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Feminism and the Puerto Rican Independence Movement since the 1950s. From Unrequited Love to a Matching Pair?

Camille Le Pioufle

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Université Européenne de Bretagne
Université Rennes 2

**Master Langues et Cultures Etrangères et Régionales :
Spécialité Aires Anglophones**

**Feminism and the Puerto Rican Independence
Movement since the 1950s
From Unrequited Love to a Matching Pair?**

Camille LE PIOUFLE

Sous la direction de Anaïs LE FEVRE-BERTHELOT

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List of Acronyms and Organizations

Alianza Feminista por la Liberación Humana – *Feminist Alliance for Human Liberation*

Asociación de Mujeres Periodistas – *Association of Women Journalists*

Cadets of the Republic – Cadetes de la República

CESA – Committee to End Sterilization Abuse

ELA – Estado Libre Asociado – Free Associated State

Daughters of Freedom – Hijas de la Libertad

FALN – Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional, Armed Forces for National Liberation

Federación de Mujeres Puertorriqueñas – *Federation of Puerto Rican Women*

Feministas en Marcha – *Feminists on the Move*

Free Federation of Labor – Federación Libre de Trabajadores

Liberation Army of Puerto Rico – Ejército Libertador de Puerto Rico

MINH – Movimiento Independentista Nacionalista Hostosiano

Mujer Intégrate Ahora – *Women Integrate Now*

NP – Partido Nacionalista – Nationalist Party

Partido de la Independencia – Party for Independence

PIP – Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño – Puerto Rican Independence Party

Popular Feminist Association of Women Workers in Puerto Rico – Asociación Feminista Popular de Mujeres Oieras de Puerto Rico

Puerto Rican Association of Women Suffragists – Asociación Puertorriqueña de Mujeres Sufragistas

Puerto Rican Feminist League – Liga Femenina Puertorriqueña

PPD – Partido Popular Democrático – Puerto Rican Democratic Party

PNP – Partido Nuevo Progresista – New Progressive Party

Republican Party – Partido Republicano

Socialist Party – Partido Socialista

Suffragist Social League – Liga social Sufragista

Union Party – Partido Unión

YLP – Young Lords Party

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Introduction

For as long as Puerto Rico has been under the domination of a foreign presence, women have been fighting alongside their male counterparts to achieve self-sovereignty for the island. The participation of women in the creation of two of the most emblematic symbols of Puerto Rican identity can serve as early evidence for their continuous support for the independence cause. Lola Rodríguez de Tío wrote the lyrics of the first version of the national anthem *La Borinqueña* while the original Puerto Rican flag was embroidered by Mariana Bracetti, and the memory of both these women remains dear to many Puerto Ricans even today. Streets and schools have been named after them, and Bracetti has her own museum in the town of Lares. In the capital San Juan, the government has inaugurated in 2014 a commemorative plaque in honor of the ‘Puerto Rican Woman’ with the names of twelve women who particularly stand out in the history of the island.¹ Lola Rodríguez de Tío is one of them.

Right to self-determination, independence, statehood, Commonwealth... the debate around political status options for Puerto Rico regarding its relation to the United States has been raging for decades both on the island and on the continent. Today it is still a topical issue at the center of the life of Puerto Ricans, and the politics of the country gravitate around it accordingly. The sensitive nature of its political status is nothing new in the history of Puerto Rico as the island has been under the control of foreign forces for more than 500 years. First, it was the Spanish who, at the turn of the 16th century, took possession of the island and made it a key part of their empire because of its strategic location. Spanish rule ended abruptly in 1898 with the invasion of the United States during the Spanish-American War. With the Treaty of

¹ Brenda Peña López, “Asamblea Legislativa Rinde Homenaje a 12 Mujeres Ilustres,” *Primera Hora*, March 6, 2014, accessed April 29, 2019, <https://www.primerahora.com/noticias/puerto-rico/nota/asamblealegislativarindehomenajea12mujeresilustres-994157/>.

