Unspoken Prejudice: Racial Politics, Gendered Norms, And The Transformation Of Puerto Rican Identity In The Twentieth Century

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UNspoken prejudice: racial politics, gendered norms, and the transformation of puerto rican identity in the twentieth century

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Para Julie, Sofia e Ilia.
Thank you for all the support.
UNspoken prejudIce: racIal polItics, genIered normS, and
the transformaTIon of puerto rIcan identity in the
twentieth cenTurY

by

CRISTÓBAL A.borges, b.A., M.S., M.A.

diSserTatIon

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of the requirements
for the degree of

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Finally, I want to thank my family. It has been a very tough haul for us, but this part of our adventure together is now done. May the days that lay before us be twice as wonderful as those we leave behind.
Abstract

The dissertation uses border theory to craft a comparative study that explores the promotion of the white *jíbaro* in Puerto Rico throughout the twentieth century and the challenges to that racialized identity that emerged simultaneously. Through a biographical approach that examines the lives of José Julio Henna (1848-1924), Arturo Alfonso Schomburg (1874-1938), Muna Lee (1895-1965), Juano Hernández (1896-1970), Ruby Black (1896-1957), Luis Muñoz Marín (1898-1980), Pura Belpré (1899-1982), Inés Mendoza (1908-1990), and Roberto Clemente (1934-1972) as symbols of Puerto Ricanness and contributors to its definition, the dissertation analyzes the racial and gendered inequalities that persisted during twentieth century Puerto Rico. Those prejudices can still be encountered on the island, as well as throughout the contours of numerous Latin American regions. The project seeks to bring forth constructive comprehensions about the creation of identities with inherent prejudices and a method for uncovering how they have been challenged. It also decenters the *jíbaro* from Puerto Ricanness and challenges nationalist identities.

The dissertation before you is an unwrapping of how the *pueblo* of Puerto Rico refashioned its communal identity. The goal is to expose racist injections and patriarchal constructs into it. The argument is presented in two parallel parts. First, I look at how Puerto Rican identity has been infused throughout the twentieth century with a continual promotion of whiteness and male superiority in an attempt to construct a unified cultural nationalism that could wrestle some control away from United States colonial power structures while replicating them. Second, I examined how throughout the century *puertorriqueños* challenged that identity and developed new understandings of *puertorriqueñidad* that began a process of creolization for their identity that is still unveiling itself.
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Introduction

“Oye, no dejes que ese muchacho coja tanto sol. Se vá poner prieto.” I remember my grandmother saying these words to my mother when I was a young teenager as I walked in from a day at the beach in Fajardo, Puerto Rico. My face, shoulders and back had gathered so much sun that they radiated heat and produced a reddish glow that warned of the pain I would suffer the following day. I heard my grandmother’s words and did not think much about it at the time. Years later I grasped the very real threat a severe sunburn held in a society that suppressed a history of prejudice.

My grandmother’s concern, “Don’t let him get so much sun. He’ll get dark,” expressed a deeply hidden fear of exposing traits that would associate me with being black. Her concern about my possible negritud (blackness) stemmed from a long societal history of favoring “white” physical traits over “black” ones. This realization was perplexing for me because, having grown up in Puerto Rico, I was taught that Puerto Rico was a country without any real problem concerning racism. The common belief was that we were the product of the mixing of three races: Taino (indigenous group), Spanish and African.1 Why, then, would my sunburn be a cause for concern? I could understand skin cancer, but why blackness? These questions stayed with me and eventually led me to begin the project I present here.

The comments my grandmother made were statements that touched on the importance of a specific type of Puerto Rican identity, one that had become the prevailing view of puertorriqueñidad or Puerto Ricanness. It was built on the image of the peasant from the

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1 Race was presented mainly as a phenotype when I was growing up. Of course, its social construction was never addressed. Thoughout this project, race refers to a concept that is socially constructed, but we must not forget that to the subjects studied here that concept was more often than not understood as a natural trait that could be scientifically observed and categorized.
mountainous center of the island known as the jíbaro. The term, as Francisco A. Scarano pointed out, referred to “certain rural inhabitants of Puerto Rico...[since] the beginning half of the eighteenth century.” Iconically represented with a straw hat and ragged clothes, the jíbaro persona was founded on the image of a group of people of European heritage that settled in isolated regions of the island. By the 1850s, the jíbaro was celebrated and propagated by Puerto Rico’s criollo (creole elite) culture through literary works like Manuel Antonio Alonso’s El Gibaro: cuadro de costumbres de la isla de Puerto Rico (1849). The connection with criollos allowed that persona to be based on whiteness. Any physical trait that opposed that whiteness put in question a person’s ability to claim Puerto Ricanness.

Yet, being Puerto Rican was more than just claiming a puertorriqueñidad connected to the jíbaro. From when I was in elementary school, I was taught that Puerto Ricans were the result of the mixing of three ancestries. The first came from the indigenous people who inhabited the island when the Spanish arrived, the Tainos. The second was from Europeans who had traveled from the Iberian peninsula. Africans contributed the last heritage to the formation of Puerto Ricans as a people. This mestizaje, or mixture, was contradictory to the arguments about the purity of the jíbaro, but both were championed together in Puerto Rico for centuries. These distinct heritages were reconciled most concretely in the nineteenth century with La Gran Familia Puertorriqueña (The Great Puerto Rican Family).

The origins of La Gran Familia Puertorriqueña as a Puerto Rican racial myth extended more than two hundred years. At the same time that elites in the North American English

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colonies were contemplating independence, elites in Puerto Rico were struggling to develop a concept of their populace that would unite the colony around a specific identity. Creating such a commonality would help these elites wrestle governing power from Iberian officials favored by Spanish authorities. First introduced in the 1770s, the Gran Familia Puertorriqueña was most directly articulated in the late nineteenth century by liberal elites seeking to build a separation from Spain. Through it, liberals attempted to define Puerto Ricanness as a result and product of the island’s colonial past. La Gran Familia Puertorriqueña accepted in a limited way what at that time was seen as racial intermingling. It stressed the contributions of each of the three traditions, but always upheld the importance and centrality of the Spanish heritage.

The idea of a racial mixture became a key element in the definition of what was a Puerto Rican. As the 1800s progressed, the economic pressures in trade, tariffs and market access pushed Puerto Rican elites to pursue greater participation within the Spanish empire so they could influence decisions affecting the archipelago. This access to the government that controlled their society gave elites the ability to influence their politics and helped them create a space in which to construct an identity distinct from Spain. Representation in the Spanish government appeased these desires for a large portion of the century, but, through struggles to secure the abolition of slavery and autonomy in the second half of the 1800s, many Puerto Ricans continued to see Spanish control over Puerto Rico as oppressive. The desire to forge a

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5 Ibid. For a visual discussion of La Gran Familia Puertorriqueña, see National Museum of American History, “A Collector’s Vision of Puerto Rico, La Visión de un Colecionista,” National Museum of American History, http://americanhistory.si.edu/vidal (accessed June 6, 2013). The wide acceptance of the concept by the 1890s suggested an early date for its construction. It is also consistent with the development of nationalist ideals and desires for political sovereignty that were pursued throughout the nineteenth century.
new cultural understanding distinct from the Spanish past led many more Puerto Ricans to embrace La Gran Familia.⁶

The concept became widely popular, but it was not used to promote an identity that celebrated the three claimed contributors equally. On the contrary, La Gran Familia was interested in a narrative of intermixing as a foundation for the creation of people that continually bettered themselves through whitening.⁷ Just as other elites throughout Latin America had done in the mid-nineteenth century, criollos in Puerto Rico argued that racial mixture made Puerto Ricans unique and different from peninsulares (people from the Iberian peninsula). That miscegenation, though, had to be controlled and limited. To accomplish that, whiteness was continually privileged. The desire to promote the uniqueness of Puerto Ricans while still maintaining the superiority of European ancestry led Puerto Rican elites to champion an identity they viewed as specifically local, just as their criollo counterparts had done throughout Latin America in the nineteenth century.⁸ Following the tradition of La Gran Familia Puertorriqueña and negotiating U.S. racial norms, Puerto Rican criollos in the twentieth century adopted the jíbaro as their hero of authentic Puerto Ricanness.⁹ Criollos sought to use that identity to define puertorriqueños in tolerable ways that would allow the U.S. to expand political self-rule on the

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⁶ Suárez Findlay, 57-59.
⁷ Ibid.
⁸ For further discussion on this process, known as blanqueamiento, see Margarita Chaves and Marta Zambrano, “From blanqueamiento to reindigenización: Paradoxes of Mestizaje and Multiculturalism in Contemporary Columbia” European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies 80 (April 2006): 5-23, and José Gomariz, “Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda y la intelectualidad reformista cubana: Raza, blanqueamiento e identidad cultural en Sab” Caribbean Studies 37 (Jan-Jun 2009): 97-118.
⁹ It is important to note that the Spanish definition of whiteness was much more multiethnic than that of the United States, which derived from a tradition of defining a person with any ancestry that was not white as non-white—a notion often called the “one-drop rule.”
island. Furthermore, they also sought to promote physical and cultural forms that were more acceptable to their own prejudices.

We will see in the chapters that follow how the idea of the white jíbaro was celebrated and established as the most authentic form of Puerto Ricanness in the political project of Puerto Rico’s first elected governor, Luis Muñoz Marín (1949-1965). Furthermore, the internalized racial constructions of that identity engrained the belief that racism was a problem of other societies and not Puerto Rico. This conviction was further justified by comparing Puerto Rico to the United States mainland’s segregated communities throughout the first half of the twentieth century.10

My own opinions as a youth were informed by that contrast between Puerto Rico and the U.S. mainland. My deep-seated confidence in Puerto Rico’s racial egalitarianism when juxtaposed with the Jim Crow south made it easy for me to bypass the racist implications of my grandmother’s comments. During my doctoral studies at the University of Texas at El Paso, I was struck by the inevitable consequence of this ignorance when I studied the racial history of the U.S.-Mexico border region. Just as borderlands scholars have traced the privileging nature of claiming whiteness in places like New Mexico and California, I concluded that as a light-skinned Puerto Rican, whose family came from the mountain town of Aibonito, my identity was strongly

10 Mercedes López-Baralt, ed., Sobre islas extrañas: el clásico de Pedreira anotado por Tomás Blanco (San Juan: Editorial de La Universidad de Puerto Rico, 2001), 145. López-Baralt presented an analysis of the significance of Antonio S. Pedreira’s Insularismo: ensayos de interpretación puertorriqueña (Madrid: Tipografía Artística, 1934), as well as the entire text with the original critical annotations by writer and literary scholar Tomás Blanco (1896-1975). Blanco’s seminal work was El prejuicio racial en Puerto Rico (San Juan: Editorial Biblioteca de Autores Puertorriqueños, 1948). For further examinations of racial egalitarianism myths see José Luis González, El país de cuatro pisos y otros ensayos (San Juan: Ediciones Huracán, Inc., 2007), and Aixa Merino Falú, Raza, género y clase social: el descrimen contra las mujeres afropuertorriqueñas (San Juan: Oficina de la Procuradora de las Mujeres, 2004).
founded on what did or did not constituted Puerto Ricanness along racial constructions.\textsuperscript{11} Moreover, I never had to negotiate Afro-\textit{puertorriqueñidad}, nor did I have to contemplate the prejudices associated with that identity. My experience motivated me to write this dissertation in an effort to explore the racial and gendered inequalities that persist in Puerto Rico and throughout Latin America. The study is an attempt to address my obliviousness to these preconceptions. As a member and product of a Puerto Rican community, I carried with me an ideology that sustains paradigms of prejudice and group marginalization. The project seeks to bring forth constructive comprehensions of the creation of these discriminatory identities and a method for uncovering how they have been challenged, so we can begin to explore ways to overcome decades of racialization and gender bias.

Several questions guided my inquiries into the topic. First, how did Puerto Ricanness become defined so closely with the \textit{jíbaro}? What and who promoted it to such prominence in Puerto Rican culture? Second, how was blackness marginalized from this identity throughout the twentieth century? How was whiteness covertly injected into the \textit{jíbaro} image? Next, how did this modern Puerto Ricanness conceive of gender? How did women promote this sense of \textit{puertorriqueñidad}? Finally, what alternate \textit{puertorriqueñidades} exist to the white \textit{jíbaro}, and who has represented them?

These questions have pushed my investigation and provided the basic framework for the chapters that constitute this dissertation, but one larger question was at the center of this work.

Why, after so many years of professing an egalitarian racial society and gender-consciousness, have racism and sexism persisted among Puerto Ricans? I read the sources I encountered at the Archivo General de Puerto Rico, the Fundación Luis Muñoz Marín, the Centro de Investigaciones Históricas, the Archivo Histórico Municipal del Municipio Autónomo de Ponce, the Huntington Library, and numerous other libraries and online sources with this question continually in mind. Furthermore, if Puerto Ricans internalized these prejudices, could their construction be unraveled and overcome? Could a hypothesis then be presented for a way to circumvent and transcend them?

Before delving into these inquiries, it is necessary to make clear some of the terminology used here. First, “jíbaro” refers to the most common use of the word in Puerto Rico and can be translated to English as a “male peasant,” though the term, especially in its plural form “jíbaros,” can signify males and females. More often than not, when a female is the focus, the term jíbara is used. In some circumstances and locations “jíbaro” has denoted negative connotations like barbaric or uneducated.12 That is not its use throughout this dissertation. Second, “Puerto Rican identity,” “Puerto Ricanness,” and “puertorriqueñidad” are interchangeable terms here. They all pertain to the intrinsic nature of being Puerto Rican, and are by nature abstract ideas to which different characteristics could be attached. Finally, it is vital to clarify my understanding of Puerto Rico and its people. Often this discussion is framed in terms of political definitions and status. Should Puerto Rico be thought of as a colony or a nation? Maybe it is a commonwealth? Perhaps a territory? For Puerto Ricans, the answer to these questions, in most instances, depends on what political affiliation the person has. Instead of engaging with this conflictive paradigm, I conceive of Puerto Rico and its people through the Spanish word “pueblo.”

12 Scarano.
From the Latin *populus*, meaning “people” or “nation,” the Real Academia Española defines “pueblo” as:

1. **Cuidad o villa** (City or villa).
2. **Población de menor categoría** (Population of lower category).
3. **Conjunto de personas de un lugar, región o país** (Group of people from a place, region or country).
4. **Gente común y humilde de una población** (Common and humble people from a specific population).
5. **País con gobierno independiente** (Country with an independent government).

It is with the third meaning that I construct my understanding of Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans. Throughout this dissertation, I use “pueblo” to convey the sense that Puerto Ricans are a people brought together by an ancestry and a common space, an island that they may or may not have lived in. Thinking of Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans as a *pueblo* also puts forth the notion that there is a unique and specific group and area I am referring to regardless of political status or definition. Ideally, I attempt to transcend politics and status for the reader so the study can allow each person who engages with it to see the value of relinquishing the use of words like “nation,” “colony,” or “commonwealth” in developing social relationships that are more inclusive and less prejudicial.

The goal for this project is to expose certain racist injections and patriarchal constructs within the *pueblo* of Puerto Rico. The argument is twofold. First, Puerto Rican identity has been infused throughout the twentieth century with a continual promotion of whiteness and male superiority in an attempt to construct a unified cultural nationalism that could wrestle some control away from United States colonial power structures. Second, throughout the century *puertorriqueños* challenged that identity and developed a new understanding of *puertorriqueñidad* that began a process of creolization. The study examines Puerto Rican

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13 Real Academia Española, *Diccionario escolar de la Real Academia Española* (Madrid: Espasa Libros, 1997), 905.
identity as it was defined and practiced by people who can be viewed as elites and/or famous figures. My approach departs from that of many scholars who look at Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans from a more bottom-up approach, as we shall see below, but it is necessary.

Puerto Rican elites, like many throughout Latin America, negotiated identity as a way of positioning themselves and their people as different from colonial and/or imperial powers. For Puerto Ricans, this process came from within the island and from its diaspora. Few, if any, studies have traced the development of Puerto Ricanness throughout the twentieth-century among elites and famous figures with the intent to expose the racism and patriarchy these people enfolded into the identity while also uncovering how others countered those practices through their public lives. Doing this allows us to more fully comprehend some of the major influences that articulated puertorriqueñidad for Puerto Ricans. The approach also allows us to uncover key historical markers within the public lives of puertorriqueños/as. The chapters to follow accomplish this by examining four themes covering Puerto Rican history between 1890 and 1972.

Chapter One delves into political manipulations of Puerto Rican identity during a campaign for the 1940 Puerto Rican elections. It discusses how Luis Muñoz Marín (1898-1980) and the Partido Popular Democrático (Populares or PPD) utilized the jíbaro to build a populist movement that led them to control the island’s politics from 1941 to 1965. Chapter Two takes a step back in the historical timeline to decenter Muñoz Marín and the PPD from the discussion of puertorriqueñidad. It analyzes a key root from which the Populares grew their ideology. I trace that lineage to the New York-based exile independence movement of the 1890s and the influential contributions of Arturo Alfonso Schomburg (1874-1938) and José Julio Henna (1848-1924). Chapter Three pushes the discussion forward chronologically to the 1920s and 1930s. The
focus here is to retrieve the often-ignored contributions and importance certain women had leading up to the 1940 victory by the Populares. I move the perspective of that history from the figure of Muñoz Marín to that of his first wife Muna Lee (1895-1965), their Washington liaison Ruby Black (1896-1957), and the future First Lady of Puerto Rico, Inés Mendoza (1908-1990). These women provided models of femininity from which female gender norms within Puerto Ricaness were crafted. The final chapter looks to three influential Puerto Ricans of the twentieth century to demonstrate how blackness, though marginalized, continually offered a challenge to the image of whiteness promoted through the jíbaro. I turn to actor Juano Hernández (1896-1970), writer and storyteller Pura Belpré (1899-1982), and baseball player Roberto Clemente (1934-1972) to offer a counterpoint to mainstream Puerto Rican identity and a new path for conceptualizing puertorriqueñidad.

The thematic organization—politics, national struggle, gender norms, and culture—does not attempt to offer a complete analysis of the entire historical period between 1890 and 1972. Instead, it takes each theme as a focal point from which to begin a dialogue with established scholarly and popular understandings of Puerto Rican identity. Each chapter is in conversation with the cultural hegemony of the Puerto Ricaness that existed during the period it covers. They are purposefully non-chronological in an effort to expose common ties between ideologies, traditions, and identifications. Extracting the discussion from the historical timeline allows us to juxtapose related ideas and actions in ways that clarify connections often muted by the events that occur between one time period and another.

The absence of a chronological driving force placed a large level of responsibility on the theoretical structure I used to guide my inquiries into the historical material. That framework was a direct result of my desire to step back and engage a new perspective from which to view a
subject matter in which I had so much personally invested. Furthermore, it was informed by the doctoral program at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) and its focus on borderlands studies. At UTEP, I learned the benefit of looking at history from the borders—whether physical or theoretical. This borderlands approach to history allowed me to take the concepts and understandings I had built over a lifetime of defining myself as a Puerto Rican, a *boricua*, and even a *jíbaro*, and place them as borders from which my study could grow.

Borderlands study has traditionally been defined within the physical world. That meaning was one that could not be denied or avoided. The terminology itself puts forth images of scholars studying empires or nation states divided by fences, rivers, geographic terrain, or lines on maps. These are practical ways of thinking about borderlands, but they limit the utility of the field. Borderlands study as a methodology uses the physical as a focus, but also as a metaphor. The stark realities that a border-centered study can show when looking at the material representations of boundaries can also be seen in the borders people construct during their daily lives. Just as the borderlands between the United States and México can be a fertile ground for the study of both countries and their people, so can the borders built between differing groups in a society or community be a rich source for historical analysis. We can think here of examples as stark as the U.S. Jim Crow South or as subtle as the differences between the quotidian experiences of immigrant women and those of men in New York during the 1890s. What different views can we encounter about those stories if we place our study at the boundaries created by the historical participants during their daily interactions and develop our inquiry from there?

Numerous scholars have theorized on this very question in attempts to develop new ways of understanding the past. Though this study was the beneficiary of many of these examinations, several theorists influenced my approach most directly. The first was the work of Latin
Americanist Walter Mignolo on border thinking. In *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (2000), Mignolo defined border thinking as “thinking from dichotomous concepts rather than ordering the world in dichotomies.”¹⁴ He positioned the idea within the postcolonial analysis put forth by scholars like Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Édouard Glissant, Aníbal Quijano, and Gloria Anzaldúa. Building from a view of the world as dominated by a modern/colonial world system where the promotion of modernity within a society invariably led to the enforcement of “coloniality of power,” Mignolo argued that border thinking was possible only from the perspective of the “colonial difference.” To unpack the implication of this idea for my study, it became important in my reading of Mignolo to clarify “coloniality of power” and the “colonial difference.”

Mignolo borrowed the idea of the coloniality of power from the Latin American scholar Aníbal Quijano. Quijano, a sociologist from Peru, was most interested in understanding the origins of the power structures that supported the modern capitalist world system grounded in Eurocentrism.¹⁵ To explore the topic, Quijano focused on how racial categorization was used to develop an economic system that controlled labor. The idea of the coloniality of power was Quijano’s attempt at describing the structures of discrimination that developed during European colonialism and were extended into the social organization of postcolonial territories. Coloniality of power was constituted through four basic elements: the classification of populations (by race, gender, culture, etc.), the establishment of institutions to reinforce and manage those classifications (state, church, universities, etc.), a definition of spaces in which to perform these first two elements (science or religion for example), and an epistemology, or theory of

knowledge, from which to formulate the parameters of this power (i.e. capitalism, modernity, and Eurocentrism). The articulation of these made it possible for the power exercised during colonialism to persist long after the colonizer had exited (whether fully or partially).

For Quijano, the consequence of the coloniality of power was directly evident in the prejudice and discrimination manifested in a society. To properly speak on the totality of consequences inherent in the modern/colonial system, spaces must be found beyond the boundaries of coloniality and modernity from which to mount a critique. If the modern/colonial system was global and worldwide, how can we conduct such an effort? For Mignolo, the answer was in the “colonial difference.”

The colonial difference is where the coloniality of power is contested. Mignolo described it as “the space where local histories inventing and implementing global designs meet local histories, the space in which global designs have to be adapted, adopted, rejected, integrated, or ignored.”\textsuperscript{16} The colonial difference in this view is a borderlands for negotiating colonialism. It is where different representations of coloniality interact and negotiate with each other. In the context of this dissertation, the colonial difference is made up of the divergent imperial ideologies imposed upon the pueblo of Puerto Rico by the Spanish and the United States governments. They interacted directly during the Cuban-Spanish-American War of 1898, but the conflict between those varying set of values and ideas continued to be felt in Puerto Rican life throughout the twentieth century.

Mignolo took the concept of the colonial difference a further step. He affirmed that it is “the physical as well as imaginary location where the coloniality of power is at work in the confrontation of two kinds of local histories displayed in different spaces and times across the

\textsuperscript{16} Mignolo, ix. Emphasis in original.
planet.” His example of this is the clash between Christian and Native American cosmologies during the fifteenth, sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. The abstract and physical spaces where the local histories of these two different worldviews interacted would be the colonial difference. I explore the colonial difference that exists between the imperial ideologies of Spain and the United States.

Mignolo stated that it was in the colonial difference, with its production of dichotomies, where border thinking was occurring. Placing oneself within the colonial difference allowed for the constructing of ideas that broke with the dualities of contesting worldviews. Border thinking then refers to “thinking from dichotomous concepts rather than ordering the world in dichotomies.” In other words, border thinking necessitates persons to place themselves between the perspectives being studied, and avoid analyzing the world in categories that oppose each other or are in conflict with each other. Instead, a scholar should examine how those oppositions and conflicting entities interact and develop an understanding of the world in relation to each other and as a whole. It is this definition of border thinking that I implement in this dissertation. Every chapter presented here attempts to place the analysis in a space where key ideas or abstractions are seen to clash. I then examine them from a position outside their boundaries. I outline the boundaries from which I construct my border thinking below, but first it is imperative to discuss what I am hoping to accomplish through border thinking.

Border thinking initially allowed me to develop examinations that exposed new ways of understanding Puerto Rican identity. As a result, I quickly noticed that I also had to explore the implications of this analysis and possibly provide a way to negotiate the complications I was uncovering. It was not enough to problematize my own Puerto Rican identity; I had to find a way

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17 Ibid.
18 Ibid, 85.
through the jungle I was creating. In that spirit, I was drawn to the work of three scholars: Chicana feminists Emma Pérez and Gloria Anzaldúa, and Caribbean philosopher Édouard Glissant.

Emma Pérez’s *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History* (1999) introduced me to the idea of studying a topic from a third space. Though her focus was specifically to bring to light the histories of Chicanas in the decolonization of history, her articulation of the place where those stories could be found never left me. Building her theoretical structure from the work of Michel Foucault in *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (1970) and Homi K. Bhabha’s *The Locality of Culture* (1994), Perez explained that historians must look to the gaps created by chronological narratives to rediscover the histories of oppressed women and men. Terming these gaps the interstitial spaces, it was there that “the unspoken and unseen” could unfold. The idea of interstitial spaces, or the spaces in between intrigued me. As I sought to locate my studies of Puerto Rican identity in areas unexplored, interstitial spaces provided a useful way of conceiving my work. The concept allowed me to continually focus on searching for the unspoken ties that bind events and people from different times and locations to each other. Additionally, her assertion that the “historian’s political project...is to write a history that decolonizes otherness” spoke to my desire to explore the exclusion of ‘otherness’ from *puertorriqueñidad*.20

As Pérez provided me with a constant reminder of where my work needed to look, the process of examining Puerto Ricanness from the interstitial spaces made it difficult for me to reconcile who I considered myself to be with the stories my research was uncovering. The sense

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20 Ibid, 6.
of loss and uncertainty the process created stayed with me. I developed an uneasy feeling towards the work I was performing. Problematizing Puerto Rican identity has many ramifications for anyone who considers her/himself puertorriqueño. I continually felt that not addressing that consequence left my study unfinished. It was not until I encountered the ideas of Édouard Glissant on “creolization” and Gloria Anzaldúa’s “the new mestiza” that I could complete this work.

Glissant, a native of Martinique, developed his idea of creolization from a Caribbean perspective by focusing on the creation of the Creole language from French and African influences. Diverging from the concepts of métissage (intermarrying, miscegenation), hybridity, or crossbreeding, Glissant argued that creolization was not simply about bringing together differences into a mix.21 Instead, he stated that with the “experience of diversity, and the long-unnoticed process it spawned, [the] label ‘creolization’...adds something new to the components that participate in it.”22 Creolization produced a unique outcome rather than a synthesis. As Glissant explained, creolization made “something else, another way.”23 It was this new path that appealed to me.

Glissant discussed creolization beyond language by exploring its manifestations in identity, history, culture, and social narratives. Central here was the unpredictability of the result. Creolization was by nature ambiguous and discontinuous. It developed in the traces of history and its memory. In other words, creolization was not a strict result of mixing certain elements to produce a prescribed result. It could draw from numerous sources, and even develop from the

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23 Ibid, 83.
historical remnants of past experiences. The unknown product of creolization allowed me to explore how new identities may have developed in twentieth-century Puerto Rico. Moreover, Glissant affirmed that it was at work in all the Americas “where the old and rigid sense of identity is confronting the new and open way of creolization.”

What Glissant, Pérez, and Mignolo all alluded to in their work was the need to think beyond the dualism of simply opposing a colonial power. It was a point made clear to me by Gloria Anzaldúa in her seminal study on Chicana identity, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987). Writing on this dichotomy, Anzaldúa argued that it is not enough to stand on the opposite bank of the river, shouting questions, challenging patriarchal, white conventions. A counterstance locks one into a duel of oppressor and oppressed; locked in mortal combat...At some point, on our way to a new consciousness, we will have to leave the opposite bank, the split between the two mortal combatants somehow healed so that we are on both shores at once.

The new consciousness was based on an acceptance of ambiguity, contradictions, and multiplicity. It was an identity she called the “new mestiza.” This creation of a new way of understanding one’s existence was how Anzaldúa constructed a history that went beyond colonialism.

Anzaldúa was interested in developing a narrative that anchored itself in imaginary understandings. She was interested in conceptions that affected the way people think of themselves and the way they construct who they are. For Anzaldúa, contradictions were not negatives; they were essential to understanding all that made up who the new mestiza was. Anzaldúa’s identity “copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for

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24 Ibid, 88-89.
ambiguity.” Bringing together approaches by structuralists like Roland Barthes and cultural materialists like Raymond Williams, as well as Foucault’s critiques on how knowledge is generated, Anzaldúa used poetry, literary works, sayings, and language to develop a history that was more than an oppositional critique. It was a new way of being that accepted all sides, but was not defined by any of them. I seek in this study to contribute to this discussion within a Puerto Rican perspective.

The work of Mignolo, Pérez, Glissant, and Anzaldúa provided a theoretical structure that allowed me to place this study within different spaces of Puerto Rican identity, but where does this dissertation land in relation to other Puerto Rican studies? For sure, I built this work on the foundation set by numerous Puerto Rican scholars. Though representing a wide range of fields and approaches, people like Latino Studies culturalist Juan Flores, anthropologist Arlene Dávila, comparative literature scholar Frances Negrón-Muntaner, Ethnic Studies specialist Ramón Grosfoguel, and sociologist Agustín Lao have presented critical and detailed examinations on Puerto Ricanness. More importantly, they laid a multi-disciplinary foundation for my work that complicated the Puerto Rican experience on the island and outside of it while also extracting the field from the dichotomous analysis of nationalism as a counterforce to colonialism.

In the early 1990s, scholars working on Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans started to overcome the frequently employed arguments over politics and nationalism that framed the field through the status question and in opposition to colonialism. At that moment, these academics began to explore what constituted being Puerto Rican. One of the earliest examples was Juan Flores’s *Divided Borders: Essays on Puerto Rican Identity* (1993). *Divided Borders* was a series of essays that focused on popular manifestations of Puerto Rican culture. By analyzing Puerto

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26 Ibid, 79.
Rican music, literature, language and migration, the author constructed an analysis of Puerto Rican identity that challenged traditional views of colonial power on the island and insular political structures. Flores placed culture in the forefront of Puerto Rican studies and viewed it as active within Puerto Rico and the United States simultaneously. As Jean Franco stated in the introduction of *Divided Borders*, the book “extends the whole concept of Puerto Rican culture beyond the island to the working class communities in New York and the East Coast and their dynamic interaction with black Americans and with workers’ movements.”

Flores presented a multifaceted exploration that moved the reader through the diverse terrain of Puerto Rican culture and through a wide span of the author’s scholarly life—the essays were written from 1979 to 1991. The use of cultural artifacts (literature, music, language) as research tools allowed Flores to deconstruct the way Puerto Ricanness had been defined through Eurocentric and colonial structures of race, assimilation, language and culture. *Divided Borders* developed an analysis that outlined the implications of colonialism within a cultural and identity-building framework. This expansion of Puerto Rican studies was most influential because it marked the decoupling of Puerto Rican culture from the restrictions of space. Flores looked at identity on the island and in the United States mainland diaspora through the study of literary works, *plenas* (traditional Puerto Rican music), and the use of language. He explored this multilocal culture not just as a space for migrant expressions of identity, but also as a space for the creation of Puerto Ricanness. By looking at culture in this manner, Flores introduced a method for studying Puerto Ricans that more closely resembled their experiences moving between the island and the U.S. mainland.

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While Flores laid the groundwork for a translocal (multiple localities) analysis of Puerto Rican identity, other scholars sought to understand how institutions constructed through imperial relationships have influenced Puerto Rican identity. In *Sponsored Identities: Cultural Politics in Puerto Rico* (1997), Arlene M. Dávila examined how Puerto Rican cultural identity was promoted and represented on the island through political institutions. She concentrated specifically on the governmental agency named the Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña (Institute of Puerto Rican Culture, ICP), and grassroots festival organizations on the island. Heavily interested in the representation and popularity of Puerto Rican cultural identity among *boricuas*, Dávila challenged the “dominant conception that there is an identifiable, single ‘Puerto Rican culture’ and that there was consensus on its meaning.” By attacking the idea of an “authentic” Puerto Rican culture, the author also questioned the use of this idealist construction as a way of protecting against the negative effects of modernity. This, she argued, propagated the idea that the Puerto Rican experience was one of a dichotomy between the “utopian past and folklore [and] the impure and immoral influences of modernity.” The rejection of these premises led Dávila to examine how the ICP had acted as a guardian of the “authentic” Puerto Rican identity through its support and promotion of artists and events it considered Puerto Rican, and the consequences that had.

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28 By translocal, I mean a focus on multiple localities that are not necessarily defined by the nation/state. They can constitute multiple cultural, identities, and/or spacial identifications with varied borders and boundaries. Often the term implies the simultaneous development of an identity in numerous places. For a further discussion on the translocal concept, see Volker Gottowik, “Transnational, Translocal, Transcultural: Some Remarkson the Reltion between Hindu-Balinese and Ethnic Chinese in Bali,” *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 25 (October 2010): 178-212.

29 Governor Luis Muñoz Marín’s administration founded the ICP in 1955 as a government agency tasked with promoting the arts of Puerto Rico.


31 Ibid, 5
Sponsored Identities traced the policies of the ICP and argued that the agency “help[ed] reproduce the colonial foundations of Puerto Rican society.” As the preeminent cultural organization on the island due to its governmental funding, administrators of the ICP defined what art forms, music, and artists constituted Puerto Rican culture and instilled a colonial hierarchy of power within the expression of that culture. Dávila also explored the hybridization within Puerto Rico that evolved out of the migration to and from the U.S. She looked at how the ICP’s affiliated centers acted “as an example of the repercussions of national cultural policy at the local level” and how nonaffiliated groups worked “as vehicles for the articulation of alternative views of Puerto Ricanness.” This approach permitted Dávila to examine various artistic practices and manifestations of Puerto Rican culture, allowing her to better ascertain how the IPC favored some artists over others.

I place my work within the study of identity that Flores and Dávila have performed, but I focus on figures that promoted the jíbaro identity politically, and others that developed alternatives to it. I borrow from Flores and Dávila the use of culture and its manipulation to uncover what constituted puertorriqueñidad, but as it was fashioned by certain members of the elite class for mainstream understandings of Puerto Rican identity. I do not take this approach to somehow circumvent views of history from the bottom up. I look at elites and famous figures because they strongly influenced the way ordinary Puerto Ricans viewed themselves, formulated their identity in relationship to others, and negotiated their quotidian interactions. The actions, words, and lives of Puerto Ricans in the public eye were often the topics of conversation and discussion among puertorriqueños on a daily basis. As a result, the examination of how Puerto Rican elites and public personalities conceived of and represented Puerto Ricanness is also an

32 Ibid, 22.
33 Ibid, 22-23.
analysis of common reference points by which Puerto Ricans articulated their own *puertorriqueñidad*. It is a study that helps frame bottom-up studies with greater nuance, and advances fuller understandings of the development of *puertorriqueñidad* in the twentieth-century.

Any study of Puerto Rican identity would be woefully inadequate if it did not take into account the experience of migration during the twentieth century and the contributions of the *boricua* diaspora. As will become evident soon, this project focused heavily on the experiences of people that divided their lives between the island and the United States mainland. Whether they were people like Luis Muñoz Marín, Muna Lee, Juano Hernández, or Roberto Clemente, who continually moved back and forth between the U.S. mainland and Puerto Rico, or members of the diaspora like Arturo Schomburg or Pura Belpré, migration and translocalism influenced greatly the formation and promotion of Puerto Rican identity. The study of Puerto Ricans and migration has marked Puerto Rican studies heavily. A pivotal example of this approach was presented in the edited volume *Puerto Rican Jam: Rethinking Colonialism and Nationalism, Essays on Culture and Politics*, edited by Frances Negrón-Muntaner and Ramón Grosfoguel (1997).

Negrón-Muntaner and Grosfoguel’s collection challenged traditional notions of nationalism, Puerto Rican identity and spaces of culture construction. One essay that looked closely at the importance of migrations was Agustín Lao’s analysis of culture as existing and fluidly moving through multiple spaces. In “Islands at the Crossroads: Puerto Ricanness Traveling between the Translocal Nation and the Global City,” Lao stated that Puerto Ricans had developed “the translocal nation” through their movements between the island and mainland U.S.:
To imagine the Puerto Rican national community as a translocal social space (a transnation) is not only to acknowledge how the mutual referentiality between territory and diaspora has always constituted the national, or to recognize the quotidian human flow between colony and metropolis, but more fundamentally it is to refer to the tailoring of a formation of peoplehood that, though hyperfragmented and dispersed, is netted by the web of coloniality (subordinate citizenship, racialization) and intertwined by multiple networks (political organizations, professional associations, town clubs) and flows (phone, faxes, salsanet) to constitute a deterritorialized-reterritorialized “imagined community” and a “social space.”

This existence in numerous territories that Lao described is a key foundational point for this dissertation. I accept the translocalism inherent in the Puerto Rican experience. Moreover, like Lao, I acknowledge that the movement between the island and the United States allowed Puerto Ricans to construct and establish their pueblo in both spaces. The multi-local construction meant that coloniality extended beyond the limits of territorial borders and boundaries—Puerto Rican coloniality was present on the island as well as throughout the U.S.

It is within the space created by the “translocal nation” that Lao detailed, the government-sponsored identity that Dávila examined, and the importance of the diaspora that Flores presented that I place this study. To be able to develop border thinking about Puerto Rican identity, it is essential to accept the integral nature of migration to Puerto Ricanness and the influence government structures on the island had on the development and promotion of puertorriqueñidad within and beyond its borders. With these ideas in mind, I initiated my work by looking at the event most responsible in the creation of the political establishment that founded the ICP: the 1940 Puerto Rican elections.

In Chapter One, I begin my discussion of identity by exploring how the 1940 campaign of the Partido Popular Democrático (PPD) made use of a specific form of Puerto Ricanness to

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build a populist movement that handed them victory and control of the island’s politics for over twenty-five years. I pay close attention to the founder of the PPD (and the first elected governor of Puerto Rico), Luis Muñoz Marín, and his promotion of the mountain peasant, the *jíbaro*, as the model for modern *puertorriqueñidad*. The border thinking I engage in here is grounded in the boundary created by Muñoz Marín between his written accounts of Puerto Rico in the 1920s and the campaign he started in 1938. The years between his articles and the founding of the PPD constitute the interstitial space in which I anchor the analysis. It was in the hidden ties between those two periods that aspects of the Spanish/U.S. colonial difference were negotiated by Muñoz Marín and the PPD.

Throughout the 1920s, as a member of the New York City literary world, Muñoz Marín published numerous articles for U.S. audiences where he presented deeply racial understandings of Puerto Ricans through physical descriptions and character profiles. I place my study in the space created by the physical and temporal distance between Muñoz Marín the author and Muñoz Marín the politician, allowing me to filter the 1940 campaign rhetoric he and the PPD created through the ideas he articulated over a decade earlier. Through these efforts, I examine how race and gender played a central part in the party’s appeal to the public through an examination of the PPD’s political discourse and its use of the iconography of the *jíbaro*. Furthermore, I argue that the result of the efforts of the PPD and Luis Muñoz Marín was the authentication of a Puerto Ricanness that promoted an unspoken whiteness.

The analysis of the 1940 election gives rise to a question regarding the origins of the whiteness promoted by Muñoz Marín and the PPD. When did the idea of Puerto Ricanness became closely connected to whiteness? Chapter Two provides an answer to this inquiry by looking at one root of that whiteness and an example of how blackness was excluded from
puertorriqueñidad in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century. Muñoz Marín offered the first clue directly on this matter. In his memoirs, *Memorias: 1898-1940* (2003), Muñoz Marín made a passing reference to Dr. José J. Henna, a Puerto Rican doctor who lived in New York from the 1870s to the 1920s. The quick statement about his meeting with Henna before returning to Puerto Rico in 1920 caught my attention because he described Henna as a “patriota puertorriqueño” who had been a member of the independence movement that opposed Spanish rule in the 1890s. Muñoz Marín presented Henna as an integral member of the New York-based Puerto Rican community and a friend of his family. He also explained that Henna supported autonomy from Spain, but by the 1920s favored annexation with the United States.

The importance of Henna to Muñoz Marín’s worldview became apparent to me while researching materials at the Fundación Luis Muñoz Marín (FLMM). Any person interested in the former governor of Puerto Rico will find rather quickly that he owned and frequently referenced materials Henna published during the campaign to convince the McKinley administration in Washington D.C. to enter the Cuban-Spanish War. I realized that to understand how the PPD promoted Puerto Rican identity in 1940 I had to go back to the Puerto Rican diaspora community of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Along with José J. Henna, Afro-Puerto Rican Arturo A. Schomburg was another key figure of that period and location. Interestingly, the influential bibliophile of African cultural artifacts and author of articles addressing race was nowhere to be found in the materials available at the FLMM. Schomburg was never even mentioned by Muñoz Marín in any of his numerous writings or speeches. The lack of connection with Muñoz Marín, and with Henna, made clear to me that I had to bridge the boundary between the contributions of Henna to Puerto Rican identity and those of Schomburg to the study of

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people of African ancestry in the Americas and their identity. Somewhere between Schomburg and Henna I hoped to find the promotion of whiteness in Puerto Ricanness and the inevitable exclusion of blackness.

Chapter Three moves forward in time to the 1920s and 30s. Here I placed the analysis in the interstitial space created between Muna Lee and Inés Mendoza, Luis Muñoz Marín’s first and second spouses. As I delved deeper into the archival materials at the FLMM, I discovered that both of these women played crucial roles in the development of modern puertorriqueñidad, especially in how it was conceived for women. Through back room political orchestration, literary contributions, direct campaign involvement, and their public personas, Lee and Mendoza worked alongside Muñoz Marín to promote his governmental and social projects. Muna Lee facilitated Muñoz Marín’s literary career in the 1920s and participated in the New Deal projects that spurred Puerto Rico economically during the depression years. Inés Mendoza worked tirelessly to achieve the PPD’s social betterment goals, and later became the public representation of female Puerto Ricanness as the Primera Dama (First Lady) of Puerto Rico in 1949. Both women were important in the development of Muñoz Marín’s career, but their individual contributions independent from him must not be ignored. By engaging in border thinking grounded in the abstract space created by the years between the marriages of these women to Muñoz Marín, we can bounce back and forth between these relationships to uncover how they represented femininity to the pueblo of Puerto Rico through their public lives. Lee, among other things, personified the goals of La Gran Familia Puertorriqueña by being the partner Muñoz Marín needed to continue the whitening of his family. Mendoza, however, embodied what a proper wife/mother should be in the modern Puerto Rican society promoted by the Populares that avoided racial references.
In these three initial chapters I discuss some of the people and events that influenced the formation of the Puerto Rican identity that was promoted by the Puerto Rican government from the 1930s to the late 1960s. I argue that this identity was deeply grounded in whiteness and specific gender norms, but was there any alternative sense of *puertorriqueñidad*? The final chapter of this dissertation addresses this question by focusing on three Afro-Puerto Ricans whose lives spanned from the 1890s to the 1980s. It attempts to engage in border thinking by highlighting the space between mainstream Puerto Ricanness and the *puertorriqueñidad* that accepted and celebrated African ancestry. The chapter begins by looking at actor and first black Golden Globe nominee Juano Hernández. I pay close attention to how his career was virtually forgotten in Puerto Rico due to his acceptance of blackness and his portrayals of African Americans on stage and in films. Next, I examine the contributions of librarian, storyteller and children’s book author Pura Belpré. I specifically explore how her importance in the New York diaspora community never translated into a celebration of her work in Puerto Rico. Finally, I end the chapter by analyzing the career and humanitarian efforts of baseball player Roberto Clemente. I argue that Clemente pushed *puertorriqueñidad* beyond the racial constructions promoted in the early twentieth century, and that his life presented a path for Puerto Ricans to develop a new consciousness reminiscent of Glissant’s creolization and Anzaldúa’s new mestiza in a public platform.

