

ReVista

HARVARD REVIEW OF LATIN AMERICA • SPRING 2008

Puerto Rico

The Island and Beyond

EDITOR'S LETTER

I'm often asked what was the first country I ever visited in Latin America. I stumble and have to think before answering. That's not because I have a bad memory.

I'm just not sure what counts as Latin America. Outside of my predominantly Dominican neighborhood on Manhattan's Upper West Side, the first Latin American "country" I ever visited was Puerto Rico. I went to a Casals Festival there in February 1967, enjoying the tropical sun and melodious classical music.

But Puerto Rico's not precisely a country. And it's not a state either. The ambivalent nature of its status mingled with my perception at that time that Puerto Rico was entirely too gringo. While my Dominican neighbors were insisting on selling milk to me at the bodega in Spanish, my tourist experience and San Juan's high-rise buildings gave me the impression that Puerto Rico was very American in the U.S. sense of the word. The people were wonderful and the music was great, and I fell in love with the taste of piononos, but all in all, I came away feeling that Puerto Rico was Latin Lite.

Flash forward many, many years to my second and third trips to Puerto Rico, both of them for international conferences in the 1990s. I'd lived and worked for more than 14 years in Latin America by then, and Spanish was very much second nature.

On one of these trips, I was looking for a novel by Chilean writer Antonio Skarmeta. I browsed the university area bookstores in Rio Piedras and finally checked out an excellent bookstore in Old San Juan. The book wasn't in stock, but the manager advised me, "Go to Plaza Las Ámericas. Go to the bookstore in the mall."

Now, going to a mall in what was sort of a Latin American country certainly did not figure on my agenda of things to do. The manager read my face, picked up the phone and called the bookstore. "They have it," he said, so off I went to the mall, filled with the kind of chain stores I generally avoid in my daily life on the mainland. After buying the book, I stayed and people-watched.

That's when I realized that Puerto Rico was actually very Latin American in culture and spirit. Yes, there was a food court, but grandparents, moms, dads, teens and tykes were promenading there as if it were an outdoor plaza that just happened to have airconditioning. Families were talking and walking and couples were courting; it was the same space as one finds in U.S. suburbs, but it was being lived completely differently.

After that experience, I began to realize that Puerto Ricans were experts at being transnational; they were experts at what anthropologists call code-switching, talking one way to one type of person and another way to another, according to the imagined cultural context.

So on my fourth and most recent trip to Puerto Rico this February, I became more conscious of my own codes. I lingered after sales transactions and tried to engage people as I do in Colombia or Guatemala. I found transnational people in a transnational society, pioneers perhaps in an emerging world.

I'm not sure it's whether I was less concerned with identity on this trip, but I became aware that, beyond issues of status and identity, Puerto Ricans were concerning themselves with Latin American issues and challenges: sustainable tourism, violence, the environment, inequity and the urban-rural divide.

Again, the people were wonderful and the music was great. But I came away with many questions about a country that is not quite a country, that looks forwards and backwards at the same time and lives in a simultaneity of many different realities.

Many people on the Island and beyond helped me to understand and shape this issue. Dr. Carmen Oquendo-Villar was an inspiration and a constant resource, my spiritual co-editor. Yrsa Dávila tirelessly helped obtain photographs and art, and cover artist Antonio Martorell became an important interlocutor in my quest for understanding.

I thank them and I thank the Puerto Rican people—on the Island and beyond—who have brought this issue into being. Gracias!

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DRCLAS: Merilee S. Grindle, *Director* • Kathy Eckroad, *Associate Director*

EDITORIAL STAFF: June Carolyn Erlick, *Editor in-Chief* • Anita Safran, Maria Regan, *Publications Team*
Carmen James, Annelie Berner, *Publications Interns*

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READER FORUM: <jerlick@fas.harvard.edu>

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THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY

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The politics of identity have traditionally revolved around issues of status. Now Puerto Ricans on the Island and beyond are also examining questions of race, diaspora and what it means to be boricua in a transnational society.

Recolonization or Decolonization?

The Neocolonial Project of the United States in Puerto Rico

BY RAMÓN GROSFOGUEL

THE STATUS DEBATE IS OUR NATIONAL SPORT, WE PUERTO RICANS like to say. After more than a century of U.S. colonialism, the issue of the status of the island is still unresolved. The first impasse is a local one between the pro-Estado Libre Asociado forces (pro-status quo Commonwealth status represented by the Partido Popular Democrático) and the pro-statehood movement (annexationists, represented by the Partido Nuevo Progresista, who seek to become the 51st state of the United States). The country is divided between these two poles—each representing 48 percent of the total votes of electors in the country for a total of 96 percent—while the remaining 4 percent of the total support independence.

The most recent 2004 elections confirm this impasse. The Partido Popular Estado Libre Asociado forces won by some 3,000 votes thanks

to thousands of independentista votes. The status issue is so much a popular sport that it has its own popular jargon; these votes were referred to as “pivazos.” The colorful word combines the term for those voting for the pro-independence Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño (PIP)—better known as “pipiols”—and the straw hat, or “pava,” symbolizing the pro-“Estado Libre Asociado” or pro-Commonwealth status of the Popular Democratic Party (PPD).

The well-documented political corruption and opportunistic politics of the main two parties, Partido Popular Democrático (PPD) and the Partido Nuevo Progresista (PNP), have exacerbated the profound economic crisis experienced in the island for the past few years. We say exacerbated because the institutional crisis of the Estado Libre Asociado (abbreviated in Spanish as ELA or meaning literally in English Free Associated State) as it exists now as a colonial relation is at the root of the crisis that is experienced and

Confronting the legacy of U.S. colonialism

PHOTOGRAPH BY JACK DELANO
COURTESY OF FUNDACIÓN LUIS MUÑOZ MARÍN

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reflected in all aspects of the social and economic life of the island. The ELA is obsolete as a political status.

The systemic crisis of the capitalist system is real, but is aggravated by the obsolescence of the ELA. Massive deindustrialization and high unemployment rates are worsening. The crisis of the ELA has generated countless social problems, and it no longer creates employment and lacks the indices of development that it had achieved in prior decades. Facing this reality, the need to decolonize the island becomes imperative. But with respect to how we resolve this situation, there exists a second impasse between empire and colony.

The empire would need to allow a federally recognized referendum in which the decolonial alternatives recognized under international law and the United Nations are included as options. In such a referendum, only three alternatives are possible: statehood (annexation as a state of the United States), an associated republic (sovereignty with autonomous status), or independence. Under current international law, the Estado Libre Asociado—which represents the current colonial situation that must be eliminated—could not represent a decolonial alternative. If the ELA were to continue as a status alternative, the country would remain divided in two halves: colonialist estadolibristas and annexationists, without an absolute majority of fifty-plus-one in support of any decolonial option. This local impasse emerged when, after the Cold War (1989), the empire suspended two proposals for federally recognized plebiscites (one in 1991 under a Democratic Congress and the other in 1998 under a Republican Congress). The two plebiscites were suspended because the elimination of the ELA as a status alternative in a referendum would leave only the three decolonial options recognized by international law (statehood, associated republic, and independence).

Thus, 90 percent of Puerto Ricans would most likely vote for the statehood option to become the 51st state of the United States. That is, the immense majority of those who currently vote for the PPD pro-Estado Libre Asociado status quo would vote for statehood before they would support either a neo-colonial associated or independent republic.

According to what imperial elites have expressed on many occasions, including that expressed by then-Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott in the late 90s, within the new post-Cold War context their reticence or fear toward Puerto Rico is not as an autonomous or independent republic, but rather the incorporation of Puerto Rico as the 51st state of the union. After a hundred years of colonialism, the formula of a neo-colonial republic (be it associated or independent) would allow the empire to trim back—under the name of a false decolonization—the strategy of neo-colonial recolonization rights that have been won through much sweat and blood.

The Puerto Rican people are not misinformed: they know very well what a neo-colonial republic in the Caribbean and Latin America is. Through a strategy of changing juridical status to a neo-colonial republic (autonomous or independent), Puerto Ricans would lose at the stroke of a pen the citizenship rights won under U.S. citizenship. This means that islanders would no longer have access to the federal minimum wage, the right to battle the empire in federal courts, the right to receive billions of dollars of federal transfers/compensations, the right to federal institutions (which allows access to massive FHA loans for private housing, millions of dollars in federal transfers for public housing, millions of dollars through FEMA in cases of natural disasters such as hurricanes and earthquakes, federal insurance for savings accounts of more than \$100,000 in case a bank goes bankrupt, social security for all citi-



zens, state medical insurance for the poor and those over 65, etc.), and the right to migrate if one cannot find employment on the island. These are neither panaceas nor are they gifts of the empire. We are speaking of rights that we Puerto Ricans have conquered and seized from the empire. These are conquests that cannot be underestimated in the neo-liberal world of savage capitalism that is experienced in the neo-colonial periphery of the world system.

The rights enjoyed by citizens of peripheral nations are not the same as those enjoyed by metropolitan citizens, however limited the latter may be. The social and civil rights included in metropolitan citizenship—even if these have been cut back, as is the case in the United States (from Reagan to the most recent Bush administration)—are still greater than those afforded by most peripheral citizenships. The cutbacks in rights guaranteed by peripheral citizenships resulting from international capital's neo-liberal offensive during the past three decades have maintained the condition of absolute inequality between these and metropolitan citizenships, despite the cutbacks and limitations that the latter have also experienced during these last decades. As a result, inequalities between peripheral and metropolitan citizenship have not disappeared, but rather have become more pronounced in all cases. This is not to claim that in the first world, civil and social rights represent a panacea, especially not in the post-Bush United States.

However, compared to peripheral citizenship, the popular sectors in Puerto Rico enjoy more rights than their counterparts in Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Argentina, Mexico or Jamaica. In the end, this inequality in social and civil citizenship is a central and constitutive part of the North/South inequalities of the capitalist world-system; it represents an integral part of the struggles to decolonize the global coloniality of power. Meanwhile, having witnessed the debacle of peripheral citizenships, members of the Puerto Rican popular classes opt not to lose their metropolitan citizenship.

Popular sectors in Puerto Rico know these realities very well. They know that the transfers, institutionality and rights granted by U.S. citizenship are not accessible—with all the cutbacks experienced and problems they bring—in the same way to the popular sectors of Latin America and the Caribbean. This has not only protected the island from extreme poverty, but has also protected us from the neo-liberal incursions of disciplinary agencies of capital like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB). As a U.S. territory under U.S. sovereignty, these agencies cannot constantly meddle in politics or blackmail with debt as they do with the rest of the neo-colonial republics in the Caribbean and Latin America. As many workers in Puerto Rico express, peripheral republics live colonialism without the benefits of colonialism. In these cases, they say, the empire loots, dominates and exploits without transferring a single penny to the popular sectors and without creating the necessary institutional conditions allowing people to survive at least decently. Frequently, the only money from the empire to Latin America and the Caribbean is military and foreign aid that never reaches the popular sectors and ends up in the pockets of the local elites and the United States' military-industrial complex. This explains why, even with all of the island's



Left: Pro-Commonwealth political graffiti adorn a wall.
Right: Popular sectors in Puerto Rico understand its realities.

social and economic problems (and these are many), the options of independence or an associated republic together cannot achieve more than 10 percent of Puerto Rican votes.

But why have imperial elites shifted from decades of opposition to the autonomous or independent republic to fearing statehood since the early 1990s? Once the Cold War had ended, imperial elites no longer needed to continue to oppose the sovereign alternatives in Puerto Rico (as they did from 1898 to 1989), because the island no longer had the symbolic or strategic military value for the struggle against other empires that it had during much of the 20th century (e.g. Germany in the first half of past century and the Soviet Union in the second half). For imperial elites, the island now constitutes an unnecessary expense for the federal treasury (more than \$13 billion annually). During almost the entire 20th century, the island had functioned as a military bastion and/or Cold War symbolic showcase of U.S. developmentalist policies. The ELA or Commonwealth status was indeed a creation of the Cold War because of fear of pro-Soviet anti-colonialist rhetoric. However, after the disappearance of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, it was more convenient for imperial elites to move the island toward a neo-colonial republic in order to exploit and dominate at a lower cost without the headache of the possible incorporation of an Afro-Latino state like Puerto Rico. That would be highly undesirable at a moment in which—according to even the conservative calculations of the U.S. Census Bureau—white Anglo-Saxons will be a demographic minority in their own country by the middle of the 21st century. According to the census, the fastest growing population in the United States are Latinos. It is within this context that we confront the ironic situation that after opposing Puerto Rican sovereignty throughout most of the 20th century, imperial elites now rotundly oppose statehood (annexation), while they favor sovereign options (which, given the reality of the neo-colonial periphery, we should call pseudo-sovereign) like the neo-colonial associated or independent republic.

Thus, there exists a second impasse between the Puerto Rican people and imperial elites: the people would vote overwhelmingly for statehood in a decolonial referendum that follows the guidelines of international law (without the ELA as an option), in order to not lose (through a neo-colonial republic) access to previously won rights and resources, while imperial elites would support a neo-

island, because: 1) this would eliminate federal transfers to popular sectors so that this money might instead fall into the hands of local capitalists through foreign aid from the U.S. Department of State (crumbs in the millions of dollars for the pockets of local elites instead of the billion that the popular sectors now receive); 2) it would eliminate restrictive federal laws, thereby making the economy more competitive and cheaper for foreign investment (corporations and transnational banks) 3) it would allow entry into the WB and the IMF (whose neoliberal plans and interventions have led to devastation and bankruptcy in many Third World countries). This option would make exploitation and imperial domination of Puerto Rico cheaper for the United States, of which the only beneficiaries would be imperial and associated local elites. Facing such a situation, the question is the same one that thousands of Puerto Rican workers ask: sovereignty for whom? This neo-colonial sovereignty would consolidate the alliance between local capitalist elites (who would control the Puerto Rican national state) and transnational capitalist elites (who would control economic, military and political operations). Fewer than 5 percent of the island's voters support this option.

In this scenario, along with other intellectuals, I have supported since the 1990s the idea of radical statehood as a political project framed in the struggle for the decolonization of the empire (against white supremacy, patriarchy, imperialism and capitalism) from within its own bowels in alliance with those discriminated minorities who will constitute a demographic majority within a few short decades. The struggle for equality of citizenship for Puerto Ricans is not only a civil rights movement, but also an important step in the battle for the decolonization of the empire from within the belly of the beast (as José Martí would say). The incorporation of Puerto Rico as a state of the union would represent a key part of struggles for the decolonization and radical transformation of the empire in the 21st century. It would be the first Latino state in a context in which white, Anglo-American populations are becoming a demographic minority in their own country. While this struggle is not deterministically decided, we choose to side with uncertainty and the risks that this carries with it rather than support the inevitable certainty of imperial exploitation/domination that an associated or independent neo-colonial republic would bring. Our position

is not far from that of the majority of Puerto Ricans. Would the Republic of Puerto Rico be an exception to what has occurred in other Latin American and Caribbean republics? Only a local nationalist chauvinism mixed with an exceptionalistic idea of Puerto Rican superiority could allow us to deliriously dream that Puerto Rico would be the only Caribbean island to escape imperial control and exploitation (by

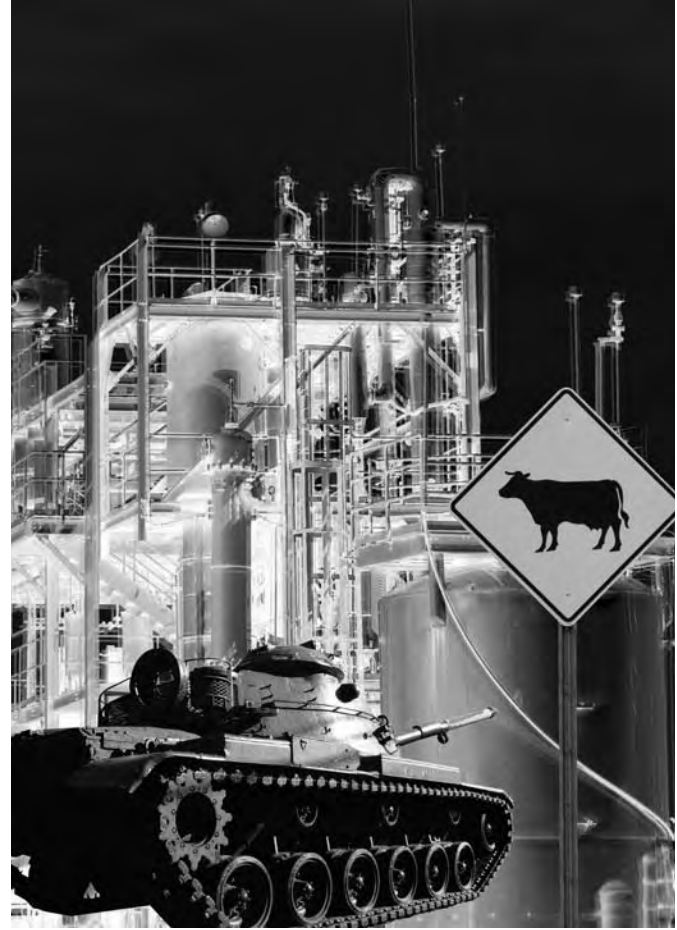
the U.S. or European powers) and intervention by disciplinary neo-liberal agencies of global capital.

A decolonial project in Puerto Rico cannot be one in which the vision and interests of a minority of neo-colonial elites aspiring to be a national bourgeoisie, to be presidents and senators of the Republic or ambassadors or consuls in foreign countries, are imposed on the population in an authoritarian manner. In their rejection of the associated or independent neo-colonial republic and their struggle for citizenship equality, Puerto Ricans express a

With statehood status, Puerto Rico would become the first Latino state in a context in which white, Anglo-American populations are becoming a demographic minority in their own country.

colonial sovereign option to cut back federal costs on the island, reduce rights such as federal environmental laws and the minimum wage, and eliminate the possibility of a Latino state, thereby improving the conditions of exploitation for transnational capital on the island while maintaining military control.

Faced with this situation, what are we to do? One option is what native Puerto Rican elites choose: accept that imperial elites don't want us and opt for neo-colonial independence or autonomy. That is, to support the imperial neo-colonial recolonization of the



Artist Garvin Sierra's 3D images show "Sor-dado," a play on the Spanish words for "soldier" and "nun" and (right) "Zona sagrada" or "sacred zone" express mixed images and symbols of Puerto Rican life.

decolonial potential that moves in a very different direction from the Latin American tradition of equating decolonization with independence. Puerto Ricans are very conscious of the colonial limitations on independence in our region. We need only glance at the inequalities existing between the independent and the non-independent Caribbean to get an idea of how the neo-colonial independent republic is the worst form of colonialism at present.

The Puerto Rican struggle for citizen equality—by both pro-Estado Libre Asociado and pro-statehood forces—contributes not only to resisting cutbacks in rights and resources entailed by the neo-colonial recolonization option of imperial elites, but moreover, integrating ourselves into the decolonization struggle within the empire through equal citizenship would be our best expression of solidarity with our Caribbean and Latin American brothers and sisters. For example, a single senator can paralyze the U.S. Congress. This is a power that no United Nations ambassador enjoys. The most radical response to the Puerto Rican context is not to create one more neo-colonial republic to resolve a problem for the imperial elites. The most progressive course is to fight from within for a democratic, anti-imperialist, anti-patriarchal, and anti-capitalist decolonization of the empire during the 21st century, and to insert the Puerto Rican decolonial struggle into the anti-imperial decolonial struggle of Latinos and other minorities inside the U.S. empire.

We don't need another neo-colonial republic with a vote in the United Nations, votes that mean little to the empire. What is more necessary—from a progressive perspective—is for a Latin American nation to enter with full rights into the empire with senators and representatives with the power to challenge it.

We Puerto Ricans have a historic opportunity that no other country in the region has: the right to demand equal citizenship and incorporation as a state with two senators and eight representatives (more representatives than 26 states in the union) in the U.S. Congress, to serve as a vehicle and expression of anti-imperial struggles within the empire. Nothing would be better for the U.S. population and the people of the world at large than to struggle to put an end to the imperial North American republic, and to radically transform the United States into a truly democratic, anti-capitalist, anti-patriarchal and anti-imperialist society, toward the achievement of more just and democratic world.

Ramón Grosfoguel is a professor in Department of Ethnic Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. He is the author of Colonial Subjects: Puerto Ricans in a Global/Comparative Perspective (University of California Press, 2003) and co-editor of Latin@s in the World-System: Decolonization Struggles in the 21st Century US Empire (Paradigm Press, 2005). He wishes to thank George Ciccariello-Maher, who translated this essay.

Boricuas vs. Nuyoricans—Indeed!

A Look at Afro-Latinos

BY MIRIAM JIMÉNEZ ROMÁN

A CONTROVERSIAL VIDEO FEATURES PHOTOGRAPHS OF SMILING fair-skinned beauty contest winners and fashion models contrasted with images of scantily dressed, full-bodied, dark-skinned women in public spaces—“evidence” of the cultural and aesthetic differences between “real” Puerto Ricans and those who make illegitimate claims on that identity.

These are the verbal and visual claims of a video making recent rounds on the Internet, explaining the alleged differences between Puerto Ricans on the Island and those in the United States. The two-minute video, which has repeatedly been yanked from YouTube, informs the viewer that “Puerto Ricans come from the island,” are overwhelmingly “blancos” or mestizos of Taíno and European ancestry, and “typically VERY classy and/or preppy or as we say in Puerto Rico ‘fino.’” Island Puerto Ricans are also highly educated, the video asserts. In contrast, Nuyoricans are “3rd or 4th generation Puerto Ricans that are usually mixed with African Americans, CAN NOT speak Spanish or speak it very badly!!! They act very, very trashy and ghetto or as we say in Puerto Rico *cafre*!!!” Nuyoricans are Afrocentric and one is more likely to find them “in prison than in college.” Indeed, Nuyoricans—a misnomer since it encompasses the entire Puerto Rican diaspora—often seem to be a target in this video and beyond for anti-Afro-Latino sentiment. Nuyoricans come under fire for their apparent obsession with race and racism and, most particularly, their identification with African-Americans and blackness.

I first encountered this view of Nuyoricans decades ago when I followed my parents’ dream and took the *guagua aérea* back to the land of my birth. I quickly learned that to be from the States was to suffer from a social disability, a condition that the island-bred believed I had best overcome for the good of the Puerto Rican nation, if not my own accommodation.

That was in the 1970s, when Puerto Rico was being invaded by a seeming horde of return migrants. The children of the diaspora were already perceived as a problem, one that taxed the island’s already scarce resources and presented perspectives that seemed antithetical to long-cherished ideas about Puerto Rican identity. Throughout my many years living and working in Puerto Rico there was rarely a reference to *los de afuera* that wasn’t, on some level, derogatory, so that even compliments (*¡Ay, pero tu no pareces ser de allá!*) only reinforced this sense of undesirable otherness.

The image of Nuyoricans as immoral, violent, dirty, lazy, welfare-dependent, drug-addicted felons was not restricted to the United States; to this day, both countries produce media images that depict stateside Puerto Ricans as overwhelmingly engaged in some type of objectionable behavior. Even by the most sympathetic of accounts, it’s assumed that living in what José Martí referred to as the “entrails of the monster” ruins Puerto Ricans,

robs them of language and culture, and leaves them susceptible to destructive foreign influences.

One aspect of this alleged foreign influence is the Nuyorican attitude toward race. Yet many foreign ideas have found fertile ground in Puerto Rico. For instance, despite initial skepticism about the feminist movement, by the late 1970s, the Island boasted a number of feminist organizations, as well as the official endorsement of the Commonwealth government. At the Comisión Para los Asuntos de la Mujer, for example, programs and literature developed in the United States barely underwent any alteration in their transfer to Puerto Rico; most were merely translated into Spanish.

Puerto Rico as a “Latin” country exempts itself from racism even as it distances itself from its Blackness, identifying “real” Blackness as somehow inconsistent with Hispanic history and culture.

Not only were these “foreign ideas” acceptable but so too was the format—neither message (middle-class feminism) nor messenger (in the main, white women) met with the easy dismissal affected against Nuyoricans who talked about race and racism. Nor were those islanders who espoused the new ideas about women’s place in society any more receptive to the new ideas about race than was the general population. Thus, when I described my own research on racism in Puerto Rico to the then-director of the Comisión, I was assured that “we don’t have such problems here.” Little wonder, then, that more than twenty-five years after Isabelo Zenón Cruz published his biting exposé on racism in Puerto Rico, *Narciso descubre su trasero*, there is still no official acknowledgment of its existence on the island. Newspapers, magazines and the broadcast media continue to ask if racism exists, rather than acknowledging that it does, a tactic followed by the island’s Civil Rights Commission in its rare publications on the subject. Nor is it surprising that Black Puerto Rican women, so long ignored as women and as Blacks, found themselves compelled to establish their own organization, La Unión de Mujeres Puertorriqueñas Negras, as a vehicle for fighting the silence, invisibility and abuse that marks their participation in *la gran familia puertorriqueña*.

This reluctance to engage racism as anything other than an imported “gringo” problem is consistent with the exceptionalist posture typical throughout Latin America, where the myth of racial democracy has continued to dominate national discourse despite well-documented evidence to the contrary. Puerto Rico, identifying as culturally “Hispanic,” has looked for its models to an increasingly Europeanized Spain and to other Spanish-speaking countries. The prevalent tendency is to ignore the neighboring Caribbean islands, full of “*negros de verdad*,” and instead to focus

on a *Hispanoamérica* ostensibly full of mestizos, indios and blancos—all bound by the same reluctance to acknowledge its strong African roots.

Puerto Rico as a “Latin” country exempts itself from racism even as it distances itself from its Blackness, identifying “real” Blackness as somehow inconsistent with Hispanic history and culture—or with history and culture, more generally. This perspective has become the official line, made real by repetition rather than concrete experience or the historical record. The contradictions have provided space for and encouraged the creation of a Taino revival movement overwhelmingly composed of second and third generation stateside Puerto Ricans who, by laying claim to indigeneity and thus the most “original” roots, propose to out-authenticate the islanders. It is a view that leaves unexplained why a people ostensibly so proud of their racial mixture overwhelmingly reject mixed race classifications. Revealingly, and to the consternation of many, more than 80% of islanders self-identified as white in the 2000 census.

It is to this white identity that our amateur video-maker pays homage, citing census figures and the mitochondrial-DNA studies of University of Puerto Rico biologist Juan Carlos Cruz Martínez to buttress his argument that “real” Puerto Ricans owe their genetic and cultural *mestizaje* to European and indigenous peoples. And it is this understanding of a de-Africanized *mestizaje* that many Puerto Ricans cling to when they first arrive in the United States.

It permits a scenario in which Puerto Ricans, defined as neither Black nor white, arrive in the United States devoid of racial prejudice only to be accosted by it in their new home. Puerto Ricans are presumably taught racism in the U.S. and forced to choose between Black or white identity, to the detriment of their “true” cultural selves. This perspective, prevalent in the scholarship produced since the 1930s, is also expressed in the autobiographical novel *Down These Mean Streets*, as the dark-skinned Piri Thomas anguishes over being “caught up between two sticks.” Yet, it would be more accurate to say that Thomas and the others are actually stuck between the myth of racial democracy with its implicit preference for a bleached *mestizaje*, and the reality of African descent as a liability. The choice, if choice there were, is not between Black and white but between the myth of race-free color blindness and the reality of anti-Black racism. It is this fundamental contradiction that provided fertile ground for new ways to understand race.

The generation that came of age in the 1960s and 1970s saw what earlier migrants have seen from the beginning of the Latino presence in the United States. Since the turn of the century people such as bibliophile and historian Arturo Alfonso Schomburg have confronted overt racism. However, the open acknowledgment of its existence, also provided the political space to fight against racism. The shared experiences of racial discrimination and the concrete conditions flowing from it—deficient educational, health, and employment opportunities—confronted the more subtly phrased, but no less destructive ideology of racial democracy, learned from our parents and our community, and it became clear that something was off kilter. The very language of racism—“pelo bueno,” “pelo malo,” “Negro *pero* inteligente,”—



Top: Preparing a meal in the countryside

Bottom: University of Puerto Rico biology student Rafael Benítez Joubert

which we heard in Spanish *and* English, left little doubt that the similarities among us were actually greater than the differences. The anti-racist, egalitarian ideas that flowed from the Civil Rights movement affected all those in the United States who were racially subordinated—African Americans, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, Native Americans, Asians, etc.—in the United States and throughout the world. Nuyoricans were particularly receptive to the ideas and values that arose from these struggles because, located at the very bottom of the social and economic hierarchy of the City, they realized that it is of crucial importance to give due attention to the role of race in our lives.

The effect of the U.S. antiracist movement on Puerto Ricans in the island has received less attention but there is ample evidence of those influences. It extends far beyond the short lived trendiness of the African-inspired dress and hairdos or the continuing fascination with the musical innovations that we know as “salsa” and reggaetón, or even the growing intellectual interest in identifying

the African influences—or, at another level, foundations—of Puerto Rican culture. Less obvious, or at least less commented upon, is the effect on the educational life of Puerto Rico, where the astounding growth of post-secondary educational institutions on the island can be directly attributed to programs implemented under federally mandated Affirmative Action guidelines. Inter-American University, Sagrado Corazón, and the countless technical colleges that opened their doors in the 1970s were able to develop precisely because *all* Puerto Rican students—whether on the island or in the States—qualified for federal assistance programs. Yet even as Puerto Ricans, especially on the island, rejected the stigma of racialization, they still accepted—indeed, actively sought out—the benefits of this racialization. That so many of the beneficiaries have often been the children of the more economically privileged sectors of our various communities does not diminish the significance of those race-based reforms. At the same time we would be remiss if we ignore the ways in which ideas about race and class continue to influence the

DOUBLE DISCRIMINATION: RACE AND HIV STIGMA IN PUERTO RICO

BY MELISSA BURROUGHS

Upon asking a young woman living with HIV to describe HIV stigma and discrimination, she responded, “It is a person that is not worth anything, that is not worth anything, is a useless person... you are sick and you can infect many people... this [disease] is not like what people think.” Health does not exist within a vacuum but rather is influenced by a number of external factors, many of which extend from social environment. Disease-related stigma promotes health inequality by restricting access to resources to those who are marginalized in the greater society. HIV stigma combines the fear of the spread of contagion with stigmatized social conditions such as poverty, intravenous drug use and sexuality. HIV infection becomes the embodiment of the marginalized status, thus adding the weight of rejection to the burden of living with a chronic illness.

In examining the intersection of HIV stigma and social stigma, I sought to uncover sub-groups within the population of people living with HIV whose particular experience of marginalization through HIV stigma still might be unheard. Color prejudice, a social force that pervades the entire Caribbean including Puerto Rico, is a form of stigma that is widely visible yet often unspoken. In my research study, I sought to give a voice to the experience of color prejudice and HIV stigma and question if these two experiences might be linked. The objective was to assess whether there is a difference in HIV related stigma and discrimination faced by darker-skinned people in Puerto Rico living with HIV compared to their lighter-skinned counterparts. Given the fact that stigma has the potential to negatively affect adherence to antiretroviral medications, mental health and clinical outcomes, it is important to highlight the ways in which stigma impacts the lives of people living with HIV.

In August 2007 I collected qualitative data using semi-structured interviews in a sample of 30 people living with HIV. A convenience sample of people living with HIV was recruited in the CoNCRA community center in San Juan, Puerto Rico. All participants were residents of Puerto Rico over age 21 and of varying ages and skin colors. In the interview, participants were asked about racial discrimination, family racial composition, and the stereotypes and challenges of people living with HIV.

