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BRINCAMOS EL CHARCO Y AHORA QUE:
HISTORICIZING PUERTO RICAN EDUCATION
IN CHICAGO, 1967-1977

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation serves as a historical and cultural analysis of the educational experiences of Puerto Ricans in Chicago following the Division Street Riot of 1966 till 1977, chronicling the ways in which the racialization of Puerto Ricans in Chicago has resulted in schooling inequalities, forcing community response in the hopes to alleviate concerns. I critically assess the city of Chicago as the *space* that this population comes to navigate, negotiate, and embody as a marker of who they are as a racialized group. Schools then become the *place* where Puerto Ricans can begin to gain a sense of security, share their lived experiences and hope to meet their practical needs. Further, schools serve as a place in which the creation and maintenance of identities are undertaken. I will contextualize how the Puerto Rican community began to confront the ways their claim to space within the city of Chicago was intricately linked to the schooling inequalities and challenges faced within city schools. I critically examine the role of the media, and other print culture, played in not only addressing the schooling concerns of the community, but as a vehicle through which the creation and affirmation of Puerto Rican identities was undertaken. I further discuss the role of women in forming of a politicized Puerto Rican community in Chicago, while tracking the intellectual history of this group. Indeed, the fight against Puerto Rican educational inequality was very much a community effort.

To the memory of my father, Ismael Rivera Rodriguez

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The 1966 Division Street Riots profoundly altered the already strained relationship between the city of Chicago and the relatively young Puerto Rican community, who now began to challenge the ways they continued to find themselves increasingly marginalized as their numbers grew within the city. The social unrest followed the shooting of a Puerto Rican youth and was clearly a result of years of constant displacement. Following the uprising, community members mobilized in order to confront then Mayor Richard J. Daley and other city officials to address the ways Puerto Ricans in Chicago were plagued with injustices including police brutality, health discrepancies, joblessness, unfair housing practices, and most importantly for this project, educational inequalities. Civil rights leaders including Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., called for combined efforts among black and Puerto Rican leaders to address these growing concerns, and to “totally free all minority groups.”¹ In the months following the riots, city officials and community members held various meetings culminating in Chicago’s Commission on Human Relations release of a 23-page report aiming to institute local programs to address community needs. Key to these findings was the development of summer programs offering English classes by the Board of Education in the Division street area, as well as “improving educational opportunities for both adults and

¹ “King Calls for Puerto Rican Meet,” *Chicago Defender*, June 15, 1966, p. 3.

children...to adjust to urban living, as well as encouraging Puerto Rican residents to learn to speak English.”² Unfortunately, “the Puerto Rican problem” went beyond linguistic limitations, as Puerto Ricans had been city residents for decades, and thus attended city schools since their initial migration and as a result gained some grasp of the English language. Despite this long history and seeming immersion into the English language, many continued to find themselves marginalized through their limited schooling opportunities. As Gina Perez argues, the transnational ties between Puerto Ricans on the island and those now in cities such as Chicago, help shape both places, with her work emphasizing “how people respond to, accommodate, and resist” the role of power in their lives.³ Her work is critical in understanding the ways in which Puerto Ricans in Chicago’s daily lives are in many ways influenced by the transnational ties to the physical island, but in many ways, also very much embedded with their work ethics and familial structures which affect the ways they interact and mobilize within the city. For Puerto Ricans, despite their desires to “claim or create a sentimental sense of belonging” within the city, they quickly learned how to claim their rights as not only U.S. citizens but Chicago citizens to develop an understanding of the resources available to them as such within the city, was key to their success.⁴ Part of that understanding, as seen the work of Perez, Merida Rúa, Ana Y. Ramos- Zayas, and others illustrates, is grasping the role of organizing the community, whether politically, through schools, as mothers, etc. in order to ensure the community’s needs were met. But further, as Lilia Fernandez

² “Puerto Rican Hearing Proposals Released,” *Human Relation News of Chicago*, November 1966, Human Relations News of Chicago, Chicago History Museum.

³ Gina M. Perez, *The Near Northwest Side Story: Migration, Displacement, and Puerto Rican Families* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2004), 6.

⁴ Merida Rúa, “Claims to the ‘The City’: Puerto Rican Latinidad Amid Labors of Identity, Community, and Belonging in Chicago,” (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 2004), 46.

argues, the struggles and activism of both Mexican and Puerto Ricans in Chicago is crystallized in the naming of two new high schools after national heroes (Benito Juarez and Roberto Clemente), and in many ways proves these groups had finally claimed their space.⁵ Thus Chicago schools very much become contested spaces in which communities can begin to re-imagine themselves through decades of struggle, limitation, and in some cases, violence. This dissertation provides a historical analysis of the educational experiences of Puerto Ricans in Chicago following the Division Street Riot of 1966 until 1977, chronicling the ways the racialization of Puerto Ricans in Chicago has resulted in schooling inequalities, which in turn prompted community response to alleviate concerns. Here I will critically interrogate the city of Chicago as the *space* that this population comes to navigate, negotiate, and embody as a marker of who they are as racialized beings. Schools then become the *place* (the inhabited space) in which Puerto Ricans then can begin to gain a sense of security and shared lived experiences, hoping to meet their practical needs, especially education. Further, schools serve as a place in which the creation and maintenance of identities are undertaken. In order to lead a discussion on these issues, I will address these three critical themes in order to speak of the historical specificity of Puerto Ricans in Chicago:

1. How did the Puerto Rican community begin to confront the ways in which their claim to space within the city of Chicago was intricately linked to the schooling inequalities and challenges faced within city schools? In particular, what role did media play in addressing and relaying these particular schooling concerns?
2. The role of women has always played an intricate part in the migration and formation of a Puerto Rican community in Chicago, as well the intellectual

⁵ Lilia Fernandez, "Latina/o Migration and Community Formation in Postwar Chicago: Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Gender, and Politics, 1945-1975," (Ph.D diss., University of California, San Diego, 2005),302.

history of this community. What role did gender play in spearheading community mobilization and social movement in terms of schooling?

3. The fight for school inequality for Puerto Rican students was very much a community effort. The dissertation will address the bigger struggle of inter-group dynamics as varying organization (faith based, revolutionary, local community, and student), and diverse student populations, worked together to confront schooling issues.

In focusing on these particular years I engage several overlapping themes to not only tell the story of the ways Puerto Rican students were marginalized within city schools, but also how their schooling served as a way this particular community, including the students themselves, came to mobilize and critically challenge the dominant forces within the city. I also show how different historical points, Puerto Ricans form critical alliances with other marginalized communities, particularly African American and Mexican Americans. For example, in the Fall of 1968 African American and Puerto Rican students staged school walkouts to demand not only the development of relevant curricula to address their needs, but to increase the hiring of African American and Spanish speaking counselors and teachers to meet their needs as students. School administrators quickly dismissed the student's grievances by claiming outside agitators for encouraging their activism. By this time the population of Puerto Rican students had grown to over 25,000 within Chicago's public schools, with the overall population in the city nearing 80,000 by 1970.⁶

It is important to also recognize how Puerto Rican women in particular engaged in community activism and organizing, motivated by how their children were being underserved or ignored by Chicago schools. Schools, I will argue, became a vehicle for these women to critically engage in the development of their communities in ways denied

⁶ Felix M. Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, (South Bend, Indiana: University of Notre Dame, 1985), 78.

to them before along gendered lines. This participation moved them beyond the traditional domestic sphere to which they had been relegated as wives or as domestic workers for Chicago families, but now moving them into roles as community leaders and school teachers/administrators. Media accounts clearly chronicled the role women played in addressing schooling concerns, with young Puerto Rican women leading sit-ins at the largely Puerto Rican Tuley High School in 1973 to voice their discontent with the administration. Community member Mirta Ramirez sought to facilitate educational change for Puerto Rican youth with the founding of Aspira Incorporated of Illinois, filling the gap not met by local schools. (At the same she was a young mother attending Northeastern Illinois University.) Aspira, initially a New York based organization, expanded to Chicago as an “effort to enable Chicago’s Puerto Rican community to break out of its cycle of poverty thru self-help” by assisting youth thru educational counseling, scholarship and loan procurement, and leadership training.⁷ For these women and many more, the plight of Puerto Rican students across the city became a community, and at times interconnectedly, a family affair.

The civic and political participation of this community during the late 1960’s and the 1970’s through community organizations such as Aspira Inc. of Illinois, the Young Lords Organization, and publications such as the newspaper *El Puertorriqueño* provided an avenue for Puerto Ricans to come together and address local issues. By doing so they forced the city to acknowledge the deplorable conditions in which Puerto Ricans were forced to live, work, and learn. For Chicago’s Puerto Ricans, the limited access to resources and quality education historically experienced by many of its school children simultaneously marginalized and empowered this community as its numbers grew.

⁷ “Chicago Puerto Rico Youths to Get Aid,” *Chicago Tribune*, November 18, 1968.

Similarly, as Puerto Rican community members and parents sought to engage within city schools, through their participation in parent/teacher associations and Board meetings, for example, the emerging college-aged Puerto Rican population now at state colleges and universities now mirrored their efforts. Puerto Rican students at Northeastern Illinois University's student newspaper *Lucha Estudiantil* and *Que Ondee Sola* chronicled the turbulent relationship between these students and institutions of higher education, expressing their own developing nationalist views. Puerto Ricans, whether parents, community members, or students, were entering a decade of community activism that sought to change the educational outcome of thousands of students while laying claim to a city they had come to call home for decades.

For the purpose of this study, it is important to briefly revisit the migration of Puerto Ricans to Chicago, but here focusing on the socio economic conditions of the migrants as it pertained to the ways school children were initially welcomed into city schools according to what expectations the city had of these "fellow Americans." For many Puerto Ricans moving to Chicago either from the island or other U.S. cities, the political discourse surrounding the status of the island came to speak to the ways in which they participated within Chicago politics and community formation. In time 1960's Chicago became a space for nationalist organizations centered on Puerto Rican independence.⁸ For groups such as the Young Lords, founded in Chicago, many of the ideas filtered through the organization also dealt with the issue of equality and access for

⁸ Puerto Rican nationalist, on and off the island, have contended with U.S. policies, intending to quell their movement since 1898. In 1950 Puerto Rican nationalist staged an attack on then President Harry S. Truman. Then in 1954, a group of Puerto Rican nationalists engaged in a shoot-out at the U.S. Capitol, including Lolita Lebron. See Ana Y. Ramos-Zayas, "Performing the Nation," *National Performances: The Politics of Class, Race, And Space in Puerto Rican Chicago*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 19-42.

Puerto Rican students in Chicago. This fight for equality within the Puerto Rican community and its schools spoke to the ways Puerto Ricans began to assert their own status as U.S. citizens in order to seek social justice. Again, among those involved in community activism were Puerto Rican women who had long participated in the labor migration to the city and who in the late 1960's organized around schooling issues affecting their children. An examination is thus far needed on the gender dynamics surrounding the educational experiences of Puerto Rican students, and the resulting increase in political and civic participation of these women. Throughout the ten years discussed here Puerto Rican women participated in the development of local organizations such as Aspira Inc. of Illinois, and through their appointments in positions such as the Chicago Board of Education fought for school equality. On the other side of the spectrum, Puerto Rican women were also at the center of intense battles between students, teachers, and administrators at Chicago's Tuley High School. The dropout rate of Puerto Rican students continued to rise to over 70% by the early 1970's, leading to the creation of alternative schools, including "La Escuelita Puertorriqueña", later renamed Pedro Albizu Campos High School. This allowed the community to take charge of educating its youth who were increasingly "pushed out" of city schools as the community continued to be racialized as second class citizens, (though citizen's nevertheless who came with voting and political power). I focus on the years 1966 through 1977, to provide a much-needed account of two critical moments in the lives of Puerto Ricans in Chicago as they came to confront their difficult existence within the city. This is prior to their increased involvement in Chicago's political arena as both elected officials and a much sought after voting bloc. Just like the Division Street Riots of 1966 was a response

to not only the shooting of a local youth but the result of years of frustration, the 1977 outbreak was caused by “housing pressures, Puerto Rican’s frustration with the city’s failure to investigate years of arson in the barrio, continued police harassment, and lack of political clout in city government.”⁹

With a population estimated at 78,963 by the 1970 census, Chicago’s Puerto Ricans held a substantial stake not only in *barrio* politics, but as shareholders in the city’s daily (and Daley) maintenance. Puerto Ricans, although U.S., citizens, found themselves racialized as non-white, with their own claim to space or identities as Americans highly contested. In Chicago, New York, and Philadelphia, Puerto Ricans began building coalitions with other ethnic and racial groups to make gains following the civil rights movement. Organizations such as the Young Lords and the Black Panthers worked together to transform the institutional forces that had plagued their communities for so long across East coast cities. In Chicago, Mexicans and Puerto Ricans actively maintained and developed ties in order to gain momentum in addressing labor, housing, and political issues, all in a political context that marginalized both groups for decades.¹⁰ Puerto Rican and African American students in Chicago in the 1970’s collaborated in various school walkouts across city schools, aimed at confronting what these students viewed as schooling inequalities that limited their educational success. My focus here is to contextualize these very points of contention in which Puerto Ricans, at times with the help of other communities of color, began to mobilize across gender, class, age, and race in order to alleviate their growing discontent within this urban center and, in particular,

⁹ Perez, 88.

¹⁰ For more on Mexican and Puerto Rican coalition building in Chicago, please see both Felix Padilla’s *Latino Ethnic Consciousness*, (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985), and Lilia Fernández, “Latina/o Migration and Community Formation in Postwar Chicago: Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Gender, and Politics, 1945-1975.”

its schools. The election of African American, Mexican, and Puerto Rican public officials beginning in the 1970's clearly spoke to the ways in which communities of color utilized their voting power to challenge the dominant forces limiting their political growth within the city, and which had limited the educational opportunities allowed to students of color in the city. With this dissertation I hope to complicate further not only Black-White binaries utilized to historicize American education but also move beyond a "Latino" understanding of schooling in the U.S., focusing on the specificity of the Puerto Rican community of Chicago and its quest for schooling equality amidst social and political change in the city.

The Racialization of Latina/os

The racialization of Puerto Ricans and other Latinas/os complicates already existing social hierarchies within the United States that of course privileged some groups over others. During the period of mass migration of Puerto Ricans to the U.S. in the first half of the 20th century, U.S. racial politics were still very much understood in a Black/White paradigm. As legal scholar Juan F. Perea argues, "a paradigm is the set of shared understandings that permits us to distinguish which facts matter in the resolution of a problem and which don't...Paradigms thus define relevancy."¹¹ Now in the U.S., Puerto Ricans and other Latinas/os sought that very "racial" relevancy in order to gain access to schools, jobs, and housing. I would argue, however, these group further sought to ensure their own history would not be ignored, historically homogenizing them as had been the case with other (im)migrants now in the U.S. Locating points of origin for

¹¹ Juan F. Perea, "The Black/White Binary Paradigm of Race," in *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge* ed. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefanic (Philadelphia: Temple, 2000), 344.

Latina/os, as well as adjusting racial designations vis-à-vis cultural and ethnic differences within these points of origins (including linguistic specificities), further complicated the creation and maintenance of a Latina/o identity within the U.S. Further, for those who can lay claim to historical ties to the United States as second, third, or fourth generation Latina/os, this population continues to be racialized as purely “foreign” or as new (im)migrants, rooted in the need to deny Latinos full participation in the U.S. Although varied in history, “both native and foreign born Latinos also share a long history of U.S. imperialism in the hemisphere and the integrally related experience of varying degrees of discrimination in the U.S.”¹² Unlike many other ethnic groups migrating to the United States, Latina/os have been victims to U.S. policies within their home countries prior to their relocation to U.S. cities because of military, political and economic interventions within their home countries. As a result of the intense focus on the migration of and tensions between Blacks and Whites in U.S. cities, Latina/os have in many ways, as Lilia Fernandez argues, “have been obscured as historical actors.”¹³ Fernández’s work, as well as the works of Gabriela Arredondo, Catherine S. Ramirez, Virginia Sanchez-Korrol and others, reinserts Mexicans and Puerto Ricans within a larger historical understanding of the urban city, very much in relation to their complicated racial history in the U.S.¹⁴

¹² David G. Gutiérrez, “Demography and the Shifting Boundaries of ‘Community’: Reflections on ‘U.S. Latinos’ and the Evolution of Latino Studies,” in *The Columbia History of Latinos in the United States Since 1960*, ed. David G. Gutiérrez (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 10.

¹³ Lilia Fernandez, 10.

¹⁴ Please see Lilia Fernandez “Latina/o Migration and Community Formation in Postwar Chicago.” Gabriela Arredondo *Mexican Chicago: Race, Identity, and Nation, 1916-1939* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2008). Catherine Ramirez *The Woman in the Zoot Suit: Gender, Nationalism, and the Politics of Memory*, (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2009). Virginia Sanchez Korrol *From Colonia to Community: The History of Puerto Ricans in New York City, 1917-1948* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1994).

As Ian Haney López argues, “the operation of law does far more than merely legalize race; it defines as well the spectrum of domination and subordination that constitutes race relations.”¹⁵ Haney López maintains that within current racial debates, an honorary “White status” has been granted to elite Latin Americans, rendering such an identity depended on “socio-racial rather than bio-racial parameters in Hispanic racialization.”¹⁶ This limited membership or claim to whiteness was not extended to all groups, as seen through the segregation of students and immigration policies aimed at groups such as Mexicans and Dominicans, while opening doors and resources to others such as Cubans.¹⁷ But the very prospect of obtaining a sense of racial upward mobility fueled attempts by Mexican American leaders in the 1930’s through the 1950’s to challenge “segregation not on the grounds that it was wrong per se, but by arguing that they were White, thereby initiating a persistent trend in which certain Latinos seek assimilation through claims of Whiteness.”¹⁸ But as Haney Lopez reminds us, the radicalism of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans ensuing in the 1960’s saw these communities rejecting this membership into Whiteness, and instead embraced pride in a non-White

¹⁵ Ibid., 8.

¹⁶ Ian Haney López, 152. Not until the Supreme Court case, *Hernandez v. Texas* did the U.S. attempt to address the racial space occupied by groups operating outside of these racial binaries and begin to contextualize the ways in which other markers such as language, citizenship, and surnames can come to be used to racialized groups of people, and perhaps even complicate notions of “whiteness.” In 1951 Peter Hernandez was convicted by an all-White jury of the murder of another farm worker. Lawyers for Hernandez sought to have the conviction overturned on the grounds his 14th Amendment Rights were violated. The case went to the U.S Supreme Court in 1954 after lower courts failed to overturn his conviction. See Haney López, “Race, Ethnicity, Erasure: The Salience of Race to LatCrit Theory,”

¹⁷ For a detailed discussion on U.S./Cuban relations and the complex immigration history of this population, see Felix Masud-Piloto *From Welcomed Exiled Illegal Immigrants: Cuban Migration to the U.S., 1959-1995* (Lahman, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishing Company, 1996)

¹⁸ Ian Haney López, *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race*, (New York: New York Press, 2006), 152.

identity.¹⁹ As such, “whiteness,” and its varying degrees, can be seen as “contingent, changeable, partial, inconstant, and ultimately social.”²⁰ The inconsistency and changeability of “whiteness,” has complicated the lives of Latina/os now in the U.S., and affected their relationship with educational systems, as the law has often been utilized as a vehicle to deny access to Latina/os.

The United States embarked in several racial projects within Latin America and the Caribbean, not only affecting the home communities of these populations, but also dictating the ways in which they would be viewed and marginalized once in the United States. The U.S.’s acquisition of the Southwest following the Mexican-American War in many ways marked the beginning of a second-class citizenship for Mexican Americans/Chicanos in the region, ramifications which are still felt today. Exclusionary immigration, educational, and language policies following the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, and its affects are not limited to the Southwest, but seen and felt across the United States as this population has been present in cities such as Chicago, New York, and St. Paul, Minnesota, for example, since the turn of the 20th century.²¹ As for Puerto Ricans, the industrialization of the island following the Spanish American War of 1898, and the creation of labor programs on the island set the stage for the wave of migration to the U.S. in the first half of the 20th century. The population began to settle in large

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ian F. Haney López, *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race*, (New York: New York Press, 2006), xxi.

²¹ The history of Mexican immigration (and migration by many accounts), including the various forces leading to the creation of Mexican-American communities in the U.S., is a growing field of study, and inclusive of the tumultuous relationship between both nations. For more, see George J. Sanchez *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). Zaragosa Vargas *Proletarians of the North: A History of Industrial Workers in Detroit and the Midwest, 1917-1933* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1993). Gabriela Arredondo *Mexican Chicago: Race, Identity, and Nation, 1916-1939* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2008)

numbers in cities such as New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago, suffering at the hands of scrupulous employers, living in substandard conditions, and receiving inadequate schooling despite their citizenship status.²²

Regardless of their date or point of entry, or the rationale behind their migration, Latinos are indeed among the “oldest Americans,” and as such, are not new to the legal, political, or educational arena, although they often find themselves silenced on issues of school equity and equality. For Mexican Americans/ Chicanos in particular, their participation was very much tied to the way in which the United States sought to limit their access to citizenship, language rights, and labor opportunities. For Puerto Ricans, the imposition of U.S. citizenship via the Jones Act of 1917 systematically altered the educational experiences of this population both on the island and across the diaspora. For both Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans, the inadequate schooling, labor practices, and segregation so embedded within their histories bind these groups together as they continue the quest for a just educational experience for their community, as Latina/os.²³

Although the term “Latino” lacks the specificity of ethnic indicators such as Irish or

²² For more on Puerto Rican migration to U.S. cities, see Carmen T. Whalen *From Puerto Rico to Philadelphia: Puerto Rican Workers and Postwar Economics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001). Virginia E. Sanchez Korrol *From Colonia to Community: The History of Puerto Ricans in New York City* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1994). *The Puerto Rican Diaspora: Historical Perspectives*, ed. Carmen T. Whalen and Victor Vazquez Hernandez (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005). The Puerto Rican Diaspora offers a rich historical account of migration to sites such as Hawaii, Ohio, and Boston, Massachusetts, often times forgotten in accounts regarding the Puerto Rican diaspora.

²³ Ian Haney Lopez argues, “a race is best thought of people loosely bound together by historically contingent, socially significant elements of their morphology and/or ancestry. In this sense, although not deemed a race in itself, the need to claim a Latina/o identity or exercise varying degrees of Latinidad, allows for groups such as Puerto Ricans and Mexicans to work with one another to challenge ill rooted notions regarding their communities. See Ian Haney López, “Chance, Context, and Choice in the Social Construction of Race,” in *The Latino/a Condition: A Critical Reader*, ed. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (New York: NYU Press, 1998), 9.

Italian American²⁴, and perhaps risks seriously homogenizing these populations, it is important to recognize points of commonality between these groups, while simultaneously recognizing their historical specificities and contributions within American History. Felix Padilla's pivotal work on the development of a Latino ethnic consciousness maintains that although "while in some circumstances Puerto Ricans and Mexican Americans were in constant physical contact and were tolerant of one another, their daily life was still demarcated by individual ethnic boundaries."²⁵ Their lives in Chicago overlapped on a daily basis, whether in schools, at work, or in community organizations, but Puerto Ricans and Mexicans in Chicago have also utilized their own community's cultural nationalism, or national identities, in order to make sense of their new lives in the city.

The educational experiences of Latinos tend to be generalized within educational studies, failing to recognize the histories of individual groups as they faced school segregation, strict language policies, lack of resources, and the absence of their histories in American education. The work of Ruben Donato on the history of Mexican American education in the southwest is essential in recognizing how individual communities experienced local politics that sought to restrict their quality of life as students and workers. Through this study I focus on the unique Puerto Rican educational experience in Chicago, as it is critical to examine their historical specificity as perhaps a means to aid others in understanding the current status of this population to extend that understanding to other Latinos.

²⁴ Marcelo M. Suarez and Mariela M. Paez, "Introduction: The Research Agenda," in *Latinos Remaking America*, ed. Marcelo M. Suárez and Mariela M. Páez (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2002), 4.

²⁵ F. Padilla, *Latino Ethnic Consciousness*, 140.

Situating Latino Education Within American Education

Yi-Fu Tan tells us that for humans, “places are centers of felt value” where our needs come to be satisfied.²⁶ Schools, I argue became such a place for communities of color in the U.S. where a sense of belonging and economic and social mobility can be fought for and demanded. Unfortunately, a history of struggle and inequality still exists. This is why I situate the Latina/o experience in U.S. schools within an understanding of the overall history of American Education. As James D. Anderson reiterates in his 1988 pivotal work on the history of Blacks in the South, “it is crucial for an understanding of American educational history... to recognize that within American democracy there have been classes of oppressed people and that there have been essential relationships between popular education and the politics of oppression.”²⁷ In many ways the schooling experiences of Latina/os mirrors that of other communities of color, as Latina/o students struggles for equality have been fought not only within courtrooms but in the community as well.²⁸ Education historian Guadalupe San Miguel’s research on the status of research on Chicano education reminds us that while many studies have been written since the 1960’s on minority groups such as Mexicans, the work focusing on education is virtually non-existent.²⁹ By focusing on Puerto Ricans in Chicago, this dissertation will demonstrate how groups of students, teachers, and community member’s worked together to confront the contentious educational arena in order to gain a sense of belonging and

²⁶ Yi-Fu Tan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1977), 4.

²⁷ James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 1988), 1.

²⁸ See Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr, “The Status of Historical Research on Chicano Education,” *Review of Educational Research* 57, no 4 (Winter 1987): 467-480. Ian Haney Lopez, *Racism on Trial: The Chicano Fight for Justice* (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 2003).

²⁹ G. San Miguel, “The Status of Historical Research on Chicano Education,” 467.

equality for students, while in many ways writing this community into the history of not only American education but also that of the city.

Once in U.S. schools, whether as recent (im)migrants³⁰ or first, second, or third generation students, Latinos continue to lag behind other groups in terms of school completion and their presence in higher education. Because of the segregated housing patterns present in U.S. cities, Latino students attend highly segregated inadequate schools in large numbers, despite their citizenship or language status. For Latinos, the quest for educational access and success has been present in the U.S. since the 19th century, has transcended borders (both state and federal), occupied court rooms and political arenas, and most importantly, has been present in the daily conversations and lives of these communities. Schools continue to be a place for Latina/os to not only realize the ways in which they come to be racialized as second-class citizens and deemed undesirable “subjects”, but also a vehicle in which they can begin to critically engage in social activism. In many ways the segregation of Latino school children mirrors the history of African American children. Latino children experienced a different type of segregation post-*Brown v. Board of Education*, however, based on linguistic differences and lack of adequate bilingual education programs. According to Guadalupe San Miguel, post-*Brown* “Mexican American civil rights lawyers abandoned the ‘other White’ legal strategy that had been used for decades in their struggle against discrimination.”³¹

Mexican American and Latinos began to wage educational legal battles, post-*Brown*, vis-à-vis an understanding and recognition as distinct ethnic groups. Mexican American

³⁰ Because my discussion will include Puerto Ricans and Chicanos/Mexican Americans, I will choose to utilize (im)migrant rather than “immigrant” in order to be conscious of the colonial relationship present for not only Puerto Ricans but Chicanos as well.

³¹ Guadalupe San Miguel, “The Impact of Brown on Mexican American Desegregation Litigation, 1950’s to 1980’s.” *Journal of Latinos and Education* 4, no.4 (2005): 221

parents in the Southwest fought legal battles for school equality in states such as California, Colorado, and Texas against the injustices that their children suffered, and the ways they continued to be marginalized despite their historic presence in those states.³² Both Puerto Ricans and Mexican Americans were targets of intense Americanization projects aimed at transforming these seemingly “backwards” people into acceptable community members in the hopes that they would come to adhere to American values and defend the American way of life through their participation in the armed forces.³³ For these communities, however, it became clear that they were not welcomed by all in the U.S. as they experienced limitations based on where they could live, what schools they could attend, and even with whom they could interact.

But there is a history of Latino school battles throughout the Southwestern United States, prior to the courts ruling in *Brown v. Board. of Education* (1954). In 1930 Mexican parents in Texas filed suit claiming their children were unjustly segregated due to their race in *Independent School District v. Salatierra* (1930).³⁴ In *Alvarez v. Lemon Grove* (1931), the court ruled in favor of the Mexican community on the grounds that

³² See Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr, “Roused From Our Slumbers.” *Latinos and Education: A Critical Reader*, edited by Antonia Darder, Rodolfo D. Torres, and Henry Gutierrez (New York: Routledge, 1997) :135-157. George I. Sánchez, “History, Culture, and Education.” *Latinos and Education: A Critical Reader*, edited by Antonia Darder, Rodolfo D. Torres, and Henry Gutierrez, (New York: Routledge, 1997) 117-134.

³³ For a thorough discussion on the Americanization projects aimed at Mexican American populations see George J. Sanchez *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945*. For a brief discussion on Puerto Ricans see, Gina M. Perez, *The Near Northwest Side Story: Migration, Displacement, and Puerto Rican Families* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2004).

³⁴ Rubén Donato, *The Other Struggle for Equal Rights*, 2. See, Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr, “Roused From Our Slumbers.” *Latinos and Education: A Critical Reader*, edited by Antonia Darder, Rodolfo D. Torres, and Henry Gutierrez (New York: Routledge, 1997) :135-157. *Independent School District v. Salatierra* case was a class action suit against the Del Rio, Texas school district. San Miguel argues this case is quite important for it asked the courts for the first time to “exercise their power of judicial review to determine the constitutionality of the actions of a local school district with respect to the education of Mexican Americans.”

separate facilities for Mexican American students were not conducive to Americanization and “they retarded the English language development of Spanish-speaking children.”³⁵ One legal case prior to *Brown* helped frame the issues of school inequality within not only the Mexican/Mexican American community but for Latinos in general. The case of *Mendez v. Westminster (1946)* brought forth on behalf of “Mexican-origin students” in Orange County, California, attempted to end racial segregation in schools on the grounds that separate was not equal.³⁶ Interestingly, this case, I argue, marked the beginning of *Latina/o* challenges to school segregation and inequity (not just strictly Mexican or Puerto Rican) as the main plaintiffs of the case, the Mendez children, were indeed Mexican (their father, Gonzalo Mendez) and Puerto Rican (their mother Felícita Mendez). Although not traditionally cited as such, *Westminster* marks the beginning of a long history of community access to quality education for Puerto Rican students within U.S. schools, who often times found themselves in racial limbo, despite their claims to citizenship. As Felícita Mendez herself once said, “I married a Mexican, so I fought for the Mexicans...Everybody that was minority was treated the same. I was a citizen, born in Puerto Rico. I could not even go to a theatre and sit with the other people.”³⁷

³⁵ Rubén Donato, *The Other Struggle for Equal Rights*, 2.

³⁶ Guadalupe San Miguel Jr., “The Impact of Brown on Mexican American Desegregation Litigation, 1950’s to 1980’s,” *Journal of Latinos and Education* 4, no.4 (2005): 222.

³⁷ Felícita Mendez Interview, 1987, as quoted in Jennifer McCormick and César J. Ayala, “Felícita “La Prieta” Méndez (1916-1998) and the end of Latino school segregation in California,” *Centro Journal of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies*, 30.

Literature Review

As Sonia Nieto reminds us, Puerto Ricans have been attending U.S. schools for over a century³⁸ whether on the island or in U.S. cities, thus complicating the historical context under which they begin to negotiate their own sense of identity while simultaneously maintaining cultural distinctiveness and working within U.S. schools. In the last twenty years, works have emerged on the educational experiences of Puerto Rican students, including a 1998 *Harvard Educational Review* special issue focusing on Puerto Rican Education in the United States. This publication edited by education scholar Sonia Nieto critically examined the multiple issues surrounding the education of Puerto Rican students in the United States, from linguistic concerns in regards to students in the U.S. to the ways Puerto Rican students response to the colonial nature of their schooling, regardless of their large population in certain school markets.³⁹ Recently, the *Centro Journal of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies* furthered chronicled the challenges and dilemmas facing Puerto Ricans in the diaspora, giving voice not only to the present day pedagogical concerns of Puerto Rican students and educators, but to the rich history of school and community activism of the diaspora as they faced school inequalities.⁴⁰

Rosalie Rolón-Dow's groundbreaking work on the lives of Puerto Rican middle-school girls, explores how "care narratives" provides a glimpse to the ways these students view

³⁸ Sonia Nieto, "Fact or Fiction: Stories of Puerto Ricans in U.S Schools", *Harvard Educational Review* 68, no.2 (Summer 1998): 133.

³⁹ Catherine Walsh's work on "'Staging Encounters': The Educational Decline of U.S. Puerto Ricans in [Post]-Colonial Perspective" in *Harvard Educational Review* 68, no.2 (Summer 1998) examines the opposition that emerge in a northeastern school system heavily populated by Puerto Ricans, yet run by "white" administrators and teachers.

⁴⁰ See Jennifer McCormick and César Ayala's "Felicitá 'La Prieta' Méndez (1916-1998) and the end of Latino school segregation in California" in *Centro Journal*. The Méndez family's quest to challenge school segregation in California shed light to the ways in which the education of Latino children (Puerto Rican as well since the Méndez children were of Puerto Rican and Mexican ancestry) was severely affected by racial politics plaguing American schools.

their own educational experiences, and the daily effects race has on their schooling interactions in comparison to the opportunities allowed to white students.⁴¹ Her study reminds scholars of the significance of the racialized conceptions children have of themselves within schools, and how it can come to alter their schooling. These contemporary works on Puerto Ricans, along with the countless studies composed in the 1960's and 1970's, are quite pivotal to our understanding of the climate associated with the schooling of this population, as they shed light on the multifaceted concerns faced by students and community members once their numbers grew within U.S. cities.⁴² My dissertation will further complicate issues within American education by situating the historical significance of Puerto Ricans in Chicago as they came to be racialized and be acted upon following their mass migration to the city through labor, housing, and subsequently educational inequalities that framed their schooling experience. For example, the city's urban renewal projects in communities such as Lincoln Park not only forced many longtime Puerto Rican and African Americans to relocate from their *physical* homes, but similarly, the rebuilding of Waller High School in the community as a magnet, performing arts high school (Lincoln Park High School) equally displaced their children from their *school* home (something further discussed in Chapter three). Their history, unfortunately, is very much likened to that of African Americans and Chicano students across the United States, who have suffered the effects of U.S. racial politics within schools, which are still evident today. The persistent common thread among these

⁴¹ See Rolón-Dow, R. (2005). Critical Care: A Color(full) analysis of care narratives in the schooling experiences of Puerto Rican girls. *American Educational Research Journal*, (42) 1: 77-111.

