1 Colonialism, Citizenship, and the Making of the Puerto Rican Diaspora: An Introduction

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By the 2000 census, 3,406,178 Puerto Ricans resided in the United States and 3,623,392 resided in Puerto Rico.[1] Puerto Rico became "a divided nation" as a result of a long history of colonialism and the massive migration that accompanied it. Puerto Rico was conquered by Spain, which began colonization in earnest in 1508. Under Spanish colonial rule, merchants and workers came to the United States to earn their livings. Political exiles came too, struggling for independence from Spain. In 1898, at the end of the Spanish-Cuban-American War, the United States acquired Puerto Rico and has retained sovereignty ever since. Puerto Rico's colonial ruler changed, and migration, now from the colony to the metropolis, increased (see Table 1-1). In 1917, the U.S. Congress declared all Puerto Ricans U.S. citizens, enabling a migration free from immigration barriers. Meanwhile, U.S. political and economic interventions in Puerto Rico created the conditions for emigration, by concentrating wealth in the hands of U.S. corporations and displacing workers. Instead of too few jobs and an unequal distribution of wealth, policymakers blamed Puerto Rico's economic woes on "overpopulation" and promoted colonization plans and contract labor programs to reduce the population. U.S. employers, often with government support, recruited Puerto Ricans as a source of low-wage labor to the United States and other destinations. Labor recruitment increased migration and shaped the formation of Puerto Rican communities. Puerto Ricans also helped each other migrate, settle, find work, and build communities, by relying on social networks of family and friends. Puerto

TABLE 1-1. Puerto Rico's Net Emigration, 1900–2000

Years	Net Number of Out-Migrants
1900–1910	2,000
1910–1920	11,000
1920–1930	42,000
1930–1940	18,000
1940–1950	151,000
1950–1960	470,000
1960–1970	214,000
1970–1980	65,817
1980–1990	116,571
1990–2000	130,185

Note: Net emigration is the difference between in-migrants and out-migrants.
Source: Francisco L. Rivera-Batiz and Carlos E. Santiago, *Island Paradox: Puerto Rico in the 1990s* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1996), 45; with data for 1990–2000 added from U.S. Bureau of the Census, *2000 Census of Population and Housing*, PHC-T-22.

Rico became "the site of one of the most massive emigration flows of this century."[2]

The public and scholarly imagination has long associated Puerto Ricans with New York City. Yet Puerto Ricans have settled beyond the barrios of New York City from the earliest waves of migration to the present, creating a diaspora of communities (see Table 1-2). Under Spanish colonial rule, Puerto Ricans settled not only in New York City, but also in Tampa, Philadelphia, and Boston. In the early years of U.S. colonial rule, labor recruitment fostered communities in Hawai'i, San Francisco, and New Orleans. It was after World War I that most Puerto Ricans settled in New York City, and by 1940, 88 percent of Puerto Ricans lived there. This concentration was short-lived, however, as the post–World War II era witnessed the emergence of Puerto Rican communities in the Mid-Atlantic, the Midwest, and New England. By 1970, just 59 percent of stateside Puerto Ricans still lived in New York City, and by 2000, just 23 percent did. Fewer Puerto Ricans have settled in other countries, despite government initiatives to establish Puerto Rican colonies in other countries. Instead, the overwhelming majority

TABLE 1-2. Puerto Rican Dispersion in the United States, 1910–2000

	In the United States	In New York City	Percent of Total
1910	1,513	554	36.6
1920	11,811	7,364	62.4
1930	52,774	—	—
1940	69,967	61,463	87.8
1950	226,110	187,420	82.9
1960	892,513	612,574	68.6
1970	1,391,463	817,712	58.5
1980	2,014,000	860,552	42.7
1990	2,728,000	896,763	32.9
2000	3,406,178	789,172	23.2

Note: Figures for 1910–1950 are for persons born in Puerto Rico. Those for 1960–2000 are for persons of Puerto Rican birth or parentage.
Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1950 U.S. Census of the Population*, vol. 4 Special Reports, Pt. 3, *Puerto Ricans in the Continental United States*, Table A, pp. 3D–4D; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population: 1970*, Subject Report, *Puerto Ricans in the United States*, Table 1, p. xi; and U.S. Bureau of the Census, *2000 Census of Population and Housing*, Table DP-1, Profile of General Demographic Characteristics.

of the Puerto Rican exodus has been to the United States, as colonialism and citizenship fostered the movement from the colony to the metropolis. The popular use of the term "Nuyorican" to identify Puerto Ricans living in the States, and until recently, the scholarly focus on New York City, suggest the resilience of the association of Puerto Ricans and New York City. This perspective has muted the diversity of Puerto Ricans' experiences and has thwarted comparative analysis of Puerto Rican communities. The chapters in this book begin the telling of these stories, by focusing on the settlement and community-building efforts of Puerto Ricans in eight different destinations. This chapter links the causes of migration with the making of this Puerto Rican diaspora.

Colonialism and Migration: Before and After 1898

Colonialism shaped Puerto Rican migration before and after 1898, as first Spain and then the United States sought to control Puerto Rico's political and economic systems. Even under Spanish rule, Puerto Ricans began making their way to the United States. Emerging economic ties between Puerto Rico and the United States brought merchants to the eastern seaboard and cigar makers to the centers of tobacco production.

Exiles sought safe haven and a base for their efforts to end Spanish colonialism. After 1898, the U.S. occupation radically transformed Puerto Rico's economy and politics, as well as migration. Colonialism molded attitudes as well. U.S. colonial administrators viewed Puerto Ricans as incapable of self-government and as a pliable labor force. These attitudes, many encapsulated in the notion of "manifest destiny," shaped U.S. policies in Puerto Rico and persisted as Puerto Ricans migrated to the States. U.S. corporations recruited Puerto Ricans as a source of cheap labor, within Puerto Rico, to the United States, and overseas. Labor recruitment intersected with social networks of family and friends to provide the foundations of early Puerto Rican settlements.