All three individuals offered counter-representations of Puerto Ricanness that presented Afro-Puerto Ricanness within the island, as well as outside of it. Moreover, Hernández and Belpré laid a foundation from which Clemente was able to work to overcome the commonly held understandings of *puertorriqueñidad*. What made Clemente different was timing and profession. While Hernández and Belpré are not always remembered in Puerto Rico, Clemente’s
achievements in a widely followed sport, and his regular coverage in print, radio and television, allowed him to transcend the borders of modern Puerto Rican identity. In Clemente I see the formulation of a new *puertorriqueñidad* that built on the contributions of people like Hernández, Belpré, and Schomburg.

The four chapters work together to present a nonlinear examination of Puerto Ricanness. They follow my process of discovery and investigation to explore how modern Puerto Rican identity developed between 1890 and 1965. The chapters also attempt to trace the development of a new consciousness within *puertorriqueñidad* for the *pueblo* of Puerto Rico that has not yet fully been defined or articulated. In the end, they represent my desire to understand my grandmother’s concern about the color of my skin and ensure that I can transcend it.
Chapter One: Border Thinking, Puertorriqueñidad, and the Populares in the Election of 1940

November 5, 1940 was one of the most important dates in Puerto Rican history. Before this day, popular belief on the island was that its political system was going to continue to be ruled by a group of parties that gridlocked the legislative process through coalition governments favoring monied interests. After November 5th, Puerto Ricans put in power a party and a man that ruled over the island for twenty-four years. It was the beginning of a period that transformed Puerto Rico from an impoverished agricultural colony to a pseudo-autonomous territory that was rapidly industrializing and urbanizing. It was also the era that saw whiteness normalized within puertorriqueñidad.

After the voters cast their ballots on that day, most of the island found itself stuck in a stalemate between the Coalición (Coalition) government of the past and a new party fancying itself the people’s party: the Partido Popular Democrático (Popular Democratic Party).¹ Known as the PPD or the Populares, the party was founded two years earlier by the prominent son of Luis Muñoz Rivera, one of Puerto Rico’s most respected leaders and politicians of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Regarded as an idealistic politician who earlier made a life as a writer and poet, Luis Muñoz Marín broke away from the traditional parties on the island in 1938 and founded the Populares as a party that could unite the ordinary men of Puerto Rico. Once the results of the 1940 election were clear, Muñoz Marín saw that his party held eighteen seats of thirty-nine in the House of Representatives. Out of the seven senate districts on the

¹ The Coalición was a political alliance between the pro-annexation Republican Union Party and the Socialist Party. Their partnership controlled Puerto Rican legislative politics from 1932 to 1940.
island, the PPD controlled four. The Populares lost the main district of San Juan and the Resident Commissioner seat in Washington, but they won the most influential political body on the island: the Senate. There the victory was by one seat.²

The narrow victory was built on a campaign that drew on over three decades of discourse about Puerto Ricanness. After the failed revolt of September 23, 1868, known as the Grito de Lares, and the successful abolition of slavery through political means on March 22, 1873, Puerto Rican liberal leaders saw very little evidence for violent insurrection as a method for achieving change on the island.³ As a result, the 1870s saw the development of the first political party in Puerto Rico, the Partido Liberal Reformista (Liberal Reformist Party), consisting of factions seeking assimilation with Spain and those aspiring for autonomy. Conservatives who desired to protect the island’s status quo economically and socially soon followed with their own party,

² Arturo Morales Carrión, Puerto Rico: A Political and Cultural History (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1983), 246-247. The election results for 1940 are interesting because the Populares did not gather the most votes. The actual win in number of votes went to the Coalición. They won the three most populous districts on the island. The number of votes, though, did not dictate the number of senators. That was determined by the amount of districts a party won. Since the Populares won four districts, they gathered more seats in that chamber. In the House of Representatives, the Coalición and the Populares tied at eighteen seats. The remaining three went to the Unificación Puertorriqueña Tripartita (a union between three parties: (1) the Partido Liberal, (2) a new party developed from a division within the Republican party, and (3) an off-shot party founded from differences within the Socialist party). The three seats held by the Tripartitas eventually joined forces with the Populares, allowing Muñoz Marín and the PPD to dominate the legislative branch of government. See Dr. Carlos Zapata Olivera interview with Angel Collado Schwartz, La Voz del Centro, “La Fundación del Partido Popular Democrático en el 1938,” episode #93, October 3, 2004, http://www.vozdelcentro.org (accessed September 11, 2013), and Fernando Bayrón Toro, Historia de las elecciones y los partidos políticos de Puerto Rico (Mayagüez, P.R.: Editorial Isla, 2008), 221-228.

Partido Liberal Conservador (Liberal Conservative Party). In the 1880s, individuals who supported more autonomy from Spain (Muñoz Marin’s father, Luis Muñoz Rivera, among them) challenged the leadership of the Liberal Reformist Party. From those efforts the Partido Autonomista Puertorriqueño (Puerto Rican Autonomist Party) was founded in 1887. The island’s appointed governor, Romualdo Palacio González, quickly attacked it and party members were arrested, tortured and imprisoned.

Efforts by some autonomists in the 1890s attempted to take the fervor of the 1868 Grito de Lares and channel it towards a Canadian-style autonomy with Spain. The process entailed cultivating an identity that demonstrated a separation from Spain, but did not foment nationalist desires for independence. Led first by professor and abolitionist Ramón Baldorioty de Castro (1822-1889) and later journalist by Luis Muñoz Rivera (1859-1916), the autonomists who sought a political resolution with Spain promoted an identity that guarded the creole elite class’s paternal guardianship of the island’s peasantry. Muñoz Rivera exemplified this when he wrote in 1890 that

we [Puerto Rico] are lacking in the strength of the people, because of the ignorance of the country population. We are without a militant youth, because of the apathy and laissez-faire attitude of our youth. We are wanting in leaders, because they greatly fear creative statesmanship; and are motivated by an unpardonable selfishness. It is necessary to educate the first group, to stimulate the second, and to attract the third...

The argument Muñoz Rivera used to counter the wishes of exile separatists to promote insurrection in the island was noted in the perspective autonomists like him had about Puerto Rico’s populace. Predictably, it was a view that advantaged the elite class, but did not disregard the rest of the population. Instead, it demonstrated the importance the public of the island had on

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4 González Vales, 115; Bayrón Toro, 3-7.
5 González Vales, 117.
6 Wagenheim and Jiménez de Wagenheim, 73.
7 Excerpt in Wagenheim and Jiménez de Wagenheim, 74.
the political goals of the privileged groups, and the shortcomings they all possessed. Those failings made it necessary for influential people like Muñoz Rivera to define Puerto Rican identity around individuals like himself and his social peers, who he saw as educated and willing to lead. That sentiment was especially true when lobbying for autonomy within the Spanish empire in 1896.  

Intellectuals on the island used the identity crafted by the nineteenth-century autonomists for puertorriqueñidad after the United States acquired the island in 1898 as a result of the Cuban-Spanish-American War. From the late 1890s to the 1930s, new generations of Puerto Rican elites steadily pushed to entrench notions of whiteness within Puerto Ricanness by connecting it to the persona of the jíbaro, the Puerto Rican peasant. The victory of the Populares in 1940 signaled a wide acceptance of the Puerto Ricanness that Muñoz Marín formulated and the populist appeal that his party garnered through the jíbaro.

We can unravel the way the Populares used race by employing border thinking to examine the party’s ideology as it was presented in their campaign materials for the 1940 elections. Since Mignolo’s border thinking occurs within a colonial difference, it is important to keep in mind that from 1900 to the 1930s Puerto Ricans continually negotiated the quotidian realities of living in a colonial territory that had changed from one imperial power to another.

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8 Autonomy was granted by Spain on November 25, 1897. It created a bicameral parliament consisting of a house of representatives and a fifteen-member administrative council. Eight members of the council were elected by Puerto Ricans, as were the entirety of the house of representatives. The Spanish crown retained the ability to appoint the governor of Puerto Rico. In turn, the governor named seven members of the administrative council. For further discussion of the form of this new government, see González Vales, 121-125. The first elections were held March 27, 1898, and saw Luis Muñoz Marín’s party attain complete control of the parliament. The parliament opened session on July 1898, but the U.S. military invaded later that month and ended the autonomic government of Puerto Rico. See Bayrón Toro, 135-140 for a detailed explanation of the 1898 election.
The colonial difference generated in the Puerto Rican experience between Spain and the United States was contested in part through the ways they understood *puertorriqueñidad*.

We can unpack how whiteness became part of Puerto Ricanness by looking at the arguments Muñoz Marín and other elites constructed in the 1920s and 1930s. It is a goal in this chapter to demonstrate how race played a central part in the party’s appeal to the public. We can do that by analyzing the PPD’s political discourse and use of the Puerto Rican *jíbaro* iconography from the interstitial space, or gap, between the 1920s-30s racial concepts about the *jíbaros* and those propagated during the 1940 campaign that celebrated their persona. Gender will be addressed in a later chapter.

The importance of a racialized appeal went well beyond the victory in that election. The campaign developed a language and imagery that permeated every aspect of Puerto Rican life for over thirty years. Through governmental policies on education, cultural sponsorship, film production, written materials, photography, art, music, festivals, and even the island’s political status, the mark of Muñoz Marín and the Populares was felt years after his 1965 exit from *La Fortaleza* (the Governor’s Mansion). The 1938-1940 campaign was the beginning of a shockwave that cemented the Muñoz Marín view of *puertorriqueñidad*. It was an example of the populist movements that appeared in almost every corner of Latin America in the first half of the twentieth century. It was also almost textbook-like in its conformity to current definitions of populism. In *Populism in Latin America*, Michael Conniff described populism generally as “an expansive style of election campaigning by colorful and engaging politicians who could draw masses of new voters into their movements and hold their loyalty indefinitely, even after their
There was little doubt that Muñoz Marín was one of these “colorful and engaging” leaders, and the support the Populares built lasted well beyond his time in office and his death in 1980.

Conniff went a step further and outlined certain characteristics of populist movements. The PPD fit these well. Conniff stated that populists “inspired a sense of nationalism and cultural pride in their followers.”[9] We will see in this chapter that this was a main focus for the Populares. Conniff continued that populists “exhibited charisma...[and] promised to reform their societies and to improve the lives of the masses.”[10] The charisma of the Populares came from Muñoz Marín, a man who had been in the public eye since he was in his teens. The party’s entire platform provided the promise of reform through its focus on social justice and bettering the living conditions of the jibaro. It was the use of the persona of that peasant that demonstrated another aspect of Conniff’s definition. He argued that populists “drew from existing sociopolitical models.”[11] They also “appropriated elements of folklore to show their nearness to the masses, and they were in turn embraced by popular culture.”[12] Muñoz Marín, from as early as 1917, used the image and folklore of the jibaro to bring authenticity to his political arguments favoring independence for Puerto Rico. The use of the jibaro as an electoral tool was a practice that was fully integrated into the PPD and helped provide a level of acceptance within the island’s populace that had not been afforded other parties in Puerto Rico before. The Populares, through ongoing efforts to garner mass appeal, constructed a populist movement that engulfed Puerto Rican politics for twenty-eight years. Afterwards, the pro-statehood movement challenged

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[10] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.
them successfully. The two political forces have dominated Puerto Rican politics since by taking turns at ruling the government and neutralizing any third party challenge.

The populist movement Muñoz Marín initiated in 1938 allowed him to present a new form of *puertorriqueñidad*. Whether accepted or rejected, his conception of who Puerto Ricans were and who they should become influenced the way Puerto Ricans defined and understood themselves for generations. Needless to say, his importance and that of his party’s discourse cannot be overstated. By looking at how the Populares succeeded with an appeal that drew heavily from whitened notions of Puerto Ricanness, we can better comprehend how the racial formulations of the early 1900s were transformed and passed to a new generation looking to modernize its nation. We will look at that campaign—printed materials, advertisements, and the party newspaper *El Batey*, as well as reflections by Muñoz Marín on the elections—from the interstitial space created by the time period between those materials and Muñoz Marín’s 1920s arguments. Through a border thinking from that position, we can view both perspectives and demonstrate that 1920s understandings of the *jíbaro* identity were used in 1940 to promote a whitened Puerto Ricanness as a model for betterment.

Any analysis of the Populares must begin with Luis Muñoz Marín. His writings from the 1920s open a window to understanding his view of the *jíbaro*. Those articles also laid the groundwork for the PPD’s strategies during the 1940 campaign. The racial conceptions Muñoz Marín and other *jibarista* writers developed allowed the PPD to construct a political image that appealed to a large number of Puerto Ricans as the most authentic *puertorriqueñidad*.₁⁴

₁⁴ *Jibarista* is a term used to refer to writers who focused much of their literary energies to defining the *jíbaro*. They looked to present *jibaros* as the authentic Puerto Rican identity.
DEFINING PUERTORRIQUEÑIDAD THROUGH A WHITE JÍBARO

By 1920, the relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico had undergone numerous changes. Initially, the U.S. used its military to occupy and govern the island. In 1900, President William McKinley signed the Foraker Act providing for a limited civilian government in Puerto Rico and establishing Puerto Rican citizenship in an effort to avoid extending U.S. citizenship to the island.15 The new structure had a governor and eleven-member executive council appointed by the U.S. president, a House of Representatives elected by Puerto Ricans, a judicial system with a Supreme Court, a U.S. District Court, and a non-voting Resident Commissioner to Congress, who was also named by the president. That form of government lasted until 1917 when President Woodrow Wilson signed the Jones Act. This legislation extended U.S. citizenship to Puerto Ricans, allowed for the election of the Resident Commissioner, established a bill of rights, and created the locally elected Senate of Puerto Rico.

With the Jones Act, Puerto Ricans found themselves integrated into U.S. society through citizenship, but excluded from it politically. As such, control over the insular legislative bodies was of paramount importance to any group wanting to increase its influence over the Puerto Rican economy and its society, as well as connections to U.S. monied interests in the island. Political parties quickly discovered that broadening their support warranted changing the way they defined themselves and their constituents. These political changes prompted other sectors of Puerto Rican society to explore the meaning of who and what was Puerto Rican, and it was in that process that jibaristas crafted their notions of Puerto Rican identity used by the PPD in the 1930s. To comprehend fully how whiteness became the bedrock of Puerto Ricanness, we must understand how the Populares used and infused it in their rhetoric. One must also outline how

they co-opted the imagined narrative of La Gran Familia Puertorriqueña, a notion that promoted the idea of racial harmony in Puerto Rico.

Numerous scholars have centered their examinations of Puerto Rico and Puerto Rican identity on Luis Muñoz Marín, the PPD and the image of the jíbaro. Few, though, have taken the 1940 elections as a point of critical change for identity. Lillian Guerra acknowledged the importance of these elections in her book *Popular Expression and National Identity in Puerto Rico: The Struggle for Self, Community, and Nation*. Guerra’s discussion of the jíbaro persona and its connection to elites like Muñoz Marín laid the groundwork for a deeper study of the ideological constructions during the campaign of 1940 and their implementation.

Guerra brought the significance of the 1940 election to the forefront in her conclusion. She discussed how the victory of the PPD highlighted the process of identity building she examined throughout her book and how it was closely connected to the jíbaro. Guerra concluded that

> The image of the rural proletarian family proudly displaying the red-and-white flag of the Populares emblazoned with the profile of the jíbaro—so often photographed in the forties and fifties—is a metaphor for the ways in which popular- and elite-class Puerto Ricans came to dialogue about them-Selves (sic), their communities, and their vision of nation across class bounds, negotiating differences of historical experience, identity, and ideology through the linking of discursive points and material interests in common.16

The statement connected the important effects of 1940 with one of the main points of Guerra’s book. The power of the jíbaro image, she argued, derived from the ability of elites to use it as a unifying tool.

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Lillian Guerra extended Francisco A. Scarano’s analysis of the ruling class’s use of the *jibaro* image to present sociopolitical critiques in anonymity—what he termed “the Jibaro Masquerade”—during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to the twentieth century through an examination of writings from the 1920s. Guerra argued that, facing a disintegration of their social control, Puerto Rican elites used the *jibaro* image to affirm the uniqueness of Puerto Ricans and re-appropriate power dynamics threatened by U.S. colonial control of the island since the end of the Cuban-Spanish-American War in 1898. Puerto Ricans like Miguel Meléndez Muñoz (writer, 1884-1966), Cayetano Coll y Cuchi (politician and writer, 1881-1961), Luis Lloréns Torres (poet, 1876-1944), and Luis Muñoz Marín engaged in a discourse that reestablished the *jibaro*’s image. These men used racial rhetoric to whiten the *jibaro* and establish the significance of that persona for Puerto Rican identity.

The manner in which whiteness was developed is explored later in this chapter, but for now it is important to understand that there is a substantive historiography on the *jibaro* as a tool for identity building. Various other scholars besides Guerra have engaged in works that dissect the way the *jibaro* was mythologized and utilized in creating a unified Puerto Rican identity. This chapter does not aspire to revisit arguments about the importance of the *jibaro* image for Puerto Rican identity. This is taken as a given. It also does not undertake an exploration of the *jibaro* mythology as a political tool. This was already accomplished in Nathaniel I. Córdova’s “In His Image and Likeness: The Puerto Rican Jibaro as Political Icon.”

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17 Francisco A. Scarano, "The Jibaro Masquerade and the Subaltern Politics of Creole Identity Formation in Puerto Rico, 1745-1823," *American Historical Review* 101, no. 5 (December 1996): 1398-1431. Scarano explored how Puerto Rican elites used the *jibaro* image as a mask. This masquerade allowed them to engage in discourses that critiqued social and political dynamics in Puerto Rico by protecting their identity and placing their arguments at the level of the popular masses and not that of the privileged groups.
In that article, Córdova examined the manner in which the iconography of the *jíbaro* was appropriated by the PPD through its insignia. The party’s emblem captured the imagination of a large number of Puerto Ricans by depicting the silhouette of a peasant farmer wearing a *pava* or field laborer’s hat—a widely identifiable icon of the agricultural working class—in red with the words *Pan, Tierra, Libertad* (Bread, Land, Liberty) written around the image (see image at right).\(^{18}\) Córdova stated that the “field laborer’s hat was part and parcel of the depictions of the *jíbaro* since early in the nineteenth century,” allowing the Puerto Rican masses to recognize the image in its most basic significance.\(^{19}\) He convincingly argued that the emblem was able to tap into the *jíbaro* myth and, concurrently, into notions of authentic Puerto Ricanness—the essence of Puerto Rican identity.\(^{20}\)

Nathaniel Córdova briefly alluded to the racial dynamics of the image when he stated that the silhouette “neutralized any consideration of race as significant to the makeup of the *jíbaro*.\(^{21}\) He argued that because race could be a main factor in the ability to present the *jíbaro* as the core of national identity, it was left as uncertain. Córdova never expanded on these statements, but it is from that ambiguity that I unfold part of the argument.

Through an examination of the manner in which race was coded, or not coded, into the PPD emblem, and its political discourse, this chapter expands on Córdova’s brief statement and on Lillian Guerra’s understanding of the importance of the 1940 elections. In this way, my

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\(^{18}\) PPD logo from Ernesto Juan Fonfrías, *Historia de mi vida política en la fundación del Partido Popular Democrático* (San Juan, PR: Impresora ESMACO, 1986), inside cover.

\(^{19}\) Nathaniel I. Córdova, "In His Image and Likeness: The Puerto Rican Jíbaro as Political Icon," *Centro: Journal of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies* 17, no. 2 (Fall 2005): 175.

\(^{20}\) Ibid, 177.

\(^{21}\) Ibid, 179.
analysis of Muñoz Marín and the PPD’s campaign is an extension of both of these works. Unlike Córdova, I do not find that race was neutralized. Instead, I explore how it was used and repackaged through cultural concepts—such as Spanish heritage, U.S. democracy and the jíbaro persona itself. The PPD campaign of 1940 accomplished this through a political discourse that transformed racial rhetoric about the jíbaro into a discourse of what constituted puertorriqueñidad.

Change can come to a society in many ways and through multiple forms. Seldom is there an instance that is identified quickly as a moment of great change and even less common is an understanding of it. The 1940 elections in Puerto Rico is one of these moments. Already in 1941, Luis Muñoz Marín understood the impact of his party’s result. Muñoz Marín wrote that “la significación de este triunfo—lo admiten todos—fue mucho más grande de lo que revela el mero dato histórico” (The significance of this victory—everyone acknowledges—was much more than what the historical data reveals).”22 Though Muñoz Marín mainly referred to the success of his party’s unconventional and grassroots campaign strategy, his words resonate strongly due to the longevity—from 1940 to 1968—of the PPD’s control of Puerto Rican politics as well as the major economic and political changes its tenure brought.

The 1930s were a time of great economic distress and political chaos in Puerto Rico. As a result of the U.S. Great Depression and the concentration of ownership in key industries (sugar, coffee and tobacco), the gap widened between rich sectors of the society and poor ones. Already suffering from great poverty, Puerto Rico lost large numbers of small landowners and farmers to

22 Luis Muñoz Marín, Historia del Partido Popular Democrático (San Juan, PR: Editorial El Batey, 1984), 13. This history of the Popular Democratic Party was published four years after Muñoz Marín had passed away. A prolific writer, Muñoz Marín left many unfinished works. This history is an incomplete manuscript he worked on from 1941 to 1942. Muñoz Marín intended to finish this work but never accomplished it.
bigger corporations. The industries of the island fell under the consolidated control of fewer corporations (mainly U.S. based). Moreover, local products and markets diminished.\(^{23}\)

In this turmoil, elites grasped at ideological understandings to make sense of the changes their country had gone through. These differences led to a political environment that became more divisive. Numerous political organizations competed for control over the legislative branch of government—the only branch controlled through Puerto Rican suffrage. As stated earlier, the U.S. President controlled the executive branch of government through direct appointment, leaving the Puerto Rican Senate, House of Representatives, and Resident Commissioner in Washington as the only branches of local government for which Puerto Ricans could vote.

Various parties were active in the 1930s. The main ones were the pro-independence Partido Liberal (Liberal Party—previously Luis Muñoz Rivera’s Union de Puerto Rico), the pro-labor and pro-statehood Partido Socialista (Socialist Party—associated with the Socialist Party of America), the conservative and pro-U.S. owned sugar industry Partido Union Republicana (Republican Union Party—also pro-statehood), and the pro-national liberation and independence Partido Nacionalista (Nationalist Party).\(^{24}\) None of the parties gained enough votes in the 1930s to govern outright. The electoral reality led to strange bedfellows, none more so than the aforementioned Coalición: an alliance between the Republican Union Party and the Socialist Party that controlled the legislature and the resident commissioner position from 1932 to 1940.


\(^{24}\) Bayrón Toro, 197-221.
These compromising arrangements led to large levels of discontent among party members because political leaders appeased coalition members and not their core followers.\footnote{Pantojas-Garcia, “Puerto Rican Populism”; Muñoz Marín, \textit{Historia del Partido Popular Democrático}.}

Just as Puerto Rican political parties found themselves struggling in the 1930s, the island itself was experiencing more division over its colonial status. The Puerto Rican Nationalist Party, led by Pedro Albizu Campos, grew strongly during the 1930s.\footnote{Morales Carrión, 221-224.} Led by the evocative rhetoric of Albizu Campos, the party moved to aggressively pursue independence from the United States. On February 23rd, 1936, two young Nationalists took matters into their own hands and assassinated Police Colonel Francis E. Riggs. Both men were arrested and, while in police custody, executed before any judicial process was initiated. The violent nature of these two events, and the publicity they garnered, left many people in Puerto Rico and the U.S. wondering what effects they would have. Muñoz Marín wrote in his memoirs that Riggs’s death greatly shocked and angered U.S. Senator Millard Tydings (whom Muñoz Marín claimed appointed Riggs to the Puerto Rican Police because he was a close friend) and Ernest Gruening, director of the New Deal’s Puerto Rican Reconstruction Administration. Similarly, the death of the Nationalists at the hands of the U.S.-controlled Puerto Rican Police shocked and angered many Puerto Ricans.

Muñoz Marín stated that he was quickly asked by Gruening, a friend and political collaborator in Washington D.C., to publicly repudiate the assassination of Riggs without mentioning the incident at the police department. Considering the police violence, Muñoz Marín wrote that

\begin{quote}
 en aquel momento opté por rehusar. Tomar la policía en sus propias manos la ejecución de la justicia me pareció una amenaza a la vida civilizada de igual o de mayor rango a la
\end{quote}
de dos fanáticos que en nombre de un patriotismo de su propio diseño asesinaban un funcionario inocente. (at that moment I opted to refuse. The police taking into their own hands the execution of justice seemed to me a similar or worse threat to civilized life than the assassination of an innocent public servant by two fanatics in the name of a patriotism of their own design).27

This position, Muñoz Marín believed, infuriated Gruening and led him to support the introduction of a bill in Congress to grant independence to Puerto Rico. Senator Millard Tydings presented that bill on April 23 of the same year. The bill called for a referendum to determine if Puerto Ricans wanted to be independent. If the people chose sovereignty, independence would be granted quickly and with little economic support. As historian Arturo Morales Carrión stated, “The implications were clear: Puerto Rico would not be eased out, but kicked out of its political relationship with the United States with as short a transition as possible.”28

Muñoz Marín thought this bill endangered his aspirations for gradual independence. He also comprehended it as a threat to his party in the elections that would occur in November of 1936. Muñoz Marín expressed his concern in a July 15, 1936 letter to White House correspondent and Eleanor Roosevelt’s friend, Ruby Black. He wrote in a seemingly contradictory way that

The moment the Tydings Bill was presented the elections were lost, unless the bill was passed. They were lost because it compelled the sugar industry to spend all the money that may be necessary to defeat the only party (the Nationalists don’t count) that stands for independence in Puerto Rico...unequivocally.29

Muñoz Marín believed that the bill hurt his Partido Liberal’s (Liberal Party) chances of winning because the party was so closely associated with independence, and Senator Tydings’ proposal

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27 Luis Muñoz Marín, Memorias: autobiografía pública, 1898-1940 (San Juan, PR: Fundación Luis Muñoz Marín, 2003), 164.
28 Carrión, Puerto Rico, 235.
for traumatic separation was scaring Puerto Ricans away from anyone in favor of breaking ties with the U.S. Muñoz Marín also understood that wealthy corporations benefiting from Puerto Rico’s peculiar relationship with the U.S. would oppose his party aggressively. The only possibility of eliminating the fear created by the Tydings Bill was for the measure to be passed in Congress and signed into law, but Muñoz Marín believed that would devastate the island’s economy. The political fallout of the dramatic measures proposed by the Tydings Bill pressured all the parties on the island, but it widened a major divide in the Partido Liberal.

After the Tydings Bill was presented, Luis Muñoz Marín led a segment of his Partido Liberal in an internal conflict. Though the bill was never passed, Muñoz Marín, disenchanted with the continued loss of political control and disappointed with the vindictively written pro-independence bill, proposed to have the entire Liberal Party abstain from the 1936 elections as a form of protest. The leader of the party, Antonio R. Barceló, opposed this move and expelled Muñoz Marín and his supporters. Unbeknown to Barceló at the time, his decision would lead to the biggest change in Puerto Rican politics since the U.S. invasion of 1898.

Along with his political followers, Muñoz Marín decided to establish a new party for the 1940 elections. In 1938, they founded the Partido Popular Democrático (PPD) and started a push to win the elections in two years. Muñoz Marín imagined the Populares as a party for Puerto Ricans excluded from the political establishment. The party quickly moved to inform voters of its political platform and to appeal for a major alteration in the way politics were practiced.

The PPD’s campaign was strongly influenced by Muñoz Marín. It brought together numerous aspects of his social, cultural, and political views cultivated through years of intellectual activity. Though his understandings were packaged by 1939 in a party platform that

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30 Muñoz Marín, Memorias, 169-170.
focused on the iconography of the *jibaro*, we must first explore how Muñoz Marín grasped this identity and Puerto Ricanness as a whole. An initial clue was presented in Muñoz Marín’s early writings on the subject.

As a participant in what Lillian Guerra called “jibarista discourse,” Muñoz Marín, along with several other writers, attempted to re-conceptualize the *jibaro* identity in the 1920s using racial rhetoric to establish the importance and significance of the *jibaro* for Puerto Ricanness. Guerra discussed the racial dynamics of this literature in her work when she stated that

> Of principal concern here is the issue of the *jibaro* image’s purity in terms of racial background and moral makeup. Central to understanding the importance of these factors is the inextricability of the racial evaluation of the *jibaro*…their insistence on the *jibaro’s* “whiteness” was the foundation upon which the rest of their contentions lay.\(^\text{31}\)

Muñoz Marín addressed race and purity as aspects of the *jibaro* in a 1925 article published in *The Nation*.

In “Porto Rico: The American Colony,” Muñoz Marín wrote for a U.S. audience about the cultural makeup and historical background of Puerto Rico. He described the physical, religious, social and racial characteristics he attributed to Puerto Ricans. Muñoz Marín began by delineating the distribution of race on the island as a derivative of natural circumstances. In arguing the lack of racial prejudice in Puerto Rican society in comparison to the U.S. south, Muñoz Marín wrote that “there are no segregated districts, though the general division of labor brought about by climatic conditions has assigned the mountains to the white man and the coast to the white and black.”\(^\text{32}\) Muñoz Marín used the word “climatic” with the commonly held belief that people of African descent were better suited genetically to work in hotter climates. In Puerto

\(^{31}\) Guerra, *Popular Expression*, 82.

Rico, the hotter zones are found on the coastal regions. The mountains tend to be cooler, though cold temperatures are seldom present on a tropical island. The use of environmental factors allowed the author to construct a border between the inhabitants of the two regions. This division would prove vital to the efforts to whiten Puerto Rican identity.

Muñoz Marín continued by discussing a group that he believed still held strong racist sentiments. He affirmed “it is women of the upper classes who offer the most stubborn resistance to a complete acceptance of the tolerant spirit that dominates our racial relationships.” He argued that these women’s racial attitudes were “a strong determinant of the tendency of whites to marry whites and of blacks to bring lighter blood into the family.” Muñoz Marín laid before the U.S. audience of *The Nation* a narrative of whitening.

Muñoz Marín also examined authenticity in this article by breaking with a commonly held understanding that the peasants of the mountains were less civilized than city elites. He wrote that those who “if conservative, measure civilization by commercial and industrial growth, and, if radical, by labor-union activity, lament the mountain regions” because it was hard to start progress there. Muñoz Marín was pointing out what he believed was a very big mistake in dismissing the inhabitants of the mountains as uncivilized. He argued for their value because the “bulk of the folk-poetry, the folk-pottery, the folk-hats, the folk-hammocks, and the folk-nobility comes from the mountains.” Extending this statement further, it seemed fair to presume that the author accepted that in the mountains was where one could find the cultural artifacts that uniquely represented authentic Puerto Rican culture.

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33 Ibid.  
34 Ibid.  
35 Ibid, 381.
These bearers of authentic puertorriqueñidad-- the jíbaros-- were white. Muñoz Marín wrote that

These forsaken jíbaros, pale, frequently blond, always poverty-stricken, form the most consistently unmixed body of Europeans on the island. Whenever the hookworm permits they are more active physically and mentally than the people of the coast...Troubadours compete with songs for the love of barefooted girls, though machetes are thought good enough to cut to decisions, often within the limitations of a gentlemanly code. The jíbaros are infantile, passionate, shrewd in their simple dealings, susceptible to religious quackery, and manage to carry a surprisingly heavy load of generosity along with that of their poverty.\textsuperscript{36}

This view of the jíbaro (the author never really alluded to jíbaras beyond their manifestations as objects of desire) maximized whiteness. Muñoz Marín highlighted again a lack of racial mixing that promoted the idea of the jíbaro as purer than other people on the island. Moreover, he expanded on his racial dichotomy between jíbaros and coastal dwellers. Having already established that jíbaros lived in the mountainous center of the island and that the coasts had more mixture with blacks, Muñoz Marín then connected that racial distribution to physical and mental activity. He left the reader with the impression that authentic Puerto Ricanness was to be found among the white, mountain jíbaros and not the darker people closer to the ocean. The geography of the island--with the mountains crossing its center from east to west and the coastal regions circling that Cordillera Central (Central Range)--created a ‘natural’ border between the jíbaros and the racially mixed coast.

In a few pages, Muñoz Marín developed an identity border as a product of natural geography. Nature could now be used to demonstrate that Puerto Ricans were civilized. Since one of the predetermining factors for civilization then was whiteness, focusing Puerto Rican identity upon the jíbaro eventually bolstered arguments by elites that the island was civilized enough for self-rule.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.
First, though, it would be necessary to prove that this argument was more than just words. Muñoz Marín’s rhetoric regarding Puerto Rico’s whiteness and subsequent civilization—directed at U.S. audiences a decade and a half before the establishment of the PPD— informs his approach towards the jíbaro image in 1940. His arguments in the 1920s had not succeeded as he hoped in demonstrating Puerto Ricans’ advanced development to the majority of island’s colonial rulers. That argument became more difficult to make after the violence of 1936 and subsequent massacre in the southern town of Ponce on March 21, 1937. On that date, Palm Sunday, the Nationalist Party planned a march to commemorate the abolition of slavery in Puerto Rico which occurred in 1873. The governor, Blanton Winship, decided a few hours before the event to declare it unlawful and sent troops in to break up the gathering. The confrontation escalated quickly and the police opened fire on the Nationalists. Nineteen people were killed (including women, children, and two policemen) and over 200 people were injured. The tragedy was first portrayed in the mainland United States as the result of radical activities. An independent investigation determined that the U.S.-appointed government held much of the blame for the deaths.37

In that volatile atmosphere, Muñoz Marín had to develop a strategy to prove the existence of Puerto Rican civilization to U.S. officials if his desires for further island self-rule were to be achieved. The portrayal of the events of 1937 in the U.S. made it clear that it was not enough to use the same racial rhetoric of the 1920s. Instead, Muñoz Marín presented Puerto Ricans with a populist approach that focused on Puerto Rican culture itself. To comprehend how Muñoz Marin

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37 Carrion, 238. A year later, Winship moved the fourth of July celebration from San Juan, where it was held traditionally, to Ponce in an act of obvious intimidation and instigation. By 1939, Winship was removed from his post.
transformed racial understandings into cultural concepts, and how this was supposed to appeal to U.S. officials, we must look at the way race as a whole was viewed in Puerto Rico in that period.

The prevalent understanding of racial issues in 1930s Puerto Rico was the idea of La Gran Familia Puertorriqueña (The Great Puerto Rican Family). Introduced as early as the 1770s, it was a part of the Spanish colonial heritage and attempted to define Puerto Rican identity as a product of its colonial past. Placing racial intermingling at its center, La Gran Familia Puertorriqueña resulted from the belief that Puerto Rican culture stemmed from the *mestizaje* or mixture of European (mainly Spanish), Caribbean indigenous, and African race and heritage. This combination created an identity that was new and separate from the three traditions, but never denied their integral contributions to the nation. Moreover, it could be used to whiten the island by encouraging more pairing with and among whites.  

The mixture of races itself, though, became an essential element in the definition of what was Puerto Rican. As the 1800s progressed, economic pressures stemming from the Latin American wars for independence and their aftermarts pushed Puerto Rican elites to pursue greater autonomy within the Spanish empire. Even though more influence in governmental matters was provided at times to some on the island, many Puerto Ricans viewed Spanish control as oppressive and distant. Puerto Ricans embraced the idea of La Gran Familia Puertorriqueña in a desire to forge a new cultural understanding distinct from Spain. It was a process witnessed throughout numerous places in Latin America.

During the 1880s and 1890s, elites shifted the conceptions of Puerto Rican identity in attempts to minimize the perception of racial prejudice on the society, thus promoting Puerto Rico’s ability to be civilized and autonomous. They “rejected the idea of an absolute colonial society, claiming the presence of a national or local culture devoid of racial divides.” La Gran Familia Puertorriqueña gave the upper class the ability to argue Puerto Rican culture in liberal, enlightened terms—i.e. as a success in racial mestizaje that continually produced a more whitened population—but it could not erase the society’s massively unequal distribution of wealth, manifested in a color line.

The separation of race from social inequality capitalized on the ideals of La Gran Familia Puertorriqueña and benefited from the belief widely held by the late nineteenth century that slavery in Puerto Rico was of a milder variety than that of the United States or other countries in the Americas. By the time the United States took control of Puerto Rico, the notion of La Gran Familia Puertorriqueña was used to negotiate race in the colonial difference between Spain and the U.S. It created a belief that the island was a place of racial harmony. It was not until the United States brought stricter racial definitions during its occupation that Puerto Rican intellectuals again directly addressed the issue of race. Muñoz Marín published his two articles—in *The Nation* (1925) and “The Sad Case of Porto Rico” in *American Mercury* (1929; discussed below)—as part of elite strategies to change U.S. comprehensions of Puerto Ricans. These efforts presented the history and lives of Puerto Ricans from the perspective of a class that had been displaced from power during the first three decades of American control.

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40 During this period, scientific racism was considered modern thought throughout Latin America. La Gran Familia Puertorriqueña presented an example of a successful “whitening” of a society through a mix of races.
In the twenty years since the United States took control of Puerto Rico, U.S. business interests had successfully worked with military and governmental structures to push aside the long established power hierarchies on the island. Facing the complete erosion of their social stature, Puerto Rican elites began to re-conceptualize their cultural and social understandings of Puerto Ricanness. The idea of La Gran Familia Puertorriqueña no longer held utility in defining Puerto Ricans. For the United States, mixture with nonwhites could not produce a whiter populace. Instead of following the tradition of mestizaje, Muñoz Marín focused his constructions of Puerto Ricanness on the idea that Puerto Rico was more European or Spanish rather than a mix of races. He wrote that “racially, it [Puerto Rico] shared with Costa Rica one peculiarity: a predominantly unmixed European peasantry—if Spain be Europe.”

The need to present Puerto Rico to U.S. audiences as a mostly unmixed populace can be understood as an effort to claim a founding characteristic of Euro-U.S. civilization: whiteness.

Muñoz Marín had spent much of his adult life to that point in the United States. He understood the premium placed on whiteness and the benefits of being able to claim it. His construction of puertorriqueñidad as Spanish allowed him to regard Puerto Ricans, and the ruling class in particular, as capable of governing their country. Muñoz Marín understood that by claiming civilization through racial terms he could then successfully argue for, and possibly achieve, autonomy or independence from the United States.

Though the period in which Muñoz Marín expressed these views (1927-1931) was what he termed “cuatro años de vida bohemia” (four years of bohemian life) in and out of Puerto Rico,

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41 Luis Muñoz Marín, "The Sad Case of Porto Rico," American Mercury (February 1929): 136. Porto Rico was the official name given to the island after the United States took control. It was not until May 17, 1932 that the United States Congress approved a law changing the name of the island back to its original Puerto Rico. Muñoz Marín expressed his discontent at having to use this name in his 1925 article in The Nation, but stated that the editor left him with no choice in the matter.
his political connections remained active through work with the Partido Unionista (later Partido Liberal), its newspaper *La Democracia*, and his wife’s friendship with the then governor of Puerto Rico, Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. Muna Lee de Muñoz Marín, an accomplished writer and leader within the U.S. women’s rights movement, lived in Puerto Rico with Muñoz Marín’s mother and their children. She worked as Director of the Bureau of International Affairs at the University of Puerto Rico. It was a position that allowed her to develop a close friendship with Governor Roosevelt, and it gave Muñoz Marín access to the highest levels of Puerto Rican government.

The close relationships Muñoz Marín maintained during his decades of living outside of Puerto Rico positioned him well to reenter the island’s political arena in the 1930s. Those connections only gave him a platform, though. His appeal was drawn from a sentiment he had expressed as early as 1917 in the article “Nuestra Personalidad” (Our Personality). In this early work, the nineteen-year old discussed the importance of maintaining a Puerto Rican identity even though the newly passed Jones Bill had granted Puerto Ricans U.S. citizenship. Muñoz Marín wrote that

> Seamos pues americanos, ya que así lo decretan las autoridades del Norte; pero seamos americanos portorriqueños, como son los de Kentucky americanos Kentuckienses; como son los de California y Hawaii americanos californianos y hawaiyanos, respectivamente.

> Que no olvide nuestro campesino como se pulsan las cuerdas del tiple, ni como se rasca un güícharo, ni lo que es una fiesta de reyes, ni lo que es el aguinaldo; que no olviden nuestras mujeres como se baila la danza; que no olviden nuestros poetas como se canta al Terruño. Conservemos nuestra personalidad netamente borinqueña. Seamos ante todo criollos.

> **Seamos jíbaros!**

> (Let us be Americans, since that is how the Northern authorities have decreed it; but let us be Porto Rican Americans, in the way that people from Kentucky are

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Kentuckian Americans; like those from California and Hawaii who are Californians American and Hawaiian Americans, respectively.

May our peasant not forget how to pluck the cords of the \textit{tiple}, nor how to scratch the \textit{güícharo}, nor what a kings’ party is, nor what an \textit{aguinaldo} is; let our women not forget how to dance \textit{a danza}; that our poets not forget how to sing to the \textit{Terruño}. Let us conserve our personality purely \textit{borinqueña} [Puerto Rican] Let us be creoles above all. \textbf{Let us be jibaros!}).\textsuperscript{44}

This rallying call to be \textit{jibaros} became a critical aspect of the populist ideology that Muñoz Marín’s movement formulated in 1938. It drew from the tactic of appropriating folklore and infusing national pride in the party’s political rhetoric.\textsuperscript{45} There may not be a clear way to assess whether the 1917 cry for Puerto Ricans to become \textit{jibaros} was taken completely to heart, but, by 1940, the \textit{jibaro} was certainly an effective tool to use in gathering political support. That fact made it imperative to understand what the \textit{jibaro} identity promoted and what it marginalized.