⁴² Eugene Bucchioni and Francesco Cordasco's, "Introduction", in *Puerto Rican Children in Mainland Schools: A Source Book for Teachers*, ed. by Eugene Bucchioni and Francesco, (Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1968) includes pieces in which to aid teachers on understanding the cultural, fertility, dating, and spiritual habits of Puerto Ricans in the 1960's.

groups of students of course is their limited presence within the overall history of American education.

Puerto Ricans and other Latina/o students continue to lag behind their white counterparts, despite the efforts of “many Latino educators, parents, and community organizations,” who have historically fought to ensure their academic development of this community of students, and, who have rejected that their status in schools is due to their Latino culture.⁴³ Education has and continues to be a community affair. This dissertation will add a critical component to the growing scholarship on Latino education by offering a glimpse into the counterhegemonic responses to the limitations placed on Puerto Ricans within schools and Chicago city politics as the community organized to make claims to a fair and equal education for their children. Michael Apple and Kristin Buras’ edited volume, *The Subaltern Speak: Curriculum, Power, and Educational Struggles*, is pivotal to our understanding of whose experiences, histories, struggles, and perspectives, are privileged in the school curriculum and education in general.⁴⁴ With this work I hope to contribute to much needed new insights on the historical educational struggles over space (as proposed school boundaries and overcrowding issues threatened the education of Puerto Ricans in Chicago) and political mobilization of Puerto Ricans as they moved from a migrant workforce to a viable political bloc seeking to change their conditions via institutional change.

⁴³ Antonia Darder, Rodolfo D. Torres, and Henry Gutierrez, “Introduction”, *Latinos and Education: A Critical Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1997), xii-xiii. The editors of this book call for a deeper understanding of the historical significance regarding the low educational attainment of Latinos, despite the multitude of scholarship present which has tended to focus on the linguistic and cultural differences surrounding this population of learners.

⁴⁴ Michael Apple and Kristen Buras, “Introduction,” *The Subaltern Speak: Curriculum, Power, and Educational Struggles* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 3.

I utilize the growing scholarship on not only Puerto Rican migration to U.S. cities, such as the work of Clara Rodríguez, Virginia Sánchez Korrol, Carmen Whalen, and others, as a means to examine the relationship between established Puerto Rican communities and the cities in which they reside in, as they come to challenge their own experiences and conditions within cultural, political, social, and economic arenas. It is important to address of the complicated migrations of Puerto Ricans following the U.S. acquisition of the island to better contextualize the lives of migrants as they established themselves in urban centers such as Philadelphia, New York, and Chicago. Carmen Whalen's extensive work on migration to Philadelphia post-World War Two, further complicates the labor history embedded within this migration by examining the gender dynamics associated with Puerto Rican migration. Whalen's look at the economic impact of women's paid and reproductive labor greatly enriches my own scholarship on the historical contributions of Puerto Rican women to the development of school and community activism in Chicago. Puerto Rican women across U.S. cities have critically engaged in American society not only as laborers, but they have participated outside of their traditional roles in order to facilitate change within their communities, as seen with Felicitá Mendez and others. I argue that these "activist" occurrences still existed within a gendered framework since these women acted as mothers, sisters, or daughters to expand not only schooling opportunities but also to guarantee local community resources. Looking at the work of Elena Padilla on the early Puerto Rican community in Chicago supports this claim, as Padilla and others at the University of Chicago concentrated their efforts in addressing the growing concerns of Puerto Rican workers in Chicago, including the hundreds of *domesticas* recruited to work in local households. Elena Padilla's work

has continued to play a role on Puerto Rican studies, as it introduces Chicago's significance in understanding the historical processes that have aided in the development of not only a Puerto Rican diasporic community, throwing light on the relationships between Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in this urban center in ways not seen before. Very much part of today's Latina/o studies discourse, Padilla's early work remind us of the long history of Puerto Ricans in the United States, as laborers, students, activist, and scholars.

In order to speak to the challenges posed to this community in terms of educational attainment and school resources after the Division Street uprising of 1966, this study will briefly examine the complicated history of Puerto Ricans once they engaged in the labor and housing market beginning in the 1940's. Several prominent works related to economic, political, and socio-push-pull factors and the Puerto Rican communities in the U.S. works on Chicago's Puerto Rican community will aid in the discussion on the initial migration to Chicago. Specifically, Elena Padilla's 1947 Master's thesis on Puerto Rican settlement in New York and Chicago⁴⁵ presents a compelling view of early migration to Chicago that allows us to analyze how later economic changes in Puerto Rico came to define and almost determine who the (then) *new* subsequent migrants to the city were, and the reasons behind their relocation. The city of Chicago strategically influenced the residential patterns of this group within the city through labor and housing opportunities allotted to this population. This was done to avoid many of the concerns arising from the migrants previous incorporation in New York. Furthermore, Ana Ramos- Zayas argues that although Puerto Ricans were

⁴⁵ Elena Padilla, "Puerto Rican Immigrants in New York and Chicago: A Study in Comparative Assimilation." (M.A diss., University of Chicago, 1947).

adamantly encouraged to maintain a sense of cultural authenticity in the face of “Americanization” practices by the U.S. government on the island, migrants were encouraged to quickly assimilate in U.S. cities.⁴⁶ Migrants were discouraged from forming Puerto Rican colonias in the U.S. and developing close relationships with other Spanish speaking groups was also deterred.⁴⁷ More importantly a look at Puerto Rican ethnic identity as interpreted by the city of Chicago is relevant to this project and beneficial to initiate discussions on the unease and marginalization this community experienced as their numbers grew in the late 1950’s and early 1960’s. Chicago was already home to not only European immigrant communities, but also a growing Mexican population, which subsequently influenced the treatment of Puerto Ricans by local government. The citizenship status of Puerto Ricans and the potential for inter-group relationship between similar ethnic minorities influenced the local government’s attempt to segregate Puerto Ricans from Mexican immigrants. This led to an increase of Puerto Ricans within other ethnic enclaves across the city, including among Italians and Poles with whom they shared a Roman Catholic background. And yet they were not entirely well received by these other groups.⁴⁸

In her book, *The Near Northwest Side Story*, Gina Pérez contextualizes the strategic planning behind the city of Chicago’s (and in particular then Mayor Richard J.

⁴⁶ Ana Y. Ramos-Zayas, *National Performances: The Politics of Class, Race, And Space in Puerto Rican Chicago*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 47. Similarly, Ramos-Zayas tells us that for the Islands Popular Democratic Party it was important to “construct the Puerto Rican nation on symbolic and cultural, rather than political, planes, mostly through the defense of all things Spanish and Taino Indian, while confining the African contribution to Puerto Ricanness to the realm of folkloric activities.” (See page 22)

⁴⁷ Ibid., 47-48.

⁴⁸ Felix M. Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, 117. Padilla discusses the ways in which Whites in Chicago would not even “tolerate” the presence of their Puerto Rican neighbors. As communities underwent urban renewal these racial flare-ups intensified.

Daley's) hand in not allowing for an initial unified Puerto Rican ethnic community to form in the 1950's and the 1960's. Felix Padilla, in his work *Puerto Rican Chicago*, adds that "early Puerto Rican newcomers to Chicago concentrated, in part, near the center of the city in correspondence to the distribution of available employment opportunities and low cost housing."⁴⁹ The communities in which Puerto Ricans came to reside directly influenced the schools their children could attend and the educational opportunities available to them. These histories set the stage for the community's need to mobilize to address the growing concerns faced by Puerto Rican families dealing with over crowded schools and forced school transfers due to district boundary changes. Politically, Puerto Ricans sought to negotiate their own standing by utilizing their U.S. citizenship as a means to gain recognition from city political figures, including the mayor.

Methodology and Dissertation Purpose

This study addresses the underlying issues leading to community wide response and awareness regarding the growing injustices faced by Puerto Rican students in Chicago from the late 1960's through the 1970's. This project stems in part from my own interest and relationship to Puerto Ricans' historical experiences with education in the city. Beginning with my own family's migration to Chicago from Puerto Rico in 1980, I became part of the story. I began my educational career in one of the very schools the community fought to seek equality for, in the classrooms of Puerto Rican teachers who themselves had maneuvered their way through Chicago schools following their family's migration. By the age of four, my life and education was intricately linked to a larger

⁴⁹ Ibid.,82.

history, marked by decades of community struggle and affirmation. I encountered this history from the moment I entered kindergarten, confronted by an English speaking world, far removed from the warm familiarity I had left thousands of miles away, until I moved on to seek higher education. My stepfather still reminds me of my initial unwillingness to embrace my new school environment, even my inability to walk through inches of snow to reach the school, insisting he carry me and my winter gear, where I led a daily battle against the mispronunciation of my name, and hoped to be understood. But I did embrace it and learned to “stand on my own”, laying claim to this space through my participation in schools and community organizations while I was made aware of the differences that have shaped the educational experiences of this community.

Although I was not present in Chicago during the years studied here, the formation of local organizations such as Aspira, the increased involvement of the Association House of Chicago in servicing Latino youth, the local efforts of community members against school redistricting that would further segregate Puerto Rican youth, and the mobilization of many to push for a new space for the neighborhood high school (Roberto Clemente High School), touched my family’s life and guided our educational future. Even though I am not writing my own stories, my work is “contaminated” with this earlier activism, inextricably linked to one another. As Laura Ellingson reflects in her own work, the contamination with ones “lived experiences results in a rich, complex understanding,” as is in my own work.⁵⁰ At the same time, I resist the urge to make

⁵⁰ Laura L. Ellingson, “‘Then you know how I feel?’: Empathy, identification, and reflexivity in fieldwork,” *Qualitative Inquiry* 4, no.4 (1998): 492-514. Ellingson’s own experience with cancer could not be removed from writing about the experiences of staff, visitors, and patients in an oncology clinic. As Ellingson critically states “I have contaminated my study with my lived experience; in turn, my study has contaminated my self-understanding as both a researcher and a cancer survivor.”

myself an authoritative figure on the subject, hoping instead to heed feminist scholar Wanda Pillow's call to equalize the research relationship- "doing research 'with' instead of 'on'" the community.⁵¹ So I return to the difficultness of separating myself from these stories because beneath these personal stories, as historian Richard White tells us, "simmers an ongoing contest over what America is and means and who gets to define it."⁵² Personal stories will define not only issues in American education, but help define a community as it came to shape me and the students that followed.

Though historical in nature, this work is guided by a critical theory framework and is very grounded in a concept of not merely representing the underrepresented and giving voice to their views, but allowing the underrepresented to represent themselves, thus creating an interdisciplinary project. As such, this project draws from an understanding of both new historicism and cultural criticism, as it is arguing that "human history and culture constitute a complex arena of dynamic forces of which we can construct only a partial, subjective picture."⁵³ Thus, I move away from a linear approach to the writing of history, and situate history as a narrative of a community's or a people's account of their own subjectivity, for just as one's identity is inexplicably linked to the culture from which they emerged and vice versa, so is history.

The emergence and transformation of identities is largely dependent on the history and collective memory of that community. The use of oral histories simultaneously serves as a means in which community members, organizers, educators,

⁵¹ Wanda Pillow, "Confession, catharsis, or cure? Rethinking the uses of reflexivity as methodological power in qualitative research," *Qualitative Studies in Education* 16, no. 2 (2003): 179.

⁵² Richard White, *Remembering Ahanagan: Storytelling in a Family's Past* (New York: Hill and Wang Press, 1998), 6.

⁵³ Louis Tyson, *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide*, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 295.

and students during this particular era can share in the ways they facilitated the changes that came to define this growing Puerto Rican community as well as tie this community together through their mutual struggles (even if working under different institutions or organizations). White reminds us of the ways the “past forges connections among what happened then, what happened afterward, and what exists now.”⁵⁴ Here history allows us to connect these individuals through their mutual pasts, and aid in our understanding the present. The history of this community, and more specifically, the history of the education of Puerto Ricans, does not stand alone, separated from a broader understanding of urban educational history, given how it speaks to issues present in other communities during this period. Issues of racism, segregation (including linguistic segregation), and police brutality linked urban communities to rural ones as well. These stories must not stand alone, but instead juxtaposed to the growing works on Puerto Ricans in Chicago, now reminding us of the multiple ways this community organized and fought to gain educational equality for their children. Members from grassroots organizations such as the Young Lords, Aspira Inc. of Illinois, local school P.T.A’s, and media outlets, despite their philosophical differences, all worked to challenge the institutions that had come to endanger the growth of Puerto Rican students.

This project draws upon print materials as primary sources, specifically local mainstream media outlets like the *Chicago Tribune*, *Chicago Sun-Times*, and the *Chicago Defender*. The community newspaper *El Puertorriqueño*, and those produced by university students and local organizations, similarly aid in this project. These materials set the stage for my study by not only providing a background on the prominent concerns

⁵⁴ Richard White, *Remembering Ahanagan: Storytelling in a Family’s Past*, 63.

emerging among community members in regards to education, but by also detailing the response of both the community and institutions regarding these issues. For example, Claudio Flores' publication, *El Puertorriqueño*, regularly ran announcements regarding local school meetings, informing Puerto Rican parents of what their rights were in terms of their children's education, while also informing the community of the various organizations engaging in the same struggle. By the late 1960's Tuley High School was populated by a large Puerto Rican student body in aging facilities. The Chicago Board of Education in the late 1960's/early 1970's sought to alleviate some of the community's concern with the building of a larger, state of the art high school. However, problems arose when the city sought to utilize a local park, popular for gatherings among Puerto Ricans as the site for the new school. Flores' newspaper served as a space for concerned community members to engage and mobilize in order to ultimately force CPS to find a new location for the high school, thus salvaging the park. Major papers such as the *Chicago Tribune* and *Chicago Defender* also detailed the troubled relationship between students, teachers, parents, and administrators, but community media reports capture the voice of the various organizations and individuals who were most affected by the growing conflict. The *Chicago Tribune* offered wide coverage of the 1973 Tuley High School conflict, in which the student, teachers, and others sought the ousting of the school's principal, including photographs to give a glimpse of the troubled situation at the school. This coverage also allowed for city-wide response to the incident, with one community member reminding critics that, "the Puerto Rican people are not foreigners" and possess many rights, among them, the "right to receive a bilingual, bicultural

education.”⁵⁵ I am careful to utilize various media outlets to ensure the most accuracy possible, as newspapers remind us that there are many sides to the same story.

Organizational record such as those of the Chicago Commission on Human Relations, the Chicago Board of Education, Association House of Chicago, all housed within the Chicago History Museum’s Research Center, provide insight on the institutional forces affecting the schooling of Puerto Ricans, and who were the major players during this period. More importantly, these papers speak volumes. The personal papers of individuals, including Dr. Isidro Lucas, will provide quantitative and qualitative information on these students once enrolled in Chicago schools. His study on Puerto Rican dropouts in 1971, completed with the help of community members and university students, looked at the institutional, sociological, and personal forces that came to influence the education of Puerto Ricans, who he saw as “one of the most neglected minorities” in the U.S.⁵⁶ Lucas’ study also allowed for Puerto Rican students for the first time to speak of their own experiences within school, and the ways they are made aware of the discrimination against them present in city schools, or the city in general. According to Ana Ramos-Zayas, “the racialized social order prevalent in the United States makes school the primary vehicle for achieving upward mobility and for transforming the children of migrants into good citizens.”⁵⁷ For Puerto Ricans in Chicago, schools did more than just that.

⁵⁵ Anthony Sviatko, “Puerto Ricans not aliens,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 31, 1973.

⁵⁶ Isidro Lucas, “Profile of the Puerto Rican Drop Out in Chicago: A Paper To The Puerto Rican Social Work Curriculum Development Workshop,” New York, May 1973: 9.

⁵⁷ Ramos-Zayas, 105.

Layout of Chapters

Chapters one and two of the dissertation allow me to not only introduce the study, framing critical questions regarding the place of Puerto Ricans in the study of the history of American education, but also to more importantly introduce this population to the United States. Chapter two's discussion on the various push/pull factors of this migration, in particular to New York City and Chicago critically examines the population's relationship between their new urban homes, and their relationships to other groups. The racialization of Puerto Ricans in the United States often times confused how they themselves viewed their positionality within these new cities, and within their relationships with other groups. In chapter three, the story of Puerto Rican students, from their initial introduction to U.S. school policies on the island, followed by their place in Chicago's city schools, remind of us of the varying ideological differences regarding Puerto Ricans in the city and within the community itself. Chapter four illustrates the role of media and print culture in an emerging Puerto Rican community in Chicago, and the ways in which these products were used to disseminate valuable community information, but to similarly inform a larger audience of the troubled realities of Puerto Rican school children. The fifth chapter illustrates how important it is to both examine the role various Puerto Rican women have played in the development of a Puerto Rican community, but also the ways in which we need to further examine how the identity of this community is very much tied to the spaces which both women and the overall community have come to occupy in the last fifty years. Finally, chapter six, serves as a brief conclusion, illustrating how further research can aid in understanding not only the relationship between policy

changes within education on the lives of Puerto Rican, but importantly, examine the constant negotiation in their lives in terms of claims to space and their own identities.

CHAPTER TWO

AL BRINCAR EL CHARCO (TO JUMP THE PUDDLE)

With the United States' acquisition of Puerto Rico via the Spanish-American War of 1898, U.S. cities became the destination of choice for many islanders seeking to leave behind the economic and political changes occurring on the island. The subsequent migration to New York and other East Coast cities quickly filled a labor need created by the U.S. involvement in both World Wars. Economic policies developed on the island by both the U.S. and local government, specifically the industrialization of Puerto Rico, aided the initial migration to the Eastern Coast of the United States and set the stage for movements to other parts of the country. As Puerto Rican men and women utilized their status as U.S. citizens (following the Jones Act of 1917) to gain entry into U.S. labor markets. The political relationship between the U.S. and Puerto Rico informed labor migration and the social and cultural milieu that developed during the course of the twentieth and twenty-first century as the population increased, establishing Puerto Ricans as relevant and vibrant community members within major U.S. cities.

Prior to the mass migration of Puerto Ricans to the United States, the developing relationship between the two came to affect the shift in population within the island as well, very much triggered by the “critical social, political, and economic transformations in Puerto Rico.”⁵⁸ The migration of Puerto Ricans from rural communities to “urban”

⁵⁸ Virginia E. Sánchez Korrol, *From Colonia to Community: The History of Puerto Ricans in New York City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 3.

cities on the island coincides with the island's move from an agricultural-based society, as the intense industrialization processes began to take shape at this time, leading to chronic unemployment rising at alarming rates.⁵⁹ Faced with increased economic displacement and disparity, migration to rapidly urbanizing cities on the island was the only option in the face of declining agricultural opportunities for many Puerto Ricans, unless willing to relocate to U.S. cities as well as other Caribbean countries. In large cities such as Rio Piedras, the population increased by 180 percent in the 1920's, and by 61 percent in the capital city of San Juan during the same period.⁶⁰ Scholar Carmen Whalen argues, "reflecting regional and gender dimensions of economic change and government policies...Puerto Rico witnessed an exodus from rural areas and rapid urbanization."⁶¹ For those unable to contract labor on the island however, movement to U.S. cities became a viable alternative and travel began to increase in the years following the Depression.

By 1910, Puerto Ricans on the mainland numbered about 2,000 with the population growing to over 45,000 by 1930, thirteen years after gaining citizenship via the Jones Act.⁶² The Jones Act contributed to the freedom of movement between Puerto Rico and the United States but it did not define the migration that was merely beginning to unfold. Following the wave of migrants engaged in the independence movement of Puerto Rico, subsequent patterns were characterized by the economic and political

⁵⁹ Sánchez Korrol, *From Colonia*, 27.

⁶⁰ History Task Force, Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, *Labor Migration Under Capitalism: The Puerto Rican Experience*, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979), 111.

⁶¹ Carmen Teresa Whalen, *From Puerto Rico to Philadelphia: Puerto Rican Workers and Postwar Economies*, (Philadelphia: Temple University, 2001), 39.

⁶² Jose Oscar Alers, Clara Rodríguez, and Virginia Sánchez Korrol, "The Puerto Rican Struggle to Survive in the United States", in *Historical Perspectives on Puerto Rican Survival in the United States*, ed. by Clara E. Rodríguez and Virginia Sánchez Korrol. (Princeton: Markus Wiener, 1980), 2.

changes occurring within both spaces. Early works on Puerto Rican migration to the U.S. sought to attribute the movement as a response to the social ills perpetuated by the islanders themselves, such as a need for “welfare dependency” and of course the perceived overpopulation of the island, ignoring the economic factors contributing to the need for migration. Anthropologist Oscar Lewis argued, “although economic factors such as low income and unemployment, created an atmosphere conducive to migration we found that non-economic factors were actually more important.”⁶³ These “non-economic” factors, of course, held Puerto Ricans responsible for the complicated political and economic situation on the island although they had little control of the island’s future, as the United States intensified its presence there.

The economic policies developed for the island, such as the Chardon Plan and Operation Bootstrap, were closely tied to the struggle for political power between the U.S. government and local Puerto Rican political groups, and contributed to the mass migration of Puerto Ricans.⁶⁴ Scholars have sought to attribute the overpopulation of the island as a push factor of Puerto Ricans to northern U.S. cities. Some have argued that this “excess” in population was partially tied to the health and medical improvements on the island following U.S. occupation, as the needs of islanders not been met under Spanish rule due to limited resources.⁶⁵ In supporting what historian Virginia Sánchez Korrol refers to as “the over population theory”, the U.S. and Puerto Rican government

⁶³ Oscar Lewis, *La Vida*, (New York: Vintage, 1965), xxxvii-xxxviii.

⁶⁴ Carmen T. Whalen argues, “A key component of the industrialization program, known as *Manos a la Obra* or Operation Bootstrap, was ‘industrialization by invitation.’ Tax exemptions, along with low wages, were to attract U.S. investors to Puerto Rico.” (See “colonialism, Citizenship, and the Making of the Puerto Rican Diaspora: An Introduction,” in *The Puerto Rican Diaspora*, edited by Carmen Teresa Whalen and Victor Vazquez-Hernandez, (Philadelphia: Temple, 2005), 27.

⁶⁵ Sánchez Korrol, *From Colonia*, 18.

engaged in conversations “to repeatedly recommend emigration as a temporary measure” in the early part of the 20th century.⁶⁶ This concern with the perceived overpopulation of the island prompted such a migration “as a strategy for ameliorating the demographic pressures allegedly hampering Puerto Rico’s economic development.”⁶⁷ According to a report published by the Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños:

Between 1898 and 1940 the Island population did in fact nearly double, but the annual rate of increase only rose slightly. Death rates declined very slowly until 1940, migration played only a small role in keeping numbers down although, as has been seen, basic patterns of movement and key enclaves in the United States and elsewhere were established... There was no really impressive surge in natural increase until well into the 1940’s, and it was not until then that a significant extension of sanitary and health services into rural areas began, despite easy assertions about great strides in this connection during early decades of U.S. occupation. At the same time that massive migration was seen as the immediate solution, there was considerable skepticism that the necessary volume of outward movement could be achieved, and so education and birth control were looked to as important additional measure.⁶⁸ (See Table 1)⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Ibid., 18.

⁶⁷ Gina Pérez, *Near Northwest Side Story: Migration, Displacement, and Puerto Rican Families* (Berkeley: University of California, 2004), 8.

⁶⁸ *History Task Force*, 120-121.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 121

Table 1 Population of Puerto Rico and the Annual Rate of Population Increase for the Census Years 1899-1960

Year	Population
1899	953,243
1910	1,118,012
1920	1,299,809
1930	1,543,013
1940	1,869,255
1950	2,210,703
1960	2,349,544

Gender and Migration

Ideologies surrounding this notion of overpopulation became an economic narrative very much tied to Puerto Rican women. The sexual habits of working class Puerto Rican women, and more importantly their reproductive practices, became intertwined with discourses not only centered on economic policies and poverty, but nationalist ideas on the island.⁷⁰ As seen throughout the world, the bodies of Third World Women become sites of negotiation in which political and economic agendas come to be waged, as has been the case for Puerto Rican women. The perception of others has been that Puerto Rican women were in need of reproductive intervention in

⁷⁰ In the 1930's, Puerto Rican Nationalist movement leader Pedro Albizu Campos claimed, "The brazenness of the Yankee invaders has reached the extreme of trying to profane Puerto Rico motherhood; of trying to invade the very insides of nationality. When our women lose the transcendental and divine concept that they are not only mothers of their children but mothers of all future generations of Puerto Rico, if they come to lose that feeling, Puerto Rico will disappear within a generation." Quoted in Laura Briggs, *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 76.

order to transform these seemingly backward women, and thus facilitate economic and social change. It was assumed that these working class women, “required contraceptives differently from those used by affluent or U.S. women”, with programs encouraging simple contraception, including “jelly and foam, and later other methods, including sterilization and ultimately the pill and IUD as well, that gave physicians and population control workers increasing control over working class women’s reproduction.”⁷¹ As insular officials encouraged migration to U.S. cities, women were “exported” through labor contracts, becoming yet again unknowing participants in both governments’ quest to transform the economic future of the island. This is critical to our understanding of the overall migration history from the island to the United States.

The migratory experience of Puerto Ricans (beginning in the 1930’s) was well orchestrated by U.S political and economic interest both on and off the island, as the population of Puerto Ricans in the United States began to increase incredibly. This shift in population to U.S. cities was very much shaped by American imperialism on the island, creating a viable work force eager to emigrate as they became displaced by such capitalist ventures. Felix Padilla reminds us:

Puerto Rico’s economic conditions were such that thousands could not survive locally.... The overflowing surplus in the Island, unable to find jobs in the cities or to survive in the countryside, was drawn to the United States to seek employment... The Puerto Rican worker became attracted to the idea of migration primarily by its promise of an immediate improvement in his material life.⁷²

The increase in job opportunity, governmental intervention, and the availability of relatively inexpensive and convenient transportation, helped lead to the growth of the Puerto Rican population in cities such as New York and Philadelphia. During the years

⁷¹ Briggs, 140.

⁷² F. Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, 53.

after WWI, the United States was faced by a shortage of semi-skilled and unskilled workers as immigration reform acts such as the Emergency Quota Act of 1921 (sometimes referred to as the Johnson Act), seriously limited the viable work force entering the United States.⁷³ This of course initiated the movement of not only Puerto Ricans, but also Southern African Americans to northern cities to ease the labor shortage in the expanding industrialization sectors. Newly transplanted Puerto Ricans found themselves no longer limited to employment in agriculture, but entering other industries such as garment manufacturing, light factory work, hotel and restaurant business, cigar making, domestic service and laundries.⁷⁴ The increase in migration to the New York area increased the formation of Puerto Rican ethnic enclaves, as was the case for earlier waves of European immigrants. But although Puerto Ricans had been exposed to an “American way of life” for many years, on the island, their inclusion within U.S. society was not an easy transition. A 1936 study entitled “Reactions of Puerto Rican Children in New York City to Psychological Tests,” recommended:

1. That steps should be taken to prevent the immigration into this country of individuals of subnormal mentality from all nations, since these individuals become an educational, social and financial burden to the community, as well as the victims of their own inadequacy in our complex environment.
2. That the projected grant of statehood to Puerto Rico should be held in abeyance, pending a thorough and impartial investigation of economic and social conditions on the island, and on the mental qualifications of its inhabitants.⁷⁵

⁷³ For more on the Emergency Quota Act, please see Ashley S. Timmer and Jeffrey G. Williamson’s “Immigration Policy Prior to the 1930’s: Labor markets, Policy Interactions, and Globalization Backlas,” *Population and Development Review*, vol. 24, Issue 4, Dec. 1998, 739-771.

⁷⁴ Sánchez Korrol, 29.

⁷⁵ “Puerto Rican Children: Results of Group Study Here Intended to Apply Locally,” *New York Times*, February, 19, 1936, pg. 18.

Puerto Ricans settling in New York and other U.S. cities found their lives, from where to live, what employment opportunities were available, and their educational future, dictated by the racial ideologies in the U.S., which delegated Puerto Ricans to a status of racialized others, perpetual foreigners despite their status as U.S. citizens.

The New York Puerto Ricans

Like other ethnic groups now populating U.S. cities, Puerto Rican migrants faced similar problems while adjusting to life in New York. Migrants from the island tended to physically situate themselves in established ethnic enclaves, alongside not only European immigrants, but with African Americans as well. Elena Padilla argued, “There is although, a stronger similarity between the Puerto Rican in New York and the Mexican in Chicago insofar as there is a great similarity in their background and both share to much extent ‘color visibility,’ which is a sociological phenomenon demanding a type of adjustment not required by American society from most European immigrants.”⁷⁶ This exact “color visibility” often placed Puerto Ricans in New York in conflict with African Americans even for those Afro-Puerto Ricans now migrating to the United States, as they found themselves almost in competition for the already scarce resources afforded to communities of color. As Ruth Glasser argues, “The day –to-day tensions between African-Americans and Puerto Ricans were undoubtedly exacerbated by the struggles of nonwhite *boricuas* to come to terms with the monolithic “Negro” identity imposed upon them from the outside by a racist North American society.”⁷⁷ Puerto Ricans were now

⁷⁶ E. Padilla, 50. Padilla later argues that because of this precise “solidarity” with Mexican’s in Chicago, Puerto Rican’s will “tend to be Mexicanized” (98).

⁷⁷ Ruth Glasser, *My Music is My Flag: Puerto Rican Musicians and Their New York Communities, 1917-1940*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995),72-73

thrust into a U.S. society which came to view them as non-white, expecting them to socially and physically (as in residentially) align themselves with “other” racial and ethnic groups.⁷⁸ Although Puerto Ricans (on the island) were not devoid of color consciousness or prejudice, racial categories were quite different that in the United States, and often functioned along a “white to black” continuum very much depended on one’s phenotype.⁷⁹ In Puerto Rico, argued Elena Padilla, race was not easily understood, and not always “necessarily linked to the biological implication of race or even to color visibility.”⁸⁰ However, racial implications were often times tied to a person’s economic status on the island, where a seemingly “mulatto” individual could gain a sense of social mobility if they brought capital to the table.⁸¹

Puerto Ricans sought to distinguish themselves from other communities of color, in particular African Americans, in order to render themselves free from the racial discrimination faced by other groups now living in the U.S. Yet, Puerto Ricans found themselves marginalized along the very color lines affecting African Americans and other groups as is evident with the physical space they occupied and labor opportunities allowed them. They had the additional challenge, however, because of their linguistic differences. Thus not surprisingly, cases of violence against Puerto Ricans began to

⁷⁸ Ruth Glasser discusses the racial segregation present in New York at the time, and the social stigma faced by Puerto Ricans who were assumed to be or labeled as African American. Signs posted on many buildings in New York City vehemently relayed the sentiment regarding Puerto Ricans as they read, “No dogs, No Negroes, and No Spanish.” Thus the most viable option for Puerto Ricans was to residentially align themselves with African Americans or begin to form their own enclaves. See Glasser, 72-73.

⁷⁹ Ruth Glasser, *My Music is My Flag: Puerto Rican Musicians and Their New York Communities, 1917-1940*, 53.

⁸⁰ Elena Padilla, 35.

⁸¹ Elena Padilla eloquently reiterates the varying racial politics on the Island, including a thorough discussion on terminology utilized to label individuals based on where they fall on the racial/economic spectrum on the island, as well as their physical location (rural v. urban).

surface in New York City by the mid-1930's, marking their presence within the city and complicating their early years.⁸² Further challenging their own claim to space within the city and their status as U.S. citizens, was the insistence of the media and other groups on referring to Puerto Ricans as deportable, non-citizens.⁸³

In the years following the Depression, Puerto Ricans in New York faced high unemployment rates, with the Department of Labor working to place newly arrived migrants in the few labor opportunities available between 1930-1936. During this period 1,977 individuals found employment in fields ranging from construction, laundry, hotels, restaurants, as well as working as carpenters, porters, tailors, and other jobs.⁸⁴ The availability of jobs was not only scarce for the working class segment of the population however, as those Puerto Ricans who had sought and obtained a college education in New York and joined the professional sector, similarly suffered from the limited employment opportunities, yet migrants contended that the alternative (returning to Puerto Rico) was not an appealing choice.⁸⁵ According to a 1947 *New York Times* article, "many Puerto Ricans regard New York as a haven from poverty, poor nutritional diet and tropical disease."⁸⁶ Women, now also increasing their numbers in New York, found themselves employed primarily as domestics, needleworkers, handsewers, garment workers, factory workers, laundry workers, stenographers typists, office helpers, waitresses and counter girls.⁸⁷ For many of these women, it would be the first opportunity for employment outside the home, away from their domestic duties and a chance at

⁸² "2 Beaten By Strangers: Puerto Ricans, In Hospitals, Know No Reasons for Attacks," *New York Times*, December 20, 1936, 6.

⁸³ "Puerto Ricans to Be Deported," *New York Times*, March 24, 1937, 5.

⁸⁴ Sánchez Korrol, 32.

⁸⁵ "Migrants Relate Tales of Hardship," *New York Times*, July 20, 1940, 21.

⁸⁶ "Puerto Rico Seeks to Curb Migration," *New York Times*, February 23, 1947, 20.