Under Spanish colonial rule, merchants settled along the eastern seaboard of the United States to ply their trade. Trade initiated two-way travel and relationships between merchants in Puerto Rico and in the United States. Merchants became the first Puerto Rican residents in several cities, many of which would not have significant Puerto Rican populations until decades later. As early as 1830, merchants from the islands established a Spanish Benevolent Society in New York City to promote trade. In 1844, one merchant settled in Bridgeport, Connecticut, while 1860 census records revealed ten Puerto Ricans living in New Haven (see Chapter 8). Trade networks also brought a small number of Puerto Ricans to Boston, where three persons born in Puerto Rico lived according to the 1860 census (see Chapter 9). By 1897, 61 percent of Puerto Rico's sugar exports went to the United States. As ships brought sugar and molasses to the port of Philadelphia, merchants settled in the city, which became a center for sugar processing.[3] In addition to settling in the United States, merchants, along with other elites, sent their children to the United States as students. "Educational migration" would continue, as Puerto Ricans came to the States for higher education, or to advance their musical training, as in the case of Boston (see Chapter 9).[4]

In contrast to merchants' scattered settlement, political exiles and cigar makers' settlement was concentrated. Cigar makers were prominent among the early migrants, not just because of their numbers, but also because of their political activism. They settled in the principal centers of cigar manufacturing, especially New York City, New Orleans, and Tampa. In Philadelphia, social networks among cigar makers played an important role in the early Latino community (see Chapter 4). These vibrant, active communities, marked by their Latino diversity and working-class base, became focal points of revolutionary activity.

Puerto Ricans and Cubans often joined forces, struggling to overthrow Spanish rule in Cuba and Puerto Rico. In 1892, José Martí founded the U.S.-based Cuban Revolution Party (Partido Revolucionario Cubano or PRC) in Tampa. The PRC was headquartered in New York City, while Philadelphia was home to at least six affiliated clubs during the 1890s. Boston's chapter of the PRC was formed in 1895, following on the heels of other revolutionary activities to gain independence from Spain (see Chapter 9).

The Spanish-Cuban-American War in 1898 had profound and lasting consequences for Puerto Rico. Having expanded territorially from coast to coast, the United States looked to expand its markets overseas. The United States' commercial and strategic interests required naval bases and coaling stations, to protect maritime trade and entrances to the proposed Panama Canal, as well as to respond to European expansionism and international competition.[5] In a July 1898 editorial in the *New York Times*, business writer Amos Fiske revealed the United States' interests in acquiring Puerto Rico, "There can be no question to perplex any reasonable mind about the wisdom of taking possession of the Island of Puerto Rico and keeping it for all time." Puerto Rico would provide a critical naval station, "a commanding position between the two continents." Puerto Rico's geography and people could be transformed, he thought, to meet U.S. economic interests as well. As a "populous island" with the soil "most prolific" and the "climate exceptionally salubrious," he saw "no reason why it should not become a veritable garden of the tropics and an especially charming winter resort for denizens of the North." Fiske was confident that the Puerto Rican "labor force," which had "never been half utilized" under Spanish rule, could be rendered productive under U.S. rule. He explained, "There are many blacks, possibly a third of all the people, and much mixed blood, but the population is not ignorant or indolent or in any way degraded. It is not turbulent or intractable, and there is every reason to believe that under encouraging conditions it would become industrious, thrifty and prosperous."[6]

Based on a sense of religious and racial superiority, Fiske justified the colonization of Puerto Rico, revealing attitudes embedded in manifest destiny. Notions of manifest destiny drove U.S. expansion and colonial rule in Puerto Rico and elsewhere. Fiske asserted, "Providence has decreed that it shall be ours as a recompense for smiting the last withering clutch of Spain from the domain which Columbus brought to light and the fairest part of which has long been our own heritage." He considered Puerto Ricans incapable of self-government and concluded that

colonization was in the best interests of the Puerto Rican people, "It would be much better for her to come at once under the beneficent sway of the United States than to engage in doubtful experiments at self-government, and there is reason to believe that her people would prefer it. It would be in accordance with the genius of our institutions to accord them self-government in local affairs as soon and as far as they showed themselves capable of it."[7] The U.S. Army landed in Puerto Rico on July 25, 1898, just two weeks after Fiske's editorial. On December 10, 1898, the United States and Spain signed the Treaty of Paris. The United States obtained Puerto Rico in place of monetary compensation for its costs in prosecuting the war. Puerto Ricans were not involved nor consulted with on the terms of the treaty. Thus began the United States' colonial rule of Puerto Rico.

A highly centralized military rule dismantled and replaced the institutions of self-government and the greater autonomy that Puerto Rico had wrested from Spain in the final days of its rule. From 1898 to 1900, the United States imposed a military occupation. With the Foraker Act (or the first Organic Act of 1900), the U.S. Congress instituted civilian rule that severely limited the participation of Puerto Ricans in their own government. The U.S. President appointed the governor and the heads of key departments, with the consent of the U.S. Senate. The president, along with the governor, also appointed the Executive Council, which performed legislative and executive functions. Five of the eleven members were to be "native inhabitants of Porto Rico."[8] The House of Delegates consisted of thirty-five elected representatives. Yet the appointed governor, the U.S. President, and the U.S. Congress all retained the authority to veto local legislation. Puerto Rico had no voting representation in the U.S. Congress, as Puerto Ricans were permitted to elect only a nonvoting resident commissioner. Some Democrats argued that the Foraker Act denied Puerto Ricans the basic rights guaranteed in the Constitution, and constituted taxation without representation, thereby making a sham of the democratic principles upon which the country was founded. Nevertheless, the act passed and remained in effect until 1917.