Paris (1898), Puerto Rico – along with its neighbor Cuba and the Pacific islands of Guam and the Philippines – was passed on to the United States who established a military government on the island, fueling the creation and development of a variety of political parties often split into two camps: those in favor of annexation by the US, and those against US domination. Two years later, the Foraker Act (1900) implemented a civil government to replace military rule. Appointed by the US President, a governor led the executive branch while the judicial system was copied after the US model, with a Supreme Court that ensured the careful application of US federal laws.² As for the legislative branch, it was also inspired from the US bicameral system: a lower chamber, the House of Representatives (51 members today), and an executive council which would later be replaced by an upper chamber, the Senate (27 to 30 members). The act also permitted free commerce between Puerto Rico and the mainland, and the Spanish currency was replaced by US dollars. As part of a wide range of political, economic, and social changes organized by the US to reform the island's system, English was made the official language of teaching and learning, which angered many among the Puerto Rican people who feared that their cultural heritage would soon be erased by the American influence.³ Resistance against the imposition of the English language grew stronger and stronger, and so did the opposition to US colonization of the island. As a result of the failure of the language policies, Spanish was quickly reinstated as one of the two official languages. Today, Spanish is still the dominant language on the island, but English is taught in school as a compulsory subject.

During the first part of the 20th century, the wide number of political parties fueled a spirit of division in the public opinion regarding the status of Puerto Rico. This conflict took an even more complicated turn when the Jones Act (1917) granted US citizenship – although a

² “Foraker Act (Organic Act of 1900) - The World of 1898: The Spanish-American War,” Hispanic Division, Library of Congress, accessed April 29, 2019, <https://www.loc.gov/rr/hispanic/1898/foraker.html>.

³ César J. Ayala & and Rafael Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century: A History Since 1898* (University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 78.

‘limited’ one – to Puerto Ricans.⁴ From this point forward they became legal citizens of the United States; yet they are still not allowed to vote for the US President. In the same way, the Puerto Rican representative at the US Congress, called Resident Commissioner, cannot participate in the final voting process, which nearly reduces his power to a symbolic presence. The Jones Act turned Puerto Rico into an unincorporated territory of the United States and apparently gave more control to the Puerto Rican government over its own affairs, but the US Congress retained the right to veto any policy the island’s legislature passed. For many Puerto Ricans, citizenship was synonymous with an attempt to thwart any remaining hope for future independence. The Puerto Rican Nationalist Party (Partido Nacionalista) was created in 1922, shortly after the Jones Act, and aimed at reaching complete sovereignty by getting rid of the US invader. The party’s advocates fought any political entity whose agenda did not directly lead to independence, and after a bitter defeat in the polls, decided to withdraw from political participation because the electoral process was judged as non-representative and broadly influenced by the colonial power.⁵ Throughout the following twenty-five years, the Nationalist Party organized massive protests and revolts to challenge US power and often resorted to violence especially after the *Ley de la Mordaza* (Law 53) was established in 1948. This ‘gag law’ made illegal any reference to independence, and consequently banned its symbols and supporters, from the Puerto Rican flag to nationalist songs and separatist political parties.

Up to the beginning of the second half of the 20th century, women had played a significant role in the Puerto Rican struggle for freedom, as evidenced by their participation in the uprising in Lares in 1868 for instance. Known as ‘El Grito de Lares’ (Cry of Lares), this Puerto Rican nationalist rebellion took place in the city of Lares, located on the West side of the island. With the goal of declaring the island’s independence from the Spanish regime,

⁴ “Jones Act - The World of 1898: The Spanish-American War,” Hispanic Division, Library of Congress, accessed April 29, 2019, <https://www.loc.gov/rr/hispanic/1898/jonesact.html>.

⁵ Jaime Ramirez-Barbot, “A History of Puerto Rican Radical Nationalism, 1920-1965,” (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 1973), 100.

hundreds of Puerto Ricans, mostly men but also women, took possession of the city before being quickly defeated by the Spanish forces the next day. The short-lived Independent Puerto Rican Republic had just had enough time to be proclaimed, and the flag designed by Mariana Bracetti placed on the highest monument when most participants, including Bracetti, were put into jail. A year later, all prisoners were granted amnesty by the Spanish government, but eighty of them had died in prison.⁶ The nationalist spirit did not die with the failure of the Lares rebellion though, and the arrival of the US gave it a new impulse, generating the support of more and more women eager to participate in the liberation of their island.

