



Guide to The Manuel “Manny” Diaz Papers



Archives of the Puerto Rican Diaspora
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Cover Photo: Manny Diaz welcoming Robert F. Kennedy at the Neighborhood Service Center, c. 1970.

Descriptive Summary

Creator: Manuel "Manny" Diaz

Title: The Manuel Diaz Papers, 1940-2007

Inclusive Dates: 1940-2007

Bulk Dates: 1960-1985

Volume: 7.5 cubic feet

Repository: Archives of the Puerto Rican Diaspora, Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños

Abstract: Manny Diaz was a founding member of such community based organizations as the Puerto Rican Forum, ASPIRA, the Hispanic Youth Association, the Puerto Rican Family Institute and Boricua College. He was trained as a social worker and went on to lead numerous institutions and initiatives, among them the Puerto Rican Community Development Project, Mobilization for Youth and PROGRESS, Inc. He received his B.S.S. from the City University and his M.S.W. from Columbia University. He served on the faculties of Columbia University, Boricua College and Fordham University. The collection measures 7.5 cubic feet and contains photographs, event programs, audiocassettes, DVD's and reports. It spans the years 1940-2007 and focuses on the New York metropolitan area.

Administrative Information

Collection Number: 2004-004

Provenance: The collection was donated by Andrea (Ande) Diaz and Lisa Diaz

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Restrictions: The collection is open to researchers.

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Date: July 2014

MANUEL “MANNY” DIAZ (1922 – 2006)

Biographical Note:

Manuel “Manny” Diaz, Jr. (1922-2006) was a Puerto Rican social worker, activist and academic. He helped found and lead several organizations dedicated to helping Puerto Ricans and other minorities in New York City, including PROGRESS, ASPIRA and the Puerto Rican Community Development Project. Born in Puerto Rico, he was educated at City University of New York, Columbia and Brandeis, and served on the faculties of Columbia, Fordham and Boricua College. He served on the White House Conference on Families and the New York State Advisory Commission for Hispanic Affairs.

Manuel Diaz was born in Humacao, Puerto Rico on September 19, 1922 to Manuel Diaz Gomez and Filomena Velazquez Rodriguez. His mother was a seamstress and his father owned a printing business. At the age of five he migrated to New York with his uncle Victor Velazquez, his mother having gone ahead of him and his father arriving a few months later. They first lived in a tenement on West 114th Street, later moving to a three bedroom apartment in Morningside Heights. The Diaz family scraped by on minimal incomes during the Great Depression, with Manuel Sr. and uncle Victor making and selling moonshine for extra money. Diaz was also involved in politics at an early age, handing out fliers for Congressman Vito Marcantonio at the age of ten.

Diaz attended P.S. 109 on 111th Street until fourth grade. He also attended P.S. 157 and P.S. 165, as the family moved frequently. He did not master English until the fourth grade. After attending James Fenimore Cooper Junior High School, his mother wished to enroll Manny in Stuyvesant High School. He was initially rejected from attending due to his grades, which led to his mother staging a one-woman sit-in at the principal’s office until the school relented. He graduated from Stuyvesant in 1941, the first Puerto Rican to do so, shortly before the United States entered World War II.

Following Pearl Harbor, Manny Diaz enlisted in the Army Signal Corp Reserve, completing the Army Specialized Training Program and completing coursework toward an electrical engineering degree. Upon completion of his training, he was sent into active duty, and participated in the invasion of Normandy as a courier. Later in the war, he was among the regiment of Allied soldiers who discovered the first of the concentration camps used for the Holocaust.

After the war’s end Diaz enrolled in City College, CUNY to complete his degree in electrical engineering degree, but tuberculosis interrupted his studies. When he returned to school he decided to change his degree to sociology, graduating in 1951. At City College he met and later married Lisa Hymowitz; their daughter Lisa Diaz was born the same year. Following his baccalaureate he entered Columbia University’s School of Social Work, earning his MSW in 1953.

Diaz joined the Union Settlement Association, a social services organization in El Barrio, in 1953. He started out as a Teenage Program Supervisor, later becoming Program Director, before resigning in 1959. During his time at Union Settlement Diaz met and worked with several others who would later become influential in the Puerto Rican and Latino communities, such as Antonia Pantoja, Angelo del Toro, Josephine Nieves and a teenaged Herman Badillo who was under his supervision. Union Settlement provided retreats and camps for members of the community, and time for Diaz and others to brainstorm ideas for improving their communities.

