

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

Part Seven: *Politics*

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

This guide includes:

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

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

The Puerto Rican Movement and Its Outcomes (1960s-2010s)

As the New York Puerto Rican ethnic barrios began to grow in the 1920s and 30s, issues of educational and citizenship rights, equal treatment, and electoral participation, incorporation, and representation in the U.S. political system gradually gained more visibility in later decades. Like some other U.S. ethnic groups, identity politics and community mobilization were common strategies in making inroads into the political sphere, and in overcoming existing political barriers and negotiating with the power structures.

The passage of the **Civil Rights Act** by the U.S. Congress in 1964 forbade segregation and discrimination based on race, color, gender, and religion. This was an important legal and symbolic milestone of the struggles carried out by several prior generations of African Americans, Latinos(as), Native Americans, women, gays and lesbians, and other disenfranchised groups. The new Civil Rights legislation galvanized these populations into continuing their social and political battles and demands for equality and the empowerment of their communities. In their demands they often adopted the militant and socially transforming outlook of the mid-1960s and 70s, including mass demonstrations, strikes, boycotts, occupation of buildings, and other forms of civil disobedience that in several instances ended in mass arrests, violent confrontations with the police, or the death of a few activists.

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Within the Puerto Rican community the period of activism that occurred during the late 1960s and 70s is known as the **Puerto Rican Movement**. A myriad of social, cultural, educational, and political outcomes stemming from this movement paved the way and opened new possibilities for younger generations of Puerto Ricans to continue struggling for equal treatment and inclusion, creating organizations and institutions to serve their communities, and contributing individually and collectively to their advancement. The movement also gave continuity to a long history of community activism and social and political struggles that had engaged prior generations of migrant *pioneros(as)*.

Two posters of the **Brief Chronology** (Parts IV-V) are organized thematically to highlight different aspects of the **Puerto Rican Movement**. This poster (IV) focuses on two main themes: **Striving for Equality and Community Empowerment** and **Political Participation and Public Service**. Some key examples are provided in the posters aimed at capturing the essence of the four thematic categories.

Key major outcomes of Puerto Rican civil rights struggles are illustrated by the number of leading institutions and organizations that Puerto Ricans created to service the community in areas such as education, social and health services, public policy, politics, and cultural preservation and enrichment. These institutions and organizations came to fruition from the vision and determination of their individual leadership, as much as from the collective resourcefulness and resilience of the many community members who participated in these initiatives. But despite these outcomes, numerous challenges and obstacles remain ahead for the new generations of Puerto Ricans to continue the social and political battles for equality and inclusion, in a U.S. society still divided by prejudice and intolerance based on issues of race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, and extremist partisan ideologies.

Striving for Equality and Community Empowerment

The organizations and individuals on the two lists below are examples of Puerto Ricans playing an active role in advocating for the rights and the welfare of their various communities, and in galvanizing community members to organize for collective action around specific issues and concerns. The outcomes of increased political participation also are illustrated in the examples of individual Puerto Rican women and men with prominent careers in public and community service provided below:

- Concilio (Philadelphia)
- Las Casitas (New York; Chicago)
- Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños (New York)
- Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción (IBA) Boston)
- Institute of Puerto Rican Arts and Culture and Paseo Boricua (Chicago)
- National Association for Puerto Rican Rights (New York)
- National Conference of Puerto Rican Women (NACOPRW)
- National Congress for Puerto Rican Rights (NCPRR)
- National Puerto Rican Coalition (NPRC; Washington, DC)
- Puerto Rican Studies Association (PRSA)
- Boricua Gay and Lesbian Forum (New York)
- The Young Lords (New York; Chicago)

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Political Participation and Public Service

- Herman Badillo (New York)
- Maurice Ferré (Miami)
- Antonia Pantoja (New York)
- Sonia Sotomayor (New York; Washington, DC)
- Irma Vidal Santaella (New York)
- Raúl Labrador (Idaho; Washington, DC)

Discussion Questions for the Brief Historical Chronology Poster

- 1) What did the new Civil Rights legislation do?
- 2) What was the retaliation for the militant and socially transforming outlook of the mid-1960s and 70s, that included using mass demonstrations, strikes, boycotts, occupation of buildings, and other forms of civil disobedience?
- 3) In what ways did the organizations mentioned in the **Striving for Equality and Community Empowerment** section of this poster contribute to advancing Puerto Rican claims for equal treatment in U.S. society?
- 4) Who were The Young Lords? What was their agenda?
- 5) Who is Herman Badillo and what was his contribution to politics?
- 6) How did Irma Vidal Santaella contribute to the empowerment of the Puerto Rican community in New York? Maurice Ferré in Miami?

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.

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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, ed. 2011-2012. "The Legacies of Puerto Rican Activism." Special issue of the *Latino(a) Research Review* 8, nos. 1-2.
- Acosta-Belén, Edna and Carlos E. Santiago. 2006. *Puerto Ricans in the United States: A Contemporary Portrait*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Press.
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- Falcón, Angelo. 2005. "Institute for Puerto Rican Policy." In *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Latinos and Latinas in the United States*. Vol. 2. Suzanne Oboler and Deena González, eds. New York: Oxford University Press, 383-385.
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- Luna, Guadalupe T. 2005. "Civil Rights Act (1964)." In *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Latinos and Latinas in the United States*. Vol. 1. Suzanne Oboler and Deena González, eds. New York: Oxford University Press, 353-355.
- Meléndez, Miguel. 2003. *We Took the Streets: Fighting for Latino Rights with the Young Lords*. New York: St. Martin Press.
- Morán, Rachel F. 2005. "Bilingual Education Act." In *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Latinos and Latinas in the United States*. Vol. 1. Suzanne Oboler and Deena González, eds. New York: Oxford University Press, 176-177.

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- Ramírez, Marissa. 2005. "Museo del Barrio." 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, 208-209.
- Rivera, Jenny. 2005. "National Congress for Puerto Rican Rights." 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, 237-239.
- Rivera, Jenny. 2005. "Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund." 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, 496-498.
- Rodríguez, Ivelisse. 2005. "Nuyorican Poets Cafe." 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, 289-291.
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