⁸⁷ Elena Padilla, 52.

independence, although I agree with Carmen T. Whalen's assertion that paid work is not something discovered by women in their new host countries, as Puerto Rican women historically contributed to Puerto Rico's and her family's economic situation through their participation in very gendered labor opportunities on the island.⁸⁸

As expected, the development of Puerto Rican enclaves in New York City was intricately tied to the availability of employment opportunities for this community of course, but it similarly allowed for Puerto Ricans to begin to participate in their own cultural practices with other Puerto Ricans. The maintenance of Puerto Rican costumes, culture, and subsequently, identities had to coexist with the existence of other immigrant and ethnic groups (such as Italians, Jews, and African Americans) as their presence in communities such as Harlem, Manhattan, the Bronx, and Brooklyn began to grow. This influx into already established communities was very much fueled by a need for cheap housing, accessibility to shopping sites (aiding in the retention of their ethnic ties), as well as reliable transportation to their respective labor markets, and independent of direct local government intervention as to where these migrants were regulated to establish themselves. With the emerging Chicago population in the 1940's, evidence suggest an interference, however, by city officials at times dictating just where Puerto Ricans were set to reside and with whom they would interact with by virtue of their settlement patterns. Patricia Sexton claimed, "though conflict is still open, Puerto Ricans are closer in life style, religion, and attitudes to their Italian rather than their Negro neighbors."⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Carmen T. Whalen, 5. Whalen argues, "In addition, attention to women's labor migrations is pivotal in understanding the increased migration of the postwar era, migrants' destinations, their economic strategies, and their efforts to recreate their household economies."

⁸⁹ Patricia Cayo Sexton, "Neighbors—Puerto Rican, Negro, Italian..." in *Puerto Rican Children in Mainland Schools*, ed. Eugene Bucchioni and Francesco Cordasco, (Metuchen, N.J: Scarecrow Press, 1968), 157.

This need to disassociate themselves from African Americans stemmed from an early awareness by Puerto Ricans in the ways race and racist ideologies were embedded in every aspect of U.S. life from housing, health care, labor, and of course education. Their tendency to seek housing in historically ethnic and poor sections of the cities, resulting in Puerto Ricans suffering from housing and health problems in these already overcrowded communities. The city's Welfare Commissioner in the 1940's, however, warned against publicity on the Puerto Rican situation, although reports of up to 23 Puerto Ricans residing in four small rooms in one Harlem place began to surface.⁹⁰ In another location, *The New York Times* reported on fifteen residents occupying a 2.5 room apartment in the same community, with a day school for ten children operating on the premises.⁹¹ However a report by the Welfare Council of New York on Puerto Ricans maintained that overcrowded living conditions was not a strange experience for them and will continue their migration to the mainland for the chance at better work, wages, and food.⁹² One report estimated that by the late 1940's between 60,000 and 80, 000 Puerto Ricans held residencies in the East Harlem area centered at 110th Street and Madison Avenue, in dilapidated units, where landlords were very pressed against making costly repairs.⁹³ These inadequacies in the lives of Puerto Ricans led the Welfare Council of New York to call a conference to deal with the hardships and "unmet needs in neighborhoods where the concentration of Puerto Ricans, already great, was daily increasing."⁹⁴

⁹⁰ "Aid Planned Here For Puerto Ricans," *New York Times*, January 12, 1947, 25.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² *The Puerto Rican Experience, The Report of Committee of Puerto Ricans in New York City of the Welfare Council of New York City*, February 1948, 10.

⁹³ *The Puerto Rican Experience*, 18.

⁹⁴ *Puerto Ricans in New York City: The report of the Committee on Puerto Ricans in New York City of the Welfare Council of New York City*, 9.

New York's Puerto Rican population increased from 45,973 in 1930, to 62,281 by 1940, with the overwhelming majority of those residing in New York City.⁹⁵ As has been the case in the U.S., (im)migrants have historically filled the need for low-wage laborers in many sectors, thus susceptible to exploitation because of not only their "new" status but also their linguistic limitations and economic condition prior to and following their migration. Puerto Ricans assumed the role of the underemployed and even as an industrial reserve army during times of labor strikes and shortages during and after times of war. Demographic studies on this group of migrants inform us that although skills and capabilities influenced the jobs available to Puerto Ricans, much of what was allowed them was very much affected by language limitations, prejudices, as well as institutional barriers such as school systems, which inadequately served the community. The Migration Division Office in New York City played a critical role in educating new migrants about the conditions in the city, as well as assessing the ways in which Puerto Ricans could best make contributions in the labor market.⁹⁶ Similarly, New York's Welfare Council maintained that the migration of Puerto Ricans to the United States must be an "organized" process between both the United States and Puerto Rico governments, with the new host cities allowed sufficient time to plan in order to avoid or alleviate overcrowding issues.⁹⁷ The Council also sought ways to protect Puerto Ricans against discriminatory practices that they saw as an unfortunate attitude still prevalent within U.S. culture.⁹⁸ By extension, the educational experiences of Puerto Ricans in New York mirrored the labor and housing experiences of the era: limited resources, within a system

⁹⁵ Sanchez Korrol, 213.

⁹⁶ Sánchez Korrol, 35.

⁹⁷ *Welfare Council of New York City*, 10-11.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

ill-prepared and ill-informed to assist the population. According to accounts compiled by the Welfare Council's Subcommittee on Education, New York City public school teachers found Puerto Rican students to be slow learners in regards to their acquisition of English, and unprepared to enter their age appropriate grade level even when their English seemed sufficient, in comparison to their European-born counterparts.⁹⁹ Further, this very committee came to question the pedagogical techniques and qualifications of teachers on the island as a cause for the educational inadequacies seen in Puerto Rican students enrolling in New York schools. With the population of Puerto Rican students in Manhattan's public schools growing to over 12,000 by 1947, the committee sought ways to improve their learning of English with experimental teaching including one on one teaching, and implementing a "big brother and big sister program" linking English-speaking students with English learners.¹⁰⁰ The Committee also recommended the establishment of "mothers clubs" in order to assist parents in an understanding "of child care in an urban community, consumer problems, nutrition, home making and other subjects designed to strengthen the home."¹⁰¹

Although not referred as such, the aims and services outlined by the Committee mirrored the contemporaneous Americanization projects now underway in Southwest communities directed at transforming Mexican families by focusing on their home lives, particularly the transmission of "culture" through women of color. By referring to their parent organizations as "mothers clubs", women (or mothers) again came to be tied to the successes or failures of the Puerto Rican community. As scholar George J. Sánchez

⁹⁹ Ibid., 34.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 36-41.

¹⁰¹ Welfare Council of New York, 42.

illuminates on the similar role of Mexican women in Americanization projects, Americanizers hoped to impact the second generation through a woman's role in transforming family life and values to mirror that of the dominant group. He notes, "the most potent weapon used to imbue the foreigner with American values was the English language."¹⁰² Women here then became not only infused with the responsibility of bringing the population to its full potential as active participants in their assimilation process (through the acquisition of the English language and success in school), but through their participation as not just "mothers" but as workers, they become agents in their community's economic, labor, and migratory history.

Puerto Ricans in Chicago, 1940-1966

Puerto Ricans have been visible across the United States in the early years of the 20th century (with forty five states reporting the presence of Puerto Ricans by 1920), with of course the New York population the site of various studies. Critical to my own work is an understanding of the population migrating, residing, and flourishing in New York, as the labor history and early educational experiences/opportunities of Puerto Ricans in New York speak to the way this population came to be incorporated into Chicago communities. The relationship between New York and Chicago is seen in the early attempts by city officials to encourage migration to Chicago in the hopes of alleviating the concerns now linked to the growing New York presence, and allowed Chicago to approach the situation for Puerto Ricans there in a different manner. As one *Chicago Tribune* article illustrates, after faced with frustration with language barriers and life in

¹⁰² George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945*, (New York: Oxford Press, 1993), 100.

New York, “many Puerto Ricans come to Chicago feeling resentment.”¹⁰³ According to a 1960 report composed in Chicago by the Mayor’s Committee on New Residents, the migration of Puerto Ricans to the mainland was not only due in fact by the social and economic conditions of the Islanders, post World War II, but as a “reflection of the greater self-confidence of Puerto Ricans as American War-veterans whose aspirations and ambitions could not be satisfied any longer by the limited opportunities on the island.”¹⁰⁴ Puerto Ricans as seen by city officials and social agencies, were to be welcomed as “fellow Americans.” Publicly the city of Chicago welcomed Puerto Ricans as new residents, who of course came with citizenship rights, but the ways in which Puerto Ricans came to be marginalized within the housing, labor, and educational market clearly spoke to the racial politics present in the city prior to 1966. Puerto Ricans were initially welcomed, discussed, and then racialized through media and social agencies accounts in Chicago, which contributes to the development of what Felix Padilla refers to as a “Puerto Rican consciousness.” With a growing population, Puerto Ricans became aware of the overall limitations placed on them within the city, as labor and housing opportunities became scarce causing the community to question their position within the city. The relationship between the city and the community became strained, altering the way in which this group was acted upon by the city of Chicago.

Early Puerto Rican scholar Elena Padilla comparatively studied the migratory experiences of Puerto Ricans to Chicago in her 1947 master’s thesis identifying two distinct migrations of this group to the city. The “old migration,” as Padilla referred to them, settled in already established ethnic (Polish and other European) communities in

¹⁰³ “Puerto Rican Culture Brought Into Schools,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 14, 1966.

¹⁰⁴ “Puerto Rican Americans in Chicago”, Mayor’s Committee on New Residents- Chicago Commission on Human Relations, Chicago, IL, June 1960. Chicago History Museum Archives.

Chicago with census reports in 1920 numbering Puerto Ricans in Illinois at 110. By this time however, the population of Puerto Ricans in New York City neared 8,000.¹⁰⁵ The “old migration” (those migrating to the city prior to the 1940’s) of Puerto Ricans to Chicago were scattered through out the city and consisted of many native- born Puerto Ricans, their non- Puerto Rican spouses, and their children. By 1940, the population of Puerto Ricans in the city climbed to 240, followed by a rapid increase as employment agencies began contract labor programs in agreement with the Puerto Rico Department of Labor.¹⁰⁶ The recruitment of Puerto Ricans to Chicago was in part a result of growing tensions present in New York’s already established Puerto Rican community, as both the Puerto Rican and local city governments, as well as the Migration Division Office in New York and Chicago, began an intense public relations campaign aimed at encouraging migration to the Midwest. According to Gina Pérez, unlike their New York counterparts, Chicago Puerto Ricans were praised for their ability to adapt or integrate to their new environment. Local papers, such as the *Chicago Tribune* and *Chicago Daily News*, regularly ran stories in the 1940’s and early 50’s speaking to their “gentleness” and “docility”. These “loving people”, stated journalist Donald Janson’s in his *New York Times* article entitled “Chicago Good City to Puerto Ricans”, have adjusted to the new environment without strife.¹⁰⁷ For many Puerto Ricans, word from their relatives already settled in New York of the declining number of manufacturing employment opportunities also helped facilitate the move to Chicago.

¹⁰⁵ Sanchez-Korrol, 28.

¹⁰⁶ For more, please see E. Padilla, 1947; F. Padilla, 1987.

¹⁰⁷ Donald Janson, “Chicago Good City to Puerto Ricans,” *New York Times*, June 4, 1961.

Many Puerto Ricans were initially recruited to Chicago as foundry workers, track workers for railroad companies, but eventually settled within other industrial jobs once their contracts ended or were terminated. However, beginning in the early 1940's, Puerto Rican women were also part of a labor recruitment program that brought this population to the city to work as domestic workers for affluent Chicago families. Simultaneously, daughters of Puerto Rico's *own* affluent families on the island were attending the University of Chicago, and crossed paths with the domestic workers now also in the city. Because of the limited employment opportunities allowed to Puerto Ricans, as well as encouragement by city officials, they began to settle in or near the center of the city. With a growing labor force in the city, accusations began to surface regarding the deplorable conditions under which Puerto Ricans were forced to work. An organization of students from the University of Chicago, headed by the daughter of then Puerto Rican Senate President Luis Muñoz Marín, investigated claims by these workers, culminating in a report released to the Chicago media as well as Illinois, Puerto Rico, and local Chicago governments. The employment agency was accused of not only forcing the Puerto Rican workers to live in deplorable conditions, but of deducting large sums of money from their wages, furthering lowering their standard of living.¹⁰⁸ In 1946 alone, nearly 400 Puerto Rican "girls" were brought to work as *domesticas* for Chicago families, earning \$60 month, with deductions taken for not only housing but for transportation from and to Puerto Rico. The Mayor's Committee on New Residents claimed the importing of young Puerto Rican women accomplished two things: "it brought one of the of the most attractive 'products' of Puerto Rican culture to Chicago and after some of these girls

¹⁰⁸ "Plight of Hired Puerto Ricans Starts Dispute," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 11, 1946, 30.

became established in the city they caused many of their relatives and friends on the island to follow them and settle here.”¹⁰⁹ But by 1947 the employment agency ceased the “importing” of girls as problems began to arise regarding the lifestyle they allegedly engaged in while in Chicago, with no regard to the agency’s unscrupulous labor tactics.¹¹⁰ According to one article, one civic organization “indicated that some of the girls, because they cannot speak English, were lonely and were frequenting Spanish-speaking night spots, where they fell into or were enticed into prostitution.”¹¹¹ The works of Maura Toro-Morn, Gina Pérez, and Lilia Fernández inform of not only the implication of a deeply gendered migration to Chicago, but their works inform us of the involvement of both governments and the employment agencies who recruited the women in controlling the many aspects of the *domesticas* lives now in the U.S.¹¹² This interaction between the working class women and university students made gains for both groups, as the unethical working conditions of the *domesticas* became the subject of labor disputes and changes within the city. Similarly, for those women attending the University of Chicago, such as scholar Elena Padilla, it provided material of sorts to pursue intellectual projects. I argue these initial events in the lives of Puerto Rican women in Chicago (or

¹⁰⁹ Mayor’s Committee on New Residents, 17. For a thorough discussion on the gendered labor migration of Puerto Rican women in Chicago see, Gina Perez, *Near North Westside Story*. Lilia Fernandez, “Latina/o Migration and Community Formation in Postwar Chicago: Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Gender, and Politics, 1945-1975,” Fernandez eloquently lays out many stipulations on the lives of these *domesticas* as they become part of the labor history of this community. In many ways it was not merely their labor or work lies limited by physical contracts, but also their social lives through their participation in afternoon tea parties, and in religious groups.

¹¹⁰ “Agency to Stop Importing Girls For Housework”, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 17, 1947, pg. 12.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² See Maura I. Toro-Morn, “Boricuas en Chicago: Gender and Class in the Migration and Settlement of Puerto Ricans,” in *The Puerto Rican Diaspora: Historical Perspectives*, 128-150.

“genealogies of empowerment”¹¹³) set the stage for the subsequent social activism and civic engagement that came to define the lives of Puerto Ricans in the city in the 1960’s and 1970’s, in particular surrounding issues of schooling and educational equality.

The Welfare Council of Metropolitan Chicago

In the early 1950’s the Welfare Council of Metropolitan Chicago was urged by various agencies and businesses, including the Board of Education, the Chicago Council Against Racial and Religious Discrimination, and the Community Fund of Chicago, to conduct a study on how to better serve the growing Puerto Rican community in Chicago. Within the Welfare Council itself, the Committee on Integration of Spanish Speaking Citizenry maintained that much needed research on the problem of integrating Spanish-speaking migrants into the community, in particular Puerto Ricans, would benefit both the city and this growing migrant group. The council was well aware of the “unscrupulous” employment practices in the recruitment of Puerto Ricans to the city, and aided in ensuring the local and state governments would also have an avid interest in the treatment of these new migrants.¹¹⁴ The problem of the Puerto Rican, which it argues was not new, included group tensions, the development of ghetto communities, educational difficulties because of linguistic differences, and severe housing conditions that in some

¹¹³ “Genealogies of Empowerment” is the title of a section of the book of collected essays, *Telling to Live: Latina Feminist Testimonios*, 25-26. As the editors write, “Our genealogies of empowerment draw on these early lessons as the blueprints for a thriving process of self-created and self-denied freedom and independence...For some of us bearing witness to social injustice became the catalyst for our involvement with ideas, kindled by the women who surround us.” Drawing from this allows me to make the more implicit the need for collecting the history of a community such as the Puerto Rican community in Chicago, and its people, in order to lay out a historical blueprint for future generations.

¹¹⁴ Mary A. Young memo to Robert MacRae, January 28, 1958. Welfare Council Papers, Chicago History Museum.

ways were more serious than other minority groups. According to Mary Young of the Committee on Integration of Spanish Speaking Citizenry, Puerto Ricans continued to have problems with “social personal adjustment, which manifest themselves in family breakdown, illegitimacy, and delinquency.” According to Ms. Young’s personal memos, suggestions within the Council were directed at publicly discouraging against migration, both in Chicago and Puerto Rico. Inter office correspondence revealed the sentiment of some regarding Puerto Ricans, who believed “all that they [social agencies and city officials] can do with non-residents who become dependent is to ship them back in plane lots” further stating that the committee should not make it easy for Puerto Ricans “to stay and bring others with them.”¹¹⁵ In fact, as is revealed in the work of Lilia Fernández, the notion of the welfare dependency of Puerto Ricans in Chicago was quite unfounded, as Fernández demonstrates Puerto Ricans made up less than 1% of the welfare rolls in Chicago in the mid-1950’s, and island officials continued to speak of the migrants work ethics.¹¹⁶ The presumed deportability of Puerto Ricans clearly spoke of not only the unease felt towards them by some administrators and officials, but the lack of information and understanding of Puerto Ricans within the city, as they came to be racialized as outsiders. Ms. Young argued that the Council formulate a committee to determine not only the immediate but long range problems of Puerto Ricans, as well look into the work

¹¹⁵ Ibid. For more on the direct dealing by both governments on the migratory trajectory of Puerto Ricans to Chicago see the works of Lilia Fernández, Gina Pérez, Merida Rúa, and Maura Toro Morn. The works of these scholars clearly lay out the contentious relationship between Puerto Rican migrants and local social agencies, who were quite ill-prepared to deal with Puerto Ricans, as well as misinformed on the population as well.

¹¹⁶ Lilia Fernández, 113. Fernández notes that the issues ensuing in the city are one of economic concerns, and not tied to Puerto Ricans, “but Chicago officials singled out Puerto Ricans as a burden.”(114)

done in cities such as New York, Milwaukee, and Loraine, Ohio in dealing with Puerto Ricans.¹¹⁷

The resulting 1957 Welfare Council report sought to inform the new residents on information and resources such as housing, medical, education, and so on, available to them, while also seeking to educate the migrants on how to conduct themselves in their new environment. On the report's opening page the committee stated, "We do not want to give you the impression that life will be easy in Chicago, and that everything will be pleasant. Neither do we wish to create a very pessimistic impression. We simply wish to give you the facts so that you can make decisions based on correct information."¹¹⁸ In speaking on the importance of cleanliness, the report reminded Puerto Ricans that they could no longer simply dispose of their banana peels out their window as the committee assumed was done in Puerto Rico, for if every one of Chicago's 4 million residents "threw his garbage out the window, the city would become impossible to live in within a few hours."¹¹⁹ Similarly, the Council warned against issues of overcrowding by Puerto Rican tenants, stating that when a family is renting a unit, it is generally against the law to utilize the space to house more families. However, as is evident when looking at the settlement patterns of Puerto Ricans in Chicago, Puerto Ricans found themselves residing in substandard units, in large numbers, as their opportunities for better housing and employment were severely scarce.

The Council spoke of the "exceptional educational opportunities" offered in Chicago, and further advocated for the vast resources available to Puerto Ricans to learn

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ "From the Dest of Robert H. McRae," Welfare Council of Metropolitan Chicago, April 17, 1957. Welfare Council Papers, Box 148, Folde r 148.3 Chicago History Museum.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 2.

English.¹²⁰ With its claim that “anyone who has lived in this city more than a few weeks should have learned a substantial amount of English; otherwise he must recognize that he is failing in acquiring a fundamental skill and the he will not be able to find success in work nor meet the most ordinary obligations of life.”¹²¹ The role of the Council was not necessarily to serve the newcomers or assist in their adjusting, but sought to quickly assimilate Puerto Ricans into the larger society, helping them to become acceptable citizens. By focusing on the Puerto Ricans home life (their cleanliness, grooming, food preparation, etc.), it presented an image of the Puerto Rican as a community in need of intervention, with the Council viewing itself as a guide through their troubled transition into urban life, while urging them to not fail at their “obligations of life” or perhaps their perceived obligations to the city.

Mayor’s Committee on New Residents

In the hopes of avoiding the overcrowding issues faced with New York’s Puerto Rican population, the city of Chicago consistently discouraged Puerto Ricans from forming their own *colonias* in their new city, instead guiding them to settle among various white European immigrants. Limiting their settlement patterns was believed to not only assist the population in adapting to their new environment and assimilate, but would encourage Puerto Ricans to quickly learn to communicate in English. In Chicago, Puerto Ricans were also cautioned against residing alongside other Spanish-speaking residents, in particular Mexicans, not only by Chicago city agencies but also by the

¹²⁰ Welfare Council of Metropolitan Chicago, 14.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 14.

Puerto Rico Department of Labor.¹²² White ethnic immigrants were not as welcoming of Puerto Ricans nor keen on sharing community space with them, forcing many migrants to pay exuberant rents for small living spaces in deplorable conditions, in the only areas available to them¹²³. In post-World War Two Chicago, severe housing shortages were already causing conflict between white-ethnics and the growing African American community, and came to affect the housing opportunities open to Puerto Rican migrants to the city as they came to be racialized as non-white. In a survey published in June of 1960, the Mayor's Committee on New Residents questioned non-Puerto Rican community members on their sentiments regarding Puerto Ricans. When questioned on whether the residents had seen any changes in their neighborhood since Puerto Ricans moved in, an overwhelming 62% responded they believed it had changed for the worse, citing a drop in business volume and property value as primary reasons for their discontent.¹²⁴ Another set of questions included in the survey, examined views held on several social situations (table 2)¹²⁵

What these numbers demonstrate is although so-called native Chicagoans were not necessarily against the migration and settlement of Puerto Ricans to the United States, as they now understood their status as U.S. citizens and their contributions to the work force, but it did not translate to a total embracing of these newcomers within already established communities in Chicago. It also forced Puerto Ricans in Chicago to create

¹²² Chicago Council Against Racial and Religious Discrimination, Letter to Miss Hazel Holm from Waitstill Sharp, January 23, 1951.

¹²³ In Chicago, the White ethnic community of this era consisted of predominately Irish, Polish, German, and Italian immigrants.

¹²⁴ Mayor's Committee on New Residents, 93.

¹²⁵ Information gathered from chart entitled "Social Distance between Non-Puerto Rican old Chicago Residents in Sample Area and Puerto Rican Newcomers," Mayors Committee on New Residents.

their own social networks in order to maintain a sense of cohesiveness and belonging in the city as a response to the overwhelming dissatisfaction with their presence by other inhabitants. Interestingly the study pointed out the varying contradictions regarding views held by Chicagoans on Puerto Rican newcomers. For example, although not willing to admit Puerto Ricans into their own social clubs, non-Puerto Ricans were open to the idea of intermarrying with them (36%), as the report argued “discriminatory feelings of the continental ‘neighbors’ are more intense when directed against the group (as neighbors on the same street, or membership in their social clubs) than when projected against individuals (intermarriage).”¹²⁶ It furthered argued:

Presence, degree and intensity of this pattern of prejudice does not seem to differ essentially from those found in previous immigrations, although this newcomer group has been exposed to in the ‘American way of life’ for over half a century and, in fact, has fought under the American flag in three wars and has enjoyed United States citizenship for almost two generations.¹²⁷

In a section entitled “The City Government Responds To The Puerto Rican Newcomer,” the Mayor’s Committee on New Residents articulated the troubling experiences of Puerto Ricans in dealing with dishonest business practices targeting the newcomers. One such incident led to the suicide of a 24 year old Puerto Rican migrant who was left debt-ridden “hounded by creditors,” after inadvertently entering a business contract.¹²⁸ Seeing a trend in deceitful practices, the city sought to educate the consumer on the possibility of being exploited by local businesses, encouraging the newcomers on

¹²⁶ Mayors Committee on New Residents, 98.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 98.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 99. On February 6, 1960, twenty-four year old William Rodriguez, a father of four small children, ate rat poison, feeling burdened and desperate about the pressing consumer contracts he had signed and the subsequent debt, and killed himself.

the critical importance of thoroughly reading and comprehending the contracts they signed.¹²⁹

¹²⁹ Ibid., 99.

Table 2 Questionnaire on “native” Chicagoans views on social interactions with Puerto Rican residents

Do you think that native Chicagoans you know would:	Non-Puerto Rican Chicago Neighbors in Sample Area:			
	Yes	No	Don't know	No Answer
1. Intermarry with Puerto Ricans?	28%	30%	36%	6%
2. Willingly accept Puerto Ricans as neighbors?	12%	44%	28%	16%
3. Willingly admit them to their social clubs?	0%	56%	28%	16%
4. Like to exclude Puerto Ricans from employment in their occupations?	14%	62%	22%	2%
5. Like to exclude Puerto Ricans from working and settling in this country?	20%	66%	12%	2%

The creation of organizations and agencies such as the Mayor's Committee on New Residents (developed in August of 1956) was a direct response to adjustment problems faced by newly arrived migrants (not only Puerto Ricans, but Southern Blacks, Southern Whites, and American Indians as well), who now faced unwelcoming and unsympathetic older residents while maneuvering themselves through the city. Puerto Rican newcomers found the assistance of both the Committee on New Residents and the Department of Migration Services useful tools in their incorporation and transition into urban life with the availability of resources ranging from health services, education, translation, assistance in locating and reaching family, and more importantly their use of voting rights.¹³⁰ The latter allowed Puerto Ricans to become active agents in the political and social developments in the city, and perhaps contributed to their involvement in community-based organizations seeking to alleviate the growing discontent in the city.

Puerto Rican Settlement Patterns and Community Development

The movement of Puerto Ricans into communities such as Logan Square, Lincoln Park, and West Town in the Near West Side, as well as Garfield Park, Pilsen, Hyde Park, and Woodlawn in the South Side of Chicago, was intricately linked to the "white-flight" now underway to suburban areas as well as vacancies created by disinvestment by property and business owners in these spaces.¹³¹ Many buildings in Chicago were converted into multi-unit dwellings in order to maximize profits for its owners, forcing Puerto Ricans and other families to crowd into illegal living spaces, normally deemed uninhabitable. The high cost of living for many Puerto Rican families, coinciding with

¹³⁰ Mayor's Committee on New Residents, 101.

¹³¹ Marixsa Alicea, "'*Cuando nosotros viviamos...*': Stories of Displacement and Settlement in Puerto Rican Chicago," *Centro Journal* (Fall 2001), vol. xiii, 2, 170.

the meager wages paid to them, resulted in overcrowded living conditions in already limited space. Absentee landlords transformed apartments into small kitchenettes, housing twice as many families than normally allowed in these particular buildings. In a November 24, 1963 *Chicago Tribune* article, journalists chronicled the harsh reality of one Puerto Rican family in Chicago living in a tenement nicknamed “Pork Chop Hill” for the high number of Puerto Ricans residing there.¹³² The Santiago family, consisting of Fernando and Joaquina Santiago and their three young children, paid \$90 a month for a furnished one-bedroom apartment, in a “dirty, yellow brick tenement.” At least 245 residents lived in 64 “furnished” apartments, with 125 of those living in “Pork Chop Hill” Puerto Rican, a scene unfortunately played out throughout the city as Puerto Ricans continued to battle high rental rates and racial discrimination at the hands of white landlords. Fernando Santiago had left the island in 1946, spending two years in Utah’s copper mines, then returning to Puerto Rico to marry Joaquina. As Fernando shared with the journalist:

There are 700 of us living in this area. I don’t like the way I live. I don’t think others do, either. The Woodlawn neighborhood is sort of a port of call for the Puerto Rican. He comes here to get used to the city and to get a job. As soon as he does this, he moves away. He either goes back to Puerto Rico or on to a neighborhood where landlords charge an honest amount.¹³³

Very aware of the unfair housing practices by many Chicago landlords, Fernando, as other Puerto Ricans had undoubtedly done, lamented over his options. Although city officials and local agencies were mindful of the many issues affecting Puerto Ricans, the migrants continued to face housing shortages, and after years in their own established communities now dealt with displacement. A 1960 study on housing and race in the

¹³² “The Harsh New World of Our Puerto Ricans”, *Chicago Tribune*, November 24, 1963, sec. F.

¹³³ “The Harsh New World of Our Puerto Ricans,” *Chicago Tribune*.

United States found that one in six Americans was unable to find housing in areas they desired because of racial discrimination, affecting no fewer than 27 million persons in the U.S.¹³⁴ How to provide adequate housing to the millions of newcomers (Puerto Ricans as well as other minority newcomers) in areas open to them has proven impossible according to the study, while also preserving the historical exclusion of minority groups from their white neighbors proved quite troublesome in these new communities.¹³⁵ A local study on Chicago communities reported that from 1950 to 1960, segregation in the city was higher than it had been in the last 50 years.¹³⁶ Researchers argued that although the city's minority population was paying similar rent rates as their white counterparts, they still found themselves living within their own communities, or, as was the case with Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in the early years of their migration, dispersed among other ethnics. Table 3, which follows, illustrates the dispersement of Puerto Ricans through out the city, in the six census areas inhabited most by this population in 1960¹³⁷:

Table 3 Puerto Rican Population In Six Chicago Communities

Census Area	Population
Woodlawn	2055
Lincoln Park	2181
Near north Side	2699
East Garfield Park	3676
Near West Side	6662
West Town	7948

¹³⁴ Davis McEntire, *Residence and Race: Final and Comprehensive Report To The Commission on Race And Race*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1960), 2.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ "Report Shows Segregation Rises in City," *Chicago Tribune*, December 23, 1962.

¹³⁷ Taken from Local Community Fact Book Chicago Metropolitan Area 1960, edited by Evelyn M. Kitagawa and Karl E. Taeuber (246-7)

Chicago's own status as a city of neighborhoods is deeply rooted in the racial and containment that has come to define and map out the city and its people. Speaking on Chicago's Black population, scholar Arnold R. Hirsch argues that with a renewal in migration to Chicago after World War Two, the communities areas of residency grew too small, old, and decayed for both old settlers and newcomers alike, with the city redefining racial borders after a period of calm.¹³⁸ As a unique urban center, the city has "allowed" for various ethnic and religious groups to situate themselves within their own enclaves within already limited spaces (such as seen with Chicago's Black population), either by choice or force (stemming from racial conflict), segregated from one another, while expected to work side by side in already limited labor opportunities. Puerto Rican migration and settlement in Chicago transgressed historical understandings of community formation and migration on various levels. For Puerto Ricans, who were simultaneously seen as domestic migrants and foreign outsiders, their movement into the city was further complicated by their own status as U.S. citizens, their "varying" racial identification, and more critically, the intervention by city and Puerto Rican agencies and officials in regards to their settlement. Although for some Puerto Ricans their movement into the city was aided by familial ties, subsequently softening their housing search, many others were not so lucky, and found themselves isolated and alone in their new city, relying on city agencies. The Chicago Land Clearance Commission was one such agency responsible for assisting displaced residents find new homes on the eve of redevelopment projects throughout the city.¹³⁹ The North La Salle redevelopment project left the city with the task of relocating the nearly 4,000 residents, admitting that one of their biggest problems

¹³⁸ Arnold R. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1998), 4-5.

¹³⁹ "Apartment Hunt All in Day's Work For Renewal Unit," *Chicago Tribune*, August 7, 1960.

in assisting these mostly foreign residents was the prevailing prejudice in the city, and the lack of sufficient income.¹⁴⁰ This scene continued to play out throughout neighboring communities, such as Lincoln Park, as new economic interest caused a real estate boom, rattling the young Puerto Rican community, and further fueling racial friction among Puerto Ricans and whites.

Puerto Ricans saw their claim to space challenged by this new wave of urban renewal in the Lincoln Park neighborhood, one that was very welcomed and planned by the majority white residents and city officials. In early 1960 the community buzzed with the news of the nearly \$300,000 allocated to Lincoln Park for the creation of a redevelopment plan, along with the promise of millions more for its undertaking in the area.¹⁴¹ As one local headline proclaimed, although Lincoln Park was “the new home of the pub and boutique, an area of coach lamps and filigree...it’s also the site of time-worn facades- and the anger of the poor.”¹⁴² Anger, of course, stemmed from the loss of homes and businesses for over two thousand individuals, and to further fuel this anger, the attempts to earmark prime vacant land for the building of tennis clubs as opposed to public housing for needy families (primarily Puerto Rican and black).¹⁴³ The small Puerto Rican enclave there refused to leave their community easily, with groups such as the Young Lords, a former Chicago street gang which transformed itself into a community organization in 1967, preparing to lead the struggle against community displacement and

¹⁴⁰ “Apartment Hunt All in Day’s Work For Renewal Unit.”

¹⁴¹ “Suggest Cutback in Urban Renewal Plan,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 18, 1960 and “Revised Plan For Renewal Agreed Upon,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 17, 1960.