Following his tenure at Union Settlement, Diaz took a position with the American Society of Friends in México as a director of community development. After one year in México he returned to the U.S. and joined the Baden Street Settlement, a community development organization in Rochester, NY. During this time he married Sharon Daniel and had two daughters, Cristina (born 1961, died three months later from SIDS) and Ande (born 1962). Diaz then took a position for New York City’s Mobilization for Youth in 1962. During this time he also assisted Pantoja in establishing ASPIRA, helping to raise the initial funds for the organization. He would later serve on its board of directors, as well as the board of the Puerto Rican Forum, the Puerto Rican Family Institute, and Boricua College, among others.

Diaz continued to work on behalf of the Puerto Rican community by founding the Puerto Rican Community Development Project, an anti-poverty organization working with other community-based organizations. In 1966, Diaz was appointed Northeast Regional Director of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which investigated employment complaints and labor practices nationwide. In 1968, he was appointed by Mayor Robert Lindsay to New York City's Civilian Complaint Review Board, where he helped mediate disputes between city government and various groups. Most notably, he helped ameliorate the dispute with the Young Lords Party, whose members were demanding lunch programs for Puerto Rican schoolchildren. When the Rev. Martin Luther King was assassinated the same year, Diaz walked the streets of El Barrio at Mayor Lindsay's request to help prevent riots from breaking out as they had in other cities.

Diaz returned to school following his appointment with the city, studying at Brandeis University's School of Social Welfare Planning on a fellowship from 1970-1972. During this time he married Emma Ramos. In 1972, he was appointed to the faculty of Fordham as an associate professor of social policy. While at Fordham Diaz established a scholarship for minority students in the school of social work, and chaired a committee which led to the establishment of the school's doctoral program. He was also appointed chairman of the National Association for Social Workers Insurance Trust. In 1979, he was selected to sit on the White House Conference of Families, created to make recommendations for the federal government on family issues.

In 1981 Diaz became the executive director of the Puerto Rican Organization for Growth, Research Education and Self Sufficiency, or PROGRESS. PROGRESS was committed to assisting the Puerto Rican community by offering technical assistance to Puerto Rican community-based organizations, such as providing workshops to improve fundraising capacities. In 1983 he served as chairperson for New York State's Advisory Committee on Hispanic Affairs under Governor Mario Cuomo. During his tenure as chairperson he helped make recommendations to the Governor's office on improving the conditions of the Hispanic community. The Committee clashed with critics such as Angelo Falcón, head of the Institute for Puerto Rican Policy, regarding the efficacy of these recommendations. He retired from PROGRESS in 1987 following a heart attack. He then took a part time job working for Congressman Angelo del Toro, and then relinquished the position in 1990 following another, more severe heart attack. Following this episode Diaz fully retired from public service and devoted himself to his family and to traveling.

Manny Diaz died on March 20, 2006, at the age of 84. He is survived by his two daughters, Lisa and Ande, and mourned by the entire Latino community.

Scope and Content:

The papers of Manuel Diaz contain significant material on the life and work of the Puerto Rican social worker and community organizer. His oral autobiography is preserved on a series of audio cassettes, as well as recordings of his academic study, travels and community work. Writings by Diaz detail his life and his outlook on the issues of his time.

There is also significant material on social issues such as education and child care, with particular emphasis on Puerto Ricans. The collection contains correspondence, photographs, audio and visual files, and artifacts.

The collection is divided into the following series:

- I. Biographical and Personal Information**
- II. Organizations and Committees**
- III. Subject Files**
- IV. Audio and Visual Files**

Access Points / Términos de Acceso:

Name / Nombres

Badillo, Herman
Bonilla, Frank
Canino, Maria
Del Toro, Angelo
Diaz, Manuel
Falcon, Angelo
Falcon, Joe
Lindsay, Robert
Montserrat, Joseph
Nieves, Josephine
Pantoja, Antonia
Thomas, Piri

Subject Organizations / Nombres Corporativos

ASPIRA
Brandeis University
Civilian Complaint Review Board
Columbia University
Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
Fordham University
Hispanic Youth Association
Institute for Puerto Rican Policy
Mobilization for Youth
National Association for Social Workers
New York State Advisory Committee for Hispanic Affairs
Puerto Rican Community Development Project
Puerto Rican Organization for Growth, Research and Self-Sufficiency (PROGRESS)
Universidad Boricua

Subject Places / Nombres Geográficos

China
Humacao
New York
Puerto Rico

Series I: Personal and Biographical Information (1940-2006)

This series details the life, travels and writings of Manny Diaz. Among these are two autobiographical documents, one prepared with the assistance of Dolores Rasalas, which richly detail Diaz's life up until his retirement. Also included is a partial transcript of an oral history he committed to audio in 2003. Also included is a portion of his dissertation submitted for his degree from Brandeis University and two photographs of Manny Diaz.