Nonetheless, some of these women also had pressing concurrent concerns: women's rights. The issue of equality between men and women really began to take shape in what is called the first wave of feminism which focused on legal rights, mainly gaining the right to vote. Famous feminist figures such as Luisa Capetillo became involved in the public sphere and advocated for women's suffrage while they also participated in the vigorous labor movement that ensued from the capitalist policies imposed on the island's economy. Literate women were finally granted the right to vote in 1929, before suffrage was extended to all women in 1935. Under American occupation, another issue directly related to women's rights arose: birth control. As early as 1907, the United States started to regard overpopulation in Puerto Rico as one of the reasons for its lasting poverty and economic instability.⁷ As a result, the US government, in association with the Puerto Rican authorities, developed a campaign to sterilize 'problematic' individuals. Thirty years later, Law 116, which facilitated access to birth control, was passed. This was good news for the advancement of women's rights who could from then on enjoy a wider range of contraception means and gain better control over their bodies. However, the Law 116 was not such a selfless act on behalf of the authorities. Indeed, it

⁶ "The Grito de Lares, 1868 – History," EnciclopediaPR, accessed April 30, 2019, <https://enciclopediapr.org/en/encyclopedia/the-grito-de-lares-1868/>.

⁷ Bonnie Mass, "Puerto Rico: A Case Study of Population Control," *Latin American Perspectives* 4, no. 4 (1977): 68-69.

promoted permanent sterilization over any other means of contraception as the best, safest solution. It resulted in a number of sterilized Puerto Rican women of childbearing age significantly higher than other US women.⁸ This public policy went on for decades until the Committee to End Sterilization Abuse called in 1975 for the implementation of a set of regulations that would offer alternative birth control options, facilitate the transmission of information on the functioning and consequences of such and such means of contraception, and therefore protect the rights of women. This issue of sterilization abuse brought together women's rights and the movement for independence in a shared effort to expose the injustices of US occupation of the island. However, the nationalist movement and the feminist movement getting closer together did not always benefit the latter who denounced the instrumentality of the issue of birth control by the nationalist movement: their sudden interest for women's rights could not be entirely genuine and was only used to further advance independence claims.⁹

It is this relationship between the two movements that will be the subject of this analysis on feminism and the Puerto Rican independence movement. Nationalism will be at the center of this reflection since in the case of Puerto Rico, its supporters share the same aspiration for self-governance and are a leading force for the independence movement. This analysis will not only examine the evolution of this relationship, but also aim at demonstrating that it has developed in positive manner over the years in Puerto Rico. The Nationalist Revolts of 1950s constitute a relevant starting point for this analysis, as it marked a turning point for a more massive and more institutionalized involvement of women in the fight for independence. The existing literature on the involvement of women in the Puerto Rican struggle for freedom often stops after the 1950s revolts. Yet the Puerto Rican independence movement did not die with the demise of the Nationalist Party – far from it. Within a broader perspective that is not limited

⁸ Alice E. Colón Warren, "Puerto Rico: Feminism and Feminist Studies," *Gender and Society* 17, no. 5 (2003): 668.

⁹ Iris Lopez, *Matters of Choice: Puerto Rican Women's Struggle for Reproductive Freedom* (Rutgers University Press, 2008), 11.

to the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party but rather looks at the independence movement in its various manifestations, it is interesting to look at what has happened since then regarding its links with feminist questions.

Most of the existing scholarship on the Puerto Rican independence movement and its relation to feminism concentrates on the Nationalist Party under Albizu Campos's leadership. Olga Jiménez de Wagenheim provides an authentic inside look of what it meant to be a nationalist woman in Puerto Rico during the first half of the 20th century with her book *Nationalist Heroines: Puerto Rican Women History Forgot, 1930s-1950s* (2016).¹⁰ She focuses on women connected to the Nationalist Party. By exploring testimonies, newspaper articles, obituaries, etc., from and about nationalist women that spent time in jail for their involvement in the nationalist cause, she aims at shining a light on their courage and dedication to independence, which is something that she argues has been done too rarely. The weak point of the book might be found in the way the author takes – maybe intentionally – these life stories and motivations out of the broader Puerto Rican historical and political context. Read on its own, it might give an inaccurate or a least an insufficient representation of the Nationalist Party's agenda and functioning, or its actual perspective on the issue of women's rights. In this respect, *Nationalist Heroines* remains fairly descriptive, and does not engage at all with any feminist analysis of women's roles in the party. In her article "*Nationalism in a Colonized Nation: The Nationalist Party and Puerto Rico*" (2013), Margaret Power examines extensively the specificity of Puerto Rican nationalism in connection to its Latin American neighbors around the 1930s. She argues in one section of her essay that the Nationalist Party made room for women to join the party and occupy leadership positions, but does it without providing an account of the party's views on women's place in society whereas this view might contradict