The U.S. occupation radically transformed Puerto Rico's economy. The United States sought to incorporate Puerto Rico into U.S. trade circuits, and to foster U.S. investment in Puerto Rico, by removing obstacles and creating an infrastructure. The Foraker Act enabled these changes, by prohibiting Puerto Rico from negotiating treaties with other countries or determining its own tariffs, by making Puerto Rico part of the U.S. monetary system, and by requiring that all goods be

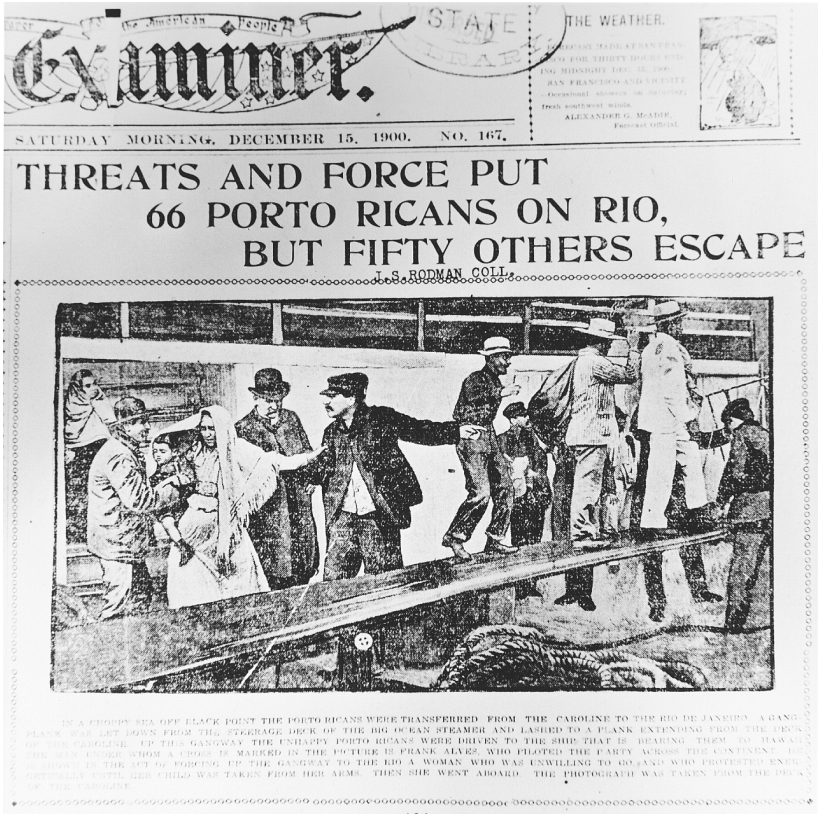
transported in U.S.-owned shipping. Although the act limited corporations to owning less than 500 acres, this provision was not enforced. Puerto Rico's primary crop shifted from coffee to tobacco and especially sugar. U.S. corporations invested in tobacco manufacturing, U.S. policy provided tariff protection for Puerto Rico's tobacco, and the industry prospered. It was sugar, however, that came to dominate the economy. U.S. sugar corporations purchased large tracts of land and invested heavily in huge grinding mills or *centrales*. U.S. policy provided a privileged and sheltered market for Puerto Rico's sugar. Puerto Rico became a classic monoculture colony, producing one crop, for export, to one market. Land concentration and an economy based on cash crops reduced households' abilities to meet their subsistence needs. Instead of households growing food for home consumption, food was now imported. Indeed, restricted to trading almost exclusively with the United States, Puerto Rico became the twelfth largest consumer of U.S. goods in the world by 1910. In short, Puerto Rico's economy became tied to and dependent on the United States.[9]

Instead of the economic hardships wrought by U.S. policies and investments, U.S. policymakers defined Puerto Rico's problem as "overpopulation." As political economists Frank Bonilla and Ricardo Campos concluded in 1981, "The steady expulsion of 'surplus' workers and efforts to attract greater amounts of capital together have governed all the plans and projects formulated by and for Puerto Ricans to solve the persisting problem of 'overpopulation' and to promote an economic development that remains elusive."[10] In 1901, Governor Charles Allen revealed a demeaning attitude toward rural Puerto Ricans and advocated their migration. Believing that "simple peasants" would "prefer to remain in idleness until someone solicited their services," he reported, "The emigration agent found an excellent field for his enterprise. He penetrated the rural districts and offered golden inducements to these simple folk to travel and see foreign lands. . . . Good wages are offered, and many are persuaded to emigrate." Describing those leaving as "the least desirable elements of this people," Governor Allen explained, "Porto Rico has plenty of laborers and poor people generally. What the island needs is men with capital, energy, and enterprise."[11] Similarly, in 1915, Governor Arthur Yager emphasized the problem of "surplus population" and the solution of emigration. Noting, "There is much wretchedness and poverty among the masses of the people of Porto Rico," he argued, "undoubtedly the fundamental cause is the enormous population." He continued, "I do not hesitate to express my belief that

the only really effective remedy is the transfer of large numbers of Porto Ricans to some other region."[12]