In the interviews, many participants described the severity of HIV discrimination. Discrimination is most disturbing when it occurs within health care settings. HIV discrimination in health care settings results in unnecessary fear of the spread of infection. For example, a few participants remarked that health care professionals often use unnecessary precautions when undergoing physical exams and procedures with minimal risk of contact with blood or fluids: “When you go to the hospital they [health care providers] put on masks unnecessarily...and they put on 80 gloves and 80 things.” While the health care providers in that situation probably did not realize that the patient recognized that the precautions were unnecessary, nevertheless they sent a message of discomfort with patients with HIV.

More surprising than wearing extra masks and gloves is the fact that some health care providers have denied care to patients because of their HIV status. One participant described an incident which she was denied care while experiencing a medical emergency:

One time I had a gynecologist who did not want to take care of me because in that moment I was bleeding. I was hemorrhaging... She could

actions taken by university admissions officers, corporate boards—and disgruntled video-makers.

But of even greater importance for those concerned with social justice has been the steadily growing chorus of voices raised against the Latino myth of racial harmony. For decades, stateside Puerto Ricans have been among the most active supporters of the Afro-Latin@ movements in Latin America and the Caribbean. In recent years the transnational dimension has gained momentum as Black Latin@s, and those who simply affirm their African ancestry, have organized in cities across the U.S. and across national borders. In addition to university-based organizations and cultural institutes, grass-roots groups such as The Afro Latin@ Institute of Chicago (ALIC), ENCUESTRO in Philadelphia and ENCUESTRO “Voices of AfroLatinos” in Boston are working to bring visibility to issues affecting African-descendant Latinos. Such efforts are also taking place on the island; in defiance of the silencing ideological and psychological controls of the rainbow/mixed race nation con-

struct a group of people in the towns of Aguadilla and Hormigueros (“Testimonios afropuertorriqueños: un proyecto de historia oral en el oeste de Puerto Rico”), have joined forces to “pursue a collective agenda so that Afro-Puerto Ricans no longer remain at ‘the bottom of the barrel.’” Black Puerto Ricans are demonstrating that when it comes to class and race matters it’s definitely *not* a question of Boricuas versus Nuyoricans.

Miriam Jiménez Román is director of afrolatin@forum, a research and resource center focusing on U.S. Black Latin@s. Editor of Centro: Journal of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies, for more than a decade she curated exhibitions and was Assistant Director of the Scholars-in-Residence Program at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. Currently a visiting scholar in the Department of Social and Cultural Analysis at New York University, she is co-editor (with Juan Flores) of Afro-Latinos in the United States: A Reader (Duke University Press, forthcoming).

not help me because I was HIV positive... I have a hemorrhage, how are you not going to see me... I needed for it to stop because I was weak [from the bleeding] and she told me that she could not see me...

Denying care to anyone because of their HIV status is unjust and unethical. After facing such treatment, one can imagine that many people living with HIV might be less willing to seek medical care in fear that they may be rejected or denied care again. While there are certain clinics and hospitals that specialize in HIV care, if the clinic is closed weekends and evenings or if the clinic is not within close proximity to an individual’s home, he or she may wait until the condition increases in severity before seeking care. This distrust of the medical community provides an even larger barrier to access to care for an already vulnerable population.

While none of the participants stated that HIV was more common in people with darker skin color, many participants of all colors noted that Puerto Ricans of darker skin color living with HIV faced a disproportionate amount of challenges that potentially impact their health. A few participants referred to those having both HIV infection and dark skin color as recipients of “double discrimination” in which their degree of marginalization would be magnified. One participant describes the discrimination faced by his wife:

My wife is a person of color... and I noted that in hospitals where she went to be seen... discrimination against her for being a person of color... I encountered this problem many times, many times... Like they say...she has AIDS, look at that man with that dark-skinned woman, you know...

While the frequency with which incidents like the one described by this man occur is not known, this anecdote illustrates the ways in which race and HIV stigma can multiply the degree of discrimination faced by people of color living with HIV with obvious negative health consequences. As many participants revealed their own experiences with stigma due to HIV infection, intravenous drug use, color and sexuality, almost all echoed the severe emotional and physical effects of social marginalization and rejection.

Given the results of this pilot study, one can begin to speculate that a racial disparity in access to medical services and health outcomes may exist. HIV and color stigma profoundly impact the life of an individual with real consequences in terms of their health and quality of life. The results of this study demonstrate the need for future research in racial and color disparities in health in Puerto Rico, in addition to adding the dimension of race and color to the literature on HIV stigma in Puerto Rico and the Caribbean. While many have used the mixed-race character of much of the Caribbean and Latin America as an excuse to not attempt to study the effect of race on health in this region, I argue that this silence is what allows inequality to thrive. We must unravel the various systems of health inequality within nations before we achieve health equity across nations.

Melissa Burroughs is a fourth year student at Harvard Medical School. Burroughs studied anthropology and human biology at Emory University where she received a BS in 2004. While at Emory, she did research on mixed-race identity in Gulf Coast Creoles. Burroughs plans to pursue a career in cardiology and global health.

National Identity Politics in Puerto Rico

Beyond the Binational Colonial State

BY JUAN DUCHESNE-WINTER

I REMEMBER MY HIGH SCHOOL TIMES IN San Juan in the late 60s. I had convinced my parents to let me switch from an elite English-dominant institution to the Spanish-dominant public school system, because I was sick of the socially suffocating milieu prevailing in that kind of Americanized private school. As soon as I entered my new public high school I met two excellent, stimulating teachers who were members of the pro-Independence party at the time. I joined a group of school friends that forged close ties with these two teachers. We were a mixed bunch. One of the *independentista* teachers had a strong working-class background, the other was typically middle class. The students in the group were equally mixed. Our relationship transcended the school environment. We saw and discussed Brazilian, Cuban and Italian films (like Pontecorvo's *Battle of Algiers*), read novels by Sartre and Camus, began to read Fanon, and engaged in political conversations informed by the relatively enlightened Marxism of the internationalist anti-colonial left. We made a point of drinking only wine or foreign (non-American) beer. Our teachers drove non-American working-class cars (Fiat or Renault). We spurned baseball and instead played *fútbol* (soccer). We registered in French classes as soon as we entered the university, just to choose the first non-binational (i.e., non-colonial) referent available. Some of those gestures were ancillary, and even unconscious performances, the center of our friendship being the search for a commitment with the radical issues of the times, which had a distinctly international provenance. I remember that our group's cosmopolitan penchant acted as a resistance strategy to the coloniality of Anglo-American culture's hegemony in the island at the time. We actually embraced subversive cosmopolitanism to resist an oppressive American influence and decode the inherent subalternity of the tame, official Puerto Rican culture embedded in the binational colonial matrix. We had no anxiety about losing our identity; we did not care about any particular identity; we just desired to break away from the colonial binational matrix. We wanted to liberate ourselves from



Artist Garvin Sierra takes on identity issues in "Que Maravilla 3D," "How Marvelous!"

the aspect of subalternity encoded in this matrix (although we obviously didn't state it in those terms). I soon decided to become a militant for the Independence struggle. Today I realize that the *inaugural scene* of my commitment to the Independence struggle was not an identity-seeking nationalist passion. It was an ethical response to subalternity and colonialism within a broad social

and political scope. I believe that the actual possibilities of a radical-democratic alternative to the currently stalemated identity politics in Puerto Rico might be related to the untimeliness of this recollection.

Identity, in its cultural, collective sense, is an ever-present social convention, as I discovered in my college years. It is a web of multiple, symbolical connections that is ceaselessly reworked in any modern society by the plurality of its individuals, who by definition are collectively constituted actors in a social stage, and are necessarily linked to particular groups. Each identity is constantly redefined in relation to the more or less open set of other identities that surround it.

A social group accentuates or softens its perceived lines of definition inasmuch as it counts on other groups that provide a background or a direct contrast to its changing contours. The essence of identity is relational.

The need for a critique of identity politics is proportional to the relative dominance of identity issues on the political stage. If, as philosopher Hannah Arendt claimed, politics is the being together of those who are different, the emergence of identity as a crucial *topos* of difference in postmodern societies places it in the center of the political arena, for good or bad. Moreover, given that collective identities of all sorts (religious, sexual, racial, ethnic, social) can only share specific jurisdictions, they may tend to converge on the problem of national identity, which is inextricably bound to the political monopoly of the modern state.

This convergence on the national question is inevitable in a country like Puerto Rico, where the state form, given its particular colonial make up, has sustained an asymmetrical binational imaginary whereby the Puerto Rican subaltern nationality is embedded in an American dominant nationality. But the subaltern nationality is embedded as an alien entity, in a colonial matrix that reproduces its alienness. While American nationality is embodied by the imperial metropolis, it acts at a distance, both geographical and cultural, in contrast to the previous metropolis, which was only geographically distant, given the linguistic, cultural and racial continuum across which the difference between *criollos* and Spaniards was disseminated. The sharp Anglo/ Hispanic break opened a further degree of separation in Puerto Rico's colonial makeup after the United States invaded in 1898 and took the Spanish master's place. The United States acts thus as a *telenation* and a *macronation* within the binational imaginary sustained by the current state form in this Caribbean island. This binational imaginary acts like a paradoxically "protective" womb for Puerto Rican national identity given that, by reproducing Puerto Rican identity as an intractably alien subjectivity within American ethnocracy, it sustains the contrastive background upon which the Puerto Rican nation has defined its fundamental contours in the 20th century. Puerto Rican endemic anti-Americanism is a corollary of this logic. An essential factor of modern Puerto Rican nationality is its latent, suppressed, sometimes inverted and often manifest anti-Americanism, which has developed a symbiotic though paradoxical link with its American *telenation* or *macronation*.

However, the colonial cultural gap has been gradually bridged, not by hybridization (as it was under Spain), nor by assimilation, but by a convergence between island Puerto Ricans and U.S. Latino cultures in the mainland. At this point of the 21st century, Puerto Rico is not immersed in a passive process of Americanization (and, arguably, it never was), but it certainly is engaged in its active *Latinoization*. The Latino sphere has offered island Puerto Ricans a relatively non-conflictive entrance into the larger sphere of United States *ethnocracy*. The only significant exception is a small fraction of the top elites related to American business, among them, the denizens of the Guaynabo City enclave, who conscientiously pursue miscegenation-assimilation through mixed marriages with Anglo-Americans.

On the other hand, entering the Latino sphere amounts, in perspective, to taking the *long road* to Americanization. An eventual U.S. Latino nation would nevertheless be *an-other* nation, with the "aggravation," for identity seekers, that it is much more dif-

At this point of the 21st century, Puerto Rico is not immersed in a passive process of Americanization (and, arguably, never was), but it certainly is engaged in its active *Latinoization*. The Latino sphere has offered island Puerto Ricans a relatively non-conflictive entrance into the larger sphere of United States *ethnocracy*.

ficult for traditional versions of Puerto Rican nationality to define their contours against a background Latino identity that hardly offers any contrast to prevailing aboriginal culture. In consequence, the very seamlessness of this process of *Latinoization* adds a further destabilizing factor to Puerto Rico's *binational* imaginary. To define a Puerto Rican identity as against a Latino identity is much more problematic than doing it against the Anglo distant other, precisely because Latino assimilation is less conflictive. Identity politics needs identity conflict. Lack of viable identity anguishes the identity seekers.

Aside from sincere, profound convictions about the value of national identity, one important reason for the *angst* of identity seekers is that they embody an elite in need of the symbolic capital required for their effective political, representational power over the local subalterns, i.e., the popular sectors of the Puerto Rican population who simply act as who they are and go about fulfilling their daily tasks without minding whether they authentically represent the Puerto Rican people or not. The *angst* of the lettered white *criollos* has contributed a substantial ingredient to the binational colonial state: it has furnished the subtle ideological awnings of its long-standing hegemony.

The binational colonial state feeds on the existential crisis it breeds. This existential crisis is not a general condition of the Puerto Rican people but mostly an exclusive affair of the elite and of the counter-elites that have for generations supplied cadres and symbolic capital to that state, and to the anti-colonialist opposition that has indirectly contributed to its successive adjustments and updates. The outstanding expression of this existential crisis is

the famous *status problem*, the perennially agitated debate on the seemingly unreachable collective decision as to the form of sovereignty to be finally opted by the Puerto Rican people: the Independent Nation State or Statehood within the U.S. Constitution. The first option is an inalienable right of every nation, upheld by the international community. The second option depends on a potential petition to the U.S. Congress, with remote chances of approval, given the hegemonic Anglo-dominant structure of American society. Puerto Rican statehood could spell the beginning of the *nemesis* for Anglo hegemony in the United States. As Mark Shell adverted in “Babel in America; or, The Politics of Language Diversity in the United States” (*Critical Inquiry*, vol. 20, no. 1), a Spanish-speaking State of the Union could demand that the Constitution be bilingual. Undertaking an official, juridically binding translation of the Constitution may be imagined as a destabilizing enterprise capable of unleashing a national debate of unforeseeable consequences for the prevailing American ethnocracy.

The status question is a collective symptom of Puerto Rican national identity, in fact, its salient defining aspect—and as such it has become a self-perpetuating political conundrum. Ironically, Puerto Ricans would lose an essential source of their national passion if the status issue were to be resolved. They would depart from a collective debate that has emotionally bound this Caribbean imagined community, by being uttered, staged, reproduced, allegorized, or encrypted 24 hours a day in the airwaves, the literature, the press, cyberspace, or daily conversation spanning the island for most of its modern history. The majority of the people not belonging to the elite do not necessarily experience the status question as a source of existential anxiety, but they festively engage in it as one of the few available avenues for subaltern participation in political expression.

Positions on status articulate intra-class differences within the dominant elites. The binational colonial state (Estado Libre Asociado) is configured on the historical hegemony of the Partido Popular Democrático (PPD), which lay its foundations in the 1952 Constitution. The pro-statehood Partido Nuevo Progresista (PNP), has only rhetorically challenged this foundation, never managing to break the hegemony of the *populares* in spite of a number of electoral victories. The once significant pro-Independence movement has been decimated by a two main events. One is the massive repression unleashed by the United States and the local government during the middle quarters of the 20th century (1930-1975). The other is the massive cooptation by the cultural-nationalist strategy of the *populares*, which has dramatically depleted the *independentista* constituency since 1976, leading to the now imminent liquidation of the only pro-Independence party remaining on the island.

The *populares* have actually managed to cannibalize the pro-Independence constituency by appropriating many nationalist issues



Today's Puerto Rican youth experience a convergence between island Puerto Ricans and U.S. Latino cultures in the mainland.

under the banner of a *sui generis* brand of colonial nationalism, inherent to the aforementioned binational imaginary constitutive of the current state form. They have in fact created an ideologically efficient, U.S.-dependent, colonial nation-state that is able to agglutinate national identity concerns in a postmodern age in which banal identity politics manage to displace radical issues related to coloniality, subaltern agency, and social transformation. The global condition of *liquid modernity*, as described by Zygmunt Bauman in *Identity: Conversations with Benedetto Vecchi* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Polity Press, 2004, pp. 50–52), has laid bare the precariousness of identity, helping it mutate into a central ideological force of our times. In Puerto Rico, this liquid modernity has provided, as in many other places, a propitious brew for renewed anxiety. The mere spectacle and consumption of identity has acted as a hysterical substitute for concrete solidarity, real commitment, and lasting alliances in social relationships, all of which have been seriously eroded by neoliberal capitalism.

An interesting balance of this situation is that nationalism and anti-colonial politics are no longer synonyms in the case of Puerto Rico. Colonial nationalism has displaced anti-colonial nationalism. This might be good news. It opens the way for the possibility of a non-nationalist and not identity-based anti-colonial stance, which might include a demand for independence that transcends nationalist ideology.

Juan Duchesne-Winter is professor of literature and cultural studies at the University of Pittsburgh. He is the author, among other books on Latin American literature and cultural studies, of Ciudadano Insano (Citizen Insane—2000), Fugas incomunistas (2005), and Equilibrio encimada del infierno: Andres Caicedo (2007). After participating at an early age in pro-Independence activism during the 70s, Duchesne-Winter has joined other Puerto Rican intellectuals in the critique of nationalist identity politics.

The New Politics of Decolonization

The Battle of Vieques

BY AGUSTÍN LAO-MONTES

VIEQUES HAS BEEN AT THE FRONTLINE OF PUERTO RICAN STRUGGLES for decolonization and a key element in the negotiations of the colonial relationship and citizenship for decades. In the 1940s and 1950s the militarization of Vieques, a Puerto Rican island that was used as a U.S. Navy base, was an important component of the negotiation that culminated in the new colonial pact juridically consecrated in the establishment of the Commonwealth. It was also, with the neighboring island of Culebra, an important focus of the Puerto Rican new social movements of the 1960s and 1970s against war, militarism, and colonialism. In the early 1980s, I was part of a vibrant movement in New York City in solidarity with the struggle of the people of Vieques, especially the fishermen. I want to highlight that this was part of a larger movement throughout the United States and that in New York there was a broad-based committee with representation from different sectors of the Puerto Rican community.

Before continuing with the story of Vieques and its importance for the new politics of decolonization, let me situate myself to allow the reader to understand my particular vantage point. I am a Puerto Rican intellectual, in particular a social scientist, who has lived in-between the archipelago of Puerto Rico and the United States for the last 25 years or so. As such, I also self-define as Afro-Latino, and as an activist-intellectual engaged in social movements both in the United States and in Latin America.

I situate myself also to make clear that I am speaking from locations and articulating analyses that differ from what is common sense in the political parties (both from Puerto Rico and the United States). Instead, the angles of vision and analytical perspectives that inform this article are tied to my political and intellectual commitments to a new politics of decolonization embedded and embodied in the theories and practices of rising local, national and transnational social movements.

The question of decolonization goes beyond the often discussed issue of the status of Puerto Rico. Decolonization is more than merely kicking out an imperial power from the administration of a colonial state, much more than achieving “independence” in the sense of building a “sovereign” nation-state. This in turn supposes and implies a theory of power and social change that could link local, national and global processes, what I call a world-historical perspective on the question of power and agency in the modern/colonial world-system. In this vein, Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano coined the concept of the coloniality of power to provide an analytical frame to understand the global pattern of western domination and capitalist exploitation instituted in the 16th century with the so-called discovery of the Americas and the concomitant rise of European imperial hegemony along with the organization of the capitalist world-economy and the emergence of Eurocentric discourses of history, knowledge, culture and identity. A simple way of representing the coloniality of power is as the intersection of four modes of domination: capitalism, racism, imperialism, and patriarchy.

Decolonization is neither an event nor the making of an independent nation-state, but an on-going process of dismantling not only all the forms of imperial domination (political, economic, cultural), but also of challenging and undermining capitalism, racism and patriarchy. For instance, Laura Briggs’ book *Reproducing Empire* is an exemplary piece of scholarship on the intersection of U.S. imperial power with the production of scientific knowledge in facilitating class, racial and gender domination in 20th century Puerto Rico.

Since the first wave of formal movements for decolonization epitomized by the Haitian revolution and the rest of the 19th century independence wars in the Americas up to the struggles for national liberation in African and the Caribbean in the 1960s, the aftermaths of mere political decolonization have been neo-colonial independence, along with global reconfigurations of the coloniality of power. Since World War II these global restructurings of the coloniality of power had occurred under the command of the U.S. Empire. These imperial-colonial continuities should not deny the historical importance of the formal demise of the old European Empires and the will of liberation enacted by anti-colonial nationalist movements throughout the world which changed not only geo-political landscapes but also the politics of culture and identity at a world scale.

However, we need to renew the way that we understand decolonization and its practical implications for a politics of liberation for Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans. That is why the example of Vieques has such resonance.

But before we go on to the specific case of the battle of Vieques, I would like to argue against the assumption of Puerto Rican exceptionalism. I contend that instead of representing a colonial reality in a postcolonial world, we Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans embody some of the most visible patterns of the coloniality of power in late modernity. There are many intertwined themes around this issue: the question of citizenship, Puerto Ricans as a diasporic nation, the battle of Vieques, the status question and the current emergence of a new way of doing Puerto Rican politics, for example.

Translocal Nation, Transmigration, and Diasporic Citizenship

Since the 1970s Puerto Rican migration turned into a permanent back and forth circular process. For many people it became a condition of dwelling-in-travel, to the extent that a large percentage of the Puerto Rican labor force increasingly began to have fewer options of good employment on either shore. As the forms of travel, communication and exchange between the archipelago and Puerto Rican communities in the United States diversified and intensified, Puerto Rican individuals, families, political parties, social movements, and institutions in general composed tied networks between the islands and the mainland. This dispersion of the Puerto Rican population and the resulting multiplication of the spaces of Puerto Rican life in the United States had reterritorialized the geography of the Puerto Rican nation beyond the Caribbean archipelago, and therefore the inclusion of Puerto Ricans in the U.S. mainland.



Vieques panorama

Part of what is implicit in this argument is that in light of colonialism, including the possession of colonial citizenship, Puerto Ricans had been massively displaced and relocated, first mostly to world cities like New York and Chicago and eventually across the United States. To the extent that we self-identify as a distinct people and that we are identified as “other” (non-American/non-white) by U.S. governmental, corporate, intellectual, and public cultures; and in so far as colonial difference colors our collective condition, we continue being Puerto Rican nationals in spite of being U.S. citizens. This promotes a sort of “double consciousness” (for a concept of double consciousness, see W.E.B. Du Bois) in which most Puerto Ricans identify culturally as Boricua at the same time that prefer to maintain the benefits of U.S. citizenship in terms of entitlements, rights and mobility. Colonial citizenship is ambiguous: on the one hand, it is a form of subordination that legitimizes U.S. hegemony; on the other hand, it constitutes a framework for extending the franchise and obtaining rights and resources from the metropolitan state.

The relative nomadism that characterizes the lives of many Puerto Ricans from cosmopolitan intellectuals to seasonal workers (some in world cities, others in agribusiness) makes the actual practices of citizenship a multilayered process of negotiation and adjustment.

For instance, the movement for a Puerto Rican/Latino mayor in New York can be described as a struggle for the right to the city from its urban citizens. On the other hand, a U.S. national campaign against the U.S. Navy in Vieques, led by the National Puerto Rican Coalition, reveals in its very definition a double meaning for the signifier “national” and the practical political implications of a U.S. citizenship that could be at once a form of imperial subjugation and a resource of anti-imperial resistance. The question of *latinidad* itself reveals some of the paradoxes of Puerto Rican colonial citizenship and hybrid identity as we often are labeled as Latinos in the United States, while frequently been stigmatized as “Americans” in

Latin America. Once again, the social movement for peace, justice and sustainable development in Vieques can be partly defined as a local and national plea for human rights as well as a way of seeking with global civil society and a claim for global citizenship.

Over the years, the issue of Vieques has coalesced with the support of a diverse group of activists, ranging from elected officials such as Gilberto Gerena Valentín (also the organizer of the first Puerto Rican Day Parade) and community-labor leader Jose Rivera who in the 1990s as a Councilman introduced a resolution that was approved in the New York City Council against the U.S. Navy bombings in Vieques. The long Battle of Vieques exemplifies the meaning of citizenship as an arena of struggles in which social movements are the most dynamic elements pushing for the extension of the franchise, the amplification of the types and claims of rights, and the concrete content and practices of citizenship.

Especially after the 1999 assassination of David Sanes, the Vieques movement is now a multifaceted one that integrates ecological, health, labor, women, peace, anti-militaristic and anti-imperialist, and popular-democratic dimensions with their respective claims. Its broad-based character and its ability at some particular junctures to convene an overwhelming level of support among Puerto Ricans everywhere, constitutes it as one of these unique movements and peculiar moments in which a colonial nation closes ranks against an empire, in spite of the enormous differences (class, gender, race, ideological, etc) in debate and conflict within the “imagined community.”

The Vieques struggle is not necessarily or primarily for political independence, but it has significant anti-imperial elements and counter-colonial effects, because its immediate target for a long time was one of the largest U.S. military complexes in the world, and because it clearly shows the despotic face of the colonial power of the metropolitan state not only over Puerto Rican colonial citizens but also over the insular colonial state.



Vieques protest in defense of "our beaches and environment"

Along with many others from both the archipelago and the mainland, the Puerto Rican representatives in the U.S. Congress, Luís Gutiérrez, Nydia Velázquez and José Serrano,—our only representatives given the territorial limitations of our second class citizenship—clearly argued that the abuses of the U.S. Navy in Vieques are executed against U.S. citizens. In this light, Vieques can once again demonstrate the ambiguities of modern citizenship and the dialectics of colonial citizenship.

From the standpoint of the rather small Puerto Rican independence movement, the victory for the Vieques movement (and for the global movements for peace and justice) that represented the retirement of the U.S. Navy from the occupation of two-thirds of the island in May 2003 was largely taken as an important step in the struggle for self-determination and in the building of a formally sovereign nation-state with its own legal citizenship. However, from the perspective of the majority of Puerto Ricans who supported (many of whom still support) the cause of Vieques, the movement translates into claims for rights to peace, health, ecological harmony and democratic control over their local affairs.

But Vieques can also reveal the limits of the politics of rights and of colonial citizenship itself. Claiming rights as U.S. citizens also means fulfilling duties such as participating in wars and contributing to building the strongest military complex in human history and that's one of the claims of the U.S. Navy. After September 11th, 2001, the imperial imperative of security and militaristic patriotism affected the course of the battle of Vieques. In fact, an important question that has been highlighted since then is, how the anti-terrorist laws and the on-going dismantling of the metropolitan welfare state, with the resulting assault on civil liberties and erosion of the social wage, can transform the actual content of U.S. citizenship and particularly how will it affect colonial citizenship.

Another way of putting it is, what are the implications for Puerto Rican colonial citizenship of the escalating erosion of U.S. liberal

democracy, and the rise of the extra-legal authoritarian "state of exception" as the legal and political norm, as manifest in the Abu Ghraib tortures and the illegal incarcerations accompanied with gross violations of human rights in Guantanamo? In short, Vieques can serve as a yardstick to evaluate both the limits and possibilities of liberal colonial citizenship as well as the seamy side of U.S. democracy, its institutions and practices of coercion and surveillance, and its militarism.

Even today, after the U.S. Navy is officially out of site, the metropolitan state and U.S. capital still have much of the power to call the shots on the possibilities to fulfill the four Ds (demilitarization, decontamination, devolution of land and sustainable development) that summarize the current demands of the social movement in Vieques. This is the ultimate proof of the form and content of colonial or second class citizenship. In spite of a powerful broad-based movement with widespread global support including in some sectors of power in the United States, the resolution of the Vieques problem (to call it that way) is not certain and the only engine of democratization and decolonization is the movement itself.

Political groupings and grassroots organizations in Puerto Rican neighborhoods across the mainland have taken Vieques as a primary concern and this shows the translocal character of some significant social movements in the Puerto Rican diasporic nation. I contend that the radical democratic ethos of some of these social movements bears the main promise for the democratization of U.S. citizenship and the decolonization of Puerto Rican life.

In light of its level of popular support, multifaceted character, and global appeal, the struggle for peace and justice in Vieques had been embraced by many other movements across the United States and throughout the world. As Francois Houtart claims in an article on the new wave of social movements against capitalist neo-liberal organization and the new imperialism, Vieques is

VIEQUES: AN UPDATE

The turquoise blue water gently laps at the fine-white sand beach dotted by coconut palms. Verdant rock outcroppings frame the scene, so picture-perfect that it merits the cliché of tropical paradise. This is Caracas Beach. The Navy used to call it “Red Beach.”

The double name is a reminder that Vieques is not an ordinary tropical paradise; it's also a fascinating David-and-Goliath story in which community activists successfully put a stop to Navy bombing and the military base on the island in 2003.

Now, five years later, Vieques residents face all the challenges of any tourist-dependent community: gentrification, sustainable environmental concerns; crime, unemployment and poverty. In addition, despite the tremendous mobilization of the community in protests that attracted Hollywood stars and U.S. politicians, many ordinary folk seem to have gone back to their daily lives, resulting in a weakening of civil society.

“People are tired,” observed Harvard Kennedy School of Government '05 graduate Giovanna Negretti, a native of Vieques, who now runs the Massachusetts Latino organization Oiste. “Daily life is a struggle.”

When she was at KSG, she sought ways to turn her goal of economic development for her homeland into a practical initiative, formulating a strategy for addressing the island's high unemployment and poverty rates through a cooperative venture model involving eco-tourism and cooperative housing.

In addition to the usual challenges of an ordinary tourist destination, Vieques also faces the legacy of the past, including environmental cleanup and concerns about cancer and other health problems, as well as scarcity of land and housing. The transformation of the Navy lands into a nature refuge has limited availability of land for low-cost housing, industries and even fishing areas.

Ismael Guadalupe Ortiz, a community activist and retired drama teacher, declared. “We're like the ham in a sandwich. The Navy gave the land to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife, and that means it's into the beach at 6 a.m. and out at 6 p.m. We Vieque folk need our mobility. Fishing is part of our economic culture. It's not just recreation.”

Community activists say the cleanup is not going nearly fast enough. The island—much of which is still off-limits—

is home to unexploded bombs, bomb fragments and toxic waste. Although a causal relationship has not been proved, residents cite a Department of Health study that indicates that Vieques cancer rates are 27% higher than on the mainland.

“Every time a truck goes by announcing a funeral, you wonder if that person died of cancer,” commented Kathy Gannett Duff, a Vieques organizer originally from Dorchester, Mass. Like many residents, she is concerned about the time the Navy is taking and the fact that bombs are being detonated in the process of the cleanup.

The Navy says it's moving as fast as possible. “The Navy is removing the hazards of potentially dangerous munitions and conducting environmental remediation on Vieques as quickly as possible with the given funding, currently at about \$20 million per year,” wrote Navy Public Affairs Officer Kelley J. Stirling in an e-mail. “The process of environmental investigation, data analysis, proposing and selecting remedies, in consultation with regulatory agencies and the public, does take a fairly long time, not just on Vieques. Interim actions can be, and have been, taken when needed to protect human health during the investigation and remediation process. We do continue to use open-air, controlled detonations as the safest way to dispose of large bombs and other dangerous munitions. These detonations occur about twice a month. The Navy performs air monitoring during the detonations and to date, nothing has been detected that would prove to be harmful or cause adverse impacts on human health and the environment.”

Walking on the Vieques beach, it's easy to forget the island's history. The long unpaved entrance to the beach used to be the entrance to Camp García. Even other unexpected dangers are more obvious. “Beware of attack rooster,” warns a sign on a home in the rapidly gentrifying neighborhood of Esmeraldas. But the problems—like on many a tropical isle—are there if you scratch the surface.