\textbf{TUR\textsc{N}ING THE JÍBARO RHETORIC POLITICAL}

Muñoz Marín’s return in 1931 after spending four years promoting Puerto Rican business interests in New York was met with an economic and social situation that had been deteriorating for decades on the island. He injected himself back into the political arena--this time with the Liberal Party and not the Socialist Party he had supported in 1920--and began working for the party’s 1932 campaign.\textsuperscript{46} He was elected senator-at-large and struggled for the next five years to move the party towards a view of social justice and economic development that was strongly influenced by the intellectual tracks informing Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal. He proposed land reform to provide more access to subsistence farming and weaken the power of U.S.-owned business over the island’s agriculture, economy and politics. Additionally, Muñoz Marín took an

\textsuperscript{44} Luis Muñoz Marín, “Nuestra Personalidad,” \textit{Juan Bobo}, March 10, 1917, Sección III, Serie 3. Artículos, Editoriales, Manifiestos, box 1, folder 20: 1, FLMM (emphasis in original).
\textsuperscript{45} Conniff, 5-7.
\textsuperscript{46} By the 1930s, the Union Party of Luis Muñoz Rivera had been renamed the Liberal Party because the name was wrapped up in the Alianza (Alliance) that ruled the island’s politics in the mid-1920s. The Alianza was made up of the Union Party and the Republican Party.
active role in promoting and administering policy changes developed through Roosevelt’s Puerto Rican Reconstruction Administration (PRRA). His efforts during that period led him to the belief that the resolution of the island’s status issue needed to be a secondary political goal to improving the island’s economy and infrastructure. Eventually, Muñoz Marín’s views and actions led to the aforementioned conflict with the leadership of the Partido Liberal and his dismissal from the party.

By the time Muñoz Marín decided to create a new political party he had relegated the status issue to the back of his political agenda. The dynamics of this transformation were essential to the PPD’s campaign from 1938 to 1940. That effort demonstrated how Muñoz Marín developed a view that prosperity could only be achieved through the creation of a cultural awareness of the positive (white) characteristics he attributed to Puerto Ricanness.

Muñoz Marín’s belief that independence would bring prosperity to Puerto Rico had been shaken by the events of 1936 and 1937. Throughout his memoirs he described this period as one of chaos and tragedy. For Muñoz Marín, the assassination of Colonel Riggs began the chain reaction that led to his opposition to the Tydings Bill. He based his resistance to the bill primarily on the idea that Puerto Rico was being treated as a child to be punished—a view that branded Puerto Ricans as uncivilized and immature. The U.S. government’s paternalistic approach towards Puerto Rico contrasted with Muñoz Marín’s attempt a decade earlier to elevate Puerto Ricans from infantile representations by portraying them as Spanish/European and white—in the racial dynamics of the United States one could not be civilized and nonwhite.

Congress failed to act on the Tydings Bill, but the damage had been done to Muñoz Marín’s Partido Liberal in the 1936 elections. Those events were later compounded by the massacre in Ponce. All together, the period demonstrated the paternalistic approach U.S. officials
used to govern Puerto Ricans. The infantilization of Puerto Rico was something that Muñoz Marín could not accept if he was to succeed at recapturing power for the local elite. For him, the clearest mechanism to demonstrate Puerto Rican civilization was through the most basic exercise of democracy: a fair and uncorrupt election.

The conflicts of the period led Muñoz Marín to develop a rhetoric that used politics as a way to present Puerto Ricans engaged in progress. Unity was a quality that Muñoz Marín felt had been lost in Puerto Rico under U.S. rule. He wrote in his memoirs that “el pueblo de Puerto Rico -ni en su clase media, ni en su clase adinerada, ni en su masa- jamás fue partidario tanto en los tiempos de España como durante el regimen de los Estados Unidos de romper drásticamente con la metropoli” (the people of Puerto Rico—neither in its middle class, nor in its monied class, nor itself in mass—was ever as much in favor of breaking drastically from the metropolis during the time of Spain as during the U.S. regime). The political division among the Puerto Rican people and its violent reactions to colonial rule threatened Muñoz Marín’s view (and that of many elites) of Puerto Ricans as a people with a civilized culture. His move to take his followers from the Liberal Party and create a political party was informed by a desire to construct unity and provide economic change for most Puerto Ricans. These changes would in turn curb the violence that had developed towards the end of the 1930s and, eventually, bring back the positive qualities of racial harmony and peace he attributed to Puerto Rican culture in the 1925 and 1929 articles. He made this clear when, in 1941, while reflecting on the aims of the “movimiento Popular Democrático,” he wrote that the party’s fifth purpose was to “tranquilizar a

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47 Muñoz Marín, Memorias, 168. The validity of this statement is questionable when one considers the independence movements present on the island throughout the nineteenth century. One example was the Grito de Lares rebellion of 1868.
los ciudadanos en la seguridad [de un nivel de vida modesto]” (tranquilize the citizens in the security [of a modest standard of living]).

Politically, Muñoz Marín developed a discourse he believed would bring Puerto Ricans back to the ‘good’ aspects of the culture he so admired. Moreover, he used his approach to help push Puerto Rican culture further along what he considered its ongoing progress towards civilization. He included that goal in his fourth purpose for the creation of the PPD. He wrote that the party was intended to “establecer un nivel de vida modesto, pero decente y civilizado (establish a standard of living that was modest, but decent and civilized).” Steeped in the Spanish legacy and influenced by U.S. rule, Muñoz Marín viewed Puerto Rico in 1938-40 as in need of a bridge between the two colonizers. How he viewed culture was telling of what his party focused on during its campaign and rule.

Muñoz Marín wrote that he comprehended “cultura en el sentido de civilización...la manera de un pueblo ver y vivir la vida; a la manera especial de un pueblo sentir la muerte al no entenderla” (culture in the sense of civilization...the manner in which a people view and live life; the special manner of how a people feel death while not understanding it). He continued to define culture as encompassing customs, arts, manners, and works. Culture was for him closely associated with daily living and how a people handled that living. It was expressed through various forms, but all reflected upon a people’s ability to claim itself as constituting a civilization. Interestingly, Muñoz Marín defined another concept that was vital for his construction of a political movement: democracy.

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48 Muñoz Marín, Historia del Partido Popular Democrático, 137.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid, 29.
Muñoz Marín left in 1940 a very detailed definition of democracy. In the article “Cultura y Democracia” (Culture and Democracy), published in the March/April issue of the Revista Ateneo Puertorriqueño (the journal of the oldest intellectual institution of the island, the Ateneo Puertorriqueño), Muñoz Marín took on the task of defining culture and democracy. He presented them as similar in their deepest significance for a people. More than a form of government, democracy

es una manera de vivir la vida ante la realidad augusta y trágica de la muerte. Es una manera de vivir la vida para poder morir la muerte dignamente...Democracia en este último sentido...debe definirse como una actitud de profunda igualdad entre los seres humanos--igualdad mucho más allá del voto y de las formas de constituir el gobierno...Democracia en este sentido es igualdad de la dignidad humana ante la vida y la muerte; es igualdad de la dignidad humana ante el dolor de la vida y ante el misterio de la muerte...La dignidad del hombre y la humildad del hombre, la igualdad en la dignidad y la humildad del hombre--esa es la democracia. (is a way of living life in the presence of the magnificent and tragic reality of death. It is a way to live life to be able to die with dignity...Democracy in this last sense...should be defined as an attitude of profound equality between human beings--much more than equality of vote or form of constituting a government...Democracy in this sense is equality of human dignity in the face of life and death; it is equality of human dignity in the face of the pain of life and the mystery of death...The dignity of man and the humility of man, the equality in the dignity and the humility of man--that is democracy).  

The definition demonstrated that Muñoz Marín viewed democracy as an ideal philosophy. He alluded to the manifestation of democracy as a vote, but specifically noted that it was much more than that. It was about dignity and humility. Dignity in how persons live their life, and humility in how persons understand their place and contributions to that life. In this regard, Muñoz Marín believed that democracy placed a great level of responsibility upon individuals in a society.

Responsibility within democracy was tied up with his notion of equality. Muñoz Marín wrote that

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democracia no implica una teoría de que todos los seres humanos son iguales en cualidades, porque eso sería falso...La democracia reconoce, porque la realidad dicta ese reconocimiento, que hay quienes son más fuertes que otros, que hay quienes son más inteligentes que otros, que hay quienes han desarrollado mayores capacidades que otros; reconoce hasta que hay quienes son mejores que otros dentro de los términos de la relación social y creadora inmediata...La democracia tiene que reconocer que los hombres son distintos, que los méritos son variados, que hay una escuela de capacidades. (Democracy does not imply a theory that all human beings are equal in qualities, because that would be false...Democracy recognizes, because reality dictates that realization, that there are those that are stronger than others, that there are those who are more intelligent than others, that there are those that have developed greater capacities than others; it even recognizes that there are those who are better than others within the terms of immediate social and creative relation...Democracy has to recognize that men are different, that there are varied merits, that there is a school of capacities).  

The inclusion of diversity within the notion of democratic equality allowed Muñoz Marín to incorporate the scientific knowledge of the time that legitimized the categorizations of human beings. Differences, though, placed responsibilities upon the shoulders of those who had more capabilities. Muñoz Marín added that

la superioridad superficial del que la tiene, en el sentido hondamente democrático de la vida, debe servirle al que tiene esa superioridad como estímulo para corregir la injusticia a favor del (sic) que no la tiene, en vez de servirle como estímulo de astucia y jaibería, para utilizarla en hundir más aún al que injustamente ha nacido o ha crecido sin esa superioridad. (The superficial superiority of the one who has it, in the deeply democratic sense of life, should serve for the one who has that superiority as a stimulus to fix the injustice in favor of the one who does not have it, instead of serving as stimulus for cunning and tricks, to use it to further sink those who unjustly were born or grew up without that superiority).  

The responsibility to use the benefits given (whether monetary, physical or intellectual) for the betterment of those in need was a cornerstone in the founding philosophy of the Populares. Muñoz Marín interlaced what he referred to as social justice with democracy. Moreover, he tied democracy to culture. To build a civilized image for Puerto Rico, Muñoz Marín believed that a deep acceptance of democracy had to be promoted. The most basic example of democracy, as

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52 Ibid, 70.
53 Ibid, 73.
Muñoz Marín wrote in “Cultura y Democracia,” could be defined as “gobierno congresional de tipo Estados Unidos...como gobierno parlamentario tipo inglés o francés...como en ciertas comunidades de la antigua Grecia, como la acción legislativa directa del pueblo...” (United States-style congressional government...as English- or French-style parliamentary government...as in certain communities of ancient Greece, as direct legislative action by the people...).  

Muñoz Marín and the Populares took this Euro-U.S. centered conception of democracy in its most basic form and explored which actions could best demonstrate the civilized nature of Puerto Ricans. They decided that focusing on the act of voting served their purposes. Not only would ensuring the integrity of elections help show U.S. officials that Puerto Rico was progressing towards higher stage of development, but it would also help a new party gain power in a political system that often relied on buying votes during election day. The Populares, then, needed to merge Muñoz Marín’s ideas on democracy and culture with an image that could appeal to a large number of Puerto Ricans.

To accomplish this, Muñoz Marín and the Populares implicitly broke with the ideas of La Gran Familia Puertorriqueña by setting aside the contributions of African and indigenous cultures. They focused on the Spanish and U.S. influences and overlooked other contributions to Puerto Rican civilization. As of the 1930s, few intellectuals saw blacks or Tainos as civilized races and therefore they disregarded them.

Muñoz Marín’s focus on Euro-U.S. civilization narrowed his view of what constituted culture. Through that perspective, he developed a political party and philosophy that built upon the history and societies he valued most. In Historia del Partido Popular Democrático, Muñoz

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54 Ibid, 68-69.
Marín examined how individualism and democracy differed under Spanish and U.S. cultures. He outlined how Spanish individualism created an ineffective democracy while U.S. individualism promoted an organized and regulated democracy. Muñoz Marín failed to distinguish clearly between Spanish and U.S. individualism, but he argued that he perceived the connection between both as beneficial for Puerto Rico.\(^{55}\)

If that link between Spanish and U.S. cultures was to benefit Puerto Rico, it became imperative for Muñoz Marín to eliminate anything that could get in the way of that merger. By focusing his construction of Puerto Ricanness on the group he considered the most “European” in Puerto Rico, he was able to negotiate the Spain-U.S. colonial difference and present an image that fit the racial parameters Euro-U.S. culture considered necessary for civilization. He could then use the cultural products of that group, the jíbaro, to exemplify advanced development. By interlacing culture with democracy, Muñoz Marín also placed being civilized in the political arena. The performance of politics thus became a way by which Puerto Rico could demonstrate its progress towards Euro-U.S. culture. The exercise of democracy through elections, and, more importantly, the fairness of that process could show the United States the ability of Puerto Rico to progress. A roadmap towards this goal was drawn that depended on the ability of the Populares to ensure that Puerto Ricans did not allow their votes to be bought or sold.

The Partido Popular Democrático was Muñoz Marín’s tool for developing a puertorriqueñidad that embraced the positive qualities of both colonial cultures. It was also his answer to the divisive political environment that existed in Puerto Rico in 1938. He pursued both by utilizing the image of the jíbaro as a physical representation of the Spanish past and a unifying entity for late 1930s Puerto Rico. The PPD took that persona and crafted an identity to

\(^{55}\) Muñoz Marín, Historia del Partido Popular Democrático, 30-33.
promote U.S.-style democratic structures and economic proposals. To sell its vision, the party began a newspaper called *El Batey* where it could present its political discourse.

Yet the PPD, with Muñoz Marín as the political face of the party, encountered a very large problem in 1938. To achieve a victory in 1940, the party needed to appeal to a substantial number of Puerto Ricans who had historically been alienated from the political system. Their only participation in politics came through the common practice of having their votes bought by parties before the elections. Muñoz Marín and the Populares focused on convincing people that their vote mattered and that the other political parties were not interested in representing the common people anymore. They argued that large money interests controlled the major parties. Muñoz Marín made these points through *El Batey* and two years of constant campaigning. The Populares focused their political discourse on three main points: its New Deal-style economic plans, the indignity of selling votes, and the elimination of political status as an issue in the 1940s elections.

*El Batey* was printed and distributed about every two weeks. The medium gave Muñoz Marín—who was editor and contributor—a space in which to develop his vision for the election. Moreover, the approach allowed the party to articulate its platform directly to readers and through mediated communication to illiterate members of society. It was common to have party supporters read *El Batey* to groups of men and women at small gatherings and evening

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56 The economic plan proposed by the PPD involved passing laws to protect farmers from losing their land through mortgage defaults, removal of the tax on salt, removal of the tax on houses valued at less than one thousand dollars, enforcement of land ownership restrictions (based on acreage), creation of the “Banco del Pueblo” to help workers and farmers with credit, establishment of commissions to help stabilize market prices on locally produced goods, establishment of a minimum wage, limiting land ownership by large corporations, promotion of Puerto Rican products in the U.S., relief for drivers of public (taxi) cars, and other measures to help many of the poorest sectors of Puerto Rico. For further reading see Carrión Morales, 246-247.
meetings. It also gave Muñoz Marín a place to formulate his idea of melding Spanish heritage with U.S. democratic institutions. The first issue of *El Batey* was published the second fortnight of March 1939. It presented a letter written by Muñoz Marín to the “hombre del campo” (man of the countryside). In it he declared that *El Batey* was the first newspaper written for the “hombre del campo.” Its purpose was to educate and inform him of issues that affected his life. Muñoz Marín laid the foundation for the three main points of the PPD’s campaign and directly connected these topics to the improvement of the lives of the “hombres del campo” (i.e. the jíbaros). Additionally, he outlined the other parties’ responsibility for the socioeconomic situation on the island. He discussed a three-pronged approach to democratizing Puerto Rican society that was grounded on the same idea of democracy he would present in the 1940 article “Cultura y Democracia.” Muñoz Marín placed a strong emphasis on opposing the selling of votes because it was a direct attack on the electoral process. Furthermore, in referring to the collusion between large financial institutions and the political parties, he asked

> ¿Cómo se arregla esa situación? Se arreglará el día que el pueblo gobierne. ¿Cuándo gobernará el pueblo? Cuando el pueblo no venda su voto ni permita que nadie lo venda sin ser objeto de desprecio en su barrio (How is the situation resolved? The situation is resolved when the people govern. When will the people govern? When the people stop selling their vote and do not permit anyone to sell their vote without being the object of contempt in their neighborhood).

Muñoz Marín was able to begin the process of creating a more organized, and presumably U.S.-style, democracy by presenting the selling of votes as the biggest obstacle to the betterment of economic and social life. Suffrage integrity was the first step in proving that Puerto Ricans were

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57 It is important to note here that the use of a newspaper to promote a political agenda was not new in Puerto Rico. Like many ideological movements in Latin America and around the world at this time, the *Populares* used print media to clearly present a political view.


59 Ibid.
a civilized people. It was also a stepping-off point for a process that could transform the island into a modern society, albeit an idealized notion of what modernization meant.

The first issue of *El Batey* also connected the money used by parties to buy votes to large businesses on the island. In one article, Muñoz Marín wrote that

> todos los partidos se han parecido en dos cosas, en que aceptan dinero de los grandes para comprar el voto de los pequeños, y en que desprecian al electorado, porque creen que se compra (all the parties are similar on two points, in that they accept money from big ones to buy the votes of the little ones, and in that they disregard the electorate, because they believe it can be bought).

Muñoz Marín never outlined who or what these businesses were, because that was not his purpose. The paramount importance for him and the party was to focus on the development of democracy.

> *El Batey*, he claimed, was there so the “pueblo campesino entienda, se libere del engaño, y gobierne democráticamente” (people of the country can understand, liberate themselves from deception, and govern democratically). He added that “*El Batey viene a hablarle al campesino para que se prepare a salvarse a sí mismo*” (*El Batey* comes to speak to the peasant so he can prepare to save himself). The advocacy of an uncorrupted democratic process served numerous purposes. Politically, the party was founded on Euro-U.S. ideals of representational democracy and buying votes undermined the free exercise of electoral rights. Practically, as a new party distanced from large numbers of wealthy elites, the PPD did not have access to the funds needed to engage in this practice. Moreover, this was a major step in creating a more modern (meaning industrialized and economically just), civilized Puerto Rico. For Puerto Rican culture to claim a space among the other cultures of Western Civilization, it had to develop an effective democratic

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60 Ibid.  
61 Ibid, 2.  
62 Ibid, 3.  
system. It was a sign of maturity and progress that would help restore the self-government U.S. officials had stripped from elites.

The importance of this issue for Muñoz Marín and the party’s political future was evident in the frequency of articles throughout El Batey dedicated to this topic. In the third issue of the newspaper, published the second fortnight of April 1939, the front page had an article by Muñoz Marín titled “Como Pedro Medina no vendió su voto” (How Pedro Medina did not sell his vote).64 The article told the story of a man named Pedro Molina who was offered money for his vote by a political leader who had helped him in a time of need. Notwithstanding his moral debt to the man, Pedro did not sell his vote; he would instead repay his debt later in an honorable manner. Whether the story was truthful or not cannot be proven, but the ever-present need to remind people not to sell their vote was clear. Almost every issue of El Batey from March 1939 to the 1940 elections in November had either an article or advertisement reminding the reader that votes were secret and they should not be sold.

El Batey served as much more than just a tool to fight the selling of votes. It also laid out the PPD’s economic platform, refuted attacks by other parties, and familiarized its readers with the insignia of the party. By October 1940, the paper dedicated an issue to recapping everything it had taught its readers, especially the “hombres del campo.” The issue discussed how the newspaper had outlined the abuses being committed by the political parties in power against the common man, the lack of enforcement of the minimum wage law, the problem with too much party loyalty, the specifics of the party’s platform and the importance of not selling votes—all key points that Muñoz Marín felt kept Puerto Rico from being seen as equal to the United States.

64 “Como Pedro Medina no vendió su voto,” El Batey, April 1939, Sección IX: El Batey, box 8, document FLMM-IX-P-121a, FLMM.
and other civilized nations. The issue (see appendix #1) emphasized this point by connecting the act of voting with the international struggle for democracy. It stated that

*El Batey les ha enseñado también para qué sirven los votos bajo la democracia que está defendiendo el presidente Roosevelt ante el mundo. El derecho a votar no es para hacer un jueguito de política* (El Batey has taught you the utility of votes under the democracy that is being defended by President Roosevelt around the world. The right to vote is not a political game).  

This connection to Franklin D. Roosevelt was telling. Roosevelt and his New Deal policies were very popular in Puerto Rico, because the administration included the island in the efforts to end the Great Depression through the creation of the PRRA. It was also very natural for Roosevelt to be associated with Muñoz Marín for, as we will see in chapter three, Muñoz Marín was often the face of the New Deal in Puerto Rico. The link with Roosevelt also legitimized the attempts of the Populares to align their efforts with Euro-U.S. democratic institutions.

The language used in the article alluded to another goal in the populist campaign of the PPD. As Conniff outlined in his definition of populism, part of the approach used by populist leaders was strongly rooted in educating people. The Populares made this focus clear by using words like “enseñado” (taught). Muñoz Marín’s and the Populares’ rhetoric presented in *El Batey* was educational. It was meant to enlighten readers and give them the knowledge they needed to comprehend the world and make better decisions.

The role of educator was one often denied to Puerto Ricans in the world of politics. Compounding the issue, colonial officials frequently pointed to the lack of education to demonstrate to Puerto Ricans why they were not ready to govern themselves. By taking control of the teaching of the “hombre del campo,” the PPD could more effectively argue that the steps necessary to achieve self-governance were being taken. The ability to progress and develop was

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65 “Lo que les ha enseñado ‘El Batey’,” *El Batey*, October 1940, Sección IX: El Batey, box 8, document FLMM-IX-P-109, FLMM.
presented and instilled in the populace. If the elections could be won using these methods, Puerto Ricans could prove their desire and capability to become a civilized, modern people. In the October 1940 issue of *El Batey*, the PPD took its last opportunity to explain the importance of every vote before the November 5 elections.

A big part of the party appeal was the iconography created by the Populares through the party’s insignia. Its design alluded to the idealized understandings the founders of the PPD had about the jíbaro. The October edition distinguished the emblem of the PPD from other party insignias by featuring it on the cover, as had other issues. In addition, the reader encountered the jíbaro with a pava (traditional straw hat) at the end of random articles and on every page (see appendix #2). The design itself became a visual tool that, together with the articles, reminded the “hombre del campo” who the party was representing and what was valued as the most Puerto Rican identity on the island. The profile slowly began to represent for the readers of the newspaper the workers and farmers of the island—the most authentic Puerto Ricans—and not just the mountain jíbaros.

On July 21, 1938, Muñoz Marín, along with prominent lawyer and future president of the Puerto Rican Senate, Samuel R. Quiñones, and Dr. Francisco M. Susoni, future Speaker of the Puerto Rican House of Representatives, had selected the party’s insignia. Antonio J. Colorado drew the image. A friend of Muñoz Marín, Colorado was an artist, journalist and later professor at the University of Puerto Rico. According to an interview with Colorado’s son conducted by Angel Collado Schwarz, Muñoz Marín asked Colorado to design the insignia of the PPD using

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66 “Lo que le ha enseñado...”, 3.
67 Muñoz Marín, *Historia del Partido Popular Democrático*, 96. It needs to be stated that Dr. Francisco M. Susoni left the PPD in the late 1940s and ran against Muñoz Marín in 1948 for the governorship of Puerto Rico—the first time Puerto Ricans were able to vote for governor. Susoni ran as the candidate for the independence party.
the image of the jíbaro. Colorado developed various options and Muñoz Marín decided on the profile of the peasant with the straw hat.\textsuperscript{69} What directly inspired the image was not clear, but it became apparent that the PPD wished for the insignia to represent a regular “campesino.”

The use of red as the color of the insignia was partly inspired by the desire to connect to the social justice ideals associated with socialist political movements. Moreover, it made for an easily identifiable image. One can also imagine that it had the indirect effect of deflecting any connotation of whiteness or blackness, though no clear evidence exists for this. Whether it was the intent or not, other PPD statements added to the complexity relating to the color of the insignia.

In an October 1940 issue of El Batey, the PPD presented readers with what they would see in the ballots when they went to vote. The article entitled “La UNICA insignia del Partido Popular Democrático es la que más se parece a usted mismo” (The ONLY insignia of the Popular Democratic Party is the one that looks most like you) attempted to clarify which insignia Puerto Ricans should look for by connecting the attributes of the image to those of the voter. The article also clarified an issue about the color of the emblem in that particular newspaper issue. The story assured its audience that the insignia “se publica en tinta negra porque el Gobierno imprime la papeleta de votar en tinta negra” (is published in black ink because the government prints voting ballots in black ink).\textsuperscript{70} The statement was in part presented to avoid voter error, but it also negotiated the insignia’s blackness and the lack of the red color the party used.

It was not hard to envision a situation where a voter would go into the voting booth looking for the insignia that El Batey stated was the one that most resembled him or her and then


\textsuperscript{70} “Lo que les ha enseñado...,” 1.
decide that none did because the *pava* insignia was black and he or she was not black. Though that scenario was probably not very likely, it was quite telling that *El Batey* chose to focus directly on clarifying why it was printed in black. The same message could have been transmitted in ways that focused less on the color and more on the design. The article could also have eliminated the doubt over color by stating that it did not matter in which color the emblem was printed as long as it was the insignia with a man wearing a *pava*. Whichever the motive for this comment was, the possibility of it being connected to any specific understanding of blackness—as opposed to whiteness—was neutralized.

The party also negotiated obstacles for promoting civilization and progress through its insignia. In the populist tradition of paying particular attention to how an image was crafted, the way the image was drawn and framed was very important. Placing the silhouette of the *jíbaro* on the emblem clearly demonstrated a desire to associate with the folklore and persona of the Puerto Rican peasant. The PPD’s banner alluded to the belief that the culture of the *jíbaro* was a foundation of Puerto Rico’s past. It was not, though, the future the Populares had in mind for Puerto Ricans. By its design, the insignia asked Puerto Ricans to think of the past, possibly in a nostalgic way, but not to project that past into the island’s future. Though the PPD wished to appeal to the traditions of the *jíbaro*, it needed to leave a door open to promote changes that would modernize Puerto Rico, prove the capability to civilize, and allow elites to regain power through the development of further self-governance. The insignia of the *Populares* was a visual representation and reminder of the party’s balance between Puerto Rico’s past and its future.

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71 Suffrage was extended to Puerto Rican women in 1929. For further reading on the women’s suffrage movement in Puerto Rico see María de Fátima Barceló Miller, *La lucha por el sufragio femenino en Puerto Rico, 1896-1935* (San Juan: Ediciones Huracán, Inc., 2006).
Through the presentation of the PPD insignia in every issue of El Batey and the discourse of democracy and voter responsibility, Muñoz Marín was able to create a textual space where he idealized notions of the *jíbaro*. The growing relationship between the Populares and the *jíbaro* persona allowed him to pursue the third purpose of the party that he identified in 1941: “*integrar el pueblo de Puerto Rico en una sola cultura*” (to integrate the people of Puerto Rico into one culture). Through this unity, Muñoz Marín viewed his party as leading the Puerto Rican people in a linear progression towards civilization and the establishment of a modern society.

Luis Muñoz Marín and the Partido Popular Democrático in 1940 politically aligned many Puerto Ricans behind specific ideals of democracy and social justice. By using the image of the *jíbaro*, he was able to re-conceptualize Puerto Ricanness around a claim of whiteness. Through a campaign that highlighted voting responsibility and economic development, the Populares developed a populist ideology that attempted to bridge the interstitial spaces between Spanish and U.S. culture. Notions of whiteness were injected in their political discourse through Euro-U.S. ideas of democracy and progress. Moreover, the party’s focus on educating through its campaign rhetoric directed at the “*hombre del campo*” allowed it to deflect the U.S. officials’ infantilization of Puerto Ricans, especially the elite. The balance the Populares achieved between promoting whiteness and appealing to large segments of Puerto Ricans regardless of their racial association allowed the PPD to form a populist movement that wrested power away from the Coalición in a narrow victory. It was an event that became a preamble to the landslide political success of 1944.

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For 1940, though, the party needed a vehicle to convey the three main points of its campaign to the masses on the island. It was constructed around the traditional identity of the jíbaro. The PPD, through its insignia and constant appeal to peasants and working-class Puerto Ricans, was able to position itself as the party that was concerned about ordinary Puerto Ricans and their welfare. This image, along with the party’s New Deal-style platform, allowed the PPD to gain control of the Senate in 1940. The political success facilitated Muñoz Marín’s transformation of overt racial rhetoric from the 1920s into a cultural rhetoric of democracy, progress and civilization attached to the values of the jíbaro. These values then became the foundation of a modern society and a modern Puerto Ricanness. The election itself solidified his views about Puerto Rican identity by giving his party governmental power and acceptance. It began a shift that would change the lives of all Puerto Ricans.

By 1944, the PPD had gained full dominance of Puerto Rico’s legislature and was on its way to a complete control of the island’s politics that would not end until 1968. Luis Muñoz Marín remained as the head of the party until 1964. In 1948, after securing Puerto Ricans the ability to vote for their governor, Muñoz Marín became the first Puerto Rican elected to that position. In 1952, along with the PPD, he created a political status known as the Estado Libre Asociado (Free Associated State or ELA) and entered into a relationship with the United States in which Puerto Rico was defined as a commonwealth. In many ways, this status—though still viewed as colonial by many Puerto Ricans—brought to fruition Muñoz Marín’s dream of creating a Puerto Rican culture that embraced positive aspects of Spanish and U.S. culture and negotiated their colonial difference.

As part of this new status, the PPD-controlled government wrote and ratified a constitution. It was the ultimate political proof of the civilization the Populares had sought since
1938 with their campaign against vote selling. It was also a direct opposition to U.S. emasculation and infantilization of the political class. The 1952 Constitution accomplished this by quite literally establishing a new set of rules for the patria, the homeland, that was dictated by and agreed upon by Puerto Ricans in Puerto Rico. It was important that it was not crafted and implemented from Washington D.C. like all other major ruling laws had been.

Throughout its time in power, the party implemented massive economic reforms that industrialized Puerto Rico and moved the island from a poor agricultural economy to a manufacturing- and service-based economy. The changes that came about after 1940 pushed Puerto Rico into a more autonomous relationship with the United States, but the cultural ideology presented in those elections promoted an understanding of puertorriqueñidad that eliminated overt racial rhetoric from discourses on identity yet normalized the privileging of whiteness.

The success of the unspoken whiteness of the PPD’s Puerto Ricanness left questions unanswered: How and when did racial divisions develop? How did the borders between whiteness and blackness in Puerto Rican identity get constructed? To answer these questions we must move our attention away from the events of 1940 on the island. We must traverse the interstitial spaces between the experiences of white- and Afro-Puerto Rican immigrants in New York City in the late-nineteenth century. Specifically, we need to examine how the separatist movement of the 1890s excluded blackness from puertorriqueñidad and implemented a racial identity border.
Appendix #1:

**LO QUE LES HA ENSEÑADO “EL BATEY”**

Desde hace un año y medio está saliendo EL BATEY. EL BATEY ha enseñado muchas cosas a los campesinos y a toda la gente que ha sufrido bajo los maltratos de partidos. Lo primero que les ha enseñado EL BATEY es que todos dieran derecho a que se les trataran como hombres y como mujeres. Para repasarlas hay que encontrar bien claras las cosas.

EL BATEY les ha enseñado que no se dañas coches como los cigarrillos. EL BATEY ha enseñado también para qué usan los votos bajo la democracia que está definiendo el presidente Roosevelt antes del mundo. El derecho a votar no es para hacer un juego de política. Es para que los campesinos y el pueblo en general puedan defenderse de los que han mantenido miles de penas. EL BATEY les ha enseñado que el voto no es para hacerse al mismo partido, toda la vida. Se vota por un partido y cuando llega el gobierno se ve el camino y se equivoca. Y si no cumplen el voto en tomar a ese partido y tratar con otro.

EL BATEY les ha enseñado a ustedes que ustedes han sufrido igual bajo todos los partidos y orgullose porque les han dado sus votos a los partidos y orgullose que comprobar votos. Muchos de ustedes no han vendido sus votos nunca. Pero han votado por partidos que los compren votos a otros. Para comprar esos votos tienen que coger dinero a los explotadores de todos lados y eso no es que todas las posibilidades hay que que hacer para que el explotador que no se convierta a la que dan el dinero para comprar los votos.

EL BATEY les ha enseñado a ustedes por qué se hace una contribución de un centavo a la sal para beneficio de las corporaciones de papeles que son las que pagan con el turismo. Como las corporaciones dan dinero a los partidos, ellos los venden en la sal que ustedes compran para el alfabeto de sus cosas.

EL BATEY les ha enseñado a ustedes que no se visten cumpliendo la Ley de Banderas Minúsculas que beneficia a los trabajadores, no faculta al alcalde. Los demás partidos pasaron por una vez en el estado rinden en las fiestas valoradas.

EL BATEY les ha enseñado a todos que los partidos políticos no son capaces que sí no cumplen con ustedes.

La UNICA insignia del Partido Popular Democrático es la que más se parece a usted mismo. — Haga una sola cruz.

El Partido Popular Democrático va adquiriendo las alianzas, coaliciones a mujeres. Para votar por el Partido Popular Democrático no hay que hacer dci un tres cosas. Para votar por el Partido Popular Democrático hay que hacer una sola cruz. Esta cruz debe hacerse bajo la única índole del Partido Popular Democrático. Esta cruz no puede ningún animal, ninguna ave, ningún pájaro. El Partido Popular Democrático no es partido de animales, de ave de palomas. Por eso un único símbolo es la cruz de un solo hombre, la cruz de un solo hombre. Por eso un único símbolo es la cruz de un solo hombre que se llama “el número uno”. La cruz es la única insignia del Partido Popular Democrático. Votando por el Partido Popular Democrático, ya no será de Asf en las elecciones.

**Pida RON POPULAR**

UN RON DE CALIDAD SUPERIOR AL ALCANCE DE TODOS

Fabricantes

Licoerías Santamaría y L. Ibel & CIA.

Caguas, P. R.

_**TIERRA-LIBERTAD**_

Vote X Así
Chapter 2: Controlling 1898 and Affirming an Identity Border: Henna, Schomburg, and the Exclusion of Blackness from Puerto Ricanness

The Partido Popular Democrático constructed a vision of Puerto Ricanness inspired by its charismatic leader Luis Muñoz Marín. At the time of the party’s creation, Muñoz Marín had spent much of his life in the United States, and most of his formative years in New York City and Washington D.C. As a result of the political work of his father, Luis Muñoz Rivera, Muñoz Marín’s youth was filled with experiences that put him in contact with the Puerto Rican diaspora and its key leaders. It was a group that had a long tradition of activism, and it took an active role in late-nineteenth century events that led to the U.S. war against Spain. Muñoz Marín later admitted in his public memoirs that the interactions he had with this diaspora informed his ideology and the policies he pursued. Considering the importance Muñoz Marín gave those leaders and their role in furthering the whitening myth known as La Gran Familia Puertorriqueña, it is imperative to examine their actions and their effects on the formation of puertorriqueñidad. To that end, I begin my analysis with the conflict that brought Puerto Rico into the United States.

In 1898, Puerto Rican history changed in a dramatic way. The colonial ways of life that developed throughout nearly 400 years of Spanish rule suddenly faced a new power that sought to alter every aspect of the island. The United States invasion of Puerto Rico during the Cuban-Spanish-American War expanded the imperial goals of this new global player, but it was not a unilateral act. Many Puerto Ricans took an active role in the process that led to the conflict between these two empires. They challenged Spanish authority and eventually formulated views of the island’s identity that became the foundation for modern puertorriqueñidad.
To be able to grapple with how the groundwork for that new Puerto Ricanness was laid, it is essential to examine how the imperial clash opened opportunities for new interpretations of Puerto Rican identity. The war created a space where the colonial difference between the Spanish and U.S. empires could be negotiated. It was not just within physical locations on the island and the U.S. mainland that the colonial difference was contested, but it was also in the abstract consequences of forcing a people to move from one imperial ideology to another. The interstitial space between the structures of the two empires was where the colonial difference resided. That area was, as Mignolo defined it, “where local histories inventing and implementing global designs” could be contested. In Puerto Rico, that negotiation originated with Puerto Rico’s transformation from a Spanish *colonia* to a U.S. colony. It was a change that affected Puerto Rican identity at every level of society.

The physical and abstract nature of the colonial difference took varied shapes at different times in Puerto Rican history. In the 1930s, violent clashes between separatists from the Nationalist Party, who idealized the Spanish tradition, and U.S. officials on the island physicalized the contestation of the colonial difference by pitting the ideological beliefs of the two imperial traditions directly against each other. The consequences were violent. As already noted, in 1935 a police shooting resulted in the death of four Nationalist university students who were protesting in favor of their party’s leader, Pedro Albizu Campos. In 1936, two Nationalists, Hiram Rosado and Elias Beauchamp, assassinated Colonel E. Francis Riggs, head of the island’s police force; they in turn were killed by the police after their arrest. In 1937, during a scheduled march by the Nationalist Party, police forces opened fire into the gathering, killing nineteen and wounding upwards of 200 people. These physical manifestations were extreme, but they were

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1 Mignolo, ix.
also just one type of contestation of the colonial difference. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Puerto Rican migrants in New York contested it through how they imagined a new community, nation, and identity for Puerto Rico.

During the decades before 1898, numerous Puerto Ricans picked up the torch of struggle against Spanish colonial rule. Lola Rodríguez de Tío, Segundo Ruiz Belvis, Luis Muñoz Rivera, Mariana Bracetti, and many others mounted movements to achieve autonomy and/or independence from Spain. Though independence was never gained, events like the armed rebellion of 1868, known as the Grito de Lares, left Puerto Rican elites with a desire to define national identity, as well as how the pueblo could be best served and protected. Puerto Ricans who opposed Spanish power often found themselves relegated to living in exile because of their views. Two such Puerto Ricans were José Julio Henna (1848-1924) and Arturo Alfonso Schomburg (1874-1938).

Treating the experiences of these two men in New York as locations within the colonial difference exposes the gaps that existed between their understandings of puertorriqueñidad. I treat these holes as the interstitial space from which to engage in border thinking. This approach accomplishes two goals. The first is to unravel Henna’s racialized construction of Puerto Ricanness. The second is to show how Schomburg was left on the outskirts of Puerto Rican identity due to the marginalization of blackness.

Henna and Schomburg constitute two generations of the nineteenth-century Puerto Rican diaspora. They also represent differing views on race, gender, nation, and identity. Both took part in revolutionary actions associated with the Cuban Revolutionary Party of the 1890s, and each developed a body of work that was celebrated by their peers. Henna and Schomburg spent their exile in New York City, and died there a decade and a half apart.
Though their experiences converged at multiple points, each man developed a view of Puerto Rico, Puerto Ricans, and self-identity that resulted in distinct life goals and social pursuits. Henna sought to inform politicians in Washington, D.C. on the civilization and whiteness of Puerto Ricans, while Schomburg undertook the challenge of rediscovering the history and contributions of people with African ancestry. Each presented his case for what he visualized as a future for their people. Moreover, they lived the ideals that they professed, and in doing so, laid the basic groundwork for the puertorriqueñidad that informed elite oppositions to U.S. colonial control in the early 1900s and the jibarista populist movement of Luis Muñoz Marín. Henna informed this process by directly defining who was Puerto Rican. Schomburg, through his move away from the nationalist movement, showed the marginalization of Henna’s views. The consequence of that alienation was that Schomburg’s ideas did not inform Muñoz Marín. Instead, Schomburg channeled his energies towards the African American experience in the Americas. Through a look at both men and their ability, or lack thereof, to connect themselves to Puerto Ricanness, we can see how modern Puerto Rican identity was racialized.

José Julio Henna was born to a well-to-do family on the 24th of May of 1848 in the southern Puerto Rican town of Ponce. His father was a white Englishman and his mother was of Spanish descent. In 1862, according to his friend and biographer Roberto H. Todd, Henna went to Saint Thomas to study at Saint Raphael’s College. ² Afterwards, he travelled through Europe and lived in France for two years. Upon returning to Puerto Rico, he became involved in the revolutionary movement that was growing on the island. In 1868, Henna was forced to leave Puerto Rico by the Spanish government and settled in New York. He graduated from Columbia College with a medical degree in 1872.

² Roberto H. Todd, José Julio Henna, 1848-1924 (San Juan: Cantero, Fernandez & Co. Inc., 1930), 5.
For the next two decades, Dr. Henna focused his efforts on building a medical practice. He worked in Paris and London for two years. Henna returned to New York in 1874, and established the French Hospital. He maintained an active practice in Manhattan, served the French and Bellevue Hospitals, and was the doctor of choice for most Puerto Ricans migrating to New York until his death in 1924.³

By the 1890s, Henna’s status among Puerto Ricans in New York had grown considerably. His role as doctor for the community facilitated his development as a leader for Puerto Rican exiles. Moreover, his revolutionary credentials from the 1860s allowed him to position himself as a constant patriot for Puerto Rican independence from Spain. That experience appealed to much of the New York Puerto Rican community because a large number of its members were political exiles as well. By 1896, the position of elder leader made Henna a logical choice to head up the Partido Revolucionario Cubano (PRC) organization that unified the different Puerto Rican clubs that supported the Cuban war for independence from Spain, a struggle that had been going on intermittently since 1868. On December 22, 1895, the PRC’s Puerto Rican members met to create the Sección Puerto Rico or Puerto Rico Section of the party, and Henna was elected its president. Attending the meeting was a young man who had already showed interest in the movement, Arturo Alfonso Schomburg.⁴

Arturo Schomburg was born out of wedlock in San Juan, Puerto Rico on the 24th of January of 1874. His father was Carlos Schomburg, a merchant of Puerto Rican and German descent, and his mother was María Josefa, a black midwife and laundress from the Danish West


Indies island of Saint Croix. Schomburg grew up among the working class of Puerto Rico and completed his early studies in San Juan. He later attended Saint Thomas College in the Virgin Islands. In 1891, the seventeen year-old moved to New York City where he established himself in a small community of Cuban cigar makers.5

From accounts presented in Flor Piñero de Rivera’s biography of Schomburg and Jesse Hoffnung-Gorskof’s study on the changing cultural identifications of the Afro-Puerto Rican, Schomburg’s motivations to move to New York may have been ideological and influenced by his education in Puerto Rico. Though Schomburg had some training in cigar making, his strong interest in Cuban events was partly due to his early studies on the island and his admiration for the work of José Julián Acosta, a key figure in nineteenth-century Puerto Rican education. Acosta was also active in supporting abolition and further autonomy from Spain. Schomburg’s desire to join the revolutionary movement-taking place within the Cuban exile community in New York pushed him quickly to carve out his own space in the struggle.