As a result, the first major migration under U.S. rule was in the form of labor recruitment to Hawai'i, a U.S. territory. Between 1900 and 1901, U.S.-owned corporations recruited more than 5,000 Puerto Rican men, women, and children to work on sugar plantations (see Chapter 2). This migration illustrated key dynamics of labor migration that would be repeated in the making of the Puerto Rican diaspora.[13] First, migrants were displaced by economic changes in Puerto Rico, wrought by the U.S. occupation. Coming from the devastated coffee region, these workers made the difficult decision to seek work elsewhere. Second, Puerto Ricans were recruited as a source of cheap labor. Despite Governor Allen's assertions that workers were offered "golden inducements" and "good wages," Puerto Ricans encountered exploitation on the long journey from Puerto Rico to Hawai'i and on the distant sugar plantations, where they had been sought as a way to reduce labor costs and increase profits. Third, although Puerto Ricans were recruited as a source of cheap labor, they were not always welcomed as members of the communities where they settled. Instead, Puerto Ricans encountered stereotypes, racism, and sometimes violence. Finally, labor recruitment often provided the roots from which Puerto Rican communities grew. Puerto Rican communities emerged, not only in Hawai'i, but also at other points along the journey, which involved travel by ship from Puerto Rico to New Orleans, by train to California, and then by ship to Hawai'i. The first expedition left Puerto Rico on November 22, 1900, and did not reach Hawai'i until December 23, 1900, even though labor agents had assured migrants that it was a fourteen-day journey. Of the 114 who started the trip, only 56 landed at the final destination, with most of the others "escaping" in San Francisco (see Figure 1-1).[14]

United States corporations also recruited Puerto Ricans to Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, and Mexico. While policymakers encouraged emigration, editorials in Puerto Rico's newspaper, *La Correspondencia*, decried the emigration and warned of exploitation. In 1901, Governor Allen simply reported, "Several thousands have gone to Cuba, and a few to Santo Domingo."[15] In contrast, one traveler observed in July 1900, "In Santiago, Cuba, Puerto Ricans cannot stand up under the duress working the iron mines, owned by an American company. The promises made have not been met and, as a result, many of our brothers have been forced to beg for charity."[16] In 1901, another labor recruitment scheme sought 3,000 men to build a railroad in Ecuador.


Examiner.

SATURDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 15, 1900. NO. 167.

THE WEATHER.

THREATS AND FORCE PUT
66 PORTO RICANS ON RIO,
BUT FIFTY OTHERS ESCAPE

J. S. RODMAN, COLL.

FIGURE 1-1. By Choice? San Francisco *Examiner*, 1900. The question of "force" surfaced as labor contracts took Puerto Ricans to Hawai'i to work on sugar plantations. Puerto Ricans who refused to continue the trip began California's Puerto Rican communities. Because of the roles of labor contracts and government involvement, debates over the "voluntary" or "organized" dimensions of Puerto Rican migration continued.
(Blasé Camacho Souza Papers, Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, Hunter College, City University of New York, New York City.)

Workers were offered seventy-five cents an hour in gold, and twenty-five acres of land if they stayed after completing a two-year contract. While one article proclaimed, "This is thought to be the most advantageous contract offered Puerto Rican workers," another warned, "We must not forget that these are American contractors and that, therefore, one must stand on solid ground and open one's eyes to avoid falling prey to some unforeseeable circumstance."[17] The *New York Times* revealed

concerns about the mistreatment of workers, "Judging from the reports of the treatment of Jamaican laborers there, Ecuador is not a desirable country for emigrants, and the Jamaican Government has prohibited further emigration." The article cautioned, "It has been suggested that the authorities might examine and report on the conditions existing in Ecuador, and especially among the laborers on this Guayaquil-Quinto railroad, before allowing Porto Ricans to emigrate thither." Nevertheless, a couple weeks later, the McDonald Company transported ninety-six Puerto Ricans to Ecuador. The next day, the *New York Times* reported that the emigration had been halted "on account of the widespread publication here [in San Juan] of an official report of the Jamaican authorities regarding the ill-treatment of Jamaican laborers in Ecuador."[18]

Still promoting emigration, policymakers sought to reduce the problems associated with private agencies by calling for increased government involvement. Puerto Ricans, who had been recruited to Mexico by private agencies in 1909, were repatriated at government expense in 1911 and 1912.[19] A 1914 Labor Bureau report called for government participation in labor contracts to the Dominican Republic and Cuba, as workers had already been recruited. The report declared, "It is certainly unwise for our laborers, who are unable to defend their own rights, to be herded off to these islands absolutely subject to the exploitations of the centrals by whom they may be employed." Instead, given that "there is a great demand for agricultural laborers in those islands, and the wages paid are approximately double those that prevail in Porto Rico," the report suggested, "If selected Porto Rican laborers could be sent in small groups to Cuba or Santo Domingo, protected by proper contracts in which the Government of Porto Rico is a party, such emigration might be advisable."[20] Calling for even greater government involvement, Governor Arthur Yager urged colonization as his solution to "surplus population" in 1915. Specifically, he advocated, "Treaty arrangements might be entered into between the governments of the United States and Santo Domingo which would include a practical scheme of emigration under governmental encouragement and aid of the surplus population of the smaller island to the unoccupied lands of the larger." In addition to the benefits of similarities in climate and language, he added that these were "two neighboring islands, over which the American government has assumed the complete or partial control."[21]

Despite government plans aimed at other countries, most migration was to the States. Labor recruitment laid the foundations for Puerto Rican communities in Hawai'i, California, and Louisiana (see