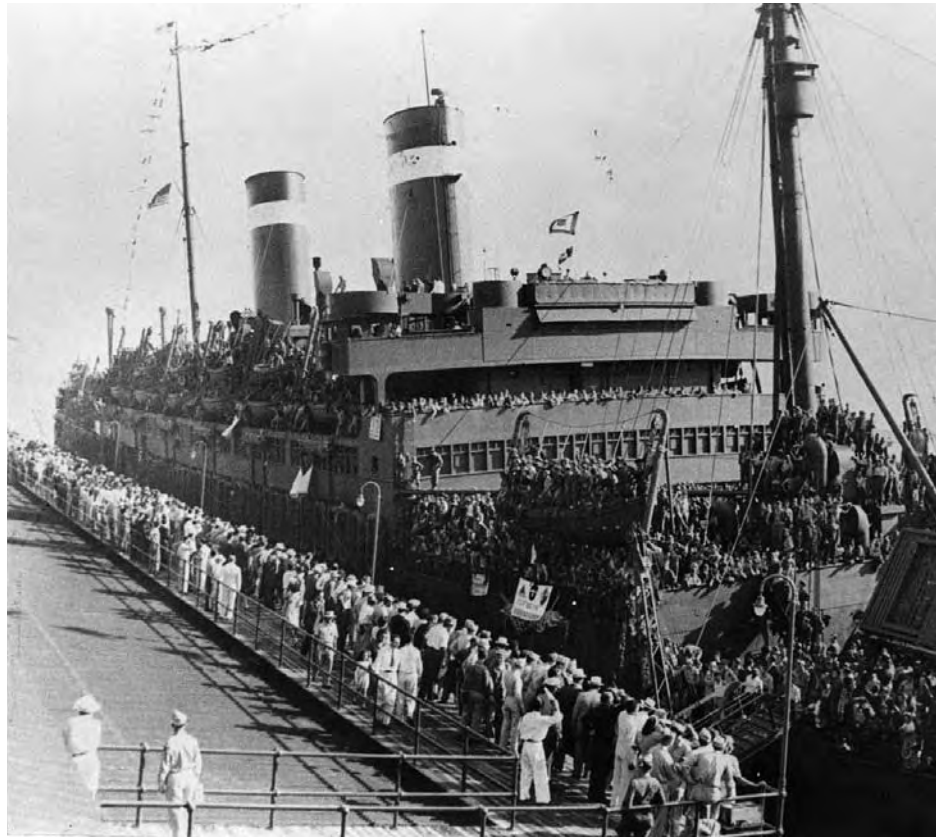
“Getting the Navy out was a tremendous victory,” observed Cristina Corrada Emmanuel, a Vieques resident who spent part of her childhood in Boston's Villa Victoria [see p. 53]. “But the challenges are now overwhelming. People are just getting by.”

—June Carolyn Erlick

perhaps the only victory of antisystemic movements against U.S. militarism. The appeal to ecology, health, peace and local democracy as human rights and the struggle against militarism and repression makes the movement for Vieques one of regional and global concern. In so far as there is an increasing globalization of claims of rights and the terrains for democratic struggles, as exemplified in the anti-neoliberal globalization movements, the question of citizenship in the context of Vieques is also part of a larger struggle for global justice, rights, and citizenship, of what we can call global decolonization.

In these neoliberal times in which the role of the citizen had been partly reduced to be a consumer and a passive elector, and politics to a mass-mediated spectacle, movements like the one in Vieques represent the promise of the democratization and decolonization of citizenship.

Agustín Lao-Montes, an assistant professor in the Department of Sociology and the Center for Latin American, Caribbean, and Latino Studies at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, was a 2007–08 Fulbright Fellow at Columbia University.



War, Modernity and Remembrance

The Puerto Rican Soldiers in Korea (1950–1953)

BY SILVIA ÁLVAREZ CURBELO

WHEN IN 1949, COLONEL WILLIAM HARRIS WAS ASSIGNED TO be the new commander of the 65th Infantry Regiment, his Army buddies kidded him about the “rum and Coca Cola” unit he was about to command in Puerto Rico. Not even the beautiful beaches and the alisio winds that welcomed him when he arrived at Isla Grande Airport in San Juan were able to dispel his misgivings about the new post: an ethnic unit in an island described by Washington insiders as “the powder keg of the Caribbean.”

His worst fears increased when he learned of the upcoming Portrex Maneuvers to be held at the neighboring island of Vieques. The Army’s Third Division, one of the most-decorated units in World War II, would play the gallant rescuer in the training exercises and the 65th Infantry, the role of the rebel enemy. When the war games ended, to the dismay of the Third’s top brass and Harris’ disbelief, the 65th, the gorkha army, was victorious.

Four months after the maneuvers, the Korean conflict began. Because of its recent notoriety, the Puerto Rican regiment was one

of the first units to be sent to the war theatre. General Matthew Ridgway, highly impressed with the 65th performance, had made the suggestion himself.

The Puerto Ricans had become American citizens in 1917 and were called for military duty when the United States entered into World War I that same year. The imperial eyes saw the Puerto Ricans as lazy, stupid, instinctive, and incapable of comprehending simple orders but they needed manpower. It was suggested that they could be assigned to menial tasks since their fighting spirit and racial constitution was always called into question. The assessment was not a surprise. The island, a giant sugar plantation under American rule, was governed in tutorial fashion and the colonial subjects were generally seen as children, of mixed breed and unfit for civic responsibilities.

In the late 1930s, as another war loomed in the horizon, an educated and progressive Creole elite entered the political arena in Puerto Rico under the populist leadership of Luis Muñoz Marín. The Popular Democratic Party’s rise to power was linked to the United States’ need to secure the Caribbean basin as Hitler’s armies advanced uncontested through Europe. The prospect of war jump-started the modernization process in Puerto Rico.

From left: Puerto Rican Soldiers embark to Korea, 1950; coming home, 1951

Puerto Rico's road to modernization involved violent spatial and psychological displacements. Nearly a quarter of a million Puerto Ricans emigrated to the United States from 1947 to 1953. Several thousands more settled in the over-crowded cities of the Island as agriculture entered into a steep decline. The giant leap forward meant the death of rural Puerto Rico. However, those violent processes were mediated and mitigated by what Peter Gay has aptly called "alibis for aggression." The plight of the peasants and the immigrants was viewed as a necessary sacrifice so that Puerto Rico would enter into full-fledged modernity. The *diaspora* was interpreted as one of the achievements of our common U.S. citizenship. The Puerto Rican soldiers played a similar role. They stood as symbols of a political relationship that had superseded colonialism and achieved a partner status with the United States.

Although Colonel Harris's fears about his unit's efficacy seemed unfounded after their triumph in the Portrex exercises, the Korean conflict was to reveal the essential paradoxes posed by a relentless modernization process and by the ambiguous colonial condition of Puerto Rico.

THE BORINQUENEERS

On August 23, 1950, the 65th Infantry Regiment left San Juan. The landing at the Korean port of Pusan coincided with the beginning of the United Nations counteroffensive against the spectacular advances of North Korean forces. The 65th would soon earn the nickname of the "fire brigade" for its ubiquitous role in an ever changing front. While unit after unit of the US Eighth Army, along with the regular forces of the South Korean Army, fell into disarray, the 65th displayed a remarkable coherence and battle efficiency. On Christmas Eve 1950, American troops in full retreat were being pushed to the sea. Among them were the elite troops of the First Marine Infantry Division. It was the 65th that protected the rear guard of the Marines; the Puerto Ricans being the last to abandon the port of Humhang before it fell into the hands of the North Koreans. Inexplicably, the 65th was not singled out for citation. None of its members received the Medal of Honor in spite of their proven valor.

How can such courage by a "rum and Coke" outfit be explained? The 65th Regiment's effectiveness was due mainly to its ethnic cohesiveness. Colonel Harris ended up understanding that very

akin to experiences documented in groups of Native American and Mexican-American soldiers, the Puerto Rican band of brothers linked a notion of territoriality to cultural and ethnic identity.

Patria (homeland, motherland) for a Puerto Rican soldier was without hesitation Puerto Rico. As a cultural and sentimental construct, *patria* was the amalgamation of real and imaginary landscapes, streams, hills and sunsets, of aromas, textures, and flavors that defined home; places of the heart where life, meaning and remembrance were possible.

In a distant Korea, where everything was so alien, the Puerto Rican soldiers went to extraordinary lengths to find some resemblance to the *Patria* they had left behind. At Christmas time, a month-long holiday in Puerto Rico, the soldiers tried to recreate the spaces of tradition. Many of the soldiers' accounts of the war emphasize the efforts to transform the sites of war into familiar sites; the artillery rumblings into Christmas carols or *aguinaldos*; or spike the dull military rations with a little *boricua* touch. This was as important as oiling the gun or changing a wet sock. Once, a group of soldiers got hold of a stray pig and they had a traditional pork dinner using the bayonet as the roasting pole.

Patria, thus, was the common topography of affections. When I interviewed Colonel Carlos Betances, more than forty years after the end of the Korean War, he would refer constantly to the soldiers under his command as "mis jibaritos." On the one hand, a *jibaro* is a peasant, specifically from the mountain-side. But it stands also as the generalized symbol of Puerto Rican identity. In referring to his soldiers with the affectionate "jibaritos," Betances, a U.S.-trained officer with impeccable credentials and flawless English, identified with and shared an essential affiliation crucial in the regiment's performance during most of its stint in Korea. For the 65th soldiers, achievements and failures, heroic deeds and above all death in the battlefield represented deeply felt cultural gains and losses

IDENTITY IN DISARRAY

The culturally-bonded regiment continued to display a remarkable record throughout the first six months of 1951. During the summer of that year, peace talks started between UN and North Korean representatives. Everything pointed to the end of the war.

In May 1951, Commander Harris was relieved from its command through a general rotation program. Shortly afterwards, many of the veteran soldiers in the 65th were sent back home and fresh personnel was flown to Korea. When the first troops returned to Puerto Rico, the government declared an official holiday. The triumphant heroes were returning home.

As the peace talks between the belligerents dragged with no end in sight, war became more irrational by the minute. It was then that many Puerto Rican NCOs were replaced by American NCOs. The regiment's morale began to suffer as the tenets of cultural bonding weakened and the situation in the ground changed to a stalemate type of war. In the letters sent to families and friends through 1951 and 1952, the 65th soldiers increasingly denounced the situation as hopeless. Even the appointment of a Puerto Rican commander, Juan César Cordero Dávila, a close friend of Gov-

The Korean War, with the participation of Puerto Rican soldiers, was to reveal the essential paradoxes posted by a relentless modernization process and by the ambiguous colonial condition of Puerto Rico.

well. Ironically, the Regiment was at its best when it was less Americanized. It is highly suggestive that during the Korean War the Regiment began to call itself "the Borinqueneers." *Borinquen* is the Arawak Indian name for Puerto Rico.

War is always a rite of passage for a soldier, especially for a young recruit. It leads a soldier on a voyage to his inner self, but at the same time catapults an individual into a particular fellowship. More



Clockwise from top left: A tent mass for the 65th; packages from the home front; war as a rite of passage; Puerto Rican soldiers in the rugged hills of Korea.

ernor Luis Muñoz Marín, could not turn the tide. In fact, his appointment to lead the Regiment revealed the political complexity embodied by the 65th. From the moment that the Regiment was deployed in Korea, the soldiers fighting in the bloody hills were seen as an example of the alleged “compact” between the United States and Puerto Rico, the perfect metaphor of a new political relationship between the two societies. In 1948, Puerto Rico was allowed to elect its own governor; when the Korean War

erupted, Puerto Rico had begun to draft their own constitution. In 1952, the Puerto Rican flag and the Puerto Rican anthem were decriminalized fifty years after the U.S. invasion of the Island in 1898. It was only fitting that the new flags were sent to Korea and that Puerto Rican soldiers were encouraged to plant them in the conquered hills.

The Kelly Hill incidents in which dozens of Puerto Rican soldiers died during an ill-advised operation in September 1952 were

prompted, according to some participants, by the decision of Commander Cordero to take the objective as a visible token of Puerto Rico's loyalty to the United States, a kind of blood tribute. But, really the operation was an impossible task from the beginning. After two days of incessant fighting, the death toll was staggering. In no other moment of the war had the 65th lost so many men. Cordero was relieved from command as a convenient scapegoat. A new commander, Wisconsin-born Chester De Gavre, resented the ethnic profile of the Regiment. One of his first orders was that all his soldiers be clean-shaven. For a Puerto Rican male in the 1950s to shave his moustache was tantamount to a castration. The morale of the 65th was severely and irretrievably affected.

One month later, the Jackson Heights (another war-torn hill) incidents were even more serious. This time, in the face of insurmountable conditions, the Puerto Rican soldiers disobeyed orders to engage in battle. As many of them would testify in the court martial trials, they could not obey an order that was impossible to fulfill. Near two hundred soldiers were arrested on charges of "willfully fail [ing] to do the utmost to engage in the presence of the enemy" and "failing to obey a lawful command from a superior officer."

Court martial trials for 92 soldiers and one officer were hastily convened and held without providing proper counsel to the defendants. The government of Puerto Rico, caught in the middle of a potentially damaging affair that could jeopardize its political agenda, kept silent for nearly two months. On New Year's Eve, the incidents were made known by a local newspaper alerted by several letters written by the imprisoned soldiers to their families.

WAR AND THE SUBALTERN

The incidents that took place in Korea are part of a highly intricate process in which subordination and resistance mechanisms are intertwined.

During the frantic last months of 1950, the Puerto Rican soldiers were the perfect colonized subjects both for the Army's hierarchy and for the local elites en route to power. Two years later, when the war effort was becoming more and more chaotic with hundreds of soldiers dying for the sake of two or three yards of barren real estate, alterity was affirmed with ferocious force and the 65th returned to its homeland in disgrace.

Two minor military operations, today no more than casual references in the Korean War bibliography, illuminate the complexities and antagonisms inherent to every colonial relationship. In reading the transcripts of Lt. Juan Guzmán's court martial, the sole officer convicted for the Jackson Heights incident, one can see this fascinating tale of alterity developing. Until his departure to Korea this college graduate had been a career drill sergeant with a distinguished service record. His testimony reveals how proud he was of serving in the Armed Forces. But during the trial, Guzmán was portrayed as an incompetent and hesitant platoon leader. U.S. officers insisted on Guzmán's inability to understand English and his failure to comprehend simple orders. Although there were evident inconsistencies in the declarations made by the witnesses for the prosecution, the military judges summarily dismissed Guzmán's version of the events.

The same pattern is revealed in the other 90-plus trials. All exhibit a common trait: the Puerto Rican soldier was subject to a process of infantilization; his ability to speak and understand was consistently denied or questioned. In the end, all of the accused were found guilty and received outrageous sentences ranging from five to sixteen years of hard labor and dishonorable discharges. Eventually, after secret negotiations between the U.S. and Puerto Rican governments, all were granted clemency. The Regiment was reorganized with the convenient explanation that the Armed Forces had to be integrated and finally was disbanded in 1954.

The fact that one in every forty-two casualties in the war was a Puerto Rican is largely ignored by the Korean War historiography as the war itself is largely ignored and almost forgotten by histo-

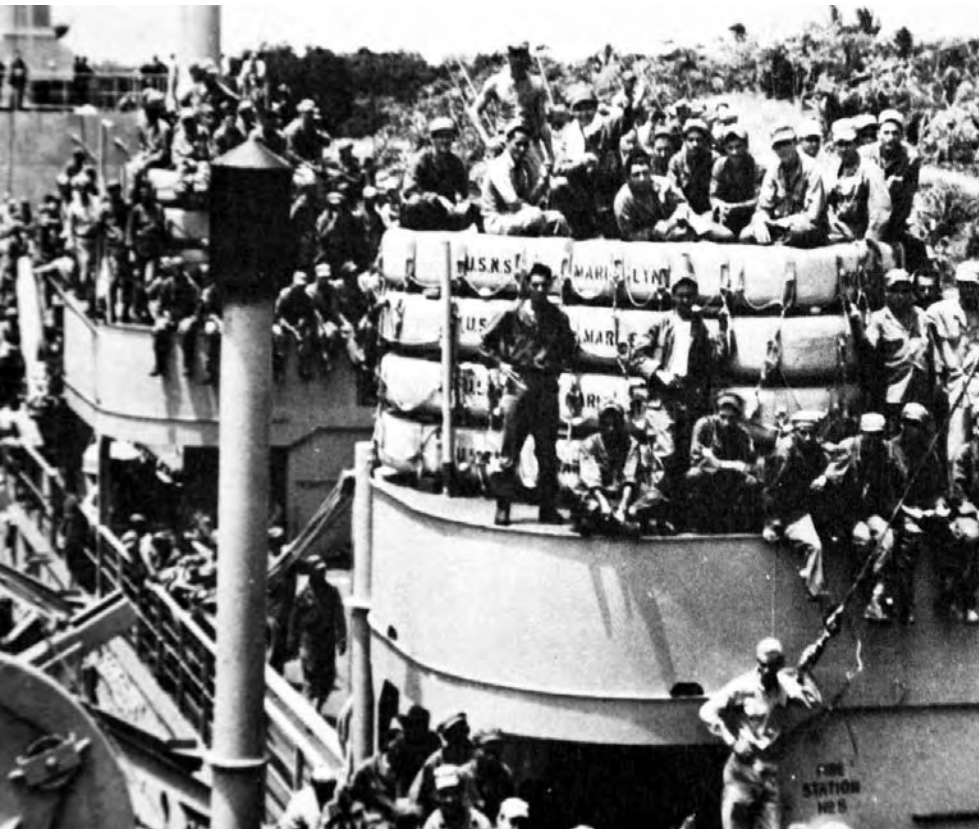
The incidents that took place in Korea involving the Puerto Rican soldiers of the 65th Regiment are part of a highly intricate process in which subordination and resistance mechanisms are intertwined.

rians and the general public. Korea gives us the opportunity to examine the essential *desencuentro* and asymmetry that lies at the bottom of more than one hundred years of colonial domination. It shows the ambiguity of the "colonized" subject responses to imperial designs and the role of ethnicity both as an adaptation and as a resistance mechanism. The dramatic events of September and October 1952 were directly related to the loss of identity suffered by the Regiment. But paradoxically, the decisions made in the hills of Korea were also a collective affirmation of identity in the face of irrationality.

The Puerto Rican community knew better and hailed the moral resilience of its soldiers, black and white, on the face of discrimination and prejudice. In a still poverty-stricken land, a military career represented a way out from unemployment and despair for many Puerto Ricans. Many of them were young men from the countryside or small towns. In pursuit of a better future for them and their families—many of them came from families of ten or more children—the Puerto Rican soldier was willing to fight his heart out. But the Puerto Rican soldier performance was also an affair of *dignidad*, perhaps one of the most basic concepts in our cultural idiosyncrasy, a mixture of pride, courage, bravery, self-respect and patriotism.

The 65th soldiers genuinely believed that they were fighting for freedom and democracy as Puerto Rican Governor Muñoz Marín had told them when he bid them good-bye. The 65th veterans, many with tears in their eyes and broken voices, still cherish the regimental colors, but they also recall with sadness and disbelief the prejudiced color of war.

Silvia Alvarez Curbelo is a cultural historian and a professor at the School of Communication in the University of Puerto Rico. She directs the Communication Research Center at the same university. She was a 2005 Wilbur T. Marvin Visiting Scholar at the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies.



Clockwise from top left: USS Marine Lynx carries the 65th Infantry regiment to Korea; war and remembrance; Gov. Luis Muñoz Marín hoists the flag; First Lady Inés Mendoza dances with a returning soldier; trial reveals discrimination.

Feet in Both Worlds

A Photoessay

IMAGES BY MIGUEL LUCIANO

Introductory Text by Peggy Levitt and Jessica Hejtmanek,

Excerpts from an Interview with Miguel Luciano

ASEA CHANGE HAS TRANSFORMED migration scholarship in the last two decades. Most scholars now recognize that many migrants maintain ties to their home countries at the same time that they become incorporated into the places where they settle. They continue to invest, support political candidates, and raise families in their homelands while they buy homes and join the PTA in the United States. By belonging to several communities at once, migrants redefine the boundaries of belonging and create new kinds of memberships and citizenships, dramatically transforming the contours of social experience.

One place these processes not only unfold but are also represented is in the creative arts. To explore how the relationship between art and society changes when social life no longer stays within national boundaries, the Transnational Studies Initiative (TSI) at Harvard organized a series

of public events in the Boston area in spring of 2007. Three artists—Giles Li, a Chinese-American spoken word artist, Samina Ali, an Indian Muslim writer, and Miguel Luciano, a Puerto Rican visual artist—were invited to present and speak about their work and how it explores an intersection between art, identity and homeland. Interviews with the artists, as well as the public conversations were filmed and made into a documentary film, *Art Beyond Borders*, which speaks not only to the relationship between art and identity but about the role of art and culture in bringing about social change.

Peggy Levitt is Chair and Associate Professor, Department of Sociology at Wellesley College, and Co-Director of the Transnational Studies Initiative and Associate at The Weatherhead Center for International Affairs and The Hauser Center for Non-profit Organizations, Harvard Univer-

sity. She is the author of God Needs No Passport: Immigrants and the Changing American Religious Landscape.

Jessica Hejtmanek is Project Coordinator of the Transnational Studies Initiative at Harvard University and an independent researcher whose work focuses on the relationship between art, media and identity.

Miguel Luciano is a Brooklyn-based Puerto Rican artist. He received his MFA from the University of Florida. His work has been exhibited widely, including at The Brooklyn Museum, NY; El Museo del Barrio, NY; Bronx Museum of Art, NY; Exit Art, NY; CUE Art Foundation, NY; and the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture, San Juan, Puerto Rico. He was awarded the Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters and Sculptors Award Grant and the New York Foundation for the Arts' Artist Fellowship. He can be reached at lmiluciano@hotmail.com.

"I'm a visual artist who was born in Puerto Rico and grew up primarily in the States, from Seattle to Miami to NY I've lived in a lot of different cities and I've also spent a lot of time in Puerto Rico during all those years—mostly going to visit family over the years, but later I would spend more time there making my work which has been a rewarding experience for me. My work as an artist deals with a lot of those issues in the back and forth, about looking at Puerto Rican history, culture and politics and the experience of being connected to both the island and the United States. My work has expanded from personal questions of identity construction to broader questions about colonialism and its relationship to globalization and consumerism."

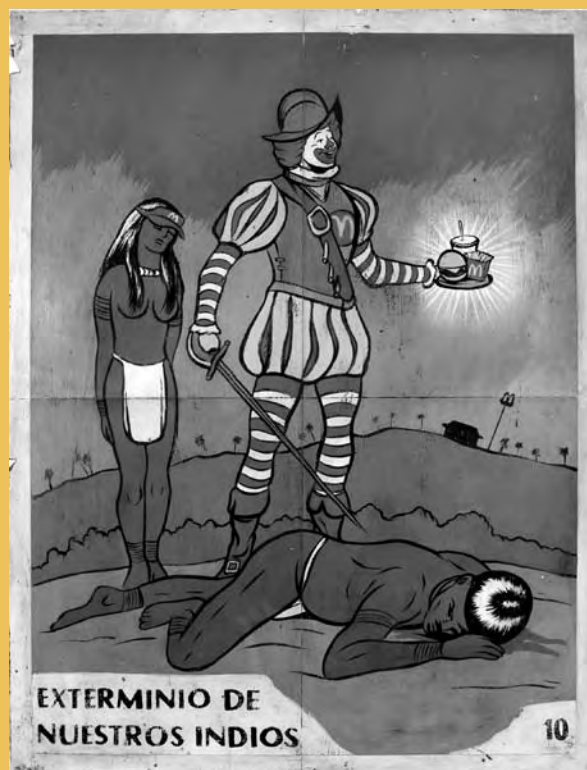


Pelea de Gallos, 2002



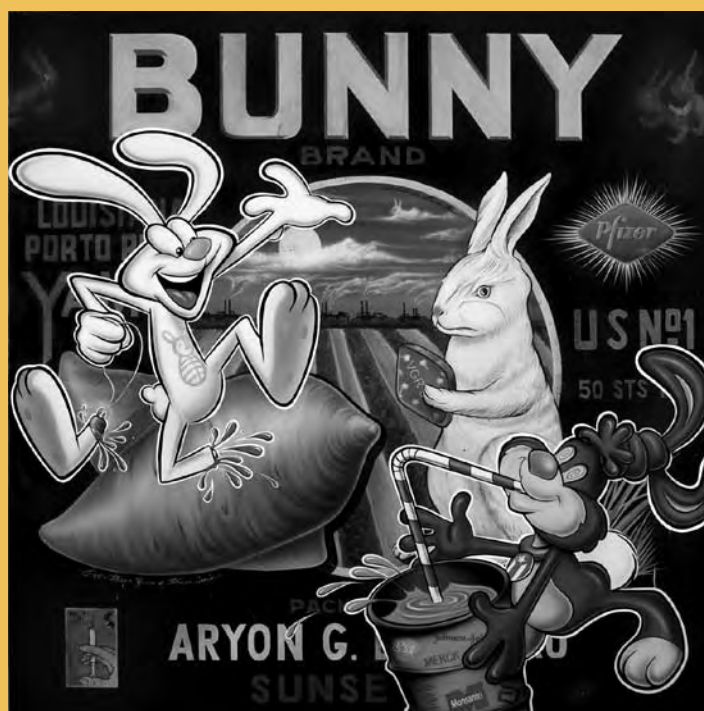
Cracker Juan, 1998

"Cracker Juan is a work that describes a lot of things I am interested in—it's a poster image that I made by appropriating a Cracker Jack label—so it directly references advertising and the dominance of popular consumer imagery. This was made in 1998, which was the centennial mark of US colonialism in Puerto Rico (1898–1998), an event both celebrated and denounced throughout the island. This seemed an appropriate image because the Cracker Jack character is a sailor, and the history of militarization in Puerto Rico, along with the complicated role of Puerto Ricans in the U.S. military, highlights our strained relationship with the United States and the inequities we experience as citizens."



Exterminio de Nuestros Indios, 2004

"I am interested in deconstructing a colonial consciousness that we have been living with for a long time—while creating spaces of resistance that empower us to embrace our contradictions, and move through them towards our own self-determined path."



Barceloneta Bunnies, 2006

"I like to evoke humor, though I sometimes use imagery from our childhood to engage both playful and painful issues. The painting *Barceloneta Bunnies* references a former pineapple town in Puerto Rico that today hosts the largest pharmaceutical complex in the world. Barceloneta was also a prominent site of U.S.-sponsored sterilization programs, an official policy on the island from the 1930's–1970's. With ironic associations to both sterility and virility, Barceloneta's Pfizer plant is the world's leading producer of Viagra today."

PHOTOESSAY



La Mano Poderosa Racetrack, 2001–2004



"In Puerto Rico, I presented *La Mano Poderosa Race Track*, an interactive sculptural installation that combines Puerto Rican folkloric iconography with consumer fantasy in a competitive Hotwheels racing competition. Hotwheels racing was a recent consumer phenomenon in Puerto Rico that became a widespread social pastime. *La Mano Poderosa* (the All Powerful Hand of God) is a traditional image from the history of Puerto Rican saint carving. Here, the Hand is ten feet tall, and the saints upon its fingertips have transformed into new *Consumer Santos*. Participants compete for mixed blessings in a race from the Stigmata Starting Gate to the Sacred Heart Finish Line, where finalists receive coveted Golden Plátano-mobile Trophies."



Inflatable Head of Columbus, 2006



"There was an attempt to build the largest statue of Christopher Columbus in the western hemisphere in Puerto Rico. The statue, designed by Russian artist Zurab Tsereteli, was rejected by several U.S. cities before arriving in Cataño, Puerto Rico... However, finances collapsed, the Mayor of Cataño resigned for psychological reasons and the controversial project was never erected. Today, Columbus lies fragmented in thousands of pieces of bronze, deteriorating in an outdoor lot next to the Bacardi Factory... perhaps the only justice in the story. The "Head" was the one recognizable fragment of the statue, and to parody this failed monument I installed an inflatable replica in la Plaza Colón in Old San Juan on May 20th, 2006—the 500-year anniversary of the death of Christopher Columbus."



Pure Plantainum, at King of Platinum—125th Street, 2006



Plátano Pride, 2006

"In the *Pure Plantainum* series, actual plantains were plated in platinum. With a thin layer of platinum on the surface, the actual fruit decomposes within. Plantains are a stereotypical yet iconic symbol of Puerto Rican and Caribbean culture with vernacular associations to race, class, labor and migration. Here they're presented like emblematic jewels that transform cultural stigmas into urban expressions of pride."



Tecato Trexi, 2007

"My work explores how issues of dependency operate in Puerto Rico—how we have gone from being a production-based society to one that is grounded in consumption, and today Puerto Ricans are among the greatest consumers in the world—per capita we spend more and buy more than consumers in any American state yet we make the least."



The Last Coqui—Kiddie Ride, 2004

"Whether you live in the states, or on the island, we're all Puerto Rican. It's about redefining the Puerto Rican experience and the Puerto Rican experience in the States or in New York is just as valid as the experience on the island—we are all one people—who share a history of migration that's gone on for a long time, and that story is one that impacts everyone—regardless of where you live."

THE ISLAND OF THE MUSE: LITERATURE AND MUSIC

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Open Mic p. 32

Women Writers of the 21st Century p. 33

Puerto Rico is the Island of the muse, lively with visual arts, music and literature. Culture—both “high” and popular—links the Island and the diaspora, the emanation of a particularly Caribbean, particularly boricua way of seeing the world.



Listening Speaks (I)

An Introduction

BY **ARNOLDO CRUZ-MALAVE**

SOME TEN YEARS AGO I WAS LIVING IN THE WASHINGTON HEIGHTS area of New York City, in what local Dominican New Yorkers refer to affectionately as *Quisqueya* Heights, when I received a call from someone I'd known nearly twenty years earlier. It was Juan Rivera, whom I'd known from my years as an undergraduate at Yale. I belonged then to a student organization, significantly named after a Puerto Rican independence rallying call, *¡Despierta Boricua!*, had an insurreccional afro, and political ideals to match; and as part of our community outreach, we'd go into the New Haven Puerto Rican neighborhood to tutor students at the local high school.

It was a community of recent immigrants from the rural interior of the Island, where I too had come from, and we, unbelievably the first class of "mainland" Puerto Rican students on the Yale campus, would often go there to attend political meetings, patronize cultural events, and search for good Puerto Rican music and food. To get there we'd have to cross the highway and the train tracks, which divided New Haven's expensive downtown shopping area from its poor inner-city neighborhoods, for the Puerto Rican community was literally on the other side of the tracks. We'd cross the high-

View of San Juan

way, the train tracks, and walk up Congress Ave., or as it was both derisively and affectionately known to locals then, The Congo.

On the other side of The Congo, was the Puerto Rican neighborhood, The Hill, an isolated tangle of streets, a town in itself, strewn with Catholic and Pentecostal churches, where entire extended families lived in dilapidated Victorians facing each other, attentive to *el qué dirán*, to each other's every word and gaze. A town not unlike the town where I'd been raised in, in the heartland of Puerto Rico's volcanic rock interior, and where I'd migrated from four years earlier to New York—that incredibly and gaily named *San Sebastián del Pepino*—oh, yes, Saint Sebastian...of the Cucumber.

I must have seen Juan then while tutoring at the local high school or serving as a counselor for the Puerto Rican Youth Services program of the local antipoverty agency, *Junta*. I must have seen Juan at some community festival, or on the stoops of this agency just hanging out. And he must have caught my eye, like so many of the handsome boys and girls who were initiating an identity then, as first-generation state-side Puerto Ricans with stridently beautiful afros, tropical polyester printed shirts, and prominently displayed Puerto Rican flags—on their butts.

