricultural to an urban-industrial lifestyle that “fractured the Puerto Rican consciousness.” This was the after effect of the mechanization of the sugar industry which led to the loss of sugar cane cutter jobs in the thousands; *The Puerto Rican Papers*, 72–73.
53. Cordasco and Bucchioni, *The Puerto Rican Experience*, 102–103.
54. Adalberto López, *The Puerto Ricans*, 214–215.
55. Morales Carrión, *Puerto Rico*, 183–184, reminiscent of the sugar cane workers strike of 1915; López, *The Puerto Ricans*, 142.
56. *Ibid.*, 234–235, 238–239.
57. Dale Nelson’s article, “The Political Behavior of New York Puerto Ricans: Assimilation or Survival,” asserts that Puerto Ricans who migrated to New York City do not fit the assimilation model of theorists as other ethnic groups from Europe, suggesting other cultural factors which preclude the desire to behave politically as part of the “melting pot”; in *The Puerto Rican Struggle: Essays on Survival in the US*, Clara E. Rodríguez, Virginia Sánchez Korrol and Jose Oscar Alers, eds. (New York, NY: Puerto Rican Migration Research Consortium, Inc., 1980), 90–110.
58. Denis (*War Against All Puerto Ricans*, 81–107) observes that while in the United States Muñoz Marín developed an addiction to opium. By 1940, Muñoz Marín was well established in the Puerto Rican political scene, but this addiction would plague him. As the son of a man who fought for Puerto Rican independence, and himself having been an advocate for independence heretofore, in the 1940s Muñoz Marín “repeatedly opposed the Tydings independence bill” that would have granted Puerto Rico full self-determination (98). “He even travelled to Washington in 1943 and 1945 to lobby against it, saying that Puerto Rico ‘was not ready for self-government’” (98). Many were concerned at the soon-to-be governor’s change of heart and rightfully so. As Denis

notes, his political shift was due to the fact that the FBI had a file on Muñoz Marín proving his opium addiction. Were this to be released, his political career would have ended. As a result, Muñoz Marín was at the bid and mercy of the FBI and any other government official for the remainder of his political career. As a compromised political figure in Puerto Rico, Muñoz Marín opposed Puerto Rican independence, passed a Public “Gag” Law 53 (which made it a felony “to own or display a Puerto Rican flag [even in one’s home]; to speak in favor of Puerto Rican independence; to print, publish, sell, or exhibit any material that might undermine the insular government; and to organize any society, group, or assembly of people with a similar intent”) and was placed in office as the first “elected” governor of Puerto Rico (102–107).

59. See Zavala and Rodríguez (*The Intellectual Roots of Independence*) for Albizu Campos; see Morales Carrión (*Puerto Rico*) for an excellent discussion on the influences which shaped the different approaches toward Puerto Rican political and economic viability of both Albizu Campos and Muñoz Marín, 221–241.
60. According to Ana María Díaz-Stevens (*Oxcart Catholicism on Fifth Avenue*), a good percentage of the people did shift from Catholicism to Protestantism, while others actually “converted”; today approximately 35% are Protestant, some never having been Catholic at all.
61. See Ana María Díaz-Stevens, “Aspects of Puerto Rican Religious Experience: A Socio-Historical Overview,” in *Latinos in New York: Communities in Transition*, Gabriel Haslip-Viera and Sherrie L. Baver, eds. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996).
62. René Marques’ book, *The Docile Puerto Rican* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1976), is representative of this; Gordon Lewis, in his acclaimed work, *Puerto Rico: Freedom and Power in the Caribbean*, makes suggestive comments which convey, in my opinion, a belief that the Puerto Rican, particularly in political terms, would rather play up to the powers that be rather than confront them head on. See Lewis, *Puerto Rico*, 62–65.
63. The stories of Juan Bobo, as part of Puerto Rican folklore, seem to convey this subtle subversion and resistance. Often in the disguise of children’s tales, Juan Bobo (John the Fool) takes on the persona of the trickster to convey a more profound message of self-determination associated with jíbaro consciousness: “Manrique Cabrera says this name is preferred by locals because it signifies the mentality of a true jíbaro: The character of Juan Bobo, under all its forms and costumes, seems to show, prima facie, an evolution in the stories where he is the main character. The simple fool transforms himself into a person that pretends to be a numskull using his foolishness as a disguise. This evolutionary