TABLE 1-3. Puerto Ricans' Residence, Selected States, 1910–2000

	1910	1920	1950	1970	2000
United States: Total	1,513	11,811	301,375	1,391,463	3,406,178
Hawaii	3,510	2,581	—	—	30,005
New York	641	7,719	252,515	878,980	1,050,293
Pennsylvania	83	433	3,560	44,947	228,557
New Jersey	23	360	5,640	136,937	336,788
Illinois	23	142	3,570	88,244	157,851
Ohio	11	124	2,115	21,147	66,269
Connecticut	4	69	1,305	38,493	194,443
Massachusetts	25	163	1,175	24,561	199,207
California	342	935	10,295	46,955	140,570
Florida	83	200	4,040	29,588	482,027
Louisiana	42	217	715	1,645	7,670
Texas	14	84	1,210	4,649	69,504

Note: Figures are for persons born in Puerto Rico for all states, 1910–1920, and for Louisiana and Texas 1910–1970. Other figures are for those of Puerto Rican birth or parentage. Hawai'i's population is not included in the U.S. total, 1910–1920.
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States*, vol. I, Population, 1910, Table 35, p. 734; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States*, vol. II, Population, 1920, Table 17, p. 630; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Puerto Ricans in the Continental United States: An Uncertain Future* (Washington, DC:GPO, October 1976), 23; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *2000 Census of Population and Housing*, Table DP-1, Profile of General Demographic Characteristics.

Chapter 2). Given the long, arduous journey, some migrants refused to continue the journey, while others returned to California when confronted with the harsh working and living conditions in Hawai'i. By 1910, the largest concentration of Puerto Ricans—3,510—lived in Hawai'i (see Table 1-3). Another 342 Puerto Ricans had settled in California, with 213 Puerto Ricans living in San Francisco. Forty-two Puerto Ricans lived in Louisiana, with fifteen in New Orleans. Labor recruitment might also explain the six Puerto Ricans living in St. Louis, Missouri. In June 1904, fifty "Porto Rican girls" between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one were recruited to work at the St. Louis Cordage Company. Problems arose, as *La Correspondencia* published a letter from two of the women who asked for help. Although twenty of the young women returned to Puerto Rico in February 1905, forty-nine Puerto Ricans still resided in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1920.[22] While families had been recruited to Hawai'i, women were also recruited as a source of low-wage labor, and their labor recruitment, it seems, could also foster settlement.

Puerto Ricans also migrated and sought work through social networks. Tobacco workers, carpenters, and other artisans continued to

settle in some of the communities established earlier by political exiles and cigar makers. In 1910, New York City was home to 554 Puerto Ricans, and Philadelphia was home to 64 (see Chapters 3 and 4). Bernardo Vega was a skilled tobacco worker who came to New York City in 1916. Vega recalled that while aboard the steamship, "The overriding theme of our conversations, however, was what we expected to find in New York City. With our first earnings we would send for our nearest relative."[23] While networks had increased the Puerto Rican population in these communities, other states had fewer Puerto Ricans and nine states had no Puerto Rican presence. By 1910, the total population in the continental United States had reached 1,513, still less than half the Puerto Rican population in Hawai'i.

U.S. colonialism meant that Puerto Ricans' status was an ambiguous one both in Puerto Rico and as they migrated to the States. With the U.S. occupation, Puerto Ricans were stripped of Spanish citizenship, but not granted U.S. citizenship. Instead, the Foraker Act rendered them "citizens of Porto Rico," a status without clear meaning in the international community or in the United States. In 1901, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Puerto Rico was a "non-incorporated territory," and that the U.S. Constitution's provisions and protections did not automatically apply to Puerto Rico. Puerto Rican leaders decried this treatment in a 1900 message to Congress, "The United States has not been fair to those who gave their hand to their redeemer . . . who turned their backs upon the old conditions and accepted the new, only to discover themselves cut off from all the world—a people without a country, a flag, almost without a name . . . Who are we? What are we? . . . Are we citizens or are we subjects? Are we brothers and our property territory, or are we bondmen of a war and our islands a crown colony?"[24]

As Puerto Ricans migrated to the States, the ambiguities continued. In 1902, a Puerto Rican woman was detained at Ellis Island and refused admission. In 1904, the Supreme Court ruled on her case, "That citizens of Porto Rico, whose permanent allegiance is due to the United States, are not aliens, and upon their arrival by water at the ports of our mainland are not "alien immigrants." The Court did not, however, decide the issue of citizenship, avoiding the defendant's contentions that "the cession of Porto Rico accomplished the naturalization of the people" and that "a citizen of Porto Rico is necessarily a citizen of the United States." As a result, Puerto Ricans were legally permitted entry to the United States, yet remained neither U.S. citizens nor aliens.[25]

Citizenship and Labor Migrations: Between the World Wars

In 1917, the U.S. Congress passed the Jones Act (or second Organic Act), and declared all Puerto Ricans citizens of the United States. Puerto Rican citizenship ceased to exist in any meaningful legal sense. Despite this change in citizenship status, Puerto Rico's political status was not changed. Puerto Ricans were now U.S. citizens living in an "unincorporated territory." In the period between the World Wars, U.S. policies and economic interventions continued to have a direct impact on Puerto Rico's economy, concentrating wealth in the hands of U.S. corporations, displacing workers, and creating the conditions for emigration. At the same time, the United States restricted European immigration. Puerto Ricans, now U.S. citizens, became a preferred source of low-wage workers for jobs in the States. Displaced by economic change at home, recruited as a source of cheap labor, and seeking work to improve their lives, Puerto Ricans boarded steamships and came to the States in larger numbers (see Figure 1-2). Between 1920 and 1940, the Puerto Rican population in the States grew from fewer than 12,000 to almost 70,000. New York City was the preferred destination, while the Puerto Rican community in Philadelphia also grew (see Chapters 3 and 4). Still favoring colonization in other countries, Puerto Rico's policymakers, nevertheless, facilitated migration to the States through contract labor programs. As Edwin Maldonado argued in his now classic 1979 essay, contract laborers were "the pioneers who established these communities." Pointing to the connections between contract labor and social networks, he concluded, "The importance of contract workers to the growth of Puerto Rican communities in the United States as well as to the socioeconomic nature of migrants . . . was that they provided the impetus for the coming of other migrants to the mainland. For through their letters back to the Island others made the trip to urban centers outside New York." Hence, U.S. citizenship facilitated a migration freed from immigration barriers, which sparked both labor recruitment and social networks.[26]