¹⁴² “Big noise from Lincoln Park,” *Chicago Tribune*, November 2, 1969.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

gentrification.¹⁴⁴ Interestingly, the local high school in Lincoln Park at the time, Waller High School, drew more than half of its enrollment from black neighborhoods, but as the community demographics shifted, local leaders sought and won the building of a new “magnet” school, focusing on the arts and communications, to replace Waller. School issues in Lincoln Park went deeper than the need for a new building for as one community member eloquently stated, “I don’t give a damn about a magnet school...what the hell is happening these days, that you’ve got to get a new building in order to justify quality education.”¹⁴⁵ Just who the school aimed to attract seemed clear to community members, with many building owners choosing to profit and sell their property to developers, evicting working class residents thus pushing them to new communities.¹⁴⁶ Redevelopment in communities such as Lincoln Park, as well as the expansion of the University of Illinois into the Near Westside, continued to displace Puerto Rican families in the 1960’s. Their movement into Near North West side neighborhoods such as Humboldt Park, Hermosa, and Logan Square helped establish community organizations, centers, and schools catering to Puerto Ricans and their needs. Humboldt Park not only became the center of Puerto Rican life in the city for years to

¹⁴⁴ Felix Padilla, in *Puerto Rican Chicago*, thoroughly discusses the urban renewal of Lincoln Park. In the chapter entitled “Organizational Response to Ethnic Oppression”, Padilla examines the various economic policies initiated by the white community in Lincoln Park, which aimed at alienating and pushing out people of color, in particular Puerto Ricans. Padilla further chronicles the attempts made by the Young Lords and church organizations to refute urban renewal and its subsequent displacement of working class people, including attempts by local organization within that decade to force the city of Chicago and developers to build affordable public housing as part of their urban renewal project.

¹⁴⁵ “Big noise from Lincoln Park,” *Chicago Tribune*, November 2, 1969. Chapter three of my dissertation will speak more on the fight for school justice in Chicago.

¹⁴⁶ Gina Perez tells us of one particular family, Juan and Carmen de Jesus, who found themselves evicted from their homes on several occasions, forcing them westward to Humboldt Park, in search of affordable housing (See the chapter “Gentrification and The Politics of Place” in *The Near Northwest Side Story*)

come, but unfortunately also a space in which Puerto Ricans would come to be racialized as a criminal element and face police brutality.¹⁴⁷ The Humboldt Park community, in particular the Division Street area, quickly became the center of Puerto Rican life and cultural identity in Chicago, after years of inadvertent transient behavior, a space in which Puerto Ricans created a sense of community cohesiveness, which I argue was needed after their previous experiences in Chicago.

With its population surpassing 32,000 by 1960, Puerto Ricans also saw their discontent within and with the city grow.¹⁴⁸ For many, their unfamiliarity with the English language worsened relations with policemen who often grew frustrated with the Puerto Rican “foreigners.” In the Welfare Council’s 1957 report, the agency informed Puerto Ricans that Chicago police resembled those they were familiar with in Puerto Rico, stating that police were “cordial and helpful to those who comply with the law.” The decade also saw Puerto Ricans facing a lack of Spanish-speaking service workers, high infant mortality rates and incidences of preventable diseases (coupled by lack of adequate health care), increased unemployment rates, educational inequalities, and of course police brutality.¹⁴⁹ On the day of the first Puerto Rican Day parade in Chicago in 1966, community frustrations inevitably erupted as a white policeman, Patrolman

¹⁴⁷ Gina Pérez argues that as Humboldt Park comes to mean “Puerto Rican” in Chicago, Puerto Ricans social and economic opportunities are quite limited by these racial/ethnic and spatial signifiers. (See chapter “Know Your Fellow Citizen From Puerto Rico” in Gina Pérez’s *The Near Northwest Side Story*)

¹⁴⁸ For more detailed information on the population, please see Local Community Fact Book, Chicago Metropolitan Area 1960, Evelyn M. Kitagawa and Karl E. Taeuber, editors. Some, including then director of the migration division of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, William Muñiz, argued that the number of Puerto Ricans in the Chicago should be higher. But “The census did not include tracts where there were less than 400 Puerto Ricans living there”, putting the figure at about 65,000 according to his estimates. (See “Commonwealth Office Helps Puerto Rican New Arrivals, Chicago Tribune, August 27, 1964.)

¹⁴⁹ Ramos-Zayas, *National Performances*, 52.

Thomas Munyon, shot and wounded a young Puerto Rican man, Aracelis Cruz.

According to a *Chicago Defender* article, the incident erupted following a police call to investigate gang activity near the Milwaukee Avenue and Division Street area of the city.¹⁵⁰ Munyon found himself followed by Cruz who allegedly held a gun to the officer, resulting in Munyon drawing his own weapon and wounding Cruz in the leg. Almost immediately following the shooting, a crowd ensued, burning several police vehicles.

Following the shooting on June 12, 1966, the intersection of Damen Avenue and Division Street became the initial site of a grim clash between Puerto Rican residents and policemen, leaving 19 people hurt during the first day of unrest, with both civilians and policemen injured by bricks, bottles, and other debris thrown by the ensuing crowd.¹⁵¹ Police presence in West Town and Humboldt Park intensified for two days following the shooting, as unrest continued, leading to the wounding of seven civilians at the hands of Chicago Police, as well as numerous arrests.¹⁵² Community leaders accused Chicago police of not aiding in quieting the rioters, urging the city to allow local leaders to address the friction within community in order to restore order, with Puerto Rican residents demanding, "Police go home."¹⁵³ The looting and damage to area, locally owned businesses gave a visual account of just how tensions between community members and the city had escalated, with both sides shifting responsibility to the other. By June 15th, Mayor Daley met with city officials and community representatives to help bring calm, stating "All of us are concerned with the safety and well being of our children

¹⁵⁰ "Shooting Angers Crowd, Patrol Car Burned," *Chicago Daily Defender*, June 13, 1966. Felix Padilla's *Puerto Rican Chicago* offers one of the earlier, detailed accounts of the uprising in his chapter, "Evolution and Resolution of Conflict."

¹⁵¹ "Burn Cops' Cars; 35 Held," *Chicago Tribune*, June 13, 1966.

¹⁵² "7 Shot in New Disorder," *Chicago Tribune*, June 14, 1966.

¹⁵³ Donald Janson, "7 Shot in New Chicago Riot as Settlement Efforts Fail," *New York Times*, June 14, 1966.

and young people...it makes it undoubtedly important that all of us exercise the greatest diligence in keeping our children and young adults off the streets and near their homes.”¹⁵⁴ In the weeks following the events local leaders worked with community members leading a protest march to city hall to present Daley with a list of demands that protesters sought to alleviate the needs and concerns of Puerto Ricans.¹⁵⁵

Ironically, the Chicago Commission on Human Relations had recently conducted a study of the Humboldt Park and West Town area, finding that “conditions in the neighborhood were serene.”¹⁵⁶ Of course, the riots shocked the city of Chicago and its human relations experts who had targeted other areas of the city as possible trouble spots in terms of civil unrest in the summer of 1966, and as Felix Padilla argues, with the 1966 incident erupting as a “new generation of Puerto Ricans sensed that persuasion was not going to bring an end to subordination and oppression.”¹⁵⁷ The city of Chicago was forced to quickly evaluate not only the living conditions of this growing community, but the many ways in which the needs and concerns of Puerto Ricans were ignored for decades. The focus of Daley and others was on attempting to rectify the “youth problem,” with community representatives seeking recreational facilities, better Puerto Rican representations on youth commissions, and the ousting of the North Boys Court Judge “to develop a comprehensive community action program against social injustices.”¹⁵⁸ Then Mayor Richard J. Daley placed much of the blame on the language barrier affecting Puerto Ricans, as did Chicago police, the Board of Education, and landlords who argued

¹⁵⁴ “Daley Urges Calm,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 15, 1966.

¹⁵⁵ “Puerto Ricans Give Demands to Daley Aids,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 29, 1966.

¹⁵⁶ “Controlling Mobs,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 14, 1966.

¹⁵⁷ F. Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, 154.

¹⁵⁸ “Puerto Rican Grievances Heard By City,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 16, 1966.

this was the primary source of difficulty in communicating effectively with Puerto Ricans.¹⁵⁹ Education and Puerto Rican youth became the central focal point when discussing remedies offered by both camps in order to better address and avoid further community discontent and unrest. Although the uprising was a direct result of the shooting of a young Puerto Rican man during the community's own ethnic celebration (an act of community assertion) community response was indeed generated by a long history of police brutality, economic and political disenfranchisement, as well as frustration over educational discrepancies in regard to Puerto Rican children.¹⁶⁰ The Division Street Riots marked a significant shift in the history and understanding of Puerto Ricans in Chicago, the way in which Chicago media began to portray the community, as well as how Puerto Ricans began to respond to a threat to their stake in the city. Long gone was the language of Puerto Ricans as "fellow Americans," a "docile" people, eager to assimilate, with the discourse now casting Puerto Ricans as violent, drug infested, and welfare dependent. Yet now, Chicago's Puerto Ricans demanded the city address and reevaluate the issues affecting their community, in the hopes of legitimizing their claims to space as equal stakeholders, and now very politicized agents. Schools then, became the site in which both the city and the young Puerto Rican community could articulate these very issues, while simultaneously aiding in creating an adequate solution to the social ills affecting Puerto Rican residents.

For Puerto Ricans in Chicago, as the discourse shifted on their status in the city, they began to assert their own claim to space as full participants in Chicago's daily life,

¹⁵⁹ Edward Schreiber, "Report on June Riot Tells Cause, Remedy," *Chicago Tribune*, December 16, 1966. As the article states, "The language barrier and the problems involved in the transfer of rural Puerto Ricans to an urban society were the underlying factors behind Puerto Rican disturbances last June."

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 83.

creating community organizations, modes of intellectual and cultural expression, while simultaneously establishing their own media outlets to dispense critical information to the community (something on which I will further elaborate in chapter four). Although the city's public and immediate response post-1966 Chicago was to move forward on rectifying the social ills affecting the population, Puerto Ricans turned to their own local organizations to seek institutional change to facilitate an improvement in their overall living conditions, be it through housing, health, educational or labor reform, after decades of perceived injustices at the hands of the city. In one of the more serious injustices, the city of Chicago agreed to an \$80,000 settlement on the 1966 shooting and subsequent paralysis of seventeen-year old Rigoberto Acosta.¹⁶¹ Part of the community formation and need for group cohesion that Puerto Ricans underwent during the 1960's stemmed from a need to create a sense of belonging, undoubtedly evoked by their continued displacement, and the constant surveillance under which they lived. In 1969, Chicago's Young Lords believed a "Latin American Movement is developing in Chicago for the purpose of putting an end to the injustices, suffering and exploitation which is forced upon our people" with the Young Lords fighting "for an end to police brutality and mistreatment; adequate housing for all; decent jobs and living wages for all; community control of the schools."¹⁶² But community control and development went beyond the grassroots organizing of the Young Lords, with business, religious, and other groups also focusing their attention on the plight of the Puerto Rican community. By 1962 at least 1,500 families were registered at Chicago's Casa Central, then housed on North Ashland

¹⁶¹ "\$80,000 to Puerto Rican," *Y.L.O.*, March 19, 1969. A August 3, 1966 *Chicago Tribune* article detailed the shooting of Acosta by Chicago Police on the 2400 block of West Division street. Police, fearful of a repeat of earlier confrontations with community members, kept a close watch on the area.

¹⁶² "Why a YLO Newspaper," *Y.L.O.*, March 19, 1969, 1.

Ave., providing assistance ranging from dental and medical check ups, English classes for children and adults, to food and clothing drives.¹⁶³ One doctor, who routinely treated patients for malnutrition and respiratory ailments, declared his weekly clinic at Casa Central was “the most stimulating part of my week...I have never seen such charming, appealing, and warm people in my life, despite the most poverty-stricken circumstances.”¹⁶⁴

As Felix Padilla argues, “Puerto Rican families in Chicago had achieved an enduring cohesion of community in which social organizations and agencies and cultural traditions played the largest part.”¹⁶⁵ Providing the basic necessities needed by the community, allowed Puerto Ricans to take control of their own lives in the city, while acknowledging their subjectivities and simultaneously adjusting to life in an urban center. For Los Caballeros de San Juan, seen as “the cream of the crop” of the community by others, providing housing information, job placement, and a safe social outlet for Puerto Ricans, from “civic minded, solid citizens who are anxious to help others.”¹⁶⁶ Organizations such as Los Caballeros de San Juan, the Young Lords Organization, and the works of agencies like Casa Central paved the way for school led activism which came to guide and define the community. I argue that the inequality which the community had found itself combating since their initial migration, similarly played out within Chicago’s classrooms. When the city embraced Puerto Ricans as fellow Americans in the early years of their migration, schools sought ways to create better

¹⁶³ “1,500 Families Register at Center,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 4, 1962.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ F. Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, 143.

¹⁶⁶ “These Puerto Ricans Like It Here,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 9, 1959.

Americans, especially by targeting their language skills.¹⁶⁷ But as the community began to question the city's role in their marginalization and victimization, schools also became engulfed in battles for community control and equality, as I will document in the next chapter. To be sure, the anxiety within the city of Chicago on its seemingly failed attempts to control or, by virtue of their settlement, contain the Puerto Rican community within the city's desired geographic and social boundaries, dictated the strained relationship between both groups, and the schooling of Puerto Ricans became the new site in which battle lines would be drawn. The community's eruption in 1966, as well as the ensuing school activism discussed in subsequent chapters, was intricately linked to this very frustration on both sides.

With a growing population in the U.S., the presence of Puerto Ricans in schools across U.S. cities spoke to the tensions felt by this very racialized and segregated community. Unlike the schooling issues faced by the Mexican American population in the Southwest, Puerto Ricans were not relegated to "Puerto Rican" schools, but their own history of segregation and school inequity mirrored much of what other communities of color experienced within urban cities. The presence of Puerto Rican students in U.S. schools was also a very urban "problem" as families tended to settle within major U.S. cities with labor contracts dictating their migratory patterns. Nevertheless, Puerto Rican students have historically found themselves along the margins of educational completion and success as their cultural and/or linguistic distinctiveness, and their experiences with race politics in the U.S. continued to hinder their overall schooling. The "Puerto Rican Problem" as defined by the New York City Chamber of Commerce in 1930 was

¹⁶⁷ Gladys Priddy, "Puerto Rican Kids Perfect Their English," *Chicago Daily Tribune*.

attributed to the perceived notion of Puerto Rican children as slow learners, and blamed their plight on the background, culture, family, language, and social class of this population of students.¹⁶⁸ The education of Puerto Ricans in Chicago hence serves as a relevant and critical space in which to examine the complicated trajectory of the community's struggle for access to resources and quest for equality, while also providing a narrative for the creation and maintenance of a Puerto Rican identity grounded in community activism and collaboration despite groups differences.

¹⁶⁸ Sonia Nieto, "Puerto Rican Students in U.S. Schools: A Brief History," in *Puerto Rican Students in U.S. Schools*, 13.

CHAPTER THREE

SCHOOLING PUERTO RICAN CHICAGO

The unstable housing market and subsequent transient characteristic of Chicago's Puerto Rican community forced many Puerto Rican children to transfer schools at high rates. High rent costs and discriminatory practices limited the mobility of Puerto Ricans in Chicago, perpetuating a *de facto* segregation affecting already disadvantaged school children. Chicago's Puerto Rican community's constant struggle with economic, labor, and housing displacement saw itself played out within Chicago schools, forcing local response in the hopes of alleviating schooling inequalities. However, for Puerto Ricans, their experience within U.S. schools did not commence with their migration, instead this population's education has been an "American" experience since 1898, with language and curriculum policies mirroring the schooling of mainland children. The United States wasted no time in reorganizing the islands educational system, centering English language acquisition and American patriotism as the central theme of the islanders learning.¹⁶⁹ The implementation of American values, customs, and culture rendered the average Puerto Rican child better informed on such American figures as Abraham

¹⁶⁹ As one report noted, "Dr. M.G Brumbaugh, the first Commissioner of Education, has a great deal to say regarding patriotic exercises. "In almost every city of the island," he says, "and at many rural schools, the children meet and salute the flag as it is flung to the breeze. The raising of the flag is the signal that the school has commenced and the flag floats during the entire session. The pupils then sing America, Hail Colombia, Star Spangled Banner, and other patriotic songs. The marvel is that they sing these in English. The first English many of them know is the English of our national songs. The influence is far reaching" (Juan José Osuna, "American Occupation and School Organization", in *A History of Education in Puerto Rico*: 135.)

Lincoln, George Washington, and even the American flag than were U.S. school children.¹⁷⁰ The Americanization of Puerto Rico, in the hands of legislators and educators, is outlined in the Puerto Rico Department of Education Circular Letters, in which the imposition of American “values” and practices were incorporated into the school curriculum.¹⁷¹ Enforcing English language instruction (and in everyday Puerto Rican life), as well as “encouraging” teachers to practice everyday use of the language under the fear of suspension, dictated the pedagogical practices within Puerto Rican schools.¹⁷² The cultural assimilation policy enforced with the implementation of English in Puerto Rico’s schools, “represented a major instrument of American colonial dominance and control...[and] although it was resisted by the Puerto Rican population, the American education program distorted the entire educational process for over a period of thirty years.”¹⁷³ In many ways such a policy failed, with Puerto Ricans retaining much of their culture and fostering what Felix Padilla refers to a “Puerto Rican consciousness and solidarity,” centered on maintaining linguistic distinctiveness amidst U.S. colonial rule.¹⁷⁴ Much of this I argue carried on with this population as they began their migration to various U.S. cities, including Chicago, as conversations about the failures and success of the community at times became intricately linked to their linguistic identity, thus

¹⁷⁰ Report of the Commissioner of Education for Puerto Rico to the Secretary of the Interior, United States of America, 1901: 72, in Osuna’s *History of Education un Puerto Rico*.

¹⁷¹ For more on the Americanization practices in Puerto Rico schools please see, Aida Negrón de Montilla, “The Americanization in Puerto Rico and the Public School System: 1900-1930” (PhD diss., New York University, 1979). Some of the items incorporated into the curriculum were Attempts to impose the celebration of holidays characteristic of the American nation and not observed in Puerto Rico previous to the conquest and cession of the Island to the United States; Attempts to transfer content of American courses of study to the curriculum of Puerto Rico schools; and Attempts to organize patriotic exercises bearing on the allegiance and emulation of the United States.

¹⁷² Negrón de Montilla, “The Americanization of Puerto Rico...”, 247.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁷⁴ F. Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, 8.

becoming a schooling concern. For as much as Puerto Ricans in Chicago were faced with unfamiliarity in terms of culture, language, and perhaps even the landscapes, schools, as educational scholar David Tyack reminds us, are the most familiar of all civic institutions.¹⁷⁵

Learning in the City, 1940-1966

In 1953 the Chicago Board of Education welcomed the help of outside agencies in dealing with issues pertaining to Puerto Rican students. According the Board of Education:

The problem for the school is particularly acute with those children who have no knowledge of English. The unfamiliarity of their parents with continental, and specifically Chicago, ways of life complicates the problem of the children's adjustment in the new school situation... The size of the population, its location and mobility and expected migration all affect administrative details in school... the schools would find valuable such information as the sort of educational opportunity which the children have already had and the characteristics of the environment from which they come.¹⁷⁶

To assume Puerto Ricans were devoid of any sense of understanding regarding the curriculum and pedagogy within U.S. schools ignores the complex history of U.S. school reform on the island, and the intricate consequences such a history plays in the relationship these migrants shared with their new host community. As Jason G. Irizarry and Rene Antrop-Gonzalez argue, "vestiges of colonialism extend beyond the Island itself, impacting Puerto Ricans in the Diaspora, the deleterious effects of which are

¹⁷⁵ David Tyack, Introduction, *School: The Story of American Public Education*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 1.

¹⁷⁶ L.J. Schloerb, Assistant to the General Superintendent, Board of Education, letter to Mr. John M. Gandy, Assistant Director Research Department, September 18, 1953, Welfare Council of Metropolitan Chicago.

evident in the experiences of Puerto Rican students in mainland schools.”¹⁷⁷ Relegated to schools ill-prepared to contend with the residuals of these very “vestiges of colonialism” impinged the educational experiences of Puerto Rican school children, often walking into classrooms plagued by the present day racial politics, or a misunderstanding of Puerto Rican people. So much so that Superintendent of Chicago schools, Benjamin Willis, appointed a special committee in 1954 to study the problems of educating Puerto Rican students.¹⁷⁸ Committee head Gretta Brown, who as superintendent of school district three oversaw 19 schools with growing Puerto Rican populations, maintained “many Puerto Rican youngsters chat in Spanish in school and the teaching of English is a problem.”¹⁷⁹ In 1955, a guidance forum dealing with Latin American students and sponsored by the Pan American Board of Education, led a discussion entitled “Puerto Rico, Our Ambassador of Good Will” also dealing with the issue of educating not only Puerto Rican youth, but in a way selling the idea of this population to a larger audience.¹⁸⁰ Former president of the Pan American Board of Education in Chicago and member of Willis’ committee on Puerto Rican schooling concern, Albert E. Goodrich, spent two years working in Puerto Rico’s schools, then served as principal of McKinley High School in the city’s south side, followed by a position as head of Wells High School in the west side.

¹⁷⁷ Jason G. Irizarry and Rene Antrop-Gonzalez, “RicanStructing the discourse and promoting school success: Extending a Theory of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy For Diasporicans,” in *Centro Journal*, 40.

¹⁷⁸ “Study School Courses To Aid Puerto Ricans,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 11, 1954.

¹⁷⁹ “Seeks to Curb Migration of Puerto Ricans,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 4, 1954.

¹⁸⁰ “Pan American Board of Education Will Present Program,” *Chicago Tribune*, January 15, 1955.

In an inter-office memo dated January of 1954, the Welfare Council of Metropolitan Chicago recognized “there is the problem of education for children who know no English.”¹⁸¹ And helping Puerto Rican children learn English became a “volunteer” effort for some Chicago teachers, dedicating their weekends to assist Puerto Rican children at local parochial schools.¹⁸² Similarly, organizations such as Los Caballeros de San Juan developed language programs to ease the transition of Puerto Ricans into an English speaking and servicing, community. One leader of Los Caballeros de San Juan, Wilfredo Velez, provided Puerto Rican newcomers classes in English and American customs during his spare time.¹⁸³ Newspaper articles, with headlines such as “These Puerto Ricans Like It Here,” portrayed the population of Puerto Rican youth as any other American youth, consumers of American customs, not “square” like their island counterparts. But although youth may have perceived themselves as any other American youth, city agencies still assumed Puerto Ricans to be “poor joiners” with a mere 4% participating in community or civic organizations within their new Chicago communities.¹⁸⁴ The transformation of Puerto Ricans and other groups became the subject of Americanization programs initiated by the Chicago Board of Education, with over 3600 students completing the program in June of 1960 alone.¹⁸⁵ At their graduation ceremony, then Illinois Governor Stratton informed students that “Responsibility is a key element of good citizenship. History has shown that the nation most likely to endure is that nation which has citizens most fully aware of their responsibilities.”

In an April 1957 report released by the Council, in the hopes of aiding the Puerto Rican community in adjusting to life in Chicago, it praised the educational opportunities available in

¹⁸¹ Letter to Mr. Rae, from Mary A. Young, January 28, 1954. Welfare Council of Metropolitan Chicago Papers, Chicago History Museum, Box 148, Folder 148.3.

¹⁸² “Puerto Rican Kids Perfect Their English,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 7, 1956.

¹⁸³ “The Puerto Ricans Like it Here,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 9, 1959.

¹⁸⁴ Mayor’s Committee on New Residents, IX.

¹⁸⁵ “3,609 Finish Adult Citizen Instructions: Classes Had Persons from 86 Nations,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 16, 1960.

Chicago to children and adults. However, English language proficiency was not the only cause for the plight of Puerto Rican students as some were either born and therefore educated for years in U.S. schools, or had experience English instruction in their previous homes (whether New York, Philadelphia, or Puerto Rico). As one study suggests, “the effect of school as an agent of socialization is not limited to the teaching of English, but this is its most obvious and dramatic manifestation” and in a sense the (now) English-speaking child “will be a major linking factor for his family with the institutions of the larger society.”¹⁸⁶ Though language continued to play a role in the schooling concerns of Puerto Ricans, this same report suggested that teacher discrimination, cultural problems, and community problems (including racial conflict among “Negro” and Puerto Rican students and gang activities at school) continued to concern the population.¹⁸⁷ Schools, and by extension school children, then become the spaces most seriously impacted by misinformation regarded by the dominant culture regarding Puerto Ricans; children who then come to view themselves within society by these assumptions. As Sonia Nieto argues, “the standard explanation for the failure of Puerto Rican youths in U.S. schools have been rooted in the students themselves: that is, their culture (or lack of it), poverty, limited English proficiency, and poor parenting.”¹⁸⁸

The promise of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) was to create desegregated schools and equality of education, yet Puerto Rican students and other racialized populations were still facing the reality of their limited educational opportunities in schools.¹⁸⁹ In the early 1950’s, the local media began to take notice of the population of Puerto Rican children present in city

¹⁸⁶ Floreal Forni, *The Situation of the Puerto Rican Population in Chicago and its Viewpoints About Racial Relations*, October 15, 1971, 19.

¹⁸⁷ Forni, 61.

¹⁸⁸ Sonia Nieto, “Stories of Puerto Ricans in U.S. Schools,” *Harvard Educational Review*, 136-7.

¹⁸⁹ For more on *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) please see James Anderson, “Crosses to Bear and Promises to Keep: The Jubilee Anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*,” *Urban Education* 39, no. 4 (2004), p. 359.

schools. The *Chicago Tribune* continually ran stories praising its public school teachers for enabling Puerto Rican students to receive “special language training”¹⁹⁰ that would allow this community to be quickly coded as “American”, but not necessarily “white”. Similarly, programs aimed at aiding Puerto Rican students acquire English skills were initiated by the Catholic Alumni Club and DePaul University which proclaimed “one feature of the program is to give culturally deprived youngsters the opportunity to talk with someone interested in them in a situation as much unlike a school room as possible.”¹⁹¹ One student featured in the article was offered a full scholarship to a parochial school if he improved his English vocabulary and reading comprehension. As the articles implied, for those youth who faced multiple school transfers, these programs served as a sense of stability in their educational lives but of course did not recognize the institutional problems hindering their schooling opportunities. Already, we see Puerto Rican students being racialized through media accounts and social agencies as the “other”, very much in need of intervention from city officials and agencies in order to facilitate their success.

A 1961 *New York Times* article touting the success of Puerto Ricans in Chicago, claimed:

Puerto Rican children have learned English...there is no segregation of minority groups in schools here. Everyone is assigned to the nearest school. Relations of the Puerto Rican students with both native whites and Negroes have been smooth, just as have relations among adults of these groups. Nor has there been any noticeable Puerto Rican involvement in juvenile delinquency or crime here.¹⁹²

What the journalist did not take into account was that although students were allowed to enroll in local schools, Puerto Rican settlement patterns in the city of Chicago were very

¹⁹⁰ Gladys Priddy, “Puerto Rican Kids Perfect Their English,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, sec. W.

¹⁹¹ *Chicago Tribune*, “De Paul Alumni Help Teens”, May 31, 1964, sec. N.

¹⁹² Donald Janson, “Chicago Good City to Puerto Ricans,” *New York Times*, June 4, 1961.

much organized along racial and class lines, thus perpetuating segregation within city schools. In 1966 more than 11,000 Puerto Rican school children were targeted by the Chicago Board of Education's "teaching English as a second language" project, in order to assist these "newcomers adjust to the city and to an English-speaking community."¹⁹³ Although language did play a role in the educational discrepancies faced by these students, as the population of second generation, English speaking Puerto Rican students emerged in Chicago, issues of inequality moved beyond language limitations.

Chicago schools did not begin to report Puerto Rican enrollment separately until 1968. As a result, obtaining accurate information on this population of students prior to then is quite cumbersome. According to Isidro Lucas' work on Puerto Rican dropouts, even then, identification of Puerto Rican origin was only made by visual count of the teacher in the classroom without checking the actual records.¹⁹⁴ Without an accurate count on the number of students in public schools, it is clear to see how easily a disservice to this community in terms of their schooling could occur. Many teachers and school officials came to view Puerto Ricans in "terms of prevailing prejudices, clichés, and stereotypes" as "dirty, lazy, wiry, treacherous, aggressive, 'spics, potential rapists, and knife wielders" and as outsiders rapidly taking over some cities.¹⁹⁵ Parents shared with researchers angry stories regarding schoolteachers who were not above referring to their Puerto Rican students as "spics", mimicking their students accent, or urging them to

¹⁹³ *Chicago Tribune*, "Willis Tells of Schools' Spanish Unit," June 24, 1966.

¹⁹⁴ Isidro Lucas, "Profile of the Puerto Rican Drop Out in Chicago: A Paper To The Puerto Rican Social Work Curriculum Development Workshop," New York, May 1973.

¹⁹⁵ Eugene Buchioni and Francesco Cordasco, "Introduction", in *Puerto Rican Children in Mainland Schools: A Source Book for Teachers*, ed. by Eugene Buchioni and Francesco, (Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1968), 14. The edited volume also included pieces in which to aid teachers on understanding the cultural, fertility, dating, and spiritual habits of this population.

“go back to Puerto Rico.”¹⁹⁶ It was no wonder that feelings of discontent and frustration began to grow within Puerto Rican communities, in particular Chicago, as parents and community members realized schools were ignoring the needs of students, and seemingly pushing them out of schools. As Richard Margolis claimed:

It is hardly a coincidence that school systems like Chicago and Philadelphia have recently included Puerto Rican children in their ethnic enrollment totals. Their awakened interest in Puerto Rican pupils is a direct result of pressure from an awakened Puerto Rican community; and if counting the children remains a far cry from teaching them, it is nevertheless the first path essential step on the path to reform...No school system, no matter how humane its intentions, is likely to come up with a comprehensive program aimed at saving Puerto Rican children unless the community suggests one and presses for its enactment...It appears to be true that education is too important to be left entirely to the educators.¹⁹⁷

The community response stemming from the 1966 Division Street uprising spoke of the unease with which this population had been living for over twenty years. Earlier local organizations, such as the Caballeros de San Juan, sought to create programs in order to provide a sense of stability, through economic and social outlets, in order to facilitate their transition into city life.¹⁹⁸ Although politically, this community was far from being united, the need to maintain a sense of stability in terms of housing and employment, eradicating police brutality, and achieving educational equality for its youth, allowed Puerto Ricans to work alongside one another to address their concerns. Schools, I argue, became a site for these very collaborative relationships to develop as education was linked to the victimization of Puerto Rican youth as their numbers grew.

¹⁹⁶ Richards Margolis, “The Losers: A Report on Puerto Ricans and the Public Schools, New York, 1968,” reprinted in *Puerto Ricans and Educational Opportunities*, (New York: Arno Press, 1975), 6.

¹⁹⁷ Margolis, “The Losers”, 14.

¹⁹⁸ Los Caballeros of San Juan were directly involved in the establishment of the Puerto Rican Day parade in Chicago, local beauty queen pageants, tutoring programs in English for local residents, and the creation of El Puertorriqueño newspaper (which will be discussed in chapter four of this dissertation.” For more on the organizations early involvements in the community, see Felix Padilla’s *Puerto Rican Chicago*.

Educational scholar Ruben Donato argued Mexican Americans were convinced that “social justice was linked to the extent to which their children were able to acquire a good education,” something similarly ascertained by Puerto Rican’s in the Diaspora and most certainly in Chicago.¹⁹⁹ Schools were also to become contested spaces in which not only Puerto Rican students, but Mexican Americans, African Americans, American Indian, and Asian American students negotiated their own identities against a backdrop of racism and violence, severely detrimental to their educational opportunities. For Mexican American children, their segregation, on the basis of their cultural, linguistic, and perceived racial differences, became customary across the U.S. Southwest. The psychological effects of their own schooling history became the catalyst for an educational civil rights era in many ways mirrored by other communities. Certainly, one seen within Chicago and other Midwestern schools during the next decade, acted out by Puerto Rican and African American students in late 1960 and 1970’s Chicago, and very well documented by local media.

Schooling and Community Concerns, post-1966

Founded in June of 1966, the Spanish Action Committee of Chicago (hereon after referred to as S.A.C.C.) was one of the main organizations to emerge following the 1966 Division Street uprising seeking to “enable local resident to identify in an organized manner the physical and social problems of the community, to interpret these needs to city agencies, and work toward implementing some community-based programs.”²⁰⁰ Led by former Los Caballeros de San Juan member Juan Diaz, S.A.C.C quickly engaged in

¹⁹⁹ Ruben Donato, *The Other Struggle for Equal Schools: Mexican Americans During the Civil Rights Era*, 58.

²⁰⁰ F. Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, 165.

local community politics, assisting local business leaders, attending school board meetings, and assisting residents with the removal of policemen accused of utilizing unfair tactics and discriminatory actions towards Puerto Ricans.²⁰¹ With an increase in population also came conflicting interest from within the Puerto Rican community in Chicago, including accusations of individuals and organizations serving city officials at a cost to the community. Five founding members of S.A.C.C released a statement in 1966 announcing their resignation and creation of a new, yet similar organization, and accusations of subversive behavior by some of its members and contributors. Ted Ramírez, now a member of the American Spanish Speaking Peoples association (formerly of S.A.C.C), publicly disclosed not only the criminal activities of S.A.C member and director Juan Díaz, but accused Díaz of receiving financial and administrative assistance from reputed Communists, and including New York Puerto Ricans from taking control of the Chicago organization.²⁰² Ramírez and others went as far as claiming it was outsiders, not local community members themselves, who following the 1966 uprising, created a list of demands to present to city officials that same year. According to Ramírez, “They knew nothing about our problems here. They just took over...There has been no effort to bring to the people the realization that they must help themselves if they are to expect help from others.”²⁰³ Juan Díaz, then the president of the Latin American Boys Club, initially denied outside (and more importantly “Communist”) involvement in S.A.C, but later recanted those statements,

²⁰¹ Ibid., 166.

²⁰² Robert Wiedrich, “Quit Spanish Group, Say Reds Move In,” *Chicago Tribune*, September 3, 1966.