Upon arriving in New York, Schomburg joined the Masonic lodge Sol de Cuba, comprised primarily of Cuban and Puerto Rican cigar makers of African descent. The move was natural for someone from Latin America who sought to integrate him or herself into progressive activities. Freemasons in the Caribbean had a long tradition of promoting liberal reforms through political means, whereas U.S. masons tended to pursue social ones.6 In 1892, along with

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5 Flor Piñero de Rivera, Arturo Schomburg, un puertorriqueño descubre el legado histórico del negro: Sus escritos anotados y apéndices (San Juan: Centro de Estudios Avanzados de Puerto Rico y el Caribe, 2004), 18; Elinor DesVerney Sinnette, Arthur Alfonso Schomburg: Black Bibliophile and Collector (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), 7-14.
Rosendo Rodríguez, an Afro-Puerto Rican cigar maker, Schomburg helped found the club Las Dos Antillas in support of the PRC.⁷

Schomburg was active in those efforts until the end of the Cuban-Spanish-American War in 1898. By that time, he had moved away from the struggle for independence in Puerto Rico. Schomburg slowly became more involved in efforts to document black culture and history, as well as to promote black pride in the U.S. and the world. By the 1920s, Schomburg amassed a collection of artifacts, art, books, writings, photography, and other cultural products by people of African descent in the Americas and globally. His home became an unofficial center for black culture in Harlem. Later, Schomburg sold the collection to the New York Public Library and became its curator. Schomburg’s materials, writings and continual investigative efforts greatly influenced the Harlem Renaissance—a cultural and artistic movement that promoted the “rediscovery of the significance of the African American tradition...[and looked] to build bridges, and open pathways to express demands for recognition, and then satisfy them.”⁸ His work creating and expanding the library, now known as the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, established perhaps the first space in the world for the study and documentation of cultural contributions by people from Africa and their descendants.

By the 1930s, Schomburg’s importance in black culture was cemented and his influence stretched much farther than the limits of Harlem or the island of Manhattan. Upon his death in 1938, the contributions Schomburg made to black culture were honored by naming the library he had directed after him, but his role as a secretary of Las Dos Antillas in the Puerto

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Rican drama of the late 1890s was ignored by historians until the late twentieth century. By contrast, José Julio Henna is remembered by many elites and scholars in Puerto Rico as a patriot of the movement to end Spanish rule over the island and as a pioneer of annexation to the United States. Henna’s role in the establishment of the French Hospital in New York and his contributions to the medical profession for over forty years in that city were also celebrated at the time of his passing in 1924.9

The different recollections of these two men point to the struggles within the U.S./Spanish colonial difference that existed in the Puerto Rican movement for independence. Why Henna has been consistently remembered in the story of the Cuban-Spanish-American War and Schomburg has not relates to some of the discourse and social constructions that formed as Puerto Ricans found themselves moving through the gaps between one colonial rule and the other. The neglect in honoring an Afro-Puerto Rican also highlighted how the narrative of the 1890s was crafted to promote Puerto Ricanness along a very specific notion of racial whitening that was used in the 1920s and 1930s to reassert island control over politics and society. To fully dissect this, it is necessary to unravel how these two men were influenced by the racial constructs of their times.

**José Julio Henna**

The United States that Henna found in 1868 was one that was transforming after the Civil War. The policies and political struggles of Reconstruction were taking shape, as were the repercussions of the end of slavery. In New York City, the period was marked by rapid change. Immigrants had arrived at its shores in large numbers since the 1830s and forced the metropolis to evolve. The population statistics were quite telling. François Weil wrote that “Brooklyn and

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New York counted about 220,000 inhabitants in 1830, one million in 1860, and 2.5 million in 1890.¹⁰ Henna arrived in the middle of this large influx of new residents, and, more importantly, in a period when city officials struggled with an infrastructure that could not accommodate so many people. Yet it was a moment that offered much opportunity for immigrants who could adjust quickly to the city and its society. Some of the key factors for integration into New York were based on race, language, and ancestry, which Henna was particularly well-equipped to fulfill as a person of white and English ancestry skilled in multiple languages.

We are told in Roberto H. Todd’s 1930 study that the doctor was good with languages. Todd affirmed that Henna learned English, French and Danish during his studies at St. Raphael’s College in St. Thomas, and later Swedish, Japanese and Chinese to better communicate with his patients in New York.¹¹ It is fair to assume that Henna was able to use his linguistic skills to adapt to Anglophone life in New York, a process exemplified by his success in completing medical studies at Columbia College within four years of arriving in the United States.

By 1872, Henna’s integration into U.S. society was officially complete. Among the documents Todd referenced was a copy of a U.S. passport. Todd wrote that:

*Entre los documentos dejados por el doctor Henna a su muerte, hay un pasaporte a favor de Joseph Julius Henna, M.D., firmado el 9 de abril de 1872 y fechado el 9 de abril de 1872 y firmado por el entonces Secretario de Estado, Hamilton Fish, lo cual justifica que para esa fecha era ya ciudadano americano el doctor Henna.*

Among the documents held by doctor Henna upon his death, there was a passport under the name of Joseph Julius Henna, M.D. dated April 9, 1872 and signed by the then Secretary of State Hamilton Fish, which confirms that by that date doctor Henna was already an American citizen.¹²

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¹⁰ Weill, 95.
¹¹ Todd, *Henna*, 5.
¹² Ibid, 11. It is very difficult to corroborate Todd’s references to documents. Upon Henna’s death in 1924, the doctor left all his papers, documents, and artifacts to the museum of his home town of Ponce. By the time Todd published his book in 1930, the documents were still present at the museum, but sometime between 1930 and 1974 they disappeared. By 1962, the
The description Todd provided of the passport proves to be very telling. First, it was of particular interest that Henna decided to change his name from “José Julio” to “Joseph Julius.” Though it was common to transform a name when immigrating to the United States, the use of an English name demonstrated that Henna understood the benefit of having official documentation that identified him in a form acceptable to the dominant society. Moreover, the physical descriptions provided in the document reaffirmed this acceptance. The passport outlined Henna as having a “forehead: wide, eyes: dark, nose: ordinary or regular, mouth: large, chin: rounded, hair: red, complexion: white, face: proportional.” These details made it clear that Henna was not just able to immigrate to the United States and become a U.S. citizen, but he was also able to position himself as a white member of his adopted country by 1872.

In 1874, Henna married Ada Bush (?-1927) from Buffalo, New York. The couple never had children and stayed together until Henna’s death in 1924. By the 1890s, newspaper articles and U.S. congressional records presented the doctor’s name as “J. Julio Henna.” The use of a Spanish form of his name by this time alluded to his comfort as an established resident of New York and member of its medical societies, but there was no clear reason for the change in the historical documents. The fact that Todd found this passport in the papers left by Henna at the

Museo Histórico de Ponce had been closed and the documents were in the possession of Antonio Mirabal, according to Encargado de la Propiedad Municipal Felipe Ralat (official in charge of the municipality of Ponce’s property) to Sr. Ismaro Torruella, Pres. Asamblea Municipal, Ponce, Puerto Rico, 29 May 1962, Archivo Histórico de Ponce, folder Asunto Antonio Mirabal. The current director of the archive, Leda. Gladys Tormes, stated that the materials were not at the archives when she took over in 1974 and that she has not been able to locate them.

13 Ibid, 11.
time of his death may be an indication that the doctor never officially changed his name as far as the federal government was concerned, but it was probably unnecessary for him to do so at that time. The more important aspect of how Henna used his name was that it seemed as if he felt quite natural with either version, and that the society he migrated to appeared to accept him under either name. Presumably, Henna could easily pass in the U.S. as either a man from a Latin American country, or simply as a white immigrant. This flexibility was one that Arturo Schomburg did not benefit from when he decided to travel north.

**Arturo Alfonso Schomburg**

The New York that Schomburg found in 1891 was one that had continued its dramatic changes through the nineteenth century. Not only had the city transformed itself physically numerous times and experienced a remarkable population growth, but its divisions had deepened. Weill wrote that the “metropolis of the 1880s was divided by such great economic, social, and cultural gulfs that the parts could only prevail over the whole.”¹⁵ The growing number of inhabitants created an environment that promoted boundaries between classes, ethnicities, cultures, languages, and racial groups. It was into that socially segregated world that the seventeen year-old Schomburg disembarked from an ocean steamer.

Unlike when Henna arrived two decades earlier, Schomburg lacked knowledge of English when he arrived in New York. Whereas the doctor found few obstacles to communicating, Schomburg attended night school at Central High School to learn the language.¹⁶ Additionally, the demographic breakdown of the immigrants to New York between 1860 and 1890 made the arrival of a black person more conspicuous. Though the overall number

¹⁵ Weill, 161.
¹⁶ Hoffnung-Gorskof, 9. It is not clear from the historical record why his English was poor after having attended St. Thomas College.
of black people in New York had grown from 1820 to 1890, the proportion dropped greatly. People who considered themselves black in 1820 were ten percent of the population. In 1890, that number had decreased to two percent.\(^{17}\) The Great Migration of African Americans escaping Jim Crow laws from the U.S. South would not begin until about 1910; thus Schomburg entered a city in 1891 that had progressively gotten whiter.

Schomburg seemed initially to find a space in the city among Spanish speakers. Upon his arrival, the young man joined the world of the Cuban cigar makers even though he had studied at St. Thomas College in the Virgin Islands. While Schomburg conquered the English language barrier through night school, the racial boundaries of life in the United States proved to be a much different obstacle, one that pushed him to embrace one aspect of his identity over another.

Schomburg soon gravitated towards the black community of the city. He married an African-American woman from Virginia named Elizabeth Hatcher in 1895. They had three sons and eventually moved to a predominantly black neighborhood on West Sixty-Second Street in the area known as San Juan Hill (where the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts is now located). Schomburg researcher Jesse Hoffnung-Gorskof characterized this migration from the Spanish-speaking community to the African-American community in New York by stating that

\[\ldots\text{four years after arriving in New York he [Schomburg] was a husband and a father in a home where English, presumably imbued with a strong Southern twang, was the language of his wife, in-laws, and children. From Hatcher, who died in 1900, and his two subsequent wives (both native blacks) and their families he must have learned North American black music, dance, jokes, and folklore, as well as patterns of kinship and social networks. He certainly learned to eat Afro-North American food and apparently developed a considerable fondness for it, proposing at one stage of his life to research and write a cookbook and social history of Negro cooking.}^{18}\]

\[^{17}\text{Weill, 116.}\]
\[^{18}\text{Ibid., 9.}\]
Schomburg’s pursuit of black cultural ties began in the early 1890s, but it was not something he seemed to separate from his revolutionary actions. Actually, the young man seemed to view the two associations as complementary.

The struggle to overcome the daily realities of racism was integral to Schomburg’s ideological view of the Cuban conflict against Spain. From his admiration of the Afro-Cuban hero of the Ten Years’ War, General Antonio Maceo, to his fondness for and professed friendship with the Latin American poet and revolutionary intellectual José Martí, Schomburg saw the revolution in terms of defeating colonialism and racial prejudice. In a 1931 article about Maceo, Schomburg stated that

Además de las proezas de su [Maceo] espada, su pluma nos ha legado sentimientos dignos de conservarse. “Los cubanos, no importa cuál sea su ciudadanía tienen una sola bandera, teñida con la sangre de sus mártires revolucionarios.” Esta expresión incluye la sangre de negros y blancos, pues José Martí siempre afirmó que la república nunca habría sido posible sin la fuerza y el músculo de todas las razas.

Besides his [Maceo’s] prowess with a sword, his pen has left us a legacy of sentiments worth conserving. “The Cubans, no matter their citizenship, have only one flag, colored with the blood of its revolutionary martyrs.” That expression includes the blood of blacks and whites, for José Martí always affirmed that the republic could not be made possible without the strength and muscle of all the races.19

Schomburg held these two men in the highest regard for their open discourse on race. To him, Maceo was a clear example of the equality of men regardless of race because of his achievements on the battlefield and his demonstration of leadership skills. Martí represented the intellectual ability and rationale for racial unity.

Martí’s influential article “Nuestra América” (1891) convinced people like Schomburg that Cubans were fighting for both national liberty and racial equality. While most of his essay focused on the need for social and transnational solidarity against colonial rule, Martí did not shy

away from demanding equal treatment regardless of race. In the last paragraph of the essay, Martí wrote that

No hay odio de razas, porque no hay razas. Los pensadores canijos, los pensadores de lámparas, enhebran y recalan las razas de librería, que el viajero justo y observador cordial buscan en vano en la justicia de la Naturaleza, donde resalta en el amor victorioso y el apetito turbulento, la identidad universal del hombre. El alma emana, igual y eterna, de los cuerpos diversos en forma y en color. Peca contra la humanidad el que fomente y propague la oposición y el odio de las razas.

There is no racial hatred, because there are no races. The small thinkers, the hesitant thinkers, muddle and rekindle the races of books, that the just traveler and cordial observer seek in vain in the justice of Nature, where the universal identity of man distinguishes itself in victorious love and turbulent appetite. The soul emanates, equal and eternal, from bodies diverse in form and color. He who foments and propagates the opposition and hate between races sins against humanity.  

It was this repudiation of racism and racial prejudice that attracted Schomburg to Martí’s worldview.

It was quite logical for Schomburg to embrace the factions of the Cuban revolutionary movement that professed racial equality, but that ideology was not the prevailing view the young man came across in his daily life. Schomburg was primarily considered black in Puerto Rico and in the United States. The daily interactions for him were peppered by reminders that no matter what relations he had with non-black people, at the end of the day he returned to his home, family, and friends among the black community of New York. Though the color line was not necessarily enforced as it was in the South, it was most definitely present in the northeastern metropolis. It is unclear if he embraced this designation immediately, but Schomburg gravitated closer and closer to the experiences and struggles of U.S. black society.

Schomburg immersed himself slowly into the cause of black culture. First, he delved deeply into the Cuban revolutionary movement. He joined the Masonic lodge Sol de Cuba upon

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arrival in New York. His choice of lodge was very telling. At the time, New York had two Masonic lodges made up of mainly Spanish-speaking Cubans: Sol de Cuba, founded in 1880, and El Progreso, founded in 1878. Though the Cuban community in New York was not very large, the existence of two Masonic lodges within this community pointed to an internal division that was long standing. Hoffnung-Gorskof suggested in his study on Schomburg that the lodges highlighted class and racial differences among the Cuban émigrés.

Masonic traditions were well established in Cuba and Puerto Rico. Joining a lodge was as much a practice of social integration as it was a show of status and inclusion. The organization of lodges in Latin America, as opposed to the United States, did not follow a segregated policy. Hoffnung-Gorskof showed that once in the United States, Cuban and Puerto Rican masons engaged the segregated structure of U.S. masonry. He noted that “among liberal nationalist or socialist émigrés, particularly in the independent Masonic groups like Caballeros de Luz [Philadelphia order under which El Progreso was organized], overt discrimination was expressly forbidden.” Despite official repudiation, two years after El Progreso was created, a group of Brooklyn-based Cubans created Sol de Cuba under the affiliation of the Prince Hall Grand Lodge, the New York order for “Negro Masons.” It appeared that Afro-Cubans and Puerto Ricans did not feel welcomed in the established Cuban and Puerto Rican Masonic groups.

Schomburg’s membership in Sol de Cuba eventually led to him becoming Master of the order and leading it from a Spanish-speaking Masonic lodge to one that was composed of English-speaking black members. In 1914, the name of the lodge changed from Sol de Cuba to Prince Hall Lodge. Numerous scholars have seen the lodge’s move towards U.S. black society as mirroring Schomburg’s migration from the world of Spanish-speaking Puerto Rican and Cuban

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21 Hoffnung-Gorskof, 30.
immigrant communities to the world of U.S. black society. He did not start to cross these borders, though, until two major events had occurred, the death of Martí in 1895 and the creation of the Sección Puerto Rico of the Cuban Revolutionary Party.

In the 1890s, José Martí was a leading figure within the Cuban revolutionary movement which attempted to bridge racial divides. His above-mentioned 1891 essay “Nuestra América,” published in México in the newspaper El Partido Liberal and widely circulated throughout Latin America and the U.S., became the rallying cry not only of the Cuban revolution, but of a Pan-American movement that looked to liberate itself from oppressive social structures and political regimes. “Nuestra América” was a poet’s response to the political partisanship that had overtaken the Cuban struggle to end Spanish rule. “Nuestra América” was a call to action for the PRC Martí had help found earlier that year.

The essay successfully postulated a vision of Latin America as one entity united through the shared experiences of colonialism and imperialism. América, for Martí, was made up of all the people that lived under the power of a Eurocentric elite structure. Martí condemned what he saw as Latin American imitations of U.S. and European governments and social structures. He stated that with the new Latin American generations

*el pensamiento empieza a ser de América. Los jóvenes de América se ponen la camisa al codo, hunden las manos en la masa, y la levantan con la levadura de su sudor. Entienden que se imita demasiado, y que la salvación está en crear.*

the thinking begins to be American. The youth of America pull up their sleeves, plunge their hands in the mix and lift it with the effort of their sweat. They understand that too much is imitated, and that salvation lies in creating.22

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The eighteen year-old Schomburg must have found the optimism presented by Martí towards the youth in the continent refreshing, but it was the insistence on equality for all men that fanned Schomburg’s views on race.

As an Afro-Puerto Rican in New York who taught Spanish night classes and worked as a legal aide, Schomburg read Martí with a clear understanding of the racial prejudice that dominated Latin American society. In Martí, Schomburg found an elite leader who professed a nationalism that openly included nonwhites. Moreover, Martí’s central role in the Cuban revolutionary movement gave the young Schomburg a cause to fight for in the dream of realizing a Cuban and Puerto Rican nationalism that would rise above the racial divisions of the Spanish empire.

JOINING THE REVOLUTION

Schomburg quickly moved to join Martí’s movement after landing in New York. It was no coincidence that he established himself among the cigar makers. This group, in New York as well as in Florida, had been central to the mass appeal of the Cuban revolution in the 1870s and the efforts that led to the PRC in the 1890s. The cigar makers provided the working-class legitimacy that the struggle needed to expand beyond the elite’s purposes. What was more important was that after the Ten Years War the cigar makers were the ones who continued to push for independence even when their bosses compromised with the Spanish government. In their company, Schomburg joined the independence cause by becoming the secretary of the primarily Afro-Cuban and Afro-Puerto Rican PRC club Las Dos Antillas.

Later in his life, Schomburg remembered this period as one in which he was closely involved in the revolution, though it also marked his first steps in a shift towards black culture. As part of Las Dos Antillas, Schomburg met key leaders, including Martí, and people from all over Latin America who were in solidarity with Cuban and Puerto Rican independence from Spain. He also met Afro-Latin Americans who shared his hope for racial equality. Though some scholars suspect that at times Schomburg may have exaggerated his role in the effort, the ideology and rationale presented by leaders like Martí heavily influenced his view on how Cuba and Puerto Rico could be transformed into nations founded on ideals of racial equality.24

In May 1895, the entire movement, and no doubt Schomburg personally, received devastating news. José Martí, having followed the spirit of his convictions, was killed in Cuba during an invasion effort organized by the PRC. His death at the Battle of Dos Ríos was a big blow. Although the fighting continued on and off until the U.S. intervened in the war, a large vacuum was created in the intellectual structure of the PRC and the independence conflict. The absence of Martí and his strong rhetoric of Latin American nationalism afforded those who viewed independence from Spain as a way to get closer to the United States a chance to reorganize the party.

The consequences of Martí’s death were felt at all levels of the revolution. For the Puerto Rican members of the PRC, the moment provided an opportunity to restructure their relationship with the party and strengthen their position in the post-revolution period. It was time to bring together the multiple clubs that had formed in support of Martí’s party. Puerto Ricans in New

24 Hoffnung-Gorskof, 10. For example, Hoffnung-Gorskof wrote that he suspected Schomburg “sometimes exaggerated the importance of his role in the movement, portraying himself as the secretary of the “Cuban Junta” (which he certainly was not) and claiming once to have helped save Martí from an attempted assassination (which he may have).”
York decided to meet at Chimney Hall on December 22, 1895. Roberto H. Todd laid out the purpose of this meeting in his 1899 memoir of the Puerto Rico Section of the PRC. He wrote that

*Al tomar cuerpo el movimiento insurreccional de Manzanillo, desembarcados ya en Cuba los generales Gómez y Maceo y realizado el martirio de Martí en Dos Ríos, aquellos mismos portorriqueños que le dieron su cooperación en los días de propaganda, creyeron llegado el momento de organizar en forma solemne y efectiva el Partido Revolucionario de Puerto Rico [Sección Puerto Rico].*

Once the insurrectional movement took shape in *Manzanillo* [Cuba], the generals Gómez and Maceo already disembarked in Cuba and the martyrdom of Martí had already been fulfilled in *Dos Ríos*, the same Porto Ricans that gave their cooperation in the days of propaganda, now thought the moment had arrived to organize solemnly and effectively the Revolutionary Party of Puerto Rico [Puerto Rico Section].

The new revolutionary group was named the Sección Puerto Rico del Partido Revolucionario Cubano (Puerto Rico Section). Present at the meeting were most, if not all, of the key leaders and members of the Puerto Rican exile community in New York who supported independence from Spain. They included Todd, Henna and Schomburg. It was at this meeting that we first see the name of José Henna associated with the revolutionary efforts of the PRC.

The attendees of this meeting voted Henna president of the Puerto Rico Section. They also made Dr. Ramón Emeterio Betances, veteran of the abolition movement and long-time exile in Paris, France, the General Delegate of the party. Henna and Betances had much in common. Both were exiled doctors who had been persecuted by Puerto Rico’s colonial government. Each spent time in Paris. Henna was there for only a few years, while Betances made it his home for decades. These similarities allowed them to collaborate through correspondence on the affairs of the Puerto Rico Section, though each sought a different outcome for Puerto Rico. Betances had argued since the 1850s for Puerto Rican independence. Henna, on the hand, desired Puerto Rico to separate from Spain, but he was not clear on whether he supported independence or not.

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26 Ibid., 4.
By 1895, Betances was considered an elder statesman and a revolutionary by Puerto Ricans. The affiliation of the Puerto Rico Section with Betances brought legitimacy to the new organization, especially in Puerto Rico, and drew on a long history of struggle that stretched back into the first half of the nineteenth century. In New York, though, it was Henna’s professional success and long residence in the U.S. that brought him the presidency of the Puerto Rico Section.

After 1895, Schomburg’s fervor for the revolutionary movement became less present in the written record. Schomburg was not rewarded at Chimney Hall with a position in the leadership of the Puerto Rico Section. This may reflect why his involvement waned after 1895, although the causes of this are uncertain. Yet Schomburg continued to reflect on and write about Cuba and key revolutionary figures throughout his life. By the end of the war, he had moved much more towards the struggles for black culture and history than Puerto Rican nationalism. It was also unclear from the available historical record what his view was on Henna’s election as president. What is certain in the years following Henna’s election was how strikingly different Henna’s view of the struggle was from that of José Martí, which also may have influenced Schomburg’s detachment from the Puerto Rican cause.

By July of 1896, Henna made his perspective evident in a public letter written to the people of Puerto Rico. Henna interpreted the situation in Puerto Rico as one where people needed to rise up and revolt against the Spanish empire. He used the Spanish government’s own economic statistics to argue that the island suffered oppressive practices that affected their trade and resource production. At the same time, Henna explained in his letter that Spanish officials used Puerto Rican acceptance of colonial rule as proof that their governance was not of the barbarous character that Cuban rebels had portrayed. Henna’s perspective on the movement was
in part formulated out of frustration with this consent and with the desire of many Puerto Ricans to work within the Spanish government to acquire autonomy.\(^{27}\) Moreover, his objectives for the work done by the Puerto Rico Section were strongly influenced by his admiration of U.S. institutions.

Unlike Martí, Henna believed that the U.S. provided the best opportunity for Puerto Ricans to improve their economic, political, and social situation. Where Martí had looked to the uniqueness of Latin America to create a nationalist ideology, Henna viewed the best future for Puerto Rico within the U.S. union. He alluded to this perspective in his letter of July 1896. He wrote that

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\text{Habituado á las libres instituciones de la Gran República de los Estados Unidos, donde el ciudadano lo es todo y lo puede todo por su intervención en la cosa pública, por la deliberación y el voto de sus impuestos, y su inerencia (sic) en cuanto concierne al interés procomunal, no concibo cómo tan cerca de sus costas la más atrasada nación de Europa conserva las prácticas de gobierno de la Edad Media y la negación absoluta de los derechos del hombre.}
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Accustomed to the free institutions of the Great Republic of the United States, where the citizen is everything and can accomplish anything through his own actions in the public arena, through the deliberation and vote of his will, and his action concerning the communal interest, I cannot conceive how so close to its coast, the most backward nation in Europe can conserve its governmental practices from the Middle Ages and its absolute negation of the rights of men.\(^{28}\)

Henna compared Spanish-style colonial rule and U.S.-style democratic rule based on notions of freedom. He frequently expressed in correspondence and public statements his admiration of U.S. institutions and his gratitude for being able to enjoy the freedoms provided to him as a U.S.

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\(^{27}\) Since 1887, the Partido Autonomista Puertorriqueño (Puerto Rican Autonomist Party) led by Román Baldorioty de Castro and Luis Muñoz Rivera (Luis Muñoz Marín’s father) had worked to attain autonomy from Spain. The party sought self-rule, but not independence. In 1897, the Carta Autonómica was approved in Spain. It granted Puerto Rico autonomy over the island’s legislative matters while maintaining the Crown’s control over the governor who held veto power on legislative measures. In July 1898, the autonomous government began its first legislative session.

\(^{28}\) Todd, Memorias, 56.
citizen. As president of the Puerto Rico Section, Henna guided much of the group’s work with this admiration ever present.

Todd’s memoirs of the Puerto Rico Section do not mention Schomburg after the 1895 creation of the group, even though his name appeared in a list of clubs associated with the PRC sent by the party’s New York secretary Juan Fraga to Joaquín del Castillo on March 15, 1896.29 One can only assume that Henna’s leadership must have been a large change for a man that experienced the prejudiced world of 1890s New York on a daily basis. What the talk of freedom must have sounded like to a man whose family by marriage lived in the segregated and increasingly violent world of the U.S. South would be interesting to assess. It is possible that Schomburg may have experienced some kind of alienation from the movement he had so strongly embraced.

“THEY GET WHITER ALL THE TIME”

After the Cuban-American-Spanish War and the U.S. invasion of Puerto Rico, Henna and other members of the Puerto Rico Section moved to influence the political discussion over Puerto Rico in Washington D.C. Henna, Roberto Todd and other Puerto Rican exiles had developed connections with President William McKinley’s administration (1897-1901) in the lead-up to the U.S. invasion. In later interviews, books, and memoirs, Henna claimed that his contribution to the U.S. war effort was paramount. In a 1922 interview conducted by Todd for the book Crónicas de la Guerra Hispanoamericana by historian Angel Rivero, Henna stated that he and Todd visited Washington in 1898 after the explosion on the steamship The Maine and were

...recibidos con los brazos abiertos, como se dice vulgarmente, y honradamente nos confesaron aquellos hombres que aceptaban agradecidos los datos que poníamos en sus manos, pues nunca habían pensado tener que poner sus ojos en Puerto Rico cuando planeaban sacar a España de Cuba.

...received with open arms, as is vulgarly said, and those men who accepted graciously the information that we placed in their hands honorably confessed to us they had never thought of having to feast their eyes towards Puerto Rico when planning to expel Spain from Cuba.  

The suggestion that the McKinley administration and its Department of War were not aware of the possibility of acquiring Puerto Rico in this conflict was quite absurd. His statement showed that he, and his group in the Puerto Rico Section, were willing to provide the U.S. with support and intelligence for this armed intervention. Moreover, these meetings with the U.S. President and members of his administration allowed Henna to return to Washington, D.C. after the war and offer proposals on how the United States should deal with Puerto Rico.

Henna’s desire after the war was for Puerto Rico to choose its form of government by way of an election. Todd wrote that the doctor was of the belief that the United States only wanted to liberate the colonies from Spanish rule; once accomplished, the northern power would “dejar el país a su libre determinación, es decir, que los habitantes de Puerto Rico por medio de un plebiscito declarasen si querian ser libres e independientes, o quedar bajo la soberanía de los Estados Unidos (leave the country to its free determination, in other words, that the inhabitants of Puerto Rico, through a plebiscite, declare whether they wanted to be free and independent, or stay under the sovereignty of the United States).” The rest of the Puerto Rico Section did not agree with Henna, according to Todd. After the Treaty of Paris on October 1, 1898 ended hostilities between the United States and Spain, and the subsequent establishment of a military

31 Ibid., 21.
occupation in Puerto Rico, Henna expressed disappointment with the U.S. government. Todd added that, “Los sucesos ocurridos más tarde desengañaron a nuestro compatriota [Henna] y fueron para él una decepción grande. ‘Nunca lo hubiera creído. ¡Que cándido he sido!,’ nos decía (The events that occurred later fooled our compatriot [Henna] and were for him a huge disillusion. ‘I would have never believed it. How naïve I have been!’ he would tell us).”

If Henna was deeply disappointed by the way the United States dealt with Puerto Rico after 1898, his feelings did not keep him from continuing to work towards his goals for the island in Washington. The doctor continued his efforts to influence U.S. policy by undertaking a lobbying campaign targeting senators and congressmen who were deciding the political future of Puerto Rico. On January 19, 1900, Henna even took part in a congressional hearing held by the Committee on Insular Affairs. In it, the doctor presented certain views that would have struck many Afro-Puerto Ricans negatively.

Henna’s participation in the hearing started rather uneventfully. Republican Congressman Henry A. Cooper of Wisconsin presided as chairman and began by asking Henna to provide general biographical information. After stating that he resided in New York and that he left Puerto Rico thirty years earlier, Henna told the committee how he was chosen for the Puerto Rican commission. The doctor declared that he was elected by “the Chamber of Commerce of Puerto Rico; by election of the house.” The nature of Henna’s appointment bore heavily on the legitimacy of his statements, and, for our purposes here, also clearly defined whose interests he represented. Unlike his work with the Puerto Rico Section, Henna acted as a representative of

32 Ibid.
Puerto Rican business and monied elites while in Washington. Before the end of the war, Henna was the leader of an exile community; now he was a voice for Puerto Rico, though he had not lived there since 1868.

Henna’s absence from Puerto Rico became an issue for the congressmen in this hearing. After the doctor’s opening statement on free trade and a discussion of the island’s exports, tariffs and quality of coffee and tobacco, Democratic Congressman Henry De Lamar Clayton of Alabama affirmed that if he had not been in Puerto Rico for thirty years then he did not have any personal knowledge of the conditions there. The statement began an exchange that shifted the tone of the entire hearing:

*Doctor:* I have not been there, no, sir; but I have always kept pace with that unfortunate island since I had the good fortune, I might say, of being put out of that country.

*Clayton:* How long have you been a citizen of the United States?

*Doctor:* I came here thirty years ago, and I was then under age; I was 18. When I became 21 I was an American citizen. My first move was to make my declaration.³⁴

Henna explained to the committee the circumstances under which he left Puerto Rico in 1868, and how he had continued throughout the decades since to work for the island to become a part of the United States. He also offered to Rep. Clayton his vision for how the United States should govern Puerto Rico. It was the complete disregard the U.S. government showed towards his ideas that disappointed Henna:

*Doctor:* There is only one thing that could be done for Puerto Rico, and that is, to apply the Constitution of the United States to the island as it is applied here to the Territories. I believe we ought to undergo a little apprenticeship, and at first, perhaps, the upper chamber should be a mixed chamber, half of the members elected by the assembly and the other half appointed by the President, with the consent of the Senate. In other words, I would have the municipalities perfectly free, an assembly to have the right to choose as many men as the United States Government will appoint to form the upper chamber, and to give the Governor-General the power to veto, which would be destroyed by a two-thirds vote, just as it is in this country.³⁵

³⁴ Committee Reports, 91.
³⁵ Ibid.
The statement revealed that Henna desired for Puerto Rico to be annexed to the United States. Moreover, he affirmed that he was willing to discuss the “political question” at any time the committee wished. Finally, the doctor stated his wish to have the U.S. Constitution extended to Puerto Rico.

Annexation, though, had to be done slowly. Henna presented his belief in Social Darwinism when he proposed that only half the assembly be determined by voters on the island. Democratic Congressman Robert L. Henry of Texas was intrigued by Henna’s limits to Puerto Rican representation:

*Mr. Henry:* Why do you think a part should be appointed by the President and a part elected?

*Doctor:* I believe it would be better, because we are in a condition where we would like to receive a few lessons, and there is no better way to receive lesson (sic) than to put the book in the hands of the child and tell him how to study, and that is the reason why I say if we have that upper chamber composed of members, half of whom are appointed by the President, there would be a stimulus to the others.³⁶

Equating the people of his island with children would not have been uncommon during that period. Frequently, when elites wished to characterize a group, community, or nation as not possessing the faculties to govern itself, they compared it to children lacking education and maturity. The demeaning and condescending nature of this rhetoric was consistent with prevalent views derived from Social Darwinism that attempted to apply the theory of evolution to social processes and groups. These ideas looked towards conflict to determine which groups and peoples were superior to others. Usually these concepts reflected more the ambitions and desires of the men and women who employed them than the actual conditions found in a particular society or culture. More often than not, the argument was simply a tool to justify specific economic, political, and/or military policies.

³⁶ Ibid, 92.
For Dr. Henna, the rhetoric was in keeping with his longing to see Puerto Rico become part of the United States, but it also fit perfectly with his scientific understanding of the people of the island. As a physician trained in the mid-to-late-nineteenth century, Henna accepted eugenic notions of racial hierarchy that privileged whiteness over blackness and purity over miscegenation. In the following exchange, it became clear that for Henna and the congressmen of that committee, fitness to govern was closely related to the capacity of a people to learn and become cultured, and that capacity was determined by its racial composition. The interaction also revealed that this line of questioning was very complex for the sensitivities of the period and that Puerto Ricans like Henna had much at stake in how race and racial mixing were understood. It showed that members of Congress were not certain that Puerto Ricans possessed that ability.

The discussion proceeded with a question Minnesota Republican James A. Tawney posed to Henna, challenging his assertion that many Puerto Ricans were already fit for self-government and that he knew this through his contact with people from the island in New York:

*Mr. Tawney:* Are you referring to the poor ones that reside in New York or Puerto Rico?

*Doctor:* The ones that come from Puerto Rico to New York. The people of Puerto Rico desire to learn. The system of education was wretched during the Spanish dominion. The illiteracy was more than 87 per cent. Spain did not spend more than $300,000 in the whole island for education and there are about 300,000 school children there.

*Mr. Clayton, from Alabama:* Have you read this report of the United States Insular Commission?

*Doctor:* Yes, sir. I have.

*Mr. Clayton:* And have you noticed that on page 6 it speaks of the ignorance prevailing in Puerto Rico; that “out of a population of 800,000 it has been variously estimated that from 10 per cent to 20 per cent only of the population can read and write. After full inquiry and careful estimate of the question we are of the opinion that not more than 10 per cent of the people can read and write.” Is that correct?

*Doctor:* I do not think so.

Henna quickly began to work back from his statement about illiteracy in Puerto Rico in an effort to convince Congress of the capability many Puerto Ricans had to better themselves. The interaction continued and rapidly moved to the most important aspect of proving Puerto Rican
possibilities for betterment: race. Clayton forced Henna to clarify himself about the number of people who could read:

Mr. Clayton: Do you think more than that or less than that can read and write?
Doctor: More, I think. This little pamphlet I prepared before war was declared, in my desire that the United States should acquire the island of Puerto Rico. I distributed it very largely; I sent a copy to every Senator and every member of Congress and to the Executive Departments. In this pamphlet I gave the statistics which might, perhaps, serve the purpose intended. This gives information about the roads and statistics about the population, commerce, expenses, etc.
Here is the statement of illiteracy in Puerto Rico.
The population of Puerto Rico according to the official census of December 31, 1887, which was the last census we had, is 806,708, which is composed of:
Whites-480,267
Mixed-248,690
Negroes-77,751
In “mixed” I place those that are descendants of Indians, mixed with the negro, etc. The negro population is being decreased every year.

It was quite telling that the discussion moved towards a discussion of race at this point. Henna laid bare the pivotal manner in which whiteness, for these men, affected a people’s ability to become educated and capable of self-government. It was essential for him to show clearly how Puerto Ricans were becoming whiter. In doing so, Henna demonstrated his understanding of puertorriqueñidad through the whitening narrative of miscegenation presented in the Gran Familia Puertorriqueña’s myth of Puerto Ricans being composed of a mix of three races: white, black and Indian. 37 He did so, though, by using horrific mortality statistics. The discussion continued with Rep. Clayton asking Henna why the black population was dropping:

Doctor: I believe there are more negroes that die than whites.
Mr. Clayton: And the death rate is greater than the birth rate?
Doctor: Among the negroes, yes; but the Puerto Ricans are very prolific.
Mr. Clayton: I thought that you said that the negro population was being decreased?
A Member: You misunderstand him. You mean proportionately?
Doctor: Yes, sir.

37 See Chapter One for further discussion on La Gran Familia Puertorriqueña.
Mr. Clayton: And that the increase has not been as great as the white increase?
Doctor: Yes, sir.
The Chairman: Are the negroes positively increasing or decreasing?
Doctor: Decreasing.
The Chairman: Are there fewer now than there were five years ago?
Doctor: I think so.
Mr. Clayton: I did not think I misunderstood him.
Mr. Henry: Does that cover the mulatto race?
Doctor: Yes; the yellow and the others. They get whiter all the time.
The following is the proportion of the educated and the uneducated:
Those who can read and write--96,867
Those who can only read--14,513
Those who can neither read nor write--695,328
This is the best criticism of the Spanish administration, as I have said in the pamphlet referred to. It is not the fault of the people, gentlemen; there is not a more anxious people in the world to learn. It is the fault that we have not the means, and we must have the means. The United States have (sic) taken Puerto Rico, as General Miles [leader of invading force] said in his proclamation, to promote the cause of liberty, justice, and humanity. 38

The ease with which the conversation shifted from ability to perform duties of suffrage, to education, and then to race, showed how deeply accepting of scientific racism these men were. Moreover, the casual manner in which these men discussed the death of Afro-Puerto Ricans as a desired outcome revealed their callous world views and ambitions. The testimony accentuated Henna’s ability to use whiteness personally, in other words how easily he ‘passed’ as white, and allowed his statements to build a border within Puerto Ricanness between white and black. For Henna, negotiation of the colonial difference mandated constructing a racial boundary that minimized the hybrid nature of traditional Puerto Rican identification. The miscegenation that once allowed Puerto Rican elites to promote their uniqueness from Spain, now was a liability in the new imperial ideology of the United States.

Whether consciously or not, the doctor defined Puerto Ricanness as non-black. When questioned about his belief that the “negro population is being decreased,” Henna answered

38 Ibid., 92-93.
Doctor: I believe there are more negroes that die than whites.
Mr. Clayton: And the death rate is greater than the birth rate?
Doctor: Among the negroes, yes; but the Puerto Ricans are very prolific.\textsuperscript{39}

For the doctor, and one can assume for the numerous people who asked him to represent their interests, black people in Puerto Rico were not Puerto Rican. Henna presented to the committee an identity that was very clear for him: to be Puerto Rican, to be able to claim puertorriqueñidad, a person from the island had to be white. Blackness represented a primitive state for Puerto Ricans. To be authentically Puerto Rican for Henna, one had to “evolve” to whiteness. The group of people who exemplified this definition were often the educated elite of Puerto Rico, but anyone who could claim some level of whiteness could be included. Through race, Henna expressed the existence of a gap between whites, or Puerto Ricans, on the island and black people. As Puerto Ricans contested the colonial difference between Spain and the U.S., that division matured into the interstitial space from which this study dissects the development of Puerto Ricanness. In other words, I anchor myself in that location so I can peer towards the perspectives and experiences on each side.

The approach affords a historical view unavailable to the people who undertook these actions. That is never more apparent than in Representative Clayton’s confusion over the statement that the population of negroes was decreasing but the population of Puerto Ricans was increasing. The misunderstanding alluded to a fundamental difference between Henna and Clayton over how race was viewed. For Henna, populations could be cleansed of blackness through miscegenation. It was all a matter of scientific breeding to highlight the desired race. For Clayton, race was primarily defined by purity. Only people with fully white ancestry could be

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.
defined as white. Any mixing would mean that the resulting offspring was black. The degree did not matter.

Having spent thirty years in the United States, Henna was aware of this conservative view on race. At this early moment in the U.S.’s relationship with Puerto Rico, Henna understood that it would hurt Puerto Ricans to be defined as black. Whereas under Spanish rule racial hierarchies could be fluid, under U.S. rule a clear line had to be drawn between blackness and Puerto Ricanness. An identity border had to be constructed. Henna’s comments were some of the clearest from the period that demonstrated this effort.

Whether Schomburg followed these hearings closely or not was not confirmed. It seemed likely considering the potential importance the hearings had on the governing structure of his homeland. In either case, he was not asked, or invited, to present testimony before the committee. Had he, it would be very difficult to imagine him following Henna’s ideological and racial tone. Schomburg demonstrated this in 1901 when he wrote a critique of statements made by the Puerto Rican leader of the Socialist Party Santiago Iglesias Pantin (the same man with whom Muñoz Marín campaigned during the 1920 elections) in favor of the American Federation of Labor. As Piñiero de Rivera wrote in her biography of Schomburg, “En 1901 suscribió una declaración respondiendo a manifestaciones de Santiago Iglesias en defensa de la Federación Americana del Trabajo, cuyas prácticas racistas resentían los puertoriqueños y los negros en Nueva York” (In 1901 he subscribed to a declaration responding to the manifestations of Santiago Iglesias in defense of the American Federation of Labor, whose racist practices were resented by Puerto Ricans and blacks in New York).”