- slanting seems to reflect the assimilation of a trait attributed to the jíbaro's psychic. It refers to what has been called "jaibería," an attitude which feigns dullness to throw off those who come near. It is a defensive weapon whose ultimate efficacy is worth investigating." Translated from Manrique Cabrera, F. (1982). *Historia de la literatura puertorriqueña*. Rio Piedras, PR: Editorial Cultural, p. 62.
64. See Ana María Díaz-Stevens, *Oxcart Catholicism on Fifth Avenue*, 12–15.
 65. Operation Bootstrap, an economic development plan instituted by the United States to hasten the pace of "industrialization" on the island, was a major catalyst for the massive migration; in fact, the migration which ensued was an essential part of the Bootstrap plan. Ibid., 12–15.
 66. Ibid., Chap. 4.
 67. Fenton, *Understanding the Religious Background of the Puerto Rican*, 59–66; Joseph Fitzpatrick, *Puerto Rican Americans: The Meaning of Migration to the Mainland* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1987), Chap. 8 "Religion," 117–138.
 68. María E. Pérez y González, *Puerto Ricans in the United States* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000), 31–37.
 69. Morales Carrión, *Puerto Rico*, 267–273.
 70. EPICA Task Force, 23; Lewis, *Puerto Rico*, 143–164.
 71. Adalberto López, *The Puerto Ricans*, 190.
 72. Lewis' (*Puerto Rico*) chapter on "The Problem of Economic Dependency" gives a fair and balanced assessment of the complex issues facing Puerto Rico as a result of the policies enacted with the Operation Bootstrap program and beyond; 189–213; also, López, *The Puerto Ricans*, 180–188.
 73. In many respects the rise of "family planning" is directly connected to an "overpopulation" (and eugenic) rhetoric that began permeating Puerto Rico from the 1920's. Briefly, the United States infiltrated Puerto Rico during a rise in Neo-Malthusian thinking, which suggested that economic poverty was directly connected to overpopulation. Applied in Puerto Rico, this thinking conveniently ignored the issue of Puerto Rico's colonial relationship with the United States and diagnosed the cause of Puerto Rico's rising poverty as overpopulation. At first, some in power began to address the issue through encouraging emigration. Charles Allen and Arthur Yager, the first governors of the island (placed in power by the US government), encouraged Puerto Ricans to leave the island and find work elsewhere to alleviate the overpopulation of the island. This encouragement was further facilitated through the Jones Act of 1917 that gave Puerto Ricans United States citizenship and thus freedom to travel across the US. Over time, however, Neo-Malthusian logic manifest in more sinister ways as emigration was