But it was surely at the town's gay bar, the not unsuggestively named *The Neuter Rooster*, where we must have first met. For I too was initiating an identity then not only as a state-side Puerto Rican but as gay. And it was in these New Haven bars where I took my first steps. It was there where we, the Puerto Rican and black gay students at Yale, would often go after marathon meetings in which we'd strategize about building the most powerful third world student movement on the East Coast. And it was there where we'd continue planning for the Revolution in another key and under the glare of a different light—the disco ball.

And though we were Yale students, and as such privileged, we'd often have to devise the most elaborate plans to elude the racial quotas being enforced in the gay clubs then. We'd match the lightest skin of us to the darkest and try to enter in couples that way. But still every so often we'd be wandering outside the club perplexed at the failure of our flawlessly designed plan. Any rational racist would have approved, we thought. Once inside, however, we'd take over the dance floor with our expansive moves, and we'd dance salsa to disco and the reverse. Once inside, a sort of family, one of

those extended Puerto Rican families that crisscross social classes and races, in which the stuck-up society lady shares uncomfortably the same lineage with the unemployed and the single mom, began to form on the basis of shared space, furious and elegant turning, deep dish, and desiring sweaty bodies.

Nearly twenty years later I was a professor at Fordham, a Jesuit University in New York, specializing in Latin American and U.S. Latino literatures, on the board of the Center for Lesbian and

Gay Studies of CUNY's Graduate Center, and writing my first essays on Puerto Rican and Latin/o American queerness, when I received Juan's call. I'd heard in the intervening years that Juan had been living in New York, gone through a series of odd jobs, been the lover of a famous artist, hung out with the rich and famous, traveled around the world. But now on the other side of the phone, he sounded distressed. He had developed AIDS and had recently come out of the hospital, and was looking for a way to make a living, to rebuild his life, looking for some direction, some way out, when he'd run into an old friend of mine from New Haven who'd given him my phone.

He also had a story to tell: something urgent to communicate—he'd been wronged, he knew it, and was looking for some vindication, to set the record straight. He visited me and he handed me a book, *Keith Haring: The Authorized Biography* by John Gruen, which he could barely read, where his name appeared—besmirched. After all, I was a Yale graduate, a university professor...I should know.

I listened to Juan's irresistibly tangled tale with no small measure of awe and rage, and quickly agreed that his story had to be heard. It had to be heard in its own right, first and foremost for Juan's sake. But it also resonated with so many of the issues queer studies was grappling with then, as it attempted to move toward its intersection with ethnic, racial, and gender studies, as it placed, so to speak, the margins of lesbian and gay identity at the center of a queer studies agenda. And it spoke similarly to questions that were beginning to be raised then in Latin/o American and Puerto Rican studies, as these fields moved from the analysis of national formations to an exploration of the nation's migrant borders. And it shed light on the vexed relations between popular and high culture and on discussions of consumerism and the appropriation of resistant vernacular forms that so preoccupied American cultural studies throughout the 1990s.

Juan had been lover and partner to the famous American 1980s pop artist Keith Haring during some of the most frenetically productive years of his career, from 1986 to shortly before his death in February of 1990. They had met at the Paradise Garage, the legendary underground disco where black and Latino gay youth, voguing drag queen divas, straight-identified "banjee" boys, and homeless and throwaway kids stomped, sweated, and swirled with music business insiders and up-and-coming media celebrities, and Haring, then at the peak of his rapidly internationalizing career, had been instantly smitten by his looks...

*Arnaldo Cruz-Malavé is Associate Visiting Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures at Harvard University this spring. Associate Professor of Spanish and Comparative Literature and Associate Director of the Latin American and Latino Studies Institute at Fordham University in New York, his most recent book is *Queer Latino Testimonio, Keith Haring, and Juanito Xtravaganza: Hard Tails* (Palgrave 2007), a book about the relationship between high art and Latino popular culture in the gentrifying New York of the 1980s, from which this essay is excerpted. He is also author of a study on the intersections of nationalism and sexuality in the prose fiction of the Cuban author, José Lezama Lima, *El primitivo implorante*, and coeditor of *Queer Globalization: Citizenship and the Afterlife of Colonialism* (New York UP 2002).*





The Coming of the *Salsa* Machine

Listening as an Experience

BY JUAN CARLOS QUINTERO-HERENCIA

FACED WITH THE DECEPTIVELY STRAIGHTFORWARD QUESTION: “How did you arrive at the idea for your book *La máquina de la salsa. Tránsitos del sabor?*” I can’t help but think on the comings and goings that led to the making of the text. Displacements, trips, solos, jam, cooking and love sessions, altogether surround and corrode my listening to Salsa. The writing of *La máquina de la salsa* traces a long, porous, temporal curve spanning from the late 1980s to its 2005 publication. Rendering, giving body, so to speak, to what it meant to listen to *Salsa* as a kid growing up in a middle-class subdivision in Río Piedras, also entailed being part of the critical intellectual scene of late-20th-century Puerto Rico. Contemporary with the writing of my study on the Cuban Revolution imaginary (*Fulguración del espacio. Letras e imaginario institucional de la Revolución cubana*, Beatriz Viterbo, 2002) and part of my poetry, the first assemblies of my *Machine* make no sense outside the brief revitalization of the intellectual field experimented on the Island in the mid-1990’s and early 2000s.

Listening as an experience is what gives, in part, cohesion to my book. Listening here means an immersion into both musicality and the whole array of affects and beliefs it produces in a listening subject. I lend my ears to musicality as a way of traversing and dealing with the demands constitutive of any true listening experience. Listening is not merely hearing something; it is going after that other body or reality that secretes its resonance and murmurs. I am overwhelmed by musicality as a rub: a zone of touches, contacts and sensuous encounters between a resonating body and what echoes within a specific listener. The sonority pulling me by the ears in Salsa is one among a series of quivering sound effects, which partake in an acoustic mystery: the emergence of a Caribbean *sensorium*. Such “effects,” their beginnings and departures, are scattered among several objects and bodies, including music, of course. With these effects it is possible to suggest some ideas on the corporeality traversing the Caribbean Archipelago. That is what I think I am after I listen to various songs or read certain poems. In the song, I imagine, I can listen to the beginnings of a Caribbean

way (reason) of being (*estar*) in vibration. It was, and still is, about how to cross over, penetrate the opening where a world exposes itself and opens (up to) the matter of its resonances.

Much of the book’s polemic thrust responds to early academic protocols placing their analytic kiosks on the identity tales weaved into *Salsa* by some *salseros*. I also wanted to reflect on the uneasiness generated, again and again, by the musical genre in the Caribbean, especially in Puerto Rico. Likewise, I wanted to lay bare the placid prescription on manners by some commentators *vis-à-vis* the *salsero* body. Moralistic, square and predictable attitudes, as well as idealization, the daydream of progressive dorks, characterize analytical approaches that move away from what, I believe, Salsa lyrics do. I wanted, then, to think about signs of alarm, and pursue those prescriptions. I wanted to question the silences and scoldings fashioned to deal with bodies exposed in and by the genre of salsa that, to be sure, compete with and unsettle the social body designed by the lettered and colonial utopias of the Caribbean.

The metaphor of the machine, or machinations of the genre has also allowed me to write some ongoing notes for a theory of performativity and the signifying nature of Caribbean musicality. The machine plots, *la maquinación*, can be understood as stalking or tracking down and as an aesthetic project working with, changing directions, consuming and transporting some misfortune. It is a module for the transformation of voices, faces, bodies, stories and topographies, something that re-emerges on Caribbean musical performances. The Caribbean musical machinery loves to metamorphose. It is voice, train, boat, mill, cauldron, sex or spaceship. In the end, I arrived to this multifarious machine by trying to do justice to my own intimate shudders and tremors: Héctor Lavoe’s voice pierces my chest with his clave, *enclavado*; Celia Cruz’s battle-cry “Azúcar” gets me on my feet, losing ground; the conversation of the Gran Combo’s trumpets and trombone, the lethal front of Chamaco Ramírez and the hasty scamp (*jiribilla*) all drive my body into despair.

Juan Carlos Quintero-Herencia is Professor at the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, University of Maryland, College Park.

Covers of record albums from the salsa world

Open Mic

Cultural Remittances, New Poetry, and Emerging Identities

BY JUAN FLORES

IN RECENT YEARS THERE HAS BEEN A NOTABLE AND UNPRECEDENTED literary rapprochement between the Island and the Puerto Rican diaspora in New York, particularly among the generation of young writers who have emerged since around 1990. A widely shared sense of the compatibility and convergence between the two social realities finds particularly forceful expression, for instance, in the writings of “Gallego,” the young poet José Raúl González, who is perhaps the prime example of cultural remittances in contemporary Puerto Rican poetry. Gallego’s programmatic poem “Nantan-Bai,” in which he explains the inspiration for his own writing efforts, includes the lines: “*Escribo porque también viví en la ciudad de nuevayol, / porque también allá se están matando porel crack. / Porque también allá se están matando porla heroína. / porque también allá existen cárceles, / porque en las cárceles de allá también hacen tiempo / cientos de puertorriqueños. . . .*”

Seen from the vantage of the street, Puerto Rico and New York are mirror images of one another, with the same scenes of addiction, alienation and everyday violence; oppressive conditions of marginality bear down on the neighborhoods. The word “nuevayol,” always in this colloquial Puerto Rican spelling, is a constant in Gallego’s poetic world, an integral part of everyday life in the impoverished Puerto Rican neighborhoods. Among his best-known poems, in part because of reggaetón superstar Daddy Yankee’s popular song “Chamaco’s corner,” a vintage Gallego rendering of the “boyz in the hood” scene; the guys (“los chamacos”) talk about everything when they hang out, including inevitably, about “nuevayol”: “*Los chamacos hablan de política, de trucos, / de salsa vieja, de nuevayol, de grafitis, de las mánises, / de los camarones que anoche les violaron los derechos.*”

Gallego recounts how his New York stay as a teenager was life-defining, with Nuyorican poets as a source of inspiration. In his poem “Y latina” he writes, “*Y la poesía me cayó de un building en Nueva York / en una noche del verano del noventicuatro,*” and in his life-tale he identifies Nuyorican poet Pedro Pietri as the most important influence on his work. He saw in Pietri a different way to create and present poetry, a model for the figure of the “poète maudit” that he himself would become on the Island’s literary scene. His writing style often reflects Pietri’s unmistakable ironic twists and uncanny understatement: “*Anoche soñé que un huracán arrancó el Capitolio / y que fue a parar al Central Park, en Nueva York, / soñé que los deambulantes / que fueron a Vietnam / jangleaban frente al Hospital de Veteranos, / que mi vecina se divorciaba / y su esposo pedía una orden de protección / contra sí mismo.*” (“El grito”)

Despite Pietri’s influence, Gallego’s main personal contacts from the diaspora were his contemporaries, particularly Willie Perdomo and Mariposa (María Fernández), groundbreakers of what might be termed the “post-Nuyorican” generation of the 1990s. Gallego has hung out with them and others, reading, touring and exchanging a lot of lessons and laughs. With Perdomo he shares the street-wise conversational style and reflectiveness, while Mariposa’s most famous lines, “*no nació en Puerto Rico, / Puerto Rico nació en mí,*” from her signature poem “Ode to the Diasporican,” beckoned a retort, in his new book, *The *c*#?!* Map: “*No nació en Nueva York, / Nueva York nació en mí.*” The dialogue, the synchronicity, the reciprocity are all remarkable, such that at times

it feels as though the diaspora and the Island constitute a single fabric of contemporary poetic expression.

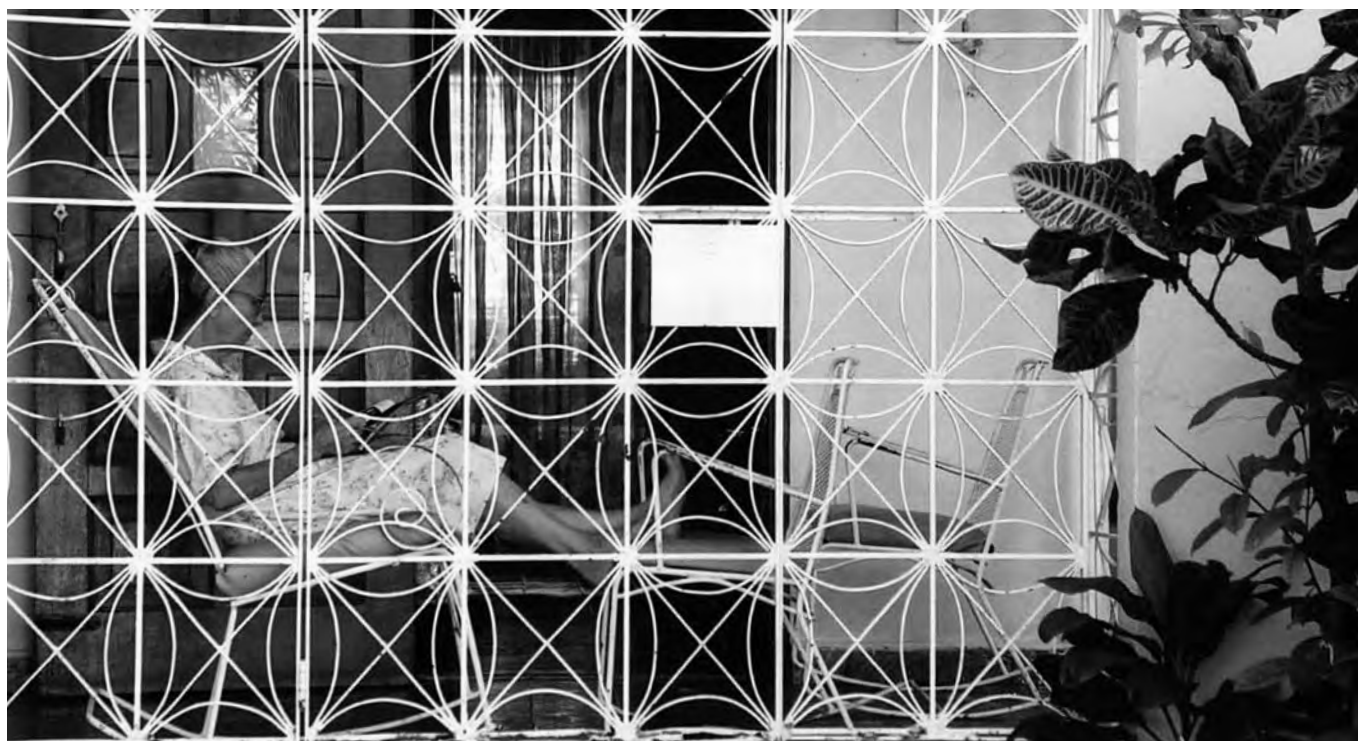
What unites Gallego and other young Island poets with their counterparts in the diaspora is the formative presence of hip hop. Hip hop is in many ways the cultural backdrop, the post-1990s generation’s zeitgeist. It has become the air the young writers breathe, in a way that could not have been the case among the Nuyoricans of the 1970s, even though they are often regarded as precursors.

Gallego expresses optimism he gains in part as MC for the open mic sessions at the significantly named Nuyorican Café in Old San Juan. There, he introduces aspiring new writers, younger than himself, writing and performing in the same vein, and sharing a poetic scene that differs in significant ways from the literary salons of earlier generations of writing on the Island. The air at the Café is filled with a new sensibility, one that is clearly and explicitly nourished by the ongoing Nuyorican cultural movement, which in the Island context constitutes a standing challenge to the traditional idea of what poetry is, and what being Puerto Rican is.

Gallego’s contemporary, the poet Guillermo Rebollo-Gil, reflects on “The Coming Puerto Rican Identities,” noting the “increased exposure of Islanders to Nuyorican works.” The resulting “clash” involves more than poetic styles or modes of performance but extends to concepts of cultural and national identity: “Traditional Island identity constructions are beginning to collide with Nuyorican formulations of Puerto Ricanness and may very well lead Islanders to question their long held views.” This “de-centering of Puerto Rican identity,” exemplified by the Island’s young writers turning more to their Nuyorican counterparts than to canonical and even contemporary Island authors, implies an alternative philosophy and aesthetic, more “liberatory and multicultural” than the official cultural ideology. The “new vision of the Puerto Rican” based on the Nuyorican aesthetic allows for more positive interaction with other racial/ethnic communities, a “race-conscious revision of Puerto Rican history” that gives adequate due to the Black Island experience, a “more nuanced view of colonialism,” and generally a more open, critical and “people-centered approach to political and social change.”

These are bold and wishful claims, of course, perhaps with inadequate heed to the less salutary aspects of the diaspora cultural package, or to the Island’s dynamics of change. But the shifts underway in the Puerto Rican poetic landscape are no doubt serious, especially because they are motivated by the youth, and are also clearly part of a larger cultural “de-centering” engendered in some significant way by the new kinds of interaction with the diaspora experience.

Juan Flores is Professor of Latino Studies in the Department of Social and Cultural Analysis at New York University. His books include From Bomba to Hip-Hop: Puerto Rican Culture and Latino Identity. This article is abridged from author’s forthcoming book, The Diaspora Strikes Back: Caribeño Tales of Learning and Turning (Routledge, 2008).



Women Writers in the 21st Century

The Porcupine's Prick

BY CARMEN OQUENDO-VILLAR

JUST AS I WAS RETURNING TO CARIBBEAN STUDIES, MAYRA Santos-Febres suggested that I write the introduction for *Las espinas del erizo: antología de escritoras boricuas del siglo XXI* (*The Porcupine's Quills: Anthology of 21st century Puerto Rican Women Writers*). Working on my doctorate at Harvard, I'd taken a detour through the Southern Cone with its imposing paternal figures. As a woman from Puerto Rico, I couldn't think of a more suitable project than Mayra's invitation (and challenge).

It was a welcomed opportunity to immerse myself in the worlds of imagination created by the contemporary pens of 21st century women writers who were joining this "commonwealth" called Puerto Rican literature. I found this invitation a tempting incentive to contribute a preliminary study and thus to participate as a critical observer. I decided to accept.

In what fashion are these Puerto Rican *escritoras*, women writers, laying siege to the traditional literary canon? It was easy for me to recognize that the Island's system of narrative, even when embedded in the discourse of colonialism and docility, has shared many characteristics with the discursive style of the sovereign patriarchs. According to Puerto Rican critic Juan Gelpi in *Literatura y paternalismo en Puerto Rico*, Puerto Rican literature was traditionally governed by the concept of literary generations, revolv-

ing around a central father figure. The production of the new women writers challenged or provided an irritant to what could be considered the first generation of Puerto Rican women writers. As the principal interlocutor in this anthology, this generation emerged in the 1970s as a result of a distancing that undermined the masculine canon, the disfiguration of the father figure and the emergence of the idea of nation as a "house in ruins," to continue with Gelpi's metaphor. Santos-Febres argues that this generation of women writers solidified the feminine literary canon in Puerto Rico and internationalized Puerto Rican literature as a whole.

The women writers—innovative and irreverent when they burst upon the literary scene in the waning years of the 20th century—emerged terrified but exuberant through the windows of the "house in ruins" of Puerto Rican literature. As Ramón Luis Acevedo points out in *Del silencio al estallido: Narrativa femenina puertorriqueña*, the 60s—and the women writers who began to publish then—paved the way for the noisy "boom" of women writers in the 70s. And, ironically, at times, these women writers are invited to cohabit in this anthology in a new house of writing localized in the globalized world of the 21st century that has preserved an acoustic memory of the 1960s and 1970s icons, such as Bob Dylan's "Like a Rolling Stone" making an incursion into Mara Pastor's *Un completo desconocido* (A Complete Stranger).

Woman through the window



Clockwise from top left: Women go beyond their private worlds: Images include Taino Flower Girl; girls hanging out by the water; Flambo Dancer

Santos-Febres gathers these texts to produce an understanding that “challenges the formal paradigms of the generation of ’70 and its most important representatives: Ana Lydia Vega, Rosario Ferré, Olga Nolla and Mayra Montero.” The anthology is dedicated to these teachers, these “female masters.” “for having forged a path that I (and many other women) have followed.”

The anthology is organized with these literary matriarchs, but also against them. They are the primary interlocutors even if some of the writers in the anthology directly address the masculine literary canon of Puerto Rican and Latin American letters, such as Neeltje Van Marising Méndez’s *Yo maté a Abelardo Díaz Alfaro*, Sofía Cardona’s *La amante de Borges*, or Alexa Pagán’s *El Cisne*, a queered allusion to Rubén Darío’s powerful literary symbol. What are the “formal paradigms” of the generation of ’70 that the new women writers are challenging? Some examples of these paradigms are the use of popular speech as a literary language; the exaltation of the working classes; and a focus on Latin American and Caribbean identity. In the case of many of these older women writers, the paradigm also involves feminine and feminist identity. The new women writers introduced by Santos-Febres distance themselves from these narrative emphases; if these themes do figure in the anthology, they do not dominate it.

The anthology’s texts do not follow a single coherent narrative paradigm. It is important to remember that these writers do not constitute a new generation. Santos-Febres explains in her preface, “I do not follow strictly generational criteria; some of these divas

were born before a lot of the others.” She clarifies, “I am focusing on a more solid foundation.” The silence about new Puerto Rican literary production forms part of this “more solid foundation.” There has not been a literary anthology of new Puerto Rican women writers since 1986. “It is as though the literary world had ended on the Island after ’70,” says Santos-Febres. “In part, this is because of the fragmentation of literary collectives, the growing tendency toward Internet publications and, perhaps as a result, exclusively local publishing.” The editor, therefore, extends an invitation to read the anthology in the context of the profound silence surrounding contemporary literature in today’s Puerto Rico.

Although her public persona has projected her on the Island as the contemporary national literary matriarch, Santos-Febres and her edited volume do not seek to inscribe her in that role. *Las espinas del erizo: antología de escritoras boricuas del siglo XXI* places the women writers in a century that searches deeper but does not venerate the model of literary generations and their imposing patriarchs and now, more recently, their equally imposing matriarchs.

This anthology is organized with a pace most closely associated with the literary workshop, a very popular phenomenon in the world of Puerto Rican letters. The momentum of a workshop is not genealogical nor vertical; rather, it is closer to the rhizomatic model of French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in which a plant assumes very diverse forms, from ramified surface extension in all directions to concretion into bulbs and tubers.

"Every writer needs her or his workshop," Santos-Febres wrote in 2005 in the prologue to *Cuentos de oficio: Antología de cuentistas emergentes en Puerto Rico*, referring in a meta-literary fashion to the process of forming craftspersons in the world of letters. This 2005 anthology, product of literary workshops led by Santos-Febres throughout the Island for decades, follows the model of volumes of short stories published as a result of workshops, such as that of Luís López Nieves' *Te traigo un cuento* and Mayra Montero's *Vientitrés y una tortuga*. In Puerto Rico, the literary workshop has had an important role in the development of narrative since the 1950s with Enrique Laguerre's first literary workshop at the University of Puerto Rico. It is significant that it is Santos-Febres—a hallowed woman writer in the Puerto Rican literary world and indeed throughout much of the Spanish-speaking Caribbean—who proposes the re-ordering of Puerto Rican literary history.

While inscribed in a literary framework, this collection reformulates the conceptions of prior anthologies. *Las espinas del erizo* does not bring together women writers who obediently stick to the model of the inviting editor. On the contrary, in this anthology's pages, we find a diversity of voices. These voices do not attempt to explain the identity of "woman," even when they would agree with gender theorist Judith Butler when she asks, "What does gender want of me?"—conceiving the identifying category "gender" as an antecedent to one's very subjectivity (Judith Butler, "What Does Gender Want of Me? New Psychoanalytic Perspectives," magistral speech, Program of Studies of Women, Gender and Sexuality, Harvard. Dec. 4, 2007). Identity in this anthology is not based on nationality/ethnicity/race or even Puerto Rican or Caribbean identity. All these identities are taken as a given or conveniently overlooked.

What stands out in each story are women "*bregando*," a very Puerto Rican word meaning "fending," "dealing with," "coping" or "getting by" or a mix of all of the above. This ubiquitous term, studied by writer Arcadio Díaz-Quinones in his *El arte de bregar: Ensayos* (San Juan: Ediciones Callejón, 2000), has multiple meanings. According to Díaz Quinones, "the verb *bregar* floats, wise and entertaining, in the multiple scenarios of Puerto Rican life... women and men employ this verb endlessly, with freedom and intelligence. Puerto Ricans are always fending for themselves, vulnerable, alert... *bregar* is, one could say, another way of knowing, a diffuse method without a compass to navigate everyday life, where everything is extremely precarious, changing or violent..." The women of this new literature "*bregan*" as protagonists; their kind of dealing with the world is not just a passive backdrop. They are women who go beyond their private worlds, who inhabit the public sphere in Puerto Rico, the Caribbean and other undefined spheres.

The category "citizen" is fundamental for these new literary subjects. Says Santos-Febres, "The fact is that women appear as agents in these worlds. She passes through them, changes them, and is changed by them; she explores them, now not from the private sphere (as mother, wife, lover, etc.), but as a citizen/marginal person/professional woman/traveler, etc. From another gaze."

This other perspective or, in more literary terms, "gaze," also affects the way women see the world of the private sphere, as occurs in Mara Negón's *Carta al padre* (Letter to Father), a text that establishes similarities and contrasts with the generation of '70 and also with other some contemporary writers, namely Rita Indiana Hernández, a young Dominican writer who frequently participates

in the Puerto Rican cultural scene. Hernández's novel *Papí* (San Juan: Ediciones Vértigo, 2005) is a counter point to Negrón's *Carta al padre*. There, the masculine figure is inscribed as a pretext, while Negrón's narrative thread explores the father-daughter relationship, far from the tense and traumatized depiction of the masculine figure in Hernández's novel or in the previous '70s narrative. This new writing avoids portraying the masculine figure as an Ambrose, character in Rosario Ferré's "When Women Love Men," in which the shadow of a fearsome man gives rise to unanticipated female solidarity. Formed in Paris under the tutelage of Hélène Cixous, Negrón has become an important disseminator of French-style feminism on the Island. This father figure is her own Caribbean re-elaboration of and detour from the theoretical French construct. The memory of the father, absent and yearned after, is the basis that permits the daughter to explore her own pleasure (*jouissance*).

The absence of the father figure, a recurrent theme in contemporary Caribbean societies, is responded to by the pleasure of the daughter, a narrative situation that differs from that of *Papí*. Hernández' text reflects the fury of a deprived youth on the streets of Santo Domingo, brought up in the swamps of Balaguer's paternalism. Eventually, after becoming successful, this protagonist's father leads the life of a 40-something rich guy, commuting between the barrio and Miami. In the process, he turns his back on his daughter. *Papí* is her furious complaint about her father's abandonment. In this sense, Hernández is in tune with 20th century Puerto Rican women writers, despite the fact that the story clearly takes place in a post-modern 21st century Caribbean context. Far from the fury, the complaints and outbursts of this type of literature, "*Carta al padre*" presents a taking of pleasure in an interior world in each sentence and on each page. The father is only a pretext.

Negrón's text is only one example of the conversations taking place in this wide-ranging anthology. The volume encompasses social critique, fantasy, the erotic and intimate perspective, and historical fiction. The tones are as diverse as the writers. So are the plots and narrative techniques. However, none of these stories engages in "pamphleteering." The stories do not seek to invoke "poetic justice." They simply explore the condition of being a woman in this world, of being a woman in a globalized world that is still deeply patriarchal. "The reason I want to present the women writers is that they (enter into) the culture of globalization from the vantage point of Puerto Rico," writes Santos-Febres in her introduction.

According to Santos-Febres, the texts of these twelve writers are the quills of a porcupine who "with different rhythms, embeds itself in the unwary skin of Puerto Rican literature." With her title, Santos-Febres inscribes and challenges the cultural tradition of the femme fatale and her toothed vagina, giving it a Caribbean twist and vindicating a shrill, irritating and indeed unfathomable image. The porcupines, like the women writers in this anthology, are creatures that live comfortably in the environment but, when threatened, can roll themselves into a ball of barbed wire. This house of writing opens the way to an immense and often hostile environment in which these porcupines live, these creature who enter into contact by making themselves felt.

Carmen Oquendo-Villar (www.oquendovillar.com) is a Puerto Rican scholar and artist. She obtained her PhD from Harvard. Her work revolves around issues of media, performance and politics, film and visual culture, as well as gender and sexuality.

THE ECONOMY AND MODERNITY

Inequality in Puerto Rico p. 37

The Struggle of Piñones p. 42

Restoring Economic Growth
in Puerto Rico p.44



The economy in Puerto Rico faces many challenges. Economic progress is visible, especially compared to other Caribbean islands, but the Island's growth is stagnant and its private sector weak. Here are some analyses and possible solutions.

Inequality in Puerto Rico

Facing the Challenges

BY HAROLD TORO

WHEN HURRICANE GEORGES RAVAGED Puerto Rico in 1998, it also blew apart Puerto Ricans' shared perceptions of relative well-being based on a narrative of quasi-linear economic, political and social progress. Hurricanes, earthquakes and tornados often force societies to confront themselves and their social inequalities. Such was the case in Puerto Rico. In some neighborhoods, people had almost immediate access to potable water; in others, there was nothing to drink for days. In some communities, generators and other resources helped with lack of electricity; poor people experienced long blackouts. After the initial cleanup, it also became apparent that some people would have a relatively easy time in finding ways to reconstruct their homes; others remained displaced. These different

experiences challenged collectively shared framings of social identity.

What seemed to be peering out from this set of circumstantial pieces of evidence was the fragility of economic progress and the underlying nature of social and economic differences, generally hidden behind highways, public construction works, and the collective obsession with the question of Puerto Rico's political status. Georges rendered apparent the geographic contiguity of gaping social and economic distances in resources and opportunities. Facts that had been tucked away in published academic journals over various decades of research, produced with statistically complicated techniques, had become concrete in the experience of an ecological disaster.

Two recent publications on Puerto Rico's economy (the Brookings Institute's "Restor-

ing Growth" and the CEPAL (ECLAC) study on Puerto Rico's economy") have rendered a more or less shared assessment of Puerto Rico's economic condition. These studies point out three main issues: the condition of Puerto Rico's labor markets, its stagnant growth and the relative weakness of the private sector. As the CEPAL study points out, private sector weakness is reflected both in low entrepreneurial initiative and, historically, in a tendency toward weak employment creation. In a certain sense, inequality is seen merely as a consequence of these dynamics. However, social and economic inequality in Puerto Rico are, if anything, at the root of many of its ailments. In Puerto Rico, there is little social mobility, and that could be a factor in social and economic inequality, although that relationship is difficult to document. More importantly, long-standing difficulties in the formulation of a societal consen-

Left: Doel Vázquez depicts scenes of modernity and inequality.



Carlos Raquel Rivera, *Marea Alta*, 1954, Linoleum, 12" x 16". Collection Museum of History, Anthropology and Art, University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus. Hurricanes often reveal the social fissures in the society.

sus around a given political direction have a plausible, albeit indirect, association with inequality in Puerto Rico.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIAL INEQUALITY

Inequality in Puerto Rico has been comparatively high since the early days of its industrialization. Inequality in a strict sense simply refers to relative position on a distribution of resources. Social scientists trying to grasp the nature of social equality generally analyze who has how much and why. They ask how much a given person—from a given social class, male or female, and belonging to a particular regional, racial or ethnic group—has relative to others in the same type of group. Household income inequality indicates distribution of resources in the most aggregate sense. This measure, which includes pre-tax sources of income, suggests that inequality in Puerto Rico has

changed over time by small amounts around a relatively high threshold.