¹⁰ Olga Jiménez de Wagenheim, *Nationalist Heroines: Puerto Rican Women History Forgot, 1930s-1950s*, 1st edition (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2016)

part of her argument.¹¹ Miguel Antonio Reyes Walker also focuses on the 1930s-1950s for his analysis “*El Discurso Albizuista En Torno a Las Mujeres: El Caso de Juanita Ojeda 1930-1950*” (2016), in which he studies Albizu Campos’s vision of the Puerto Rican Woman, mainly through his speeches. With the example of Juana Ojeda Maldonado, he provides a depiction of the involvement of women in the independence cause, while arguing for the existence of a feminism in the Nationalist Party that transcended the concepts of race and class.¹² Much less laudatory of the Nationalist Party, Jaime Ramírez-Barbot’s dissertation *A History of Puerto Rican Radical Nationalism, 1920-1965* (1973) details the often violent actions undertaken by members of the independence movement and particularly by Albizu Campos’s followers. In his analysis, the few mentions of women and their relation to the party work against the positive depiction offered by Walker or Power since they present the party and its leader as sexists and opposed to the feminist movement.¹³ The most complete work on the topic is probably *Puerto Rican Women’s Role In Independence Nationalism: Unwavering Women*,¹⁴ in which Bryant examines the involvement of Puerto Rican women in the nationalist struggle through the study of articles from the newspaper *Claridad* with the conclusion that their contribution was largely underestimated and underrepresented. In *Together We Stand Apart: Island and Mainland Puerto Rican Independendistas* (2011), Brandyce Kay Case Haub provides an extensive exploration of the Puerto Rican independence movement both on the island and the continent. She argues that “despite the ways in which Puerto Ricans may participate in transnational social and economic exchanges at the level of the individual, calls for national sovereignty remain

¹¹ Margaret Power, “Nationalism in a Colonized Nation: The Nationalist Party and Puerto Rico,” *Memorias: Revista Digital de Historia y Arqueología desde el Caribe*, (20), (2013): 131-132.

¹² Miguel A. Reyes Walker, “El Discurso Albizuista En Torno a Las Mujeres El Caso de Juanita Ojeda, 1930-1950,” *Centro de Estudios Avanzados de Puerto Rico y el Caribe*, (2016): 35.

¹³ Ramirez-Barbot, “A History of Puerto Rican Radical Nationalism, 1920-1965,” 112.

¹⁴ Maria Bryant, “Puerto Rican Women’s Role in Independence Nationalism: Unwavering Women,” (PhD diss., American University, 2011).

committed to political nationalist expressions and localized practices.”¹⁵ Although she mentions nationalist views on women’s conditions and Puerto Ricans’ attachment to their nationalist heroines, she does not particularly focus on the way feminism and the independence movement interact.

This analysis covers four main elements that have taken place since the 1950s and follows a chronological development. The time-period under review being fairly stretched out, this analysis is based on a diverse corpus of primary sources which gathers speeches and testimonies, photographs and posters, party platforms and organizations’ programs, as well as documentaries, televised interviews and newspaper articles.

The first element under study centers around the Nationalist Revolts of 1950. Under the leadership of Pedro Albizu Campos, the most famous leader of the Nationalist Party, many Puerto Rican women joined the party and devoted their lives to the struggle for independence. Albizu Campos’s ambiguous relation to the advancement of women’s rights as well as nationalist women’s motivations and their functions within the party will be studied to reveal the existence of a fairly shy feminism. Wagenheim’s book *Nationalist Heroines* will be used as a basis to understand nationalist women’s motivations, while the study of a selection of Albizu Campos’s speeches from the year 1950 and 1952 will provide a better understanding of his disposition towards women.

The second element is the issue of sterilization. Thanks to the documentary *La Operación*’ released in 1982,¹⁶ the misinformation of Puerto Rican women on the sterilization procedure but also their eagerness to gain control of their body and sexuality will be explored. The Statement of Purpose from the Committee to End Sterilization Abuse will be used to shed light on how the issues of colonialism and women’s rights have interacted with each other.