Although there had been earlier discussions and initiatives to grant Puerto Ricans U.S. citizenship, the pressures of World War I expedited the passage of the Jones Act. As political economist Pedro Cabán argues, "The grant of U.S. citizenship was proposed as a gambit to abate Puerto Rican dissatisfaction with the colonial regime, quiet political agitation for independence, and serve to permanently bind the country to the

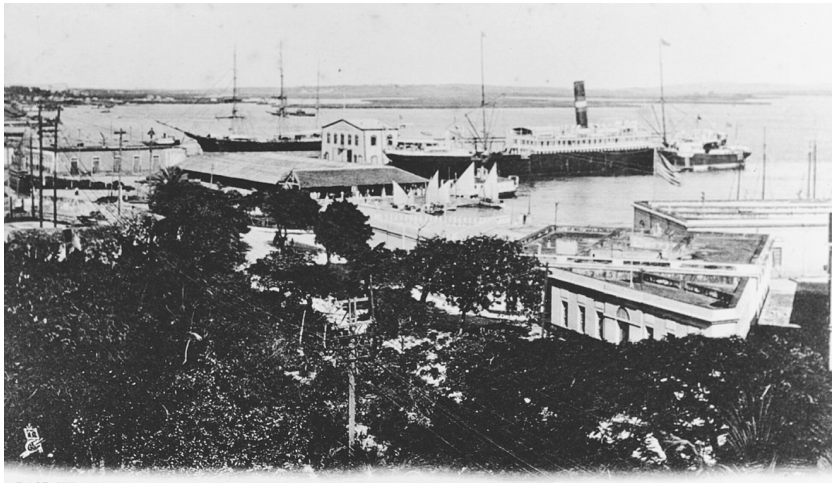


FIGURE 1-2. By Boat: The Steamship *Coamo* in San Juan's Harbor, c. 1900. Before World War II, Puerto Ricans came to the States by steamship, most as paying passengers and some as stowaways. Thousands traveled from San Juan to New York City on the steamship *Coamo*, shown at the pier in San Juan's harbor in 1900.
(The Postcards Collection, Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, Hunter College, City University of New York, New York City.)

United States." Puerto Rico figured prominently in U.S. strategic needs for stability in the Caribbean and for a defense perimeter to protect the Panama Canal. The military draft was extended to Puerto Rico shortly after the U.S. declaration of war against Germany. Puerto Ricans were required to register for compulsory military service, despite their lack of voting representation in Congress or for the President of the United States. Puerto Rican men served, with 241,000 Puerto Rican men registered for military service and 17,855 inducted into the army by October 26, 1918. More than 4,000 were sent to Panama to guard the canal.[27]

The Jones Act expanded Puerto Ricans' participation in their insular government without compromising U.S. colonial authority. The upper and lower houses of Puerto Rico's legislature were now fully elected. Yet the U.S. Congress retained the authority to amend or annul legislation passed in Puerto Rico, as well as the authority to selectively apply federal legislation. Puerto Rico's governor was still appointed by the United States, as were the attorney general and the commissioner of education. The appointed governor then appointed other key administrators. In

addition to military conscription, the United States determined Puerto Rico's tariff and monetary policy, defense, immigration, and communications. Puerto Ricans still had no role in the federal government that controlled these matters, lacking voting representation in Congress and for the president. In 1934, the U.S. government transferred the administration of Puerto Rico from the War Department's Bureau of Insular Affairs to the Department of the Interior's newly created Division of Territories and Island Possessions. The move from War Department to the Department of the Interior did not, however, alter the "colonial formula" put into place by the Jones Act.[28]

As with the transfer of Puerto Rico from Spain to the United States, Puerto Ricans had no say in the conferral of U.S. citizenship. Political leaders, nevertheless, voiced their views of the Jones Act. Speaking before the U.S. House of Representatives in 1916, Luis Muñoz Rivera pointed to the contradictions between U.S. democratic ideals and U.S. policies in Puerto Rico, "On the 18th day of October 1898, when the flag of this great Republic was unfurled over the fortresses of San Juan, if anyone had said to my countrymen that the United States, the land of liberty, was going to deny their right to form a government of the people, by the people, and for the people of Puerto Rico, my countrymen would have refused to believe such a prophecy, considering it sheer madness." Muñoz Rivera urged the United States to live up to its ideals and grant self-government to the people of Puerto Rico. Emphasizing the disjuncture created by conferring U.S. citizenship while maintaining Puerto Rico as an unincorporated territory, he asserted, "My countrymen, who, precisely the same as yours, have their dignity and self-respect to maintain, refuse to accept a citizenship of an inferior order, a citizenship of the second class, which does not permit them to dispose of their own resources nor to live their own lives nor to send to this Capitol their proportional representation." He called for a "full plebiscite on the question of citizenship" so that Puerto Ricans could "decide by their votes whether they wish the citizenship of the United States or whether they prefer their own natural citizenship."[29] Puerto Ricans who formally rejected U.S. citizenship were denied the right to vote in Puerto Rico. For José de Diego, the leader of the insular House of Representatives, the Jones Act meant that Puerto Ricans were either "stripped of their natural citizenship" or rendered "foreigners in their homeland" if they rejected U.S. citizenship.[30]