In terms of the tendencies of aggregate inequality, Puerto Rico's inequality patterns have shifted around since the beginning of its development period, when inequality by this measure was probably at its peak. In 1969, aggregate household inequality was about 57 percent on the GINI scale. It shrank to its lowest in 1989 (to 51). However, recent census data shows that inequality is again on the increase. Using this data, it appears that inequality is now back to where it was in the late 60s.

The CEPAL (ECLAC) study finds that U.S. federal transfers to the poor are a mitigating factor in Puerto Rico's poverty and inequality. It also finds that the poor are generally associated with those who have no declared jobs in the census. Thus, the history of weak employment creation associated with the island's development

partially accounts for the position of the poor in Puerto Rico. While federal transfers might mitigate inequality at the bottom of the distribution, any shift in the role of factors affecting the real earnings of those employed will intensify inequality patterns. But this seems to explain marginal shifts in the context of an already highly unequal distribution.

Household income inequality has changed over time by small amounts around a relatively high threshold. In the 1950s, aggregate household income inequality hovered around .44 on the GINI scale (Orlando Sotomayor, 2004:1397–1398). This meant that the poorest 20 % accounted only for around 5.6 % of all income, while the richest 20 percent controlled about 50.4 %. While living standards have risen considerably since the 1950s, inequality patterns worsened with industrialization (1950 to 1979), improved mildly in the 1980s, but

worsened dramatically in the 1990s. While the pie has increased over time, shares have actually remained constant or declined for all but the households in the top 20% of the income distribution. The top quintile of all households obtained about 60 percent of total income. (CEPAL, 175–176). In 1999 aggregate household inequality hovered at around .558 on the GINI scale according to Sotomayor's research.

Puerto Rico has higher levels of household inequality than some of the poorest states in the United States, where inequality is lowest relative to the more industrialized states of the Northeast. For example, Puerto Rico's aggregate income distribution in 1999 (w. a GINI coeff. of .56) was more unequal than that of West Virginia, the poorest state (w. a GINI coefficient of .44), and more unequal than the District of Columbia or the state of New York. Aggregate inequality in Puerto Rico resembles patterns found for other developing countries. Puerto Rico in the late 90s was comparable in its aggregate inequality to other Latin American countries with which one would not generally find Puerto Rico in the same breath, such as Brazil. It is startling that Puerto Rico has a GINI coefficient of .57, while Brazil is only slightly worse off, ranked at .60 respectively (CEPAL: Table 87, pg 179). Census data for 2005 suggests that household inequality in Puerto Rico has inched slightly downward to .53 on the GINI scale.

LABOR MARKETS

Labor market earnings reflect wide disparities as well, both at a fixed point in time and over time. For example, the ratio of average to median earnings (a gross approximation to the degree of inequality in the labor market) was about 1.3 in 1969, when data on the subject first became available. However, since 1969 was the tail end of the peak of Puerto Rico's industrialization, such a gauge reflects an already widened distribution of earnings owing to the industrialization process itself. While earnings inequality declined in the 1970s with the recession, it returned during the 80s and 90s to its previous levels, to reach 1.54 in 1999. This increase in the spread of earnings is a function of the increase in the average earnings of those regularly employed, which increased from \$11,800 in 1969 to about \$20,000 in 1999. The median however, (reflecting the earnings of those who are

just on the 50th percentile) stayed largely in place hovering between \$9,000 and \$10,000 for the better part of thirty years (1969–89). When segmented by quintiles, it becomes obvious that inequality patterns observed for households also hold for the labor market. In essence, top earners (those at the top 20 % of the distribution) have actually increased their share of all earnings from 48% in 1969 to about 52 % in 1999. Such a rise in inequality has happened at the expense of almost everyone. The exception is the lowest 20 % who have maintained a share of earnings at a steady 4.3 %.

These patterns hold true by education thresholds as well. While returns to education increased during the 80s, inequal-

It is startling to find in the late 90s that the international measure of inequality, known as the Gini coefficient, Puerto Rico's score was only slightly better than that of Brazil: Puerto Rico with .57 and Brazil .60.

ity has not only widened across education thresholds but also within them. This however is not true for the entire period. For example, college-educated workers used to make about 3.4 times the earnings of workers who never entered high-school in 1969. By 1999 the disparity was about 2.5. This disparity has shrunk because as the least educated workers have become a smaller proportion of the working population, their earnings have actually increased by a wider margin up to 2.6 times what they used to be in 1969. For college-educated workers, average earnings have increased by 1.6 times their value in 1969. Most affected have been those workers with a high school education. While their annual earnings were above the average in the 1960s, their position has deteriorated in absolute terms through the 80s and only improved marginally during the 90s. Nowadays, they earn only 85 percent of the average annual earnings, whereas in the late 60s workers with a high school diploma earned approximately 115 percent of annual earnings. Thus, those at the bottom are fewer with stagnant earnings, while the most highly educated have actually gained in recent years, especially when compared to those with just a high school education. Most of this change took place during the 90s. This process is not one

of polarization since that would involve a thinning of the middle and a thickening of the bottom and the top of the distribution. Rather, the evidence seems to reflect an underlying re-structuring that favors those already at the top of the distribution. Generally, such dynamics have been associated with an increasing jobs-skill mismatch.

INDUSTRIAL RESTRUCTURING AND OCCUPATIONAL RECOMPOSITION

The labor market in Puerto Rico is changing, and that change does not favor those with little education. In 1970, the most common occupations involved working in the garment and textile industries as sewers, embroiderers, tailors, and dressmakers.

Over the next thirty years, the occupational structure diversified and experienced a general, albeit slow, upgrading in the status of jobs. By 1999, the most common occupations were secretarial and administrative assistants. Together with janitors (a position of low occupational status), these occupations comprised about 9% of the adult work force (ages 20–59).

If occupational status is segmented by education, the difficulties of the bottom-end of the labor market become readily apparent. In 1969, about 4% of high school dropouts had positions as managers. By 1980, this share of managerial positions dropped to 1.8 %. Thus, those with some high school education found themselves taking jobs such as cooks and building caretakers that had traditionally been the arena of those with no high school. In the area of top-ranked occupations, the upgrading of jobs seems to have changed very little as well. For example, in 1969, the top-ranked occupations with the most people employed were mid- to low-level managers, typists and teachers. By 1999, the most common top-ranked occupations were teachers, along with a greater variety of professional positions such as accountants, supervisors and managers—occupational groups not much different from those found thirty years earlier.



While Puerto Rico lags behind most U.S. states in terms of household income equality and economy, it is also a magnet for Caribbean migration, as evidenced in this strip of small Dominican businesses in San Juan.

OTHER RESOURCES

Patterns in the labor market might be amplified by wealth-garnering mechanisms that were previously not available to households. “Other” sources of income are now more highly correlated with the size of a household’s income than had been the case thirty or forty years ago. The data available for such a conclusion is merely suggestive. This is an area in which very little is actually known. But data from the U.S census on the correlation of non-earned income with total household income suggests an increasing positive correlation of household income with “other” income resources such as interest and pension income. Among households in Puerto Rico the correlation of “other” income sources with household income was around 8% in 1970. By 1990 total household income had a correlation of 15 percent with interest income, of 3 percent with retirement income and of 3 percent with other income. For those in the top 20% of the distribution, household income was positively correlated with interest income at 17 %. In 2000, the correlation of income from interest with the

size of household income ascended to 21%, and that of “other” sources ascended to 5%. While the increasing association of higher incomes with non-earnings sources is not definitive evidence, it suggests an increasing relevance of other sources of income not related to the labor market as a source of position for households. Such a trend very likely reinforces the structural position of those already privileged by better positions in the labor market, and higher and better quality education. Thus, increasingly disparate endowments of resources widen an already unequal access to a vast array of social and cultural capital required for successful attainment in the labor market.

Education has in fact operated to mitigate pre-existing inequalities. K–12 education has been largely public and of relatively high quality when compared to other countries (the public-private ratio and the quality of public education have worsened recently). The expansion of higher education has a more controversial role. In the 60s some researchers argued that, contrary to popular perceptions, the expansion of public higher

education and the role of the Universidad de Puerto Rico (UPR) as a public institution did not mitigate inequality, nor did it alter the rates of access of socially privileged sectors to higher education (see for instance the work of Luis Nieves-Falcón). In other words, patterns of social mobility did not change with the expansion of higher education. If this was true then, it is even more so now.

Finally, mechanisms that operate to mitigate inequality-inducing features of the labor market have plausibly had the opposite effect, worsening pre-existing inequality. Here various aspects of government policy come together to affect observed inequality. For instance, the state-side tax framework has been found to be regressive in its distributional effects. This is largely a function of the way in which it is implemented, not of the nature of its design. Another example is an industrialization policy that has not stimulated effectively the creation of jobs for a broad swath of the population seeking and needing higher-end employment. In recent years, a zero-growth scenario coupled with inflation has quite plausibly



Puerto Rico has entered the 21st century facing a crossroads.

amplified inequality and even worse, might have worsened living standards.

These patterns of inequality are replicated in many other ways. Geographically, municipalities around urban areas have higher per capita incomes than those in the historical hinterland. For example, Guaynabo, the municipality with the highest income per capita, had about 3.27 times the per capita income of Adjuntas, the poorest municipality in 1999. Although these geographic differences have been shrinking over time, partly owing to out-migration from rural to urban areas, their persistence speaks to a historical record of lopsided conditions that used to favor urban areas both in the expansion of education and in the location of industrial development.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

Puerto Rico has entered the 21st century facing a crossroads. Some of the mechanisms for economic stimulus and development that its political class had relied on have been eliminated by the U.S. Congress. Others have been rendered irrelevant by the

re-positioning of Puerto Rico in the global economy. The insular government had once directed a relatively coherent development program with muscular agencies committed to the formulation of a path out of stagnation and poverty. Now government is considered at best an obstacle and at worst culprit of the slow growth and of the inefficacious educational system that seem to hamstring the Island. While there are no easy solutions, various policy options could aid in mitigating trends in inequality. First, a state-side earned income credit would improve the condition of the working poor, thereby mitigating inequality in the labor market. While a recently implemented consumption tax, labeled the IVU, was largely deemed regressive, there is no reason why a consumption tax could not be structured to have progressive re-distributive consequences, with a possible inducement to savings and local capital build-up. Finally, policies directed at institutional factors require long-term plans. A new industrial policy cannot simply stimulate the high-end of the job market. It must address the slow growth of jobs, particularly in the

middle range of the labor market. It should not take another hurricane like Georges to draw attention to the huge inequalities in Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico and its government must face the challenge now.

Harold Toro is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs. He received his PhD in Sociology at the University of California, Berkeley in 2007. This article condenses some of the findings and analyses from his dissertation: Economic Development and Labor Market Inequality in Puerto Rico. His research examines the interplay between economic development, demographic change and social stratification, with a focus on Latin America and the Caribbean. He has also written on the stratification consequences of educational expansion in Puerto Rico during the initial period of U.S. colonial control, and on gender inequality among small businesses in the United States. Currently he is working on projects focused on inter-generational occupational attainment in Brazil and on urban poverty in Mexico.

THE STRUGGLE OF PIÑONES

SAVING ANCESTRAL HOMES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

BY MARGARITA PERSICO

Maricruz Rivera-Clemente has shown pride in her African heritage ever since she was a child by dancing the Puerto Rican national folkloric dances, *bomba* and *plena*. Today, students practice the dances in her office in Piñones, just outside San Juan.

This is not a dancing school, but a community watchdog organization called Corporación Piñones Se Integra (COPÍ). Rivera-Clemente, 37, founded the community coalition in 1999 to educate people about the importance of their African heritage as a weapon to preserve the neighborhood and the environment—both threatened by developers.

Piñones and its coveted oceanfront—the only beach area close to the airport still not developed by the tourism industry—has been disputed since the late 1960s, generating a historical clash between residents and tourism industry representatives.

Rivera-Clemente said that residents were about to lose their land when developments for hotels, casinos, luxury condominiums and residences were proposed for the Vacía Talega sector of Piñones. The proposed development would have also disturbed a natural area near the Piñones Mangrove Forest, added Carmen Guerrero, environmental planner and consultant for Piñones coalitions.

"They threaten us with the destruction of the Piñones Mangrove Forest and the expropriation of the families," said Rivera-Clemente in a telephone interview.

A village of nearly 2,300 residents in the township of Loiza, Piñones is located on a floating islet. The metropolitan community of Isla Verde and the Luís Muñoz Marín International Airport surround Piñones, which includes two lagoons and Puerto Rico's largest mangrove forest.

Joel Katz, PFZ Properties' president, saw a great opportunity in an area with such natural beauty. He was one of the businesspersons to propose a project to attract tourists. Costa Serena, a

development of around 1,000 units for Piñones, included a condominium-hotel and 64 residences, according to *Caribbean Business Magazine* in 2002.

He wanted to merge the development with microbusinesses such as food concessions, arts and craft kiosks that could blend in with the neighborhood's character. The project would have attracted money and jobs for the impoverished area and created over 4,000 jobs and millions in tax revenue, according to the publication. Katz declined an interview, saying that he is involved in a lawsuit on this matter.

The business plan, however, had more challenges than its size, according to Edgardo González, director of the Department of Forest Service.

"Piñones area is very sensitive," said González over the phone. "It is a wetland area."

"That construction would have been inside a system that is practically fragile," Gonzalez explained. Disturbing this area by building structures, highways or parking lots "could be detrimental for the ecological area," he said.

He also worries about the danger such a project could pose to new residents because of its proximity to the shore. "The area would have problems in case of hurricanes," he noted.

In addition, FEMA maps indicate that building large-scale projects in a coastal flood zone like Piñones would pose a risk to visitors.

"The preliminary maps show it should be a coastal high hazard area," said Paul Weberg, a New York-based FEMA engineer, "Developers must build anything on piles."

Puerto Rico Governor Aníbal Acevedo Vila disagrees. He told *El Vocero* newspaper last year that the disputed Piñones' land "has a zoning that permits tourist development." When contacted to confirm this published statement, the governor did not return phone calls or emails.

But Rivera-Clemente is convinced that the land belongs to the residents, and they should not be disturbed. The local black militia earned the land when they protected Puerto Rico from invasion, she said.

"The land of Piñones ... belong to us, the residents. ... The Spanish crown gave them [to us] in 1797 because we contributed to the battle against the English."

However, Jalil Sued-Badillo, Puerto Rican historian, communicated via e-mail that he does not know of any document that would validate such claim.

This deep-rooted community dates back to the 1600s, when it served as a safe haven for runaway blacks and Taino slaves, said Rivera-Clemente.

Sued-Badillo, author of *Puerto Rico Negro*, said that the family of Francisco Piñon, a black gold miner



Top: Loiza town hall
Below: view of Piñones housing

who owned eleven black slaves in the area in 1530 stayed in Piñones and inspired the neighborhood name.

"Document references later in that century record that the family established in Piñones and the [area] maintains it's name until today," the historian said.

However, the government disputes the residents' ownership of these lands, and, according to Rivera-Clemente, started creating difficulties so they would eventually give up the area.

"Since they wanted Piñones for other types of development, they denied the residents [water and sewer] services," she contends.

She said the water company sent them water a few days a week. Many people canceled their water services and used the

underground water springs because the system was not reliable. Guerrero, the environmental planner, believes that improvements to Piñones' infrastructure depended on Costa Serena's approval.

The residents did not accept Costa Serena and reportedly none of them intend to move. Rivera-Clemente, however, worries about other pending projects.

Despite the odds, she is optimistic about the future for young residents. She thinks that eco-tourism managed by micro enterprises such as kayaking and bicycle rentals could bring money and new jobs without relocating the community and menacing the environment.

"Piñones is a big family, we all have blood ties."

She believes that in a few years her organization will be able to help the community financially, by training the children and developing an Afro-Puerto Rican show called "El Ballet Majestad Negra".

"We do not have to destroy natural resources to make money," she concludes. The bomba music pulsates throughout the one room community center, which serves also as an office, as her students continue to practice.

Margarita Persico is a graduate student in Harvard Extension School's Master in Journalism Program. She is Puerto Rican. She is an avid genealogist and photographer who enjoys yoga, hiking, traveling, and maintains a personal blog with public commentaries on various topics and films (www.margarita.vox.com).

Below, clockwise from top: a shoreside restaurant has views of Isla Verde to the west and the entrance to the mangrove forest boardwalk to the east; the outdoor kitchen at Cury's Pionono, Arepa, Frituras; Maricruz Rivera-Clemente; a fruit stand.





Restoring Economic Growth in Puerto Rico

Proposing Solutions

BY THE HARVARD-MIT PUERTO RICAN CAUCUS

THERE ARE ABOUT EIGHT MILLION PUERTO Ricans living in the world; half of them living in the United States of America and half of them living in the Island of Puerto Rico. Puerto Ricans are the second largest Hispanic community in the United States, second only to Mexicans.

Being one of the largest economies in Latin America, Puerto Rico has more population and a larger economy than Panama, Uruguay and Costa Rica—yet the Island struggles to define its economic and political place in the world. It is a puzzle how it is possible that the Puerto Rican economy has reached a stalemate. The latest figures, in fact, show a negative growth in the last two years (well before the U.S. housing slump began in 2007) for the first

time in decades. The dire circumstances of the Puerto Rican economy have created an unprecedented scale of brain drain to the United States. As the successful economic development experiences in Singapore and Ireland show, and more recently those of India and China, we know that a ready access to talent is a fundamental component of growth.

At the moment, there are more than 50 graduate and undergraduate Puerto Rican students at Harvard-MIT who want to improve Puerto Rico's economy and make a difference in the world. They believe that the only way to move forward with the Island's economic development is by taking charge and assuming the responsibilities that leadership entails.

Thus, more than 100 students from more than 25 universities from Puerto Rico and the continental United States gathered at Harvard University in April 2007, to participate in the conference "Restoring Economic Growth in Puerto Rico: Proposing Solutions," convened by the Harvard-MIT Puerto Rican Caucus. The conference aimed to create links between the present leaders in Puerto Rico and its future leaders to propose solutions and become agents of change.

The Harvard-MIT Puerto Rican Caucus seeks:

- To propose concrete, innovative and fresh solutions to the Island's problems and go the extra mile to improve the livelihood of the Island and its future prospects.
- To allow students to make their own contributions in jumpstarting the Puerto Rican economy and restoring growth.

Barrio Obrero contrasts with San Juan's high-rises.



- To show both Island and Mainland Puerto Ricans the importance of rejecting complacency and taking action to improve Puerto Rico.

ABOUT THE CONFERENCE

The conference featured eight panels and five keynote speakers, including Richard Carrion, CEO and Chairman of Popular Inc. (NASDAQ: BPOP); Antonio García Padilla, president of the University of Puerto Rico; and Hon. Federico Hernández Denton, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in Puerto Rico. The eight panels ranged from Economy, Finance, Entrepreneurship, Education, Biotechnology and the Pharmaceutical Industry, Health Enterprises, Sustainable Development, to Branding Puerto Rico. The panelists emphasized the importance of reinforcing those aspects of the economy

that have been effective, such as the pharmaceutical industry, and reforming those that have proven inadequate, such as the quality of the educational system, the government's transparency and a set of incentives more global in nature.

The panelists proposed solutions centered on the necessity of a personal commitment to excellence and on motivating Puerto Rican students studying outside of the Island to return home in order to work and to contribute through entrepreneurship initiatives in the public and private sectors. Entrepreneurs emphasized the economic power inherent in the creation of new enterprises both as an economic boost and as a source of employment, since the number of male workers in the island is one of the lowest in the world. It is also essential to increase the amount of

resources invested in knowledge creation, and improve the quality of education and training. Puerto Rico's greatest challenge today is not necessarily the acquisition of more capital and human resources, but their optimal utilization.

THE FUTURE OF PUERTO RICO

All of the Puerto Rican leaders, who attended the conference in April, 2007 spoke to us about the importance that young people mobilize to take action in favor of the Island. In fact, many of these leaders asked us to take the Conference to Puerto Rico in 2008. The Harvard-MIT Puerto Rican Caucus is also enthusiastic to report that the University of Puerto Rico students (a system of more than 60,000 students) have joined the Harvard-MIT Puerto Rican Caucus to build a conference in 2008 in San Juan,

Puerto Rico. We have joined forces for this year to create *Mentes Puertorriqueñas en Acción* (*Puerto Rican Minds in Action*) as a tool to promote mobilization and change among the Puerto Rican student population in Puerto Rico and abroad.

ABOUT THIS ARTICLE

This article highlights a few of the presentations of the conference speakers. They present an overview of the situation in the island while presenting the speaker's personal beliefs concerning the best solutions to some of the problems.

ABOUT THE HARVARD-MIT PUERTO RICAN CAUCUS

The Harvard-MIT Puerto Rican Caucus is a group of Puerto Rican undergraduate and graduate students and alums from Harvard and MIT committed to improving the quality of life in Puerto Rico. For more information, please go to www.harvardmitcaucus.com. Ana Franco (Harvard B.A. '10), Israel Figueroa (B.A. '09), Maria Fernanda Levis (Harvard M.P.A. '07, M.P.H. '08, Carmen Oquendo-Villar (Harvard Ph.D. '07), G. Antonio Sosa-Pascual (MIT Sloan M.B.A. '08), Michelle Quiles (Harvard B.A. '10)

and Juan Villeta (MIT B.S. '10) contributed to this article. We would also like to thank all the students who contributed to making this effort a reality and all our strategic partners, in particular the Center for the New Economy in Puerto Rico, La Organización de Puertorriqueños de Harvard (La O) and the Association of Puerto Rican Students at MIT (APR). We would like to give special thanks to our Co-Founders, including Luis Martinez, former President of La O at Harvard and Katia Acosta, former President of APR at MIT for their unconditional support and vision.

THE HARVARD-MIT PUERTO RICAN CAUCUS: AN ANALYSIS BY RICHARD FREEMAN

THE "RICH UNCLE" SYNDROME

Germany and Puerto Rico may not have a lot of similarities, but there is a part of Germany that looks just like Puerto Rico: East Germany. Southern Italy also looks just like Puerto Rico in terms of labor force participation and some other problems. East Germany has been bailed out by West Germany. Southern Italy has been bailed out by the successful northern Italy. Puerto Rico, on the other hand, has been somewhat bailed out by the United States. Part of this is what Richard Freeman has called "having the rich uncle" syndrome. The rich uncle is very nice to you in some ways, but in other ways, what the rich uncle does is destroy employment, among other things.

East Germans also have higher capital-labor ratios than the rich uncle has in the mainland because that is where all the big investments are concentrated in these very capital-intensive sectors. What the rich uncle has done is to give incentives for people to invest in the eastern part of Germany, so people create very capital-intensive projects. The positive aspect of this crisis is that this is not a Puerto Rican-specific crisis. This is a general economic phenomenon in many other places.

The parallel between Puerto Rico and Germany is also on the migration side. There is free migration between East and West Germany and between Puerto Rico

and the mainland. That has both positive and negative consequences. Many people can come to New York and elsewhere and make higher earnings than they could make back on the island. If one did a different calculation about Puerto Rico, you could re-calculate the GNP or GNI based on the income accruing not to the island, but to people who were born on the island. Everything then would look much better.

has established the comparative advantage. The only way in which one is going to break this is to pick the good parts of the rich uncle, but not buy into the other parts that can be debilitating to the economy.

PUERTO RICO'S ADVANTAGES

Puerto Rico has a couple of advantages. One of them is that it is very small. If you look at Sweden, Sweden had a crisis ten

The creation of 300,000 jobs would turn the island around. That is only a few blocks in Beijing or Mumbai; this is not turning around a billion people and moving a huge thing. Puerto Rico is a small country.

There are other ways in which this rich uncle phenomenon operates. One is that Puerto Rico has the United States minimum wage and there are now discussions about raising it. One of the reasons to raise it is because of poverty, but the current U.S. minimum wage applied in Puerto Rico is obviously a very high minimum wage for a place that has lower incomes. Second, many people are on benefit programs in which a certain amount of the funding comes from the mainland. As in the German situation, Puerto Rico has also imported its patterns of trade and it is the rich uncle who

years ago which was as bad as or worse than that of Puerto Rico. It had a fiscal crisis and a complete meltdown, which was a major disaster. Like Puerto Rico, Sweden has a large government sector but as Ericsson (a major firm in Sweden) did better, Sweden also did better. Puerto Rico may just need one sector, one large growing firm. The creation of 300,000 jobs would turn the island around. That is only a few blocks in Beijing or Mumbai; this is not turning around a billion people and moving a huge thing. Another country that has dealt with this kind of situation was Ireland,



Puerto Rico is a small country with a mobile labor force. However, there is now a 10% unemployment rate.

which was a disaster case in the 1970s. They had the worst unemployment rate and they also had the rich uncle phenomenon. There has always been a free open border between Ireland and the United Kingdom. Ireland was a place where everybody was leaving and the notion that it would become a great success was just ridiculous.

The striking thing from most of these small country comparisons, be it the Scandinavians or the Irish, is that they have incredibly efficient governments. Ireland has a low share of workers in the government sector, whereas Puerto Rico has an extraordinarily large share of people in the government sector. The Scandinavians managed to bring about an efficient government sector so it did not become a drag on the economy. When they had their crisis in the mid-90s, they cut benefits and let

people off. They really squeezed their public sector and managed to pull themselves to where they are now. They have about a 10% unemployment rate, but they had very good growth over a period of time.

Puerto Rico has another advantage: having so many people in the United States. It has a natural constituency or group that should be extremely helpful. I do not know how many among the students will go back to the island or how many will in fact live in the States, but wherever one does it, one has to think of ways to establish economic connections. This has been the case of the Indian immigrants who came to the United States. A total of 1/10 of 1% of the Indian population now lives in the States and they earn 10% of the GDP of India. They have been doing a good job of sending businesses back to India.

If the government is ineffective and not functional, then who will be the doers? I am a little dubious of the finance sector because I keep thinking of them as those who smoke big cigars and make lots of money, and those are not normal people. The government can take a lead in implementing an industrial policy, but it needs some serious planning, as well as some group of leaders who are able to take the lead and all you need is just one kick.

Richard B. Freedman is the Herbert Ascherman Professor of Economics at Harvard University and a collaborator on the Center for the New Economy's book *The Economy of Puerto Rico: Restoring Growth*. Freedman is also Senior Research Fellow on Labour Markets at the Centre for Economic Performance of the London School of Economics.

THE HARVARD-MIT CAUCUS: AN ANALYSIS BY ANTONIO GARCÍA PADILLA

MANUFACTURING POWERHOUSE

Puerto Rico's present ascendancy as a manufacturing powerhouse arose from United States tax incentive strategies favoring corporate investment and job growth. Today, Puerto Rico is struggling to make the transition from a manufacturing powerhouse into an Research and Development powerhouse. Can Puerto Rico shift its development emphasis to both generate its own (R&D) and attract outside firms to locate there? What steps should Puerto Rico take to strengthen university research capabilities? What kind of tax incentive strategies should it design to promote R&D at a large scale? How can we attract back world-renowned researchers of Puerto Rican descent, Hispanics and other nationalities?

KEYNOTE ADDRESS SUMMARY

For several generations of Puerto Ricans, Congress has had the responsibility of taking care of Puerto Rico's economic well-being. Its focus was on maintaining section 936 in the Internal Revenue Code of the United States, which has been the Rosetta Stone of our development strategy.

Section 936 has become much more than just a favorable federal tax treatment for corporate income generated in Puerto Rico. Because of it, the tax departments of many U. S. corporations became the main promoters of Puerto Rico as a manufacturing center. However, the environment has changed. Our development strategy will no longer be federally codified. The fight is no longer in Congress; the fight is in our hands now.

Puerto Rico based its strategic moves on economic development and made the investments necessary to accomplish its objectives. Since the days of 936, Puerto Rico has had an industrial base in the life sciences. The University of Puerto Rico receives 18-20,000 admission applications yearly, with 40% for science and engineering programs—twice the percentage of U.S. science and engineering applications. These are the vocational aspirations of our people, which are in line with the needs of our industrial base.



Tourism is one source of revenue for Puerto Rico. Manufacturing is a lesser-known boom.

One third of our GNP is produced by the pharmaceutical industry. Puerto Ricans have developed high-level skills in drug manufacturing, allowing us to host a pharmaceutical industry of a density unrivaled in the world. More than forty companies operate in the commonwealth, creating more than 26,000 high-paying direct jobs and contributing another 50,000 jobs indirectly. Three quarters of the twenty top-selling prescription drugs in the United States are manufactured in Puerto Rico.

MOVING-UP THE VALUE CHAIN

However, manufacturing alone will not secure our economic success. We will be facing increasing competition from Asia and Latin America in the coming years. China and India will be capable of manufacturing drugs with our level of proficiency and at lower costs. Thus, we need to move up the value chain of our industrial base. Puerto Rico must utilize its trained people not only to manufacture, but also to research, design, develop and test products. We

should play a role in scientific discovery.

The United States National Academies conducted a survey that examines the factors affecting a company's decision when choosing where to locate R&D activities. The conclusion was that companies locating R&D in emerging economies are attracted to high market growth potential, high-quality R&D personnel, a high level of university faculty expertise and ease of collaboration with universities. Companies locating in developed economies are attracted to high-quality R&D personnel, good intellectual property protection, a high level of university faculty expertise, and ease of collaboration with universities. Hence, universities and their people are important for both emerging and developed countries, but more so for the latter.

PROVIDING A SCIENTIFIC ENVIRONMENT FOR R&D

We must strengthen university research capabilities in order to make Puerto Rico more attractive to R&D investments. Knowl-

edge innovations are best achieved when and where creative people come together. Creative people attract one another and the benefits that flow from these creative interactions spill over to society as a whole. This is why we have exerted efforts to attract world-renowned researchers to lead and to further the recruitment of world-class talent.

This effort must include incentives in order to allow Puerto Rico to become as competitive as possible in terms of costs. But how can we revamp our incentive structures to support the new R&D agenda? Puerto Rico's incentive structures, designed to attract manufacturing in order for Puerto Rico to become a world-class manufacturing center, achieved their goal. Manufacturing centers are profit centers; manufacturing comes at the end of the

creation line, when profits are realized. In order to attract manufacturing, Puerto Rico exempts profits from taxation. However, R&D is different. R&D in itself does not generate profits. R&D centers are not profit centers; R&D centers are cost centers or investment centers.

The tax incentives that we now offer are irrelevant to attracting R&D to Puerto Rico. We must strengthen our appeal to researchers and direct our tax incentives to this area. We must grant exemptions to the personal income of highly competitive researchers and grant tax credits to companies doing research in Puerto Rico. Now that Puerto Rico has moved its state income taxation to the taxing of consumption, this makes more sense.

In the 1960s and 1970s, we heard a lot about Puerto Rico becoming the bridge

between the two Americas. We were talking then about orienting our economy to the service sector. That opportunity was lost: Florida became the provider of health, support, education, entertainment and many other services to Latin America. As we approach our current challenges, the outcome is going to be different. The difference stems from the fact that Puerto Rico's agenda is not only the agenda of government, nor exclusively the agenda of universities, but the agenda of the young people.

Antonio García Padilla has been the president of the University of Puerto Rico since 2001. He received his undergraduate degree and his law degree from the University of Puerto Rico before completing an LL.M. from Yale Law School. In 1999, he was elected to the Council of the American Law Institute.