Box Caja	Folder Cartapacio	
1	1	Correspondence, 1964-2006
	2	The Puerto Rican Society: A Beginning Framework For Research and Analysis, by Manny Diaz, April 1974
	3	Executive Inventory Record Forms, 1966-1967
	4	Hispanic Commission to Israel, 1979-1984
	5	Obituary, <i>El Diario/ La Prensa</i> , 2006
	6	Oral History Transcript, 2005
	7	Personal Papers, 1940-2006
	8	Reference Letters, 1970-1987
	9	Transfer Papers, 2006-2007
	10	Writings, undated, 1962-2005
	11	Photograph of Manny Diaz at PRCDP dinner
	12	Photograph of Manny Diaz with social worker Magdalena Miranda
		Oversized Documents
OS	I	Index Card Directory, undated

Series II: Organizations and Committees (1963-1992)

Manuel Diaz's work in the community as well as in government is documented in this series. The papers of PROGRESS (Puerto Rican Organization for Growth, Research, Education and Self-Sufficiency) include internal memos and meeting minutes which shed light on the organization's workings. The papers on the state Advisory Committee for Hispanic Affairs include letters to *El Diario/ La Prensa* criticizing the paper's coverage of the Committee, and verbal sparring with Angelo Falcón, then-head of the Institute for Puerto Rican Policy. The management curriculum of the Hispanic Leadership Development Program highlights Diaz's interest in labor matters.

Box Caja	Folder Cartapacio	
2	1	New York State Governor's Advisory Commission on Hispanic Affairs, 1983-1985
	2-3	PROGRESS, 1979-1992
	4-5	Hispanic Leadership Development Program: Management Curriculum
	6	Universidad Boricua, undated, 1963-1971
	7	White House Conference on Families, 1979-1980
	8	White House Conference on Families, Directories, c. 1979

Series III: Subject Files

This series includes files and reports on various aspects of life for Puerto Ricans in the United States, including education, history and social policy. There is also material on various aspects of social policy, including child abuse. Also included is material written by or about other members of the Diaz family, including Andrea (Ande) Diaz, Lisa Diaz and Emma Ramos-Diaz.

Box Caja	Folder Cartapacio	
3	1	Child Abuse Articles and Information, undated, 1980-2000
	2	City College of New York-CUNY, 1971-1995
	3	Diaz Family, undated, 1984-2007 (Missing)
	4	General Subject Files, undated, 1974-2002
	5	Puerto Rican Education, undated, 1970-1976
	6	Puerto Rican Families, 1975
	7	Puerto Rican History, 1956-c.1970
	8	Cuaderno, Units #2 & 6- CENTRO Fall 76
4	1	Puerto Rican Independence, 1977-1998
	2	Puerto Rican Migration, 1950-1983
	3	Puerto Ricans in Public Schools, 1968-1985
	4	Social Policy, undated, 1977-1995
	5	Studies of Puerto Ricans in the United States, undated, 1967-2001
	6	Thesis, Community in Action: The Central Harlem Experience in the War on Poverty, 1963-1968, by Andrew Block, December 2005
	7-9	Writings of others, undated, 1971-1987

Series IV: Audio and Visual Files

The files in this series primarily record the life of Manuel Diaz. An extensive, twenty-seven CD set (also duplicated on twenty-two audio cassettes) contains an oral autobiography of Diaz, in a series of interviews conducted by Blanca Vazquez. In addition, the series holds over 100 additional audio cassettes documenting Diaz's work as a faculty member at Fordham University, various lectures and travel to China. The recordings include excerpts of lectures by figures such as Joseph Monserrat, Josephine Nieves and Piri Thomas, among others.

Box Caja	Item Pieza	
5	Audiocassettes Featuring Manny Diaz	
	1	Austin, Paper Discussion, c. 1971
	2	China Trip Planning Meeting, c. 1977
	3	For Colored Girls, c. 1980
	4	Columbia University School of Social Work—Alumni, undated
	5	Council on Social Work Education—APW Workshop #96, 1976 March 2
	6	Diaz, Manny and Canino, Maria Dissent from Governor's Committee, c.1980
	7	Diaz, Manny, Oppressive Systems and the Puerto Rican Community, 1975
	8	Dissertation/Conflict Discussion
	9	Faculty, 1981 May 13
	10-11	Fordham Faculty Retreat/Job Placement, 1976 February 17
	12-13	Fordham Faculty Symposium, circa May 1976
	14-22	Fordham Faculty Futures Committee-Mayer tapes, 1980-1981
	23	Futures Committee in China, 1980 October 17
	24	Gurin, Arnold, c. 1973
	25	Job Placement Committee/Fordham Faculty Colloquium, 1976 May 18
	26	Keynote Speech to Annual Conference of Puerto Rican Social Workers, Nov. 1976
	27-30	Machismo Lectures and Discussions with Manny Diaz, 1975 November 7-1976
	31	National Association of Social Workers—Manpower, undated
	32-33	PRIMESS Conference, Nov. 1976

