

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

Part One: *The Historical Narrative*

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

This guide includes:

- Discussion Questions for the Cartography Poster
- Discussion Questions for the Brief Historical Chronology Poster
- Activities
- Recommended Readings

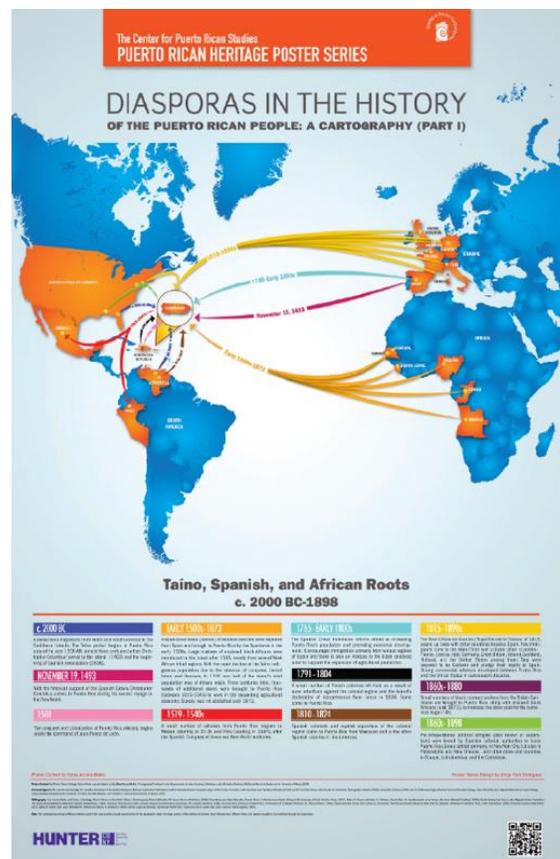
Poster Series used: *Diasporas in the History of the Puerto Rican People: A Cartography, Part I*

This world map shows the Americas in the center of the poster and a portion of the European and African continents to the right. This map uses arrows to illustrate different population migratory movements **to** and **from** an encircled zoomed view of the island of Puerto Rico. These population flows to the island contributed to the formation of the Puerto Rican people and are part of their cultural roots and historical experience.

The earlier population influxes to the island date back to around the year 2000 before the Christian era with the indigenous migrations from South and North America to the Caribbean islands. The **Taíno** indigenous phase began around the year 1200 of the Christian era.

The **Spanish** colonial era (1493-1898) begins with the arrival of **Christopher Columbus** on **November 19, 1493** during his second voyage to the New World. The island that the Taínos called **Borikén** was renamed **Isla de San Juan Bautista** [Island of St. John the Baptist] by Columbus and its main port in the northern coast was later named **Puerto Rico** [Rich Port]. During the colonial period the two names were interchanged and the island eventually became known by the name of its largest port. Conquest and colonization began in 1508 under the command of **Juan Ponce de León** who was appointed governor of the island.

The **African** presence in Puerto Rico dates back to the early years of **Spanish** conquest and colonization, when the Spaniards brought with them some black African servants from Spain. The island's indigenous population rapidly declined due to forced labor, epidemics, suicides, war, the violence and brutality of Conquest, and the system of forced labor known as the *encomiendas* [grants of land and Indians to work the parcels were apportioned among Spanish colonists]. Around 1519, large numbers of black Africans from



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

Part One: *The Historical Narrative*

the slave trade began to be brought to Puerto Rico to replace the declining indigenous labor in mining, agricultural activities, and domestic tasks.

After three centuries of colonial neglect, Spain began to pay more attention to the development of its island colonies towards the late 1700s. In 1765, Field Marshall Alejandro O'Reilly was sent to the island to assess its conditions and make recommendations to the Crown that would foster economic development and trade. Encouraged by land grants, many immigrants from different provinces of Spain (primarily Cataluña, Valencia, Asturias, Andalucía, Galicia, Santander, and the Canary and Balearic islands) came to Puerto Rico to participate in an expanding agricultural economy. Over half a century later, in 1815, Spanish authorities conferred the **Real Cédula de Gracias** [Royal Decree of Graces] that for the first time allowed trade with other countries besides Spain and encouraged immigration to Puerto Rico from over a dozen different European countries: France, Corsica, Great Britain, Ireland, Italy, Germany, and Holland, among them.