¹⁵ Brandyce Kay Case Haub, “Together We Stand Apart: Island and Mainland Puerto Rican Independentistas,” (PhD diss., University of Iowa, 2011), 3.

¹⁶ Ana María García, *La Operación*, Directed by Ana María García, Latin America Film Project, 1982

The importance of the Young Lords Party regarding the association of feminism and the nationalist ideology will be the third focus of this analysis. The 13-point program and platform (1969-1970) of the party as well as testimonies from former members gathered in the book *Palante: Young Lords Party* (2011)¹⁷ and *We Took The Streets, Fighting for Latino Rights with the Young Lords* (2005)¹⁸ will be useful to demonstrate how the nationalist pledge of the Young Lords worked in parallel with their radical commitment to the advancement of women's rights.

Finally, a fourth part will be dedicated to the examination of the agenda of the Puerto Rican Independence Party (Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño - PIP) and the involvement of its vice-president María de Lourdes Santiago Negrón in the fight for women's rights. One of the three parties dominating the political stage on the island and the only one defending the independence option, the PIP quite recently took a feminist turn, mainly at the instigation of Santiago Negrón. Today, it embodies what could be seen as the closest thing to a peaceful cohabitation between nationalism and feminism. The PIP's program for the gubernatorial elections of 2016 and interviews of Santiago Negrón will help highlight the reality of this relationship.

Two main ways to analyze the connection between feminism and the independence movement can be put forward: one looks at the involvement of women within the separatist organizations (mainly here the Nationalist Party, the Young Lords Party, and the Puerto Rican Independence Party) and the extent to which they have had access to leadership positions within these organizations. The other takes an interest in the place that the independence movement gave to the issue of women's rights among their demands for complete sovereignty. This place logically grew in importance over the decades, along with society's increasing care for women's rights in general. Thus, it goes from an almost non-existent attention to women's

¹⁷ Young Lords Party, Michael Abramson, and Iris Morales, *Palante: Young Lords Party*, Reprint edition. (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2011).

¹⁸ Mickey Melendez and José Torres, *We Took the Streets: Fighting for Latino Rights with the Young Lords*, (St. Martin's Press, 2003).

rights issues during the time of the Nationalist Party to a portion of the 2016 PIP program exclusively dedicated to the advancement of women's rights.

Of course, this analysis does not purport to be exhaustive considering the vastness of both the time-period and the quantity of political parties and organizations that fought for Puerto Rican independence or for the advancement of women's rights. I instead choose to focus on the organizations that had the most prominence at their time, as well as on issues that were given the most attention. I wish to underline the fact that, as a French white university student, I do not pretend to speak in place of Puerto Rican women, nor do I intent to back one or the other option for the political situation of Puerto Rico in its relation to the US. With this analysis, I only wish to demonstrate the positive evolution of the relationship between feminism and the Puerto Rican independence movement. In order to do so, a first part will be devoted to a more contextual and historical presentation of both the independence movement and feminism on the island, while a second part will explore the role of women in this movement, as well as the inclusion of feminist issues in the debate around the struggle to gain complete sovereignty. Finally, a third part will discuss a question that naturally arises from the main topic of this analysis: do feminism and nationalism – which constitutes a significant part of the independence movement – necessarily have conflicting interests? Or on the contrary, is a feminist nationalism possible? The advancement of women's rights has often been deemed incompatible with the nationalist ideology and their relationship can be – and has been – tumultuous for various and oftentimes authentic reasons. Many feminist scholars have argued against the possibility of a feminist nationalism mainly because the nationalist ideology usually endorses a return to a more traditional type of society, closer to what they consider to be the true, original national identity.¹⁹ Unfortunately, this model of society is most of the time patriarchal, and therefore based on the subjugation of women, which is obviously incompatible

¹⁹ Ranjoo Seodu Herr, "The Possibility of Nationalist Feminism," *Hypatia* 18, no. 3 (2003): 136.

with feminist ideals. Yet, many women around the world – as shown by the Puerto Rican example – have participated in nationalist organizations and fought for the independence of their country. Using the arguments of some “Third-World feminists”²⁰ – a branch of postcolonial feminism – and applying them to the Puerto Rican context, I defend the feasibility of a ‘modern’ nationalist movement that would also support the advancement of women’s rights.

²⁰ The reasons why I choose to use the term “Third-World” will be explained in Part III.