THE HARVARD-MIT CAUCUS: AN ANALYSIS BY ARTURO CARRIÓN

THE PUERTO RICAN BANKING SYSTEM

The financial sector in Puerto Rico is one of the backbones of economic development. The size and sophistication of the financial sector in Puerto Rico offer a competitive advantage that must be adequately leveraged as Puerto Rico moves forward and out of its current economic crisis.

From 1996 to 2006, growth in financial assets was tremendous, from \$31 billion to close to \$100 billion. There was a slight decrease last year, but that was mainly due to a restructuring of the asset base. In terms of loans, the growth was impressive, despite some sectors' assertion that the Puerto Rico banking system has emphasized investments in securities more than in loans. If you look at the loan product comparison, we have commercial, industrial, construction, and conventional lending, which have been growing the most. From \$16 billion in 2000, real estate-backed lending has increased up to almost \$50 billion.

Back in 1996, we had a smaller amount of loans than of deposits, but in the last three years, loans have exceeded total deposits. This does not take into account the so-called broker deposits, which have

been financing a great deal of our lending activity. The Puerto Rico banking industry has shown a great commitment to the Puerto Rican economy in terms of financing its economic demands and activities.

Deposit growth has grown steadily in the last two or three years, and this is mainly because of the lack of incentives for local or core-based deposits. For the core deposits, the Puerto Rico Bankers Association has now introduced a bill in the local

of good credit records, good saving habits. This campaign has been going on for the last four months and it has been a complete success. We trust that when the legislation is finally approved, we can engage in a more aggressive bank-by-bank campaign.

Capital is also a very important part of the Puerto Rican economy, having grown from \$2.3 billion in 1996 to \$6.5 billion in 2006. This is very important because one of the main sources of capital is retained

Banks in Puerto Rico play a very important part in the Island's infrastructure. The banking infrastructure is as vital to the Puerto Rican economy as water resources, electricity and communications.

legislature to bring down the income tax that should be charged to the interest received on interest-bearing deposits. We expect that bill to be approved by the end of this legislative session.

We have engaged in a local media campaign where we are emphasizing the importance of financial planning, the maintenance

earnings. And retained earnings are those profits that are retained in the Puerto Rican economy by our local banking system. The leverage is 10 to 1, which means that for every dollar of capital, we can create \$10 in loans.

Besides the deposit and lending functions, banks in Puerto Rico play a very

important part in the island's financial infrastructure. Puerto Rico has one of the most efficient financial infrastructures in the hemisphere. We have 550 branches, 1400 automatic teller machines, and 47,000 point-of-sale terminals.

In terms of the number of transactions and items, in volume, by the clearing house, the number of local checks in 1999 was 70 million and, in 2006, it was 58 million. That means we are processing fewer local checks. The dollar amount of those checks, however, increased from \$84 billion to \$94 billion, which means that the process is much more efficient. Our banks have strongly

promoted debit transactions and direct deposits to try to get banking operations to be more efficient.

The banking infrastructure is as vital to the Puerto Rican economy as water resources, electricity, and communications. We are emphasizing not only traditional deposit and lending functions, but the infrastructure as well. A recent analysis performed by our economists indicates that bank loans in Puerto Rico contribute nearly 90% to the national gross product. Almost 75% of commercial loans are for less than \$250,000, meaning that credit is available to all sectors of the Puerto Rican economy.

In conclusion, our commercial banks

continue to provide the necessary financing so that our economy continues to be vigorous in an extremely competitive global market. It has also been able to stay at the forefront of the most modern technologies. We are ready to continue participating in the economic development of Puerto Rico and we welcome the contribution our young people will make to our economy in the near future.

Arturo Carrión is the Executive Vice-President of the Puerto Rico Bankers Association, a non-profit organization dedicated to the representation of commercial bankers in Puerto Rico in governmental, legislative, and executive forums.

THE HARVARD-MIT CAUCUS: AN ANALYSIS BY DANERIS FERNÁNDEZ

PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURING: KEY TO ECONOMIC GROWTH

The pharmaceutical industry of Puerto Rico was established almost 40 years ago, when there was no knowledge base and no infrastructure. Forty years later, the pharmaceutical industry has become one of the key elements in Puerto Rico's economic success. Global pharmaceutical manufacturing has not grown as it has in the past, but it definitely is not dead. The pharmaceutical industry remains a growing industry.

The pharmaceutical industry represents an important segment of Puerto Rico's economy. Pharmaceutical manufacturing, specifically, represents:

- 24% of the GDP
- 60% of exports, or \$36 billion
- 45% of imports, or \$14 billion
- 50% of corporate taxes
- 25.5% of employment in manufacturing, or 30,000 jobs and more than 100,000 indirect jobs

Fourteen out of the top 20 pharmaceutical products are sourced from Puerto Rico and that represents a lot of income. Out of those 14 products, 11 will lose their patents within the next couple of years. We will have to replace those products so that we can continue to generate revenues for the island. Two companies have

already lost \$10 billion worth of sales. Fortunately, we have replaced those with biotech investments, so that it is netting off to zero. However, because we have to attract investment, it does not mean that the Puerto Rico government will keep receiving equivalent revenue from the pharmaceutical industry. It is therefore a huge challenge for the Puerto Rican economy to attract business and to keep growing, while facing the need to be competitive in a global market.

CRITICAL ISSUES IN THE PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY

Research has been very challenging. R&D costs have been increasing. Success rates have gone down considerably. We see global over-capacity, lower return on investment, and forced cost reductions.

Fewer products are going to be reaching the blockbuster criteria—the billion-dollar drugs. Most of the companies are working on the same therapeutic areas. The times when we had an exclusive product for three to four years is gone. The structure of the pharmaceutical industry and what we do in Puerto Rico needs to change; there will be a lot of challenges. A lot of money will be required to develop drugs that are truly differentiated and those

that will meet medical needs because that is the only way anyone will survive in the market.

One particular phenomenon in the pharmaceutical industry in Puerto Rico is that while everything was moving because of our tax structure, a lot of the technology that is required for the new drug platforms did not get to Puerto Rico. This is because we have labor-intensive requirements to operate in the island; hence, all the technology and all the knowledge around that technology were installed and created in other jurisdictions.

We have built a strong infrastructure. We also have the knowledge base for chemical and pharmaceutical operations, but is it focused on the right technology? Do we have the right knowledge base so that we can compete in the market in the future? That is the biggest challenge. We need to bring the knowledge to the island so that we can compete and can prove to our companies that there is a good reason to invest in Puerto Rico. It is not solely about the taxes or the tax breaks anymore, but we do need to keep those; otherwise, we will lose our competitive edge. We need to make sure that those incentives are still there, but we also need



The Puerto Rican economy spans from this low-tech trap repair to high technology and sophisticated Research and Development.

to understand that we need to create the knowledge base.

ACHIEVING GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS

We need to focus and change the way we have been approaching the industry. Instead of focusing only on manufacturing, we have to expand that and look at the whole supply chain; we have to move toward an end-to-end approach for the business. We also have to promote research and development activities in Puerto Rico through tax incentives. Companies should be able to get funds for some of their research and development work, and that should be incorporated in the process so we could create a critical mass of scientists who would go into research and development, expanding our supply capabilities.

With regard to marketing, we have to find a way to be able to export to Latin America. Most of our exports go to the United States. There is no reason for that. We need to be more competitive and make sure that we can provide services not only to the United States, but also to

the rest of Latin America. We also need to assume leadership in emerging drug development platforms.

Further, we have to look at our cost structure. Two issues figure in cost structure: energy and payroll. In tackling the issue of energy cost, we have to stop the dependence on oil or look for ways to reduce that dependence. And, this does not mean that the government has to invest in creating the infrastructure; there are people who are willing to invest in it.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

Puerto Rico has to set its economic development priorities in areas for which it has proven expertise and high potential. For this, we must:

- Identify a limited number of high-technology and high-productivity niches that maximize our present capabilities.
- Capitalize on the healthcare industry and related sectors (biotechnology, medical devices, scientific instruments, and electronics) and expand beyond manufacturing.

- Increase knowledge-based investment models to replace labor-intensive operations with high-technology, high-salaried, capital-intensive operations.
- Promote clinical research and development to strengthen scientific research capabilities.
- Make the best of our geographical and cultural assets to better serve emerging regional and global markets with our enhanced capabilities.
- Last but not least, we must change our complacent mindset in order to make way for a competitive culture. We have lost our ability to compete, so we have to build that back. This is one of the things we need to bring back to Puerto Rico—the true belief that we can compete in a global market.

Daneri Fernández is the Vice-president of Merck Sharp & Dohme Puerto Rico and the Chairperson of the Pharmaceutical Industry Association. She is a chemical engineering graduate from the University of Puerto Rico, Mayaguez.

FROM SAN JUAN TO BOSTON

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When one thinks of the Puerto Rican diaspora, one immediately thinks of New York and Nuyoricans. However, Boston's ties to San Juan are long and deep. Here is a look at a few of the historical and present-day links.

The Creation of the Villa Victoria

Today's Legacy

BY MARIA DOMÍNGUEZ GRAY

I CAN'T HELP THINKING OF NEW YEAR'S EVE AT THE BOSTON HOUSING development Villa Victoria. Even as I stroll through the streets of Boston's South End in the emerging spring, I reminisce how the scene came to life at midnight on New Year's Eve. People of all ages poured into the streets to the festive music of parrandas and shouts of "Feliz año!" Men, women and children treat each other almost as extended family, in a way that no longer exists in our closed-door modern cities. This is because the Villa Victoria has a story and legacy as exceptional as its name, important for not only the children of the Villa (as residents affectionately call it), but for all of us.

The windows and small yards of the townhouses sparked at New Year's with lights, creating a whimsical winter wonderland. Images of Puerto Rican culture alongside tasteful Martha Stewart-like decorations and an occasional blow-up snowman reflect the residents' pride in their homes and neighborhood. In fact, a pedestrian coming upon the Villa Victoria from the posh, brownstone-lined streets of the South End would probably not realize that she had entered a housing development. The brick townhouses painted in soft yellows, peaches, greens, and browns, and highlighted by Spanish ironwork, do not fit a stereotypical picture of the "projects."

The story of the Villa I share is one that I first learned working there on social justice issues for more than 12 years. It is an oral history that I have since heard repeated many times by my friends and now relatives, as my husband's family was one of the first to move into the Villa.

In the early 20th century, abandoned by Boston's elite, the South End became an affordable neighborhood for immigrant and poor communities, among them Syrians, Greeks, African Americans, Chinese and Puerto Ricans (Mario Luis Small, *Villa Victoria: The Transformation of Social Capital in a Boston Barrio*, 2004). The Puerto Ricans settled primarily in the area between Tremont and Washington Streets known as Parcel 19. While apartments were affordable, the condition of the housing was deplorable and the neighborhood soon became targeted in the 1950s as part of Boston's urban renewal project.

A Harvard student in Puerto Rico.

The urban renewal project had started in the West End, which was "renewed" by being demolished. The West End redevelopment controversy and the displacement of its families reverberated throughout Boston but most especially in a South End fearful of sharing the West End's fate.

As the city's focus turned to the South End's Boricua ("Boricua" is another word for Puerto Rican) enclave for renewal, a group of mostly Puerto Rican residents met in the basement of St. Stephen's Church in the late 1960s to fight for their community. The group which incorporated as the Emergency Tenants' Council (ETC) and later formed the sister social service organization, Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción (IBA), rallied the neighborhood with the motto "no nos mudaremos de la parcela 19"—"We're not going to move from Parcel 19."

Residents admitted that living conditions needed to be improved. However, they did not want the community to be displaced, and they wanted their voices clearly heard in any renewal plan. Through a widespread and active organizing campaign strengthened by allies—priests and nuns, neighbors outside the parcel, redevelopment professionals, and college volunteers—ETC won the unprecedented right from the city in 1969 to serve as the developer for Parcel 19. ETC flew one of its allies, an architect named John Sharratt, to Puerto Rico to study the architecture that would feel most like a community to them. The architecture of the resulting Villa Victoria achieved that goal, with its plaza and parks and casitas facing one another. The development also provided a facility for the elderly to keep aging relatives close. Several indoor community spaces included a youth and arts center, a community credit union, and the home of one of the first bilingual preschools in the country.

When the Villa was completed in 1976, residents, fueled by the pride that came from preserving their neighborhood, turned to strengthening human service programming. In the early 80s, a partnership between an active parent in the neighborhood, Ada Palmarin, and a Harvard student, Remy Cruz, led to the formation of the Keyatch Program of the Phillips Brooks House Association, offering free tutoring, big brother/ big sister and summer programs



Villa Victoria celebrates Puerto Rican traditions through music and dance.

for neighborhood children. Jorge Palmarin, Ada's son and an original participant in the program reflects, "Not only did Keylatch give us a place to go and be safe, but it also gave us a learning structure and a way to build friendships across the neighborhood." I have been fortunate to inherit the trusteeship of this program and observe 10 years of students who, in serving others and continuing that community-building tradition, have become deeply moved by the story and legacy of the Villa.

It is through Keylatch and personal relationships that I have also seen this legacy fading and known the very real obstacles many of the children and grandchildren of those first residents face. While the original residents fought for and won the Villa, its walls could not keep out the challenges afflicting our poor communities, from insufficient educational opportunities to addiction to violence. The original story has at times been overshadowed by heart-breaking stories of loss that community members have experienced. And as new residents move in and children move away, fewer current residents know the story of the Villa's beginnings first-hand if at all.

Even so, there is palpable power in the legacy of those who fought to create the Villa. It is in the energy of Villa Victoria on a hot summer day or the shimmer of those holiday lights; it is at the annual Festival Betances in July to commemorate ETC's victory;

it is at the community's Jorge Hernández Cultural Center; and it is there every day when I pick up my two-year-old son from his grandmother's house. I know that I am leaving him in loving hands, but more than that, in any given day two to three people who know him will stop and say "que dios le bendiga." It is a rare gift for a child in Boston to be so blessed by his community. Such gifts must live on and a new generation must take responsibility for the story. In the words of my once colleague and now sister-in-law Jenny Gray, which I first heard 12 years ago when she introduced me to the Villa, "It is so important that they [the children and youth of the Villa] know their history and the story of how people fought for this community. It is how they know what they are capable of and believe in themselves, how they know to fight for what is just, and how they care about one another and their community." Pass it on.

Maria Domínguez Gray is the Deputy Director of the Phillips Brooks House Association and holds a M.Ed. from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. She would like to dedicate this article to her growing family and to all those children and grandchildren of the original Villa generation who fight to keep the legacy alive.

The Seeds of Villa Victoria

A Tree Grows in Puerto Rico

BY NELSON I. COLON

WHEN I ARRIVED AT THE HARVARD GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION in 1981 to work on my doctorate, I got involved in Boston's Villa Victoria out of family necessity. Even though I had been a community organizer in Puerto Rico, my main interest was in finding playmates for my three children—from three to eight years old at the time.

My children came away from the experience with lots of friends, but I received the seeds of a legacy that would influence my way of looking at community organization for the rest of my life. Now, as the director of the Puerto Rico Community Foundation, I find the Villa Victoria experience, which emphasizes empowerment through mutual housing concerns and other practical issues, shaped my way of working and thinking.

Assistant HUGSE Dean Estela Carrion, who lived in Dorchester, connected me with community leader Nelson Merced of the Hispanic Office of Planning and Evaluation (HOPE), which provided intellectual support to Villa Victoria.

Villa Victoria was in its most vibrant period. Jorge Hernández was the director of Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción (IBA); the housing project community was painting a colorful mural on its walls—a symbol of the hope and community participation. I got to see Villa Victoria almost every day because my youngest daughter attended the pre-school there.

At the time, Puerto Ricans were the largest Latino population in the Boston area with a strong presence in community development. Through Villa Victoria, I became familiar with the concept of affordable housing that involved the community to create its own space. As a community organizer, I was quite familiar with the rhetoric of “power” and “control,” but Villa Victoria employed these concepts in practical ways. I decided to write my qualifying paper for my doctorate on the concept of empowerment, focusing on its cultural aspect. I did the interviews for my paper in Villa Victoria; even more than a home away from home and the place where my little girl went to preschool, Villa Victoria was informing my intellectual quest across the river.

Three particular conditions of Puerto Rican migration made this type of cultural empowerment particularly important, and provided me with the seeds of what I would later implement on the Island. Puerto Rican migration is circular; because Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens, it is easy to move back and forth, and the dream of return—held by most immigrant groups—is apt to become a reality, at least for a while. Villa Victoria's architecture brings the past in Puerto Rico to the present and also extends to the dream of the future. Villa Victoria is a cultural and psychological portrait of life in Puerto Rico.

In Villa Victoria, I also discovered another important aspect of being Puerto Rican. As a North American citizen, one has the right to legally reclaim a space. Unfortunately, undocumented immigrants—or to a certain extent, even legal immigrants from elsewhere—do not have that automatic right. Thus, Puerto Ricans

in a sense are “entitled” to their empowerment, rather than merely being empowered by themselves. I learned that communities can develop their empowerment by controlling their physical space.

One thing is to say that Puerto Rico needs more power, and another to have a house. One thing is to have intellectual power and another thing is to have concrete assets—or assets in concrete. To have a house, a building, offices, a conference center—with a Puerto Rican organization that is truly representative—entails a level of empowerment that is much deeper than the psychological one.

I received my HUGSE doctorate in 1988 and returned to San Juan. I came back convinced that through community, we can improve our quality of life. I first worked as program director for the Puerto Rico Community Foundation; one of its programs was the federal “Community Housing Development Organization” (CHDO). I tried to recapture the experience of Villa Victoria by training community boards to develop housing. We paid attention to training about how to purchase land, how to have vision to develop a project, how to plan a project and other practical subjects.

Since the Foundation got involved in 1994, CHDOs went from one to 34. With 2,000 housing units, they represent 10% of all social housing in Puerto Rico. Just between 1995 and 2002, community housing development organizations in Puerto Rico built or rehabilitated 1,647 housing units at a market value of \$145,180,000. That is, grass-roots community-based housing generated value of more than \$100 million in 24 communities in Puerto Rico. My Island faces special challenges in terms of housing. It is one of the most densely populated in the world. While the cost of an affordable housing unit, using 2002 figures, is \$70,000, the mean family income in Puerto Rico is \$10,000, with 59% of the Puerto Rican population on the Island below the U.S. poverty level.

Education is sub-standard too. So here at the Foundation, we're also involved in another project that I consider to be inspired by my experience at Villa Victoria. We're working with the education system to transform it from the grassroots, using community power to stimulate changes in schools. We want an international standard of education for Puerto Rico, and right now it is not even on the par with U.S. standards. We want to change the focus from that of preventative programs with objectives like “No Child Left Behind” or the prevention of dropouts to that of an overhaul of the entire system. That can only come about with community involvement. This is a grassroots project that we are undertaking on a large scale.

Thus, the seeds of Villa Victoria have multiplied in Puerto Rico in two directions: housing and improvement of public education. I never imagined that the day I dropped off my daughter at the Boston preschool to find her playmates.

Nelson I. Colon, who received his doctorate from the Harvard Graduate School of Education, is President and CEO of the Puerto Rico Community Foundation.



Equal Marriage Between My Two Homes

Puerto Rico and Massachusetts

BY WILFRED LABIOSA

WE ALL SHOULD HAVE THE RIGHT TO DECIDE IF WE WANT to marry or not. We all should be able to fall in love, and decide if we want to share “the rest of our lives” with one person with whom we share our views and values. This common right among heterosexuals is not as readily available for homosexual couples with the exception of those living in certain parts of the world. One of those is Massachusetts.

While some heterosexual couples decide not to marry, they at least have the right to marriage. Only a few legislators and governments understand that this right is for everyone without regards to sexual orientation.

It is with great pride that I can write this story; my partner and I are one of these homosexual couples that can get married legally. My life has changed (and that of my spouse) with the right to marriage for all couples, including those who are gay and lesbian, in the state of Massachusetts. My hope is that this column can give you (the reader) the importance of such right not just from a legal

perspective but from a psychological and sociological perspective and why it is so important for people like me, from Puerto Rico, to gain this right. It is a basic human right!

Growing up in Puerto Rico as a gay Latino man, I never thought possible that I was able to live with the same rights of all others. Growing up I was told that my lifestyle doesn’t deserve the same human rights as everyone else, that we were deviants and can never have “true” love. I knew that what they were saying was wrong but I thought that in my lifetime I would never been able to prove “them” wrong. Thanks to other activists, political figures, and strategists, I’m so proud that I can now prove them wrong. I am also proud of the work being conducted currently between Puerto Rico and Massachusetts.

Here in Massachusetts, activists are helping couples from Puerto Rico fulfill their dreams of a gay marriage/wedding. We are promot-

The family Labioso-Barter at home.

ing “special communities” underground marriages between Puerto Rico and Massachusetts Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender (GLBT) communities. At the same time, we are building stronger bridges among both subgroups and movements. We are making the dreams possible of many gay and lesbian couples. These couples are aware—like couples from other states and US territories — that they do not acquire marriage rights when they go back to Puerto Rico. However, for some of these couples who have married in Massachusetts it means that they can “fight” for equal marriage rights back at home. Some of the Puerto Rican couples that have married here in Massachusetts are using their marriage certificates to fight for equal civil rights back on the Island. I know personally of more than 15 couples who have married here but live in Puerto Rico; some consider their “second home” Massachusetts and even are considering moving here if the law doesn’t change in Puerto Rico.

In Puerto Rico, the struggle for equal marriage is happening right now. After the defeat of sodomy laws in the United States, Puerto Rico as a colony also had to revise its laws. Since then, Puerto Rico has been flourishing as a destination for gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgenders, affording them the same rights to all except the right to marriage/civil unions. It has been such a change, that now even the Puerto Rico Tourism Company has developed a “special populations” unit which includes targeting publicity campaigns to attract this market.

As a Puerto Rican living in the state of Massachusetts, I’m lucky to have the same rights including marriage equality. My U.S citizenship is good everywhere I travel but my marriage is not. It is interesting to note that the “mother country” of Puerto Rico, Spain, has afforded equal marriage rights to all, including homosexual couples; so have Mexico City, Argentina and other places. Every time I travel I have to think if my spouse and I would be “welcomed.” Now when you go to Puerto Rico, whether Puerto Rican or not, you can know that it is safe to visit and enjoy the GLBT life and nightlife. There are laws that protect us GLBT people and allows us to have a good time.

I moved to Boston because I fell in love with the city and its universities. Even though I encountered racism and prejudices while attending school, I thought that I needed to learn from these “isms” in order to become an activist. I learned the skills necessary to become a proud young Latino gay professional. Upon graduation, I began to formalize my career and my social activism. I also fell in love. My partner and I knew that we should have the same rights as all other couples that were living together.

So many years thereafter, we gained the rights as all others in this state. The Massachusetts court decision confirmed one of the many reasons why I wanted to stay living in this state, its progressiveness coexisting with its dichotomies.

I have worked with the struggle and the challenges, and know that up to now my work has paid off. I love Massachusetts not only because of the “living” democracy that we can live but because Latino individuals like me now can grow without the families telling them that they don’t deserve the same rights because of their difference. Now a young Latino gay man can have hopes and dreams of dating and finding a good man (or woman) to marry. Now we are equal under the law, we have the same protections under the law as our neighbor does and that we as a family are protected but don’t plan on moving from this state.

There are many gay Latino men growing up in Puerto Rico that still hear their families telling them that they are different and that they don’t deserve equal rights. This is about to change in Puerto Rico. However, a small group of leaders in Puerto Rico, straight and GLBT, have been campaigning for the past two years to acquire marriage equality and to consider any two people living together for more than a certain number of years as a domestic partnership with equal rights no matter their sexual orientation. The argument of equal marriage for all is not one that has to do with religion, but with legal rights.

Currently in Puerto Rico, Senator Jorge Adolfo de Castro Font presented the controversial Resolution 99 for a constitutional amendment that marriage should be between a man and a woman. This resolution has received opposition from many sectors in Puerto Rico including many heterosexual allies. In addition, the Permanent Joint Commission for the Revision and Reform of the Civil Code of Puerto Rico has held many public hearings to revise a civil code that incorporates equal marriage, inheritance rights for couples living together and not married, and other issues relevant to civil partners not married.

If either of these two strategies is deemed unconstitutional, they would go all the way to the Federal Magistrate in Boston. As a commonwealth, colony of the United States, Puerto Rico is governed federally, and Massachusetts was assigned to Puerto Rico for all final federal-based decisions. All federal magistrates/judges are housed, trained, and meet under the Massachusetts Supreme Court. Yes, Puerto Rico is governed not by their own final courts but by a “supreme” federal court in Massachusetts. All final appeals to decisions from Puerto Rico would come (and have come in the past) to Boston to decide on the final say. Strategists in Puerto Rico know this and we hope that if it comes down to it, local federal authorities would deem equal marriage rights to all and not the few, using the local Massachusetts law as guidance.

Until the final decision is cast, we have leaders like myself, who are helping citizens of Puerto Rico fulfill their dreams that are full of love, compassion, and pride, indirectly, from a social perspective rather than from a political perspective. It is important that we all do whatever we can do to bring equal marriage to many other parts of our nation and world. Activists like myself work collaboratively with Puerto Rico because it is the nation where we were born and we strongly believe and know that the laws will (are) changing.

The day of my wedding was the happiest day of my life, not only did I marry the love of my life but it instilled in me the feeling that I can go back to those folks who put me down growing up and say to them, I knew things would be different. I see the same happiness in the faces of the many couples that I have helped get married here from Puerto Rico, they experience very similar feelings as those that I felt on my wedding day. It is a feeling that I hear is the same for heterosexual or homosexual couples who married for love.

Wilfred W. Labiosa, MS is a mental health counselor and activist involved in local and national Latino/a GLBT movement. He is co-founder of Somos Latin@s LGBT Coalition of Massachusetts, the only group by and for the local GLBT community and host of the annual Latino Pride Week of New England. For more information on his monthly GLBT column or this group visit, www.somoslatinoslgbt.org.

HARVARD AND PUERTO RICO

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Harvard University and institutions in Puerto Rico have worked together on many projects. One of the most dynamic of these collaborations is the Puerto Rico Winter Institute, a major January “happening.”

Stretching in January

The Puerto Rico Winter Institute

BY MERILEE S. GRINDLE

THE PUERTO RICO WINTER INSTITUTE is a major January “happening” at the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies. For the past four years, students from Harvard and the University of Puerto Rico have enjoyed more than the sunshine, warmth, beauty, and good food of Puerto Rico. They have collaborated in intensive intellectual “stretches” across disciplines, cultures, and time.

Conceptualized by Doris Sommer, a professor in Romance Languages and Literatures, the Institute (PRWI) is an experiment in appreciating the rich academic and cultural life of Puerto Rico and expanding interactions among students and faculty who share research and teaching interests. As Sommer explains in her description of the Aula Verde, the “real” world is never far away from the Institute experience.

I’ve had the privilege of sharing some of that “real” world experience in PRWI activities for the past two years—and I have indeed been stretched! In the summer of 2006, I joined discussions about the connection between water, the environment, and plant life in Puerto Rico. This particular PRWI was organized by Noel Michele Holbrook, professor in Harvard’s Department of Organismic and Evolutionary Biology; students and I attended daily lectures held

at Puerto Rico’s Escuela de Artes Plásticas; lectures were made real through study visits to rain forests, watershed sites, mangroves, and the bioluminescent bays of the island of Vieques. The stretch resulted from bringing together plant biologists, hydrologists, and human rights activists (among others) to consider the meaning of water for plant and human life.

This kind of interaction has been made possible through generous support from the Wilbur Marvin Foundation, the Winter Institute is a groundbreaking way to promote collaboration between universities, their students, and their faculty.

I again got a chance to witness these collaborations this past winter when I attended lectures and participated in field activities related to the fascinating topic of how the brain and human emotions interact in interpersonal communication, whether it is through speech, gesture, or artistic expression. Students and I puzzled over the art and science of “empathic translation” in music, art, poetry, law, and neuroscience and considered how our insights could be applied to cross-cultural communications and artistic expression. The experience, organized by Alice Flaherty, a professor of neurobiology at Harvard Medical School, was an intriguing intellectual stretch for me,

made all the more rewarding through sharing it with students and faculty engaged in their own intellectual reaching.

At this point, I can only regret that I was not part of the first two stretches. In 2005, “Culture at a Crossroads,” organized by Sommer, was an intellectual journey that considered architecture, literature, identity, and religion. The following year, the Institute was organized around the theme of public health and society, and was led by Harvard Medical School professor Arachu Castro, who focused attention on Caribbean and U.S. connections, particularly with relevance to AIDS, immigration, and the health status of U.S. Latinos.

The Puerto Rico Winter Institute has been extraordinarily successful in helping both students and faculty stretch their minds beyond the normal boundaries of academic disciplines and cultural understandings. It has also resulted in increased networking and collaboration among scholars in Puerto Rico and Harvard. The sunshine, the warmth, the landscape are wonderful; so is the intellectual exercise.

Merilee S. Grindle is the director of the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies and Edward S. Mason Professor of International Development at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

Rhesus monkeys on Cayo Santiago.



Children participate in workshops on urban ecology run by community members, many of them parolees and probationers.

A Green Classroom

Puerto Rico in Winter

BY DORIS SOMMER

“Aula Verde” is the name of an ecological park and science center for school children in Puerto Rico. It was an appropriate visit for the third Puerto Rico Winter Institute, dedicated to water and plants and directed by Harvard biology professor N. Michele “Missy” Holbrook. The amphitheater-like design of the flora, to facilitate viewing in lessons by the practiced guides, and the elegant simplicity of the laboratory building that borders the butterfly farm and dedicates space for arts and crafts with skilled mentors, were all quite pleasing to Missy’s experienced eye, but not astounding for the well-traveled botanist until we learned how the park was developed. It’s a story of recycled resources and civic revival.

Marco Abarca, a creative Costa Rican human rights lawyer, had been called in to consult on an ongoing class-action lawsuit against unconstitutional prison conditions in Puerto Rico.¹ Abarca, a law professor at the University of Puerto Rico (UPR), managed to direct part of the fine monies accumulated throughout years of litigation toward an investment that would improve the living conditions in one of the largest and poorest housing projects in Puerto Rico. Abarca together with community participants, consisting of parolees and probationers, began to transform the mosquito-infested badland behind the Catholic school into a natural haven. Then, with the help science educators, the group designed a workshop for elementary

school children on urban ecology. As the participants organized, what developed was a community-based, self-employed enterprise known as Aula Verde. Its expert workshops are certified by the Department of Education of Puerto Rico and supported with Title I funds for the approximately 12,000 elementary school children who visit each year. By now the concept of “Aula Verde” is an inspiration for other consolidated sustainable development initiatives that can significantly improve lives in marginalized communities and at the same time enhance the education of Puerto Rico’s youth.

The project has salutary side effects in the academy as well. Abarca’s UPR law students work together with the commu-



Aula Verde is an ecological park and science center for school children in Puerto Rico. The website is www.aulaverde.org.

nity participants of Aula Verde to develop research that stretches the range of community improvement efforts to social concerns such as adolescent pregnancy, breast-feeding, school retention and prevention of drug abuse. Collaborative research prepares students to make effective interventions in all these areas, as evidenced by the support garnered in several non-profit organizations that have formed a tight network to promote this community's development on various fronts.

The name, Green Classroom, also captures a general spirit of the island as a haven for learning, especially in winter, through collaborations across faculties and student bodies that might otherwise stay unknown to one another. For the past four years during the month of January, Harvard students and professors have been leaving the black, white, and grey winter of Boston to land in the full color of Puerto Rico to join colleagues and classmates there in order to learn from one another.