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40 Piñiero de Rivera, 28-29.
Schomburg also rejected the Social Darwinism that so heavily influenced Henna in 1900. In a 1904 response to an editorial in New York’s *The Globe* that stated that Puerto Ricans were not capable of governing themselves because they were an immature people, Schomburg wrote,

*A los puertorriqueños no se nos consultó si queriamos ser parte de los Estados Unidos, ni en lo que respecta a nuestra soberanía nacional...Nosotros, como nación independiente, no lo [gobernar] haríamos peor que los cubanos. Si se quiere dejarnos a nuestro libre alberio, no faltarán hombres capacitados en Puerto Rico para conducir a nuestro pueblo a través de cuantas emergencias y peligros puedan ocurrir. ¿Por qué no se prueba?*

We Puerto Ricans were not consulted on whether we wanted to be part of the United States, nor in regards to our national sovereignty...We, as an independent nation, would not do it [govern] any worse than the Cubans. If you wish to leave us to our free accord, there would be no shortage of capable men in Puerto Rico to conduct our country through the numerous emergencies and dangers that could occur. Why not test this out?  

While Henna would have seen the need to distinguish between the elements in Puerto Rico lacking maturity and those capable of governing, Schomburg saw any accusation of immaturity as a condemnation of all Puerto Ricans. He did not divide Puerto Ricanness along racial borders. For Schomburg this was a defense of his national identity as much of blackness.

Those borders were constructed, though, and, by 1904, Schomburg already found himself on the outside of Puerto Rican affairs. No evidence existed that Schomburg ever turned his back on the struggles of his native island, but by August of 1904 he had already published his first written work focused on black culture. “Is Hayti Decadent?” presented Schomburg’s interest in the experience of a Caribbean people with African ancestry and marked the completion of a shift towards the cause to which he would dedicate his energies.

Now as a member of the black community of New York, Schomburg poured his efforts into documenting the importance of African ancestry in the history of the entire world. In the early 1900s, motivated by a desire to prove that people of African ancestry had a very rich and

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41 Ibid, 29.
important history, Schomburg began to collect documents, art, and artifacts created by Afro-peoples from the U.S., Latin America, the Caribbean, Europe, and elsewhere. By the 1920s, his collection of cultural artifacts was unmatched in the world. His home became a central point for the men and women who took part in the Harlem Renaissance, and he had become a key writer, thinker, and teacher of black culture and history. “Racial Integrity: A Plea for the Establishment of a Chair of Negro History in Our Schools” (1913), “The Negro Digs Up His Past” (1925), “The Negro Brotherhood of Sevilla” (1927), and other essays appeared in black publications nationally and cemented his status as an intellectual fighter for the rediscovery of black history and culture. As a result, his connection to Puerto Rico became more obscured, especially among his compatriots.

Schomburg’s contributions to nationalism on the island had now been eclipsed by his much more central role in the study of black culture. He maintained a clear connection to Cuban independence—especially Martí—both in his writings and public statements. By the early 1900s, he would sometimes be mistakenly referred to as Cuban. Hoffnung-Gorskof wrote that “black journalists who met him on a visit to the South in the early 1900s described him as a ‘well educated cultured Cuban gentleman...and a recognized leader in the Cuban-Spanish circles in New York City.’ These credentials were well earned.” Schomburg’s experiences with the Cuban cause allowed him to legitimize himself as a person who fought for justice and equality. It was a past that served him well in the struggles he undertook to recapture and present the history of black culture.

43 Hoffnung-Gorskof, 10-11.
Schomburg’s shift from the Latin American nationalist struggle to black culture and history was more than just a personal decision. It was a disillusionment with the way many Puerto Ricans solidified the identity border between Puerto Ricanness and blackness that Henna had articulated in 1900 into the imagining of *puertorriqueñidad*. To be Puerto Rican, an Afro-Puerto Rican had to accept a cultural nationalism that marginalized and excluded blackness. Schomburg seemed to realize this by 1904 and decided to fulfill his desire to make a difference within black culture in the U.S., the Caribbean and around the world. Henna, on the other hand, continued his exile in New York and maintained his belief that no better future could be given Puerto Rico than to annex it to the United States. Betterment for Puerto Ricans was dependent on the United States and the ability of people on the island to mature, civilize, and whiten.

The separate identities that were developed in this period by the actions of Henna and Schomburg informed generations of Puerto Ricans. The *jibaristas* that influenced Luis Muñoz Marín’s populist movement took up the whitening efforts presented by Henna in his testimony to Congress and interwove it with the traditional Puerto Rican peasant. At the same time, Schomburg’s model for Afro-Puerto Ricans suggested that the diaspora experience in the U.S. could afford a greater connection to African ancestry, but it could not provide wide acceptance within Puerto Ricanness. Nonetheless, we will see in a later chapter that many Afro-Puerto Ricans lived lives that embraced both sides of the identity Henna attempted to bisect. The divergent paths that were set by Henna and Schomburg made *puertorriqueñidad* a contested space of the colonial difference, and constructed an interstitial space that many Puerto Ricans traversed as they defined their own identity, especially when migrating to the mainland U.S.

Of course, race was just one of the ways Puerto Ricans negotiated the colonial difference between Spain and the U.S. We will see in the next chapter that gender also provided
opportunities for describing the nature and meaning of *puertorriqueñidad*. Gender played a crucial role in the development and acceptance of *jíbaro* Puerto Ricanness. Just as examining Henna’s and Schomburg’s contributions exposed an interstitial space within the racial construction of early twentieth-century Puerto Rican identity, analyzing the interstitial space between two key women of the 1920s, 30s, and 40s uncovers the gendered norms packaged within *jíbaro puertorriqueñidad*. Those two women were Muna Lee de Muñoz Marín and Inés Mendoza de Muñoz Marín.
Chapter 3: Positioning Puerto Rican Femininity: Border Thinking through the Worlds of Muna Lee and Inés Mendoza in the 1930s

As the elections of 1940 drew near, the Partido Popular Democrático concentrated on winning women over to the party’s vision, which included the racialized border identity of the jíbaro that grew out of Dr. Henna’s expressions in 1900. The PPD made an effort to reach puertorriqueñas with their arguments against the selling of votes. A clear example was an August 1939 article in El Batey that presented the comments a mujer campesina (peasant woman) made to Muñoz Marín in a neighborhood of the town of Naranjito. The article quoted the woman colloquially telling the party leader

¡Que me parta un rayo si yo dejo que mi marido venda su voto otra vez! Yo siempre había creído que eso de que él trajera aquí una comprita más grande y un poquito de ropa el día de las elecciones era bueno pa’ nosotros. Pero ahora que usted ha explicado que por eso es que yo el resto del tiempo estoy yo bregando con una olla vacía y con unos muchachitos que no tienen qué comé (sic) y con una candelita que a veces no se puede juntal (sic) y con una cuestión de que no hay medicinas y de que no hay médico, después de yo saber eso bien, ¡que me parta un rayo si dejo a mi marido vender su voto y si no le enseño a mis muchachitos que cuando crezcan sepan que eso no se jace (sic)!

May lightning strike me down if I let my husband sell his vote again! I always thought that him bringing more groceries or a few items of clothing on election day was good for us. But now that you have explained that because of that the rest of the time I have to deal with an empty pot and with kids that don’t have anything to eat and with a fire that sometimes can’t be started and with a situation in which there aren’t any medicines and that there aren’t any doctors, after I have learned of that, may lighting strike me if I let my husband sell his vote and if I don’t teach my kids that when they grow up they shouldn’t do that!¹

The authenticity of these statements was almost impossible to ascertain, but they revealed some of the key characteristics central to the gendered construction of the jíbaro-style Puerto

¹ "Lo que le dijo una mujer campesina a Muñoz Marín en un barrio de Naranjito," El Batey, March 1939, Sección IX: El Batey, FLMM.
Ricanness. The woman’s comments also alluded to the central role education played for Muñoz Marín in breaking from his emasculating relationship with Washington, D.C.

Since he was first elected to the Puerto Rican Senate in 1933, Muñoz Marín had built a relationship with the Roosevelt administration in an effort to bring New Deal reforms to Puerto Rico. The access he garnered, though, was heavily dependent on his wife’s social and professional connections. By exploring Muna Lee de Muñoz Marín’s centrality in the political achievements that positioned Muñoz Marín to establish the PPD and succeed with the new party, we can develop a deeper comprehension of the role women played in the formation of modern puertorriqueñidad. Additionally, unravelling the effect Muna Lee and her professional acquaintance Ruby Black, an influential female journalist with close ties to the FDR administration, had on the success of Muñoz Marín’s political career acquaints us with the gender dynamics that were acceptable during the early-mid twentieth century. Moreover, by taking the argument further and examining the integral importance of Inés Mendoza, Muñoz Marín’s second wife, in the 1940 campaign, we can understand how she articulated an example of the modern Puerto Rican woman. It is critical to express the importance of these women’s influence on the life of Luis Muñoz Marín, but we cannot make the mistake of thinking that he defined any of them. Nothing could be further from the truth.

As we will see, Muna Lee and Inés Mendoza had their own individual successes and ambitions before they met Muñoz Marín. Of course, their relationships with him altered their approaches and provided opportunities as well as limitations. At the very least, Muñoz Marín was a connecting thread that ensured their lives would continue to be associated with each other.

The magnitude of that entanglement was made clear to me while visiting Muna Lee’s tomb in Old San Juan. Buried with Lee were her daughter, Munita Muñoz Lee, and Viviana
Muñoz Mendoza, the first daughter of Inés Mendoza and Luis Muñoz Marín. As I stood next to that grave, I realized that the significance of these women for Puerto Rico could not be studied without employing an approach that spanned both their experiences. Particularly, it was vital to look at their contributions during the period that pushed jíbaro Puerto Ricanness into the forefront of Puerto Rican culture. To accomplish this, I anchor my analysis during the time that witnessed Muñoz Marín’s marriage with Muna Lee become irreconcilably strained, and his interactions with Inés Mendoza grow closer. These events developed slowly and stretched from the mid-1920s to the 1940s.

I treat the relationships between Muñoz Marín, Muna Lee, Ruby Black (as political liaison in Washington D.C.), and Inés Mendoza as symbolic of the gender norms the Populares sought to promote for modern Puerto Rican men and women. I take this approach because Muñoz Marín is seen among Puerto Ricans as the most influential person in the creation of the contemporary Puerto Rican experience. His government’s policies redefined Puerto Rican politics, society and culture in the twentieth century. His persona and values informed Puerto Ricanness for generations and are still used to articulate puertorriqueñidad—whether by aligning with or against him. If Muñoz Marín is so important for Puerto Rican identity, then why would we not look at the women that facilitated his success?

The relations constructed by Muñoz Marín, Lee, Black, and Mendoza can be divided into two periods. The first is dominated by the marriage of Lee and Muñoz Marín from 1919 to 1936. It is that relationship that made possible the interactions between Black and Muñoz Marín, and, as we will soon see, his ascendency in politics. The second starts in 1936 and continues until the death of Mendoza in 1990. It was marked by the partnership, both professional and intimate, of Mendoza and Muñoz Marín. Separating this time frame into two periods constructs an interstitial
space that is characterized by the unspoken ties that brought these women together and maintained their experiences intertwined for decades afterwards.²

The marriage between Lee and Muñoz Marín crumbled slowly. It lasted over two decades and was not officially finalized until well after Muñoz Marín and Mendoza had been together for almost ten years. Due to the messiness of these interactions, it is vital to analyze these interactions from an area that can peer into each relationship, and yet not favor one perspective over the other. For these reasons, the interstitial space for this chapter is found between the ending marriage of Lee to Muñoz Marín and the beginning of Mendoza’s relationship with him.

In the symbolic view of these relations, Muna Lee and Ruby Black embodied the foreign women who wanted to nurture the abilities and possibilities of the new colonial people. We can see this in how they facilitated, promoted, and actively worked with Muñoz Marín to advocate for change in Puerto Rico through direct programs with the United States government. Moreover, they helped him gain legitimacy in a political world that had often ignored Puerto Rican politicians. Inés Mendoza, instead of continuing the nurturing metaphor, developed a new role for Puerto Rican women by personifying the puertorriqueña who defended and fought for her people by standing by and with her puertorriqueño. She represented a shift towards solidifying power within Puerto Rico and Puerto Rico’s desire for autonomy. Mendoza provided Muñoz Marín with a partner as well as a role model for the modern Puerto Rican woman. Mendoza’s early struggles in favor of Puerto Rican culture, as we shall see later in this chapter, gave her credentials in the puertorriqueñidad movement. It was a legitimacy that helped Muñoz

² This unspoken connection was made clear for me when I visited Muna Lee’s grave in Old San Juan, Puerto Rico located in the Santa Maria Magdalena de Pazzis Cementary. Buried with her in the same tomb was Viviana Muñoz Mendoza, daughter of Luis Muñoz Marín and Inés Mendoza.
Marín during his lowest political moments to transform himself from an underachieving politician to a national statesman.

The positions Lee and Mendoza maintained within the PPD as partners of Muñoz Marín allowed a transformation of puertorriqueñidad to occur within the ideology of the party. This study examines these representations to extract the changes these women brought to their roles and juxtapose them. Though interconnected, a boundary existed between Lee and Mendoza and their relationships with Muñoz Marín. It is through the use of border thinking that we can expose and analyze the contributions of these women.

In past studies, scholars have ignored the influence of these two women except to examine how they facilitated Muñoz Marín’s political accomplishments in the 1930s. The common historical narrative was that through Lee, Muñoz Marín met Ruby Black, and, eventually, developed a relationship with Eleanor Roosevelt and the FDR administration. Once that occurred, Muñoz Marín made use of his literary contacts and intellectual abilities to promote the inclusion of Puerto Rico in New Deal reforms.

The conventional story also presents the work of Muñoz Marín during the thirties as leading him closer towards the cause of the jíbaro. In the process, he matured as a politician and eventually led the disenchanted factions of the Liberal Party to create the Partido Popular Democrático and win the election of 1940. In 2009, Antonio Fernós López-Cepero drew attention to the triangular partnership created by Muñoz Marín, Lee and Black. His thesis was that Black acted as an unofficial agent of the Roosevelt administration tasked with ensuring that its selected politician, Muñoz Marín, would promote the reforms the presidency sought for

3 Antonio Fernós López-Cepero, La correspondencia secreta entre Luis Muñoz Marín y Ruby Black, 1933-1946: crónica de una relación política (San Juan: Ediciones Puerto, 2009).
Puerto Rico. Eventually, the New Deal reforms gave way to the military needs during the preparations for war with Germany.

Fernós argued against the view that Muñoz Marín was the main instigator of the political changes in the 1930s. Instead, he regarded Muñoz Marín as a chosen emissary that continually struggled to promote his agenda and goals. In that view of the period, Lee and Black became central characters in a story of imperial manipulation. However, it did not take into account the colonial difference between Spain and the U.S. that these people inhabited, nor the gendered dynamics Lee and Black negotiated. Furthermore, Fernós’s interpretation had little room for the contributions made by Inés Mendoza.

This chapter argues that the actions of these people were much more nuanced and their contributions much more diverse. To attempt to place blame or glory on one person is an act of over-simplification. Worse, as in the case of Fernós’s argument, it leads to a distortion of the importance each person had for the development of modern Puerto Rico. To understand modern Puerto Ricanness, it is critical to use border thinking from the interstitial space between the two marriages to examine the influence Lee, Black and Mendoza each had on how Muñoz Marín developed his ideology. Up to now, no studies have undertaken this approach to unravel how gender roles were embedded into Puerto Rican identity.

The story from El Batey quoted at the start of this chapter put forth some of the basic characteristics that were central to the gender norms promoted by the PPD. It presented a succinct narrative that encapsulated the accepted role a Puerto Rican woman should have in a society pushing to modernize. Three crucial traits a puertorriqueña needed to embody were to be active, supportive, and male-focused. The article demonstrated to the reader how this woman fit these basic tenets.
First, the characteristic of being active was one that was essential to the role a puertorriqueña was to play in the society envisioned by Muñoz Marín and the Populares. It was more a matter of engagement with social and political ideas than being involved in political groups. The article’s headline presented that concept immediately to the reader: “Lo que le dijo una mujer campesina a Muñoz Marín en un barrio de Naranjito.” It was clear that the woman in this story was purposefully placing herself in the sociopolitical discourse being presented during the PPD’s campaign. It was that form of active engagement by Puerto Rican women that the Populares sought to celebrate and promote.

To be active meant being continually in search of a better understanding about the economic, social, and political situations on the island. Of course, the assumption made in this story, and all narratives presented by the Populares, was that Muñoz Marín and the PPD would deliver truthful and honest analysis to the people of Puerto Rico. Women’s activity was imperative for the political hopes of the party, but that role needed to be harnessed in clear and productive ways that did not challenge the PPD power structure. It was not enough to be involved; the party needed to devise direct goals for these puertorriqueñas to help the modernization efforts. Mendoza, contrary to Lee’s more hidden advocacy, was presented as Muñoz Marín’s public constant supporter. For the wife/mother in the article the goal was clear: do not let your husband sell his vote.

The supportive role demanded of women was presented as a natural progression from motherhood. Building on a tradition of viewing women as more innocent and pure than men, the Populares proposed how puertorriqueñas could take part in the movement. Moreover, they tapped into the social norms already associated with motherhood and being a wife: mainly being the moral compass of the family. The article made this connection clear when it quoted the
woman telling Muñoz Marín that “after I have learned of that [the effect of selling votes], may lighting strike me if I let my husband sell his vote and if I don’t teach my kids that when they grow up they shouldn’t do that!” The assumption is quite obvious here: the moral center of men was suspect, hence women, being of much greater fortitude, had to make sure that their men did not succumb to weakness. Additionally, puertorriqueñas had to take seriously their role as mothers of the pueblo and ensure that their children grew up to know that selling their votes was detrimental to the nation.

The wife/mother responsibility relayed in the article was one quite common in patriarchal systems throughout Euro-Western cultures. For the Populares to ask women to perform this task was not extraordinary, but it did reaffirm that puertorriqueñas needed to embrace this role for the formation of a modern Puerto Rico. To facilitate the betterment of daily life on the island, the narrative presented through El Batey asked women to guide the household with their moral compass (or noble decency). In fact, this understanding of the female role also tasked puertorriqueñas with being the enforcers of electoral morality or validity or legitimacy or principles. It was up to the women, whether wives, mothers, sisters, or daughters, to ensure that the men in their lives honor the sacredness of the vote on election day. That goal, though, was one that represented the totality of the intrinsic responsibilities that the Populares wanted women to have in the movement. Yet, from active members in the leadership of the party like Felisa Rincón de Gautier to essential contacts and activists of the movement to modernize Puerto Rico, women had been essential to the success of Muñoz Marín and, eventually, his party since his days in 1920s New York.⁵

⁴ “Lo que le dijo una mujer,” El Batey.
⁵ Felisa Rincón de Gautier (1897-1994) was active in the Liberal Party since 1932. When Muñoz Marín was expelled from the party in 1937, she followed him and became a founding
Luis Muñoz Marín’s rise to electoral success in 1940 started decades earlier when he met Muna Lee in New York in 1919. Lee had worked for the U.S. Secret Service since World War I translating and censoring Spanish, Portuguese and French correspondence. It was a job she applied for in 1918 to escape the isolation she experienced in Oklahoma City as a teacher and poet who aspired to a literary life. The metropolis was a big change from her life in the plains of Oklahoma and her time in college at Ole Miss in her birth state of Mississippi. However, Lee was well on her way to becoming a key player in New York’s poetry circles since her work had already appeared in influential publications like *Smart Set, Poetry* and *Contemporary Verse*.

Lee’s pre-New York work caught the attention of H.L. Mencken, a respected literary critic for *Smart Set* and *Poetry*. In the years to come, his duties as editor of the *American Mercury* and numerous books, newspapers, and magazines made him one of the most influential people in twentieth-century U.S. literature. Lee made an impression upon Mencken when she first arrived in New York. Her biographer Jonathan Cohen stated in his 2004 edited volume of her poetry that

> through her correspondence with Mencken, she found a long-time mentor and stimulating force. His generous praise of what she had already produced--and what she later called his “contagious belief” in her ability to keep producing good work--spurred her continued poetic development.⁶

Lee’s relationship with Mencken would continue to prove beneficial for her work, and eventually that of her husband as well.

The meeting between Lee and Muñoz Marín occurred in the most literary of ways. Lee’s poetry, and her status as a young poet to watch, brought her to the attention of Muñoz Marín, member of the PPD. In 1946, Rincón became the first female mayor of a capital city in the Americas when she was elected mayor of San Juan. She served in that post for twenty-two years.⁶ Cohen, 9.
who edited a bilingual magazine in New York focused on Latin American culture. According to Cohen’s account of the meeting, “the dashing young Muñoz (three years her junior) presented himself to Lee, carrying with him a letter of introduction [from Mencken] and a sheaf of her poems, which he had translated into Spanish with the hope of publishing them.” Muñoz Marín’s recollection of the meeting in his public memoirs was simpler. He stated that “Por mi relación con miembros del grupo literario americano, y especialmente con el poeta hispanófilo Thomas Walsh, había conocido a la que iba a ser mi primera esposa, Muna Lee (Through my relationship with members of the American literary group, and especially the hispanophile poet Thomas Walsh, I met the woman who would become my first wife, Muna Lee).

In either case, it was clear that Lee’s poetic notoriety had brought the pair together. Muñoz Marín was himself a published writer with poems and articles to his credit, though his name was not as well known as Lee’s. The two began a relationship that brought together their love of literature and Latin American culture. It was a romance that in a matter of months progressed from strolls in Central Park to a walk down the aisle. On July 1, 1919, Muna Lee and Luis Muñoz Marín married. Lee took the name of Muna Lee de Muñoz Marín but continued to publish under her birth name.

They settled in Greenwich Village at first, and quickly became “a ‘well known’--most interesting--couple in the literary world of New York.” They both pursued their writing careers vigorously. Within a year Muna Lee was expecting their first child, Munita, and they relocated to Staten Island to find more affordable housing. The move proved to be short lived. In 1920, Muñoz Marín decided to return to Puerto Rico and participate in the island’s politics by

7 Ibid, 13.
8 Luis Muñoz Marín, Memorias: autobiografía pública, 1898-1940 (San Juan, PR: Fundación Luis Muñoz Marín, 2003), 59.
9 Cohen, 14.
campaigning for the Socialist Party. The couple migrated again, this time to Puerto Rico. It was a change that would not last long.

By the summer of 1921, Muñoz Marín brought his family back to New York, frustrated by the politics he encountered in his homeland. The family, now consisting of a newborn, Muñoz Marín’s mother and another child on the way, settled in Teaneck, New Jersey. This move lasted four years, but the period presented a pattern of migration that would continue for most of Muna Lee’s life. At times she would live in Puerto Rico, and at other times in New York or Washington. It also forewarned of her husband’s willingness to leave the stability of their home in pursuit of his own ambitions.

For three years the couple worked their literary contacts to generate an income. Muñoz Marín wrote book reviews and Lee freelanced and translated texts. Both delved deeply into the written world of Latin America. For Muñoz Marín, it was his heritage and the profession to which he aspired. For Lee, it was a way to connect the United States with the rest of the hemisphere. She believed that through cultural exchanges fuller understandings could develop that would eventually lead to better relations between Latin America and her home country. Lee considered this a vital part of Pan Americanism, and she defined that term as “the deep desire of every country for the common good of all... it is the oneness of purpose that makes of us all responsible citizens of the spiritual commonwealth of Pan America.”

Using literature to advance this cause quickly became a lifelong passion that Lee pursued through her written work, as well as her later employment at the U.S. Department of State and the University of Puerto Rico.

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10 Cohen, 194. The quote was from Lee’s address before the Unofficial Plenary Session of the Sixth Pan-American Conference in Havana, Cuba on February 7, 1928.
According to a letter written to Mencken in 1922, Lee decided to publish a book of poetry to develop a better name for herself in U.S. literary circles. She viewed this as an opportunity to “carry out my plan of integrating South American poets.”\textsuperscript{11} Her ongoing access to publishers in New York, as well as her established reputation as a writer, permitted Lee to make this decision a reality. Macmillan published Lee’s book of poetry in 1923 with the title \textit{Sea-Change}. It was well received, but the happiness of the moment would soon give way to trouble in the Muñoz Marín-Lee household.

In spring of 1923, Muñoz Marín left his family to return to Puerto Rico on a trip to “\textit{recopilar las obras de Muñoz Rivera} (to gather the written work of Muñoz Rivera [his father]).”\textsuperscript{12} What Muñoz Marín described in his memoirs as a trip of a few months seemed to have been much longer and more traumatic to Lee. Cohen presented this period as a “distressing turn when Muñoz left her and their children (as well as his mother) in Teaneck...[h]e lived in Puerto Rico without his family for almost two years.”\textsuperscript{13} The absence of her husband notwithstanding, Lee continued her translation work, freelance writing, and publication of book reviews in the \textit{New York Times}, as well as her domestic duties.

Muñoz Marín returned in 1925, and the couple sold their house in Teaneck to move into an apartment on the West Side of New York. Here the couple again immersed themselves into the literary world of the metropolis. Their home quickly became one of the key stops for literary figures. They had “well-known Sunday night ‘open house’ parties [which] included...writers...\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 16. 
\textsuperscript{12} Muñoz, \textit{Memorias}, 78. 
\textsuperscript{13} Cohen, 18.
teachers, explorers, diplomats, dilettantes, artists, revolutionaries, and mercenaries, even Spain’s famous bullfighter, Juan Belmonte.”

The popular couple soon moved away from New York in 1926, this time to return to Puerto Rico, where Muñoz Marín had been offered the job of editor of the newspaper his father had begun almost forty years before, La Democracia. The newspaper was a partisan publication associated with the Liberal Party, and it was the party’s president, Antonio Barceló, who had offered the position to Muñoz Marín. It was the first time since Lee and Muñoz Marín married that the couple was financially secure. That security would not last.

Due to political pressures, Muñoz Marín was pushed out of La Democracia by the summer of 1927. As he recalled it,

*En una campaña editorial en La Democracia sobre las ganancias excesivas de la Central Aguirre, sentí que le estaba creando problemas a Barceló...nunca me llamó la atención sobre esto. Pero mi situación emocional se hacía cada vez más difícil. Barceló me encomendó una misión de publicidad económica en los Estados Unidos...al terminar aquella misión, me quedé en Nueva York hasta 1931.*

In an editorial campaign for La Democracia about the excessive profits gained by the Central Aguirre [a sugar company], I noticed that I was causing problems for Barceló...he never called my attention to the matter. But my emotional situation was harder every day. Barceló sent me on a mission of economic publicity in the United States...when that mission was finished, I stayed in New York until 1931.15

In this simple statement, Muñoz Marín characterized for his readers an act that must have been of terrible instability for his family. Not only had Muñoz Marín lost the financial security Lee and he had finally managed to reach, but he again left his family.

Lee, who by 1927 had already established herself in Puerto Rico, stayed on the island. Along with her writing and household duties, Lee took a job directing international affairs at the University of Puerto Rico. She also injected herself into the local suffrage movement and

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14 Ibid., 24.
expanded her participation in the National Women’s Party (NWP). Increasingly, Lee found that her literary work translating Latin American writers, her political activism in women’s issues, and her Pan-American ideology in foreign affairs had found a home in Puerto Rico. Moreover, through those activities, Lee developed a belief that the U.S. should promote economic reforms for the island that could help its inhabitants become more self-reliant; indeed, in the thirties she championed New Deal programs for Puerto Rico. Lee also supported independence for Puerto Rico as a way to ensure its cultural integrity. While she immersed herself in a new life, her marriage became more strained.

Lee engaged closely with the colonial government through her position at the university. Her work in the NWP also kept her connected to the struggles of women in the U.S. and internationally. Muñoz Marín’s four years in New York away from his family were a different matter altogether.

Longing for the lights of New York, the Socialist viewed this period as an escape from the political entanglements of Puerto Rico. Fernós described it as Muñoz Marín’s “interesting, solitary time” through Greenwich Village, but not effective in its goal of promoting industrial investment for Puerto Rico.\(^{16}\) The young aspiring poet was successful at publishing articles about Puerto Rico’s economic and social issues, though.

Muñoz Marín and Lee did not live under the same roof again until 1930. As a couple, Muñoz Marín and Lee found their lives moving in different directions. They would remain officially married until 1946, but the relationship would never regain the passion that saw them wed after only knowing each other for a couple of months. Muñoz Marín had several romantic affairs, and, by 1938, he was living with the woman who became his second wife, Inés Mendoza.

\(^{16}\) Fernós, 60.
Their emotional barriers notwithstanding, Lee and Muñoz Marín continued to work together on numerous political ventures. After examining this relationship closely, it became very difficult for me to imagine Muñoz Marín’s career being as successful as it was without Lee’s immense contributions. From Muñoz Marín’s literary career in the United States, to his key articles in The Nation and American Mercury in the 1920s, and even his contact with the Roosevelt administration after 1932, Lee was the connecting thread that opened access for Muñoz Marín and legitimized his credentials. It is this reality that makes the exploration of their relationship and their partnership so integral to this work.

Most of the historiography on Muñoz Marín and Lee has presented their relationship as a melding of two literary minds that travelled on similar paths for a few decades before following their respective destinies. Cohen alluded to this interpretation when discussing Muñoz Marín’s first time returning to Puerto Rico after their marriage in 1919:

Big changes were at hand: by the third month of their marriage, Lee was pregnant with the first of their two children. In the spring of 1920, Muñoz was pulled back to Puerto Rico, his true destiny, and took her with him; he wanted to devote himself to bettering the lot of the island’s poverty-stricken masses.¹⁷

The manner in which Cohen framed Muñoz Marín’s action with hindsight knowledge of the events to come in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s made the paths these two people took seem inevitable. It was clear that Muñoz Marín was frequently drawn back to Puerto Rico and the politics there, but so was Lee.

After her first visit to Puerto Rico, Lee embraced the island through her work at the University of Puerto Rico, and her poetry. Moreover, she was actively taking part in social, political and educational arenas in Puerto Rico. The notion that the couple simply followed different paths that led each away from the other was incorrect. They may not have had a

¹⁷ Cohen, 14.
continually intimate relationship in their marriage, but they did forge a partnership that was critical to both their ambitions.

The first proof of this was in the literary connections Lee made available for Muñoz Marín. As stated earlier, Lee initially contacted the literary critic H.L. Mencken in 1915. By that date, she had already published poetry in major magazines. For his part, Muñoz Marín was also a published writer by 1915. His literary endeavors, though, were rooted in Puerto Rico at this time. As the son of a greatly admired statesman, Luis Muñoz Rivera, Muñoz Marín found space for his thoughts and observations in local newspapers and periodicals.

It was not until after Muñoz Marín’s marriage with Muna Lee in 1919 that his literary career in the United States began to develop. Before their meeting, the only clear evidence of his written work in the U.S. was the short-lived bilingual magazine Revista de Indias (Indies Review) and a few poems published in Smart Set. Muñoz Marín’s first major published pieces in U.S. print were short poems. In 1922, he published the poem “He Makes a Picture of His Love” in the New York modernist poetry monthly The Measure.

The contribution was a good accomplishment, but it seemed naive to think that Lee’s connections as a well-published poet in New York were not of benefit for the young Puerto Rican. Moreover, the “Contributors” page in the monthly alluded to this benefit. It stated, “Luis Muñoz Marín, at present of Teaneck, New Jersey, has appeared in both Spanish and English publications. His wife is Muna Lee, an American poet.” The entry in itself appeared insignificant at first, but later evidence made the inclusion of Muna Lee’s name in this description of Muñoz Marín quite interesting.

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18 Muñoz Marín, Memorias, 58, and Cohen, 13.
19 Luis Muñoz Marín, “He Makes a Picture of His Love,” The Measure, 1922, Sección XIII, Colección Gloria Arjona, FLMM.
One of the most important relationships Muñoz Marín developed through his published work was with Ernest Gruening. Gruening was a newspaperman who in 1920 became the editor of *The Nation*. Later, Gruening was one of the main officials overseeing New Deal plans for Puerto Rico. He was also a U.S. Senator for Alaska from 1959 to 1969. In the early 20s, though, Gruening was involved in the publication of Muñoz Marín’s pivotal article on Puerto Rico’s dire situation titled “Porto Rico: The American Colony.” The article was instrumental in placing Muñoz Marín as a key figure in the U.S. regarding Puerto Rican affairs. In his *Memorias*, the future governor wrote that “con relación a ese artículo en The Nation se inició mi amistad personal con Ernest Gruening, que después habría de tener un impacto importante... (in regard to that article in *The Nation* my personal friendship with Ernest Gruening started, which would later have an important impact...).” Again, Lee seemed to be important in the development of this relationship.

Muñoz Marín’s article in *The Nation* was published in 1925. It appeared that even if Gruening was no longer the editor of the magazine at this time (he is listed as editor up to 1923), he probably worked with Muñoz Marín to get the article published. How the two came in contact was not clear from the historical record, but it was quite possible that Lee’s relationship with H.L. Mencken may have been crucial in bringing Gruening and Muñoz Marín together.

In the May 18, 1921 issue of *The Nation*, Mencken was listed as a contributing editor. Since Gruening was the managing editor of the magazine, it seemed logical that the two had a working relationship. From that connection, it was highly probable that Mencken was a catalyst for Muñoz Marín to publish his first article on Puerto Rico’s condition that targeted a U.S. audience. With that very real possibility, it was clear that Lee’s ongoing correspondence with

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Mencken provided an opportunity for Muñoz Marin to use his literary talents in a medium consumed and highly regarded by U.S. liberal elites.

Mencken himself recalled Muñoz Marín as Muna Lee’s spouse in his autobiography. Mencken wrote that

Two rather curious contributors [to Smart Set] were Agnes Boulton, then the wife of Eugene O’Neill, and Luis Muñoz Marin [sic], the husband of Muna Lee...Marin’s contributions to the Smart Set consisted of several very short poems. He was then [1920] quite unknown. Later on he became a successful politician in his native Puerto Rico, and is now (1945) the political boss of the island.  

Though Mencken did not seem to think of it as important in this entry, he published Muñoz Marín numerous times during the 1920s in The American Mercury and The Baltimore Sun. One of those articles was “The Sad Case of Porto Rico” (1929), which was discussed in Chapter 1.

Lee did much more than just open doors for Muñoz Marín. Throughout their years as a married couple, Lee actively lobbied with her professional contacts to consider her husband for work and/or as an expert in matters pertaining to Latin America and Puerto Rico. One possible result of such efforts was the Pan-American Conference that Lee and Muñoz Marín attended in 1928.

Just months after Muñoz Marín left his family in San Juan for the allure of New York, the couple met up in Havana, Cuba for the Sixth Pan-American Conference. Lee was chosen as a delegate from Puerto Rico to take part in a contingent of women that attended the proceedings to request an opportunity to address the participants. She travelled to the conference and joined forces with other representatives from the National Woman’s Party, as well as Pan-American

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feminists. On February 7th, Lee delivered a speech before the Unofficial Plenary Session where she advocated for a “treaty guaranteeing us [women of America] equal human rights.”

Though Lee and Muñoz Marín both attended the conference, their roles were not equal in importance. Cohen’s biography of Lee presented Muñoz Marín in a secondary role. He wrote that “Despite this tension [the couple’s separation] in the fall of 1927, which eased only sporadically, Lee and Muñoz were soon together in Havana at the Pan-American Conference, where he was relegated to the role of an English-Spanish interpreter.” Whether this was an attempt to mend their relationship, an opportunity to be together, or a professional interest of both, it appeared that Muñoz Marín was at the conference with the help of Lee. Was this a result of lobbying by Lee on behalf of her husband? It was not certain from the historical record. Three years later, though, Lee provided a much clearer example of her skill at promoting Muñoz Marín.

Lee wrote a letter dated June 23, 1931 to Dr. Charles G. Maphis of the Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Virginia to suggest people for a roundtable panel on the new industrialism of the South. At this time, Lee worked for the National Woman’s Party, which was evident on the letterhead. Lee mentioned several women with connections to the NWP, as well as some with interest and knowledge of Latin America. She then put forth the governor of Puerto Rico, Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., as a valuable participant. Lee continued by writing:

My husband, Luis Muñoz Marín, who was, as you may recall, on the program for the Institute in 1929, but was prevented by illness from coming, could also come down, I think. His studies on affairs in Latin America, Spain, and Porto Rico are regularly featured in Baltimore Sun, where you may have seen them. He contributes to many leading magazines in both Spanish and English.

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22 Cohen, 194.
23 Ibid., 31.
24 Muna Lee to Dr. Charles G. Maphis, letter, June 23, 1931, Papers of the Institute of Public Affairs, 1925-1953, University of Virginia Library.
She clearly promoted her spouse in a straightforward and appropriate manner. The contact information for Muñoz Marín she provided in the letter was her own office address in Washington, D.C. Lee even signed the letter “Muna Lee” with “Mrs. Luis Muñoz Marín” in parenthesis underneath.

Whether this kind of statement was made in attempts to further Muñoz Marín’s political goals, to generate income for their family, or to carve out time from their lives apart to spend with each other was not clear. By all accounts, Lee fully believed in her husband. Moreover, the efforts worked. By June 27, 1931, a Western Union telegram from Dr. Maphis to Mrs. Luis Muñoz Marín read, “Very happy to have you and your husband participate in the round tables July first and second and remain longer if possible. Institute paying traveling expenses and entertainment. Please wire reply.”25 Lee and Muñoz Marín were both on the list of participants for the round table conference.

The success Muna Lee had in promoting her husband throughout the literary world of New York, along with his continued ability to deliver on expectations, slowly moved in the late 1920s and early 1930s from publishing and conferences to hard politics. By 1931, Muna Lee had taken a leave of absence from her job at the University of Puerto Rico and was working as the Director of National Activities for the National Woman’s Party in Washington, D.C. She arrived at the capital in September of 1930. That month, Muñoz Marín was in Montreal, Canada seeking treatment for a misdiagnosed case of tuberculosis. He wrote Lee that he hoped to meet up with

25 Dr. Charles G. Maphis to Mrs. Luis Muñoz Marín, telegram, June 27, 1931, Papers of the Institute of Public Affairs, 1925-1953, University of Virginia Library.
her and the children in Washington soon.\textsuperscript{26} By August of 1931, Muñoz Marín was back in Puerto Rico.

Lee continued her work in Washington, D.C. for the NWP until the summer of 1932 when she returned to her job at the University of Puerto Rico. Her time in Washington, D.C., though, was very productive for her feminist and Pan-American ideals, as well as for the political career of her husband. Through the close relationship Lee had developed with Puerto Rican governor Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. (1929-1932) before leaving Washington D.C. and her work at the NWP, Lee developed close relations with the Washington D.C. press corps and friends of Eleanor Roosevelt, one of whom was journalist Ruby Black. Lee had met Black during her time in New York in the 1920s. It was not clear exactly when their friendship began, but by the late 1920s the two exchanged correspondence. They were both writers and members of the NWP. The similarities did not end there, though. It was that access to the soon-to-be First Lady, along with the couple’s literary connections that offered Muñoz Marín an opportunity never before made available to a Puerto Rican political leader.

\textbf{BLACK — LEE — MUÑOZ MARÍN TRIANGLE}

Ruby Aurora Black was born in Thornton, Texas on September 5, 1896. She was the daughter of a cotton farmer and politician, George Washington Black. Like Muna Lee, who grew up mainly in Hugo, Oklahoma, Black spent her childhood in the plains. She attended college at the University of Colorado and the University of Texas between newspaper responsibilities,

\footnote{\textsuperscript{26} Luis Muñoz Marín to Muna Lee, letter, September 19, 1930, Sección XIII, Colección Gloria Arjona, FLMM.}
graduating in 1921. Similarly, Lee saw her collegiate experience divided between two different institutions, the University of Oklahoma and the University of Mississippi.27

Both women were economically independent and eventually made their way to New York and Washington, D.C. Black worked at numerous newspapers and founded her own news bureau in 1929, the Ruby A. Black News Bureau. By 1932, Black provided news for various newspapers throughout the United States and, through the efforts of Lee, *La Democracia* in Puerto Rico. Both women were established power brokers in the woman’s movement. Their respective roles complimented each other with Lee in charge of promoting the activities of the NWP and Black responsible for reporting from Washington.

The similarities in backgrounds may have brought the two women together, but it was their passion for feminist ideas on suffrage and equality, as well as Pan Americanism, that grew their friendship into a working partnership. Lee and Black believed that better relations with Latin America needed to be encouraged in the United States. Lee saw her focus in Latin American and Spanish literature as part of her life’s mission.28 Black dedicated much of her journalistic career to reporting on issues pertaining to Latin America. Their pursuits mirrored each other’s so closely that, in the 1940s, both women worked for the Office of Inter-American Affairs. Black retired in 1947 due to illness and died in 1957 in a fire. Lee continued her work for the State Department until her retirement in 1965. It was in the 1930s, though, that Lee’s relationship with Black grew to a critical level of political and social importance for Puerto Rico.

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Franklin D. Roosevelt’s presidential win in 1932 brought much change for Ruby Black. As a woman reporter, she had access to the women-only press conferences held by First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt. More important for Black, she was the first woman hired by the United Press specifically to cover these press conferences. Of course, she was already the Washington correspondent for La Democracia. Muna Lee had asked her in early 1932 to become Muñoz Marín’s reporter at the capital.

The partnership between Lee, Black and Muñoz Marín was astute. It was a product of their age. Muñoz Marín was the public figure that, as a man, would deliver speeches, interviews, and press conferences. Black was the person with the closest connection to the Roosevelt administration. Her contacts helped maintain a clear understanding of what Washington was planning for Puerto Rico. Muna Lee, back in Puerto Rico since 1932, was tasked with keeping track of the political environment in Puerto Rico. She organized the strategy on the island to promote the goals of the New Deal and orchestrate support for the Liberal Party. Lee also communicated with Muñoz Marín concerning the happenings in Puerto Rico when he was in the U.S. She had returned to her position at the university, but she also took over coediting duties for La Democracia. The opportunity to put in place a public agenda in Puerto Rico that favored their ideological views was there for the taking and the three of them moved quickly to secure it.

By 1933, Ruby Black was covering the press conferences of Eleanor Roosevelt, but she was also her friend. According to The Eleanor Roosevelt Encyclopedia,

Black first met ER [Eleanor Roosevelt] just prior to the inauguration of Franklin D. Roosevelt as president in 1933...[t]he two established a personal relationship with Black and Little [Ruby’s husband] visiting ER and FDR at Hyde Park, New York, and ER

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going to Black’s home in Alexandria, Virginia. ER invited Black’s small daughter, Cornelia Jane, to a White House birthday party for her own granddaughter...  