- 34 PROGRESS, Membership, 1982 April 15
- 35-36 PROGRESS, Personnel Committee, 1981 May 26 (**recorded music on one tape-Diana Ross**)
- 37-38 PROGRESS, Executive Committee 1981 May 13—1981 September 22
- 39 PROGRESS Staff Meeting, 1981 July 30
- 40-42 PROGRESS, Staff/Board Review Meeting tapes, c. 1983 March 23
- 43-48 PROGRESS Board of Directors tapes, 1981 June 9-1982 July 21
- 49 Puerto Rican Committee, Fordham, 1976 February 3
- 50 Puerto Rican Lecture #3, undated
- 51 Puerto Rican Social Workers/Morning Session, undated (**Cracked/ Broken**)
- 52 Radio WADO with Malin Falu—Manny, Nilda, Damaso, 1981 June 25
- 53-54 Revolutionary Neighborhood Committee of Peking (Beijing), 1977
- 55-56 Social Transformation in China with Manny Diaz Presentation, 1977
- 57 Transportation Lecture, 1973 April 9
- 58-59 World Trade Center Symposium on Puerto Ricans and Mental Health, undated

Audiocassettes, General

- 60 Binstock, Robert Lecture, 1973 March 28
- 61 Bonilla, Frank/Migration-Centro, undated,
- 62 Castro/Leca Viscaino Flemming, undated
- 63-64 Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños Seminar: Josephine Nieves, 1976 February 5-1976 May 6
- 65 Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños Seminar: Joe Falcon and Linguistics, c. 1976
- 66 Chicago Symphony Orchestra in Hong Kong, 4/7/1986 remove
- 67 Conservatory, 1977 (**Bad Tape**)
- 68 Cuban Embassy—Bucharest, 1977
- 69-72 Dalian (Talien), China, 1977
- 73-78 General Discussion/Inaudible, undated
- 79 Gerontological Society Conference on Spanish Speaking Elderly, c. 1970
- 80 Greek Cruise Ship/Diaz Orientation on Cultural Revolution at Hillside Part II, 1977
- 81 Harry Rodriguez at Fordham, undated (**Broken**)
- 82-95 Hausman, Leonard lectures, 1973 February 20—1973 May 18
- 96-97 Institute of National Minorities, 1977
- 98 Korean Minority Brigade at Shanghai Conservatory, 1977
- 99-109 Kurtz, Norman Lectures, 1973 February 5—1973 May 14
- 110-111 Monserrat, Joseph and Frederico Aquino, 1971 January 6
- 112 New School China Lecture, 1977
- 113-114 Peking (Beijing) University, 1977
- 115 Puerto Rico China Group Orientation/Retreat #1-2, 1977
- 116 Puerto Rican Syndrome, undated
- 117-119 Symposium tapes (Austin/Discussion), undated
- 120 Tarrytown Family SWAPS Class Discussion, undated
- 121-122 Thomas, Piri and Frederico Aquino, 1971 January 6
- 123-125 Warren tapes, 1973 March 19, April 9, May 7
- 126-127 Women in China Conference, 1977
- 128 Women and Socialism, 1976 December 18

Manny Diaz Oral History Project and Miscellaneous CD's

- 6 1-27 Manny Diaz Oral History Project, 2003
- 28 Manny Diaz/Maria Canino Dissent on Governor Cuomo's Task Force on Poverty and Welfare c. 1980 (**inside cushioned mailer**)

29 Speech by Manny Diaz, Oppressive Systems and the Puerto Rican Community, 1975 **(inside cushion mailer)**

Audiocassettes

30-51 Manny Diaz Oral History Project, 2003

52 Oppressive Systems and The Puerto Rican Community, Manny Diaz speech at National Association of Social Workers, 1975 **(inside cushion mailer)**

53 Manny Diaz/Maria Canino Dissent on Gov. Cuomo's Commission on Poverty and Welfare, c. 1980 **(inside cushion mailer)**

DVD's

54 Black-Latino Alliances and Allegiances—Stories of Structural Change from Manny Diaz. Fielding Graduate University—Symposium, 2006 January 11