The small island measures about 100 by 35 miles but has over 20 ecosystems making it a virtual laboratory for life sciences, as we learned during the inaugural 2004 Winter Institute on a tour of the vast and impressive UPR Botanical Gardens in Río Piedras. The island also condenses many of the social, cultural, public health and ecological issues that count on local expertise and that also claim our general attention today in major universities throughout the Americas. Like a time-tunnel for Latin American countries that have recently entered the economic force-field of the United States through negotiated but uneven treaties, Puerto Rico could look like a laboratory and teach a lesson about what is gained and what is lost when circulation (of monies, goods, and people) trumps sovereignty. Since the 1950s, while Latin American economies were busy building local industry through Import Substitution Industrialization, Puerto Rico was a pioneer in attracting outside investment. The models developed there for over

half a century are now being implemented throughout Latin America.

Nevertheless, Puerto Rico is usually overlooked or relegated to someone else's field of study, unless the focus is specifically on the island in a book, or a course, or a lecture often by Puerto Rican scholars themselves. Other academics can't quite place the territory and tend conveniently to ignore it. North Americanists seem consider it Latin American and therefore out of bounds; and Latin Americanists have apparently put it close to the United States where their field tapers off into another domain. Caribbeanists are likely to focus on Cuba as representative of the Spanish speaking area; and post-colonial studies can't quite include Puerto Rico's pre-post "Commonwealth" status, especially when its oxymoronic structure comes out clearly in Spanish as "Estado libre asociado." Juan Flores calls the condition "Lite Colonial."

Puerto Rico is a hybrid of cultures and of conflicting political identities counter-

poised in a seemingly delicate but somehow enduring balance. The complicated island consistently performs the counterpoint and edgy creativity that theorists have described as either quintessentially Caribbean (read Cuban) according to Fernando Ortiz, or as distinctly borderland (between Mexico and the United States) to follow Néstor García Canclini. Puerto Rico's complexity might have been exemplary for their theories, but perhaps it goes deeper than they were prepared to imagine. Contradiction is official in Puerto Rico as well as commonplace. To be both a "free state" and an "associated" or dependent territory would appear untenable and can be ontologically unnerving. Yet the duality has promoted admirable agility and a tolerance for contradiction, even while it strains the emotional resilience that the situation demands. A glaring example is the legitimate complaint that although Puerto Ricans cannot vote in presidential elections, they are drafted under presidential leadership into the United States Army at an alarmingly high rate, from the time of the Korean War, through the Viet Nam years up to today's war in Iraq. Less notorious but just as revealing an example of contradiction are the two separate legal traditions that lawyers generally command in Puerto Rico: the Civil Law tradition, which combines German and French positive law inherited from a reformed Spanish Empire, and the United States Common Law tradition that imposed its own adversarial procedures (vs. the older inquisitorial approach) without objecting to the substantive claims of the Civil Law tradition. Cases are generally argued in Spanish, unless they go before the United States District Court in Puerto Rico, in which case they must be argued in English. This leveling of differences between legal systems has prepared Puerto Rican lawyers to consult for other Latin American countries that feel the pressure to adopt United States legal procedure in order to facilitate economic accords. But the "homogenization" of differences in Puerto Rico should look like a limit case for countries that are testing the boundaries of treaty-friendly "harmonization" that promises to recognize the legitimacy of different legal systems despite asymmetries of economic and political power. The island remains a microcosm and classroom for this challenge today, as the national law of sovereign states rubs against demands of other states and of international conventions and courts.

The island's unsettled political status doesn't amount to an identity crisis—Puerto Ricans are generally proud to be *boricuas*—but it does provoke noteworthy resourceful responses that combine elements of Anglo and Hispano along with other immigrant worlds and that sometimes retrieve older indigenous traditions, making the island a fascinating focus for scholarship and for enduring friendships. This became clear to me when I started to travel to San Juan, following the pattern of my Brooklyn barrio neighbors from childhood. It was also clear that almost anyone would come to the same conclusion about the intellectual and personal pull of Puerto Rico once they got there. And Puerto Ricans would benefit from the visits too, as my friend Rubén Ríos Avila explained. UPR students are homogeneously almost all from the island and hardly get exposed to unfamiliar points of view, so that the interchange of perspectives is not only welcome but fundamental for a critical education. Bringing Harvard colleagues and graduate students to share seminar experiences with Puerto Rican counterparts became a project I took on with enthusiasm and with confidence about the promising results. The project began through the Cultural Agents Initiative, as I explored sites and partners in Old San Juan where visitors would inevitably feel drawn, and it was adopted by the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies once the design could be implemented as a program, thanks to support by the Wilbur Marvin Foundation.

From the beginning, our collaboration has counted on the hospitality of the Escuela de Artes Plásticas—where the Institute holds its classes across from the magnificent Morro Fort and the Atlantic Ocean; the Centro de Estudios Avanzados de Puerto Rico y el Caribe—where Harvard students and some faculty stay in the old seminary's student rooms behind the peaceful cloistered patio; and the University of Puerto Rico, our close partner in academic planning and staffing, through the initiative of Silvia Álvarez Curbelo, a professor and former DRCLAS Visiting Scholar.

Our themes or areas of focus vary from year to year, intentionally, in order to engage the broadest possible range of students and scholars. Seminars and fieldtrips on arts and religion in the first year brought Tom Cummins, David Carrasco and J. Lorand

Matory to work with Enrique Vivoni, Angel Quintero, and Juan Flores. The next year, Arachu Castro, Dharma Cortes, and Dolores Acevedo-Garcia worked with Gloria Canino and Jorge Duany on issues of public health. And in the third year Missy Holbrook accompanied by Maciej Zwierniecki, Paul Moorcroft, Rafael Bras, Elvira Cuevas, Ernesto Medina, Carla Restrepo and Jorge Ortiz studied water and plants. Neuroscience and the ethics of empathy provided a context for Alice Flaherty to include Graham Ramsay and Doris Sommer in partnerships with Margarita Alegría, Marco Abarca and Antonio Martorell in the recent fourth year of the Winter Institute. Next year we hope to engage colleagues in economics or the law. Topics change, but the collaborative model remains constant. Three, sometimes four, faculty members from Harvard join an equal number of professors from the University of Puerto Rico to alternate their lectures and presentations between visiting and local professors for a dozen graduate students from each institution. Through this design Puerto Rico is as a partner for Harvard's scholarly engagements in ways that can foment sometimes lasting exchanges or dialogues. The two-way and mutual model of the Institute probably distinguishes it from other approaches to scholarship abroad. Most either host a Harvard professor with his or her students in a country appropriate to their course material; or they engage Harvard faculty to teach in foreign universities. Some students study abroad too, often during summers, but very few choose to substitute a semester or a year at Harvard for a term elsewhere. The Winter Institute takes advantage of down-time in the dead of winter not only to identify Puerto Rico as an appropriate site for the study of many fields; it also recognizes Puerto Ricans as colleagues and mentors across a range of academic disciplines.

Doris Sommer is Ira and Jewell Williams Professor of Romance Languages and literatures and of African and African American Studies at Harvard University. She is also Director of Cultural Agents (culturalagents.org). She thanks Professor Abarca for his help with this article and for providing photos. She thanks Professor Abarca for his help with this article and for providing photos.



Monkeys and Men

Learning from Cayo Santiago

BY MELISSA S. GERALD

WHAT DOES WHO OPENS THE DOOR ON a date on a frigid Cambridge evening have to do with a lush island off the shores of Puerto Rico? For that matter, what does this island, teeming with squealing free-ranging rhesus monkeys, have to do with some of the best minds at Harvard?

I pondered these questions as I prepared to give a lecture on sexual selection theory to a group of Harvard students at the Puerto Rico Winter Institute this January. In a sense, the answer to the second question is easier to answer. Harvard scientist and prolific, two-times Pulitzer Prize winning author Edward O. Wilson reminded me last spring that his journey into what became the field of sociobiology began on this island, known as Cayo Santiago, in 1956. Since then, Cayo Santiago has become a mecca for both scientists who study social behavior through observations of the social interactions and relationships of monkeys, and for evolutionary biologists of all sorts, who try to fathom the workings of the mind and language. Marc Hauser, Harvard psychologist and recent author of *Moral Minds* (Ecco Press), and his students

have conducted ongoing research for more than twenty years on Cayo Santiago.

Hauser works extensively in both the field and the laboratory. "What is exciting about working on Cayo Santiago is that you can ask profound questions about the evolution of mind to animals living in semi-natural conditions, and answer these questions with the rigor of captive experiments, and with the sample size of a drosophila geneticist," observed Hauser recently.

So, going back to my first question, how does mundane dating etiquette connect to sexual selection and patterns of monkey behavior? Here is a quick tour of what I explained to the students.

Current divorce rates for the United States suggest that even if we manage to stay in a relationship there are always ups and downs. Many conflicts between men and women often arise from the differences between the sexes. How do we breathe, eat, or drink? We know how to satisfy these basic, primary needs. There are serious consequences for people who do not succeed at these tasks: they die. By contrast, if we do not find a mate, we only suffer, albeit a lot, if one is to judge by the plethora

of self-help dating books for both men and women.

Our living primate relatives, such as monkeys and apes, can help us to recognize different reproductive decisions and strategies that continue to operate today. For those who do not succeed at reproducing, they die and with them go their genes. Natural selection favors those traits that lead to the greatest survival and reproductive success of the bearers. What is good for the goose is not necessarily good for the gander, and as we see in many animals, like humans, males and females often differ in behavior and appearance. Nearly 150 years ago, Charles Darwin began to unravel the selective forces driving these differences between the sexes.

SEXUAL SELECTION THEORY

Darwin noted that some traits seemed to hinder survivorship. For example, the bright feathers of the male peacock are conspicuous to the female peahen. They also stick out like a sore thumb to predators, appearing as flags waving to predators, "eat me, eat me!"

To account for these sexually dimorphic traits Darwin developed the theory of sexual selection, a subset of natural selec-

Rhesus monkeys are the subject of interdisciplinary research on Cayo Santiago.

A LOOK AT CAYO SANTIAGO

BY JUNE CAROLYN ERLICK

It doesn't look like a zoo, indeed, on Cayo Santiago, a 38-acre tropical island off Puerto Rico's coast, the only mammals in cages are human beings. Edmundo Kraiselburd, the affable director of the Caribbean Primate Research Center here, quickly scoots behind bars to check a few messages on his Blackberry.

In this free-ranging monkey colony with a population of 1,022 rhesus macaque monkeys, it's the monkeys who are kings (and queens). Visitors to the island must be tested for tuberculosis before arrival. "We know the monkeys are cute, but don't make eye contact with them," sternly warns colony manager James Ayala. "I'm being serious."

Cayo Santiago staff are busy trapping monkeys to obtain scent and DNA to determine paternity lines, marking each monkey for identification purposes. Everything has to be done before hurricane season in June. Adaris Mas, the Research Center's first Puerto Rican resident scientist, points out the different monkey groupings. Some monkeys are grooming themselves, while others patiently groom each other. They are indeed cute.

Before ducking into his protective cage-office, Kraiselburd tells his visitor, "The whole concept of National Research primate centers came from Cayo Santiago. The subject of sociobiology got its start here also with E.O. Wilson."

Kraiselburd, a virologist by training, explains that the first monkeys were brought to Cayo Santiago from India

in 1938. All the monkeys on the island are descended from the original 409 monkeys, providing a specialized gene pool. Supported by the National Institutes of Health and administered by the Unit of Comparative Medicine at the University of Puerto Rico, the island is a researchers' paradise.

The latest "hot theme" to be studied is stress, according to Ayala. "The question is whether dominant animals are more stressed than others," he observes. "You can get information from a naturalistic setting that you can't elsewhere. The environment in a lab is stressful for the animals in and of itself. That's what makes this place unique."

Research on the island, according to Kraiselburd, has resulted in the malaria vaccine, the Hulka Clip that controls reproduction, and tetanus advances, not to mention discoveries in the fields of psychology and sociobiology. The research on the island is multidisciplinary, ranging from cognition and communication to morphology and physiology.

The island now confronts two challenges. One is overpopulation. Monkeys on the island don't face hungry lions or tigers, and they have ready access to food. This means that the survival rate is considerably greater than in the jungle. The challenge is how to thin the monkey population through sales and donations without upsetting the balance among the groups of monkeys.



Edmundo Kraiselburd (far right) and his team.

The second challenge is a human one. The island is less than a mile off Puerto Rico's coast; Kraiselburd is initiating projects to integrate the Research Center with the community, a low-income village of fishermen. Even though tourists are not permitted on the island, a monkey-themed museum and library on the mainland could attract visitors. He's currently involved in a project to improve community schools.

"It's all about giving back," says Kraiselburd.

A large rhesus emerges seemingly from nowhere, ignoring the visitors. The sky is as blue as it could possibly be. An iguana slinks by, his green skin bending with the lush vegetation.

"When E.O. Wilson was here recently to participate in a documentary, we tried to find him some ants, because we know he's interested in ants," comments Ayala, reminded by the iguana of the island's spectacular biodiversity. "But we couldn't get enough ants in one place, so we found him a termite mound."

Try doing that in a zoo.

*June Carolyn Erlick is the editor-in-chief of ReVista. She is the author of **Disappeared: A Journalist Silenced** (Seal Press 2004) and **Una gringa en Bogotá** (Aguilar, 2007).*

tion. Sexual selection is selection for traits that enable individuals to acquire more and better mates. So while a trait may be damaging to survivorship it will be favored when it increases reproduction. Sexual selection occurs as a result of a character being non-randomly related to variance in reproductive success. As such, Darwin surmised that these

gaudy feathers evolved because, while peacocks are clumsy in flight, the long fanciful tail is sexy to females and could enhance males' ability to reproduce.

Sexual selection theory provides a general framework from which we can explain communication differences between the sexes. This theory informs us that males

are likely to compete against one another for females, that females are the choosy sex, and that males advertise individual differences to attract females. While he was a graduate student and before joining the Harvard faculty, Robert Trivers explained in a seminal paper in 1972 why males do what they do and why females do some-

thing else. It is all about investment. This would be investment toward an offspring, in terms of time, energy, and risk at the expense of one's own fitness.

On Cayo Santiago, one can see first hand that female rhesus macaques are the investing sex, and this is typical for primates. Females get pregnant and once impregnated, females are required to carry the offspring to term. Women gestate for more than nine months, female rhesus do it for five and a half months, and both do it at a cost. Pregnancy is rather metabolically taxing. Pregnant females get hungry and lethargic. Imagine life as a pregnant rhesus monkey. You do not have supermarkets. You have to find your own food. This quest for food comes at the expense of doing other things, such as grooming and getting groomed, cultivating and maintaining social relationships, relaxing, or even taking care of your other kids. Once a mother, the investment expands. Infant rhesus require milk for at least the first 6 months of life, and a female cannot start cycling again immediately after birth, particularly if a mother is nursing on demand. It is very demanding keeping your eye on a playful infant, who could easily wander into the path of a competitor, or in the territory of a predator, if in the wild. Without the mother, the consequences can be quite devastating for an infant.

The extent to which a male invests varies across the primate order. Nevertheless, all in all, the extent to which the female primate invests in offspring care is far greater than any investment a male can devote to his offspring. A male's minimal investment is the sperm that he contributes.

It could certainly behoove a female to mate with a male who will stick around to help take care of her and their young. How is a female able to assess whether a male is able and likely to provide her or their offspring with direct benefits such as protection or even material benefits like food? Typically, socially dominant animals have priority of access to resources. When resources are in scarce supply it can greatly benefit a female to be connected to a male ally who can monopolize access to resources. Indeed, across many species there appears to be great evidence that females choose males on the basis of their dominance rank. Females also might exercise choice for males who can offer indirect benefits such as good genetic quality for her offspring.

Some of the research that has been done on Cayo Santiago helps us to understand some of those selection criteria. For example, evidence exists that female rhesus macaques prefer males that are socially novel to them and thus genetically different. This preference prevents inbreeding. Inbred offspring are typically less likely to survive and reproduce than outbred infants. Apart from checking out the new male on the block, females may also pay attention to individual differences between males in appearance to gain information about his underlying quality, or even how a male is likely to behave toward them.

VERVET CHEATERS

There are all sorts of ways that men and women adjust themselves to make themselves more appealing. Women can wear make-up, and men can work out. Even playing hard to get is about sexual economics. By decreasing availability (not returning phone calls or playing "hard-to get"), the value of that person goes up. Animals cannot cheat. They are what they are. I conducted some experiments in vervet monkeys, an African cousin to the rhesus monkey, to see what exactly happens when you help a male cheat. Male vervets exhibit varying intensities of blue and aquamarine color on their scrotum. Males who display resplendent colors tend to dominate their pale counterparts, so I painted pale males bright. I could not make an alpha out of a cheater, but brightly painted pale males tricked others, but not always in the faker's favor. While pale males acted nicely toward these imposters, brightly colored males perceived these males as a challenge and attacked, regardless of how the poor cheater behaved. Furthermore, females tended to act antagonistically toward these cheaters. Moral of the story: cheaters never prosper.

These studies of vervet monkeys underscore the importance of coloration in guiding social interactions between individuals in a captive setting. Vervet monkeys are not alone in spreading their words through color. Adult rhesus males and females exhibit reddened sexual skin (both faces and genitalia) during the mating season. While color intensity increases throughout the mating season, it maxes out during the season's prime days of mating activity. Corri Waitt and colleagues wanted to determine whether females pay attention to this coloration in

males. Their experimental study showed that females paid preferential attention to images of male faces that were digitally reddened over images of the same males who had paler faces.

As I reported to the students, the coloration a male rhesus monkey sports also directly affect their social interactions with others, even in the wild. In a more recent study I led on Cayo Santiago, we showed that males with greater face and genital hue spent more time associating with females in both nice, affiliative interactions and in sexual activities. Coloration does not appear to be threatening to females, as coloration was not associated with aggressive behavior, so we are surmising coloration is attractive to females for one reason or another.

At the Puerto Rico Winter Institute, I discussed with the students why females are the choosy sex, the possible criteria female primates use in their choice of mates and how females communicate interest in males and exercise mate choice. Although I highlighted these concepts by discussing patterns found in nonhuman primates, I informed the students that there is no typical primate, just as there is no typical human culture. The choices a female makes will be dependent on her environment, and social factors may constrain her preferences. Sexual selection theory can help us to understand human mating strategies and how men and women communicate. As we recognize common patterns among primate species we also see common threads among cultural groups of humans, which pronounce our common origins. Clarifying how sexual selection operates to affect male and female communication in primates may also shed light on some of the universal problems that plague humans such as: sex differences in crime, sexual jealousy, and why it is so difficult for humans to remain faithful.

Those are just a few of the things my research on Cayo Santiago has allowed me to understand and explore. And it will continue to provide an opportunity for Harvard and other researchers to learn about monkeys...and ourselves.

Melissa S. Gerald is Associate Professor at the Laboratory for Primate Morphology and Genetics in the Department of Medicine at the University of Puerto Rico Medical School. She was the Scientist-in-Charge of Cayo Santiago from 2001 to 2007.

The Bolivian Street Children Project

BY MARISA MURPHY

At 12,000 feet, you can feel the effects of the altitude every step you take. But a group of seven women from Harvard did not let that stop them from two months of in-depth work in the world's highest capital city, La Paz, Bolivia. After preparing during spring semester, the group flew south in June 2007 to spend two months volunteering with the Bolivian Street Children Project. Three of us had just graduated from Harvard's Graduate School of Education (HGSE) (one being me, as an Ed.M in Human Development and Psychology); two had just graduated from Harvard College; and two were still at HGSE and the College. Together we took an amazing journey as a part of a very special project.

The Bolivian Street Children Project (BSCP) was started by Chi Huang as a Harvard Medical School student. Volunteering in Bolivia with a church to meet the medical needs of orphanages and children's homes, Chi had a dream to help the many children living on the streets of La Paz. The realization of this dream started small; he brought a young boy living on the streets back to the church to give him shelter and food. But after years of fundraising and planning, he was able to build new homes, and with the help of an incredible staff, to create a family for former street children through the BSCP.

We first needed to learn more about their situation and the context of our entry into their world. Chi's wife, Kristin Huang, a current HGSE doctoral student, has been integral in creating the programs for the BSCP boys. The last few years she has organized a group of students from Harvard to go down to Bolivia with new projects and enthusiasm. Catherine Ayoub, who holds a joint appointment at Harvard Medical School and HGSE, co-taught the seminar with Kristin Huang, bringing her expertise in child trauma to enhance our understanding of the boys' situations. We prepared for our summer work by meeting weekly to discuss Bolivian politics, culture and the problems of street children. Our goal was to develop projects for the boys in the homes to enrich their experiences, helping them think about their futures. Over time we became a close group and a cohesive team. Because this was a volunteer opportunity, we also fundraised together. With the generous help of the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies at Harvard, we were able to cover our plane flights and living expenses in Bolivia.

When we arrived in June, we had many ideas and theories as well as lesson plans and schedules. Meeting the boys was beyond any possible preparation. In a walk through La Paz, Chi pointed out where

he found some of the boys—in an abandoned building or hiding in a tree. After many ups and downs, these boys are attending school and living in family homes. We worked on daily projects with them, alternating between working on the newspaper and a movie, developing goals and planning a final event. Each day we made some progress together, trying new things through writing photography and film.

Our end products, a community newspaper and film, showed the great talent and strength of the boys. The newspaper was named *Sueños*, or dreams, after Chi's dreams for them and for the organization. The color newspaper copies were filled with photographs of the home, the new football field and favorite dogs, as well as the boys playing soccer. The boys wrote articles about school, global-warming, football tournaments and life-plans.

When we talked about their future plans, they talked of great professional goals like becoming an engineer, doctor or psychologist, as well as having their own homes and families. We brought in local professionals who could talk about their own journeys and the importance of study.

Getting to know and love a group of extraordinary boys, now becoming young men, was something I will always cherish. We had time to travel around Bolivia on weekends



Making a Difference: The Harvard women spent two months volunteering with the Bolivian Street Children Project. Above, the boys enjoy themselves with the volunteers.

and after our project had ended, but the time spent with the boys is my real memory of the country and hope for its future.

Marisa Murphy '04 BA in Anthropology from Princeton, and '07 Ed.M in Human Development and Psychology from the Graduate School of Education at Harvard. She is currently a research coordinator for child temperament studies at Mass General Hospital in Boston.

Stepping into the Background of a Magic Realist Novel

Alex Webb; Edited by Rebecca Norris Webb, *Crossings: Photographs From the U.S.-Mexico Border*, Monacelli Press (New York, 2003, 152 pages).

A REVIEW ESSAY BY KRIS SNIBBE

While photographing in the Amazon, Alex Webb felt as if he had stepped into the setting of a Mario Vargas Llosa or Gabriel García Márquez novel because of the sense of magic realism in the air. Webb has acknowledged the influence of Latin American Magic Realist literature on all of his work throughout the tropics, including Mexico. In *Crossings* an embedded narrative emerges that revolves around three major themes from Latin American Magic Realist Literature: fantastical transformations of the human figure and the found environment; the exploration of socio-political conflicts within societies; and the portrayal of death and spirituality as everyday aspects of life.

The photographer recalls, "I first went to the border in 1975... [M]y initial fascination with the world of border crossers has expanded to include many other kinds of crossings, cultural, economic, spiritual... [T]his U.S.-Mexico borderland has come to fascinate me, almost a third country to itself that is brutally divided—by a river, a fence, a wire—and yet it is also one."

In *Crossings*, Webb's self-described exploration of "emotional and psychological



"San Ysidro, California, "Arrest of Border Crossers," 1979. *Crossings: Photographs From the U.S.-Mexico Border*. By Alex Webb. New York: Monacelli Press, 2003. 130. (Color Photograph)

geography" merges pathos, sensuous color and cultural dissonance. Webb's work occupies an intersection of literary imagination and the found environment that has challenged the conventions of photojournalism while expanding the genre of photo reportage.

Webb graduated from Harvard College and accepted Charles Harbutt's invitation to join Magnum Photos in 1974. From 1975 to 1978, inspired by contemporary photographers such as Robert Frank and Henri Cartier-Bresson, Webb photographed the US/Mexican border in black and white. *Crossings* begins with

a sequence of 10 stark and captivating black and white photos, followed by a quote from *Capirotada: A Nogales Memoir* by Alberto Alvaro Ríos, "The trouble is, we talk about the border as a place only, instead of an idea as well. But it is both where two countries meet as well as how two countries meet and the handshake is rough. The book then changes over to color, with images from 1979 to 2001.

From 1979 to the present, Webb has photographed all of his major books using Kodachrome film, known for its hyperbolic translation of colors. His choice of such vibrant

color saturation reflects Webb's longtime interest in Magic Realist literature. Webb first read *One Hundred Years of Solitude* while studying History and Literature at Harvard. One of the more striking images in this novel that is filled with haunting, startling images is that of the enigmatic character Remedios the Beauty floating off into the sky while hanging laundry on a clothesline. This scene belongs to an inverted reality created by the author in which the extraordinary is presented as an ordinary occurrence. In "Boquillas, Coahuila, 1979," Webb captures a moment that echoes the ascension of Reme-



Alex Webb. "Boquillas, Coahuila, 1979." *Crossings: Photographs From the U.S.-Mexico Border*, Monacelli Press, New York, 2003, 152 pages. Edited by Rebecca Norris

dios—a boy jumping off a roof appears to grasp a concrete wall in order to prevent himself from floating off into the sky. A red rope leads the eye from the top edge of the frame to an imagined point beyond the photograph toward which the boy might ascend. The visual device accentuates the boy's apparent victory over gravity.

Webb's formal, rectilinear composition and large depth of field creates a visual sense of solidity that "grounds" the image in reality. In contrast, the fantastic pinks and rich tonal range of deep blues create a sense of hyper-reality in which the boy appears to transcend both metaphysical and geographical boundaries. His shadow forms the shape of a cross that perfectly mimics the angle of the Christian cross tilting from the spire of a church in the background. Finally, the child's levity evokes the soul's ascent at the time of a person's death.

This photo appears in *Crossings* and also begins the sequence of images in Webb's first book, *Hot Light Half-Made Worlds: Photographs from the Tropics* (1986). Preceding this image in *Hot Light*, Webb includes a quote from Carlos

Fuentes' novel *The Hydra Head* that portrays the "Tropics" as a paradoxical place that combines seductive beauty and devastating terror: "Little by little he began to feel drowsy, lulled by the sweet novelty with which the tropics receives its visitors before unsheathing the claws of its petrified desperation."

Photography critic Vicki Goldberg thought that she discerned in *Hot Light* "a kind of brilliant and benign camera colonialism, in which people in underdeveloped countries are appropriated for higher design and effectively ignored." Goldberg's political orientation toward Webb's photography is based on traditional expectations of social documentary photography as a medium to advocate for social reform.

Webb defended his artistic vision in *Hot Light* during a 2005 presentation of his work at the Fogg Art Museum: "I think it's a politically and culturally and historically dangerous book in certain ways in that it ignores all kinds of cultural and historical differences – It was essentially a poetic and atmospheric book,...but I think that this was the right way to initially present this particular obsession that I have."

While *Crossings* traverses

the intersection between Mexico and the United States, it simultaneously unveils the cultural interactions between the real and imagined worlds that characterize much Latin American Magic Realist literature. In "Outskirts of Tijuana, Mexico, 1995," Webb's unique treatment of perspective and depth of field creates visual juxtapositions of forms that results in hyperbolic representations of the human figure. In this form of visual alchemy, the individual's relationship to his environment is transformed to intensify emotional dissonance.

Through Webb's omnipresent lens, a box of colorful shoes appears as a massive monument towering over miniscule human figures who inch past the construction site of bleak factories where low-paid Mexican workers manufacture goods to export to the United States. The caption for *National Geographic's* presentation of this image in the article *Tijuana and the Border: Magnet of Opportunity* reads: "A portable shoe store lends a touch of flair to a drab dustscape in eastern Tijuana, a growing maquiladora district. The tax-free assembly plants, many foreign owned, employ nearly 700,000 people

nationwide and pump life into [local] towns." But there are other worlds beyond this literal, statistical interpretation of the image. The dream-like, bizarre quality of these shoes resonates with the surrealist idea of found art.

Similar to this use of visual hyperbole by Webb is a magnificent distortion of scale that occurs in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, when José Arcadio returns to Macondo as a colossal figure after traveling the world as a gypsy. While his magical increase in size reflects the enormous life experiences he has gained, in "Outskirts of Tijuana" the large appearance of the shoes creates a symbolic decrease of power for the human figures whose visual weight and figurative status is reduced to that of worker bees in relation to the high heels. Webb's virtuosity for transcending the laws of time and space in his images is matched by his long-term commitment to his projects. Two weeks of field time often results in the exposure of 20,000 frames. Equally impressive is his proximity to his subjects, "I've crossed the border illegally a number of times with groups of Mexicans in different places. In each instance, they were caught and I was arrested."

In "San Ysidro, California, Arrest of Border Crossers, 1979," which appears as the cover of *Crossings*, the beauty and terror of the tropics Webb refers to in his *The Hydra Head* quote is personified and presented as an explicit antagonist. In the buttercup-yellow profusion of flowers is the "sweet novelty," while the "petrified desperation" is represented by both the stormy skies and the presence of the border patrol and their static helicopter. The sense of "petrified desperation"

is palpable in the resigned stance of the border crossers.

While riding with a border patrol truck, Webb saw this arrest unfolding and told the driver to “stop the car!” He explains that this situation was “a gift from the photo gods.” This scene appears to take place somehow outside the normal constraints of time and space, creating the sense that the physical and the metaphysical are co-existent. Webb’s Christ-like figural treatment of the border crossers being arrested and their expressions of quiet acceptance of suffering resonate with Webb’s interest in Catholicism. Webb said that, for him, working in Mexico represented a spiritual and ideological change from the United States. He was, he said, “leaving a capitalist, protestant, individualist country and moving into places where there is a much, much greater sense of mystery.”

In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, when Jose Arcadio

Buendia dies, there is a spirit of renewal in death that is shown “when the carpenter was taking measurements for the coffin, through the window they saw a light rain of tiny yellow flowers falling.” The spirit of this magical occurrence relates to hyper-real aspects of “Arrest of Border Crossers.” From one perspective, the Mexican men have arrived in an idyllic pastoral landscape dotted with brilliant yellow flowers that evokes the notion that the United States is a land of opportunity. The swollen clouds, which a moment ago might have predicted plenitude, appear ready to burst with a torrential downpour. As they shimmer with a foreboding blend of yellow, purple and blue hues, a visual atmosphere is created that foreshadows the imminent incarceration of the illegal immigrants. In the visual narrative of this image, arrest might be seen as representation of death, where conventional existence and the

inner landscape of the mind dissolve into a mythopoeic reality, similar to the consciousness of dreams and a reflection of the influence of Magic Realism.