²⁰³ Robert Wiedrich, “Puerto Ricans rip ‘Take-Over’ By Outsiders,” *Chicago Tribune*, September 4, 1966.

perhaps as a way to avoid added pressure by Ramírez and other members or to retain some community credibility:

Juan Díaz!? He wanted no part of Communism. And he was always telling everybody not to do things to disturb the police and give the community a bad name. Some of his own people from the Spanish Action Committee, including Ted and Mirta Ramirez and Victor, attacked him in the article, calling him a dictator...After that, Juan Diaz was completely discredited in his community.²⁰⁴

Religious leaders and community activist Janet Nolan and Father Donald Headley, and the impending Red Squad investigations revealed just how complicated the situation was for not only Díaz and the Ramírez's, but for the Puerto Rican community itself.

According to one account, the Ramírez' sudden attack on Juan Díaz and others was engineered by red squad instigators, who manipulated the already tense relationship between these individuals, with one patrolman infiltrating S.A.C with allegations of communism leading an all-out attack of Juan Díaz.²⁰⁵ Richard "Rick" Gutman, attorney for the organization Alliance to End Repression, contended that although the Ramírez vehemently utilized both the media and their community influence in order to discredit both Juan Díaz and S.A.C, they did so with no knowledge of the subversive actions of the Chicago Police Intelligence Division. As Juan Diaz later testified:

I was confused, depressed and disappointed...and also ashamed....And I was really hurt because I never expected Mirta or anybody to accuse me of communism and to resign from the organization. I'm still suffering from that....Membership dispersed. Many of them left the town. And others went and made their own organizations....Nobody wanted anything to do with us.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ Bud Schultz and Ruth Schultz, "Chicago Red Squad Targets," Interview with Sister Janet Nolan, in *The Price of Dissent: Testimonies to Political Repression in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 428.

²⁰⁵ Interview with Richard "Rick" Gutman, *Price of Dissent*, 429.

²⁰⁶ *Price of Dissent*, 429. Originally excerpted from trial transcript, direct examination of Juan Diaz, Spanish Action Committee of Chicago v. City of Chicago, 1984.

The infiltration of community based organizations such as the Spanish Action Committee of Chicago during the 1960's indicates just what sort of impact Puerto Ricans as well as other marginalized groups had across U.S. cities, and similarly, the length local and federal officials would go to in order to preserve a status quo which would continue to limit the participation and advancement of said communities. For Puerto Ricans in Chicago, their fragile relationships, diverging interest, and now, generational and class divides during this era allowed "outsiders" the opportunity to further cause friction, with the press, as Felix Padilla argued, playing an indispensable role in the planned disruption of these organizations and the lives of their members.²⁰⁷

In the late 1960's the city of Chicago was faced with an increasingly troubled population, who continued to question the city's role in their limited status and the myriad of problems faced by the community. This is quite evident in the organizational response of Puerto Ricans and city administrators in dealing with the array of issues afflicting Puerto Ricans, ranging from police brutality and health concerns, to the educational needs of school age children. For some in the community, this response was a direct consequence of the riots. Community member and organizer Samuel Betances remembers, "it was a response to the riots because number one, everyone was taken back because nobody really knew why the Puerto Rican community in Chicago was the first community ever to explode into a riot... when we get together, we didn't know what to do. But we knew that education had to be part of the answer."²⁰⁸ As one report stated, "It was not until June 1966, when the 'civil disorder, which was primarily directed against

²⁰⁷ Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, 178. In his chapter, "Evolution and Resolution of Conflict," Padilla details the actions of Chicago's Police Department in deterring community activism, demonstrations, and limiting free speech in order to lessen the community's political activism and cohesiveness.

²⁰⁸ Samuel Betances, Interview with author, September 25, 2009, Chicago, IL.

the police and government,' shocked the city and that the problems of Puerto Rican residents were made visible and were publicly disputed for the first time."²⁰⁹ Following a five-mile march of over two hundred Puerto Ricans, African Americans and their white allies representing various organizations (faith based, civic, and more grassroots groups), community leaders wrote a three-page list of demands was distributed to city officials in June of the same year.²¹⁰ The Mayor soon after revealed a plan to help the community deal with both language concerns and youth problems, including the opening of Operation Head Start classes in several elementary schools, churches, and settlement houses.²¹¹ Similarly, Daley sought to institute tutoring programs in English for Spanish-speaking immigrants, offering summer English classes housed in four northwest side high schools.²¹² Funding from the Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 allocated funds for research specialists focusing on bilingual issues to institute programs aimed at alleviating the needs and concerns of community members.²¹³ In 1966 Henry Romero utilized such funding to head a summer teachers institute in the hopes of aiding Chicago schools with large Puerto Rican populations. As Romero stated, "The first thing I tell them is that our role is to combine two cultures, not, as some would have us believe, to forsake one for the other... Puerto Rican children, like strangers anywhere, are quick to

²⁰⁹ Floreal Forni, *The Situation of the Puerto Rican Population in Chicago and its Viewpoints About Racial Politics*, 3.

²¹⁰ "Puerto Ricans Give Demands to Daley Aids," *Chicago Tribune*, June 29, 1966.

²¹¹ "Mayor Daley Reveals Plans to Help City Puerto Ricans," *Chicago Tribune*, July 6, 1966, B6.

²¹² *Ibid.*

²¹³ President L.B. Johnson's historic 1965 passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 sought to assist disadvantaged school children improve academically through federal mandate such as Title 1 funding. As Erik Robelen writes, "Conceived as part of President Johnson's War on Poverty, the original statute was focused primarily on delivering federal aid to help level the educational playing field for poor and minority children. And Mr. Johnson--a former teacher at a predominantly Mexican-American school in Cotulla, Texas--had high hopes." "40 Years After ESEA, Federal Role in Schools Is Broader Than Ever." *Education Week* : 24.31 (2005).

grasp and ready to understand once initial barriers are broken down.”²¹⁴ Although dealing with language difficulties was a critical component of addressing the schooling needs of Puerto Ricans in Chicago, as Daley and others recognized, Henry Romero asserts, so is the “implications of language difficulties” and other such barriers further complicating the schooling of this population. But as one principal of a Northwest side school rebuked, “My parents were Italian immigrants. I think they would have been surprised if I had been taught subjects in Italian. I think Puerto Rican youngsters here want to learn English.”²¹⁵ Interestingly, this same principal was instrumental in developing a program for educators at schools with large Puerto Rican, Spanish-speaking student populations, in order to assist these teachers in improving their communication with their students. In a previous article Miss Picchiotti stated she was apprehensive at the very idea of utilizing an interpreter to communicate with children because, as she stated, “regardless of how much you try, the child feels you are condescending when you talk thru an interpreter.”²¹⁶ One is left to question Miss Picchiotti’s later assertion regarding the monolingual aspirations of Puerto Rican school children were, considering her commitment to aiding their bilingualism through her program development and building positive relationships between teachers and students. For some Chicago families and their students the growing discontent with their overall treatment within schools reached a boiling point by 1966, with students and community members demanding the ousting of principals and teachers who were not only not meeting the needs of the local communities but whose racist

²¹⁴ Puerto Rican Culture Brought Into Schools,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 14, 1966.

²¹⁵ “300 Attend Puerto Rican Conference,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 28, 1967, 3. Pulaski School Principal, Miss Natalie Picchiotti, who attended the 1967 conference on Puerto Rican concerns, did not agree with the assertion by others that what Puerto Rican students needed was adequate bilingual education programs in order to succeed in school.

²¹⁶ “108 Teachers Taking Lessons in Spanish: Many Pupils Can Speak No English,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 23, 1966.

ideologies permeated their educational lives. One such school principal proclaimed in 1966, “You can’t trust these students... You can’t trust the Negroes and Puerto Ricans; you have to treat them rough.”²¹⁷ Those very comments, and the alleged racist views of the principal, Ms. Mildred Chuchut, led to the creation of both the Concerned Teachers of Jenner School and the Concerned Parents of Jenner School groups to stage a three-day boycott, keeping a reported 95% of the student body out of school.²¹⁸ But this school walkout was only the beginning of an emerging era of school walkouts/boycotts by Chicago’s African American and Latina/o community, and very much linked to an overall national movement of school reform by the people affected by inadequate schooling the most. Dionne Dans said it best: “Chicago Teachers, students and community members had fought a very intense battle to create a new reality at their schools... that when they reorganized they possessed the power to effectively change the way the public school system of Chicago would educate their youth.”²¹⁹

Chicago’s Puerto Rican students were not alone in seeking to remedy the schooling inequalities inherited from decades (or for Mexican, African, and Native American students almost a century) of racist politically charged policies aimed at severely limiting their overall success and opportunity to reach a sense of economic and social stability in the United States. In March of 1968 alone, thousands of Mexican American and Chicano students participated in mass school walkouts in order to protest the “inferior quality of education” which generations of Mexican American children had

²¹⁷ “New Race Charge Against Jenner Principal,” *Chicago Daily Defender*, February 1, 1966.

²¹⁸ “Three-Day Boycott at Jenner: ‘Concerned Parents’ Group Maps Program to Emphasize Protest,” *Chicago Defender*, January 15, 1966; “Jenner Principal Asks Firing of Teacher,” *Chicago Daily Defender*, January 25, 1966.

²¹⁹ Dionne Dans, “Something Better for our Children: Black Organizing in the Chicago Public Schools, 1963-1971,” (PhD Dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2001).

endured.²²⁰ Much closer to home, Chicago's African American students, parents, and teachers ardent battle to bring educational justice and equality to its public schools has been well documented by scholar Dionne Dans. Dans' work clearly demonstrates the African American community's own "legacy of organizing" through mass boycotts and walkouts beginning in the early 1960's to confront not only the defacto segregation of Black students, but also the critical contribution of teachers themselves who sought a new reality for their students but the racism Black teachers themselves felt at the hand of Chicago's Teachers Union.²²¹ For students from California to New York, the maintenance of these persistent inequalities and subsequent dangers posed to them within U.S. classrooms are in many ways a site in which historians and educational scholars can document the transformative actions of communities seeking a new reality. The actions of these communities similarly allowed for a collaboration between Latino and African American students whose demands at times mirrored one another, and whose fights for educational justice played out in Chicago during the 1960's through the 1970's. On one day alone in 1968 over 200 students at Chicago's Fenger High School demanded the hiring of a "Negro" teacher to teach the African American history course now taught at the school, while across town African American and "Latin American" students at Harrison High School continued to fight for resources aimed at their particular

²²⁰ Dolores Delgado Bernal, "Rethinking Grassroots Activism: Chicana Resistance in the 1968 East Los Angeles School Blowouts," in *The Subaltern Speak: Curriculum, Power, And Educational Struggles* ed. Michael W. Apple and Kristen L. Buras (New York: Routledge, 2006), 141.

²²¹ Dionne Dans, "Something Better for our Children..."

communities, including the hiring of African American and Latin American school officials.²²²

In a 1967 report on the annual pupil headcount by the Chicago Board of Education eight elementary schools in the city were labeled as “Puerto Rican schools,” because of their large or increasing Puerto Rican student body.²²³ Teachers at one such school quickly realized not only were their schools faced with institutional problems aimed at students own racial and linguistic distinctiveness, but structural issues within the schools also impinged on their learning environment. Poor lighting forced teachers at Otis Elementary School to curtail reading programs on days when their own eyesight became strained from the lighting, forcing them to cut programs and activities for the 890 pupils and 39 teachers at the school.²²⁴ As one teacher put it, “Our school is starting to look like a haunted house.” In December of 1967 the Chicago Board of Education sought to redraw school boundaries in the Humboldt Park community, forcing the transfer of school children out of their local school, with no regard to their proximity from home, and whose parents had already established an honest, working relationship with their current school principal. Puerto Rican parents felt “that the boundary change had something to do with the fact that most of the pupils affected were Puerto Rican.”²²⁵ If anything, what the presence of these parents at the Board’s meeting demonstrated was the

²²² “Another Day of Disorders Hits Schools,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 10, 1968. As this piece stated, “The black students said they were afraid they would not win their earlier demands. The Latin-American students said they sympathized with the blacks and wanted Latin-American school officials.” This understanding of the needs of one group of students by another, clearly demonstrates the awareness of Latino and African American youth of their own communities relationship with schools and the possible solutions.

²²³ “City’s Public Schools Now 53 PCT. Negro: Whites Drop to 41.5 Per Cent,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 25, 1967, 1.

²²⁴ “Poor Lighting Puts School in Dark Ages,” *Chicago Tribune*, April 1, 1968.

²²⁵ “Public Hearing Set on School Transfers,” *Chicago Tribune*, December 21, 1967.

active participation of Puerto Ricans in the educational lives of their children. One Board member noted, “Many of these parents attending our committee meeting had taken time off from their jobs to attend and lost pay for doing so.” Nitza Hidalgo argued that for Puerto Ricans, “parenting strategies of the working-class mothers stemmed both from their cultural traditions and their neighborhood context, in which the physical safety of their children was not assured.”²²⁶ For Chicago’s Puerto Rican students, the “educational” or “schooling” safety of this population was also threatened in many ways, as Puerto Rican’s sought to both utilizes already existing structures in which to raise questions regarding the schooling of their children (such as P.T.A and school board meetings), but also develop new avenues that would allow them the space to further interrogate the growing frustrations within city schools (school walkouts/boycotts, creation of Puerto Rican centric schools/curriculums, and then the radicalization of local organizations).

With a shifting demographic, Puerto Rican parents as well as African American parents, sought to gain a sense of stability for their own children, combating issues of school redistricting, busing, overcrowding, and the overall daily learning needs of their children. Education or adequate schooling at this historical point has become a critical component in not only addressing community discontent, but linked by the community itself to the overall disinvestment of the city in Puerto Ricans. According to Jose “Cha Cha” Jimenez, Puerto Rican students were “not connecting” with schools.²²⁷ This was evident with the increasing dropout rates from the 1960’s through the 1970’s. But just like Puerto Ricans saw themselves pushed out of neighborhoods across the city, the late

²²⁶ Nitza M. Hidalgo, “Toward a Definition of a Latino Family Research Paradigm,” in *Race is... Race Isn't: Critical Race Theory and Qualitative Studies in Education*, 110.

²²⁷ Jose “Cha Cha” Jimenez”, Interview with author, Chicago, IL. September 20, 2008.

1960's saw their stake within community schools questioned, and at times ignored. From Lincoln Park to Humboldt Park, Puerto Rican students questioned the role of education in the socio-economic plight felt by this population. *The me nobody knows* was a book published in the late 1960's chronicling the literary voices of African American and Puerto Rican school children that more often than not found themselves silenced as they learned to maneuver not only their way through inadequate schools and school systems, but as they attempted to make meaning of their own lives. As 13 year-old Victor wrote in the collection, "When I first get up in the morning I feel fresh and it seems like it would be a good day to me. But after I get in school, things change and they seem to turn into problems for me. And by the end of the day I don't even feel like I'm young. I feel tired".²²⁸ For Puerto Rican children as well as other students of color, schools were not necessarily a place for solace and nurturing, but instead reminded them of the ways in which their own sense of self and their opportunities were often negated by limited resources and racial politics.

With Puerto Rican and African American students in Chicago contending with constant displacement from communities and schools (in addition to the negative racial attitude towards them at the hands of teachers and school administrators), it is easy to understand their activism during the late 1960's and early 1970's. Just as the rest of the country faced an era of civil unrest and racial conflict, Chicago and its schools were afflicted with similar turmoil. Students at various Chicago high schools — including Harrison and Bowen High Schools in the city's south side, as well as Tuley, Wells, and Lakeview high schools in the city's north side— organized school walkouts and boycotts

²²⁸ Untitled poem, *The Me Nobody Knows*, ed. Stephen M. Joseph, (New York: Avon Books, 1969), 20.

demanding an incorporation of culturally relevant material into the curriculum, an increase in the hiring of faculty of color and school administrators, and other demands. On one day in 1968 over 28,00 students boycotted 38 Chicago schools while several hundred teachers refrained from teaching classes in support of the students.²²⁹ Speaking on the student's demands, then Chicago Teachers Union president John Desmond stated, "these decisions should not be made by principals or district superintendents under the pressure of student disorders or community upheavals."²³⁰ A 1968 Chicago Tribune headline proclaimed "Lake View High Staff Listens to Student Grievances" with students demanding an English language course for Spanish speaking students, a Spanish speaking placement counselor, and interestingly "guest speakers who would appeal to the interests of the minority group."²³¹ But although students grievances were heard following their brief boycott of the school, the school principal contended the school disturbance was the work of outside agitators unfamiliar with the school. According to the article, prior to the school disturbance a local community group (suspected of being Chicago's Young Lords Organization) distributed leaflets directed at Puerto Rican students, articulating the various community and schooling issues their community faced. As the principal stated, "No names were on the handout, but a telephone number was given. And students were urged to call this number and join a protest demonstration."²³² Students continued their struggle for school reform within Chicago's schools through out the next several years, with groups such as the Latin Student Coalition leading hundreds in walkouts across the

²²⁹ "28,000 Out in 2d Boycott of Schools," *Chicago Tribune*, October 22, 1968.

²³⁰ "Urges Action to Cope with School Furor: Union Asks Redmond to Clarify Policy," *Chicago Tribune*, October 12, 1968.

²³¹ Peter Born, "Lake View High Staff Listens to Student Grievances," *Chicago Tribune*, November 8, 1968.

²³² *Ibid.*

city, helping form coalitions across racial and ethnic groups. One central point of the school disturbances dealt with the over 60% dropout rate within the Latino community as well as their claims that “they are victims of a lack of concern by the Board of Education.”²³³ The establishing of Aspira Inc. of Illinois in 1968 was one of the most influential means initiated by the community itself in order to combat their current schooling battles, offering Puerto Rican students a link to greater educational opportunities. According to one article, “Aspira’s main objectives is to help qualified youngsters thru educational counseling, scholarship and loan procurement, and leadership training.”²³⁴ Although solely credited as the brainchild of community member and organizer Mirta Ramírez, the birth of the organizations Illinois chapter was a community affair:

Juan Sangrudo Cruz, Julio Estacio, Samuel Betances, Marcelino Diaz, and Ted and Mirta Ramirez, we chipped in a hundred dollars each, and that, we heard of Aspira somewhere, I don’t know we had heard there’s a place called Aspira, so we said why do something in Chicago that may already exist, maybe we can bring what exist in New York, because we always thought that New York was the capital of Puerto Ricans, if it was going to happen, New York was already have had to make it happen already. So one of the things that we did was we chipped in and we got Mirta to call New York and make an appointment with Aspira leaders, Aspira of New York. She did, and we put her on a greyhound bus, cause we couldn’t afford a plane ticket, and gave her those five hundred dollars, and Ted agreed, and we sent Mirta on an expedition to New York to find out what is Aspira, how does it work, and under what circumstanced can we bring it to Chicago. She was there for about a week, and came back with glowing reports, so, we made a committee and invited Aspira of New York representatives to Chicago to meet with us.²³⁵

With the help of a Ford Foundation Grant, Chicago’s Puerto Ricans found a platform to address educational reform, not on the streets, but within classrooms through the

²³³ “Students Protest Latin Policies,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 11, 1971.

²³⁴ “Chicago Puerto Rico Youths to Get Aid,” *Chicago Tribune*, November 14, 1968.

²³⁵ Samuel Betances, Interview with author, September, 2009.

establishment of Aspira. As Ramírez maintained, “No one is going to help Puerto Ricans. If we want to take advantage of opportunities in this society, we’ll have to help ourselves.”²³⁶

The growing discontent with both city and school officials, and the social unrest it led to within the city, prompted then Mayor Daley to appoint both an African American and the first Puerto Rican to Chicago’s Board of Education in 1969. Maria B. Cerda and Alvin J Boulette were named to the board, inheriting two old yet pertinent problems faced by the 11 member board: integration and fiscal concerns.²³⁷ Mrs. Cerda served as an assistant to Mirta Ramírez for Aspira, as well as the Welfare Council of Metropolitan Chicago.²³⁸ Daley’s appointment of these two community members were not a welcomed change, as community members questioned the liberal stance of both nominees, who would surely play a lead role in upcoming Teachers Union negotiations, and will assumably not compromise on critical program cuts.²³⁹ But for others, Maria Cerda’s appointment to the Board was a welcome change, and influential in paving the way for institutional change within Chicago’s schools, and for the city’s Puerto Ricans. Through Cerda’s work on the Board, Aspira of Illinois was able to establish chapters at the local high schools, intervening when administrators were not as welcoming of the

²³⁶ Carolyn Shojai, “Latins Form Group to Develop, Train Spanish Leaders,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 16, 1969.

²³⁷ “Two New Faces,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 16, 1969. Interestingly, Mrs. Cerda was the wife of (now retired) Appellate Judge David Cerda; the first Mexican American and Latino appointed to Illinois Appellate court.

²³⁸ Not only did Mrs. Cerda serve as the first Latina, and Puerto Rican member of the Chicago Board of Education, but her husband the (now retired) Honorable Judge David Cerda who was the first Latino (and Mexican American) in Illinois to have been elected a judge of the Cook County Circuit Court and to serve as a justice of the Illinois Appellate Court.

²³⁹ Peter Negronida, “Daley’s Selections Jeopardize His Influences Over School Board,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 20, 1969.

organization.²⁴⁰ But for Mexican and Puerto Rican parents, Board of Education meetings also became a space to perform a unified front in order to articulate their needs for expansion of bilingual instruction as well as their desire for a Spanish-speaking deputy school superintendent to represent their interests.²⁴¹

The creation of local organizations aimed at not only cultivating a culture of belonging for Puerto Rican youth, but similarly including these youth in the process of creating change, emerged during this era. “The Concerned Puerto Rican Youth” was created in 1968 “for the purpose of planning and developing programs for the youth and adults in the community...to create interest in the fields of Education, Employment and Recreational Programs.”²⁴² The organization, housed on West Armitage Avenue, sought to organize various “creative programs” aimed at encouraging Puerto Rican youth to remain active in sports and other activities, other than gang fighting. Speaking on the educational program available with the Concerned Puerto Rican Youth, one youth, Dino, proclaimed:

This educational program is for the students in school and those who have dropped out and didn't learn the important part of having a good education and what it would mean to them in later years. The Concerned Puerto Rican Youths have helped me because now I have a place where I can come with all my friends and have a good time dancing and playing games instead of being a gang-banger, standing on a corner getting high looking for trouble. Now I can look for a brilliant future and not a 20-year sentence in jail.²⁴³

It was appropriate for Dino to imagine a life other than one in prison, considering that one of the many activities planned by the C.P.R.Y in 1969 was a tour of an Illinois

²⁴⁰ Samuel Betances, Interview with the author.

²⁴¹ Peter Negronida, “School Board Hears Gripes For 13 Hours,” *Chicago Tribune*, November 4, 1969.

²⁴² Concerned Puerto Rican Youth News, vol.1, no. 1, November 1969. DePaul University Library Special Collections and Archives, Box 79, Folder, Concerned Puerto Rican Youth.

²⁴³ Concerned Puerto Rican Youth Newsletter, 5.

prison. Youth were allowed a glimpse of the daily lives of these incarcerated women, “where freedoms light ceases to brighten their future.”²⁴⁴ The activities of organizations such as the C.P.R.Y allowed Puerto Rican youth an alternative to gang life, instead bringing various groups together for “constructive purposes.”²⁴⁵ There were over 100 members in C.P.R.Y by 1970, ranging in age from 6-26 years old, with all members expected to adhere to the groups 10 rules of conduct, but with membership open to everyone, “boys and girls of all races.” Youth were to refrain from swearing or drinking in the center, writing on walls or damaging property in anyway, loitering outside of the building, and even “necking, or abusing mates rights” in the center.²⁴⁶ The groups newsletter similarly served as an appropriate space in which these same youth, who had seen the struggles of not only their community but those around them, experienced school and community violence, and whose lives were disrupted repeatedly by gentrification and other urban renewal policies, to creatively express their own discontent with the situation under they found themselves living, but also as a sign of hope for their own future. As one student, *The Critic*, wrote, “ I dislike very much a prejudiced white man; I get disgusted at a prejudiced black man; For he is lowering himself to the same level. But I get sick when I meet a prejudiced Rican, for he even turns against his own people.”²⁴⁷

One unnamed author eloquently expressed his desire:

We are the ones who are setting the example for our younger brothers and sisters. They will follow in our footsteps, but the wrong we do will be hard to get undone. This is no sermon, you see. I’m nineteen years old myself, but, I think if we start

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁴⁵ Concerned Puerto Rican Youths, Information letter, April 15, 1970. DePaul University Library Special Collections and Archives. Box 79, Folder Name Concerned Puerto Rican Youth.

²⁴⁶ Concerned Puerto Rican Youths Newsletter, 3.

²⁴⁷ Concerned Puerto Rican Youths Newsletter, 5.

thinking more about our lives and the future ahead of us, we can see that there is room for improvement.²⁴⁸

Improving their school lives at least, became the center of Puerto Rican life for the next few years, and in many ways the catalyst for uniting the community, which often times found themselves divided by ideological differences and varying accusations. Puerto Rican youth, as well as other youth of color, mediated new means of resistance aimed at transforming and confronting the constant provocations faced by these groups, whether on street corners or classrooms. Historian Andrew J. Diamond argues that through these transformative actions, transcending their own boundaries (whether racial, ethnic, etc.) these youths “contributed greatly to shaping the histories of the larger communities encompassing them.”²⁴⁹

“The Tuley Thing”

Since the late 1960’s, Tuley High School, situated within Chicago’s Near Northwest Side, saw an influx in the number of Puerto Rican students, as more families relocated to the Humboldt Park community. The need to replace or expand an aging Tuley became the site of contention within the community for the next few years. Parents, students, educators, and city officials weighed in their own varying agendas and needs on the impending move of the school, very much tied to the community’s identity and spaciality. Educational consultants hired to assist with the city’s plan for the new high school argued, “Since schools are an integral part of the community, its residents

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Andrew J. Diamond, *Mean Streets: Chicago Youths and The Everyday Struggle for Empowerment in the Multiracial City, 1908-1969*, 8.

must be involved in the planning of their school.”²⁵⁰ It was the effort of local organizations such as the Northwest Community Organization (NCO), Wicker Park Community Council, and others with the assistance of Catholic Church officials who vigilantly fought for the construction of the high school, after years of empty promises by school officials, hoping to alleviate the overcrowding at Tuley. Unfortunately, although the city was ultimately willing to build the new school within the community, it recommended its location be on California Street, between North Avenue and Division Street, in the heart of the Puerto Rican community yes, but unfortunately in the middle of Humboldt Park (the actual park itself).²⁵¹ As residents demanded: “Escuela Si, Pero en el Parque no!” [School yes, but in the park, no], citing that by losing the park for the building of the new high school, the community would lose one of the only outlets that provided an escape from inadequate and congested housing, and offered free and safe recreation.²⁵² A coalition of over twenty community organizations, including Los Caballeros de San Juan worked together to fight the building of the school, “y cuantos enemigo tenga la comunidad” (and whatever enemies our community may have).²⁵³ But not everyone was opposed to the construction of the school within the park’s boundaries. One local newspaper account of the events questioned the intentions of community leader and husband of Aspira founder Mirta Ramírez, Ted Ramírez’s, intentions as he publicly supported the schools building despite its disruption of community life. As Ted Ramírez argued, “Costaría mucho dinero y tomaría mucho tiempo preparar un sitio en el área,

²⁵⁰ Joette Getse, “Educational Consultants Praise Chicago’s Community Participation,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 2, 1969.

²⁵¹ “Groups to Decide on New Humboldt Park High,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 15, 1967.

²⁵² “Nueva Escuela Tuley Si! En el Parque Humbolt No!”, *El Puertorriqueño*, May 1970.

²⁵³ “Nueva Escuela Tuley Si! En el Parque Humbolt No!”, *El Puertorriqueño*, May 1970.

mientras que en el parque podemos comenzar a construir mañana mismo.”²⁵⁴ Ramírez’s seemingly lack of concern over the loss of park land for the school was not a welcoming assertion to community members, including Los Caballeros de San Juan, who were all too eager to utilize *El Puertorriqueño* to point out Ramírez’s outsider status as the newspaper argued his home address is well beyond Humboldt Park’s boundaries. Tuley High School principal Dr. Herbert Fink maintained, “I don’t care which site but by God we have to move. We need something you can get in quickly.”²⁵⁵ The work of community organizations such as the N.C.O and La Junta Coordinadora de Asuntos Puertorriqueños worked to secure the acquisition of land for the new 3,000-student school near Division and Western Avenue. As one community member proclaimed, “La comunidad nuestra ha sabido ponerse de pie y oponerse con dignidad y determinación y el Parque se had salvado.”²⁵⁶

Issues with the new schools location were quite minute considering the growing tensions within Tuley as parents became dissatisfied with the treatment of their own children and the lack of sensitivity towards Puerto Rican students at the hands of the school’s principal and his administration. For many, the seemingly lack of concern by the Board of Education over the increasing drop out rate of Puerto Rican students, and the over all conditions of the public school system led to one of many rally’s calling not only for the ousting of Tuley’s principal, but proclaiming (as their picket signs voiced) that

²⁵⁴ “Caballeros Se Oponen a Tuley En El Parque,” *El Puertorriqueño*, March 5-11, 1970. [“It would cost too much money and take too much time to prepare a site in the area, while in the park we could begin building tomorrow.” Authors translation]

²⁵⁵ “City Officials Get Tour of Tuley High, Humboldt Park Site,” *Chicago Tribune*, April 23, 1970.

²⁵⁶ “Se Salvo el Humboldt Park,” *El Puertorriqueño*, April 6-30, 1970. [Our community has risen to its feet and with dignity and determination has opposed and the Park has been saved.] My translation.

“Puerto Ricans are tired of waiting.”²⁵⁷ The group, “The Coalition for Tuley”, consisting of parents, teachers, students, and various community organizations organized a school boycott in the Fall of 1971 seeking to oust the school’s chief, Dr. Herbert Fink, leading a march to the main offices of the Chicago Board of Education to meet with officials over their growing concerns.²⁵⁸ According to one report, “Latin pupils” were the majority of students in Chicago’s District 6 in the near Northwest Side, including the majority of the enrollment at 43 elementary schools.²⁵⁹ Of these students Puerto Ricans constituted over 47% of the population, and further increased in numbers in other districts in the city’s near Northwest Side. The enrollment at Tuley High School mirrored the districts shift as the population of Spanish-speaking students there (most of them Puerto Rican) surpassed 64%, an increase of over ten percent from the previous school year.²⁶⁰ With reports such as Dr. Isidro Lucas work on “The Puerto Rican Dropout Problem” emerging, detailing the needs and issues afflicting the Puerto Rican student in Chicago, it was hard for school and city officials to continue to ignore the problem at hand. But one proposal aimed at curbing the dropout rate at Tuley High School was quickly and vehemently opposed by Board members in 1971, citing the plan as “an insult to the students.”²⁶¹ Board member Mrs. Maria Cerda took issue with the proposals definition of the school dropout problem, and as she argued, “The problem is not that the students are apathetic, as the plan states...It’s that the school experience gives them no self-identity or self-pride.”²⁶² It was also in 1971 that Dr. Isidro Lucas, from the Council on Urban Education, released a

²⁵⁷ “Latin American Students Rally,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 12, 1971.

²⁵⁸ “Demand Principal’s Ouster,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 8, 1971.

²⁵⁹ “Latin Pupils Constitute 10.4% of City Enrolment,” *Chicago Tribune*, November, 23, 1971.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ “Board Dismisses Dropout Curb Plan,” *Chicago Tribune*, November 18, 1971.

²⁶² Ibid.

comprehensive report entitled, “Puerto Rican Dropouts In Chicago: Numbers And Motivations.”²⁶³

Lucas’ report interrogated the various motivational factors that by this point had led to an over 70% dropout rate of Puerto Rican students in Chicago, inclusive of the perceived neglect of this specific group in terms of their educational resources and opportunities. Lucas argued, “in general, schools were not found to be geared to Puerto Rican students,” with students dealing with “an acute self-identity crisis...prevalent among Chicago Puerto Rican youth.”²⁶⁴ Further, “Puerto Rican youth in this study show the effects of having been exposed to discrimination on the basis of the American race concept. The fact that there is awareness and knowledge of societal inferiority does not mean there is acceptance of this inferiority as a fact.”²⁶⁵ According to the study, when compared to student’s nationally, Puerto Rican students in Chicago demonstrated a greater sense of defensiveness when questioned by the researchers regarding their success rates, or lack of success, tending to blame teachers, or “somebody or something.”²⁶⁶ And similarly, “schools were found to have very little influence in increasing the staying-in rate: they did little to improve the student self-image or cultural identity.”²⁶⁷ Some of the students surveyed acknowledged a need and desire for the teaching of Puerto Rican culture and history in the schools, something students at Tuley and other Chicago high schools similarly demanded of the Board. The acquisition of English, or lack thereof, has generally been linked to a students schooling success, but what is often ignored is what

²⁶³ For the purpose of his study, Lucas defined the Puerto Rican dropout as a “young person who having received a substantial part of his/her education in the continent has stopped attending school without obtaining a high school diploma, for any reason except death,” 19.

²⁶⁴ Lucas, 7,21.

²⁶⁵ Lucas, 26.

²⁶⁶ Lucas, 28.

²⁶⁷ Lucas, 1.

role the student Spanish retention plays in the students success, with Lucas arguing “that the more confident a student is of his/her knowledge of Spanish the more chances to stay” in school.²⁶⁸

Although the dropout rate was argued to be over 70% for Chicago’s Puerto Rican, deciphering the accuracy of that figure proved to be a difficult task, as researchers and school administrators could not always account for every student, who either voluntarily or involuntarily ceased to attend school.²⁶⁹ Quite evident with the increase in both community and school activism of Puerto Ricans is the estrangement felt by this population of students with their schools, as students, according to Lucas, do not feel part of the school, nor relate to teachers in effective ways. Laying claim to their communities schooling needs, as students, parents, or even educators, is exactly what the Tuley community attempted, and would lead to the creation of various organizations in the community, including the creation of la “Escuela Superior Puertorriqueña” in 1973.