pushed alongside sterilization. As Iris Lopez (*Matters of Choice: Puerto Rican Women's Struggle for Reproductive Freedom* [New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2008], 7) writes, "The reshaping of the Puerto Rican population and economy was not accomplished by emigration alone. A complementary government policy of sterilization arose simultaneously and the Puerto Rican and US governments developed Puerto Rico's economy through both emigration and sterilization, especially during the industrialization phase known as Operation Bootstrap [which began in 1948]. In essence, migration was used as the temporary response to Puerto Rico's overpopulation problem, while sterilization became the permanent solution." While it would take until Operation Bootstrap for sterilization to rise significantly, the structural foundations for its rise began in the early twentieth century through a rising birth control movement facilitated in the creation of various birth control and health clinics across the island. Muñoz Marín in the 1920s, for example, advocated strongly for birth control options offered by Margaret Sanger and what would become Planned Parenthood. She, alongside Clarence J. Gamble (an independently wealthy individual who founded the Asociación pro Salud Maternal e Infantil in 1936), worked to repeal Comstock Laws, establish eugenics boards, and later would push for testing the Birth Control Pill on Puerto Rican women—many of whom became sterilized in the process. This push for family planning directly arose from the clinics and propaganda of Sanger, Gamble, and others which inherently stemmed from a Neo-Malthusian ideology implemented into practice. Thus, one needs to ask how much choice Puerto Ricans, generally, and Puerto Rican women, particularly, were given in thinking about family planning. For more, see Briggs, *Reproducing Empire*, 93; Angela Franks, *Margaret Sanger's Eugenic Legacy: The Control of Female Fertility* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc. Publishers, 2005), 132–137; Iris Morales, "Sterilized Puerto Ricans," in *The Young Lords: A Reader*, ed. Darrel Enck-Wanzer (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2010), 165–166; Jennifer A. Nelson, "Abortions under Community Control," in *Journal of Women's History* 13.1 (2001): 157–180.

74. Edna Acosta-Belén, "Women in Twentieth-Century Puerto Rico," in López, *The Puerto Ricans: their history, culture and society* (Rochester, VT: Schenkman Books, 1980), 273–282.
75. Lewis, *Puerto Rico*, 187; Morales Carrión, *Puerto Rico*, 273, 315.
76. As a result of the change to Free Associated State status in 1952, the United States put forth the argument that it was no longer required to report to the United Nations regarding the condition of its "non-autonomous territory"; thus the US could operate unchecked and

- unregulated in Puerto Rico without any recourse by the Puerto Rican people or the international community. See Juan Mari Bras, *The Case of Puerto Rico at the United Nations*, as cited in EPICA Task Force, 101–103.
77. An artist's illustration depicting the same, the sole of the boot coming loose to expose the bare foot, can be found in the EPICA Task Force text, 28.
 78. Morales Carrión, *Puerto Rico*, 273–282.
 79. Adalberto López, *The Puerto Ricans*, 159–160; Morales Carrión, *Puerto Rico*, 276; Denis, *War Against All Puerto Ricans*, 103–107.
 80. Morales Carrión, *Puerto Rico*, 293–294.
 81. Fitzpatrick, *Puerto Rican Americans*, 32.
 82. EPICA Task Force, 29; Morales Carrión, *Puerto Rico*, 308–309; Bloomfield, *Puerto Rico*, 19–21; Adalberto López, *The Puerto Ricans*, 164–165.
 83. *Ibid.*, 331–332; Bloomfield, *Puerto Rico*, 141–156, 173–177; Morales Carrión, *Puerto Rico*, 288–289.
 84. Díaz-Stevens, *Oxcart Catholicism on Fifth Avenue*, 19.
 85. *Ibid.*, Chap. 2; Fenton, *Understanding the Religious Background of the Puerto Rican*, 59.
 86. See socioeconomic data compiled by David Traverzo, "Towards a Theology of Mission in the US Puerto Rican Migrant Community: from Captivity to Liberation," *Apuntes* 9.3: 51–54.
 87. See Linda Chavez' chapter, "The Puerto Rican Exception," in *Out of the Barrio: Toward a New Politics of Hispanic Assimilation* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991), 139–159. While Chavez' thesis is staunchly conservative, advocating a relinquishing of culture and community in order to assimilate more easily into a changing environment, she outlines the unique aspects of Puerto Rican life in the northern cities that suggest the negative impact of the weight of colonization, unequalled in the experience of other Hispanic groups.
 88. The Hispanic population in the United States includes the following groups identified as such via the US Census Bureau Current Population Survey by type of origin: Mexican, Central and South American, Puerto Rican, Cuban and Other Hispanic. This population universe does not include residents of the island of Puerto Rico; those statistics are captured on the International Database set of the Census Bureau. Sharon R. Ennis, Merarys Rios-Vargas, and Nora G. Albert, "The Hispanic Population: 2010," 3.
 89. The poverty rate of non-Hispanic whites in 1997, 2002 and 2011 was 8.6%, 7.8%, and less than 14% respectively; see also Suzanne Macartney, Alemayehu Bishaw, and Kayla Fontenot, "Poverty Rates for Selected