How the friendship developed so quickly was not clear, but, considering both women believed in feminist causes and were quite independent, they may have found common ground on many levels. Simply being a member of the NWP, living in Washington and covering the news of the capital may have been enough to bring the two women together, but Black was also the managing editor of the NWP magazine, *Equal Rights*. She had struggled to make a name for herself in the Washington media establishment, and persevered to become the first woman employed as a correspondent for the United Press. Whatever the reason, this relationship allowed Black to position her friend’s husband, Luis Muñoz Marín, as a person with whom the administration should meet on matters pertaining to Puerto Rico.

It was no surprise that Mrs. Roosevelt would consider Black’s suggestion. As correspondent for *La Democracia*, Black had an established relationship with Puerto Rico. Moreover, Black was fluent in Spanish and had knowledge of the island and Latin America. Finally, Muñoz Marín had just been elected to the Puerto Rican Senate as a member of the minority party. He was a published author in major U.S. political magazines, and he had connections with New Dealers like Ernest Gruening. A meeting was set with Eleanor Roosevelt for November 7, 1933. It marked the beginning of Muñoz Marín’s participation in Washington as an administration insider. It also started a relationship between Muñoz Marín, Lee, Black, and Washington, D.C. that had unexpected ramifications for the gender norms propagated by the Populares in their version of authentic *puertorriqueñidad*.

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Women in Puerto Rico and the United States at this time generally were expected to maintain their presence and influence within the private, domestic sphere of society. Women like Muna Lee, Ruby Black and Eleanor Roosevelt were exceptions to the accepted norms. Each succeeded in her professional affairs, but they were always connected to men in their public lives. That constant public need to stand by men helped maintain their legitimacy, and, in most instances, allowed them to further their political and social agendas. Of course, Puerto Rico and the United States had a long tradition of individual women active in topics pertaining to women, children and social reform.

The history notwithstanding, the most publicly accepted role in Puerto Rico for these kinds of women and their actions was one of support. It was appropriate for a woman to help the man in her life. Most often this manifested itself in the home through domestic work. As far as mainstream society was concerned, women took care of house chores. Men took care of ensuring an income, and providing house, food, and necessities. Yet this belief that permeated Puerto Rican society was often a fantasy. In a study of the 1910 and 1920 census data for Puerto Rico, Francisco Scarano and Katherine J. Curtis White found that women frequently headed households, despite the views of this society as “patriarchal, where males supposedly ‘carried the reins’ in the family, their authority unquestioned, and women’s role as domestics subalterns were affirmed in elite as well as popular discourse.”\(^{31}\) Scarano and White discovered in the data that women were household heads at much higher proportions than [previously found in a study that looked at a specific community in the 1960s]. No fewer than one in five household heads in 1910 and 1920 (21.3 percent and 20.1 percent, respectively) were female across Puerto Rico. In twentieth-century world-comparative or even Latin American terms, these rates were quite high.\(^{32}\)


\(^{32}\) Ibid.
The statistical facts notwithstanding, Puerto Rican popular culture reflected the biased beliefs of the times. An example of this can be seen in the popular song “El Hombre y La Mujer” (The Man And The Woman) by Los Jardineros, a band that recorded between 1929 and 1932.

The lyrics to the tune stated that

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spanish phrase</th>
<th>English translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Estoy ya bien convencido</td>
<td>I’m already convinced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El hombre hace todo en el hogar</td>
<td>The man does everything in the home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La mujer no vale nada sin marido</td>
<td>The woman is worth nothing without a husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El marido es como algo celestial</td>
<td>The husband is like something celestial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y ahi a usted van las mujeres</td>
<td>And there go women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Con su mandato</td>
<td>With their errands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hablando todito el dia</td>
<td>Talking all day long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y haciendo gastos</td>
<td>And creating expenses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>¿Quién paga la casa? -- el marido</td>
<td>Who pays the house?-- the husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>¿Quién trae el jabón? -- el marido</td>
<td>Who brings the soap?-- the husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>¿Quién hace la compra? -- el marido</td>
<td>Who buys the groceries?-- the husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>¿Quién lleva el timón? -- el marido</td>
<td>Who takes the reins?-- the husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>¿Quién tiene mas calma? -- el marido</td>
<td>Who is calmer?-- the husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>¿Quién tiene razón? -- el marido</td>
<td>Who is right?-- the husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>¿Quién hace la compra? -- el marido</td>
<td>Who buys the groceries?-- the husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>¿Quién paga el carbón? -- el marido</td>
<td>Who pays the firewood?-- the husband</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The patriarchal view in this song was clearly taken to an extreme, but it represented an artistic interpretation of the gendered roles men and women were expected to fulfill in 1920s and 1930s Puerto Rico in spite of the lived reality.

As bellying these gender expectations, the period between 1919 and 1935 was very active for the suffrage movement in Puerto Rico. From the time the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was approved and ratified in 1920, Puerto Rican suffragists struggled to have universal voting rights extended to the island. In a series of decisions discussed in La lucha por

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el sufragio femenino en Puerto Rico, 1896-1935, U.S. courts and officials of the executive branch dictated that the Constitution did not apply in Puerto Rico because it was an unincorporated territory. The decision followed the precedent set by the Insular Cases that were decided from 1900 to 1915 concerning constitutional issues relating to the territories acquired during the Cuban-Spanish-American War.

Once political parties and social organizations on the island took up female suffrage, sentiments towards it diverged. The Republican Party in Puerto Rico for the most part attempted to follow U.S. precedent in keeping with its pro-statehood stance. They wanted it to be paired with U.S. women’s suffrage. The Union Party--later the Liberal Party--adhered to a nuanced position that favored extending suffrage only to literate women. Members of the Socialist and Nationalist Parties held both pro- and anti-suffragist sentiments, though each leaned more towards the modernist views that promoted equality between the sexes. Using border thinking to examine these differences, it became clear that the parties battled the suffrage by contesting the imperial traditions that existed on the island. Depending which side of the U.S./Spain colonial difference they associated with, island politicians crafted views on women’s right to vote.

The negation of colonial ideologies extended to religious institutions. Suffrage exposed the interstitial space separating churches on the issue. Pro-North American Catholics viewed suffrage as part of the need to promote progress on the island. Catholics that sided more with the Spanish church saw suffrage as another battleground for preserving their traditional structures and beliefs. What all these different positions on suffrage meant was that the issues of gender norms and roles were ever present in the identities being negotiated by puertorriqueños. In part

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35 Ibid.
due to continual pressure that questioned why Puerto Rican women should not vote when mainland U.S. women could, suffrage was extended to literate women in 1929, while universal suffrage was not granted in Puerto Rico until 1935.

The song by *Los Jardineros* in this context appeared to be an expression of how the changes being proposed were viewed by Puerto Rican men. These views must have been obvious to Muna Lee and Luis Muñoz Marín. Moreover, they were not isolated to Puerto Rico. Many of the gender norms that relegated women to the domestic and private spheres of society permeated throughout European-based cultures. Ruby Black, and even Eleanor Roosevelt, experienced these conventions as well.

Though restricted by these prejudices, Lee and Black succeeded in positioning themselves as important players in their chosen fields. It was no coincidence, though, that the spaces they were able to find to exercise their political views revolved around a colonial territory. In the patriarchal perspective of the period, the promotion of progress in a colony would naturally be a more feminine endeavor. In part this was due to the manner in which territories were thought of in the U.S. mainland. As early as 1898, the lands acquired by the United States after the Cuban-Spanish-American War were presented in the U.S. consciousness as children. It was strikingly evident in media representations of the U.S.’s relationships with the new territories. The following cartoons are just two examples of this view:
These two characterizations played with the understanding of colonial relationships as paternal by nature, but they did not criticize this condescending approach. It was clear that U.S. actions during the war were to be performed by men. Theodore Roosevelt’s Rough Riders were a public representation of that. As the years passed and the armed conflicts receded, women became integral in the colonial efforts at social betterment and modernization. Laura Briggs demonstrated that women were indeed agents and designers of colonial policy, but they were also the targets of colonial change through birth control policies and legislation on sexuality.38

The burdens of social motherhood inside and outside the home within a patriarchal society allowed many women in the U.S. to envision their contributions to the betterment of their pueblo and the world through the fate of the colonies. The role of mother extended abroad often took the form of nurturing and teaching. Whether through feminist struggles, religious missions, or educational tasks, women took over much of the colonial projects and interactions in Puerto Rico36-38

37 Ibid., 54.
Rico. By the 1930s, and with the election of a president in the United States who depended heavily on his wife for policy decision-making and the public image of his administration, women were at the center of political maneuvering between Washington and San Juan. It was then no surprise that the closest relationship any politician in Puerto Rico had ever had with the White House since the U.S. invasion developed through the activities of women.

The access facilitated through Muna Lee’s career activities as a poet and feminist allowed Muñoz Marín to present himself before the most powerful people in U.S. politics to advocate his vision of a modern Puerto Rico. The future governor described this opportunity in his *Memorias* as connected to his protest against the Roosevelt-appointed governor, Robert Hayes Gore (1933-34). Muñoz Marín, after a dedicated campaign against Gore in Puerto Rico, journeyed to Washington to directly petition the administration for the governor’s removal. He wrote in his memoirs that Ruby Black had kept readers of *La Democracia* informed on the growing doubts in Washington about Governor Gore. Muñoz Marín then stated that

_Cuando se supo que yo llegaría a la capital de los Estados Unidos a protestar contra el gobernador Gore, la señora de Roosevelt le indicó a Ruby Black que me invitara a tomar el té con ella en la Casa Blanca* (When it was known that I would arrive at the capital of the United States to protest against governor Gore, the wife of Roosevelt told Ruby Black to invite me over to the White House to have tea with her).\(^39\)

Black’s importance went beyond being an intermediary. It was likely that, as a friend of Eleanor Roosevelt and trusted source of information on matters pertaining to Puerto Rico, Black had a heavy hand in facilitating the meeting and framing the reputation and legitimacy of Muñoz Marín. One must not lose sight of the fact that Muñoz Marín was a first term senator-at-large of Puerto Rico. He did not represent any specific district and he was a member of the minority party. Moreover, Puerto Rico had an official representative in Congress, Resident Commissioner

\(^39\) Muñoz Marín, *Memorias*, 118.
Santiago Iglesias Pantín. Luckily for Muñoz Marín, this longtime leader of the Socialist Party was in an alliance with the Puerto Rican Republican Party that had backed Herbert Hoover in the 1932 presidential election. Iglesias Pantín was also not an appealing collaborator for an administration that sought to put in place a large level of change. He was sixty-one years old, a native of Galicia, Spain, and much more comfortable speaking in Spanish. On the other hand, Muñoz Marín was young, just thirty-five in 1933, completely fluent in English, comfortable in the world of U.S. politics, and a strong supporter of Roosevelt’s ideas.

Given that difference, one can almost imagine Black describing Muñoz Marín as a forward-thinking progressive, published in The Nation and the American Mercury, who was not anti-U.S., but rather wanting to improve the circumstances of his country. He was a Puerto Rican who grew up in the United States. He even married a respected U.S. writer who worked for the NWP. In short, Muñoz Marín was an easy sell. Of course, gaining access was simply a start; Muñoz Marín, and to a great extent Ruby Black and Muna Lee, had to deliver for the Roosevelt administration.

From 1933 to 1937, Lee, Black, and Muñoz Marín maintained a constant exchange of letters that tracked their tactics and struggles negotiating Puerto Rican and U.S. politics. The distance and boundary between San Juan politicians and Washington became blurred as Muñoz Marín and his political supporters implemented the New Deal policies the Roosevelt administration had for the island. When Muñoz Marín was in Washington, Lee kept him abreast of the political ongoings in Puerto Rico, and advised him and Black on editorials or articles they should submit to La Democracia, which Lee and Muñoz Marín still edited despite his political position and her work at the university. The couple continually worked to maintain Puerto Rican public opinion on Muñoz Marín’s side. La Democracia was the perfect tool for that.
When Muñoz Marín was in Puerto Rico, Black kept him informed of activities within the administration and advised him on preferred strategies. She also helped Lee and Muñoz Marín frame Puerto Rican public opinion by providing favorable reporting of their efforts and highlighting negative stories about their adversaries. Black became more integral to the goals of Lee and Muñoz Marín as Roosevelt’s policy towards Puerto Rico took shape. By 1935, following the ideas put forth by a federal commission headed by the chancellor of the University of Puerto Rico, Carlos Chardón, the Puerto Rico Reconstruction Administration (PRRA) was created. Though he was not officially named to the Chardón group to avoid controversy with the Coalición, Muñoz Marín worked closely with it and helped shape the recommendations that came out of it. The Chardón Plan, as the commission’s report became known, outlined measures to lower unemployment, increase production, and reduce wealth inequality. Its most notable proposal was that a public corporation should be established to buy land, run sugar mills, and distribute land to farmers. The Coalición opposed the plan, but it was favored in Washington and implemented with few changes through the PRRA. FDR appointed Dr. Ernest Gruening, editor of *The Nation*, to head the administration.\(^\text{40}\)

With a friend at the helm of the PRRA, Black, Lee, and Muñoz Marín became more snared in the day-to-day politics of the island. The specifics of their influence were made clear through their correspondence. For example, Ruby Black’s closeness to Puerto Rican politics was apparent in a letter written by Muñoz Marín to the leader of the Liberal Party, Antonio Barceló. The document was typed in Washington D.C. and dated November 6, 1933. It was an update from Muñoz Marín to the head of his party on his recent activities in the U.S. capital. Addressing his objections to Governor Gore, Muñoz Marín stated that Roosevelt had appointed Gore to the

position to thank him for his support. Yet politically Gore aligned with the Republican Party on the island. His belief in a permanent union with the United States made him an opponent of the Liberal Party, which favored independence. Moreover, he held views against birth control, which indicated to Muñoz Marín that he did not prescribe to modernist ideas of population control and progress.

At the end of the letter to Barceló, a handwritten note was added. It was from Ruby Black and it stated in English, “As Sen. Muñoz Marín had to leave for Baltimore before this letter was typed, I am signing it for him. Ruby A. Black.” ⁴¹ The note was telling of the relationship that Black and Muñoz Marín had. It also showed that people outside the Lee-Muñoz Marín-Black triangle comprehended to some level that they were working together.

One document addressed to Muna Lee further confirmed the intertwined nature of this relationship. The first was a 1933 letter from the Dean of the College of Education at the University of Illinois, Thomas E. Benner, who had been chancellor at the University of Puerto Rico (UPR) from 1924 to 1929. In his letter, he praised Roosevelt for appointing Gruening to head the PRRA and affirmed that since he was a friend of Gruening he did not think it appropriate for him to ask Gruening to help him with a claim he had pertaining to the UPR. After he presented that disclaimer, he wrote to Lee:

It might, however, help if you...could write him about the matter, indicating the legislative support which has been given it and the present paralysis of action, due apparently to trumped up technicalities in the Auditor’s Office and the indifference of Governor Winship. ⁴²

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⁴¹ Luis Muñoz Marín to Antonio R. Barceló, letter, November 6, 1933, Sección III, Serie 1. Correspondencia, FLMM.
⁴² Thomas E. Benner to Muna Lee, letter, November 12, 1934, Sección XIII, Colección Gloria Arjona, FLMM.
The statement confirmed that Lee had some connection with the newly appointed head of the PRRA. It also assumed that her position as faculty at the university, her work with the NWP, and her connections with the Roosevelt administration could sway Gruening to intervene. What action, if any, Lee took regarding this matter was unclear in the historical record, but the fact that the request was made demonstrated that Lee was actively engaged in matters pertaining to politics well beyond her public role in Puerto Rico.

The fundamental work Lee played in Puerto Rican politics was laid out in numerous letters from this period. In a typed one-page document dated six days before Benner’s on November 7, 1934, Lee wrote to Muñoz Marín about several issues. The final part of the letter addressed her meeting with one of Muñoz Marín’s political comrades, Ernesto Ramos Antonini, future cofounder of the PPD and president of the House of Representatives of Puerto Rico. Lee wrote that Ramos Antonini showed her a cable he received from Muñoz Marín concerning a commission to meet Gruening. She stated that

I suggested that he call Guerra, which he did. Hernández Lopez [elder Liberal politician and member of the senate] had not spoken to him, to Guerra, nor to any of the rest about the matter. So I called up Travieso and asked if he had seen Hernández Lopez; he said no, that Don Juan had no telephone, that he would see him at nine in the morning.43

The information Lee provided for Muñoz Marín broadly showed that she acted on his behalf amongst members of the Liberal Party that were close to him. Additionally, it seemed that she was also a source of strategy, advising, and planning. As the letter continued, this role became more apparent:

I then called Benigno Fernández García [Attorney General of PR], who had heard nothing at all from anyone about the matter but was most enthusiastic, and asked if he would go over immediately to see Hernández Lopez. He said he would. I called Bourne [director of PR Emergency Relief Administration] and Mahlon [ex-secretary to Governor

43 Muna Lee to Luis Muñoz Marín, letter, November 7, 1934, Sección XIII, Colección Gloria Arjona, FLMM.
Gore], to try to find out when Gruening would arrive. Neither knew, though Mahlon said that Hernández Lopez had called him to ask the same question during the afternoon, stating that he wanted a commission to greet Gruening. I told Mahlon I wasn’t interested in commissions nor acquainted with Hernández Lopez (which is true) but that I wanted to know about Gruening as a matter of personal interest. But you know Mahlon: he didn’t know anything about it. This morning Chardón told me about Gruening’s probable arrival this afternoon, so I called Ramos Antonini...  

It became obvious from this narrative that Lee was fully immersed in the political nuances of Puerto Rico. Moreover, she was an active player who understood how to negotiate the divisive ideologies that dominated the island. To Muñoz Marín’s associates, Lee was an extension of him when he was away. In this exchange, though, it appeared that she was also a key resource for them when they needed to accomplish specific goals. Lee was the one directing what needed to be done, attaining pertinent information, making calls, and even providing misdirection with political opponents as in the case of her conversation with Mahlon Ashford.

Lee became more deeply involved as an intermediary between local Puerto Rican politics and Washington officials as the years progressed in the 1930s, but she never allowed herself to be front and center as the visual representation of that relationship. In part, Lee avoided the spotlight due to her position at the university and her work with Pan-American feminism and the NWP. Instead, Muñoz Marín was the person that embodied the translocal political game. He was the Puerto Rican who navigated Washington most effectively. For many Puerto Ricans, he was their direct line to the White House. It was an image that he, along with Ruby Black, had tailored during the first two years of FDR’s presidency.

Through articles in La Democracia, Ruby Black and Muñoz Marín constantly presented their spin on the events in Washington. Black was the reporter that covered the major news from the capital, and Muñoz Marín, already a known writer of editorials in Puerto Rico, provided his

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44 Ibid.
perspective as a Puerto Rican and senator. Black ensured that as many news outlets as possible would carry word of meetings between Muñoz Marín and the FDR administration through her news bureau. Beyond facilitating meetings with Mrs. Roosevelt and other key figures, Black also wrote articles that presented favorable perspectives for Muñoz Marín, and advised anyone that she could in the Roosevelt administration of Muñoz Marín’s legitimacy and desire to promote the New Deal agenda.

By late 1934, Muñoz Marín had met with FDR and Mrs. Roosevelt, as well as numerous other administration officials. Mrs. Roosevelt had visited Puerto Rico, with Ruby Black as one of her companions for the trip. Additionally, Muñoz Marín had become the trusted Puerto Rican political contact for Roosevelt. He worked closely with Gruening to develop and put in action a recovery plan for Puerto Rico. In his memoirs, Muñoz Marín recalled that

> Gruening y yo laboramos juntos en responder al gran reto. A veces se excedía Gruening en su autoridad, con la aprobación tácita de Roosevelt. Por la propia naturaleza del Nuevo Trato y de la causa que yo defendía para Puerto Rico, mi influencia era mayor que la de un simple senador de minoría (Gruening and I labored together in response to this great challenge. Sometimes Gruening exceeded his authority, with tacit approval from Roosevelt. Due to the nature of the New Deal and the cause I defended for Puerto Rico, my influence was much greater than that of a simple senator in the minority.)

The influence Muñoz Marín had in Washington became clear to Puerto Ricans as the months passed. Through newspaper articles and radio broadcasts, Puerto Ricans were kept up to date on Muñoz Marín’s actions. They also understood that Ruby Black was a key figure in the young senator’s access to powerbrokers in Washington.

An example of the effectiveness of Black and Muñoz Marín’s media efforts was documented in a letter written by a Puerto Rican woman from Santurce to Muñoz Marín on November 16, 1934. It was common for Muñoz Marín to receive letters from fellow Puerto

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45 Muñoz Marín, Memorias, 146.
Ricans. For most of his life, and due to his father’s stature as a Puerto Rican political leader, he was a public figure. He wrote editorials from the age of eighteen and constantly kept his voice present in the written world of Puerto Rico. As a senator, he was then even more active in media and news. Requests for favors, critiques, and adulations were frequently sent to him. This letter from Sra. Elena Martínez, though, was particularly telling.

Ms. Martínez began by first asking Muñoz Marín to forgive her for daring to write to him while he was in the United States, working hard to provide some relief for Puerto Rico. Martínez then stated:

*Solo deseo Ud. me le hable a la Ruby Black o si puede hablar personal (sic) con Mrs. Roosevelt, se que Ud. puede, me le pida una carta para Mr. Bourne* [James Bourne, Director of Puerto Rico Emergency Relief Administration, precursor to PRRA]. *Aquí me moriré de necesidad, he trabajado en el Dept. del Interior por la (PRERA) dos veces, la primera vez dos meses y pico y la otra un mes veinte días, de un año y pico que hace que está la Rehabilitación en Puerto Rico (I only wish for you to speak to Ruby Black for me, or if you could talk to Mrs. Roosevelt personal (sic), I know that you can, and ask her for a letter for Mr. Bourne. I will die of necessity here, I worked in the Dept. of Interior for the (PRERA) twice, the first time for two months and a bit, and the other time for a month and twenty days, out of a year and more that the Rehabilitation has been in Puerto Rico.)*

Martínez appealed to Muñoz Marín as a link to the Roosevelt administration. She was also aware that Muñoz Marín had access to the administration through Ruby Black. The document seemed to demonstrate that the relationship between Black and Muñoz Marín was public knowledge. The deep political entanglement that Black and Muñoz Marín had was appreciated by Ms. Martínez and even exploited. Moreover, Martínez realized that Mrs. Roosevelt played an constitutive part in the island's politics.

The insight this letter provided went well beyond just its intended topic. Ms. Martínez touched on an aspect of Muñoz Marín’s political relationship with Washington that soon led him

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46 Elena Martínez to Luis Muñoz Marín, letter, November 16, 1934, Sección XIII, Colección Gloria Arjona, FLMM.
to reconsider his role in this power hierarchy. Just over three years after this letter was written, Muñoz Marín was on his way to establishing a new political party in Puerto Rico and starting on a long road towards the creation of a more autonomous government. In 1934, though, he may not have grasped how Elena Martínez’s words exposed him as an intermediary with little power.

Again, Martínez wrote that she only desired for Muñoz Marín to “speak to Ruby Black for me, or if you could talk to Mrs. Roosevelt personal (sic), I know that you can.” Her words located the political power and will in the hands of the women that Muñoz Marín was working with. He might have thought that his interactions were part of his manipulation of the Washington system, but for Martínez, he was a messenger. In hindsight, she astutely observed a power dynamic that could not have pleased Muñoz Marín, even at that early state of his interactions with the Roosevelt administration.

Relegating most of his access to the White House to women left Muñoz Marín in a position that could be described as emasculating. The relationship he cultivated with Franklin D. Roosevelt was made possible by his meeting with Eleanor Roosevelt. That meeting was realized through the efforts of Ruby Black. It was also fair to state that Muñoz Marín never would have met Black without the contacts provided him through his wife. Muna Lee was directly responsible for Muñoz Marín being able to sit for tea with Mrs. Roosevelt. It was a circumstance that Elena Martínez touched on in her letter, but the full dynamics of it were not made clear to Muñoz Marín until three years later, when he advocated abstention from the electoral process in the 1936 Puerto Rican elections.

In April of 1936, Millard Tydings introduced a bill into the United States Senate that laid a route for Puerto Ricans to vote on independence in the November elections of that year. In part

47 Ibid.
a response to the assassination of the Chief of the Insular Police, and Tyding’s friend, Colonel E. Francis Riggs, the bill offered Puerto Rico independence if its citizens voted for it. If chosen by the island residents, it would be a very fast move towards full sovereignty from the United States. As early as April 28, 1936, Muñoz Marín expressed his opposition to the bill. In a letter written to Senator Tydings, he stated that the bill had “two main defects.”

The first was that it provided for a transition period, something Muñoz Marín saw as unnecessary. The second defect was that it did not allow for the fulfillment of the economic measures the Roosevelt administration was implementing through the PRRA.

The letter offered some amendments for inclusion in the bill that Muñoz Marín thought would get the Puerto Rican people to support it. His suggestions were not adopted and by July of 1936 he had moved to promote his party’s abstention from the Puerto Rican elections. On July 3rd Muñoz Marín wrote to Ruby Black that “I have proposed the Liberal Party abstention from the elections...If the Liberal Party goes to the election it will be inevitably beaten” because of voters’ responses to the Tydings Bill and the Liberal Party’s promotion of sovereignty. If independence meant losing economic help from Washington, Puerto Ricans would vote against the party that advocated it. Muñoz Marín continued in his letter to plot out a course of action for Black and their supporters in Washington to ensure that he maintained his close relationship with government officials. He attempted to counter actions by his political opponents within the Liberal Party and Puerto Rican politics to drive a wedge between him and the Roosevelt

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49 Muñoz Marín to Ruby Black, letter, July 3, 1936, in Fernós López-Cepero, 156.
administration. Muñoz Marín ended his letter by stating to Black, “Go to it kid.”\(^\text{50}\) The response Muñoz Marín received was far from what he expected.

In a series of three letters, dated July 6th, 8th, and 13th, Ruby Black presented to Muñoz Marín and Muna Lee her concerns with abstention. In her first letter, Black connected Muñoz Marín’s plans with how administration officials would react to them: “While I know, Luis, that you are absolutely high in the estimation of Ickes [Harold, Secretary of Interior] and Chapman [Oscar, Assistant Secretary of the Department of Interior], I am not sure that they would repeat past utterances if you are still holding out against participation in the elections.”\(^\text{51}\) The brief paragraph went directly to what had made the political relationship between Black and Muñoz Marín so effective: access to the Washington administration and Muñoz Marín’s ability to ingratiate himself to them. Black later outlined for Muñoz Marín why she personally opposed his position. Her objections were that there was no way for him to stop all voting, it would make him unpopular in Washington because it was not a technique accepted by U.S. tradition, and she still held hope that he could win the elections.

The second letter by Black was much more direct and lengthy. In four pages that were carbon-copied to Muna Lee, Black recapped work that she and Muñoz Marín accomplished since 1933. She reminded him that their successes were the result of “my contacts and your intelligence and statesmanship.”\(^\text{52}\) Furthermore, Black painstakingly outlined how they had been able to make the Liberal Party and its ideals of economic reconstruction and political independence for Puerto Rico legitimate in Washington. She also refreshed Muñoz Marín’s

\(^{50}\) Ibid., 157.  
\(^{51}\) Letter from Ruby Black to Luis Muñoz Marín, 6 July, 1936, in Fernós López-Cepero, 158.  
\(^{52}\) Letter from Ruby Black to Luis Muñoz Marín, 8 July 1936, in Fernós López-Cepero, 160.
memory on how they turned him into the “Puerto Rican whose advice was most highly regarded and most closely followed in Washington.” She argued that considering that the U.S. controlled the island, that it was much more powerful militarily and economically than Puerto Rico, and that it would only grant independence on its terms, the proposed abstention from the November 1936 insular election would nullify all the work they had accomplished in three years.

Black understood that officials in Washington, and U.S. people as a whole, would view this political technique as unacceptable “to our mores, or...to our strange minds.” She warned that Muñoz Marín and his associates would be seen as “outlaws and ‘soreheads’ who did not have the courage to make a fight when powerful forces were against” them. The letter was a very detailed and expansive plea for Muñoz Marín to reconsider his position. It was surely not the reply he expected and, by Black’s tone, it was not taken amicably.

We do not have a record of the letters Muñoz Marín or Muna Lee may have written to Black between July 6th and the 13th, but Black’s response demonstrated her desire to restate her intentions and her support of Muñoz Marín and his economic and political goals. It read like the reply of a person who felt close friends had misunderstood her and hurt by their reactions. Unlike her previous two letters that were addressed to Luis with statements for them to be shared with Muna, the July 13th one began with “Dear Muna and Luis.” It was a subtle difference, but one that demonstrated a wish to communicate with the couple she had known for years.

53 Ibid.
54 Ibid, 161.
55 Ibid.
56 Letter from Ruby Black to Muna Lee and Luis Muñoz Marín, 13 July 1936, in Fernós López-Cepero, 164.
Black then proceeded in her usual straightforward manner. Her next line was, “Please get these three facts straight.” She had not discussed the elections with anyone.\textsuperscript{57} She reset the motives and intentions expressed in her previous two letters. Moreover, she directly assured Muna Lee and Muñoz Marín that she understood that there was no “hostility against the U.S. in what Luis does. But I doubt that others here would be convinced of that.”\textsuperscript{58} Black’s correspondence demonstrated her support for her two friends and their ideals, but it was also a reminder that she was presenting her opinions on how the U.S. would react to the actions Muñoz Marín intended to take. Black seemed to feel that her intentions had been misrepresented by Muna Lee and Muñoz Marín, and she was determined to correct that error.

These three documents presented a window into the relationship between Ruby Black, Luis Muñoz Marín and Muna Lee. It was a partnership of equals in talents, knowledge and skills. Their relationship was crafted out of idealistic views on how to better the economic and political circumstances of Puerto Rico, but their approach was grounded in practical actions for their times. They engaged in maneuvering with Washington and used their individual capabilities for their common goal. Each contributed through advice, meetings, writing, editing, facilitating and crafting of their objectives, but only one received the public spotlight continually. It was the result of a time when men ruled political life, and women performed the role of their supporters. It was also why Black’s letters seemed to have stung Muñoz Marín deeply.

In a very clear manner, Black affirmed to Muñoz Marín and Lee that their political capital lay squarely in the hands of people over whom they had no leverage. Muñoz Marín was a senator at large for a minority party. He did not have a clear constituency, nor any strong measure of political power. Lee, who supported Muñoz Marín’s goals behind the scenes, could

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{57} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{58} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
not attain his level of acceptance in political circles. Moreover, her actions had to be quite discreet considering her public position at the University of Puerto Rico and in the NWP. The fate of Muñoz Marín and Lee’s work lay in the hands of distant agents that saw Puerto Rico as just one aspect of a much larger national and world context. In this case, the colonial difference was contested locally in Puerto Rico, but that negotiation had what Walter Mignolo called “global designs” for the U.S. In other words, the realities on the ground in Puerto Rico had real implications for U.S. power around the world and how it was viewed. Black bluntly presented that picture to her friends, and it led to the end of their triangular political partnership.

Muñoz Marín steadfastly pushed for abstaining from the November election in 1936. He gathered much support, but it was not enough to sway the rest of the party leadership. By September of 1936, the leadership of the Liberal Party had split between Muñoz Marín and Antonio Barceló. Barceló’s contingent successfully spurned Muñoz Marín’s proposal to abstain. As a result, Muñoz Marín and his supporters rejected any nominations for political posts. The conflict led to a defeat at the polls for the Liberals. By May of 1937, the Liberal Party had expelled Muñoz Marín and his group. It was the worst period politically for Muñoz Marín. It was also the lowest point in his relationship with Lee.

Their political relationship notwithstanding, Lee and Muñoz Marín had steadily grown apart from the time he returned from New York in 1931. Just as the triangular collaboration between Lee, Muñoz Marín and Black was picking up steam between 1933 and 1936, the fifteen-year-old marriage was crumbling. There was evidence as early as 1932 that Muñoz Marín had affairs with other women.59

59 See Bianca to Luis Muñoz Marin, letter, April 21, 1935; Fini Rincon to Luis Muñoz Marín, letter, March 31, 1937, Sección XIII, Colección Gloria Arjona, FLMM. Both showed evidence of romantic interactions between Luis Muñoz Marín and the letters’ female authors.
Whatever the full nature of Muñoz Marín’s interaction with these women, Lee did not allow it to stop her from promoting the couple’s political and public agenda. She published the poem “Lyric of the Sun” in 1935, through which she expressed, according to Cohen, that “she had moved beyond her resentment of his abandonment of her and could celebrate life.” The reality for Lee was that she was a product of the norms of her era. As a woman, even though she was independently successful, her biggest asset to be able to continue her work for Pan Americanism was her marriage to a prominent Latin American politician. Though in poetry her maiden name carried much prestige, throughout Latin America and within the U.S. political arena she was known as Mrs. Luis Muñoz Marín or Mrs. Muna Lee de Muñoz Marín.

Lee’s married name opened doors for her, and yet it also embodied her gendered role as a supporter of her husband. Just as her name had made New York publishers accessible to Muñoz Marín, his name now made her point of view and activism legitimate in Washington and political centers throughout the world. Lee had managed to make herself relevant in the international woman’s movement and Pan Americanism. Just as her husband was able to bridge the divide between Washington and San Juan, Muna Lee was able to continually cross the boundaries between her work in the U.S. government and Latin America. It was a skill that she developed through her literary talents and residence in Puerto Rico, but her relationship with Muñoz Marín also facilitated it. As the 1930s progressed, though, the emotional distance between Lee and Muñoz Marín left little place for an estranged spouse in Muñoz Marín’s ever more public persona.

It was not clear exactly at what point the political movement that Muñoz Marín was developing understood that its success hinged on the public image of “Don Luis Muñoz Marín.”

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60 Cohen, 38.
It might have been from its inception after the expulsion from the Liberal Party, or when the Populares began the process of registering their party in each municipality on the island. Whichever the case, by 1938, Muñoz Marín and his supporters moved to demonstrate his skill, talent, integrity, and greatness.

Muñoz Marín had been a public figure for most of his life. His story was popular throughout Puerto Rico. By 1935, he was a key political figure who was known as much for his oratory and written skills as for his image as a bohemian and frequenter of tertulias (roughly meaning gathering of intellectuals and literati). Puerto Ricans saw him as the son of a great man who had not fulfilled his potential, a young talent who had yet to develop into his own man. Part of that maturing process was his marriage to Muna Lee. His contemporaries did not even consider his philandering as negative for his public persona. Moreover, it could be a positive reenforcement of his masculinity as long as he did not publicly address or boast about it. In a time when the media or political opponents did not exploit matters of this nature, the estrangement between Lee and Muñoz Marín provided him an opportunity to transition from the image of a young bohemian to that of a serious statesman.

One aspect of this shift was connected with Muñoz Marín’s ability to provide examples of Puerto Rican masculinity and femininity. As discussed in Chapter One, throughout the campaign for the 1940 election, the Populares successfully developed a male icon in the jíbaro. The party never presented Muñoz Marín as the embodiment of that persona, but it did argue that he was the jíbaro’s champion and advocate. He performed the masculine role of father and protector of the pueblo. What Muñoz Marín could not do by himself was develop a feminine model for Puerto Rican women that supported his vision for a modern Puerto Rico.
No matter the fact that women were inherent to the economic, social, and cultural life of the island, public views of women in the late 1930s had not progressed too far beyond those sung about by *Los Jardineros* in the early part of the decade. Women were vital to the success and goals of men, but they were always in the background, in the private sphere. Muna Lee’s work in support of Muñoz Marín demonstrated this role. Living on the island, Lee was the most hidden participant of the political triangle with Black and Muñoz Marín. It was acceptable for women in the mainland U.S. to take part in public roles, but not in Puerto Rico. Lee’s Pan Americanism work fit well into the image most Puerto Ricans had of U.S. women who travelled to the island in an effort to “help” its population.

As these two very intellectual and ambitious people grew further apart, the links Muñoz Marín’s public image had to his life in tertulias and Greenwich Village became more distant. By 1937, Muñoz Marín had shown himself to be a man who could negotiate Washington politically, but, as the letter from Mrs. Martinez stated, he could also make use of the women that helped run that capital city. The vague allusion to his ability to woo women seemed to be an important part of the skills he possessed. It was a talent that Muñoz Marín even wrote about in his memoirs. In a passage where he discussed his first meeting with Eleanor Roosevelt, Muñoz Marín boasted that “en una ocasión, aprovechándome de la reputación que autoriza a los latinos a decir píropos respetuosos, le dije que tenía los mejores ojos del mundo (In one occasion, taking advantage of the reputation that allows Latins to say respectful flirtatious compliments, I told her she had the best eyes in the world).”\(^6^1\) The skill Muñoz Marín had with women was part of his reputation. Moreover, from 1937 onward, it was a reputation that was reaffirmed every time he campaigned or had meetings when Inés Mendoza was present.

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\(^6^1\) Muñoz Marín, *Memorias*, 118.
**INÉS MENDOZA**

The daughter of a farmer from the town of Naguabo and a former teacher, Inés Mendoza was a woman who had made her name in the Puerto Rican consciousness through her efforts to oppose the enforcement of English-only teaching in public schools. From 1935, Mendoza refused to instruct her high school students in English even though the insular government mandated it. She argued that Spanish was an important part of Puerto Rican culture and that it was the language with which students were most comfortable. As a result of her activism, Mendoza was fired from her position at Central High School in Santurce. She fought her dismissal with the advocacy and support of the American Civil Liberties Union, but in 1937 lost her case.62

The civil rights fight left Inés Mendoza unemployed. She was married to graphic artist Rafael Palacios and they had two children. The nationalist battle she had over Spanish provided few material gains, but it did promote wide public praise and brought her closer to a man she had formally met a few years earlier, Luis Muñoz Marín.

Muñoz Marín wrote in his memoirs that his marriage to Inés, though not legally, truly began in 1938.63 Mendoza wrote in her diaries that her love for him developed in 1937.64 Each was married with children, but they found common interests in their political ideals and struggles. Their relationship was open and public, especially as the campaign for the 1940 elections progressed. Mendoza lived with Muñoz Marín in Cidra, Puerto Rico and she travelled with him throughout the island as they made the case for the PPD.

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64 Sánchez, 71.
More than a companion, Mendoza was a campaigner and speaker. She used her teaching skills to provide classes for the *jíbaros* on varied topics, not just politics. She organized meetings, distributed copies of *El Batey*, and promoted the new party. Additionally, she cared for the couple’s first-born child, Viviana, and carried their second daughter, Victoria, who was born a month after the 1940 elections. Just as Lee had been in the past, Mendoza was a companion to Muñoz Marín and his collaborator. Her role, though, was one that developed in a much more public and visible manner. Lee was limited in how much public exposure she could have due to her position at the University of Puerto Rico. Lee represented the gendered norm of the 1920s and 1930s that relegated women to a role of support for their men outside the public eye, while Mendoza became a model for how women could openly help bring about Puerto Rico’s modernization.

Mendoza’s role alongside Muñoz Marín was quite different from Lee’s. The support Lee provided Muñoz Marín and his political goals was part of her own personal ambitions and activism. Indeed, it was her established reputation through her work and literature that facilitated much of Muñoz Marín’s political gains. Moreover, she seemed to influence his long-term goals for Puerto Rico through her Pan American ideas. Lee envisioned a new identity for the island. She argued in a 1929 speech before a round table session at the Institute of Public Affairs of the University of Virginia that “Puerto Rico is Spanish American in its past, Anglo-Saxon in its present, and, I trust, in the deepest sense Pan-American in its future.”65 Her argument appeared to influence, or at the very least inspire, Muñoz Marín’s push for a new political status for the island in the early 1950s. His party’s establishment of the Free Associated State (Estado Libre Asociado) commonwealth relationship was championed by Muñoz Marín and the PPD as a new

65 Cohen, 216.
and original definition of political governance. It was a political status that attempted to bridge the differences between Latin American traditions and U.S. society, much in the same spirit as Pan Americanism. The Free Associated State promoted greater autonomy over local politics as a way to protect Puerto Rican traditions and cultures, but it also embraced closeness with the U.S. to facilitate economic development and social stability.

Viewing the commonwealth status through border thinking about Muñoz Marín’s relationships with Lee and Mendoza demonstrates the connections between Pan Americanism and the Free Associated State. It also shows how the new status was an attempt at negotiating the U.S./Spain colonial difference. The Estado Libre Asociado blended U.S. governmental traditions into Puerto Rico while trying to secure enough autonomy to protect puertorriqueñidad. Lee’s contribution to that status becomes clear with the exploration of the interstitial space between her marriage to Muñoz Marín and Mendoza’s.

Mendoza support for Muñoz Marín was more immediate, though. Throughout their lives together, Mendoza directly engaged in Muñoz Marín’s political work and took part in performing the duties needed to achieve their goals. As such, Mendoza’s role was very much public. The image of her standing with Muñoz Marín transformed the view of him as a bohemian politician and set forth a new role for Puerto Rican femininity. Moreover, the fact that she was Puerto Rican and a nationalist also signaled that Muñoz Marín had shifted away from Washington D.C. toward a greater preoccupation with Puerto Rico.

Though he had been a married man and father for almost two decades by 1938, Muñoz Marín spent much of that time apart from his family, and thus his image was one of a man on his own and left to his own devices. He was known to be a heavy social drinker and husband with a wandering eye. That entire persona, developed over decades, slowly gave way to a very different
image as more people saw Inés Mendoza as his devoted companion. As Daisy Sánchez stated in her study of Mendoza referring to the period after 1940, “Inés María se dedicó por entero al hogar y a ‘domesticar’ el carácter rebelde de su marido (Inés Maria dedicated herself completely to the home and to domesticating the rebellious character of her husband).” Inés deliberately engaged in that process after their victory in 1940, but that “rebellious character” was also transformed throughout the campaign by the couple’s constant togetherness.

At first, Mendoza was an embodiment of the rebel in Muñoz Marín because she was his mistress. As it became apparent that Mendoza was not a momentary interest, she became a figure of stability. Furthermore, her reputation as a person who stood up for her principles allowed Mendoza to be seen as a moral center for Muñoz Marín. It was that fortitude and integrity, which Mendoza exuded, that made her a model for the type of femininity that Muñoz Marín and the Populares wished to promote. It was a gendered role that built on the long established notions of purity and support for men, but in a much more visible and public manner.