Like the Foraker Act before it, the Jones Act continued favorable conditions for U.S. economic interests. As economic historian James

Dietz notes, "The Organic Acts guaranteed that political decisions would be governed by the interests of the United States, while U.S. capital investments reoriented the economy." Puerto Rico's economic dependence on the United States increased. To stimulate U.S. investment in Puerto Rico and increase trade, duties would not be collected on Puerto Rico's exports. The economic transformations set in motion by the U.S. occupation continued, as the coffee industry declined and the sugar industry expanded. The land devoted to sugar increased dramatically, from 72,146 to 145,433 *cuerdas* between 1899 and 1909 and to 237,758 *cuerdas* in 1929. Although the 500-acre restriction on corporate land holdings remained intact, it also remained unenforced. Land concentration was pronounced, and by 1930, 34 percent of all land was owned by farms that had 500 acres or more. As corporations, many of these farms were in clear violation of the 500-acre limit. Indeed, four large U.S. corporations dominated the sugar industry, owning or leasing 24 percent of all land devoted to sugar in 1930 and controlling 211,761 acres by 1934. They also owned eleven of forty-one centrales.[31] The impact on the people of Puerto Rico was striking, as Cabán concludes, "Although Puerto Rico was a remarkably profitable investment zone for U.S. corporations, it had also been converted into a Caribbean sweatshop with its attendant social ills and political difficulties."[32]

These economic transformations sent people in search of work. The decline of the coffee industry devastated the mountainous interior of the island. Wages in coffee were lower than those in tobacco or sugar, and the work was seasonal. Despite their efforts to preserve their homes and lifestyles, many coffee growers abandoned their farms. Migrants from the coffee region made their way to the coastal areas, where sugar plantations were taking hold. Yet sugar plantations failed to provide jobs for all the workers displaced by the demise of coffee. As U.S. sugar corporations amassed large concentrations of land, small farm owners in the sugar region lost their land. Even those who secured jobs in the sugar industry faced seasonal employment and harsh conditions. Most workers were employed during the harvesting season, which meant widespread unemployment during the dead season or *tiempo muerto* for six months of the year. Wages were low, and land concentration limited workers' ability to supplement low, seasonal wages by growing food crops or keeping animals. These hardships were worsened by natural disasters, as hurricanes pummeled Puerto Rico in 1928 and 1932. The worldwide depression of the 1930s was felt in its full severity in Puerto Rico.[33]

Despite these policy-induced and natural disasters, Puerto Rico's policymakers continued to point to "excess population," as the cause of Puerto Rico's "problem." The Bureau of Insular Affairs acknowledged, "The Bureau has had constantly before it for years the question of the over-population of Porto Rico, and has had in mind various projects to relieve this situation." The chief of the bureau, Frank McIntyre, continued to promote colonization, "As a permanent relief, it favors the colonizing of several hundred thousand Porto Rican people in Santo Domingo." As a "temporary" solution, he proposed, "to bring to the United States from 50,000 to 100,000 laboring men to be used on farms as agricultural laborers, for which they are best fitted, or as right-of-way laborers on the railroads or similar work requiring manual labor."[34] Although he supported colonization, Governor Yager was "not enthusiastic about the employment of labor in the United States." As a result, McIntyre abandoned his plan to bring men to the States "under a contract," but concluded, "I should not be sorry if it were tried out in a limited extent without Government intervention."[35]

Instead of "overpopulation," organized labor pointed to "exploitation" as the cause of Puerto Rico's economic problems. The Federación Libre de los Trabajadores de Puerto Rico's 1918 resolution on emigration explained:

> The Free Federation of Labor in Porto Rico does not attribute the poverty prevailing in the country mainly to the large number of laborers in the island, but, on the contrary, to the large number of exploiters who dishearten Porto Rico by grabbing the lands; to absorption by speculating Trusts and Corporations; to the centralization of wealth; and to the decided support rendered unconditionally by the local government to every kind of business, legal and illegal, undertaken by all these combined forces of exploitation.

For the Federation, poverty in Puerto Rico and colonization plans were tied to the interests of U.S. corporations and to the government support of these corporations. The Federation's Santiago Iglesias pointed out the connections: "The Sugar Trust proposes to lay its hands on the neighboring island of Santo Domingo as it is already doing," with the Guanica Central there "enjoying the military protection of our nation since it may be stated that it is our government that dictates the policy of Santo Domingo." He opposed efforts "to oblige" Puerto Ricans "to emigrate to Santo Domingo through hunger and seek employment out there of the Guanica Central under the most unheard of and deplorable conditions." As a result, the Federation opposed

emigration "to Cuba, Venezuela, Hawai'i, Santo Domingo, and any where else outside of the United States."[36]

The United States was another matter. The Federation "endorsed the idea of emigration, officially protected, guaranteed, and where there was not only security for the Porto Rican workmen, but also for those from any other section." Given conditions in Puerto Rico, the Federation conceded that "to alleviate their condition the laborers had necessarily to make the sacrifice of leaving their homes and seeking wider horizons away from Porto Rico." They hoped for "the great advance the labor element would make by having an opportunity to work on the mainland." In contrast, organized labor charged policymakers and employers with seeking to retain a surplus of workers to keep wages low. The Federation was thus critical of the governor's motives in opposing "migration" to the States, "This idea, of course, was opposed by the insular authorities who were backing up the interests of the exploiters . . . inasmuch as their biggest business is to be able to have six men for each job." Similarly, Santiago Iglesias charged that policymakers and employers wanted to assure "that a sufficient number of laborers will be available so the barons of wealth and the corporation may obtain labor at the cheapest possible figures at all times."[37]