In Alejo Carpentier’s essay “On the Marvelous Real in America” (1949), he argues that “Marvelous Realism” (a literary label synonymous with Magic Realism) is an amplification of aspects of the imaginative reality present within Latin American culture. Wendy B. Faris and Lois Parkinson Zamora expound on the meaning of Carpentier’s essay, “In Latin America, the fantastic is not to be discovered by subverting or transcending reality with abstract forms and manufactured combinations of images. Rather, the fantastic inheres in the natural and human realities of time and place, where improbable juxtapositions and marvelous mixtures exist by virtue of Latin America’s varied history, geography, demography, and politics—not by manifesto.” Likewise, the fantastical

juxtapositions found in Webb’s photographs of the US/Mexican border are not imposed upon his subject—rather, they can be seen as a reflection of the complex social and cultural interaction between these two countries. In relation, *Crossings* forms the foundation of Webb’s oeuvre—in this assimilation of photojournalism and Latin American Magic Realist Literature, Webb has remained respectful of both traditions.

Kris Snibbe’s book manuscript, “Exploring the Border Between Form and Chaos:” *Photojournalism’s Intersection with Latin American Magic Realist Literature in Alex Webb’s Vision of the Tropics* received the Dean’s Prize for Outstanding A.L.M. Thesis in the Humanities from the Harvard Extension School in 2007. Snibbe has completed photographic essays about Mexico City, India, China, and Tibet that revolve around socio-political and religious themes. He has worked as a staff photographer at the Harvard University News Office for 14 years.

A Journey South

Steve Reifenberg, *Santiago’s Children: What I Learned about Life at an Orphanage in Chile* (University of Texas Press, 2008), 226 pages

AN EXCERPT FROM THE FOREWORD (ABRIDGED) BY PAUL FARMER

There are five reasons I jumped at the chance to write a preface to Steve Reifenberg’s memoir about living and working in the early 1980s in a home for Chilean children who would otherwise have ended up in a large institutional orphanage. Five reasons, five areas of curiosity, five questions.

First, anyone who works in countries with many orphans—in places where young parents are apt to die—needs to know

more about how best to raise these children humanely. You don’t have to read Dickens to doubt that large orphanages would be the best way to raise, for example, the millions of AIDS orphans now living in some of the places where I work as a physician.

A second reason I wanted to read *Santiago’s Children* was because I knew that its author had had an experience similar to mine: after college,

Reifenberg set off for a country far from home, a troubled but beautiful place in which he became engaged in a noble enough task. He found himself helping run, under the guidance of a remarkable Chilean woman opposed to “the warehousing of children,” a group home for a dozen poor children. I expected to read a lyrical account of two often frustrating and sometimes emotionally wrenching years, the story

of a journey south to a place he didn’t know, a journey with and among people, most of them children, who had known none of the security he’d enjoyed in a rock-solid, middle-class American family. Epiphany, or at the very least illumination, seemed sure to follow. I wanted to know more about Steve Reifenberg’s coming of age and to compare notes.

I knew that Steve—“Tío Esteve” to the Chilean children

and to the tiny band of their fearless adult protectors—had arrived in Santiago, the tumultuous capital city, at a fairly harrowing time in Chile's history. So, third: How would Chile's political crisis figure in so personal a memoir? Coming a decade after the 1973 coup that put an end to Chile's experiment with democracy, Steve's tenure occurred at the time of a devastating economic downturn, a time of police interrogations, a time of curfews and mean military repression of demonstrations, often using deadly force.

Fourth, would this be a good book to use in teaching? Scholarly treatises and historical accounts of difficult times rarely try to capture the everyday feel, the gritty anxiety of living on the edge, financially, with a dozen children to look out for; academic accounts are not good at rendering the texture of everyday life as violence and repression intrude. Teaching about the travails of democracy in Latin America is difficult to do when we are left to choose between shrill polemic, superficial journalism, and dry, experience-distant accounts. Steve Reifenberg was both an eyewitness and an externally placed observer, and he also learned a good deal about what was happening in Chile from human rights materials gathered from his own country.

Finally, I knew that the book had been conceived in journals written more than twenty years ago. But Reifenberg had finished *Santiago's Children* much more recently, back in Santiago, where he once again lives and works as director of the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies' Regional Office. I was dead curious to see if he'd been able to follow the fates of all the children one would get to know in



the telling. What were they all up to now? What relationship did this dark Chile of the early 1980s have with the impressive, if uneven, advances of Chile today?

Santiago's Children is immensely satisfying on all five scores: for young Americans—and for young people from many other places who find themselves able, through the luck of the draw and accident of birth, to travel to places like Chile or Haiti or Rwanda—this memoir will serve as a gentle and self-deprecating guide book. What happened to its author, the ways he grew and learned more about his strengths and weaknesses, are all there. The book is pitch perfect, as far as humor and detail go.

First, there are the children. You get to know them and to see them grow. Reifenberg spent two years as a surrogate parent and teacher in the orphanage. Some of the kids were right off the street; some had been abandoned by a parent not able to get by; others were orphaned by political violence or by the grinding violence of poverty and economic crisis. Reifenberg lets us know what it's like to try and prepare more than a dozen kids for school each morning, or what it feels like to try, twice, desperate for money, to launch a fam-

ily farm only to see the water cut off or, worse, your newly acquired draft horse die before the field is fully plowed. We see how tempers sometimes flare in tight quarters, sense the anxiety that accompanies a trip to the beach in charge of a dozen unruly kids. And always, there is the narrator's frustration at not mastering Spanish quickly enough, often to the amusement of the kids and neighbors.

Through these stories, we actually get to know a dozen children. The portraits are built piecemeal, but by the end of *Santiago's Children* we're left with the characters: irrepressible Carlos and his brother Patricio, whose father is in jail and whose mother cannot take care of them; studious and preternaturally mature Verónica; naughty and irrepressible Marcelo; Andrés, a boy who can be relied on to carry out any threat or whose fear of horses is born when the doomed draft horse nips him prior to going to her great reward; Big Sonia, the amateur philosopher "So, why do they always call God a he? It makes me furious!" And quiet Karen whose occasional utterances surprise Steve.

Reifenberg is careful to focus on the children themselves in the first half of the book. But as the book moves forward easily, and with a great deal of humor, political violence seeps into its pages. By that time the reader is a fierce partisan of these children and their neighbors, who live in a poor part of town. What is the narrator to do with the entreaty, from one of the mothers of the thousands of "disappeared" young activists, that Steve, the American, help her to find her son? The wave of disappearances laps frighteningly close to the home. By the latter half of the book the constant attack on civil and political liberties is as expertly blended

into the text as the household struggles for access to the one bathroom and the arguments about who's going to do what chores. In finishing the book, we discover we've learned a good deal about Chile.

As Reifenberg later discovered at Harvard, so many students are trying to figure out how to make a contribution in some meaningful way. We're all liable, especially when young, to undertake quests hoping for a personal sense of self-efficacy—to feel that we've made a meaningful contribution. Through his book, we see him coming to understand just how huge the obstacles are. The book is also honest about the frustrations. Surrounded by lives trampled by poverty and repression, he begins to see just how privileged and protected our lives in North America have been. More honestly still, Reifenberg traces the links between our own privilege and the privations of others. In the case of Chile, these connections are direct and damning.

Steve Reifenberg's central message, though, is optimistic, encouraging. The effort doesn't have to be Herculean, he seems to be telling an audience contemplating great deeds in far-away places. A big step in the quest is taken, simply enough, by investing time and energy in something decent and then sticking with it. It's important to be willing to engage in things you care about, even if those efforts do not always lead to obvious victories, and to continue learning in the process.

For this reason, especially, the book will be a wonderful resource for students, young and old. I now teach mostly medical students and physicians, but in my experience, their concerns are not very different from those Steve felt,

as did I. It's hard to imagine someone who finds himself an outsider in one of the tougher neighborhoods of Latin America or Africa or other "foreign" parts of the world—or someone interested in learning about one of those places—who would not find this book immensely instructive and moving.

Santiago's Children reminds us that even modest efforts,

like those of Steve Reifenberg, might at least palliate the pain encountered in a place like Pinochet's Chile. Certainly efforts such as his, and the lessons drawn for this kind of international experience, would be preferable to the current, ham-fisted approach to U.S. foreign policy and to the conventional development enterprise. Often these policies

are steered, and none too gently, by economic ideologues who don't often apologize when they make yet another about-face whose costs are borne by others. I can't help but wonder what might have transpired if we'd approached these same problems and policies with the good will, humility, and the willingness to learn that runs throughout this book.

Medical anthropologist and physician **Paul Farmer** is a founding director of Partners In Health and the Presley Professor of Medical Anthropology in the Department of Social Medicine at Harvard Medical School. He has written extensively about health and human rights, and about the role of social inequalities in the distribution and outcome of infectious diseases.

The Sandinistas and Nicaragua: Through a Journalist's Eyes

Stephen Kinzer, *Blood of Brothers: Life and War in Nicaragua* (David (Rockefeller Center Series on Latin American Studies, Harvard University Press, 2007, 460 pages)

A REVIEW BY JACK SPENCE

Stephen Kinzer, *New York Times* Bureau Chief in Nicaragua for most of the war years, pauses in his compelling account of the war and its politics to explain the Socratic method needed to give directions in Managua—a city still not rebuilt a decade after its 1972 earthquake and bereft of street signs. "Do you know where the Pepsi Cola plant used to be (before the earthquake)?" If the answer is negative try another more distant landmark; if positive begin the narrative—go three blocks *al lago* (toward the lake), two *abajo* (the direction where the sun goes down), then 25 *varas al lago* to the green house on the left. Find a known landmark (existing or not) that was not too many twists and turns away from the ultimate destination.

I imagine two audiences for this handsome DRCLAS edition of the book originally published in 1991—an older crowd with knowledge of the political land-

marks and a college-age group that was in kindergarten when U.S.-backed Violeta Chamorro defeated Sandinista Daniel Ortega in 1990.

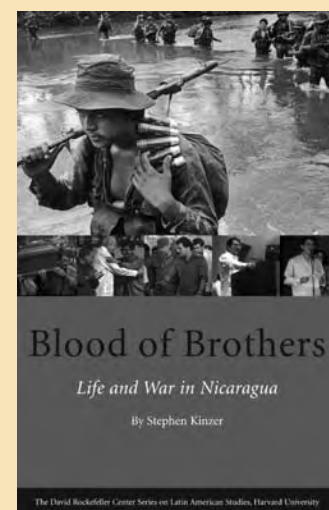
At that time, Nicaragua had been a leading news story in the United States since 1978. It is to Kinzer's great credit that as a young freelancer he sniffed this story out. When it broke during the rebellion against the Somoza family dynasty, he was quickly hired by the *Boston Globe*, and not long after that the *Times* came calling.

Perhaps half a dozen U.S. professors had any expertise in Nicaragua before 1978; by the early 1980s it had become a frequent subject in college courses. Kinzer notes that 100,000 North Americans visited Nicaragua during the Sandinista years. Though many were on short visits—political tourists in Kinzer's term—they were deeply involved in this centerpiece of U.S. foreign

policy. Most were fervently in favor of the Sandinistas and still more opposed U.S. foreign policy in Central America. A good many in this older group may want to revisit through this book. For them, *Blood of the Brothers* will be an emotive read.

A younger generation of readers may find themselves lost in Managua. This is not meant as a criticism. Kinzer is a fine writer and like cordial Nicaraguans on the streets of Managua provides guideposts. Among the many books on Central America, Kinzer's is eminently readable. But Nicaraguan and U.S. politics were extremely complex. The cast of characters is large. And the political distance from here to there is great. The Cold War is an abstraction and so Reagan's obsession with Nicaragua will be hard to understand.

The cell phone generation used to constant online news may not "get" Kinzer's des-



peration to make deadline on the one working phone in rural Sapoa needed by several dozen reporters for news of a breakthrough in talks between the Sandinistas and the U.S.-organized and financed "contra" rebels.

But they would be well advised to read this book. Kinzer tells a trying story about a war being fought on the soil of a dirt poor country—hardly an

irrelevant topic in the last few years. Equally important for those interested in international conflict resolution is the long and winding thread of negotiations that led to a way out, but not until all sides had been weakened: the Sandinistas by a war-damaged, collapsed economy, the U.S. government by the Iran-Contra scandal, the contras in turn by threatened supply lines. Nicaragua had been bled white.

Relentless as this story is, Kinzer provides breaks in the action, some humorous, with cultural encounters, side trips into history, swims in the Rio Coco, and tricks learned to circumvent rules and find goods made scarce by the war.

These "sidebars" flesh out the book's second story—the life and practice of a war correspondent. This will interest and provoke both younger and older readers. To other reporters and observers of Nicaragua, Kinzer had the plum job. Bureau chief of the most influential paper in the United States with an office, staff, car and an ingenious driver who got him out of many scrapes, Kinzer was a sought after figure by all sides. Inevitably, his reporting was controversial to many, perhaps most, players and sympathizers.

Though the plum job, it was not one for the faint of heart. Many reporters ran risks and some in Central America were killed. Kinzer's posting to Nicaragua ran on—and on and on. And so did the number of trips down roads where the contras often staged ambushes or planted mines. The continued dangers and repeated exposure to the brutal human damage of the war took a personal toll. He wanted out, and then a relative peace arrived at Sapoá in 1988. He left before

the 1989-90 electoral campaign got rolling.

To old Nicaragua hands of various stripes the book will recall perhaps still smoldering controversies. The Oliver North crowd will not like this book. When Reagan hardliners trumped conciliatory figures such as Secretary of State George Schultz, chances at peace were lost. The brutality of the contras and presence of Somoza's officers in their top ranks is an oft mentioned theme. These are not freedom fighters as Reagan would have it.

I found myself reliving the old arguments. The Washington consensus was that the Sandinistas were very bad; the debate was what to do about it. Kinzer has a more nuanced view of the Sandinista government, but in the main he is critical, particularly of their repressive tactics against the civilian opposition inside the country.

I think occasional comparisons with El Salvador or Guatemala would have enabled younger readers, to better assess the Sandinistas and their opponents.

For example, Kinzer dismisses Sandinista agrarian policies as hopeless models of state control (fixed prices, state farms, state-sponsored cooperatives) that had been tried elsewhere and failed. Thus, he suggests, peasant disaffection quickly grew and soon led to peasants in the north joining the contras. At the time the U.S. press ignored agrarian issues. Crucial though they were in Central America, they were not part of the debate in Washington.

Careful readers will see that the agrarian issue was more complex. Contras, mainly peasants, attacked cooperatives defended by peasant members armed by the Sandinistas.

Prior to the 1984 election I visited a cooperative. Coop leaders greeted me with a litany of complaints about the Sandinistas. No tractors, insufficient fertilizer, and lack of technical assistance. When I suggested that not many on this cooperative would vote for the Sandinistas, they looked at me in disbelief. "Who do you think gave us the land?" they said.

By the 1970s, the traditional Latin American model of large haciendas had left extensive rural poverty, and expansion of export products in Central America had shoved many peasants off the land. In El Salvador even the Reagan administration supported (perhaps through clenched teeth) agrarian cooperatives that emerged from a U.S.-sponsored confiscation of large farms.

Kinzer has a good deal of sympathy and not much criticism for civilian opponents of the Sandinistas—*La Prensa*, the newspaper of Somoza's victim Pedro Joaquín Chamorro and then his widow Violeta, Arturo Cruz who almost became a presidential candidate in 1984, and then became a contra director with a CIA stipend, and Archbishop Obando y Bravo and various other anti-Sandinista bishops, though he does criticize Obando y Bravo for his failure to criticize the brutality of the contras.

The obvious Salvadoran parallel to Obando y Bravo is Archbishop Romero, assassinated in 1980, by a death squad associated with a man who became a 1984 presidential candidate. Romero was neither the first nor the last cleric to be killed, but it took the cold blooded murder of six Jesuit priests a decade later for the United States to begin to consider abating

the munificent flow of aid to that country's government.

Even when censored, *La Prensa* remained a hard hitting, polemical critic of the Sandinistas. By contrast small leftist papers in El Salvador had been bombed out of business. Kinzer does note that repression elsewhere in Central America was much worse, but the sentence that acknowledges this does not emerge until page 304.

Kinzer dismisses the 1984 elections in Nicaragua as a "charade" once Arturo Cruz decided not to enter the race leaving only small opposition parties involved. His account of negotiations between Cruz and the Sandinistas holds the Sandinistas as ultimately responsible. But it seems clear they had made concessions sufficient to satisfy Cruz, who was then told by backers in Nicaragua not to sign anything.

By contrast the 1984 Salvadoran election was celebrated as an exercise in democracy in the U.S. press and by the Reagan administration despite massive death squad killings in the previous four years. The obvious parallel to Arturo Cruz would be Salvadoran Rubén Zamora and other civilian opposition figures who almost certainly would have been assassinated had they not fled El Salvador years before.

He attributes Chamorro's 1990 victory to the deep unpopularity of the Sandinistas and her own iconic figure—widow of martyred Pedro Joaquín, a mother who presided with success over a family that had members on both sides of the fight. But this analysis pays little heed to the other crucial influence in the election. The war was likely to continue if the Sandinistas won because the U.S.-backed contras remained in the field.

Though somewhat less active, the contras had asserted that if the Sandinista won, the election could not have been free and fair—despite massive, unprecedented levels of UN and OAS election observation over many months.

Kinzer's portrayal of the ever mounting toll of the war is of such power that it cannot be doubted that the threat of more war must have affected voters.

These criticisms aside, Kinzer's great store of knowledge and his affection for Nicaragua

and sympathy for its suffering people carries the book. First time visitors and re-visitors will be engaged from beginning to end.

Jack Spence is professor of political science and associate dean of

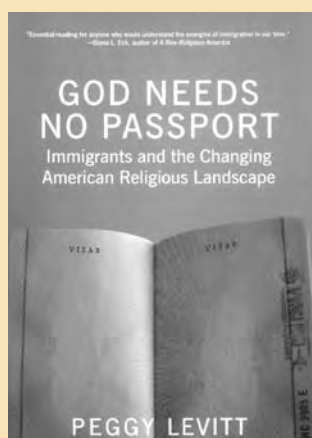
the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Massachusetts Boston. He heads Hemisphere Initiatives, a research organization that has monitored peace and democratization processes in Central America. He was an official observer of the 1989–1990 election in Nicaragua.

Reshaping the U.S. Religious Landscape

Peggy Levitt, *God Needs No Passport: Immigrants and the Changing American Religious Landscape* (The New Press, New York and London, 2007), 270 pages

A REVIEW BY VAN C. TRAN

As a practicing Buddhist, my first Mass attendance at St. Ambrose two years ago was a memorable event. I had spent the earlier part of the day visiting Buddhist temples with Diana L. Eck, Harvard professor of comparative religion and Indian studies and director of the Pluralism Project. At the end of our trip, we ventured into St. Ambrose—a stone's throw from Luc Hoa temple in the bustling Fields Corner neighborhood, home to Boston's largest concentration of Vietnamese refugees. A Catholic church that served generations of Irish Americans since its initial opening in 1914, St. Ambrose was filled with hundreds of Vietnamese Catholics on that Sunday afternoon. In his sermon, the pastor switched flawlessly between English and Vietnamese to simultaneously address the first-generation immigrants about the need to contribute to relief efforts to flood victims in Central Vietnam and their U.S.-born children about the importance of maintaining Vietnamese cultural values. It was there and then that I first glimpsed the important ways in which immigration is reshaping the



U.S. religious landscape and how religious practices are rarely confined to nation-state boundaries.

Months later, I would learn that St. Ambrose is also home to a sizable Latino congregation which holds its own Spanish-language Mass every Sunday. In a nutshell, what I experienced at St. Ambrose mirrors what is happening in communities across the country as the United States incorporates its most recent wave of immigrants, a swell that began in 1965. At the dawn of the 21st century, immigrants and their U.S.-born children comprise about a quarter of the population of the United States. And most of them are

here to stay. At the same time, increasing globalization, technological advances and ease of travel have made it easier than ever before for immigrants to lead *transnational* lives (to actively maintain social ties and participate in social lives both in their home countries and the United States). In light of these changes, scholars like Samuel Huntington have questioned contemporary immigrants' desire and willingness to assimilate into American life. Drawing upon original empirical data, *God Needs No Passport* offers fresh and important insights that would inform our national debate on immigration, on the role of religion in public life and on the changing nature of social life in a more interconnected global world.

In this ground-breaking work, Peggy Levitt provides the first comparative study of transnational lives among four immigrant groups in Boston—Brazilian, Indian, Irish and Pakistani. Levitt suggests that our conventional wisdom about the migration process as one in which immigrants uproot ties from home communities and transplant them onto new soil in the United States is no lon-

ger in keeping with the changing realities of immigrant lives. She argues that adopting a transnational lens broadens our understanding of the contemporary immigrant experience. In other words, immigrants are constantly re-negotiating their boundaries of belonging and many do keep their feet in both home and host societies. In particular, religion provides fertile grounds to investigate these transnational processes, as the scope of influence of major religious traditions regularly span across nation-state boundaries.

In addition to a prologue and a conclusion, the book consists of six chapters that build tightly on each other. Levitt provides vivid descriptions of her respondents' four home communities and explores the myriad ways in which these immigrants simultaneously live across nation-state borders. She takes us with her on adventures to remote corners of the globe from Valadares, Brazil, to Inishowen Island, Ireland in an effort to connect the human dots between these far-flung places and Boston—her main fieldwork site. From the lobbies of the Sheraton hotel in Karachi, Pakistan, where she

met the cosmopolitan Wasim to the living quarters of the faithful Mahendra in Vasna, India, Levitt delves into the lives of her respondents in a genuine effort to understand how they make sense of their transnational existence and the multifaceted ways in which faith plays a part in their daily life.

Drawing upon ten years of original research, *God Needs No Passport* is impressive in its scope and primarily relies on in-depth interviews with hundreds of respondents from three major religious traditions—Christianity, Hinduism and Islam. To fully grasp the fluidity of social lives across nation-state borders, Levitt also spent significant time conducting participant observation with these immigrant communities both in Boston and in their home countries. Through the voices of her respondents—Protestant Valadarenses, Hindu Gujaratis, Muslim Karachiites and Catholic Inishoweners, Levitt weaves together a fascinating tapestry of immigrant lives and their religious practices.

On the ground, the transnational reality that Levitt documents is multifaceted and quite fascinating. Among the first-generation Brazilians that Levitt spoke to in Framingham, most maintain active ties with families and friends in the sending community, call home and send remittances on a regular basis, keep track of major news development in and make occasional visits to Brazil. In Governador Valadares, families with relatives in the United States eagerly tune into the weekly religious program on their local television channel, which routinely features the Portuguese-language Mass from St. Joseph's Church in Somerville, in the hope of getting a glimpse of their loved ones who might be

in attendance. These are but a few examples that illustrate the myriad ways in which sending communities in Brazil are closely linked to receiving communities in Boston.

From public religious ceremonies in New York to private iftars in Boston, Levitt's conversations with immigrants suggest that many see themselves as *religious global citizens* or "members of communities of faith composed of fellow believers around the world" (p.83). Like legal citizenship, religious citizenship comes with its own set of benefits (i.e. providing extended networks of social support) and responsibilities (i.e. creating additional demands on immigrants' resources). Unlike legal citizenship, religious citizenship cannot be confined within nation-state boundaries. More importantly, these global citizens of faith are embedded within religious institutions that have become increasingly connected to each other. For example, the Vatican not only serves as the administrative capital of Catholicism but also profoundly connects the ideas, values and practices in this faith tradition from one locale to another.

In the end, the spectrum of faith that Levitt finds among her respondents is dazzling. What is more significant is the fact that most people told Levitt in no uncertain terms that their faith does matter to them. At the same time, they must grapple with either discrepancies between their personal interpretation of their faith and that of others from the same faith or contradictions between their own faith and that of other religious traditions. In drawing out these internal inconsistencies, Levitt not only highlights the changing nature of faith in contemporary immi-

grant America, but also brings attention to the fact that religious syncretism, both within and between faiths, is now the norm rather than the exception among her respondents. For them, to be an American not only implies a tolerant stance towards other pluralistic traditions but also requires active engagement with those from a different faith.

In the final chapter, Levitt explores the relationship between religion and politics. Contrary to popular perceptions, most immigrants wholeheartedly embrace American culture and civic life. Participation in their religious institutions not only provides immigrants with an anchoring point for their culture and identity but also helps them cultivate important civic skills. In other words, the same set of religious institutions play a crucial role both in the political incorporation of contemporary immigrants here in the U.S. and in the maintenance of immigrant social ties to their home countries. As Levitt's respondents quickly point out, these two processes are hardly at odds with each other and often occur simultaneously.

Ultimately, would these transnational connections facilitate or hinder incorporation into American society among subsequent immigrant generations? As the experience of European immigrants who arrived a century ago would indicate, complete assimilation into American life among these earlier groups was a multi-generational process. More importantly, transnational involvements tended to decrease with each immigrant generation. Looking forward, one key question that remains unanswered is whether or not these transnational ties will continue to persist into the second-generation—the U.S-born

children of immigrants. To her credit, Levitt also interviewed almost a hundred second-generation respondents from these four ethnic groups whose perspectives did inform her study, though she decided that the relatively small number did not warrant their inclusion in this book.

God Needs No Passport is as much about how Boston is intimately connected to Governador Valadares of Brazil and Gujarat State of India as it is about how the United States is closely connected to the rest of the world, simply by virtue of it being a nation of immigrants. Levitt targets first and foremost a general audience, though academic researchers should find the detailed footnotes and references very informative. The book is well-written and very engaging throughout, filled with stories that vividly illustrate the enduring significance of religion in contemporary life. In fact, one cannot help but admire Levitt's sensitivity as she recounts her immigrant respondents' experiences, perspectives and struggles. Furthermore, Levitt's optimism about the future of America is refreshing. While acknowledging that important differences do exist among individuals from various faiths, Levitt also points out that these individuals are also actively reaching out towards each other across these divisions. And that active sense of pluralist engagement is at the core of a new religious America—a nation that is always in the making.

Van C. Tran is a Ph.D. candidate in sociology and social policy at Harvard University. His research focuses on the socioeconomic, civic and political incorporation of the immigrant second-generation, with a special focus on Hispanics/Latinos in the United States.

Querida June

Gracias por el nuevo número de la revista titulado *Violence A Daily Threat*. Esta es de un modo literal *ReVista*. Nos hacen—tus colaboradores y tú—ejercer la *re-vista*, el mirar con detenimiento aquello que ya hemos visto en nuestros países, pero que por ser una dolorosa y amenazante realidad en muchas ocasiones nos negamos a ver, retiramos la mirada y con ella también nuestra conciencia.

Repasando la odisea del dolor que supone un viaje por la violencia vista y *re-vista* de nuestro descontento continente, los secuestros, violaciones, asesinatos, heridas y amputaciones, asaltos y a saltos nos percatamos de que el llamado progreso ha sido aparcelado dejando fuera enormes mayorías donde se fermenta la injusticia y se incuba la violencia. Toda violencia es política teniendo como origen y destino la comunidad sobre todo cuando ella no se percibe a sí misma como una entidad coherente y responsable, autora de la narrativa de su precaria existencia.

La violencia contra la mujer en el hogar y el empleo, contra homosexuales, lesbianas y transexuales, contra menores de edad se suma a la ejercida por militares y paramilitares, opresores e insurgentes y el saldo de resentimientos y venganzas, de odios y represalias que generan.

Alienta enterarse de que no todas son malas noticias, que hay esfuerzos y logros notables por transformar el rostro del maltrato dejando atrás el rastro de la miseria humana para convertirlo en camino de paz, reconciliación y justicia. Es importante hacer hincapié en que esto también es noticia para compensar el irresponsable y alarmista proceder de los medios de comunicación señalado por Benjamín Fernández.

Contestando a tu gentil invitación para diseñar la portada del número dedicado a Puerto Rico, que es donde el lector revisará estas palabras, decidí que la imagen titular fuera un perfil que conversara con la frontalidad semioculta de la lacrada mujer de la portada anterior. En cierto modo sería, si no la otra cara de la moneda, sí su perfil ensombrecido.

Para ello recurrí al envejecido emblema del jíbaro que protagonizó la Operación Manos a la Obra (Operation Bootstrap) a mediados del siglo pasado. Si bien el perfil ensombrado de paja cara al sol remitía a la ruralía y a la tradición, en el programa de gobierno ese mismo perfil le dio el frente a la industria de manufactura, servicios y turismo y la espalda a la agricultura.

Los trabajadores agrícolas ya desde principios de siglo fueron llevados por programas gubernamentales de emigración laboral a destinos tan distantes como Hawái o tan cercanos como la Florida y el avión símbolo del turismo se tradujo en guagua aérea de ida y vuelta cuyo boleto migratorio con pasaporte estadounidense pasa de generación en generación.

No sin un altísimo precio. El salto fue mortal, no sólo el trasatlántico sino el repentino y brusco cambio de estructuras sociales, económicas, culturales, religiosas y lingüísticas en una pequeña y rural isla caribeña e hispano parlante ahora cegada por las luces intermitentes de hoteles, casinos y bares, inundada por un

floreciente narcotráfico con las consiguientes luchas territoriales, el desmembramiento de hogares y vecindarios, la agonía y muerte de idearios comunitarios y la postergada soberanía para regir su propio destino subordinado por más de un siglo a la autoridad metropolitana con sede en Washington, D.C. Y con ello el Servicio Militar Obligatorio por décadas y ahora voluntario con el enorme saldo de muertes en guerras de ultramar.

La hospitalidad y bienvenida tradicional boricua se traduce en esta portada en *well come*, un pozo (*well*) donde se extrae lo que se quiere y puede y un hambre (*come*) insaciable de productos de consumo al cual se *está* habituado, adicto más bien. Si el perfil que dibujo no es halagador, es porque pretende reflejar una realidad más que inquietante, amenazante.

Mi propio hogar dentro del Recinto de Cayey de la Universidad de Puerto Rico fue incendiado la tarde del domingo del fin de semana de Acción de Gracias hace poco más de un año. El fuego fue provocado por cuatro adolescentes de quince y dieciséis años que robaron un tocadiscos y una videocasetera antes de prenderle fuego a la casa. Obras de arte y artesanías, libros, documentos y fotografías se convirtieron en cenizas demostrando que no hay sistema de seguridad, alarma ni vigilancia capaz de subsanar el deterioro de una sociedad enferma y en peligro de muerte. Sólo transformando la realidad, alimentándola con valientes e imaginativas iniciativas como algunas de las que ilustra la *Revista* anterior puede ejercerse el cambio necesario.

A partir del incendio y aprendiendo de la estética del fuego, su huella oscura y cálida utilicé carbón, humo, fuego, cenizas y agua sobre papel y madera creando una exposición titulada *Martorell D.F.*, (después del fuego) con la esperanza de apuntar a lo positivo desde la desgracia, hacer de la desgracia gracia eliminando el *des* empobrecedor y negativo. Un espectáculo concebido por la teatrera Rosa Luisa Márquez titulado *Cenizas quedan* reunió en torno a las ruinas de la casa incendiada a artistas de teatro, danza, música, artes visuales y literatura a celebrar un renacer desde las cenizas.

La reacción solidaria de nuestro pueblo no se hizo esperar. Sintieron y así lo expresaron la necesidad de superar y trascender nuestros males. Si el perfil carbonizado del jíbaro puertorriqueño que abre estas páginas mira hacia adelante, si logra hacer *re-vista* de su realidad, también puede transformarla.

Antonio Martorell
4 mayo de 2008
Puerto Rico

Antonio Martorell, the artist who drew this *ReVista*'s cover, is the Wilbur Marvin Visiting Fellow at the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies. A translation of this essay can be found at www.drclas.harvard.edu.

PUERTO RICO



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Harvard University
David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies
1730 Cambridge Street
Cambridge, MA 02138

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