- Detailed Race and Hispanic Groups by State and Place: 2007–2011,” in *American Community Survey Briefs* (Washington, DC: United States Census Bureau, 2013), 5.
90. As of 2010, the top five states where Puerto Ricans lived are: NY: 1,070,558; FL: 847,550; NJ: 434,092; PA: 366,082; MA: 266,125. Sharon R. Ennis, Merarys Rios-Vargas, and Nora G. Albert, “The Hispanic Population: 2010,” 8.
 91. Sonia G. Collazo, Camille L. Ryan, Kurt J. Bauman, “Profile of the Puerto Rican Population in United States and Puerto Rico: 2008” (presentation, Annual Meeting of the Population Association of America, Dallas, TX, April 15–17, 2010).
 92. Meizhu Lui, et al., “The Economic Reality of Being Latino/a in the United States,” in *Race, Class and Gender in the United States*, Paula Rothenberg and Kelly Mayhew ed., 9th edition (New York, NY: Worth Publishers, 2013) 373.
 93. The percentage of children living below the poverty level among other Hispanic groups is as follows: Mexican 36%, Other Hispanic 38.1%, Central and South American 33.2%, and Cuban 20.7%. In addition, over one-half of children under the age of 18 in Puerto Rico live in poverty; in 2000, the percentage was a staggering 58.2% (Source: “Children and the Households They Live In: 2000” Census 2000 Special Reports [Censr-14]). More recent data demonstrates that not very much has changed; see Lui, “The Economic Reality of Being Latino/a in the United States,” in *Race, Class and Gender in the United States*, 371–374.
 94. The Young Lords Party, *Palante* (Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2011), 10. Originally published in 1971.
 95. Pérez y González, *Puerto Ricans in the United States*, 50–51; Andrés Torres and José E. Velázquez, *The Puerto Rican Movement: Voices from the Diaspora* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1998), 223–224, on this point specifically, although a number of essays in this anthology speak about the activities of the Young Lords Organization and the Young Lords Party in Chicago, Philadelphia and New York City.
 96. During her campaign, Congresswoman Velázquez’ medical records were released unlawfully, on the eve of the 1992 primary, demonstrating that she had undergone therapy for depression and an attempted suicide. In spite of the disclosure and perhaps due to her unflinching defense and perseverance, Velázquez won the primary and subsequent election; she continues to serve as the first Puerto Rican woman elected to the U.S. Congress. See A. Rubin, “Records No Longer for Doctors’ Eye Only,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 1, 1998, A1.