Indeed, Puerto Rico's employers complained of labor shortages and opposed emigration. One employer countered the government's view of surplus population and equated strikes with idleness, "There are more workmen needed than can be obtained and there is no reason for any man being idle. Last Spring when some Government officials were in the island, there were idle many men in and about San Juan, the best paid labor in every country—the dock laborers who were then, as is very often the case, on a strike."[38] Hence, although policymakers sought to promote emigration and employers complained of insufficient and "idle" labor, both groups sidestepped the issues of economic displacement, as well as wages and working conditions. The Federation, on the other hand, supported emigration only where working conditions "are more favorable than in the island" and only if Puerto Rican workers were "not to be utilized as strikebreakers or to the prejudice of laborers in the United States in the matter of wages." In short, the Federation sought to prevent the use of Puerto Rican workers as a source of cheap labor in Puerto Rico, in the States, and elsewhere.[39]

Yet during World War I, wartime conditions and Puerto Ricans' U.S. citizenship led to a contract labor program to bring Puerto Ricans to the States to work in war industries and on military bases. The state played

a central role in this labor recruitment. By May 1918, arrangements were being made for Puerto Rican men to be employed in "construction work on Government contracts." More than 10,000 were slated for "war work at Norfolk, Newport News, and Baltimore and vicinity." The War Department resolved the transportation dilemma by bringing workers on the return trips of supply ships. Workers were to receive thirty-five cents an hour, and time and a half for overtime work. They would pay twenty-five cents per meal for food provided by the government commissary, and housing was to be provided free of cost. By mid-November, 13,233 men had been sent to the following destinations: 2,774 to New Orleans, LA; 3,809 to Wilmington, NC; 2,944 to Charleston, SC; 3,105 to Brunswick, GA; and 601 to Savannah, GA.[40]

Despite state involvement, workers' complaints of mistreatment and poor conditions surfaced almost immediately. Puerto Rico's commissioner received a telegram requesting an investigation, "Workmen brought here from Porto Rico to work for the Government in New Orleans ill treated. They have also been taken out of the city under soldiers guard and knocked with butt-ends of guns. Some have been paid only part of their salaries and other[s] nothing at all. Their goods all lost."[41] Conditions were, it seems, no better at Camp Bragg in Fayettsville, North Carolina. In a sworn deposition, worker Rafael Marchán revealed the contrast between workers' expectations and the conditions under which they found themselves. Marchán and 1,700 other men signed on, "it being distinctly and clearly understood" that they "came under the [a]egis and protection of the Government." They "were to be employed in their respective trades; . . . housing accommodations and living and working conditions were to be of such a kind as to insure their health and comfort, and that proper measures would be taken to provide for their welfare and protection against mistreatment and abuse . . . and that they were not to be restrained in their personal liberty or in any way compelled to do any kind of work or live in any given place against their will." Instead, Marchán reported that "owing to the improper and unsanitary conditions under which the said Porto Ricans labor and live . . . it has been the case with some twenty-two of them who have died from utter lack of proper care and medical attention." He noted "cases of such utter and inhuman cruelty as to compel sick men under the pretext of their being lazy, to either go to work or be locked up, just because in fear of the ill treatment which they expected to receive at the hospital they would rather stay in their own beds." Nor were they free to leave: "Some have positively refused to

continue at the Camp and an[n]ounced their intention to leave, but have been prevented to do so by sheer compulsion of force."[42] In response, Santiago Iglesias wrote to Secretary of Labor William Wilson attributing the problems to the fact that rather than the Department of Labor, "army officers took charge of the emigration and consequently many deplorable things occurred."[43]

Workers, recruited to Hawai'i nineteen years earlier, also sought help from policymakers. In 1919, when they heard that sugar companies were planning to recruit additional workers, twenty-six Puerto Rican workers responded with a warning, "In Hawai'i, we Porto Ricans are abused and despised more than any race." They pointed to economic issues, "The cost of living is very high, and what we earn is not enough to clothe our families," and older men, unable to work any longer, were reduced to begging. In addition, they reported, "They usurp our civil rights," through unjust incarceration and denial of their rights to vote. They ended with a request, "We wish and beg to be repatriated at once. We wish to advise our brothers in Porto Rico not to emigrate to Hawai'i, for a Porto Rican in Hawai'i is of less importance than a criminal in Porto Rico." Puerto Rico's Senate passed a resolution requesting an investigation and repatriation for those wishing to return to Puerto Rico.[44] The next month, legislation authorized the commissioner of agriculture and labor "to intervene . . . in all matters concerning emigration of laborers from Porto Rico," to investigate and regulate offers made to workers, and to secure and enforce contracts, ensuring provisions for "the stability or repatriation" of workers. At the same time, the government would "have no obligation in any emigration to protect or enforce the rights of such persons as shall leave this country, unless the contracts . . . have been approved by the Commissioner." Recruitment without authority was made a misdemeanor.[45]

During the 1920s, approved contract labor programs recruited women, as well as whole families. In 1920, the American Manufacturing Company, a rope factory in Brooklyn, New York, recruited 130 women. The arrangements revealed elements of paternalism and a company town. Residing in company-owned housing, women workers were chaperoned by two women from respected Puerto Rican families, while additional Puerto Rican women provided domestic services. They were transported to and from work in a company bus, which they were permitted to use for other activities. Male companions, with the exception of the driver, were prohibited. When fifteen workers left their positions, charging that the employer violated the terms of the contract,