In a modern Puerto Rico, women were supposed to dedicate themselves not only to their domestic duties, but to ensuring that their men did not partake in immoral or unrighteous acts. This gendered construction was expressed during the campaign in an El Batey article that asked women to make certain that their men did not sell their votes. As had the account presented earlier from the periodical, El Batey argued that because women faced the effects of the island’s poverty daily in the home,

...les toca a las mujeres ser la voz que todos los días les esté diciendo a sus hombres que tienen que acabar con esta situación ordenadamente y pacíficamente, pero con dignidad de hombres. Son las madres las que les tienen que decir a sus hijos que no le vendan su voto a nadie...Son las hijas las que les tienen que decir a sus padres que tienen que actuar como hombres...Son las novias las que les tienen que decir a sus novios que no pueden querer a hombres que van a vender el porvenir de sus futuros hijos...Se puede

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66 Sánchez, 105.
ganar a estos intereses si las mujeres, --madres, esposas, novias e hijas-- les dicen a sus hombres todos los días que tienen que tener vergüenza y no venderse...

...it is up to women to be the daily voice that tells their men that they have to end this situation in an orderly and peaceful way, but with the dignity of men. It is the mothers that have to tell their sons not to sell their votes to anyone...it is the daughters that have to tell their fathers that they have to act like men...it is the girlfriends that have to tell their boyfriends that they can not love men that are going to sell the wellbeing of their future children...It is possible to beat these [monied] interests if women --mothers, wives, girlfriends and daughters-- tell their men every day that they have to have shame and not sell themselves...67

The promotion of such a supportive role for women in the political arena, but within the private sphere, allowed the leaders of the Populares to harness a sector of society that had only been included fully in the voting process since 1936. Their involvement was vital for the future of the island, even though that future was still seen as male-centered. Yet, Mendoza went beyond the household by involving herself outside the private sphere through activities like speech giving and campaigning.

Neither Muñoz Marín nor the PPD articulated a radical change for women. What they did do was offer an updated patriarchy by arguing for a clear role for women within their vision of a modern Puerto Rico. Though women were essential parts of the political maneuvering and negotiation that took place between the island and the colonial power, their role was often hidden in the shadows of men. Muna Lee, Felicia Rincón (until she ran for the San Juan mayorship), Fini Rincón, and even Elena Martínez were some of the examples of women who worked from those shadows to promote changes for the country and their own lives. As the political shifts of the late 30s led to Muñoz Marín’s establishment of the PPD, the need to develop a broad appeal for the party necessitated the formulation of a role for women that was much more open and public.

67 “Lean esto las mujeres de nuestros campos,” El Batey, April 1939, Sección IX: Materiales Impreso y Periódicos, Periódico: El Batey, FLMM.
Muñoz Marín’s failed marriage with Muna Lee did not fit the rhetoric that was being presented throughout his campaign. On the other hand, his continually deepening relationship with Inés Mendoza exhibited all the characteristics of the gender roles the party promoted. Muñoz Marín embodied the father figure that would guide the nation, just as a male head of household would guide his family. Inés represented the new Puerto Rican woman that supported her man’s efforts. She actively took part in the campaign delivering the ideological message. Moreover, Mendoza presented herself publicly. The basic foundation of the ideal modern Puerto Rican woman the Populares looked to create was detailed in the rhetoric of the campaign, but it was embodied in Inés Mendoza.

As the PPD became the most powerful political party throughout the 1940s, it was impossible to think of Muñoz Marín without Inés Mendoza. Their relationship became part of the public image of the Populares. Moreover, it became a personification of the party’s ideals. Just as Muna Lee was able to promote the skills and talents of Muñoz Marín during the 1920s and early 30s, Inés Mendoza developed a public image that facilitated his acceptance as a mature and serious leader.

The Puerto Rico that developed after 1940 celebrated women publicly and yet limited their roles in society. The gendered norms of this modern Puerto Rico marginalized women and promoted their subjugation as fundamental to Puerto Ricanness. As support figures, women’s identities within modern Puerto Ricanness were defined through men. The image of a jíbaro as the most authentic representation of Puerto Ricanness was accompanied by the puertorriqueña who provided him support, moral fortitude and children. Rarely, if ever, was she called a jíbara in public discourse. Instead, as with the quote from El Batey presented at the start of this chapter, puertorriqueña peasants were mainly referred to as mujeres campesinas. A physical
representation of this construction of Puerto Rican femininity can be seen in a monument erected for the jíbaro along the Luis A. Ferré highway that connects the two largest cities in Puerto Rico, San Juan in the North and Ponce in the South.

Finished in 1976, *El Monumento al Jíbaro Puertorriqueño* was placed in the mountains of Salinas adjacent to the only rest stop on the island. The focal point of the monument was a statue sculpted by Puerto Rican artist Tomás Batista Encarnación. The piece is white and depicts a family: a standing man and a woman sitting in front and to the side of him holding a child (see below). It placed the man in a position of prominence with his hand on the shoulder of the woman. He is seen was holding a hoe over his left shoulder and looking straight ahead into the distance. The woman sits with her head leaning forward as she looks at the baby she holds in her arms. Her support of the jíbaro is both literal, with her shoulder supporting his hand, and figurative as she holds his future in her arms in the form of their child. The entire structure represents the ideal jíbaro family: proud man, supportive woman, and racially white.

The monument was, and continues to be, a daily reminder of the identity the Puerto Rican government wished to promote as the most authentic. On one side of its base it made the argument even more clearly. It reads: “*El jíbaro es el hombre de nuestra tierra, el cultivador de*
nuestro suelo, genesis de nuestra raza y auténtica expresión puertorriqueña (The jíbaro is the man of our land, the cultivator of our soil, genesis of our race and authentic Puerto Rican expression).” The modern patriarchal society that by 1976 had been fomented for over thirty-five years was fully commemorated by this monument. It celebrates a social structure founded on the identity developed through the struggles of people like Muñoz Marín, Inés Mendoza, Muna Lee, and the Populares throughout the 1930s. The monument also represents how the jíbaro was used to negotiate the colonial difference of twentieth-century Puerto Rico through its celebration of a traditional myth with roots in the Spanish colonial period. The jíbaro had become the symbol of the PPD and the political status that diffused opposition to U.S. rule and advocated continued close ties with the North American power.

Crystallizing Puerto Rican identity around the persona of the jíbaro and patriarchal constructions of gender roles were two essential aspects of the view Muñoz Marín and the PPD had for modernizing Puerto Rico and transforming its culture. That process, built on the efforts made by Dr. Julio Henna in 1901 to divide blackness from Puerto Ricanness, was fully on display in the monument. The statue provided continuity to the gendered constructs of this form of Puerto Ricanness, and even to the exclusion of blackness by the chosen color of the material used, as well as the facial features of the figures. Other forms of Puerto Ricanness competed for acceptance during this period, but they were often marginalized. The following chapter explores examples of counter constructions of Puerto Ricanness along race, and the development of an identity that, in Glissant’s terms, creolized—or created a new—puertorriqueñidad.
Chapter 4: The Afroborinqueña/o Challenge: Juanó Hernández, Pura Belpré, Roberto Clemente and the Creolization of Puertorriqueñidad

Puerto Rican elites in the twentieth century promoted the persona of the jíbaro in a desire to construct an identity that was quintessentially Puerto Rican. They used the jíbaro to build a national distinctiveness grounded in a whitened, male-centered culture that could gain some political control back from the United States. The endeavor contested power structures articulated through the colonial difference set in motion by the U.S. invasion of 1898. It was a representation that promised progress through the formation of a new and modern Puerto Rico. It used racial constructions and gendered norms with the assumption that they were natural creations. As a result, the championing of this identity marginalized any culture or group that was not associated with the white jíbaro. This was most evident in the exclusion of blackness and the attempt to make afroborinqueños invisible within Puerto Ricanness.¹ These efforts notwithstanding, Puerto Ricans of African ancestry challenged constructions of Puerto Rican identity that promoted whiteness and transfigured Puerto Ricanness through a process that creolized it throughout the twentieth century. It was no longer a white or black identity, but a new puertorriqueñidad. They did this in all areas of society, but often found that acceptance and success were more likely attainable outside of Puerto Rico.

To examine the alternatives to Puerto Rican whiteness, I found it essential to explore examples of people who successfully embodied a Puerto Rican identity that was not specifically tied to the mountain peasant. It became imperative to seek out figures that challenged this construction, and laid the groundwork for a new consciousness akin to what Gloria Anzaldúa

¹ Throughout this chapter, I use the terms afroborinqueña/o, Afro-Puerto Rican, and Afro-Puertorriqueño interchangeably. All three refer to people who identify themselves as Puerto Rican and of African descent.
termed the “new mestiza” in the Chicana/o and borderlands contexts. Just as Anzaldúa conceives of the U.S. borderlands identity as one that pushes beyond exclusion and marginalization, I seek here to broaden understandings of Puerto Ricanness. To uncover how puertorriqueñidad was changed, I explored Edouard Glissant’s concept of creolization beyond its linguistic tradition as a tool for comprehending the process Anzaldúa describes as a new consciousness that “copes with developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity.” I refer to creolization here not solely as a convergence of two languages, but as a coming together of identities and cultures as well. I search for a creolized new form of Puerto Ricanness from the negotiations of afroborinqueños/as with the jíbaro persona. Focusing on the identity developed by the subjects of this chapter—Juano Hernández, Pura Belpré and Roberto Clemente—allows me to examine the exclusion of afroborinqueños and the transformation of Puerto Ricanness, a process that I characterize as creolization.

Hernández, Belpré and Clemente were Afro-Puerto Ricans who excelled in their chosen fields outside of Puerto Rico and eventually acquired acceptance among their compatriots as representatives of Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricanness. They migrated to the United States mainland and defined themselves as Puerto Rican and black. They also lived lives that demonstrated that Puerto Ricanness was more than the jíbaro. None of them set out to change Puerto Rican identity, but the overall effect they had on Puerto Ricans as role models did just that.

In this chapter, the theoretical framework is deployed in the following manner. To explore the possible challenges to the identity fomented by the Populares, I shift the analysis of the Spanish/U.S. colonial difference from the contested areas of politics, culture, and gender

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2 Anzaldúa, 79.
discussed in earlier chapters to that of the racial experience lived by three Puerto Ricans. I launch my border thinking from the gap that existed between the identity constructed by Hernández, Belpré, and Clemente, and the one put forth by the Puerto Rican government after 1940. That location was translocal. It resided in Puerto Rico, in the mainland U.S., and everywhere that Puerto Ricans found themselves negotiating their identity beyond the parameters of whiteness created by the PPD’s jíbaro narrative. Finally, the study of Hernández, Belpré, and Clemente led me to the realization that their contributions to Puerto Ricanness eventually articulated an identity that was the result of both imperial pasts and multiple racial components.

For puertorriqueñidad, Glissant’s creolization was characterized by an identity that was simultaneously connected to the island, but yet not limited by its boundaries, national definitions, or racial constructions. In Hernández, Belpré, and Clemente we see an identity that was translocal and multiracial. Hernández and Belpré laid the groundwork towards creolization as pioneers of hybrid identities that negotiated the Spanish colonial past with U.S. colonialism in the twentieth century. Clemente expanded that identity beyond hybridity and into a new comprehension of Puerto Ricanness.

Juano Hernández was an actor. Pura Belpré was a librarian, storyteller, and author of children’s books. Roberto Clemente was a baseball player. They were active during the same time as Luis Muñoz Marín and Muna Lee. Each achieved the highest professional recognition, and, as a result, received great accolades. However, each had to travel outside Puerto Rico to be successful, and they soon discovered that the color of their skin was a signifier that brought prejudice upon them. Their physical traits forced them to negotiate a racial environment that excluded them once they decided to follow their ambitions in the United States. Hernández, Belpré, and Clemente identified themselves strongly as Puerto Ricans, but they also highlighted
their blackness. With each of them, we encounter a Puerto Ricanness that defined itself as black and Puerto Rican, while not rejecting the jíbaro. Throughout the century, their refusal to negate any part of their identity eventually led to a formulation of Afro-Puerto Ricanness that could not be tied to skin color. It was a transformation that creolized puertorriqueñidad by creating a new identity that was more than the sum of its parts.

I discovered no study that explored the significance of these three figures to Puerto Rican identity. I found only passing references to Hernández in scholarly work on African American participation in films. Studies on Belpré have seen a recent resurgence in the last ten years with multiple entries focusing on presenting her biography and her literary work. Clemente’s life has been widely discussed in sports biographies and studies about his contribution to baseball, as well as his importance in the integration of Latinos within sports. Most written material, however, addresses his career in baseball and his tragic death. Few have looked to his influence on Latin American identity and history. Furthermore, I found no study discussing Clemente’s identity as it pertained to Puerto Ricanness.

The lack of critical examination of these individuals allowed me to place my analysis outside the framework of popular understandings of Hernández, Belpré and Clemente. I centered my border thinking about their lives from the interstitial space created between the Puerto Ricanness championed by the island’s government and elites after 1940, and the actual puertorriqueñidad each one of these figures embodied. While the PPD and Muñoz Marín articulated an identity deeply grounded in whiteness, Juano Hernández, Pura Belpré and Roberto

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Clemente lived a Puerto Rican identity that accentuated the blackness within *puertorriqueñidad* as well. They contested the Spain/U.S. colonial difference in each of their lives, often along racial constructions. Hernández dealt with it by developing a career within U.S. black theater and films. He aligned himself closer to the U.S. part of the colonial difference. Belpré negotiated it by taking the Spanish traditions she grew up with and successfully presenting them to Latina/o and mainstream audiences in the United States through storytelling and children's books. She maneuvered the colonial difference by delving further into Puerto Rico’s cultural past during Spain’s control. While Hernández and Belpré represented some of the ways *puertorriqueños* had to contend with the Spain/U.S. colonial difference, Clemente strongly refused to be trapped in either side. He struggled with the coloniality of power Puerto Rico’s circumstance forced on him throughout this life on the island and in the mainland U.S., but he rebuffed its definitions and surpassed its boundaries. Just as in previous chapters we saw the utility of border thinking in unravelling the contestation of the Spain/U.S. colonial difference by locating an interstitial space from which to examine that difference, here that area is represented by the decisions Hernández and Belpré made to associate themselves closer to the Spanish or U.S. side of the colonial difference. The interstitial space is the contrast between them. Placing the study there allows us to see how Clemente transcended that dichotomy and created what Glissant called “something else, another way,” a creolized *puertorriqueñidad*.

While in previous chapters the colonial difference has manifested mainly along the clash of two imperial powers within the psyche of Puerto Ricans, here it developed through the identity these individuals presented outside of the island. Their blackness, though a cause for prejudice in Puerto Rico to an extent, could not be hidden or minimized in the U.S. As such, the

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5 Glissant, 83.
racial space each empire’s legacy created forced Hernández, Belpré and Clemente to negotiate their Afro-Puerto Ricanness differently when they migrated. The hard realities of living in the U.S. as people with African ancestry allowed them to articulate identities that on the one hand honored their puertorriqueñidad and on the other embraced their blackness defiantly. In contesting the colonial difference during their migrations, each also influenced Puerto Rican identity by offering examples of puertorriqueñidad that countered what the PPD and Muñoz Marin were promoting.

**Juano Hernández**

Juano Hernández was born in San Juan on July 19, 1901. His father, José Guillermo Hernández, was a Puerto Rican merchant marine and his mother, Clara Chaves, was Brazilian. Hernández’s mother died when he was four years old, and his father decided to move to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil so his son could live with his aunt. By the age of seven, Hernández was already a performer in the streets of Rio as an acrobat and singer. He travelled throughout Latin America and the Caribbean for the next five years. In 1915, he arrived in New Orleans and began a career in theater and vaudeville that led him to New York City and Broadway.⁷

There was no clear record of Hernández ever attending school, but he recalled in interviews taking and even paying for classes during his travels. Once in the mainland United States, Juano quickly learned the importance of speaking and writing English. Carlos Montes,

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⁷ Biographical sheet from the Greenevine Agency, box 1. folder 7, and finding aid for Colecciones Particulares: Juano Hernández (C.P. 5), AGPR.
archivist at the Archivo General de Puerto Rico (AGPR) and author of the biographical essay in the finding aid for the Juano Hernández collection, wrote that “una cosa aprendió muy temprano-- dijo en una ocasión-- es que si usted habla el inglés con algún acento, la gente tiende a reirse de usted (one thing he learned very early on--he said on one occasion--if you speak English with any kind of accent, people tend to laugh at you). To avoid any ridicule, Hernández worked hard to become completely fluent in English. His efforts proved successful as exhibited by his constant work in the 1920s and 30s in U.S. theater and radio.

The historical record showed that Juano Hernández acted in, directed, and wrote numerous plays and radio programs by the mid-1930s. He played the lead in a popular radio series about an African American railroad steel-driver titled “John Henry” which aired on the CBS network. Hernández found plenty of work throughout what was called at the time “Negro theater.” He played leading roles in traveling plays like “Porgy” and “Harlem.” These plays were often promoted as “Southern realism” or “Negro realism” dramas (see appendices A and B) because they addressed the lived experiences of African Americans in twentieth-century United States. Hernández continued to perform and write within the segregated entertainment industry throughout the 1930s and 40s.

Hernández’s stature as a talented black actor steadily grew and, in 1949, he appeared in the Hollywood film adaptation of William Faulkner’s novel Intruder in the Dust. Juano was cast in the leading role of Lucas Beauchamp, an elder African-American farmer wrongfully accused of murdering a white man in a southern U.S. town. Beauchamp, with the help of a young white boy and his lawyer father, eventually proved his innocence and regained his freedom. The film

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8 Finding aid, Colecciones Particulares: Juano Hernández (C.P. 5), AGPR.
9 Newspaper clippings (1932-1941), box 5, folder 28, Colecciones Particulares: Juano Hernández (C.P. 5), AGPR.
received wide acclaim and Hernández’s performance was rewarded with a Golden Globe nomination as New Star of the Year. His portrayal of Beauchamp was considered by many critics of his time, and film historians today, as one of the strongest African American characters ever presented in Hollywood. In *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, & Bucks: An Interpretative History of Blacks in American Films*, Donald Bogle argued that Beauchamp in *Intruder in the Dust* was exceptional because “startling is the fact that not once does the black man bend. Not once does he stoop to prove he is as good as a white man.”\(^\text{10}\) According to Bogle, because of Hernández’s superb work “[Beauchamp] remains one of the great black male movie symbols.”\(^\text{11}\)

Throughout the 1950s, Hernández continued to work steadily in Hollywood. He performed in dozens of films and TV shows. More often than not, he played black characters that were strong and unyielding to the dominant culture. In many films, he was the only black actor in the cast. Bogle stated that Hernández often interpreted characters that were proud, individualistic, and uncompromising, a rarity to see among black actors in the 1950s, which eventually led to fewer roles. By the 1960s, he found it more difficult to land steady employment and was mainly relegated to the B film industry. As his career sputtered in Hollywood, Hernández began to delve deeper into his teaching.\(^\text{12}\)

From 1948 on, Hernández traveled from Puerto Rico to Hollywood and locations around the world to film. In between roles, he taught classes on English phonetics and acting at the University of Puerto Rico. He also established the Liceo de Arte Dramático (Dramatic Arts Lyceum) in Santurce, Puerto Rico. The Lyceum, a place where students could hone their skills in television, radio and film, was successful throughout the 1950s. As his career in Hollywood

\(^\text{10}\) Bogle, 155.

\(^\text{11}\) Ibid., 156.

\(^\text{12}\) Brochure for Premio de Arte Dramático “Juano Hernández” (Actor Puertorriqueño de la Raza Negra), box 5, folder 29, Colecciones Particulares: Juano Hernández (C.P. 5), AGPR.
waned, though, he saw less interest in his services and fewer students. He returned to California by the late 1960s where his reestablished lyceum thrived for several years. He continued to provide acting and singing lessons in Hollywood until his death in 1970.

Hernandez’s career spanned over six decades and saw him achieve success in radio, television and film. Though he always held strongly to his Puerto Rican roots, he found his success within the African American entertainment community. It was unclear why he did not claim more directly his Brazilian roots. The geographic and political closeness of Puerto Rico, as well as the post-1950 Cold War policies of the United States government that sought to promote Puerto Rico as a beacon of positive U.S. influence in Latin America, may have been contributing factors, but no historical material supports these theories directly. From early vaudeville performances in all-black troupes to depicting black characters in radio and film, Hernandez mostly embodied representations of African Americans. His blackness in the United States predominated in his public image, but he never allowed himself to be fully defined by it. A clear example of his complex identity was the fact that he did not anglicize his name. In a time when even ethnic white minorities would pick up pseudonyms to better appeal to U.S. audiences, he insisted on using Juano Hernández.

The pride he demonstrated towards his Latin American roots did not prevent his career in the United States from being defined within the racial worldview of the early and mid-1900s. Throughout a family scrap book available in his collection at the AGPR, newspaper cutouts and

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program bills described Hernández as a “colored” or “negro” performer. We can see this in the images below:

![Image #1](image1.png)

The opportunities afforded to him through the segregated theater circuit led to his success in radio. Hernández was then able to transform that fame as a talented performer into film and television roles. Throughout all that work, he accepted the identification with African Americans in the United States. As we can see in image #2, Hernández took part in celebrations of African American culture. This particular example is quite interesting because as part of the “All Star Negro Performance” Juano Hernández performed for the New York Urban League, whose executive board included one Arthur A. Schomburg. This was the same Schomburg that broke away from the Puerto Rican Independence Party led by José Julio Henna once it became obvious that the movement was not interested in incorporating Afro-Puerto Rican identity nor promoting racial equality. No record exists on whether Schomburg and Hernández met that night or any time before or after the event.

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14 Newspaper clippings (1932-1941), box 5, folder 28, and “All Star Negro Performance,” New York Urban League (Nov. 25, 1933), box 5, folder 77, Colecciones Particulares: Juano Hernández (C.P. 5), AGPR.
As opinion makers in Puerto Rico were redefining Puerto Ricanness using the “white” jíbaro, Juano Hernández was building a career in the United States that made use of his blackness. By 1949, Hernández had become so successful that his performance in a Hollywood film earned him international acclaim. He had gained fame in the mainland United States and was also well known in his native land. In 1950, the interim governor of Puerto Rico, Vicente Géigel Polanco, and the Puerto Rican Legislature honored Juano Hernández’s achievements in radio, television and film with a ceremony in the governor’s palace and a special dinner at the Hotel Caribe-Hilton.15 It was one of several celebrations of Hernández’s accomplishments during the 1950s. Among these was an honorary doctorate from the University of Puerto Rico. Notwithstanding this public acceptance, by 1957 Hernández found little support in Puerto Rico for his school for the dramatic arts.

Exactly what reasons led to the lack of interest in Juano Hernández’s lyceum were not clear, but on April 6, 1957, the Puerto Rican magazine Alma Latina published an editorial lamenting the actor’s departure. It stated that Hernández was “triunfante en Hollywood, decepcionado en su isla...se queja el veterano actor Juano Hernández de ‘la apatía de algunos actores de radio y televisión’ (Triumphant in Hollywood, let down in his island...the veteran actor Juano Hernández complains about ‘the apathy of certain radio and television actors.)”16 The editorial explained how Hernández’s lyceum in Hollywood had found much success and how celebrities like Elvis Presley and Elizabeth Taylor sought his services out. Of course, this would not be the first time that an artist found more appreciation outside of his/her homeland.

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15 “Rinden homenaje a Juano Hernández,” PR Ilustrado (March 11, 1950), Colecciones Particulares: Juano Hernández (C.P. 5), AGPR.
16 “Juano se va,” Alma Latina (April 6, 1957), Colecciones Particulares: Juano Hernández (C.P. 5), AGPR.
than within it, but could this situation be in part a result of the rise of the *jibaro* identity and the promotion of that form of Puerto Ricanness by the government of Luis Muñoz Marín?\(^1\)

It might not have been a coincidence that a Puerto Rican who fully accepted and incorporated blackness into his construction and presentation of Puerto Ricanness did not find a place within the island’s entertainment industry, the government’s cultural institutions, or publicly funded media projects. Starting in the late 1940s, the Puerto Rican government founded the Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña (ICP) and the Division de la Educación de la Comunidad (DIVEDCO). The ICP was created to promote a specific form of Puerto Rican culture, while the DIVEDCO used popular media like print, film, and theater to educate citizens on social issues.\(^2\) Both institutions were administered following the precedents established by New Deal programs like the Works Progress Administration and the Federal Writer’s Project. Numerous Puerto Rican artists and writers found employment within the ICP and DIVEDCO, especially if they already had created work that highlighted Puerto Ricanness in a fashion similar to the identity promoted by the PPD and Muñoz Marín. One clear example of these artists was writer and playwright René Marqués. Famous for the play “La Carreta” (The Oxcart), in which he presented the hardships a peasant family suffered during its migration from the island’s mountain region to the city and eventually to New York, Marqués worked on screenplays for PPD government’s DIVEDCO during the 1950s on topics ranging from personal hygiene to the role and importance of women in a modern Puerto Rico. These topics connected closely with the political ideology of

\(^1\) It is interesting that from the 1930s-1960s another Puerto Rican actor, José Ferrer, a Puerto Rican that was seen as being white, was widely celebrated in and out of the island due to his award winning performances in U.S. film and theater. For a detailed understanding of Ferrer’s career see Bruce Lambert, “Jose Ferrer, Actor, Writer and Director, 80, is Dead,” *New York Times* (January 27, 1992).

the Populares because they elevated the *jibaro* as the quintessentially Puerto Rican, but yet promoted social and economic progress consistent with the development goals of the PPD.

Unfortunately, Juano Hernández seemed to find little support from DIVEDCO or the ICP. It was not clear if he actively sought employment or funds from the government agencies, but it was apparent that there was not much demand for his work in Puerto Rico by 1957. The reasons for this are not clear. Part of the lack of interest may have originated from his advanced age by the late 1950s, but it could have easily been something as benign as his fee as an established actor, or simply the fact that he was mainly known for English language media and DIVEDCO’s efforts were mostly in Spanish. Much of it could also be due to how little his public image related to the form of Puerto Ricaness being promoted and propagated by the PPD government. Hernández was a proud and celebrated Afro-Puerto Rican, and there was little room for that kind of Puerto Ricaness within the cult of the white *jibaro*. He was a pioneer of the black Puerto Rican experience, and as such was a precursor to the identity that Clemente would promote.

The strong push by the Puerto Rican government to construct a cultural nationalism based on the *jibaro* marginalized numerous forms of Puerto Ricaness. Juano Hernández represented an example of how little value was placed on elevating blackness and African heritage within Puerto Rican identity on the island. Instead, the cultural traditions of European descendants and their notions of whiteness—physical and cultural—were celebrated. That exclusion also extended to forms of gender that did not adhere to norms of patriarchy and republican motherhood. Pura Belpré was one individual that challenged these traditional constructs throughout her life as a librarian, storyteller and author of children’s books.
Pura Belpré

Pura Teresa Belpré Nogueras was born in the central-region town of Cidra, Puerto Rico on February 2, 1902. The daughter of Afro-Puerto Ricans, building contractor Felipe Belpré and Carlota Nogueras, Pura Belpré spent her childhood relocating throughout the island due to her father’s work. She attained her primary and secondary education in the towns of Cayey, Arroyo, Guayama, and San Juan. Unusual during this period for women, Belpré graduated from Central High School in Santurce, Puerto Rico in 1919. Moreover, she enrolled at the University of Puerto Rico to pursue a career in teaching. In 1920, Belpré visited New York City for her sister’s wedding. She planned to return to Puerto Rico, but during her time in the metropolis she was offered a job at the New York Public Library.\(^\text{19}\) Having received English instruction on the island, Belpré was able to take advantage of this opportunity. The position, initially presented to her sister who turned it down because she was going to get married, was as Hispanic assistant at the 135th Street branch. The job started Pura Belpré on a career path that made her one of the most influential Puerto Ricans in New York.\(^\text{20}\)

The opportunity developed out of the changing face of the community that lived near the branch. Librarian Ernestine Rose observed her neighborhood becoming more Spanish-speaking.

\(^{19}\)“Pura Belpré storytelling at Casita Maria,” image, Pura Belpré Papers, Archives of the Puerto Rican Diaspora, Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, http://centropr.hunter.cuny.edu/prwriters/pb-docs.html (accessed May 9, 2013).

and decided to engage the population in its own language. Pura Belpré was assigned to work at the adults’ and childrens’ rooms. As she sought to better serve the growing population of Latinos, many of whom were Puerto Rican, Belpré looked for stories from her homeland within the stacks to read to the children who visited the library. She did not find any. The experience launched her on a lifelong quest to make the stories she grew up with in Puerto Rico available to Puerto Rican children in New York City.²¹

It was not until 1925 when Belpré received training in storytelling at the Library School of the New York Public Library that she wrote her first story. In it she captured her memories of a tale her grandmother recited to her while she was growing up on the island.²² The story was “Pérez and Martina,” a narrative about a cockroach named Martina who rejects suitors who arrive at her balcony asking her to marry until the day a mouse named Pérez called at her window. The two fall in love and marry, but the happiness was short-lived. During Christmas time, Martina decided to cook a new dish to surprise Peréz and, while the large pot boiled, she left to take care of housework. The mouse arrived at the home and was tempted by the smell of the food being prepared. He decided to climb on a stool to taste it, but fell into the pot and died. The story ends with Martina dressed in a black veil playing a sad song about her tragedy with a guitar.²³ It received praise from Belpré’s co-workers, and soon she was using it during the branch’s story time.

Belpré’s ability to receive permission to use her unpublished work for storytelling was a testament to her talent as a writer and her dedication. During this time, the New York Public Library did not allow unpublished stories to be used for story time at branches. Of course,

²¹ Ibid.
²² Ibid., 428.
considering the library did not possess any folktales or stories that reflected the cultural background of the people who visited that branch, crafting story time under the restriction of having to use published works would have left Pura Belpré with little content that could connect with the Puerto Rican youth she saw every day.

*Pérez and Martina: A Portorican Folk Tale* was released as a book in 1932. It was the first Puerto Rican story ever published in the United States, and it negotiated the two imperial forces contested in Puerto Rico’s colonial difference. The story was grounded in the Spanish culture of Puerto Rico. It presented characters that performed music, danced, and wore clothes from the Iberian tradition. Pérez was described as having “royal descent,” while Martina was introduced as a “Spanish cockroach.”24 The book, though, was written mostly in English (songs were presented in Spanish with translations) and crafted to be distributed in the United States. Belpré sought to bring the traditional culture of nineteenth-century Puerto Rico to twentieth-century New York. In its desire to provide Puerto Rican youth in the U.S. with a representation of their ancestral culture, the book engaged in a process that can be described as border thinking. Belpré took aspects of both cultures and merged them into a hybrid product, but placed more emphasis on the Puerto Rican tradition she remembered. She aligned herself more with the Spanish tradition of the Spain/U.S.colonial difference, and in the process became a precursor on how to combine the two cultures. Belpré’s work through her writings opened pathways of acceptance to the mixing of the colonial traditions, and provided a precedent for the creolization that Clemente’s life exhibited.

Belpré continued to write and work at the 135th branch library, and later the Aguilar branch on East 110th Street, until 1945, when she resigned. By that time, she was married to

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24 Ibid, 2-11.
African American violinist and conductor Clarence Cameron White. In a letter dated April 4, 1944, Belpré wrote to her husband about their decision that she leave her work so they could spend more time together while he travelled for work. The decision, the importance of which I discuss later, was not easy, and in the letter Belpré asked White to accept her plan to take a leave of absence first before actually resigning from the NYPL so she could fulfill her professional goals without being part of the library. She stated that “during that time I shall try to adjust my innerself (sic) to the change...[i]f at the end of it [the year of leave] we still think I ought to stay away, I will then resign.” Eventually, the couple put Belpré’s proposal into action. Until White’s death in 1960, Belpré and her husband travelled together and supported each other’s endeavors. Belpré worked on her writing and published the edited volume “The Tiger and the Rabbit” and Other Tales in 1946, the first English language collection of Puerto Rican folk tales in the United States. She continued to publish throughout the 1950s and returned to the New York Public Library after her husband’s death as the Spanish children’s specialist for the entire system.26

The position allowed Belpré to develop storytelling techniques to implement throughout the system that would help serve the growing Latino population of the city.27 She designed
puppet programs and bilingual presentations while also translating Spanish-language stories. Belpré was forced to retire in 1968 due to the city’s age limit for public employees, but she continued to work closely with the library system through the South Bronx Library Project. The program targeted nine branches in predominantly Puerto Rican neighborhoods to help promote use of the libraries and help them develop programing that would serve their surrounding communities. Belpré continued her lifelong work in storytelling, and she also helped compile a volume on Spanish-language children’s books. *Libros en Español: An Annotated List of Children’s Books in Spanish* was published in 1971.28

Pura Belpré continued her activities with the South Bronx Library Project until 1978. Four years later, she was honored by the New York Public Library on June 30, 1982 for her life’s work. The following day she was found dead in her bedroom, having passed away in her sleep. In 1996, the Association for Library Service to Children established the Pura Belpré Award. The prize “is presented annually to a Latino/Latina writer and illustrator whose work best portrays, affirms, and celebrates the Latino cultural experience in an outstanding work of literature for children and youth.”29 Through this accolade, Belpré’s name and memory were honored nationally and associated with excellence in the production of work that helped Latino/a children discover their heritage. Unfortunately, like Juano Hernández and Arturo Schomburg, Pura Belpré is not broadly remembered in Puerto Rico.

28 Ibid., 433-435.
The Pura Belpré Award was developed to honor children’s books that were written for Latino/a audiences in the mainland United States. Recent scholarly efforts to examine her life and work have developed, but the study of Pura Belpré is still in its nascent stage.\textsuperscript{30} Moreover, during her lifetime, Pura Belpré’s work did not align with the forms of womanhood being promoted in Puerto Rico as described in Chapter Three.

Though Belpré was a strong supporter of her husband’s career, as we saw by her resignation from the NYPL, Clarence White’s musical profession did not define her work. Their relationship did dictate certain limits that she was willing to accept, but there seemed to be an understanding that each person had his/her own career. The image of a self-made and individualistic woman was very different from that of Inés Mendoza. Though Belpré and Mendoza lived during the same time frame and made their names working to promote the wellbeing and betterment of Puerto Ricans and Latinos, each developed different personas when it came to their relationships with their husbands. Moreover, Belpré continued to work in the New York library system until 1968, and through outside organizations after that she kept her work going, not that of her husband.

The complete reasons for why Pura Belpré has not been remembered in Puerto Rico more widely or honored on the island are still to be fully explored. Whether her blackness or her bucking of gendered norms attributed to this marginalization are yet to be determined, considering she did not make them dominant aspects of her writing or her public personality. Belpré seemed to accept belonging to La Gran Familia Puertorriqueña, of which blackness made up one part of being Puerto Rican, and that would explain her disinterest in pointing out that part

\textsuperscript{30} See Sánchez-González, \textit{The Stories I Read to the Children}; Hernández-Delgado, “Pura Teresa Belpré, Storyteller and Pioneer Puerto Rican Librarian.”
of her identity. It would just be a given part of her cultural history. Yet, one example points to her concern over stereotypical representations of blackness added into her work.

In a letter dated March 5, 1961, Belpré wrote about her discontent with decisions made by the illustrator of her book *Juan Bobo and the Queen’s Necklace: A Puerto Rican Folk Tale* (1962) about the Puerto Rican character of Juan Bobo. She stated:

I am just recuperating from the shock of the illustrations for my “Juan Bobo.” A little research into the character and background of our peasants would have enabled the artist-illustrator to have made a true picture of this folk character, so loved in Puerto Rico...You can well imagine my shock when I saw Juan Bobo and the Judge portrayed as stereotyped Negros (sic)...I feel like apologizing to every Puerto Rican who might chance upon this book.31

The exact nature of the illustrations was not clear, and a copy of them was not available. What was certain from these remarks was that racial representations were important to Belpré. She felt strongly that the artist had not done justice to the peasants (or jíbaros) of Puerto Rico. Furthermore, the injustice was committed by drawing caricatures of blackness. Considering Belpré’s reaction to the artist portrayal, it is doubtful that her body of work was a contributing factor to her absence from the collective memory of the Puerto Rican pueblo. It is also difficult to determine from the current historical record why she has been forgotten in Puerto Rico, though much more research is needed in this area.

Suffice it to say here that the existence of such a strong and influential woman in the experience of the Puerto Rican diaspora during the period of their largest migration drew the attention of this study. Furthermore, the lack of evidence pointing towards any communication or interaction between such an important cultural agent in New York and the people most responsible for the development of a modern Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricanness was quite

conspicuous, especially since Belpré worked to expose Puerto Rican culture to migrants from the island and mainstream U.S. audiences. It was also no coincidence that Belpré’s career developed outside of Puerto Rico. Her experience in the U.S. mainland followed the precedents set by most of the individuals discussed in this study.

Whether it was Henna, Schomburg, Muñoz Marín, Lee, Hernández, or Belpré, being part of the Puerto Rican diaspora provided these figures a space to develop their individual identity as well as understandings of their culture in relation to that of the United States. Being outside the island afforded them the freedom and distance to articulate and/or redefine who they were and where they came from to a mainstream U.S. populace generally ignorant of their history and culture. Even more significant was the ability each had to return to the island and influence its politics, culture, and society. Unlike many other diasporas, return to Puerto Rico after U.S. citizenship was granted to Puerto Ricans in 1917 was as simple as the purchase of a boat fare at first and a plane fare later in the twentieth century. As such, when we take into account the significance of the Puerto Rican migration to New York for the way Puerto Ricans understood themselves, and how much change it influenced, the lack of publicity in Puerto Rico about Pura Belpré becomes even more puzzling.32

One aspect of the memory of Pura Belpré that became quite telling for Puerto Rican identity is how it has been used to represent broader Latinness or Latinidad. The Pura Belpré Award was established to honor Latino/a writers, not Puerto Rican ones solely. Her name is used annually to represent a wider Latin identity. It was an identification that Juano Hernández also

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experienced. Hernández was often described as a Negro actor of Puerto Rican and Brazilian heritage. To be sure, neither Hernández nor Belpré hid their Puerto Rican or Afro-Puerto Rican background. Nonetheless, their image was packaged as a broader Latino/a or Latin American one in the United States, as well as a generic black image in the case of Hernández. It was also marginalized in the public consciousness of Puerto Ricans on the island.

As successful as these two individuals were, their image did not challenge the Puerto Ricanness being promoted by the Puerto Rican government in the years between 1940 and 1965. The Muñoz Marín-led government and its institutions of culture continually presented the white *jíbaro* with a patriarchal narrative as the authentic Puerto Rican identity. As presented in Chapter One, a part of the identity being promoted was anchored on the boundary articulated by Muñoz Marín in the 1920s between the people of the mountains and that of the coast. Not surprisingly, some of the people that championed Afro-Puerto Rican identity were from seaside regions, rather than the favored mountains. Schomburg and Hernández were from Santurce and San Juan respectively, both located in the North seaboard.

Few individuals could counter the cultural nationalism being reaffirmed by the populist government of the PPD. One of these few was a gifted right fielder from the Northeast coast who played for the Pittsburgh Pirates.

**Roberto Clemente**

The study of identity and nationalism has for many years now been extended to sports. The level of popular engagement and intense identification with sports seen in most societies lend this topic for the analysis of national identities and their representations. Many scholars have examined these issues, but few—if any—have looked at the way national identities are developed and presented through sport in Puerto Rico.
Explorations of sport have often centered on the ideas of its development and the export as a dynamic of cultural imperialism. Works like Allen Guttman’s *Games and Empires: Modern Sports and Cultural Imperialism* (1994) look at the way sports have developed as vehicles of cultural exportation, but do not focus on the way identity is molded through the participation and following of sports. Sports have also been used to research racial and minority identities. John Bloom and Michael Nevin Willard have published a book titled *Sports Matters: Race, Recreation and Culture* (2002) that examines racial identities and the representation of minorities through sports in the United States. This look at identity within sports begins to examine how societies place importance on athletic representations. Extending these studies of identity to the national level we encounter several studies that focus on national and international sports.

Recently, sports scholars have looked specifically at race and identity within athletic themes. A clear example of this is Amy Bass’s edited volume *In the Game: Race, Identity, and Sports in the Twentieth Century* (2005). Bass presents a series of essays that examine the effect of sports on race and identity using four broad themes: heroes, fans, aesthetics, and futures. Each theme provides examinations of how sports reflect social changes, and, more importantly, how they allow us to more fully understand our cultures and societies. As Bass wrote in the introduction to her collection:

> this charge seeks to examine the historical, ideological, and cultural imperatives contained within sport, firmly situating it as a significant, if not commanding, element of studies that engage with ideas of racial identity, hopefully embodying a pioneering way of looking not only at sports and popular culture, but the examination of race and ethnicity writ large.33

It is with that same belief in the integral part that sports play in the construction of identity and racial and gendered understandings that I undertake the examination of Roberto Clemente and

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his creolization of *puertorriqueñidad*. First, though, we must explore who Clemente was and where he came from.

Roberto Clemente Walker was born on August 18, 1934, in the town of Carolina, Puerto Rico. He was the youngest of eight children in the household of Melchor Clemente and Luisa Walker. His father, from the inland town of Gurabo, was a foreman for the Central Victoria sugarcane processing company. Luisa Walker was a native of the coastal town of Loiza and supplemented the family’s income by sewing and cooking meals for the field workers. The family was not poor by the standards of 1930s Puerto Rico, but their means were modest and just enough to provide for their needs. Roberto Clemente’s childhood was that of a working-class household, and from an early age he learned the value of hard work and dedication. It was a work ethic that served him well in his career as a baseball player.34

A talented athlete from an early age, Clemente was first spotted by the professional baseball industry of Puerto Rico at the age of fifteen. Puerto Rico since the 1930s had been a baseball haven during the winter for the best Negro League players of the United States. By the 1950s, Jackie Robinson’s crossing of the color line in baseball meant that major league teams felt more at ease seeking new players in places like Puerto Rico. As a result, professional teams on the island became testing grounds for youth athletes looking to make it to the big leagues in the mainland.

Clemente started playing for pro teams on the island while still in high school, first for the Juncos team and then the Santurce Cangrejeros. It was during his time with the Cangrejeros that he was scouted by the Brooklyn Dodgers. On February 19, 1954, at the age of nineteen, his father agreed to sign a contract with the Dodgers on behalf of Clemente for “the salary of $5,000

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for the season plus a bonus of $10,000.”^{35} Clemente left Puerto Rico later that spring bound for Canada to play for the Dodger’s minor league team, the Montreal Royals. He spent most of the 1954 season on the bench because Brooklyn wished to hide his skills from other teams to avoid having him drafted during the post-season minor league draft. Their efforts proved futile and on November 22, 1954, Clemente was drafted by the last place Pittsburgh Pirates.^{36}

It is important for us to address the accomplishments of Roberto Clemente before we can unpack the identity he created throughout his life. Clemente’s career with the Pirates was impressive. During his eighteen years in Pittsburgh, Clemente won four batting titles for best batting average in the National League, twelve Golden Gloves Awards for best fielding at right field, one Most Valuable Player (MVP) Award, two World Series Championships (1960 and 1971), and one MVP award for the 1971 World Series. He tallied 3,000 hits and batted a lifetime average of .317. Moreover, he was voted to the National League All Star game twelve times.^{37} His career, by all numerical standards, was truly outstanding. His greatness, though, came from much more than his statistics on the field.