As a reflection of the community’s stake as a space very much representative of its Puerto Rican population, the residents sought to have the new school named after prominent figure in Puerto Rican history Eugenio Maria de Hostos.²⁷⁰ After the death of baseball legend and humanitarian Roberto Clemente in late December of 1972, students at Tuley led a brief sit-in that following month aimed at encouraging the Board of

²⁶⁸ Lucas, 62.

²⁶⁹ Voluntary reasons for withdrawals according to the Board of Education included: leaving school for verifiable employment, leaving school because the student was needed at home by family, marriage, poor scholarship, leaving school with whereabouts unknown. Involuntary reasons for withdrawing included: transferring to other day schools in the city, being excused from school temporarily due to physical disability or mental retardation, death, and leaving school with the students whereabouts unknown.

²⁷⁰ Carlos Caribe Ruíz, “Acuerdan Nombrar Escuela Tuley Eugenio Maria de Hostos,” *El Puertorriqueño*, Semana del 10 al 16 de Diciembre de 1970. Hostos was a prominent figure on the Island, known for his work in education, literature, philosophy, as well as an advocate for Puerto Rican independence.

Education to honor his life and the community with naming the school after him. Persistent problems at Tuley erupted in the winter of 1973 with students, staff and community members seeking the removal of the school's principal. That year, a boycott led by Tuley counselor Carmen Valentín and others, resulted in a three-hour battle with Chicago Police, leaving six officers injured and 16 arrests, with one protesters proclaiming, "no one in this city is aware of the problems in our community and no one cares."²⁷¹ This was a far cry from ten years before where the city and media focused their attention and efforts at alleviating and addressing the social ills and accomplishments of its latest newcomers, now finding these community members seeking to defend their own stake in a very racially charged city and its schools. A February 7, 1973 *Chicago Defender* article called for the Board of Education to not ignore its "inescapable moral responsibility" of such issues within schools because "unchecked eruptions are always fraught with the danger of plunging a whole community into the caldron of racial confrontations with tragic consequences."²⁷² These very consequences were already contending with when this same community suffered through its first uprising in 1966, one in which many of the students, teachers, and staff at Tuley experienced, and were still waiting for the empty promises of the local government following the riots. Ironically, addressing the educational needs of Puerto Ricans in Chicago was one of the main concerns of both the community and city officials following the riots, and was now the issue perhaps pushing its local youth to the verge of another uprising. The engulfing community activism many of these students have lived through since the mid-1960's in Chicago was in some ways manifested by daily reminders of how "Puerto Ricans are

²⁷¹ "Tuley protesters battle police," *Chicago Tribune*, February 1, 1973.

²⁷² "Tuley High School," *Chicago Defender*, February 7, 1972.

confined even physically to their own neighborhoods, which they do not control. Police, schools, business and public services are provided by non-Puerto Ricans.”²⁷³

On February 5, 1973 Board officials announced the removal of Dr. Fink as principal of Tuley “in the best interests of the school” while over two hundred of his supporters waited outside of the four hour long closed Board meeting with representatives of the Principals association threatening legal action because of his removal.²⁷⁴ Dr. Fink maintained, “I felt very close to my students, my staff, and my community, but I made the agreement to leave with the board fairly and justly.” In a letter to the editor following the Boards announcement, one Fink supporter and Tuley student wrote:

Two years ago, protesters demanded our new school be named after a former governor of Puerto Rico. Now they want another name. Next year someone else may die, and we’ll have more problems over a name. What about Murray F. Tuley? Just because he was no Puerto Rican, doesn’t mean he no longer deserves to be honored. All high schools have their problems. Tuley is simply average. Dr. Fink has done as good a job as anyone could and we thank him for it. The problem could be settled if the people down at the board would get off their sears and find out what a majority of the students want.²⁷⁵

The removal of Principal Fink was met with mixed feelings as some students questioned whether his departure would eradicate the longstanding social ills present within the community. As one 17-year-old student put it, “So, Fink’s gone. We still have all our problems. He was just a little one that made all the big ones bigger. So he’s gone. I say, ‘So what’.”²⁷⁶ Those same problems were evident as racial tensions at the high school escalated a year later into violent outbreaks between Puerto Rican and African American

²⁷³ Lucas, 26.

²⁷⁴ “Principal at Tuley Ousted,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 6, 1973.

²⁷⁵ Bob Buchanan, “Tuley student speaks,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 7, 1973.

²⁷⁶ ““The Tuley thing...it gave people a chance to win,”” *Chicago Tribune*, February 18, 1973.

students, that left two students dead and several others injured.²⁷⁷ Violence between African American and Puerto Rican students escalated after the shooting death of student Emmanuel Williams near the school, followed by the killing of a Puerto Rican student soon after.

Regardless of the opening of Roberto Clemente High School and the ousting of Principal Fink, both battles vigilantly fought by students and community members did little to squelch the unease present among students, staff, and community members. A 1974 student walkout at Clemente High School led by Concerned Committee for a Better Education at Clemente High School became an intense battle between protesters and police officers, resulting in 28 arrests and dozens injured.²⁷⁸ This time around the protest was led by students who in many ways resented the influence of not only school counselor Carmen Valentin, but outside interest who students argued inundated them with political propaganda. That same week the Board of Education reassigned Valentin, math teacher Joseph Figueroa, and Antonio Burgos to other schools in order to ease the turmoil at the school.²⁷⁹ The Concerned Committee sought the restoration of teacher Mr. Figueroa, who was a strong opponent of Carmen Valentin and hoped for a permanent principal to replace the ousted Fink. Similarly, they sought limiting the teaching of politics to that already included in the approved school curriculum, the removal of Valentin, disciplinary action against teachers who introduced politics into the extra-curricular activities of students.²⁸⁰ The following day members of the Spanish Action Committee of Chicago held a community meeting who opposed a follow up rally at the

²⁷⁷ "Tension High at Tuley," *Chicago Defender*, January 10, 1974.

²⁷⁸ Rudy Unger and Patricia Leeds, "28 in student protest seized; 22 cops injured," *Chicago Tribune*, November 13, 1974.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

school, fearing it was merely a diversion to allow “dissidents” from entering the school and cause further turmoil.²⁸¹ S.A.C.C members and others blamed the complicated political ideologies within not only the local community but in Puerto Rico for the present day tribulations of Chicago’s Puerto Rican students and schools. One newspaper article labeled Valentin as the root of all the disruptions at the school, accusing her as using her position as both a platform to promote her views regarding the independence movement of Puerto Rico and as a recruiting ground for the revolutionary movement.²⁸² But its important to remember who was at the center of all this controversy, not necessarily as instigators or as active participants, but rather those most affected by the actions and decisions of others. Students, whether supporters of Valentin or rallying behind her permanent removal, stood to lose the most if conflict continued at the highly troubled high school. Some of the students initially supported the works of Valentin and local community members, hoping it would bring a positive change to their educational lives, later coming to resent the influence of others as they saw their own stake as students not an important aspect of all the battles being waged across the community. As Tuley/Clemente student Robert Robles clarifies, “It’s enough. There is always trouble here. It is all games, all politics. What about my education?...She [Valentin] cares only about herself. Get her out of here and there will be peace at Clemente.”²⁸³

²⁸¹ “Units plan to avert trouble at Clemente,” *Chicago Tribune*, November 14, 1974.

²⁸² “Who’s winning at Clemente,” *Chicago Tribune*, November 16, 1974.

²⁸³ Rick Soll, “Many forces at work at Clemente,” *Chicago Tribune*, November 14, 1974.

Chicago's Puerto Rican's and Higher Education

To assume an immediate calm and resolve over the issues present at the school (which in many aspects mirrored the overall situation of the local community), was not a realistic assessment on Robles behalf. But for not merely a community, but a generation of youth whose life has continually been marked by social turmoil, whether at the hands of teachers, police, or their own community. Puerto Rican students were again the victims. And for those students fortunate enough to have the opportunity to move on to higher education, the struggle for educational equality took on a new form. Although still affected by a high dropout rate, the population of Latina/o students at institutions of higher learning within Chicago and the state of Illinois saw a rise during the 1970's:²⁸⁴

Table 4: Hispanic Enrollment at Public Universities, Fall 1973-Fall 1977

INSTITUTION	FALL 1973	FALL 1974	FALL 1975	FALL 1976	FALL 1977
Chicago State University	108	126	145	157	140
Eastern Illinois University	11	19	28	22	29
Governors State University	13	28	29	23	76
Illinois State University	55	55	56	125	109
Northeastern Illinois University	345	437	550	NR	881
Northern Illinois University	164	168	202	202	203
Sangamon State University *	8	19	16	11	7
Southern Illinois University- Carbondale	36	61	107	92	82
Southern Illinois University- Edwardsville	19	40	33	46	42
University of Illinois –Chicago	725	818	1,116	1,251	1,402
University of Illinois -Medical Center	31	30	43	49	81
University of Illinois – Urbana/Champaign	171	217	248	285	344
Western Illinois University	69	92	87	105	117
Public Universities TOTAL:	1,755	2,110	2,660	2,368	3,513

²⁸⁴ Hispanic Enrollment at Public Universities, Fall 1973-Fall 1977. Data provided by the Illinois Board of Higher Education.

* Sangamon State University is now the University of Illinois at Springfield.

The situation for Puerto Rican students at institutions such as Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU) in the city's Northside seemed like a continuation of their days within Chicago's public schools. Students at Northeastern created the Union for Puerto Rican Students in order to better evaluate ways in which students at this level could both be better served by the institution and how they themselves can continue to better serve the communities from which they came. Felix Padilla rightfully argued, "Puerto Ricans were making a direct connection between their demands for educational reform and the general demands of the Puerto Rican barrio for equality."²⁸⁵ Barrio youth faced the reality of inadequately prepared schools and agencies, which did not recognize the relevance of familiarizing itself with the linguistic, racial, and most importantly, the cultural distinctiveness of Puerto Ricans in Chicago. These students found Northeastern University and other institutions of higher learning and began to create their own organizations and print materials, similar to the developments occurring within the overall Puerto Rican community. The creation of the Union for Puerto Rican Students at Northeastern Illinois University in the Fall of 1971 allowed students such a space in which to better articulate those very desires and needs of the students on campus. Maximino Torres, a former administrator and instructor at Northeastern claimed the students "familiarity with their experiences of the harsh environment they had endured in their community" not only sustained but "guided them to recognize, perhaps instinctively, the prevalent needs Hispanic American students face in higher education and to articulate recommendations to address such needs."²⁸⁶ Seemed, for these students,

²⁸⁵ F. Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, 184.

²⁸⁶ Maximino Torres, "An Attempt to Provide Higher Educational Opportunities to Hispanics: The Evolution of Proyecto Pa'lante at Northeastern Illinois- 1971-1976," PhD dissertation, Loyola University, Chicago, 1983: 38.

the quest for a sense of equality at any level in many ways not only became learned behavior but perhaps an element of their everyday cultural practice. The Union for Puerto Rican students argued for more culturally relevant courses, geared at allowing these students a sense of belonging within the University's curriculum, and as one student proclaimed, "we felt we needed some one person at the school who was, acquainted with our community," seeking better counseling aimed at Puerto Rican students specifically.²⁸⁷ More importantly, Puerto Rican students at NEIU, as well as other Latina/o students, sought and remained committed to their own academic success, asking school administrators to invest that commitment to them as well by developing programs whose sole purpose was aimed at assisting this population. The establishment of the Pa'lante program at NEIU, after a series of student-led activism, highlighted the students demands of the hiring relevant staff who will work closely with school Administration, have a stake in the admission and retention of Puerto Rican students, and ensure the availability of financial aid to these students.²⁸⁸

In tandem with the already short yet conflicted history of this community, Puerto Rican students at NEIU soon found that although they succeeded in rectifying the immediate needs of the student population, dissatisfaction and conflict within the organization itself quickly ensued. In September of 1975, the student run newspaper, *Lucha Estudiantil* ran the story, "Proyecto Pa'Lante Used Alliance" alleging the organization was not only allowing providing the names and contact information of its students to a student group "to propagandize their organization" but further accused Pa'lante's director Maximino Torres of using his role and resources as director to help

²⁸⁷ M. Torres, 332-333.

²⁸⁸ F. Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, 187.

advance the groups agenda.²⁸⁹ In the October 1977 issue of *Que Ondee Sola*, student writers furthered scrutinized the work of Proyecto Pa'lante's director, Torres, claiming the programs students themselves continued to complain regarding the inadequacies of the director, lack of financial aid, and the courses Proyecto Pa'lante students were being forced to take. As one student wrote, "Proyecto Pa'lante with its present coordinator Maximino Torres is only interested in getting students in for September, and then totally forgets about them."²⁹⁰

Felix Padilla best contextualized the importance of higher education in the lives of Puerto Ricans, for these institutions "not only provided training and developed skills, it inculcated values, commitment, and modes of behavior...and more protective of civil rights."²⁹¹ I would argue that it is not only the attainability of higher education providing this sense of accomplishment to Puerto Ricans, but the inherited adeptness to seek resolve in the many injustices it has faced during its short history in the city. Fueled by their desire for educational equality is at the core of the community's commitment to protect their civil right, and provide them with the skills to confront the many threats faced by the community.

Puerto Rican Students in the Diaspora: A Time and Place for Change

Perhaps isolated and almost exiled within their own community in Chicago, Puerto Ricans in the city continued to campaign for a sense of educational, political, racial, and social equality, a battle that became synonymous for this diasporic community

²⁸⁹ "Proyecto Pa'lante Uses Alliance," *Lucha Estudiantil*, vol.1, no.1,1.

²⁹⁰ "Maximino Torres Does It Again," *Que Ondee Sola*, October 21, 1977, 3.

²⁹¹ F. Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, 189.

in the U.S. The schooling alone of this community became a national struggle, transcending space and time, and very much embedded within the overall vision of Puerto Ricans in the diaspora as a means to confront the injustices the populations has contended with amidst colonial rule and now as racialized beings. Anthony De Jesus and Rosalie Rolon-Dow remind us that the “political, social-cultural and linguistic tensions inherent in the relationship between Puerto Rico and the U.S. have frequently been mirrored in the schools attended by Puerto Rican students...As a result, Puerto Ricans educated in U.S. schools have alternately experienced school sites of oppression, struggle, resistance and hope.”²⁹² The story of migration and schooling, for Puerto Ricans, are historically and intricately linked as it positions the Puerto Rican student and the community in these very sites of oppression, struggle, and resistance, and has led to the legal and political battles for Puerto Ricans from New York to California (*Mendez v. Westminster*). Chicago was just one of many spaces in which these very stories unfolded, and to some degree remain untold. Some groups, such as Aspira of New York, sought new avenues in the 1970’s in which to challenge the structural forces affecting the educations of Puerto Ricans, and in many ways utilized language and bilingual education as a site for educational reform for Puerto Ricans. Sandra De Valle argues that for Puerto Ricans, language and culture were ones means in which these students could become empowered, and in many ways revitalized the educational experience of the community.²⁹³

²⁹² Anthony De Jesus and Rosalie Rolon-Dow, “The Education of the Puerto Rican Diaspora: Challenged, Dilemmas, and Possibilities,” in *Centro: Journal of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies*, Vol. XIC, Number2, Fall 2007, 4.

²⁹³ Sandra Del Valle, “Bilingual Education for Puerto Ricans in New York City: From Hope to Compromise,” *Harvard Educational Review*, Vol. 68, no.2, 1998; 200.

The Aspira Consent Decree (1975) proved a significant victory for the Puerto Rican and Latino community of New York City. The education of this population severely depended on the creation and maintenance of relevant curriculums within city schools which also took into account the linguistic challenges faced by Puerto Rican students since their initial migration to the city. The Courts decision in *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) mandated that “where inability to speak and understand English language excludes national origin-minority group children from effective participation in the educational program offered by a school district, the district must take affirmative steps to rectify the language deficiency in order to open its instructional program to these students.”²⁹⁴ Clearly, Lau did not explicitly call for the creation of bilingual education programs in the U.S., in order to truly open the educational doors to non-English speaker. In 1972, attorneys from the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund filed a complaint on behalf of thousands of Puerto Rican children and their parents, as well as Aspira, and other Latino children, for failure to serve its non-English students. After a lengthy legal process, the United States District Court of the Southern New York issued an opinion “to the effect that these neglected children had rights under federal law”, issuing to orders that both sides prepare and submit a plan to remedy the needs of the children in question.²⁹⁵ The Aspira Consent Decree was signed on August 29th, 1974, calling for the creation of a “transitional bilingual education” (TBE) program to meet the needs of its students. Luis O. Reyes states that the decree “originally intended to address the grievances raised by the Puerto Rican/Latino community” but the creation of a TBE

²⁹⁴ William G. Mildán and Shirley Muñoz-Hernández, “The New York City Consent Decree: A Mechanism for Social Change,” *The Bilingual Review* IV, no. 3 (September/December 1977): 169.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 171.

program was far from the bilingual/bicultural program sought by the plaintiffs.²⁹⁶ In many ways, the resulting program mirrored the assimilationist approach seen with the working of LULAC, as acquiring English was “the paramount social imperative.”²⁹⁷ In fact, according to Del Valle, “many felt that the decree represented an assimilationist model of education that did not address the essential concerns of the Puerto Rican community...to have schools respect the Spanish language and the social, familial, and civic culture of Puerto Rican students.”²⁹⁸ Just like the school struggles of communities such as that in Chicago, the schooling concerns and needs of Puerto Ricans are more complicated and multifaceted than one issue, and attempting to address such concerns with a monolithic approach leaves community members feeling further disconnected and marginalized.

Conclusion and Summary

The schooling of Puerto Ricans, or better yet, the lack of adequate schooling for Puerto Ricans in Chicago, has united a very ideologically divided population at times, while at other conjunctures, it provided the catalyst to highlight or exacerbate their existing conflict. David Tyack argues that when people deliberate the education of their youth they are debating the future of the nation as a whole.²⁹⁹ This is similarly applied to the case of Puerto Ricans in Chicago for the relationship between the schooling of Puerto Rican youth and the increasing politically charge development of the community as a

²⁹⁶ Luis O. Reyes, “The Aspira Consent Decree: A Thirtieth-Anniversary Retrospective of Bilingual Education in New York City,” in *Harvard Educational Review*, Vol 76, no.3, Fall 2006: 372.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 372.

²⁹⁸ Del Valle, 201.

²⁹⁹ Tyack, 2.

whole were intricately intertwined, often questioned by Puerto Ricans themselves. Who had a greater stake in the educational lives of these students was a constant debate among community leaders, school administrators, and parents, and clearly demonstrated with the Tuley/Clemente demonstrations. Schools from the era preceding the development of the common school in the U.S. to the situation faced by Puerto Ricans and other students of color, have continued to be impacted by wealth, race, and gender, as an indicator of the resources afforded to particular schools and school systems. The active participation of “various minority communities,” according to Educational Historian James D. Anderson, was affected by public schooling, and “served as the main community issue around which different people could rally to promote achievement, equality, and the promise of the American dream.”³⁰⁰ Youth, in particular youth of color, have historically been negated the opportunity and the right to become active participants in developing changes that would improve their educational lives, bringing to light their social realities as part of their that quest for change. Their daily lives, however, are consequently at the hands of those in power, and who may not necessarily be genuinely invested in the academic (and in many ways, overall) survival of Puerto Ricans. Apparent in the actions of those contending the oppressive and limited schooling allowed them, in particular students in organizations such as “Concerned Puerto Rican Youths” as well as the various, often times opposing, groups fighting for control of Tuley and Clemente High School are “the

³⁰⁰ James D. Anderson, Introduction to “1950-1980 Separate and Unequal,” in *School: The Story of American Public Education*, 123-124.

many heroic and subtle forms of resistance exercised by marginalized youth to create new possibilities.”³⁰¹

Puerto Ricans across the U.S. have utilized their political capital as Latina/os with voting rights and their experience with the creation and maintenance of local and national organizations, to promote achievement and equality for themselves and others. Locally in Chicago, groups such as Los Caballeros de San Juan, Spanish Action Committee, Aspira and the many student led organizations set the stage for a social movement within the city, seeking to transform the educational lives of this population, but allow the community an opportunity to demand social justices, and recognition by the city of Chicago for the condition of their lives during the last thirty years. Sonia Nieto best exemplifies the longstanding struggles of Puerto Ricans, and the continued desire for change, as she states, “although school can do little to remove barriers related to poverty, they can create space where student can learn at high levels and demonstrate the tremendous promise that they have. When that happens, we will all be winners.”³⁰² But when Puerto Ricans in Chicago began to question their living conditions within the city during the 1940’s and beyond, it soon became apparent that without a viable option for they themselves to improve their living conditions, their lives within the city would continue to be a harsh reality. Schools quickly became the very opportunity needed by Puerto Ricans to confront their very marginalized reality within the city, but to also work alongside other Puerto Ricans contending with the same questions regarding their status within the city. Puerto Ricans were soon looking for new means of communicating their

³⁰¹ Enora Brown, “Freedom for Some, Discipline for ‘Other’: The Structure of Inequity in Education,” in *Education as Enforcement: The Militarization and Corporation of Schools*, ed. By Kenneth J. Saltman and David A Gabbard (New York: Routledge, 2003), 136.

³⁰² Sonia Nieto, “A Brief History,” 32.

needs, concerns, and issues with one another as their access to mainstream media was quite limited and did not always convey honest portrayals of them. The creation and maintenance of alternative media outlets, particularly those initialized by Puerto Ricans in Chicago, would function as one more organized response to the conditions of Puerto Ricans in the city, and one very critical venue in which parents, community members, and most importantly, students, communicates their troubled relationship with Chicago schools.

CHAPTER FOUR

LIVING AND WRITING IN THE PUERTO RICAN DIASPORA

The dissemination of information regarding the schooling and community organizing of Puerto Ricans in Chicago was quite limited through mainstream media and, for the most part, one-sided. Until the mid-1960's, Puerto Ricans depended on these very media outlets to link them to both the local growing community but also to remain informed about the ongoing political, economic, and social news from Puerto Rico. Yet the Puerto Rican community in Chicago soon created their own newspapers and journals in order to ensure their own interest within the city would have a place to develop and be heard. Interestingly, this emerging print culture chronicled the battles waged in the city for educational equality while simultaneously creating a sense of community across ethnic and geographic locales.

The need for this population to develop and maintain its own print media was indicative of their evolving status within Chicago but also of their own recognition of their own permanency within the city. Although Puerto Rican migrants to Chicago, and other U.S. cities saw their stay as temporary, buying time before their ultimate return to the island, the emergence of youth activism (as seen through the Young Lords and organizations such as Chicago's Concerned Puerto Rican Youths) clearly demonstrates the population's permanency. Their inclusion and active participation in higher education and as a growing business and politically active constituency, both complicates and

enhances our understanding of the community's historical significance, through their involvement in print culture, be it local newspapers or journals. In tandem with an emerging activism advocating civil rights and cultural empowerment, the 1960's and 70's brought on battles to establish ethnic studies programs at U.S. colleges and universities, with Puerto Ricans and Chicana/os very much invested in these spaces, now as students and educators. The creation of these programs, or more specifically Puerto Rican and Chicana/o Studies, as well as the inclusion of school-wide curriculum reflective of Puerto Rican and Chicana/o communities and experiences allowed for a validation of sorts for those seeking to not only establish themselves within academic settings, but hoping to bring light to issues afflicting their communities for so long, and for so long undoubtedly overlooked. During this era came a need to provide scholarly spaces for the production and sharing of literary and intellectual contributions by Puerto Rican and Chicana/o scholars and community members.

Traditional and more established journals were not always as welcoming of scholars of color, whose own works now came to reflect their history as racialized and marginalized people, living and learning against the dominant culture, when they were allowed to learn at all. Their exclusion from more historically homogeneous journals in some ways led to the creation of community based and produced sites for articulating the lived realities of this growing population. Similarly, developing their print materials can be seen as a response to the unfair depictions of Puerto Ricans and others within mainstream print media. Chicago's unique status in the 1960's and 1970's as a burgeoning city in which both Puerto Ricans and Mexicans lived side by side, and laid claim to space allowed for the forging community ties across historically grounded ethnic

and racial divides. Through their mutual struggle to gain a sense of equality and belonging emerged a Latina/o literary and intellectual collective.³⁰³ But although there was a sense of community collaboration among Puerto Ricans and Mexicans in Chicago, it was through Puerto Rican run newspapers and journals that we begin to see how through print materials these groups began to situate themselves and their lives alongside one another. For Puerto Ricans three such collectives provide a rich and insightful narrative on the lives of Puerto Ricans in Chicago by Puerto Ricans, with these particular journals and newspapers developing during one of the community's most trying eras. *The Rican: A Journal of Contemporary Puerto Rican Thought*, *El Puertorriqueño*, as well as the newspapers of the Young Lord's Organization (which went by various names during its tenure), provided venues in which to not only allow scholars a space to articulate their own research agendas, but similarly examine and include the voices of the growing diasporic Puerto Rican community. Prominent scholar Juan Flores reminds us that the life of a diaspora does not necessarily begin with the arrival of a people to their new "host setting," but instead "when the group has begun to develop a consciousness about its new location, a disposition toward its place of origin, as well as some relation to other sites within the full diasporic formation."³⁰⁴ Puerto Ricans in Chicago serve as an appropriate example in understanding diasporic communities when one looks at the evolving and problematic relationship between the community and the city since their

³⁰³ In her 2005 Dissertation, Historian Lilia Fernández details the history of Mexican and Puerto Rican (im)migration to this Midwestern city, who found themselves contending with the residual racial and economic politics faced by previous waves of migration to Chicago, with Mexican and Puerto Ricans engaging in community activism and grassroots politics in order to navigate their daily lives. (Lilia Fernandez, *Latin/o Migration and Community Formation Postwar Chicago: Mexican, Puerto Rican, Gender Politics, 1945-1975*, (PhD Dissertation, University of California at San Diego, 2005).

³⁰⁴ Juan Flores, *The Diaspora Strikes Back: Caribeño Tales of Learning and Turning* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 16.

initial migration to the city, and now the growing struggle to gain a sense of stability in the schooling lives of their children. The shift in public discourse regarding Puerto Ricans (initially a bit more welcoming, but necessarily accepting) coincided both with their growth in population within the city, and the development of relationships with Mexican and African American residents, and is well documented within the pages of all three publications. Since their inception, these publications not only allowed a space for the dissemination of information and valuable resources aimed at Puerto Ricans and other Latina/os, but equally created a platform in which the creation, maintenance, and evolution of Puerto Rican identities could be acted out. John Storey argues that “our identities may seem grounded in the past, but they are also about becoming who we want to be or being who we think we should be in particular contexts,” with the performativity of Puerto Rican identities taking on various dimensions through out the pages of these periodicals.³⁰⁵ The sometime contrasting agendas and ideologies of the community played out in these three particular journals and newspapers clearly demonstrating the intricate particularities shaping this group’s identity. Nevertheless, the texts brought forth an insightful narrative of their lives within the city, sometimes very much in opposition to the very narrow and problematic views held by dominant mainstream media regarding Puerto Ricans, and at other times conflicting with one another. Hegemonic practices of mainstream print media own fundamental aesthetic created a culture of exclusion of works created by and regarding marginalized communities. These spaces may not have always seemed like a reliable or viable option for scholars of color who sought to divulge their own agendas, nor as a source for fair and honest information on these growing communities. Thus, *The Rican*, publications from the Young Lords

³⁰⁵ John Storey, *Inventing Popular Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 86.

Organization, and *El Puertorriqueño* served as intellectual, yet not highly regarded, venues in which Puerto Ricans across the diaspora could express the lived realities of their heterogeneous communities. Whether situated within the halls of academia, New York, Chicago, or on the Island, these materials allowed the community to forge a sense of belonging and collaboration for those living in the margins now for over three decades in Chicago.

El Young Lord Latin Liberation News Service

With a growth in population across various U.S. cities (beyond their East coast beginnings), Puerto Ricans sought new ways to forge ties among themselves, thus facilitating a discussion on the plight of their growing community and the ways to confront the unease under which their own claim to space was very much constrained (and strained to some extent) by the current discourse aimed at communities of color. The creation of organizations such as the Young Lords, the Brown Berets, and the Black Panthers were instrumental in mobilizing people of color to challenge the growing discontent and disparities which had by the late 1960's limited the opportunities available to them in terms of schooling, labor, and housing. A former Chicago street gang, the Young Lords Organization re-organized itself as a community-based collective in the late 1960's, seeking to challenge the city's urban renewal plan, which was displacing primarily working class and poor people of color, and the countless acts of police brutality targeting Puerto Rican residents. As the Young Lords organization grew outside of its Chicago boundaries and origins, Puerto Ricans began to further collaborate on ways to better the situation for their population. More importantly, Puerto Ricans created a

culture of collaboration and exchange of ideas, which linked them despite their own class, gender, sexual, racial, and intellectual differences with other Puerto Ricans. This very “culture of collaboration” and need to work across and despite differences has played a prominent role in the history of this community in the United States. From its inception, Chicago’s Young Lords Organization capitalized on the importance and effectiveness of utilizing print media to disseminate critical information to the community, and as a tool to communicate with members of other marginalized groups. According to their monthly publication, a newspaper was needed because “a Latin American Movement is developing in Chicago for the purpose of putting an end to the injustices, suffering and exploitation which is forced upon our people.”³⁰⁶ Further, it stated “the editorial hopes that the tool of a newspaper can help aid in the development of a political consciousness in the community and in YLO, help develop revolutionary goals, people, strategy, and contacts.”³⁰⁷ Issues of police brutality and harassment, both aimed at Puerto Rican residents and other Latinos and African American’s became a recurring theme in the YLO’s writings. The May 1969 shooting death of YLO member Manuel Ramos at the hands of a plain-clothes police officer prompted members to organize the local community to confront both the offending officer, but also the city’s mayor Daley. The death of the married, father of two, also became a platform to remind the city of its lack of response towards the needs of Chicago’s poor community.³⁰⁸ The Young Lords along with the Poor People’s Coalition, Young Patriots, and others, staged a

³⁰⁶ “Why a YLO Newspaper?,” *Y.L.O* 1, no.1, March 19.1969. Unless stated otherwise, all of the Young Lords Organization newspapers and publications discussed here can be accessed via DePaul University’s online digital archives collection at:

<http://eres.lib.depaul.edu/eres/coursepage.aspx?cid=4075&page=docs>.

³⁰⁷ “Young Lords, Serve and Protect”, *Y.L.O*, May 1969, p. 6.

³⁰⁸ Untitled article, *YLO* 1, no.2, p. 6-8.

take over of Chicago's McCormick Theological Seminary, renaming it the "Manuel Ramos Memorial Building" following the shooting death, demanding the creation of a Puerto Rican cultural center, funds for the creation of a 24-hour day care center, affordable housing for poor and working class people (in property owned by McCormick), as well as financial support for various welfare rights and leadership programs.³⁰⁹ As the family of Manuel Ramos wrote, "What the Young Lords are doing in a city so terribly afflicted by the discrimination and corruption affecting our people etc., will some day be recognized world wide." What is quite notable is the ways in which the Young Lords brought the plight of marginalized and troubled communities around the U.S. and abroad to the pages of their monthly newspaper in Chicago. The newspapers commitment was not limited to creating a space in which members of the YLO could regularly document their growing troubled relationship between the city and the community (who had now become a constant target of Chicago Police), nor did the publication restrict its coverage to Chicago's Puerto Ricans. Since its inception, the newspaper ventured outside its own ethnic and geographic boundaries, linking Puerto Ricans to their Chicana/o and African American allies, and similarly aligning their own struggle with a larger movement. Through this movement the Young Lords sought a "new society in which all people are treated as equal," with the newspaper providing a glimpse of a transnational movement to do just that. Stories on Malayan working women battling to gain unionizing rights preceded detailed articles on the constant police surveillance of Chicago's Young Lords seeking to combat urban renewal plans in Chicago's Lincoln Park community.³¹⁰ Whether knowingly or not, the YLO newspaper

³⁰⁹ "McCormick Take Over," *YLO*, May 1969, p. 7.

³¹⁰ *YLO*, volume 1, no.1, March 19 1969.

succeeded in placing people and communities often alien to one another or even in conflict, in conversation, linking them through their shared struggles.

As Lilia Fernández argues, “Mexican and Puerto Rican points of intersection at times contained very real antagonism and hostilities, while at other times they resulted in coalescence and coalition-building.”³¹¹ Yet, as members of Chicago’s YLO’s came to realize after attending the spring 1969 Chicano Liberation Youth Conference, Puerto Ricans and Chicanos had much in common in fighting the same enemy: “pig power structure, capitalism.”³¹² Featuring these very common, at times almost paralleled struggles of Chicana/o community activism, depictions of police violence, and community displacement, allowed Puerto Rican activists (such as the YLO) and community members a sense of belonging to a greater movement for equal rights and community empowerment, across racial and ethnic differences. The April 1, 1971 issue of the newspaper entitled “The Government and Repression,” focused on the current and historic struggles against local and national governments, many of which at times proved brutal and fatal for Puerto Ricans and Chicana/os. In one such case featured in this issue, a Texas family was brutally gunned down in the middle of the night, including a young girl and her pregnant mother, by Texas police officers searching for two men accused of killing three police officers.³¹³ As the wounded 36-year-old mother later stated, “After wounding us they made us kneel down on the floor, including the children, and told us not to make a move. When the oldest boy, 14 years old, moved they hit him on the side of

³¹¹ Lilia Fernández, *Latin/o Migration and Community Formation Postwar Chicago: Mexican, Puerto Rican, Gender Politics, 1945-1975*, 13.

³¹² “Chicano Youth Conference” *YLO*, May 1969, p. 20.