PART I

Women Shaping a Puerto Rican Identity in a Strained Political Situation

A. Being a Woman in Puerto Rico in the 20th Century

To engage in a discussion about the status of Puerto Rican women in the 20th century involves being aware of the intersectionality of the issues at stake and the way they interacted and influenced each other, resulting in the creation of a strong feminist momentum in the first decades of the century, which then regained strength in the 1970s. The labor movement and the fight for universal suffrage were deeply connected, while an upper-class, intellectual group of women aimed at increasing their political and cultural power. Colonialism as well as religion had significant repercussions on how women were seen and saw themselves, and historical legacies such as prostitution and poverty impacted the ways in which women's role was – and to a certain extent still is – defined in the Puerto Rican society: mainly being a mother and a housekeeper.

- *A Growing Economic, Political, and Cultural Involvement*

In keeping with the historical tradition of gender roles' expectations in the Puerto Rican society under Spanish rule, women on the island at the beginning of the 20th century were largely confined to the private sphere and the management of the house and the family. According to Cofresí in “*Gender Roles in Transition Among Professional Puerto Rican Women*”, “a good woman is one who is selfless and willing to ‘sacrifice’ in order to insure the well-being of her family, including the well-being of her parents as they age.”²¹ Their conventional place was at home, not in the workplace, and Puerto Rican women therefore widely depended on their husbands for subsistence, comforting men into their position of the

²¹ Norma I. Cofresí, “Gender Roles in Transition among Professional Puerto Rican Women,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 20, no. 1 (1999): 162.

‘male breadwinner’.²² Scholars often blame the Spanish colonial system and religious institutions for encouraging and perpetuating the subordination of women. In her 1986 book about the Puerto Rican woman, Acosta-Belen describes

Puerto Rican colonial society during the period of Spanish rule was, like societies throughout the Spanish American world, a patriarchal, paternalistic, and military-oriented society in which the subordination of women to men was almost absolute. Women of all classes were conditioned to be obedient daughters, faithful wives, and devoted mothers. Their inferior [social] status was reinforced by juridical inequality. Laws concerning the family, the administration of community property in marriage, authority over the children, and some labor practices limited the rights of women.²³

However, despite this undisputable influence of the Spanish system on Puerto Rican society, it is important to keep in mind that the oppression of Puerto Rican women was nothing but the continuous expression of the historical oppression that women had to endure in most parts of the world – although it is also necessary to remember that this oppression did not manifest in a homogeneous manner. It would be incorrect to attribute the growing involvement of women in the public sphere solely to the American takeover of the island as progress had already been made during the last decades of the 19th century in particular, as evidenced by the development of female education and the great part played by women in political issues related to colonialism. Nonetheless, the arrival of the US in Puerto Rico had significant consequences on the life of women. For instance, divorce, forbidden under Spanish rule as a result of the entanglement of the Catholic church and the state, was legalized.²⁴

With the arrival of US power, Puerto Rico witnessed a quick and radical shift in the makeup of its economic landscape. Since Spanish occupation, the island’s main source of income was based on agriculture with the cultivation of sugar cane as well as tobacco and coffee. Agriculture, and especially sugar cane production, remained the primary sector of

²² Félix O. Muñiz-Mas, “Gender, Work, and Institutional Change in the Early Stage of Industrialization: the Case of the Women’s Bureau and the Home Needlework Industry in Puerto Rico, 1940-1952”, in Felix Matos-Rodriguez and Linda Delgado, *Puerto Rican Women’s History: New Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2015), 181.

²³ Edna Acosta-Belen, *The Puerto Rican Woman: Perspectives on Culture, History, and Society*, 2nd Revised edition (New York: Praeger Publishers Inc, 1986), 3.

²⁴ Ayala and Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century*, 16.