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^{35} Ibid., 37.
From the moment Clemente left Puerto Rico for the majors, he was struck by the color line of the U.S. North and the strict segregation of the South. In Pittsburgh, Clemente rented a room from Stanley and Mamie Garland, a black couple living in one of the city’s black neighborhoods, from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s. He entered a tight-knit community in a city divided racially and ethnically. Though he fit physically into black Pittsburgh, Clemente did not speak English well, and his accent always brought attention to the fact that he was a black man from Latin America and not from the mainland United States. Latinos in the 1950s were almost a nonexistent minority in Pittsburgh. That notwithstanding, Clemente objected to having his name anglicized and infantilized as “Bobby” and frequently corrected sports journalists on the matter.

Clemente’s *latinidad* ensured that he would experience a large level of isolation in his first years in Pittsburgh. He was subjected to racial hostility on the road from opposing fans, but, like all black players before him, he was advised to ignore the bigotry. It seemed that for the most part he was able to do that, but what he saw on the field once the season started was nothing compared to the realities of spending spring training in Florida every year. The Pittsburgh Pirates held their pre-season in Fort Myers, Florida, a town and state deeply entrenched in the Jim Crow South.

Growing up in Puerto Rico, Clemente had never seen overt institutional racism. In Florida, he was subjected to it on a daily basis. During spring training, white team members were put up in hotels while black prospects were forced to stay in the private homes of black citizens. The segregation of public spaces and restaurants caused complications for black players continually. Social gatherings were divided, and, when visiting restaurants, black players were forced to stay in the bus while white players went in to eat. During those instances, some white
players would bring food out to the black players. That practice was something that Clemente opposed strongly, to the point where he told his white teammates to stop bringing them food. He found the gesture to be paternalistic, and his prideful character could not accept it. Instead, he insisted that they would fend for themselves.\textsuperscript{38}

The strength of conviction that Clemente demonstrated in standing up to that demeaning situation was evident in every aspect of his life. His fearless play on the field was often attacked for being too aggressive or self-serving by the media. When challenged by sports reporters, Clemente would erupt in long discussions with them about how his skills were not appreciated, or how he was misunderstood. He spoke his mind and demanded respect. As Clemente’s biographer David Maraniss wrote:

\begin{quote}
The message [from friends], according to Clemente was the same. “They say, ‘Roberto, you better keep your mouth shut because they will ship you back,’” but Clemente did not want to stay silent. His sense of fairness overtook his innate shyness. “This is something that from the first day, I said to myself: ‘I am the minority group. I am from the poor people. I represent the common people of America. So I am going to be treated as a human being. I don’t want to be treated like a Puerto Rican, or a black, or nothing like that. I want to be treated like any person that comes for a job.’ Every person who comes for a job, no matter what type of race or color he is, if he does the job he should be treated like whites.”\textsuperscript{39}
\end{quote}

Clement expressed this in a 1971 interview during which he reflected on his career. It demonstrated his early commitment to equality and to speaking out about it. He articulated a view of who he represented that was reminiscent of Pan-Americanist ideology. By saying that “I represent (sic) the common people of America,” Clemente was referring to America in the context of all the Americas, not in the popular U.S. use of the term that signifies the United States. The final statement about being “treated like whites” was quite telling of his experiences in the South. It demonstrated his understanding of the clearly better treatment white people were

\textsuperscript{38} Maraniss.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 71.
privileged to receive. The interview was conducted in English and it showed some of his language limitations, but the sentiment could not be more uncompromising. What was more impressive was that these were not just words for Clemente. His day-to-day actions throughout his life demonstrated his commitment to fighting for fairness and the betterment of underprivileged people, though he never publicly participated in civil rights activities or demonstrations.

Numerous examples of Clemente’s generosity can be found in biographies about his life. There were stories of the ease he had in speaking with fans, and how he would go out of his way to help people with whom he felt a connection. Whether it was an admirer, a teammate, or a poor person he encountered during his travels, Clemente made an effort to engage with the people he met and attempted to provide some form of relief for them. Though often paternalistic, it was a manifestation of his worldview: all people are equal. During a trip to Nicaragua as manager of the San Juan Senadores in November 1972, Clemente spent mornings distributing money to poor people he sought out in the streets of Managua. It was a common practice for the famed ballplayer. Beyond these individual acts, Clemente spent the last few years of his life developing two projects in Puerto Rico, though he never had the opportunity to put them in place.

The first was a chiropractic vacation spa. As a baseball player and survivor of a car accident in 1954, Clemente suffered back pains throughout his life. In his search for relief from

41 Maraniss, 6.
the aches he endured, he visited the Logan College of Chiropractics in St. Louis in 1957 and was amazed at the success of the treatments. He visited the college frequently and became so well versed on its techniques that his wife, Vera Zabala, recalled during an interview that “he was a chiropractor without a license...He worked on many patients who would have gone to surgeons.” It was not unusual for Clemente to turn a conversation in which a friend complained of a neck pain into a chiropractic session in his living room. He was putting his ideology to practice on a daily basis.

The second project Clemente was developing was a sports city in Puerto Rico for children. His vision for the venture was to provide a free place for Puerto Rican youth to learn and practice sports. The city would act as a space for children to learn discipline, the value of hard work, how to strengthen their bodies, and skills that they could keep with them throughout their lives. Clemente understood how much baseball had helped him better his life and those of his family and friends. More importantly, it had allowed him to develop his ideas of the world he experienced through travel, interactions, and exposure to different people. He wished to provide the same opportunities for children in his homeland.

These two projects demonstrated Clemente’s ongoing belief in giving back in a world that was so often unfair and unequal. He frequently told friends and family that “if you have a chance to make life better for others, and fail to do so, you are wasting your time on this earth.” Clemente carried this mantra with him and it informed the way he viewed himself in baseball and life.

Clemente’s skills on the field allowed him to enter a league that was struggling with racial integration. It had only been seven years since Jackie Robinson had entered the major

\[42\] Ibid., 215.
\[43\] Ibid., 322.
leagues, and Clemente had to contend with the added pressure of being a black player from a Latin American country. He faced prejudice in many forms, but it never seemed to change the way he viewed his own identity. He was proud to be Puerto Rican and black. His mother’s family was from a coastal town that was known for being the island’s Afro-Puerto Rican cultural center. It was also a runaway slave community during the Spanish colonial period.  

Clemente continually fought to receive fair treatment in the United States. As his career progressed and he became an elite player in baseball, Clemente felt a responsibility to help other Latino players that came into the league. He provided tips on how to communicate and negotiate the U.S. cultural landscape to young players from all over Latin America. He offered his wisdom on the sport and set an example for them to follow. With time, Clemente came to see himself as part of the larger Latin American community. During a 1970 ceremony honoring Clemente’s years as a Pirate, he stated to the audience at Three Rivers Stadium:

I’ve sacrificed these sixteen years, maybe I’ve lost many friendships due to the effort it takes for someone to try to do the maximum in sports and especially the work it takes for us, Puerto Ricans, especially for the Latinos, to triumph in the big leagues. I have achieved this triumph for us the Latinos. I believe that it is a matter of pride for all of us, the Puerto Ricans as well as for all of those in the Caribbean.

Clemente, unlike many professional athletes, understood his influence beyond the game, and he took every opportunity to show his pride in being Puerto Rican and Latino.

By the time of his death in a plane crash during a humanitarian mission to provide aid to Nicaraguan earthquake victims on New Year’s Eve 1972, Roberto Clemente was the most famous Puerto Rican on the island, in the mainland United States, and in Latin America. Clemente was the embodiment of who Puerto Ricans were for many people who had little contact with puertorriqueños. He was not, though, a representation of the white jíbaro from the

44 Ibid.
mountains. Instead, he was an Afro-Puerto Rican from the coast. A person from the region Luis Muñoz Marín had marginalized from the authentic highland Puerto Ricans in his 1925 article in *The Nation*. It was the regional distinction that Muñoz Marín made in the U.S. weekly. Yet it was doubtful that Clemente had any knowledge of this geographic identity division. Clemente was a big supporter of Muñoz Marín. The governor was even present at the ballplayer’s wedding to Vera Zabala on November 14, 1964. Clemente’s acceptance of the Puerto Ricanness championed by the Populares was so obvious that he named a nightclub he owned in Carolina after the iconic image of a *jibaro* walking alongside an ox-driven cart, “El Carretero.”

The Afro-Puerto Rican image Clemente proudly presented did not seem to him—nor to Belpré or Hernández—to contrast with the Puerto Ricanness promoted by the island’s government from the 1940s to the 1960s, but it did. He was one of only a handful of Afro-Puerto Ricans that were publicly presented and accepted in Puerto Rico. Others, like singers Ruth Fernandez and Lucecita Benítez, were encouraged to minimize the physical manifestations of their blackness by straightening their hair or wearing lighter make-up. Moreover, they faced strong backlash from the Puerto Rican media industry whenever they decided to highlight their African heritage.⁴⁶ Clemente had transcended those criticisms.

The success Roberto Clemente had in sidestepping the circumstances of being black within the public arena of Puerto Rico was in part due to the nature of his profession. As an athlete, Clemente was judged by his performance on the field. This was true especially during the early years of his career. Puerto Ricans that knew of him in the first six or seven years of his

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⁴⁶ See the analysis of Lucecita Benítez in Yeidy M. Rivero, *Tuning Out Blackness: Race & Nation in the History of Puerto Rican Television* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005). Rivero also examined one of the most popular comedic actors in Puerto Rico, Ramón Rivero. He was at the hight of his popularity between 1940 and 1956 when he died. Rivero, a white Puerto Rican, was best known for a blackface character he often portrayed named “Diplo.”
major league time were strictly interested in his abilities on the diamond. All impressions of him that did not relate to baseball were considered secondary and only relevant when they were so negative or positive that they spoke to his character and could not be ignored. Furthermore, until the World Series of 1961, most people in Puerto Rico had only heard or read of Clemente. Few--those who owned television sets, visited ballparks in the mainland U.S., or went to winter league games on the island--had ever seen Clemente play. Most people encountered Clemente through radio or newspaper articles.

The fact that he made his name outside of Puerto Rico allowed him to avoid the initial pressures Puerto Rican public figures faced to minimize their blackness when they were first trying to promote themselves. As his career developed, Clemente’s personality and generosity became widely recognized, a situation that only facilitated his acceptance. Though his daily experience in the mainland United States was continually negotiated within racial divides, Clemente was shielded from the less overt racial norms enforced upon the island’s popular personalities. By the mid-1960s, Clemente was well known among Puerto Ricans. His success in major league baseball was a source of pride.

By 1972, Roberto Clemente was the most widely known and beloved Puerto Rican among boricuas on and off the island. His death, and the humanitarian circumstances surrounding it, only elevated his image and allowed it to cross the boundary dividing reality from myth. After December 31, Clemente was no longer just a great right fielder. He was much more than a source of athletic pride among Puerto Ricans. Roberto Clemente became a legend who was as much known for his desire to help others as he was for his baseball skills.

Clemente is remembered throughout Puerto Rico, Nicaragua, Latin America and the United States as a larger-than-life figure. People throughout North, Central, and South America
created books, songs, movies, graphic novels and stories that retold his life and used his memory to convey notions of distinction and ultimate good. For example, in “La mitificación de Roberto Clemente como héroe fundacional en un poema nicaragüense,” Ramón Luis Acevedo discussed the way Clemente has been mythologized in Nicaragua. Acevedo focused his analysis on examples in poetry and stated that “dentro de este panteón de héroes fundacionales mitificados por la poesía nicaragüense, también encuentra su lugar el pelotero negro de Grandes Ligas Roberto Clemente, protagonista de “Poema a un hombre llamado Roberto Clemente” [1973] de Horacio Peña (In the pantheon of foundational heroes mythologized by Nicaraguan poetry, there is a space for the black baseball player from Major League Baseball Roberto Clemente, protagonist of “Poem for a man named Roberto Clemente” [1973] by Horacio Peña).” Peña’s poem was an epic that elevated Clemente by comparing him to religious figures and highlighting his humanitarian efforts. A more recent representation of Clemente was the graphic novel 21: The Story of Roberto Clemente by Wilfred Santiago. It chronicles the life of Clemente and his professional career in a visual way.

The imagery associated with Clemente has also been predominant since the 1970s. His jersey can frequently be seen in baseball stadiums in the U.S. and abroad, and his picture has been hung in homes as a sign of respect and reverence since his passing. Furthermore, after Clemente’s death his identity transcended constructs of Puerto Ricanness and Afro-Puerto Ricanness. He became a man who was from Puerto Rico, but who belonged to Latin America or Las Americas. Peña’s poem argued this point well when it stated that Clemente “a fuerza y gracia de ser puertorriqueño/ deja de serlo/ y se hace símbolo viviente/ templo/ torre/ columna

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de eterno fuego de todo un continente (in strength and grace of being Puerto Rican/ he stops being it/ and becomes a living symbol/ temple/ tower/ column of eternal fire for an entire continent).”"49 These verses showed that quickly after Clemente’s death he had become an example of greatness for Latinos/as and Latin Americans. Furthermore, they alluded to Clemente’s creolization of puertorriqueñidad by expanding his identity beyond Puerto Rico.

The process by which Clemente crossed the identity borders constructed by national boundaries was unique. Though in the United States people from Latin America are often treated as a monolithic whole through terms like Latinos/as or Hispanics, national rivalries and division are present among Latin Americans. Those divides are set aside in the context of life in the U.S., and constructs of Latinidad or Latinness are used to build common identification, but nationality still is a major point of unity. Clemente transcended this peculiarity by becoming a figure with whom many Latin Americans wanted to relate regardless of their cultural heritage. He was Puerto Rican, he was black, and he was Latin American, but none of those categories could encompass the totality of who Clemente was or who claimed him as their own. As Glissant stated about creolization, it goes beyond the mixing of differences and “adds something new to the components that participate in it.”50 With Clemente, the new element was a translocal appeal that accepted all the parts of his identity and connected them.

If Clemente had more clearly represented the Puerto Rican government’s ideal of jíbaro Puerto Ricanness by being a white man from the mountains, he might never have been able to transcend the identity borders erected around Puerto Ricanness. His blackness, among other elements, set him apart from mainstream Puerto Ricanness, and it was that existence that allowed

him to become an idol for Latin Americans. Had he been a poster child for the Populares’ *jíbaro*, could Clemente have built his persona as a representative of Latinos in baseball and, after his death, beyond the sport?

The isolation Clemente experienced in the U.S. as a black Latino player allowed him to understand the obstacles people with his background endured. Clemente’s lifelong desire to make a difference for others pushed him to accept the responsibility of representing Latinos in his profession, but it also motivated him to ensure that he left his sport and his world in a better state for people from Latin America. It was those conscious decisions that demonstrated that Clemente viewed himself as Puerto Rican, as black, as Latino and as Latin American. Not a sum of all, but a product of each.

The difficulties experienced by Clemente as a black Puerto Rican in the United States were expressed in the 1971 interview. Almost alluding to an interstitial space, he said

> I am between the worlds...So anything I do will reflect on me because I am black and...will reflect on me because I am Puerto Rican. To me, I always respect everybody...my mother and father never told me to hate anyone, or they never told me to dislike anyone because of racial color. We never talked about that. As a matter of fact, I started listening to this talk when I came to the States.51

Living in the United States was crucial to him transcending white *jíbaro* Puerto Ricanness. It was no accident that all three people in this chapter made their careers and their names in the United States mainland as opposed to Puerto Rico. Their blackness placed them on the margins and borders of Puerto Rican identity, and their migration allowed them to redefine themselves as both Puerto Rican and black.

For Juano Hernández, Pura Belpré and Roberto Clemente, leaving Puerto Rico was a physical act that deepened their identification with the island yet provided enough distance to

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51 Maraniss, 172-173.
control their construction of that identity. Moreover, they lived during a time when their Puerto Ricanness was defined upon an almost empty canvas. Hernández’s and Belpré’s constructions of Afro-Puerto Ricanness mainly affected the way certain people viewed Puerto Ricanness in the mainland United States, but they did establish a foundation from which Clemente’s identity could creolize puertorriqueñidad and create a new consciousness. The challenges they represented to the white jíbaro image were limited. This was not the case for Roberto Clemente. After Clemente, Puerto Ricanness was creolized on and off the island for Puerto Ricans and non-Puerto Ricans alike. It could not be viewed without taking blackness into account. The proud, black Puerto Rican right fielder could not be excluded. His image and his identity were larger than anything the Puerto Rican government could construct. How much Clemente’s image changed Puerto Ricanness has yet to be fully examined, but greater representations of blackness were seen in Puerto Rican culture throughout the 1970s and 80s. No doubt numerous factors and the passage of time contributed to this, but the influence of Hernández and Belpré on the Puerto Rican migrant communities, as well as Clemente’s throughout Las Americas, must not be ignored. After Hernández, Belpré and Clemente, puertorriqueñidad was creolized, and a path was laid for Puerto Ricans to develop a new identity that defined them beyond the limits of borders and nation. It is now up to us, puertorriqueños, to envision ourselves past colonial boundaries and ideologies that have divided us.
Appendix C:

Second Negro Play
Is Most Realistic

"Harlem" Follows "Porgy"

At Empire

The second of the series of productions with a Negro cast, being offered at the Empire Theatre under the direction of Forbes Randolph, is "Harlem," which opened last night. By no means as entertaining a play as "Porgy," it is in atmosphere as concerned, "Harlem" nevertheless holds the attention from beginning to end.

The story is that of a young negro family, brought north to Harlem, "the city of refuge," by the hard-working eldest son. The action that all takes place on one Saturday night, shows how Harlem had affected the family. The father, always shiftless, holds a "real party," joined enthusiastically by "Tita," whom the city has turned into a "shameless harlot." On the other side are the eldest son, playing by "Porgy" of last week, and the mother, trying hard to hold her husband and children in her religion.

The hilarious "real party" the fight between gangsters controlling the "Harlem" neighborhood, "Manch, whores, and the complex love affairs of being the actress living a "real party" that makes the party seem a portion of an ordinary family effort, and a "hardest working" effort of "Harlem," all make up to the characters choice of a well balanced cast in the hope that many of the minor characters in "Porgy" carry the leading roles in "Harlem" with entire success. Jama Hernandez is again the villain of the piece and Laura Henderson ("Maria" in "Porgy") is appearing in suspense she as "Mother Wilkins." Special mention should be made of Bernita Brown, a dark and very small "Jama's boy."

Harold Peck

Park Av."Air seems to be the mode of travel most popular now between this city and London. During June and July, the Cunard Line air line. This compares with 1368 using the line during 1931.

John Henry, of Radio
Fame, Cast in "Sailor
Beware" at Lafayette

Juan Hernandez, better known to radio fans as "John Henry," has been chosen to head the cast of the initial production of the Harlem Community Players, which will reopen the Lafayette Theatre on Friday evening.

"Sailor Beware," which had a successful Broadway run, will be the opening production of a capable cast of well-known Negro actors including George Rasdell of "The Green Pastures," who are tvhroughout giving the finishing touches on their performance.

The Harlem Players will present later in the same month several dramatic offerings, including plays by Negro authors, or written about Negro life.

The public is urged to support their ventures.
Appendix B:

“Porgy” Thrills Big Audience

Southern Realism Is Seen At Empire Theatre

An American folk play of the negro South, given by a colored company direct from a long New York run, held a large audience absorbed at the Empire Theatre last night. The company was presented by Mr. Forbes Randolph and Mrs. D. M. Stair. “Porgy” is a play of stark realism, revealing the intensely human side of life in the negro quarter of Charleston, South Carolina. With song and dance, sometimes gay, but often tragic, the colored folk react to the ups and downs of their strange existence, religion and superstition merging in their weird incantations.

Porgy is a crippled peddler, and the story largely concerns his romance with the female companion of a drunken bully, a woman of the underworld, who finds in comradeship with the cripple a way to a better life. When the bully is driven into hiding after committing a murder, his girl seeks refuge with Porgy, thereby enlisting a strong arm in her defense. But the call of old habits proves too strong for the woman, opening the way for a climax of infinite pathos. Atmosphere for the central theme is provided by a number of vivid glimpses into the lives of negroes in “Catfish Row,” the fishing neighborhood where Porgy lives. Many spirituals are sung with striking effect, talented singers being numerous in the company and the blending of voices a rare delight.

Outstanding performances includes that of Laura Bowman, as Maria; Thomas Moseley, as Porgy; Juan Hernandez, as Crown; Venella Johnson as Bess; Rose McClendon, as Serena; and Percy Verwayen, as Sporting Life.

“Porgy” has been seen in Toronto before, but never with such gripping effectiveness as these talented colored players achieve with the natural fire of the race in emotional expression. A continued ovation from the audience at the close gave Mr. Randolph opportunity for a few remarks, then the entire company sang “God Save the King.”
Conclusion

The overgrown grass that covered the path leading up to El Monumento del Jíbaro in Salinas, Puerto Rico was my first clue that the memory I had of this place was no longer accurate. As I approached the statue, it became apparent that neglect had faded the physical glory it once held. What I did not yet realize on that day in 2011 was that the deterioration I was seeing before me was going to push me to investigate the value and significance of the identity celebrated there. I knew before then that this dissertation was a personal project for me, but I did not fully comprehend how. I started this project wanting to explore how Puerto Ricanness developed in the early twentieth century, and I ended up examining my *pueblo* in an attempt to better understand my experience as a Puerto Rican.

By 1976, when the monument was unveiled, the political and social program of Luis Muñoz Marín and the PPD had been in action for more than thirty-five years. However, the populist political consensus Muñoz Marín had been able to craft in the 1940s was no longer in place. His Populares had lost the 1968 and 1976 elections. The stronghold the PPD had on the Puerto Rican government had disappeared, and a divided political landscape was again present on the island. Economically, the outlook for Puerto Rico was perilous.
By the 1970s, Operation Bootstrap, the PPD’s two-decade old plan for promoting industrial development, corporate investments, manufacturing, and infrastructure development in Puerto Rico, was sputtering.¹ Heavily reliant on tax incentives for corporations and federal government funding, the strategy began to suffer from an inability to maintain the needed monetary levels for growth.² Operation Bootstrap experienced a long decline on the island culminating in 1996 with the elimination of the federal tax breaks that made Puerto Rico desirable to private interests. The new direction marked the end of an economic strategy that had been in place for close to fifty years.

Socially, Puerto Ricans were a much different pueblo inside and outside the island by the 1970s than the one that had gravitated to the jíbaro rhetoric in the 1930s and 40s. Decades of migration to and from the U.S. mainland gave puertorriqueños a much broader understanding of themselves and, for many, a personal experience with daily life outside the island. The significance of this translocal development was varied, but parts of it can be witnessed in contemporary cultural expressions that mixed influences from various places. Some examples of these can be found in music like Reggaeton and the success of Puerto Rican artists like Raúl Juliá, Jennifer Lopez, Ricky Martin, Marc Anthony, and Calle 13, among others.³ Being Puerto Rican, and Puerto Ricanness itself, were much different from the 1970s on than before that

² The use of tax incentives was examined by multiple authors in Edwin Meléndez and Edgardo Meléndez, eds., Colonial Dilemma: Critical Perspectives on Contemporary Puerto Rico (Boston: South End Press, 1999).
decade. Though the rhetoric of the *jíbaro* continued to influence *puertorriqueñidad*, direct contact with that lifestyle no longer existed for most of the *pueblo*.

Throughout this dissertation, I have presented a critique of the Puerto Rican identity that was solely based on the *jíbaro*. I undertook this task because, looking at Puerto Rico in a broader perspective as part of the U.S. and Latin America, our racial and gendered inequalities have persisted throughout the Americas due to the creation of national identities that promote whiteness and patriarchal structures at the expense of marginalized groups. The goal of this project was to uncover how this happened within the Puerto Rican *pueblo* as a case study that could unveil concepts and approaches for use in other places. Furthermore, I presented examples of how the reaffirmation of prejudice was continually challenged throughout the twentieth century, and how those counter-narratives manufactured a process of change that represented an ongoing creolization of identity. It was vital to examine ways that Puerto Ricans engaged in the formation of a *puertorriqueña/o* process reminiscent of Anzaldúa’s “new mestiza” because the process of critiquing the *jíbaro* identity had left me uprooted from who I had always viewed myself to be. As a *pueblo*, we cannot transcend the racism and patriarchy that has marked our identity until we can understand the shortcomings of *puertorriqueñidad* and accept them. I used a biographical approach to show how these ideas on identity, race, and gender manifested themselves in the lives of people who were well known to Puerto Ricans.

The dissertation added to Puerto Rican studies by expanding on how attempts to define Puerto Rican authenticity have been founded on whiteness and patriarchy. Where Puerto Ricanists like Juan Flores, Arlene Dávila, Frances Negrón-Muntaner, Ramón Grosfoguel, and Agustín Lao have dissected Puerto Rican identity through the examination of culture, migration, and government structures, this project sought to contribute to the scholarship by using a
borderlands approach to place the analysis beyond the dichotomies of politics, nation, and colony. Through this effort, I presented a set of possible tools for unraveling the prejudices inherent within national identities and helped set a path for identifying new forms of identity that are much more fluid and inclusive.

The endeavor to uncover this history was founded on a theoretical basis that sought to avoid the trappings pertaining to status and nationalism as a response to colonialism, which are often encountered in Puerto Rico. My approach here was to construct a discussion that placed itself outside the spaces created by political discourse and cultural ideologies. I turned to the arguments of Walter Mignolo, Emma Pérez, Édouard Glissant, and Gloria Anzaldúa because they provided me with a theoretical structure that situated my contributions within different spaces of Puerto Rican identity. Through Mignolo’s method of border thinking, I examined Puerto Ricanness from “dichotomous concepts” represented by individuals rather than “ordering the world into dichotomies” contracted from national or cultural categories. Pérez’s concept of interstitial spaces, or the area between two structures, provided me with a way to visualize and frame my analysis. Once I organized my critique, I then turned to Glissant’s idea of creolization and his theorization of how it described the creation of “something else, another way” to discern how *puertorriqueñidad* had and could continue to move beyond the white *jíbaro* identity. Anzaldúa’s “new mestiza” showed me a way of being that accepts all sides and is not defined by any of them. Her arguments allowed me to explore a way forward for a creolized Puerto Ricanness that does not need to marginalize any groups within it. The framework helped me research the diverse legacies that contribute to Puerto Ricanness. Moreover, this theoretical approach gave me the tools to uncover how specific individuals built lives that did not accept the

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4 Mignolo, 85.  
5 Glissant, 82.
predominant identity of their times and constructed a foundation for the transformation of *puertorriqueñidad* to a new, yet unfinished, identity.

From the 1890s movement for separation from Spain to the 1930s political rhetoric of Luis Muñoz Marín and the PPD, Puerto Ricanness was defined and characterized by concepts of whiteness. Furthermore, gendered norms were promoted that elevated patriarchal views of family and women, even though the examples of these norms, women like Muna Lee and Inés Mendoza, did not constrain their daily lives to those restrictive expectations. Simultaneously, Puerto Ricans challenged these constructions by living lives that embodied identities much different from the idealized white *jíbaro*. For example, Afro-Puerto Ricans like Arturo Schomburg, Juano Hernández, Pura Belpré and Roberto Clemente offered counter narratives that complicated the identity being promoted by elites and the Puerto Rican government. Thus, this dissertation articulated two narrative threads. The first examined the process of incorporating whiteness and patriarchal gender norms into Puerto Rican identity. The second thread demonstrated examples that challenged that very Puerto Ricanness and outlined how those individuals progressively pushed *puertorriqueñidad* towards a new formulation through a process of creolization with Clemente.

I began the analysis by looking at the Puerto Rican election of 1940 and the development of Luis Muñoz Marín’s populist political rhetoric, because that period marked the clearest moment when the whitening efforts of the elites triumphed in gaining support from a majority of Puerto Ricans. In Chapter One, I examined how the Populares made use of the *jíbaro* to build a broad consensus from which to launch their economic and social reforms. The campaign had the additional goal of reconciling the colonial legacy of Spain with that of the United States. In essence, it was an attempt to gain control of Puerto Rican political power by negotiating the
U.S./Spain colonial difference. Muñoz Marín himself admitted this after the 1940 election when he stated

Lo que representa, en este sentido, el movimiento Popular es el proceso de síntesis de ambas tradiciones...lo que se está fundiendo en Puerto Rico son los factores emotivos y espirituales de la democracia española con los dinámicos y organizativos de la democracia americana--el profundo respeto español al hombre y el genuino respeto americano al ciudadano--; el sentido español de igualdad humana, el genio americano para organizar la igualdad ciudadana (In this sense, what the Popular movement represents is the process of synthesis of both traditions...what is being merged in Puerto Rico are the emotive and spiritual factors from Spanish democracy with the dynamic and organizational ones of the American democracy--the profound Spanish respect towards man and the genuine American respect towards citizens--; the Spanish sense of human equality, the American ingenuity to organize civic equality).

The use of the jíbaro to contest Puerto Rican identity through notions of whiteness that elevated the Spanish heritage over the cultural legacies from the Taino natives and Africans was developed by elites throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Their efforts targeted the use of language, the performance of traditions from Spain, and the celebration of European physical traits. Until the PPD connected the jíbaro with whiteness, the idea of La Gran Familia Puertorriqueña was used by elites to exclude nonwhites from true Puerto Ricanness. It was an ideology based on whitening, and it left little room for individuals who could not somehow claim enough whiteness. To build a broader coalition, the Populares took the racial rhetoric and turned it into a nationalist one based on cultural identification. The assumption, though, that authentic Puerto Ricanness was dependent on whiteness was an idea inherited by Muñoz Marín and the Populares from members of the generation before who struggled to acquire sovereignty from Spain in the late nineteenth century.

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6 Luis Muñoz Marín, Historia del Partido Popular Democrático (San Juan: Fundación Luis Muñoz Marín, 2003), 33. The author made clear in this work that when he used the word americano (American) he was referring to the way it was being used commonly in Puerto Rico at the time (1940s), meaning someone from the United States.
We saw in Chapter Two that Puerto Rican exiles in New York who organized to support the Cuban efforts against Spain with the hope that Puerto Rico would enter the conflict also sought to define Puerto Rican identity after the Cuban-Spanish-American War ended. Among this group, some people looked to create a specific division between Puerto Ricanness and blackness. The whitening of *puertorriqueñidad* continued in the early 1900s through the discourse of Puerto Rican elites like José Julio Henna. When Dr. Henna remarked about the growing death rate of some people on the island by saying it was high “among the negroes, yes; but the Puerto Ricans are very prolific” we saw that a division had been made between being black and being Puerto Rican. I described the statement as part of the creation of a bordered identity that was developed to marginalize any groups thought to be detrimental to the white elites’ aspirations to gain economic and political control of Puerto Rico, as well as their wish to control the image of Puerto Rico so they could make themselves more appealing to the U.S. government. Left outside of that Puerto Ricanness were individuals like Arturo Schomburg.

Schomburg dedicated his life after the end of the Cuban-Spanish-American War to acquiring and preserving the history and culture of people with African ancestry. His contributions to the development of African American Studies were numerous, but none was more important than the collection he gathered of cultural artifacts from people of African ancestry. Eventually, he donated his collection to the New York City Public Library system and then curated it at the 135th Street branch. The library was named the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in honor of him. All these accomplishments not withstanding, Schomburg was not widely remembered among Puerto Ricans throughout the twentieth century except for those who considered themselves Afro-Puerto Ricans. I positioned my argument in this chapter from the interstitial space created between Henna’s construction of Puerto Rican
identity and Schomburg’s articulation through his words and his actions of a Puerto Ricanness that celebrated blackness. This allowed me to show the difference between the Henna-inspired view of Puerto Ricanness and the Schomburg acceptance of African heritage.

The two men represented different views on identity, but they began to contest and negotiate those ideas within the colonial difference Puerto Ricans inhabited as a result of the 1898 war. Henna aligned himself strongly with the U.S. views on race that overtly favored whiteness, while Schomburg developed his view more closely with those of Latin Americans like José Martí who rooted themselves in the somewhat more inclusive racial understandings developed from a Spanish legacy. Whether purposefully or not, Henna and Schomburg helped push forward dueling conceptions of puertorriqueñidad. One was promoted by elites and decades later used politically to gain some control of the island’s politics. The other was affirmed through daily interactions and an acceptance of blackness by some Puerto Ricans who migrated to the U.S. mainland. Each continually developed within the parameters of the U.S./Spain colonial difference, but race was not the only aspect of identity that was addressed in the efforts of the 1940 campaign.

Chapter Three focused on how the period of the 1920s and 1930s was crafted by women just as much as it was by men. To delve into this point, I tailored my analysis around the women that facilitated the rise of Luis Muñoz Marín in the 1940 election. I focused on Muna Lee and Inés Mendoza to unpack the way women’s roles were defined to fit within a patriarchal paradigm that could not openly acknowledge professional women active in politics. Using border thinking to place my study in the space that developed due to the years and emotional distance between the two marriages, I demonstrated the pivotal role that Lee--along with her Washington contact, Ruby Black--and Mendoza had played in the populist takeover of Puerto Rican politics.
Moreover, to examine their importance for puertorriqueñidad, I explored the contributions these women made to gender norms. Throughout the chapter, I unwrapped Lee’s and Mendoza’s representations of women’s roles to show how the Populares promoted a Puerto Ricanness that marginalized women who did not adhere to a style of domesticity that supported their men. Ironically, both women lived lives that went well beyond the realm of the home.

Lee manifested her view of a woman’s role throughout her life in politics, poetry and literature. Sometimes she supported her husband’s goals through those efforts, but it was not her overall purpose to do so. Instead, after the 1920s Lee participated consistently in two main struggles. One was to promote suffrage and equality for women throughout the United States and Latin America. The other was to advocate a Pan-American approach to foreign policy, and even the establishment of a Pan-American identity throughout North and South America. Lee articulated her hopes for Puerto Rico in this regard when she stated during a 1929 speech that “Puerto Rico is Spanish American in its past, Anglo-Saxon in its present, and, I trust, in the deepest sense Pan-American in its future.” Lee’s activities were so independent from her husband’s that she did not conform smoothly to the gendered roles promoted by the populares.

The disconnect Lee represented was not evident with Mendoza’s support of Muñoz Marín. That support was a vital aspect of Mendoza’s role as the new Puerto Rican woman, but it made up only part of her image. That became clearer after the election of 1940, which left Muñoz Marín as the president of the insular Senate, and even more so once she became First Lady of Puerto Rico after her husband’s election as governor in 1948. Before her relationship with Muñoz Marín, however, Mendoza was active in politics and nationalist causes. As the

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campaign for 1940 began, she performed multiple roles in the party’s cause. Mendoza was part organizer, facilitator, speaker, and even teacher for peasants who wanted to learn to read. Once in the governor’s palace, she performed the ceremonial duties demanded of such an office and stood beside her husband, but she also delivered speeches on pertinent issues of the day, wrote newspaper columns, and supported social efforts to better education and improve overall health of children. It was in her role as a First Lady and uncompromising reinforcer of her husband’s policy that Mendoza solidified herself as a role model for Puerto Rican women, though the groundwork for this symbolism was laid by her contributions during the 1930s and 1940s. For the first time, a Puerto Rican woman was placed at the forefront of the island’s politics, and it was an example that could not be ignored.

The gender norms championed by the PPD government worked with the racial parameters developed through the persona of the jíbaro to promote a Puerto Ricanness that elevated patriarchal whiteness over all other identities. This political rhetoric worked well in garnering support and winning elections, but it did not help maintain the jíbaro lifestyle it celebrated. From the 1940s to the late 1960s, the Populares constructed an economic system that industrialized Puerto Rico through incentives. This new strategy moved Puerto Ricans from agricultural jobs to the factory floor. It was a change that effectively ended the way of life of the jíbaro. Of course, this period also saw the ironic romantization of that life.

The white, male-focused jíbaro identity permeated the Puerto Rican pueblo at almost every level, but it was not the only form of Puerto Ricanness that existed in the twentieth century. As explored in Chapter Four, Afro-Puerto Ricans like Juano Hernández, Pura Belpré

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9 Carrion, 312-313.
and Roberto Clemente mounted challenges to the status quo. These individuals constructed throughout their lives a negotiated identity that embraced their African roots while not denying their puertorriqueñidad. Furthermore, we saw that as early as the 1910s (i.e. Hernández) and 1920s (i.e. Belpré) Puerto Ricans were contradicting the bordered identity presented by Dr. Henna in 1900. Instead they incorporated elements well beyond the whiteness and restrictive gender roles promoted by the PPD.

The chapter anchored itself in the interstitial space that existed between mainstream Puerto Ricanness and people that constructed an identity accepting of African ancestry and nontraditional gender norms, as well as the jíbaro. Through Juano Hernández and Pura Belpré, we explored ways by which puertorriqueñidad was expressed in harmony with blackness. These two individuals articulated the colonial difference by contesting the U.S. imperial legacy and the Spanish one. Hernández constructed a career that flourished within U.S. social structures that imposed racial segregation and the use of English, while Belpré continually returned to the Spanish heritage taught during her youth. The identities developed by these two individuals progressively challenged the Puerto Ricanness of the PPD and mainstream Puerto Rican culture. They demonstrated that Puerto Rican identity did not have to surrender to whiteness or patriarchy to be successful and useful.

The groundwork set by Hernández and Belpré provided an environment in which to transform Puerto Ricanness from a bordered identity that marginalized any aberration from the white jíbaro to a puertorriqueñidad that embraced diversity and refused to choose between its constituting parts. Following the work done by Gloria Anzaldúa with the “new mestiza” to describe the development of a new identity by looking at the experience of women born in the borderlands space of the U.S/Mexico border, I examined Roberto Clemente in an effort to show
how Puerto Rican identity has moved beyond the parameters of nationalism, and cultural nationalism specifically, to a new manifestation devoid of racial, spatial, and cultural limitations. *Puertorriqueñidad* could encompass persons, whether or not they were born in Puerto Rico or outside of it, who accepted U.S., Spanish, or another culture, and were white, black, indigenous, or of any race. Not a direct product of the mixture of its ancestral roots but informed by it, this new identity was a creolization of Puerto Ricanness that Clemente did not envision, but one that he facilitated nonetheless through his overwhelming popularity.

When Clemente stated that “I am between the worlds...So anything I do will reflect on me because I am black and...will reflect on me because I am Puerto Rican,” he acknowledged his experience inhabiting a space that could not be limited or easily defined.\(^\text{10}\) He focused on the racial implications of that existence, but it would not be hard to imagine a similar statement on the U.S./Spain colonial difference. Besides being caught between races, Clemente also lived between the legacies of two empires. He described himself as black and Puerto Rican. He was also proud of the diverse lineages that converged in the Puerto Rican *pueblo*. The creolization of *puertorriqueñidad* represented by Clemente’s life and his transcendence of the barriers of mainstream Puerto Ricanness can be witnessed now throughout that identity.

From a linguistic expression that incorporates numerous languages (indigenous, Spanish, English, Arabic, and others), to musical creations that mix numerous genres (i.e. Reggaeton--mix of hip-hop, reggae, salsa, and electronica), and even translocal living, Puerto Rican identity is no longer defined through racial borders or a specific space.\(^\text{11}\) Fewer forms of Puerto Ricanness


continue that show strict adherence to the form developed by the Populares. The most common expression that still lingers is the use of the jíbaro persona as an identifying term (i.e. soy jíbaro de Puerto Rico), and an almost jingoistic cultural nationalism consisting of the depiction of the Puerto Rican flag adopted by the Sección Puerto Rico in the 1890s on t-shirts, bandanas, tattoos, and jewelry.

The creolization of puertorriqueñidad challenges these remnants of the populist period in a continual process of reinvention, but it has yet to completely break away from them. The action is a frightening one. It entails the incorporation of the unknown and the acceptance of that which was once outside what was defined as Puerto Rican. It does, though, demand an inclusion of all that makes up the pueblo. I now see that it was the unveiling of what was marginalized within puertorriqueñidad that my deep sunburn subconsciously represented for my grandmother. To show that which had been hidden was to accept things thought of as inferior or bad. What my grandmother did not realize, and could not realize, was that what was hidden was the most necessary to show. In the stories of Henna, Schomburg, Muñoz Marín, Lee, Mendoza, Black, Hernández, Belpré, and Clemente, I discovered that the Puerto Rican pueblo would continue to be stuck within the limits of its colonial definitions until it embraces its totality--racist/gendered flaws and all--and opens itself to whatever newness results from that act of inclusion.

The stories of these individuals juxtaposed with my own construct another space. It is an interstitial space that I did not foresee at the onset of this dissertation, but has nonetheless developed between the people I studied and myself. Standing in that area, I attempt to find


another way of understanding our shared identities. It is again a border thinking, and it has exposed my reservations about the nationalist sentiments I openly embraced in the past. I now await eagerly a return to El Monumento del Jíbaro so that I can attempt to continue the creolization I have pinpointed in this work through the acceptance of those qualities I viewed as flaws and those details I never noticed.
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Vita

Cristóbal A. Borges is a historian from Puerto Rico that studies race, gender, identity, and borders in his homeland, Latin America and the United States. He holds a B.A. degree in Communication and Canadian Studies from the University of Washington, a M.S. degree in Radio, Television, and Film from the University of North Texas, and a M.A. degree in History from the University of Texas at El Paso. Borges has taught courses in higher education for over seven years, and he has experience teaching in nontraditional settings like LifeLong Learning Centers and the Apple Store.

Borges has shared his research at conferences in the United States and the United Kingdom. He produced a 24-minute documentary about the U.S. Naval bombing on the island of Vieques, Puerto Rico titled Vieques: Island of Conflict and Dreams, and he also helped design a museum exhibit about the Bracero Program for the Oral History Institute at the University of Texas at El Paso. Borges helped construct the H-Borderlands website, and edited its listserv.

Borges received an Honorable Mention from the Ford Foundation Dissertation Fellowship in 2012, the William Turrentine Jackson Scholarship in 2009, the Cotton Memorial Graduate Fellowship in 2008, and the Outstanding Graduate Student Award from the University of North Texas in 2002.

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