Increased commercial ties between Puerto Rico and the United States began to thrive in the 1820s, eventually turning the island into one of the U.S.'s major trading partners in the Americas. Puerto Rico exported sugar, molasses, and rum to the United States and, to a lesser degree, coffee and tobacco. Most of the crop for the latter products was exported to Spain. In turn, the island became a major consumer of imported goods from the United States. Puerto Rican businessmen, merchants, students, professionals, laborers, and other sojourners began to travel to the United States during those years. Back in Puerto Rico, the creole propertied class was charmed with the prosperity and lifestyle of the U.S. bourgeoisie and with the American nation's industrial and modernizing drive. At the same time, the U.S. geopolitical and economic expansionist aspirations in the Caribbean region became more evident. In 1898, the United States invaded Cuba and Puerto Rico and, after Spain's defeat in the Spanish-Cuban-American War (also known as the Spanish-American War or War of 1898), Puerto Rico was turned into an unincorporated U.S. territory while Cuba was granted independence. According to the 1900 U.S. Census, the Puerto Rican population in the United States was less than 1,000 people.

The **Taino**, **Spanish**, and **African** roots represent the three main cultures and races that through centuries of racial mixture and cultural contact contributed to the formation of the Puerto Rican nation. European immigrants from over a dozen countries added substantially to the cultural and socio-economic lives of island Puerto Ricans during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Since the second half of the twentieth century, large numbers of Cuban exiles (early 1960s) and immigrants from the Dominican Republic (1970s-present) settled in Puerto Rico (see **Map Poster: Diasporas in the History of the Puerto Rican People: A Cartography, Part II**), and made their economic and cultural presence felt in Puerto Rican society.

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

- 1) What is the specific role of Indigenous, Spaniards, and black Africans in the formation of the Puerto Rican nation?
- 2) How is their presence evident in today's Puerto Rican culture?

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

Part One: *The Historical Narrative*

Poster Series Used: *Brief Historical Chronology of Puerto Ricans in the United States, Part I*

Puerto Rican Cultural Roots (c. 1200-late 1700s)

The first section of this poster briefly establishes the cultural roots of the Puerto Rican people. It begins with the development of Taíno indigenous culture prevalent on the island at the time of the Spanish arrival and conquest; followed by the inflow of enslaved Africans brought by the Spanish to replace the rapidly declining Indian population. This section highlights the convergence and blend of Taíno, Spanish, and African cultures on the island during the Spanish colonial period, and the various late 1700s and early 1800s immigrations to Puerto Rico of French, Corsicans, Italians, Germans, British, Irish, Dutch, and a few other nationalities that added to the formation of the Puerto Rican people.

The Beginnings of Puerto Rican Presence in the United States (1815-1897)

The second section of this poster emphasizes Spain's opening of trade between its colonies and other countries as a result of the Real Cédula de Gracias [Royal Decree of Graces] of 1815 granted by Spain to the island colonies of Cuba and Puerto Rico. The Real Cédula de Gracias opened trade with countries that were friendly to Spain and eventually led to the expansion of Puerto Rico's commercial ties with the United States in the 1820s. These new trade relationships turned Cuba and Puerto Rico into important U.S. partners in the export and import of goods. Merchants, students, sojourners, professionals, artisans (e.g., cigar workers, typographers), and other laborers began to come to the United States.

This section of the poster also emphasizes the presence and contributions of Puerto Rican separatists who advocated for the independence of the island from Spanish colonial rule and were forced to leave the country. Since separatists in Puerto Rico endured political persecution and exile, they are known in the present as the "pilgrims of freedom." Many opponents of the Spanish colonial regime settled in New York and other cities and countries in the Americas and Europe, during the last few decades of the 19th century. From foreign destinations they continued to collaborate in the efforts to free Cuba and Puerto Rico, Spain's last two colonies in the Americas.

Notable Puerto Rican separatist exiles participated in creating organizations in New York to advocate for their political ideals. During this period, a few other Puerto Ricans came to the United States in search of educational, professional, or business opportunities. This poster features the contributions of the most prominent "pilgrims of freedom" and the

The poster is a vertical timeline titled "BRIEF HISTORICAL CHRONOLOGY OF PUERTO RICANS IN THE UNITED STATES (PART I)". It is divided into two main sections: "PUERTO RICAN CULTURAL ROOTS c.1200 - Late 1700s" and "BEGINNINGS OF PUERTO RICAN PRESENCE IN THE UNITED STATES 1815-1897".

PUERTO RICAN CULTURAL ROOTS c.1200 - Late 1700s

- c.1200**: Evidence of the Taíno culture can be found in numerous archaeological sites across the island.
- 1493**: Christopher Columbus landed on the island. According to Spanish chroniclers, he named the island Puerto Rico. The name was inspired by the Spanish word for "rich" or "abundant".
- 1508**: Spanish colonization begins under the command of Juan Ponce de León. He established the settlement of San Juan, the oldest city in Puerto Rico.
- 1511-1513**: Many Taíno rebellions against the Spaniards.
- 1519**: The Taíno, Spanish, and African peoples form the racial and ethnic mix of the Puerto Rican culture and the Spanish colonial population.
- 1765**: Many Puerto Ricans migrate to the United States to escape political and economic repression.