³¹³ “Texas Pigs Attack Chicano Family: Critically Wound Father, Mother and Daughter,” *El Young Lord Latin Liberation News Service*, March 1969, p. 3. The police officers entered the house of the Rodriguez family in Dallas, Texas, wounding the three family members. The two offenders who the police intended to arrest, lived over fifty feet away in a neighboring unit.

the neck very hard.” Perhaps as a response to the current status of Puerto Ricans on both the island and in U.S. cities, as well as other communities of color, the YLO utilized this current issue in the press to link the past to present day struggles for equality and human rights, and further historicize both Puerto Rican social movements and Puerto Rican nationalism, across generations and space. Featuring an educational piece on the history of the 1937 Ponce Massacre in Puerto Rico and a 1971 confrontation between Puerto Rican police and students at the University of Puerto Rico Rio Piedras campus in the same issue as a reminded Puerto Ricans of their ongoing struggle for political independence and “victory over imperialism.”³¹⁴

The newspaper (and organization) similarly commented on the current status of Latino, Puerto Rican, and African American students in city schools. The same urban renewal projects displacing poor, working class families from communities such as Lincoln Park, led to immediate ratifications to students at Waller High School:

Cerca de tres cortos partes de las venetanas se encuentran sin vidrios y el edificio esta por caerse. La escuela “sirve” principalmente a negros y latinos, adolescentes de la comunidad quienes sus familias estan pobres para mandarlos a escuelas privadas y quienes tambien poco a poco se mudadas del area por Renovacion Urbana (urban renewal). Algunos miembros de la facultad, en especial el principal, son verdaderos racistas que trabajan solamente por el dinero y nunca les importa si el estudiante aprende o no.³¹⁵

³¹⁴ “March 21, 1937: The Ponce Massacre” and “U.P.R Repression” both appeared in the April 1, 1971 issue of the newspaper. In the 1937 incident, a group of Puerto Rican Nationalist leaders held a peaceful demonstration in the town of Ponce, where they were met by over two hundred armed police men, leaving over a dozen civilians dead, with many more wounded. In 1971, a clash between pro-independence students and ROTC cadets on the campus of the University of Puerto Rico ended two lives.

³¹⁵ “Waller High School,” *El Young Lord*, volume 1, no.2, April 1971, 6. “Close to three rooms have windows without glass, and the building is close to collapsing. The school serves primarily Blacks and Latinos, youth from the community whose parents are too poor to send them to private schools, and who have also little by little move away from the community because of urban renewal. Some members of the faculty, including the principal are real racist who work only for the money and do not care if the students are learning or not.” (authors translation)

According to the article, after the suspension of over 170 students during a six-month period at Waller, a group of Waller mothers attempted to meet with the school administrators seeking the reinstatement of the students, only to be dissatisfied with the principal's lack of interest to meet with the women. Students and allies at the high school led a demonstration at the school, in solidarity with their brothers and sisters who they believed were seemingly punished for being black or Latino.³¹⁶ At Wells High School, an afternoon meeting between Young Lords members and students seeking information regarding the organization led to a rock throwing confrontation between police and students:

We were in the lunchroom rapping to our brothers when the school's pig came over and started telling us that we were trespassing and that if anything happened, we were going to stay until the period was over and we told him so. He left and about twenty minutes later he came back and started telling that we had to go, so when we refused, he called to some other pigs and dragged us away so that we would not be able to relate to our brothers.³¹⁷

Although the presence of the Young Lords at the school was an obvious trespassing issue for police, it quickly became an opportunity for students to vent their frustrations with school administrators, and support one of many community organizations who appeared to have a clear understanding and familiarity with their needs.

Looking beyond the Young Lords' and, by extension the newspaper's own political ideologies, it's necessary to acknowledge the critical historical importance of this particular publication, and the indispensable relationship it maintained with an otherwise silenced or misinterpreted community. Newspapers such as the *Chicago Tribune* and *Chicago Sun-times* limited its coverage on Puerto Ricans in the city, or as Young Lords leader Cha-Cha Jimenez argued "the *Chicago Tribune* had a history of fabricating racist

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ "Speak Out: Straight from Mousee," *YLO*, volume 2, no.6, p. 2.

lies against Latinos, Blacks, Native American and other poor of this city.”³¹⁸ So for a generation of Puerto Ricans —some born and raised in Chicago’s streets, attending Chicago’s schools, and living Chicago’s racial politics— creating such a space in which to critically examine their own subjectivities, while simultaneously retaining a sense of cultural and community cohesiveness was desperately needed. Sometimes, this ever evolving relationship with the city, and Puerto Ricans quest for that very community cohesiveness, resulted in internal conflict, something that played out in the pages of both the Young Lords newspaper and *El Puertorriqueño*, as well as within the community itself. To label Chicago’s Puerto Rican community as homogenous would indeed be an inaccurate assessment.

El Puertorriqueño

If the Young Lords news service aimed to liberate a very marginalized community, then *El Puertorriqueño* sought to keep them well informed. Founded in 1965, *El Puertorriqueño* “became an established institution in the Puerto Rican community, wielding enormous influence over the thinking of barrio residents.”³¹⁹ Utilizing the resources and advantageous relationships of Chicago’s Puerto Rican business community, and the growing political presence of Puerto Ricans in the city, the newspaper provided more than just a space to relay the ongoing social ills plaguing Puerto Ricans, but more importantly established an almost permanency of the Puerto Rican community that I would argue was not previously established within other media.

³¹⁸ Letter from Jose Jimenez, General Secretary of Chicago’s Young Lords Organization, to “All Press Contacts.” April 1, 1974, folder 3, box 2, Young Lords Collection, DePaul University Special Collections.

³¹⁹ Felix Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, 142.

Although much more modest in its politics compared to the YLO newspaper, *El Puertorriqueño* became quite outspoken on community issues affecting local residents, while providing information ranging from voting rights, schooling issues, to local Puerto Rican beauty pageants. As Felix Padilla argued, “the paper would note the needs, the pains, and the aspirations of the Puerto Rican newcomer who, in America, fought an arduous struggle for existence.”³²⁰ While recognizing the struggles of this community, and the role local city government played in the marginalization of Puerto Ricans, the newspaper also provided growing or aspiring Puerto Rican businesses and middle-class residents, a space in which to play out their own evolving identities and lay claim to the city as rightful inhabitants and not foreign outsiders. However, it is not to assume that this community press, or as Padilla refers to it, migrant press, had evolved into an assimilationist tool seeking to transform the community into acceptable, privileged individuals. Instead it created a sense of community cohesiveness transcending class, gender, and the racial specificities that came to define Puerto Rican Chicago. This was very much dependent on the cultural distinctiveness of Puerto Ricans (including the use of Spanish for the newspaper), and still very much tied to the island. In fact one of the newspaper’s regular staff writers was credited as covering news from Puerto Rico, ranging on sport rivalries among Puerto Rican towns to the building of new roads on the island, thus closely linking life there to that of new migrants now settling in Chicago.

Celebrating Puerto Rican culture, as well as the accomplishments of community members became a common theme of *El Puertorriqueño*, including that of editor and contributor Claudio Flores. On the front page of the March 15, 1968 issue, Mr. Flores was touted for his re-appointment to the Chicago Human Relations Commission, an

³²⁰ Felix Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, 141.

essential tool in recognizing and seeking to rectify race relations within the city, having played an organizational role in the migration and settlement of Puerto Ricans to the city. Flores' frequent column in the newspaper "Ramas y Espinas" (branches and thorns), focused on local matters, often questioning the exclusion of community members in issues regarding the community. His column reported on both Puerto Rican and Mexican "society," linking these two groups in the pages of the newspaper and their growing presence there. Although the column did provide essential information regarding the critical nature in which Puerto Ricans participated and contributed through their civic involvement (such as through their role in the Puerto Rican conference, Chicago's school board, etc.), the radicalism and grassroots activism that came to define the YLO organization, and to some extent, the Puerto Rican community post-1966, was not as obvious in Flores' writing, or even the newspaper itself. However, I would argue, although this seemingly moderate Spanish-language newspaper did cater to a different audience than the YLO, and benefited greatly from the resources allotted by a Puerto Rican business elite, Flores and others continued to provide valuable insight on issues affecting Puerto Ricans in Chicago from police harassment and urban renewal, to the schooling concerns of the community.

In the May 31, 1968 issue of *El Puertorriqueño*, the living conditions of 42 Puerto Rican families shared the front page with the crowning of the year's pre-teen Puerto Rican queen. Unlike the newly crowned beauty queen, the 42 families would not be spending the upcoming Puerto Rican Day Parade adorning a float, but instead found themselves questioning their dilapidated, roach infested living quarters, and the

possibility of losing their homes to demolition.³²¹ Similarly, in the winter of 1970 the newspaper reminded the community of the rights of tenants suffering from lack of adequate heating of their homes during the cold winter. The front page again declared that year's "Reina del Congreso de Organizaciones Puertorriqueñas" (the Queen of the years annual Puerto Rican parade).³²² These two events in the lives of Puerto Ricans in Chicago not only demonstrate the discrepancies within the community itself, but are also very indicative of the gender dynamics at play within the pages of the newspaper. Women for the most part were mothers or beauty queens, or for the case of the newly crowned 1968 Mrs. Puerto Rico Chicago, both.

Although the newspaper was founded, published, and for the most part, penned by Puerto Rican men, one woman's frequent writings became a unique, and at times controversial, contribution to the paper. Trina Davila advised Puerto Rican residents on issues ranging from voting rights to encouraging, if not demanding, parental accountability to their children's education, while lamenting the status of the poor. In March of 1968, Davila reminded Puerto Ricans of their responsibility not only to the city but to themselves by urging the community to participate in local elections, by either simply voting or seeking an elected position, instead of assuming that those in power will automatically work for the community.³²³ It became quite a common theme for Davila to

³²¹ "En Peligro de Perder Hogares: 42 Familias Boricuas," *El Puertorriqueño*, May 31, 1969, 1.

³²² In the January 8, 1970 issue, "Falta Calor en Muchos Hogares de Chicago," the newspaper reminded residents of the resources available: "Déjeme recordarle nuevamente que el personal del Centro de Progreso Urbano de la calle Division está aquí con el único propósito de servirle a la comunidad. (Let me remind you again that the personnel of the Center of Urban Progress is here with the only purpose of helping the community.) (Author's translation)

³²³ Trina Davila, "Impresiones: Llegó la Hora Nuestra, Todos a Inscribirse Para Votar," *El Puertorriqueño*, March 15-21, 1968, 5. Davila wrote: "Les hago un llamamiento para que salgan de su mutismo y que luchemos por lo que en realidad nos pertenece, un puesto de honor en esta

either reprimand or advise Puerto Ricans regarding their actions and responsibilities, going as far as questioning some residents status as “poor people.” In a January 1970 column Davila asked just who were these poor people for from her experience, many times those who refer themselves as poor could have sought employment, but opted not to.³²⁴ It was these very assumptions and contentious topics that at times prompted community members or other newspapers to question Davila’s influence and own notions regarding the community which she presumed to help. In an open letter to Trina Davila, Young Lords in 1969, Young Lords member Cha-Cha Jimenez wrote:

I respect your intelligence, your age, and your expressed concern for the Puerto Rican people. However, you create doubts in me and many of my brothers and sisters by the narrow one-sidedness of your editorials...They’re not lazy people. You try to work where they work and see. And as far as the law goes, when the laws serve poor people, then we will follow them, not when they enslave us.³²⁵

It is these very diverging views that help us most in understanding the undertakings of these community members in confronting their own status within the city, but also the social hierarchies that existed within this population itself. Although *El Puertorriqueño* did provide a different kind of service to the Puerto Ricans (perhaps seen as a bit more conservative or limited by some), the truth of the matter is that it indeed serve them. *El Puertorriqueño* as a whole offered the Puerto Rican newcomer, as well as the long term resident, a sense of belonging, or home, in this new and burgeoning city. The newspaper’s own weekly classified section and business advertisements informed residents on housing and employment opportunities, an important service considering the troubled problematic history Puerto Ricans endured within both markets. For *El*

ciudad donde vivimos.” “I call on you to not be mute any longer, and for us to fight for that which belongs to us; a place of honor in this city in which we live.” (authors translation)

³²⁴ Doña Trina Davila, “Bieaventurados los Pobres y los humildes,” *El Puertorriqueño*, January 6-14 1960, 6.

³²⁵ Cha-Cha Jimenez, “Dear Dona Trina Davila, My Puerto Rican Sister,” *YLO*, 1:4, 2.

Puertorriqueño, whose run lasted until the 1980's (longer than any other Puerto Rican publication in the city), its critical documentation of a emerging Puerto Rican identity and consciousness, and its own reach across ethnic and class divides is quite essential in our overall understanding of the development and cultivation of print culture within marginalized communities, and perhaps inspired the emergence of other print media that helped frame a critical understanding of the historical specificity of this community. *El Puertorriqueño* became an important for Chicago's Puerto Ricans who sought relevant information on city schools and its students, ranging from P.T.A meetings, class reunions, highlighting student's achievement, as well as detailing the ailing situation for Puerto Rican students.

El Puertorriqueño allowed for a space for groups to express their growing frustration with the ways they saw the city as failing Puerto Ricans and other Latina/os in Chicago and find ways to work across and despite differences to bring on changes that will benefit these community members. But more importantly, the newspaper offered what not other mainstream media outlet in the city could which was also celebrate and recognize the successes and hard work of students who have maneuvered their way through schools despite their shortcomings (the schools that is), allowing residents an alternative to their troubled lives. When a group of twenty-four students at San Miguel High School on Division graduated, the newspaper featured them prominently in a 1968 issue of the paper, dubbing "Spanish Power". For parents seeking information on local school meetings, the publication periodically featured a section, "Noticias Escolares," in order to inform the communities of the work being done by teachers, parents, and other school officials to improve the lives of students, and also inform parents seeking the

availability of resources to assist their own endeavors (such as English language classes). A May 10, 1968 feature entitled “Un Puertorriqueño Ciudadano del Mes” (Puerto Rican citizen of the month), honoring the scholastic and community contributions of Mr. Jose Lopez, then a student at Tuley High School.³²⁶ The article was eager to recognize Lopez as the Chicago Board of Education’s “Youth Citizen of the Month” and the winner of a scholarship to be used at Loyola University in Chicago. Although there is of course a history of activism and discontent within the community, it is also critical to recognize the works of students and community members who have in many ways sought to establish themselves within the city, seeking access to an almost middle-class sensibility, via their participation and contributions in civic organizations and schools. Schools of course became the very venue and opportunity to gain access within the city, thus the success of students was often celebrated in the pages of the newspaper. I argue, however, that the newspaper was not necessarily devoid of any political consciousness or merely accepted the plight of Puerto Ricans, but instead provided valuable information in Spanish for the community, thus making the information accessible to a wider audience. However, even the reporting of community activism was also in line with the view and collective identity of the writers and contributors, and differed greatly from the raw, almost Gonzo journalism within the pages of the Young Lords publications. For example, when the controversy over the building of a new school to replace Tuley began, *El Puertorriqueño*’s reporting on the issue placed the opinion of Los Caballeros de San Juan as central to the debate and as spokespeople for the needs and wants of the community,

³²⁶ “Un Puertorriqueño Ciudadano del Mes,” *El Puertorriqueño*, Mayo 10-16, 1968, 12. It is important to note that Mr. Lopez is also the brother of Oscar Lopez who would later be sentenced and jailed for alleged Terrorist acts as a member and leader of the Pro-Puerto Rican independence group, Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional Puertorriqueña (FALN). Jose Lopez went on to become the director of the Puerto Rican Cultural Center of Chicago.

not always including the voices of those outside of the organizations ideologies or membership. To a community outsider, the newspaper's March 5, 1970 article "Caballeros de San Juan Opuesto a Escuela en el Parque Humboldt" would appear as if the battle to "save" the park for the community was solely spearheaded not only by Los Caballeros, more importantly, by men, despite the work of other organizations and individuals involvement. Again, although organizations such as Aspira of Illinois was headed by a Puerto Rican woman, and a Puerto Rican woman was the sole Latina/o on Chicago's Board of Education, the newspaper did not always recognize their efforts as active participants and leaders within the community.

The newspaper's stake as a Spanish-language, Puerto Rican run publication legitimized the role of its local residents working diligently as active participants in creating institutional changes that will benefit and improve their daily lives. The pages of *El Puertorriqueño* provided indispensable information in Spanish for parents including their own rights and responsibilities in the schools, to ensure schools did not leave them out of the decision making process. But as informative as it may have been in terms of listing relevant school improvement meetings, reunions, and announcing the many accomplishments of Puerto Rican students, the newspaper remained quite critical of the works of other community members, and maintained its somewhat conservative views regarding the participation of unions perhaps to remain in good standing with Mayor Daley and other school officials. Daley's persistent presence on the cover of the newspaper, with headlines such as "Latinos Con Richard J. Daley," offered an image of camaraderie between a community plagued with joblessness and social unrest with an administration often blamed for the lack of resources and opportunities allotted to Puerto

Ricans. Janet Nolan, who through her own religious work was an active participant in Humboldt Park in the late 1960's and supporter of Juan Diaz, maintained that for many the only way to achieve a sense of political power was to align themselves with Mayor Daley and his political machine.³²⁷ In her previous conversations with Juan Díaz, Nolan learned of how some in the community viewed *El Puertorriqueño's* founder along those very lines:

He [Juan Díaz] told me that the man who owned the newspaper *El Puertorriqueño* was on Mayor Daley's Council of Puerto Rican rights, but he did not speak for the people. According to Juan and others he was strictly a "tio Tomas" —an Uncle Tom.³²⁸

The September 9-15, 1971 issue of *El Puertorriqueño* took time to align itself with other media outlets such as the *Tribune*, and accuse Diaz of Communist involvement.

A February 1971 edition of the newspaper not only announced the end of the public school teachers strike in Chicago, but the newspaper denounced teachers for not putting the welfare of their students ahead of their own self-interest and desire for higher wages.³²⁹ As the cover article points out, Chicago's teachers are the best paid in the nation. Being the best paid, according the newspaper, would leave teachers no reason to strike and unionize against Daley and the city, leaving children as victims of city-wide power struggles. But to be fair, the newspaper equally highlighted the Board of Educations ineffectiveness in providing adequate resources to meet the needs of its teachers, and argued that teachers were justified in their demands for higher wages and sought to place the welfare of students and parents who were most affected at the center

³²⁷ *Price of Dissent*, 428.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, 428.

³²⁹ "Termina Huelga de Maestros de las Escuelas Publicas," and "Huelga de Maestros el Derecho a Unificarse," *El Puertorriqueño*, January 14-20, 1971. "Another strike has ended in this city of many pollutions in which many strikes form because of the. What have the children and parents gained? Promises that many times are not filled." (Author's translation)

of the issue. The newspaper was not consistent with their views regarding teachers, the strike, and more importantly labor unions, as made clear in the writings of columnist Trina Davila and the editorials of founder Claudio Flores. In the January 28th-February 3rd, 1971 issue of *El Puertorriqueño*, Davila's column "Termina Huelga de Maestros" asks, "Ha terminado otra huelga en esta ciudad de tantas poluciones y que las huelgas forman parte de ellas, Que han Ganado los ninos y los padres? Promesas que muchas veces no se cumplen."³³⁰ Davila speaks of unions as very selfish entities, who fail to serve those very individuals whose financial support sustain union leaders and organizations. Although Claudio Flores maintains teachers began organizing under labor unions as a means to ensure their own rights and demands, he also claims teachers have chosen to become a part of the bureaucratic process over their responsibility to teach children.³³¹ The strike, according to Flores, "no es una cosa de otro mundo, sino, una huelga más; pero una de verdadero desastre porque complica desventajosamente a la niñez y a la juventud en desarrollo."³³² But perhaps their disdain for the organizing of teachers was not a blanket one. As Davila in March 1971 wrote encouraging the creation of la "Asociacion de Maetros Hispanos" in the hopes of supporting the work of "Hispanic" teachers in Chicago schools, who according to Davila, have sacrificed themselves and have fought for their children.³³³ Chicago's Latino teachers were indeed facing their own obstacles within its public schools and the Chicago Teacher's Union

³³⁰ Davila, "Termina Huelga de Maestros de las Escuelas Publicas."

³³¹ Claudio Flores, "Huelga de Maestro el Derecho a Unificarse," *El Puertorriqueño*, Demana del 14 el 20 de Enero de 1971. "Que el maestro se haya convertido en parte de una fuerza burocratica suyo interes personal esre sobre la responsabilidad de impartir la ensenanza..."

³³² *Ibid.*, 3. The teacher's strike is not something from another world, but instead just another strike; but one with devastating affects because it undoubtedly complicates the lives and development of young children and youth.

³³³ Trina Davila, "La Asociacion de Maestros Hispanos," *El Puertorriqueño*, March 18,24, 1971, 5.

(CTU) in order to address their concerns. Latino teachers contributing to the *Chicago Tribune's* editorial pages in 1973, accused the CTU of not going forward with non-binding, “no monetary demands” for a union study commission on teaching English as a second language and bilingual education.³³⁴ As the groups stated, “the Latino community has long been skeptical of the CTU’s concern for the Latino teacher and student. This current action indicates clearly to Chicago’s 250,000 Latino population that the priorities of the CTU and those our community have very little in common.” But it seems Davila’s priorities, sometimes at odds with some in the community, as seen in debates with Young Lord leader Cha Cha Jimenez, in this instant had much in common with the concerns of Latino teachers. It also had much in common with the ongoing disputes between Chicago’s African American teachers, the CTU, and the Board of Education. According to Dionne Dans, Chicago’s African American teachers in the 1960’s risked their jobs “for their belief in quality education for Black students and mobilized against the Chicago Teachers Union for their own certification and against the Union’s racism.”³³⁵ Clearly, Chicago schools had not only become a contested, and sometimes violent, space for its students of color, but similarly caused much turmoil for the teachers seeking to change racist practices aimed at their communities.

The Rican: A Journal of Contemporary Puerto Rican Thought

Established in Chicago in the Fall of 1971, *The Rican* set “to establish a literary communication to exact an appreciation of isolated and forgotten values, perceptions,

³³⁴ “Latino teachers protest,” *Chicago Tribune*, January 18, 1973.

³³⁵ Dionne Dans, 141.

visions and experiences of second and third generation Puerto Ricans.”³³⁶ Journals such as *The Rican* and as well as its West coast counterpart *Aztlán*, were quite instrumental in providing Puerto Rican and Chicana/o scholars a space in which their intellectual and literary articulations could not only reach a larger audience, but vehemently challenge ill-rooted notions of their scholarship while simultaneously building relationships beyond their own geographic and ethnic locales. Similarly, *The Rican* created an alternative to the Anglo-centered, heavily monolingual spaces that until then dominated academic settings and even sites of cultural expressions for scholars of color who by then only gained access through what Norma Alarcón has termed the “special issue syndrome.”³³⁷ Unlike most other scholarly journals, such as *Aztlán* (published out of UCLA), *The Rican* did not find itself housed within any institutional space, therefore not provided the equal support and resources afforded to other publications. Even when journals are not monetarily supported by a specific institution, such ties provided some validation or even scholarly “protection” in terms of their content, while it can be argued that such ties come at a cost to contributors or editors whose could find at times their control and voice limited. *The Rican*’s inaugural issue was initially listed as being published by “The Rican Journal Inc.”, later credited as the “Midwest Institute of Puerto Rican Studies and Culture”, both non-profit educational organizations. In her pivotal piece on the critical importance of *Third Woman* on Chicana feminist literature, Catherine Ramírez maintains how vital it was for such presses to not “make a single unit their institutional home” as a

³³⁶ *The Rican: A Journal of Contemporary Puerto Rican Thought* (Fall 1971):1.

³³⁷ Norma Alarcón, “Hay Que Inventarnos/ We must invent ourselves, *Third Woman: Of Latinas in the Midwest*, Vol.1, no. 1, 1981; 5.

means to safeguard their independence.³³⁸ This independence allowed journals such as *The Rican* to look beyond the halls of academia for contributions but include up and coming writers, artists, and scholars, as well as local youth who began to exert their literary voices in order to express their constant struggle not only as Puerto Ricans, but as youth of color in communities that continued to criminalize them and limit their participation as U.S. citizens and students.

With the journal's publication in the U.S. Midwest, *The Rican* moved Puerto Ricans from the East coast, "Nuyorican" identity that had been solely attributed with Puerto Ricans to a critical understanding of this diasporic population by the 1970's. The journal's choice to not limit itself to a specific regional locale spoke to the need to forge literary, academic, and activist ties with other communities during this era, with a growing population of Latinos now situated within the Midwest. The journal did indeed maintain a need to recount the plight of Chicago's growing population of second and third generation Puerto Ricans, while also creating opportunities for Puerto Ricans across U.S. cities to understand and share in their similar battles and gain a sense of equality after decades of struggles within their own specific locations. Both the journal as well as community based organizations (such as the Young Lords) were utilized to reach out to one another. Early on *The Rican* was also inclusive of contributions by and regarding Chicanos whose similar tales of educational and social injustices bound them to their Puerto Rican counterparts, no matter where they found themselves (West Coast, East Coast or Midwest) and despite ideological differences. I maintain that the interrogation of the growing commonalities of Puerto Rican and Chicano populations within the scholarly

³³⁸ Catherine Ramirez, "Alternative Cartographies: Third Woman and the Respatialization of the Borderlands," *Midwest Miscellany* 30 (2002): 47-62.

pages of journals such as *The Rican* and *Revista Chicano-Riqueña*, as Richard T. Rodríguez points out, “reflects the coexistence of these two groups in a common public sphere,” even when groups find themselves at times in conflict with one another publicly.³³⁹ In the inaugural Fall 1971 issue of the journal, Thomas Perez’s piece “Dialogue with a Chicano Student” chronicled the experiences of one Chicano student, as he maneuvered his way through an “Anglo” controlled school system that relegated him, as a Chicano, to its margins. As Guillermo recalled, “We were always in a little damn thing over here, man. We always had all the shit, the stupid books, the broken crayons. Everybody seemed like they got the new ones, except us.”³⁴⁰ For Guillermo, as was the case for many others during the 1960’s and 70’s, the mere assertion as “Chicanos” was met with suspicion or dismissed by teachers. For many, the lack of educational curriculum and material that spoke to the cultural distinctiveness of Latinos/Chicanos similarly impeded the schooling of this population, who were not new to American schools. As the civil rights activism of the 1960’s unfolded across the U.S., a new wave of community radicalism and social awareness grew for Puerto Ricans and Chicanos, with much of that activism centered on educational issues as their schooling concerns were not rectified despite their growing presence within U.S. schools with education linked to the victimization felt by youth of color.

Samuel Betances’ May 1974 article in *The Rican* spoke of that very unrest felt by Puerto Rican and Chicano students who continued to seek access to higher education, as

³³⁹ Richard T. Rodríguez, "Glocal Matters: A Response to José E. Limón ." *American Literary History* 20.1-2 (2008): 184.

³⁴⁰ Thomas Perez, “Dialogue: With a Chicano Student,” *The Rican*, (Fall 1971): 32.

well as demanding that institutions stop ignoring their needs as Latinos.³⁴¹ During its tenure, *The Rican* continued to publish reports on the status of Puerto Rican students in the United States, as well as including literary pieces by the very school children scholars continued to discuss. In 1971 eighteen year-old Edwin Claudio's phenomenal poem entitled "A Boycott" helped archive the rich history of Puerto Rican student activism and the painful reality faced by this population as it entered the schools doors daily:

Like it happened:
Ricans got together to say No to
an unjust education which says
you learn the anglo way of life
Can you dig?
Wife swapping in nice
Decent suburban homes.³⁴²

This "unjust education" and the story of Chicago's school walkouts have by far been omitted from the history of Latino education although students throughout the era continued their struggle to extract school reform from within, whether welcomed by administrators or not. The power dynamics present within these classrooms and later city streets (and other public spaces) attempt to relegate the Puerto Rican student to a sense of powerlessness amidst shifting ideological and racial discourses. Here Edwin shifts the power to youth who proclaim an end to this unjust education, which attempted to "sell" an American way of life as a cure to their own community's social ills. The community's struggles over schools, such as Tuley, Clemente, and others were captured by media outlets in Chicago. Edwin's own first person account truly allows us a humanistic view over the fight for educational rights from one of the very people it comes to affect the most. The inclusion of Edwin's and other voices within *The Rican* allows us to piece

³⁴¹ Samuel Betances, "Puerto Ricans and Mexican Americans in Higher Education," *The Rican*, (1974): 27.

³⁴² Edwin Claudio, "A Boycott," *The Rican*, (1971): 29.

together these deliberate accounts of the trauma surrounding their schooling and everyday lives, written by those living through it, with the journal offering space for these very youth to be heard and seen by a major audience, something not seen within other venues. This audience also included incarcerated Puerto Rican men who provided “blurbs” for the back covers various issues of the journal who proclaimed the journal to be “most valuable to our people’s struggle... We are trying to find these valuable materials that are so far from within our reach.”³⁴³ This far-reaching audience of course was not the norm within other academic journals, as they typically served a homogeneous audience, reflective of a particular academic voice and field, and not necessarily tangible and open to the needs and ideas of those outside of those fields. But just as groups such as the Concerned Puerto Rican Youth offered students a glimpse into the lives of incarcerated Puerto Rican men and women, the journal’s inclusion of these very people, acknowledged the existence of this population, not merely casting them and their experiences as no longer relevant because of their current status within prison walls, but making them actors in the community’s efforts at mobilization.

Although grounded in its commitment to provide a platform for voicing the ideologically charged views and concerns of local community members, *The Rican* continued to provide a space for those engaging in scholarship centered on the very needs and stories of the communities from which they emerged. To be sure, it is safe to assume the field of Puerto Rican studies can be seen emerging and developing within the pages of *The Rican*, with works by scholars such as Edna Acosta-Belen, Frank Bonilla, Isidro Lucas, and Eduardo Ceda Bonilla. Any historiography on the emergence of Puerto Rican

³⁴³ *The Rican: Journal of Contemporary Puerto Rican Thought*, (1971): 1.

studies within the United States must account for the work of these scholars, and their presence within the pages of *The Rican* allowed the journal the opportunity to put scholars within the field in conversation with one another, but also in a way validated claims made by contributing youth and community members of their troubled realities: substandard schooling, racism, identity problems, language issues, and political status. Saying no to an unjust education, as eighteen-year-old Edwin Claudio suggested, was understandable if one read the status of the Puerto Rican dropout as detailed by Isidro Lucas. As Lucas argued, the principal reason given by Puerto Rican students for their dropping out of Chicago schools was due to the weariness of the crisis of their identity, which made their daily existence within schools a difficult one.³⁴⁴ This is very much in line with the views held by Edwin and others, who sought creative ways to voice the constant struggle they engaged in with education and teachers in general. An “Untitled Play” (found in the same issue) written by seventh and eighth grade students at Chicago’s Chopin Upper Grade Center detailed the daily interactions between teachers and students, some of whom eventually drop out of school. The play’s main character, Pedro, finds himself sent to the principal’s office following a dispute with his teacher:

Pedro: I wasn’t doing anything

Mr. Herman: That’s what you said last time.

Pedro: Mr. _____ doesn’t teach anything. All he does is say shut up or keep quiet.

Mr. Herman: But what you don’t seem to understand is that a teacher cannot teach when students are running around the room or talking too much.

Pedro: But that’s what usually happens.

Mr. Herman: I think you are blaming the problem on everyone else except yourself. You have to respect your teachers. They are here to teach you.

Pedro: They can’t teach man.

³⁴⁴ Isidro Lucas, “Puertorriqueño En Chicago: El Problema Educativo Del Dropout,” *The Rican: Journal of Contemporary Thought*, (1974): 10. Original text in Spanish: “La principal razón personal ha de definirse así: el estudiante puertorriqueño de Chicago vive agobiado por una gran crisis de la propia identidad, que hace su permanencia en la escuela cada día más difícil.”

Placing blame on the student allowed Mr. Herman as well as others, to render themselves free from any responsibility regarding the unease under which Puerto Rican students continued to find themselves in urban schools.

As the only journal discussed here, *The Rican* differed from both the periodicals of the Young Lord Organization and *El Puertorriqueño* in several aspects. First, *The Rican's* audience was not limited to its local reaches, but instead, it sought to establish itself within a national context, in some ways mirroring the trajectory of the very mainstream publications it found itself excluded from. Though challenging those very traditional journals, *The Rican* still maintained a very structured setting, with an editorial board reflective of the emerging Puerto Rican studies agenda of the time, one whose traditions still resided within the halls of academia. Secondly, *The Rican* was the brainchild of a cohort of college educated, U.S. reared young Puerto Ricans, looking to provide a scholarly space for Puerto Ricans, similar to what Black scholars were doing at the time.³⁴⁵ I argue that the relationship these groups of growing Puerto Rican intellectuals, who similarly suffered the racial politics afflicting Puerto Ricans at the time, but now within the halls of academia, allowed for the creation of this intellectual product. As journal founder further states, “to produce any intellectual product you really need to have space, and an opportunity to think. It dawned on us that there was no such document, no journal...what we wanted which was a journal in which we could discuss ideas and articles and relate to issues.”³⁴⁶ For a generation of Puerto Ricans now living, learning, and writing in the diaspora, the journal provided just that.