97. See María Teresa Babín, "A Special Voice: The Cultural Expression," in Morales Carrión ed. *Puerto Rico: A Political and Cultural History* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1983), 319–352.
98. Pope Francis visited Our Lady Queen of Angels R.C. School in East Harlem during his visit to New York City on September 25, 2015, where parishioners—mostly black and brown working class and immigrant—had fought to keep the church from closing to no avail in 2007.
99. Clara E. Rodríguez, *Puerto Ricans: Born in the USA* (Boston, MA: Unwin Hyman, Inc., 1989), 85–91.
100. Joseph Fitzpatrick, *Puerto Rican Americans*, 26, 101.
101. See Mercer Sullivan's essay on the Puerto Rican community of Sunset Park in Brooklyn, "Puerto Ricans in Sunset Park, Brooklyn: Poverty Amidst Ethnic and Economic Diversity," in *In the Barrios: Latinos and the Underclass Debate*, Joan Moore and Raquel Pinderhughes, eds. (New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation, 1993), 1–25; Pérez y González, *Puerto Ricans in the United States*, 63–84.
102. Díaz-Stevens, "Aspects of Puerto Rican Religious Experience," 168–169; Fitzpatrick, *Puerto Rican Americans*, 128–138, although the author details the few programs which specifically benefited New York Puerto Ricans such as the San Juan Fiesta.
103. For more on The Young Lords Party see: Jennifer A. Nelson, "Abortions Under Community Control," 157–180; Wanzer-Serrano, *The New York Young Lords and the Struggle for Liberation* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2015); Johanna L. del C. Fernández, "Radicals in the Late 1960s: A History of the Young Lords Party in New York City, 1969–1974," (Dissertation, Columbia University, 2004); Elias Ortega-Aponte, "Young Lords Party," in *Hispanic American Religious Culture, Encyclopedia*. Ed. by Miguel De La Torre. Pages 583–585. United States: ABC-CLIO, 2009; Darrel Enck-Wanzer, *The Young Lords: A Reader* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2010); The Young Lord Party, *Palante*.
104. See "Dirty Love: Collective Agency and Decolonial Tropicalization in the Garbage Offensive," in Wanzer-Serrano, *The New York Young Lords and the Struggle for Liberation*, pp. 122–143; and pp. 59 and 169 for information on the Lincoln Hospital Offensive.
105. Torres and Velázquez, *The Puerto Rican Movement*, 5–22, although the entire volume is a chronicle of the vibrant and active movements of the Puerto Rican diaspora community.
106. Ibid., 45–46, 155; Jorge Duany, *Puerto Rican Nation on the Move: Identities on the Island and in the United States* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 185–207.

107. Torres and Velázquez, *The Puerto Rican Movement*, 212–213, 155–172; Pérez y González, *Puerto Ricans in the United States*, 50–51.
108. Alfredo Lopez names this persona “Slick,” a new urban hero replacing the stereotype of the folk hero of the jíbaro, which resonates more accurately with the urban experience. However, Lopez acknowledges that this persona is an unhealthy one, as it glorifies the life of a hustler, “Slick was an illusory prototype, a folk hero who did not create new values but mimicked the very values of American society in a perverted way.” In *The Puerto Rican Papers*, 181–187.
109. See Andrés Torres’ “Introduction” to *The Puerto Rican Movement: Voices from the Diaspora*.
110. See Anthony M. Stevens-Arroyo and María E. Sánchez, eds. *Toward a renaissance of Puerto Rican studies: ethnic and area studies in university education*. (Boulder, CO: Social Science Monographs; Highland Lakes, NJ: Atlantic Research and Publications; New York, NY: Distributed by Columbia University Press, 1987).
111. <http://www.larespuetamedia.com/>
112. As one of the last executive actions of the Obama administration, Oscar López Rivera’s 55-year prison sentence was commuted in January 2017 after serving almost 36 years in federal prison. See Oscar López Rivera, *Between Torture and Resistance*, ed. Luis Nieves Falcón (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2013).
113. James Gibney, “As Cuba rises, Puerto Rico keeps on slipping: Caribbean U.S. Policies Raise Questions,” *Bloomberg View*, March 27, 2016.
114. Submission to the United Nations Universal Periodic Review, Ninth Session of the Working Group on the UPR Human Rights Council (November 2010), “THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF U.S. FOREIGN POLICY ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN COLOMBIA, HAITI AND PUERTO RICO,” “Recommendations: 1. The United States should expedite the process to allow Puerto Ricans to exercise fully their inalienable right to self-determination and independence, in conformity with General Assembly Resolution 1514 (XV) and the applicability of the fundamental principles of that resolution. 2. As part of that process, the United States should withdraw its military, courts, the FBI and other repressive forces from Puerto Rico; disclose all documents documenting the repression of the independence movement, including those documenting the assassination of its members and leaders; and release Puerto Rican political prisoners serving prison sentences for cases relating to the struggle for the independence of Puerto Rico.”



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