BEGINNINGS OF PUERTO RICAN PRESENCE IN THE UNITED STATES 1815-1897

- 1815**: The Real Cédula de Gracias is granted by Spain to the island colonies of Cuba and Puerto Rico, opening trade with countries friendly to Spain.
- 1821-1848**: The independence of Puerto Rico is declared, but the island remains under Spanish colonial rule.
- 1850**: The United States acquires Florida from Spain, and the island remains under Spanish colonial rule.
- 1869**: José Martí is born in Havana, Cuba. He is a key figure in the independence movement of Puerto Rico.
- 1873**: The United States acquires the Philippines from Spain, and the island remains under Spanish colonial rule.
- 1880s-1920s**: The United States acquires the Hawaiian Islands from Spain, and the island remains under Spanish colonial rule.
- 1897**: The United States acquires the Virgin Islands from Denmark, and the island remains under Spanish colonial rule.

The poster includes portraits of historical figures such as Juan Ponce de León, José Martí, and others. It also features small images of historical documents and artifacts. The poster is published by The Center for Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College.

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

Part One: *The Historical Narrative*

collaborations between Cubans and Puerto Ricans in the separatist movement. Although separatists promoted the liberation of Puerto Rico from Spanish colonial rule, there were two ideological trends within the movement: those promoting independence for the island and those supporting its annexation to the United States.

Among the most prominent political and intellectual figures who lived in New York during this period featured in this poster are:

- Ramón Emeterio Betances
- Eugenio María de Hostos
- Sotero Figueroa
- Francisco Gonzalo “Pachín” Marín
- Inocencia Martínez Santaella
- Lola Rodríguez de Tió
- Arturo Alfonso Schomburg

Discussion Questions for the *Brief Historical Chronology of Puerto Ricans in the United States, Part I*

- 1) Who is a “pilgrim of freedom”?
- 2) What were the cultural contributions of the “pilgrims of freedom” and their activities in their countries of exile?
- 3) What were the political contributions of the “pilgrims of freedom” and their activities in their countries of exile?
- 4) How did individuals experience being part of U.S. society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as exiles or immigrants?
- 5) How did individuals experienced being part of U.S. society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as colonial migrants?

Activities

- 1) **Brief Summaries:** Ask students to summarize the poster’s major themes in a sentence or two and relate their view of how certain landmark events have influenced the Puerto Rican community in the United States.
- 2) **Minute Paper:** Ask students to respond to two questions: (a) What was the most significant thing you learned from this poster?; and (b) What questions remain in your mind after studying this poster?
- 3) **The Muddiest Point:** Ask students to identify any issues, concepts, or information that remain unclear to them after studying the poster. Then, to describe how they can find additional information from the Study Guide’s recommended readings to enhance their knowledge and understanding.

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

Part One: *The Historical Narrative*

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

Recommended Readings

- Acosta-Belén, Edna. 2005. "Lola Rodríguez de Tió and the Struggle for Freedom." In *Latina Legacies: Identity, Biography, and Community*, Vicki Ruiz and Virginia Sánchez Korrol, eds. New York: Oxford University Press, 84-96.
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- Cabán, Pedro. 2001. *Constructing a Colonial People: Puerto Rico and the United States: 1898-1932*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Jiménez de Wagenheim, Olga and Kal Wagenheim. 2002. *Puerto Ricans: A Documentary History*. Princeton, NJ: Markus Weiner Publishers. First edition 1994.
- Matos Rodríguez, Félix. "Lola Rodríguez de Tió." 2006. *Latinas in the United States: An Historical Encyclopedia*, Vicki Ruiz and Virginia Sánchez Korrol, eds. New York: Oxford University Press, 637.
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- Ojeda Reyes, Félix. 1992. *Peregrinos de la libertad*. Río Piedras, PR: Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico.
- Picó, Francisco. 2006. *History of Puerto Rico*. Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener.
- Oboler, Suzanne and Deena González, eds. 2005. *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Latinos and Latinas in the United States*. 4 vols. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Santiago-Irizarry, Vilma and Pedro Cabán. 2005. "Puerto Ricans." In *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Latinos and Latinas in the United States*. Vol. 3. Suzanne Oboler and Deena González, eds. New York: Oxford University Press, 506-515.
- Stavans, Ilan and Harold Augenbraum, eds. 2005. *Encyclopedia Latina: History, Culture, and Society in the United States*. 2005. Danbury, CT: Grolier Publishing.
- Zavala, Iris and Rafael Rodríguez, eds. 1980. *Anthology of Puerto Rican Political Essays*. New York: Monthly Review Press.