³⁴⁵ Samuel Betances, interviewed by author, September 5, 2009.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

Conclusion

Aside from organizations such as the Young Lords, Puerto Ricans on both the island and the U.S. mainland have historically utilized the press in order to critically engage within and across communities, dispensing valuable information ranging from current events on the island as well as social outlets within their local cities in order to meet and congregate with other Puerto Ricans. More importantly, these newspapers created spaces and opportunities where Puerto Ricans could articulate their growing discontent with their overall limited status in the United States, and reconfigure their own positionality within a contentious civil rights movement. Linking the struggles of both Puerto Rican and Chicana/os, and chronicling these stories within the pages of these publications, mapped out a clear view of a “Latino ethnic consciousness” that came to transcend racial, class, national, and of course, ethnic boundaries.³⁴⁷ In contextualizing the emerging print culture with a clearer understanding of a Puerto Rican identity, focusing on these three particular texts demonstrates the range in political ideology, class, and economic differences that are well embedded in that very identity. Although other publications similarly contributed to the expansion of a distinct Puerto Rican diaspora, such as *Revista Chicana-Riqueña*, and are quite essential in mapping this community in ways that challenged monolithic assumptions of Puerto Ricans, situating *The Rican*, *El Puertorriqueño*, and *YLO* in Chicago further enriches the history of Puerto Ricans in the diaspora, by documenting their experiences, contributions, and struggles outside of an East Coast identity. As is evident in a historical understanding of the Puerto Rican community in Chicago, views on their existing status within both the city and the island,

³⁴⁷ Felix Padilla, *Latino Ethnic Consciousness*

differ explicitly, as did their social, class, and political ideologies. But more importantly, these print materials gave a voice to a community both acted upon and silenced by a dominant culture. Or as Puerto Rican scholar Lisa Sánchez-González argues, speaking of Puerto Ricans “as a subaltern community, or a group that has not only been invisible in national discourses of culture, but has been depicted in ways that make it impossible for that community to render itself visible in these discourses” is quite useful when discussing the literary contributions of this group.³⁴⁸ For Puerto Rican students these publications made their growing needs visible, unlike more traditional media outlets, which often times denied them a voice or validated the students concerns, or more importantly, portrayed them as troubled and criminal. Foucault’s quintessential work on prisons and the spectacle of punishment, remind us “the public execution is to be understood as a judicial, but also as a political ritual. It belongs, even in minor cases, to the ceremonies by which power is manifested.”³⁴⁹ In this case, the public spectacle of the lives of Puerto Ricans (including students, and their schooling shortcomings, the community uprisings, and the violence encountered by the community), played out in the pages of mainstream media, while this allowed those in power in many ways to vilify the population, and continue to blame them for their current plight. But beyond failing to recognize their needs, mainstream media outlets in the late 1960’s and 1970’s often times place blame on these students for the tumultuous relationship with Chicago’s schools, failing to recognize discriminatory practices faced by this population. Borrowing from Maylei Blackwell’s analysis of Chicana print culture as social movement practices,

³⁴⁸ Lisa Sanchez Gonzalez, *Boricua Literature: A Literary History of the Puerto Rican Diaspora* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 3.

³⁴⁹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage, 1977), 47.

similarly allows me to speak to the role these material played in a developing Puerto Rican community.³⁵⁰ Blackwell argues that “print community modes of production are a crucial site of historical inquiry helping us understand the development of Chicana feminist ideology, discourse, and political praxis in a way that accounts for how ideas traveled through local formations as well as larger cross-regional circulations.”³⁵¹ *El Puertorriqueño*, *The Rican*, and the YLO’s publications, become very central to a discussion on not only the historical significance of Chicago’s Puerto Rican’s, but more importantly, it relayed just how this population viewed their own lives, whether as students, activist, or middle-class, all with a valid history and valid claim to space. I insist that these spaces allowed the population to re-imagine itself, not merely as marginalized individuals or troubled, but through their own lens, and on their own terms, even if at odds with one another. These print materials discussed here marked a very unique Chicago Puerto Rican identity, and fueled their quest for social justice and recognition. Such a quest thus came to define a generation of Puerto Rican activists and students, but more pointedly, a community.

³⁵⁰ Maylei Blackwell, “Contested Histories: Las Hijas de Cuauhtémoc, Chicana Feminisms, and Print Culture in the Chicano Movement, 1968-1973,” in *Chicana Feminisms: A Critical Reader*, ed. Gabriela F. Arredondo et al., (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2001), 59-89.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 60-61.

CHAPTER FIVE

MOVING FORWARD, WORKING FOR CHANGE

The growing and rich scholarship on Puerto Rican women in the United States is critically tied to the complicated labor and economic relationship between the U.S. and the island since the U.S.' acquisition in 1898, with recent works focusing on discussions on the reproductive rights of Puerto Rican women since that time.³⁵² Although works on the vast participation of these women in the labor history and struggles in the United States is called for, there is a need for the literature to explore the myriad of ways in which Puerto Rican women in cities such as Chicago, situated themselves not as passive actors in the making of "Latino spaces" but as active leaders in instituting changes that have historically altered their community's lives. Works such as that of Virginia Sánchez Korrol's on Puerto Rican women in religious vocations in the U.S., "can help us understand a broader history precisely because they are unconventional: at a historical juncture in the development of Puerto Rican barrios, when women's roles were circumscribed by social custom and occupation."³⁵³ Puerto Rican women in Chicago, through their various roles within and outside of the home, similarly aided in the

³⁵² See Laura Briggs, *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science, and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico*. Eileen J. Suárez Findlay, *Imposing Decency: The Politics of Sexuality and Race in Puerto Rico, 1870-1920* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke, 1999).

³⁵³ Virginia Sánchez Korrol, "In Search of Unconventional Women: Histories of Puerto Rican Women in Religious Vocations Before Mid-Century," in *Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader In U.S. Women's History*, ed. By Ellen Carol DuBois and Vicki L. Ruiz (London: Routledge, 1990), 322-332.

development of their local communities, sometimes transcending racial and class differences in order to gain a sense of stability for their own children.

Chicago's Puerto Rican Women and Community Activism

The “importing” of Puerto Rican women to Chicago in the 1940’s did more than provide a viable and seemingly exploitable workforce for countless Chicago families, but more importantly it inserted these women as principal players in the development of the city and community’s history. The relationship between these *domesticas* and university students in Chicago speaks to the intricate ways Puerto Rican women began to imagine themselves within the city, far away from not the only the familiarity of family and home, but perhaps away from the constraints of both family and home. As seen in the works of Lilia Fernández and Angelica Rivera, Mexican American women in Chicago as well organized themselves in communities such as Pilsen in order to address educational, health, and other concerns affecting their lives in the city, while simultaneously claiming a space for themselves through the creation of and participation in various organizations.³⁵⁴ Puerto Rican women in Chicago were often times merely relegated to domestic roles within the work force or the home, or paraded around the city as the “best product” the island had to offer as seen through Los Caballeros de San Juan’s initiated beauty pageants. There is then much discussion and work needed on the works of these same women as they found themselves participating in preserving and improving the lives of their children, students, and other community members, through their roles as

³⁵⁴ See Lilia Fernández, “Latina/o Migration and Community Formation in Postwar Chicago: Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Gender, and Politics, 1945-1975,” chapter 4. Angelica Rivera, “Reinserting Mexican-American Women’s Voices Into 1950’s Chicago Educational History,” (PhD Dissertaion, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2008).

teachers, administrators, leaders, and of course mothers. In Chicago, the education of Puerto Rican school children was just one of the venues in which these women asserted themselves as community activist, even if they did not refer to themselves as such. The lives of four women in particular truly speak to the historical significance of Puerto Rican women in Chicago as history makers, or as Sánchez Korrol states, “these were the women who were either formally educated, skilled or bilingual, or who, by virtue of their community involvement, exercised leadership roles.”³⁵⁵

Elena Padilla

Although not a native to Chicago, Elena Padilla’s name has become quite synonymous with the study of Puerto Ricans in the city since her groundbreaking work in the 1940’s. Both through her scholarship on Puerto Rican and Mexicans in Chicago in the 1940’s, and her community work to bring light to the work and living conditions in Chicago of Puerto Rican contract workers, Padilla in many ways provided the groundwork for an emerging Midwestern Latina/o Studies, providing valuable insights on the lives of these community members in the earlier days of their settlement. Through her work alongside her fellow University of Chicago colleagues, assisted these migrants with adjusting to life in their new host city.³⁵⁶ As Arlene Torres describes, “she [Padilla] was a pioneer at the time because she was a scholarly activist... She sought to combine her scholarship with her activism in order to make a difference in the lives of other

³⁵⁵ Sánchez Korrol, “In Search of Unconventional Women,” 323.

³⁵⁶ Merida Rúa’s and Arlene Torres forthcoming book, *Latino Urban Ethnography and the Work of Elena Padilla* (University of Illinois Press, forthcoming) explores Padilla’s life and contributions to the development of Latina/o Studies, and her works influence in the lives of a generation of scholars.

individuals.”³⁵⁷ This sense of scholarly activism became embedded in Puerto Rican life in Chicago as women who followed Padilla, such as Maria Cerda, used their own educational capital in order to continue to make a difference in the lives of their community, and in particular, school children.

Maria Cerda

The 1969 appointment of a Puerto Rican woman, Maria Cerda, to the Chicago Board of Education by Mayor Daley, along with Alvin J. Boutte (an African American) was denounced by local groups who labeled the appointees as representatives of “special interest groups” by virtue of their ethnic identities.³⁵⁸ One such group, composed mainly of Chicago housewives, denounced the Mayor’s nominations, citing discrimination against Chicago’s working class whites, arguing now their needs will not be met. A representative of Chicago’s Southwest Associated Block club, Ellen Noonan, argued that Mrs. Cerda “will represent the Spanish-speaking people and not us...nobody there will listen to us.”³⁵⁹ One other group member argued that by appointing Cerda, who was the wife of the first Mexican American Illinois Appellate Judge David Cerda, Mayor Daley has set “an ethnic precedent” with other groups now perhaps seeking to have their own community represented on the board.³⁶⁰ But Cerda’s appointment to the Board of

³⁵⁷ As quoted in Jeff Kelly Lowenstein’s, “Scholars Build on Work of Elena Padilla; Early Researcher of Puerto Ricans in the U.S.,” *The Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education*. Aug 29, 2005. Vol. 15, Iss. 24; pg. 29.

³⁵⁸ Peter Negronida, “Two Nominees OK’d For Board of Education,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 29, 1969.

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

³⁶⁰ Ibid. Speaking on the appointment of an African American to the Board, Mrs. Marilyn Moran, representative of the Bogan High School delegates stated, “We want conservative representatives...Mr. Boutte can only represent the liberal element because I have yet to meet a conservative Negro.”

Education came at a critical time in terms of Chicago's Puerto Rican and Latino history. Following the 1966 Division street uprising, city officials laid out plans to address the growing problems of the Puerto Rican community, with educational concerns consistently offered as a venue to do so. The pivotal appointment of not just a Puerto Rican, but a Puerto Rican woman, to the board spoke to the growing need of addressing the educational discrepancies in the lives of Latina/o children in Chicago's city schools. By 1969, Puerto Rican and Mexican parents were already active participants and attendees at Chicago Board meetings, seeking adequate bilingual education for its pupils, and increased Spanish-speaking administrators to represent their interests.³⁶¹ Cerda, a native of Puerto Rico who relocated to the city to attend the University of Chicago, was seen as Daley's response to the outcry from the Puerto Rican community to remedy their lack of representation within city politics.³⁶² During her five-year term on the Board of Education, Cerda worked vigilantly for issues on bilingual education and a "school curriculum that valued Latina/o children's cultural backgrounds."³⁶³ As Cerda herself stated:

It was a lot of work. At the time I had kids and I had not worked for 10 years after I had my kids cuz I wanted to be a mother at home. It was really an effort because there were many meetings. It was an exciting period, we were talking about—the big issue before me, before I came to the board was busing. That was not as vital as it was when I came around, but there were many issues and I brought the issue of, not so much bilingual education, but what are we doing for this population that is growing, for many who don't speak the language? How are we doing getting resources to teach them? And then we went searching Puerto Rico and Mexico and brought teachers for Puerto Rico and Mexico. We started with Sylvia Herrera

³⁶¹ Peter Nogronida, "School Board Hears Gripes For 13 Hours," *Chicago Tribune*, Nvember 4, 1969.

³⁶² Samuel Betance Interview with author. Also, "Two New Faces," *Chicago Tribune*, July 16, 1969.

³⁶³ Lilia Fernandez, "Latinas in the Midwest," in *Latinas in the United States: A historical Encyclopedia*, vol.1, edited by Vicki Ruiz and Virginia Sanchez Korrol (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2006), 18.

an Aspira program for 20 students at the University of Illinois to study for teaching. Many of them are working at the board of education now. And we did many things to...also deal with the problem and deal with solution. And find resources to deal with the problem.³⁶⁴

During her five years on the Board, Maria Cerda became a constant presence at local schools (unlike her other Board colleagues), sought an increased in funding for Chicago's bilingual education programs, utilizing such funds to recruit qualified teachers from Mexico and Puerto Rico to aid in the classrooms, and ensured Latino students were physically counted within the schools.³⁶⁵ For some, such as *The Rican* founder Samuel Betances, Cerda's work within the board has had long-term affects in the lives of Puerto Ricans and other Latino students:

She [Cerda] was very key because when we brought Aspira to Chicago in 1968, ah, one of the things that Aspira use to do at that time was they use to establish Aspira Clubs in the High School. So I went to Lane Tech to establish, to help establish an Aspira Club. To meet with the principal to let him know, and he said absolutely not we don't want that club here. So I said o.k, very good. So I called Maria Cerda who spoke to the superintendent, who spoke to the principal, and we then had Aspira club, an Aspira Club at the high school.³⁶⁶

Her appointment as the first Executive Director in 1974 of the Latino Institute in Chicago further spoke to her commitment to educational equality by developing program aimed at training and directing local community leaders to address the growing concerns with Chicago Public Schools bilingual education programs.³⁶⁷ Maria Cerda's work, first

³⁶⁴ Maria Cerda Interview with Lilia Fernandez. Interestingly, Maria Cerda moved to Chicago in the late 1950s, as a single, well educated Puerto Rican woman, seeking to attend the University of Chicago's graduate program in social work. Speaking to a greater understanding and collaboration across Latino groups in Chicago, according to her interview with Lilia Fernandez, Cerda married Mexican American lawyer (and later Judge) David Cerda in Chicago. Judge Cerda was then a founding member of LULAC in Chicago.

³⁶⁵ Maria Cerda Interview, with Lilia Fernández. June 25, 2004 Interview the property of Lilia Fernández.

³⁶⁶ Samuel Betances Interview with the author.

³⁶⁷ For more on the history of Maria Cerda's work for the Latino Institute (1974-1979), DePaul University Archives, Latino Institute Records, Series One.

as an assistant to Mirta Ramirez at Aspira Inc. of Illinois in its early days, as a one-term member of the Board of Education, through her participation of the Latino Institute of Chicago, and lastly through her appointment by the late Mayor Harold Washington as the Director of Employment and Training in Chicago, truly demonstrates her lifetime commitment to ensure that a sense of justice was gained for not only Puerto Rican students, but for Latinos in general in the city. Speaking on the role of women, Cerda stated:

If it weren't for us there wouldn't be a community. In Aspira in New York, Puerto Rico, and wherever they are, the women are the leaders. The first woman, [Antonia] Pantoja, was the one with the idea. All of us when we went to the national meetings in New York, all of us would sit on the floor and we were all women, all scorpions...The majority of the agencies. Look at Carmen Velasquez at El Valor, she got that agency from nothing and look what she has. Look at Alivio, another woman. Look at Así. If it weren't for women, we would not have the leadership that we have right now. In Puerto Rico have always been strong and leaders. Here, in the Mexican community less. But because of me, you get people like Guadalupe Reyes, Mary Gonzales, who is a humongous leader, and people like that talking strongly in the Mexican community. Maria Mangual. All of that was new. At the beginning it was men in the Mexican community, but slowly women got up and they haven't let go.³⁶⁸

Mirta Ramírez

As a representative of the Lakeview Latin American Coalition, in 1971 Mirta Ramírez was instrumental in leading a march to the home of Chicago's Superintendent of schools to question the districts decision to cut federal funding from programs aimed at assisting Spanish-speaking children.³⁶⁹ Groups such as the Lake View Latin American Coalition, working with the Chicago Latin American Education Alliance, in 1971 accused the Chicago Board of Education of threatening to cut funds for its vital Teaching

³⁶⁸ Maria Cerda Interview with Lilia Fernández

³⁶⁹ "Latins Plan March," *Chicago Tribune*, July 23, 1971.

English as a Secondary Language (TESL) program, prompting Ramírez and others to organize a 1,000 person march to Chicago school Superintendent James F Redmond.³⁷⁰ By this time, Ramírez had already become a fixture in local community activism through her role within both the Spanish Action Committee of Chicago, but more importantly through her participation in *Aspira*. It was Ramírez who ventured alone to New York City in 1968, via Greyhound bus, in the hopes of convincing *Aspira* leaders there, to allow her the opportunity to establish the organization in Chicago.³⁷¹ Ramírez's presence within the Puerto Rican community in Chicago continued through her participation in several community-based organizations such as the Spanish Outpost, *Aspira Inc.* of Illinois, Spanish Speaking Action Committee of Chicago, and then as the first curator of the Puerto Rican Museum of History and Culture in 1993. But her community activism was not without controversy, as she and her husband Ted Ramírez, as discussed in an earlier chapter, were at the center of Red Squad attempts to infiltrate and cause friction within local organizations.³⁷² The scare tactics used by officers seeking to destroy local community organizations and leaders targeted not only the Ramírez's, but similarly tainted the community's view on the works of the many individuals singled out by the Chicago Police Department (CPD) and the Red Squad, with frequent talks on alleged communist activities:

[Police officer] then advised [Mrs. Ramirez] of the fact that communists are undisputed masters of deceit, and will seize on any popular or controversial issue for their own cause. [Mr. and Mrs. Ramirez] both seemed on agreement with this, but were slightly reluctant when the [police officer] said he would like their help

³⁷⁰ "Latins Plan March," *Chicago Tribune*, July 23, 1971.

³⁷¹ Samuel Betances Interview with the author.

³⁷² For more on the Red Squad, please refer to the "Chicago Police Department Red Squad and related records [manuscript], ca. 1930s-1986," Chicago History Museum. Documents are only available under special permission, as access to them is restricted until Sept. 23, 2012, by order of Judge Susan Getzendanne.

in removing any communist influence from SACC. They feel that SACC has a lot of potential, and would never allow communists to take over, but would inform the [police officer] of the presence of any new or suspicious persons who might try to get into SACC. (August 1966)³⁷³

An undercover officer, assigned to the Chicago Police Intelligence Division who was engineering the internal rift between the Ramírez's and other members of SACC, Thomas Braham, encouraged the paranoia that was ensuing among the organizations members. According to some reports, Ted and Mirta Ramírez were “identified as collaborators” by the infiltrators, because of their own dissatisfaction with the running of the organization.³⁷⁴ Although Mirta and Ted Ramírez, via press conferences, publicly refuted any alliances with SACC members allegedly involved in subversive, communist, and illegal activities, they too were as much victims of the CPD's Red Squad attempts to discredit any organizing done by Puerto Rican activist.³⁷⁵ Mirta Ramírez's presence and dedication to the local community is very much part of Chicago's Puerto Rican history, with one of the community's school, formally known as Bernard Moose Elementary Schools, now bearing the name Mirta Ramírez Computer Science Charter School.

³⁷³ Minutes from the class action lawsuit brought in June of 1984 by SACC vs. the Chicago Police Department, as quoted in Felix Padilla's *Puerto Rican Chicago*, 175

³⁷⁴ Felix Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, 175.

³⁷⁵ During the 1984 court proceeding that sought to implicate the city of Chicago in the “unconstitutional” surveillance of Puerto Rican community members and organizations, attorney for SACC, Richard Gutman stated, “Ted and Myrta (sic) were victims too. They were used. The various police reports make it clear that Ted and Myrta (sic) did not necessarily want to quit SACC; this wasn't their idea. They were totally opposed to putting out the stuff about communism.” Felix Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, 175.

Carmen Valentin

Media accounts regularly chronicled the role women played in addressing schooling and community concerns throughout the 1960's and the 1970's. In events such as those that occurred at Tuley High School during the early 1970's, women often times took leadership roles across all levels. Teacher turned school counselor Carmen Valentin gained local notoriety for encouraging students to boycott classes at Tuley, as demonstrators sought the removal of then principal Herbert Fink. Police officers speaking on Valentin's involvement in Fink's removal contended that the "anti-Fink campaign was just an excuse to enable Mrs. Valentin to 'radicalize those kids.'"³⁷⁶ Her involvement in the earlier battles at Tuley led to her initial removal from the school. Valentin found herself first at a desk job at the Board of Education, followed by a brief stint at Senn High School, before being reinstated at Clemente following demonstrations in order to restore order at the troubled school.³⁷⁷ Valentin would then herself become the target of a student led walkout aimed at removing her from the new Roberto Clemente High School, which replaced Tuley in the fall of 1974, because of her involvement in the Puerto Rican independence movement.³⁷⁸ As seen in a previous chapter, students who previously supported Valentin's efforts at both Tuley and Clemente, soon became disenchanted with the lack of results. As student Robert Robles said in a 1974 *Chicago Tribune* article:

Carmen is trouble...She is power crazy. She wants to run the school- that's all. We gave her power by following her, and now she turns her back on us. She doesn't care about us or our education. She lied and lied. We followed her two years ago when she led the protest against Fink. She said we would have a Puerto Rican principal- she told us we had to have on if we were gonna get ahead. I

³⁷⁶ John O'Brien, "Ex-Chicago teacher called 'godmother' of FALN here," *Chicago Tribune*, April 11, 1980.

³⁷⁷ Ibid.

³⁷⁸ "28 in student protest seized; 22 cops injured," *Chicago Tribune*, November 13, 1974.

believed that, I guess. We still don't have a new permanent principal. But we still have Carmen.³⁷⁹

After receiving notification of her subsequent removal from Clemente, Valentin maintained, "The students don't want me out... Those students were a small group- tools of the administration. But they will not get me out. We are going to fight."³⁸⁰ Carmen Valentin did indeed lose the battle at Clemente High School, but later became quite active as a counselor at Central YMCA Community College, where she continued to work closely with not only Puerto Rican students, but other students of color as well. Although Carmen Valentin perhaps is most remembered for her involvement in Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional (FALN), an underground, pro-Puerto Rico independence militant organization, responsible for armed actions against U.S. government entities.³⁸¹ Through her subsequent trial, imprisonment, and Presidential pardon, Carmen Valentin has become a fixture in the history of the community, despite individual political ideologies. But just as Padilla, Cerda, and Ramirez, Carmen Valentin's involvement in motivating students and community members to demand educational change in equality for Puerto Ricans, truly personifies her lifelong commitment to ensuring the voices of these students was heard, and their needs addressed.

³⁷⁹ Rick Stoll, "Many Forces at Work at Clemente," *Chicago Tribune*, November 1, 1974.

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

³⁸¹ Jan susler, "Unreconstructed Revolutionaries: Today's Puerto Rican Political Prisoner's/ Prisoners of War," in *The Puerto Rican Movement: Voices From the Diaspora*, ed. By Andrés Torres and José E. Velázquez (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 145. For more information on the trial, sentence, and prison condition please see this chapter.

Conclusion: Rethinking Puerto Rican Women's History

Unlike second-wave white feminist whose own visions at times centered around middle-class ideologies still quite foreign to many women of color during the mid to late 20th century, the organizational work of Puerto Rican and other women of color stem from activist women who are largely organizationally distinct from one another, but who continue to organize along racial/ethnic lines.³⁸² Puerto Rican women emerged from gendered labor context, and intellectual, history (as with Padilla), began to understand their own lives as part of a larger complex, problematic, and very racialized reality within U.S. cities. Their migration across the island and to the U.S. was at times marked by their bodies and linked to the problematic history of reproductive rights and sexuality in Puerto Rico. Except for educator and community activist Carmen Valentin, the other women discussed in this chapter became quite involved in mobilizing much needed change in the lives of Puerto Rican in the city through their active participation within established institutions. Ana Ramos-Zayas maintains that although many “females are noted for their participation in political struggle, thus legitimizing it as a terrain of women’s emancipation,” their participation was still done under men’s terms and visions.³⁸³ When speaking on the participation of Mirta Ramirez in traveling to New York to seek participation in *Aspira*, Samuel Betances remembers that while other male collaborators in Chicago contributed financially for one of their members (Mirta) to travel to New

³⁸² Benita Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism, Black, Chicana, and White Feminist Movements in America’s Second Wave* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 3.

³⁸³ Ana Y. Ramos-Zayas, *National Performances*, 92. Ramos-Zayas gives the example of Puerto Rican revolutionary Lolita Lebrón. “Lolita Lebrón’s womanness is separated from her participation in anticolonial politics and filtered into the political scene only insofar as it is sexualized as the fantasy of male revolutionaries: the beautifully manicured Lolita Lebrón wearing four-inch heels and a fitted dress during her anticolonial attack on the U.S. Congress.” (92-93)

York, Ted Ramirez's contribution was not monetary but rather as his approval and permission for his young wife to travel to New York unchaperoned.³⁸⁴ Puerto Rican women in Chicago aided significantly in the development of a Puerto Rican community, at times limited however by their roles as working mothers. As Maura Toro-Morn's work on gender and community development in Chicago demonstrates, their role at times centered around their use of church spaces and church activities in order to offer not only a source of support for other families, but similarly socialized Puerto Rican girls to their roles, with an emphasis on the value of service.³⁸⁵ Servicing the community, hence, became a vital part of Puerto Rican life in Chicago, and is clearly seen in the lives of Padilla, Cerda, Ramirez, and Valentin.

These women, and others like them, offer a new historical alternative to the lives of Puerto Ricans and other Latina/os across U.S. cities, challenging the power dynamics that have limited our own reading of gendered genealogies that come to represent Latino history. For these women and many more, the plight of Puerto Rican students across the city became a community, and at times, a family affair. For as Vicki Ruiz and Virginia Sanchez Korrol remind us, "women were critical to forging livable settlements out of such inhospitable sites."³⁸⁶ Latinas, as well as other women of color, "take the stance that their life experiences as women of color, in a structurally unequal society informed their

³⁸⁴ Interview with Samuel Betances with author.

³⁸⁵ Maura I. Toro-Morn, "Boricuas en Chicago," *Puerto Rican Diaspora*, 139-140. Toro-Morn argues however, that although Puerto Rican women were vital to the migration to Chicago and the community development that followed, they did so within the confines of Puerto Rican culture.

³⁸⁶ Vicki L. Ruiz and Virginia Sánchez Korrol, "Introduction", *Latina Legacies: Identity, Biography, and Community* (New York: Oxford Press, 2005), 6.

decisions about organizing as feminists of color in organizations that were distinct from so-called mainstream white feminist groups.”³⁸⁷

For Puerto Rican women and Latinas in general, their own identities were tied to the communities in which they now found themselves living in, as they continued to make meaning of their own lives. As mothers, teachers, students, and community members, Puerto Rican women forged a critical awareness of how their temporal claim to space continued to limit the educational opportunities offered to the community, but simultaneously comprised of and inspired a community of scholars, educators, and activists. These women, then, become actors in history, intricately affecting the lives of many others.

³⁸⁷ Benita Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminisms*, 1.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

Space and Identity in Puerto Rican Chicago: Toward an Emergent Scholarship

The period of time that came to define the Puerto Rican community in Chicago has led to a history of community activism and a self-awareness of the ways in which their claim to space has been limited and often times negated since their arrival to the city. For Puerto Ricans, schools became sites in which this very awareness gave them an opportunity to challenge the racial politics that severely plagued the lives of children. For as Henri Lefebvre argues, “social movements must produce their own space,”³⁸⁸ or in the case of this community, produce social structures to move them beyond not only that sense of temporality but allow them to provide a better quality of life for themselves. It is not only imperative to historicize the lives of this community as they maneuvered their way within the city and its ever changing racial landscape, but to also begin to contextualize the critical nature of space in relation to Puerto Rican identity and the “historical baggage” with which it has been forced to contend for decades.

One common theme on Puerto Rican communities in the diaspora, is the critical importance of space and place. The abstraction that in many ways has come to define the community’s status as abject beings stems from their constant displacement, and the myriad ways their own identities as Puerto Ricans often depends on constructs of space,

³⁸⁸ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2004).

place, and history. Similarly, in thinking of inhabited spaces (such as Chicago), we must look not only at their material nature (that which we can physically grasp), but also understand how these spaces are thought about, envisioned, and therefore shaped by not only those who live them, but also by those who seek to change them (through gentrification for example). Schools then must be thought of in the same way, as issues of redistricting, busing, and so on threaten the rootedness of Puerto Rican students and therefore shifts the racial landscape of those particular spaces and identities. Therefore, in order to understand the in-betweenness and sense of loss that has come to define or contour Puerto Rican identities, more work is needed on the cultural significance, the intersectionality of race, gender, and class that speaks to Chicago's Puerto Rican community during the last fifty years. Their claim to space, and the inherit loss of that space then becomes part of that identity and the community formation Puerto Ricans have continued to experience. As Karen Mary Davalos contends, "Diaspora requires geographic and temporal specificity and thus can contradict a cultural identity that is not dependent on space and time."³⁸⁹ In acknowledging this contradiction of sorts with regards to their cultural identity then becomes a critical point in which to comparatively look at the lives of Puerto Ricans in Chicago, the island, and other diasporic sites. Thus we can examine how a national identity for Puerto Ricans is very much altered, but not necessarily contradicted or erased despite their longevity in the diaspora or their movement across spaces. Throughout this dissertation, I have demonstrated how Puerto Ricans in Chicago began to make sense of their own lives through their community activism not only centered on school equality, but through their creation and participation

³⁸⁹ Karen Mary Davalos, *Exhibiting Mestizaje: Mexican (American) Museums In the Diaspora* (Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 2001), 27.

in print culture which allowed them the space in which to articulate their own lives, on their terms. Their own vision of who are as a people, where they hoped to be, and so on, is very much part of that narrative.

The Puerto Rican community's their constant movement across the city complicates not only our own understanding of how spaces are produced, but also the performativity that goes along with it as people offer a new alternative to the production of space with their new occupations and their own cultural and social practices. Drawing from the works of scholars such as Mary Pat Brady (namely her work on Chicana literature and spatiality), can aid in better understanding the ways in which spaces "works to produce gendered, sexualized, eroticized and racialized identities that reinforce and reinscribe state power by centering that power as determinative."³⁹⁰ The urgency and quickness in which the city of Chicago has acted upon Puerto Ricans speaks to this power dynamic, which at times has left the community no choice but to challenge dominant forces through community activism. Gaining control of the schooling of their community gave them a sense of hope that will continue to benefit us for decades to come.

A Promise For Simple Justice

A 1983 report on the current status of school desegregation in Chicago was interestingly titled, "A Promise of Simple Justice in the Education of Chicago School Children?" As the report stated, the quality of life for Chicagoans should not merely be measured by its economic, crime, housing, or transportation status, but more importantly, "Chicago's future must also be measured by the achievement of its public school

³⁹⁰ Mary Pat Brady, *Extinct Lands, Temporal Geographies: Chicana Literature and the Urgency of Space* (Durham: Duke, 2002), 74.

children.”³⁹¹ It was this very simple act of justice sought by not only Puerto Rican students, but also African American and Mexican American students, that inspired a decade if not a generation of school-centered activism in Chicago. Chicago public schools have longed been characterized by their racial isolation, and because its schools grew out the idea of neighborhood schools, as neighborhoods became marked by racial and ethnic segregation, as did their schools. According to one account, “official restrictive covenants, and neighborhood school policies established to be consistent with them, worked to contain blacks and other minorities in specified areas of the city” leading to 91% of elementary schools and 71% of high schools to be single race by 1956.³⁹² White flight out of Chicago neighborhoods and its public schools has led to an increase in school segregation, despite policies initiated by the Chicago Board of Education following the Hauser Committee report of 1964.³⁹³ The school uprisings that ensued in the late 1960’s and the 1970’s indicative of the shared sense of hopelessness felt across Chicago’s schools by students, teachers, and community members as they continued to see their own lives affected by school inequality. Both the Illinois Board of Education and the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare in the late 1970’s reiterated, and in many ways, validated decades long claims by Chicago’s Puerto Rican, African American, and Mexican American communities regarding their own dissatisfaction and concern with Chicago’s schools. After being informed in 1976 by the Illinois Board of Education of their noncompliance with the state’s rules on desegregation, the Chicago

³⁹¹ “ An Interim Report: A Promise of Simple Justice in the Education of Chicago Children?,” Prepared for Monitoring Commission for Desegregation Implementation, by Mary Davidson, February, 1983, vi. Chicago History Museum

³⁹² Executive Summary, Report by the Board of Education of student desegregation plan, April 1981,2. Chicago History Museum.

³⁹³ Ibid., 3.

Board adopted the Access to Excellence plan in 1978 to “achieve compliance through a program of voluntary desegregation.”³⁹⁴ But the following year, the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare rejected the Chicago Board’s request for federal funding on the grounds it continued to practice discrimination by assigning particular children to particular schools, and further investigating the Board on possible violations of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.³⁹⁵ But these findings do little to erase the tragedy that became the educational lives of those students who fought for decades within schools and communities for that very promise of simple justice. Although it perhaps provided a sense of accomplishment to have their stories finally acknowledged, and thus offering that very hope to future students.

Chicago’s Puerto Ricans sense of hope stemmed from the community’s resistance to merely comply with the structures within labor, housing, and education which relegated them to a second-class citizenship, despite their legal standing. Borrowing from David Tyack, “Schools have continued to shape the core of our national identity.” Moreover, they have consistently served as a political arena for citizens (or communities) to content with one another.³⁹⁶ For Puerto Ricans, the continued struggle for a sense of belonging but identity amidst constant struggle has continued to shape their own national, or perhaps nationalistic consciousness. Speaking on the Tuley High School struggles, the Reverend Joseph Fitzharris summarized it best: “This is a community of hopeless people.

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

³⁹⁵ Ibid., 3-4. The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare rejected the Chicago Boards revisions to its Access to Excellence report as inadequate and imprecise, although the Illinois Board of Education gave the report a qualified approval. According to the report, “In April of 1980, the Department of Justice indicated its conclusion that a sufficient case existed to warrant filing suit against the school district, but invited the district to negotiate.”

³⁹⁶ David Tyack, *School*, 1.

The Tuley thing, well it gave the people a chance to win at something. And winning means hope.”³⁹⁷

³⁹⁷ “The Tuley Thing,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 18, 1973.

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