

Teaching Guide for The History of Puerto Ricans in the U.S.

Part Two: *Labor Migration and U.S. Policies*

The use of the *Puerto Rican Heritage Poster Series* and this *Teaching Guide* complement *The History of Puerto Ricans in the U.S.* created by Dr. Virginia Sánchez-Korrol.

This guide includes:

- Discussion Questions for the Cartography Poster
- Activities
- Recommended Readings

Poster Series used: *Diasporas in the History of the Puerto Rican People: A Cartography, Part II*

This poster shows the United States (including the Hawaiian Islands) and the Caribbean region. The latter region displays an encircled close up view of Puerto Rico. The poster illustrates Puerto Rican migrations to different parts of the United States and indicates the growth of various Puerto Rican communities at different historical periods.

During the early years of the U.S. regime in Puerto Rico, the military government encouraged U.S. companies to recruit Puerto Rican agricultural laborers to work in their sugar plantations in Hawaii and Cuba. Promoting contract labor migration was used by U.S. authorities as a government policy tool for dealing with the high levels of unemployment and poverty that overwhelmed Puerto Rico's population, and for securing low wage labor for U.S. companies.

In 1910, there were only about 2,000 Puerto Ricans living in the United States, but migration accelerated after U.S. citizenship was conferred to Puerto Ricans in 1917 and the population increased to 11,811 by 1920. In the following decades, the migrant population significantly grew from 52,774 in 1930 to 301,375 by 1950, the early years of the post-World War II Great Migration (mid-1940s to mid-1960s).

From the 1930s to the 1950s, some Puerto Ricans also migrated to the U.S. Virgin Islands, especially St. Croix, to work in the sugar fields. Many of these migrants came from the nearby island of Vieques, a municipality of Puerto Rico, and were displaced from their land when the U.S. government expropriated more than half of Vieques' territory to build a naval base and a target practice range there during World War II.



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Migration to the United States intensified during the Great Migration period and, since then, continues at a steady pace into the 21st century. The continuous influx of new migrants has led to the formation or expansion of numerous stateside Puerto Rican communities, mostly located in large U.S. urban centers and suburban vicinities. In 2008, the population of the Puerto Rican diaspora for the first time surpassed that of the island of Puerto Rico. The U.S. Census estimates a stateside Puerto Rican population of 4.7 million in 2013, compared to 3.7 million island residents.

The arrows in this map poster point to the geographic dispersion of the Puerto Rican migrant population to the United States. This geographic dispersion became a more evident trend in the post-World War II Great Migration period and continues into the present. In the 1960s, over 80 percent of the Puerto Rican population was concentrated in the New York metropolitan area and a few other cities in the Northeast. In 2010, only about 23 percent of the total stateside Puerto Rican population resided in the state of New York. Eighteen percent of Puerto Ricans now live in Florida, 9 percent in New Jersey, 8 percent in Pennsylvania, and about 6 percent in each of the states of Connecticut and Massachusetts. Some population estimates show that within a few years, the Puerto Rican population of the Orlando metropolitan area in Central Florida may surpass that of the New York metropolitan area. The cities of Chicago, Philadelphia, and Hartford, CT also have high concentrations of Puerto Ricans (over 200,000 each).

As Puerto Rican migration to the United States was taking place, large numbers of immigrants from the Hispanic Caribbean islands of Cuba and the Dominican Republic came to Puerto Rico during the second half of the twentieth century. First, was a major wave of Cuban exile immigration to Puerto Rico and several other Spanish-speaking countries, and to the states of Florida and New Jersey propelled by the 1959 Cuban Revolution. Thousands of Cuban exiles settled in Puerto Rico in the early 1960s. A decade later, Dominicans also began to immigrate to Puerto Rico and notable increases occurred in the 1970s and 80s. Documented and undocumented immigration from the Dominican Republic to Puerto Rico continues to a lesser degree into the present.

Discussion Questions for the *Diasporas in the History of the Puerto Rican People: A Cartography, Part II*

- 1) In what specific ways is immigration to Puerto Rico an important part of its history?
- 2) In what specific ways is migration to the United States a persistent reality throughout the 20th and 21st centuries?
- 3) What are some of the implications of the contemporary geographic dispersion of Puerto Ricans and their significant population growth in several new U.S. cities and states, other than their traditional places of early settlement?

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Activities

1) Brief Summaries: Ask students to summarize the poster's major themes in a sentence or two and relate their view of how certain landmark events have influenced the Puerto Rican community in the United States.

2) Minute Paper: Ask students to respond to two questions: (a) What was the most significant thing you learned from this poster?; and (b) What questions remain in your mind after studying this poster?

3) The Muddiest Point: Ask students to identify any issues, concepts, or information that remain unclear to them after studying the poster. Then, to describe how they can find additional information from the Study Guide's recommended readings to enhance their knowledge and understanding.

4) Profiles of Notable Individuals: Ask students to write a brief, focused profile of an individual, a group, or an organization or institution highlighted in the poster whose values, goals, or actions the reader admires based on the provided poster content.

Recommended Readings

- Acosta-Belén, Edna and Carlos E. Santiago. 2006. *Puerto Ricans in the United States: A Contemporary Portrait*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Cruz, José. 1998. *Identity and Power: Puerto Ricans and the Challenge of Ethnicity*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Duany, Jorge. 2001. *The Puerto Rican Nation on the Move: Identities on the Island and in the United States*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.
- Duany, Jorge. 2011. *Blurred Borders: Transnational Migration between the Hispanic Caribbean and the United States*. Raleigh-Durham, NC: University of North Carolina Press.
- Duany, Jorge and Félix Matos Rodríguez. 2006. *Puerto Ricans in Orlando and Central Florida*. New York: Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños.
- Glasser, Ruth. 1995. *My Music is my Flag: Puerto Rican Musicians and their New York Communities, 1917-1940*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Haslip-Viera, Gabriel, Angelo Falcón, and Félix Matos Rodríguez, eds. 2005. *Boricuas in Gotham: Puerto Ricans in the Making of New York City*. Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers.
- López, Iris. 2005. "Borinkis and Chop Suey: Puerto Rican Identity in Hawaii, 1900-2000." In *The Puerto Rican Diaspora: Historical Perspectives*, Carmen T. Whalen and Víctor Vázquez-Hernández, eds. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 43-67.

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- Padilla, Félix. 1985. *Latino Ethnic Consciousness: The Case of Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans in Chicago*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Pérez, Gina M. 2004. *The Near Northwest Side Story: Migration, Displacement, and Puerto Rican Families*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Ramos-Zayas, Ana V. 2003. *National Performances: The Politics of Class, Race, and Space in Puerto Rican Chicago*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Silva, Milton and Blasé Camacho Souza. 1982. "The Puerto Ricans of Hawaii: On Becoming Hawaii's People," *Journal of Contemporary Puerto Rican Thought* 1 (1), 29-39.
- Thomas, Lorrin. 2010. *Puerto Rican Citizen: History and Political Identity in Twentieth-Century New York City*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Torres, Andrés, ed. 2006. *Latinos in New England*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Whalen, Carmen T. 2001. *Puerto Ricans in Philadelphia: Puerto Rican Workers and Postwar Economies*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Whalen, Carmen T. and Víctor Vázquez-Hernández, eds. 2005. *The Puerto Rican Diaspora: Historical Perspectives*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.