employment throughout the first decades of the 20th century, but the US rapidly introduced production and service industries that offered thousands of women a way to earn their own salary. According to Warren, “Puerto Rico pioneered the trends of women’s proletarianization and employment in Latin America and the Caribbean,”²⁵ although it obviously did not translate into an immediate improvement for women’s status. Garment and tobacco factories, as well as domestic labor were the principal employers for Puerto Rican women, who “worked in professions that were simply an extension of their care-taker’s role”.²⁶ US capitalist industries saw Puerto Rico’s cheap workforce as an opportunity to cut their labor costs, and women in particular were the most poorly paid, with often no more than two pennies a day in the textile industry. Fearing that women’s low wages would drag men’s salaries even lower, the Free Federation of Labor (Federacion Libre de Trabajadores), a trade-union established in 1899, took a great interest in organizing women, and advocate for a minimum wage, but also for better health care and job safety.²⁷ This participation of women in the labor movement marked the first step towards the fight for universal suffrage. The Popular Feminist Association of Women Workers in Puerto Rico (Asociación Feminista Popular de Mujeres Obreras de Puerto Rico) was created in 1920 under the leadership of women involved in the Free Federation of Labor, and fought for women’s right to vote in the broader context of social injustice and poverty that they claimed had been brought by US occupation.²⁸ Obtaining the right to vote for all women, even illiterate, was therefore not only a matter of achieving gender equality but also a way to fight capitalist oppression. Influenced by their role of mothers, women from the labor movement felt the urgency to become active in the public sphere to be able to improve the day to day situation of misery of their families. Moreover, female suffrage had been given to all US

²⁵ Warren, “Puerto Rico : Feminism and Feminist Studies,” 665.

²⁶ Altagracia Ortiz, “Historical Perspectives on Feminism and the Puerto Rican Woman,” *Journal of Women’s History* 1, no. 2 (1989): 171.

²⁷ María de Fatima Barceló-Miller, “Halfhearted Solidarity: Women Workers and the Women’s Suffrage Movement in Puerto Rico During the 1920s,” in *Puerto Rican Women’s History*, 131.

²⁸ Barceló-Miller, “Halfhearted Solidarity,” 132.

women in 1920, and as US citizens since the 1917 Jones Act, Puerto Rican women logically expected to be next in line. However, the US-influenced Puerto Rican government was reluctant to give so much power to these women who, considering their great numbers and their involvement in the labor movement, could be a threat to the capitalist interests of the industries.

Parallel to this suffragist labor movement was a campaign conducted by a group of propertied, intellectual women from the upper-class that focused on attaining a greater participation in the political and legislative process and aimed at readjusting women's role in the Puerto Rican society. In 1921, they organized into the Puerto Rican Feminine League (*Liga Femenina Puertorriqueña*), which name was rapidly changed for the Suffragist Social League (*Liga Social Sufragista*). These women made their gender their principal argument by claiming that, as mothers, they would be able to tackle issues that are often neglected by men.²⁹ Opposed to the proletariat trend of universal suffrage, many militants of the Suffragist Social League advocated for a restricted female suffrage, which would only give literate women access to the right to vote. Discords on this question provoked the dividing up of the Suffragist Social League. The original association decided to side with the Popular Feminist Association of Women Workers in Puerto Rico in 1924, whereas dissident members formed the Puerto Rican Association of Women Suffragists (*Asociación Puertorriqueña de Mujeres Sufragistas*) and kept on defending a restricted franchise.

The fight for women's right to vote took a partisan turn as the Popular Feminist Association of Women Workers was close to the Free Federation of Labor whose political arm was the Socialist Party (*Partido Socialista*), while the Puerto Rican Association of Women Suffragists sided with the Union Party (*Partido Unión*) and the Republican-Unionist Alliance. Unfortunately, the alliance between the Suffragist Social League and the Popular Feminist Association of Women Workers in Puerto Rico never really worked in favor of the latter.

²⁹ Barceló-Miller, "Halfhearted Solidarity," 129.

Indeed, members of the League were willing to make concessions regarding the contents of the numerous debates and bills that offered to grant the right to vote only to literate women. When a restricted franchise was finally established in 1929, the League became instantly less active. It was only in 1935 that universal suffrage was established, after the Republican-Socialist Coalition took power in the 1932 elections.

As a logical positive result of universal suffrage, women's influence in political matters in Puerto Rico took an official aspect and female representation in elections started to develop. Felisa Rincón de Gautier for instance was elected mayor of San Juan in 1946, making her the first woman in charge of a capital city in the Americas. Female political empowerment continued to grow in the following decades with women attaining positions of power as mayors and representatives, despite limited accounts in the literature on the subject that give the impression that women did not get as involved in the political process after they obtained the right to vote.³⁰ Nonetheless, the feminist momentum created by the labor movement and the struggle for universal suffrage undoubtedly tended to lose a bit of its strength after 1935.

- *The Feminist Revival of the 1970s*

Despite visible progress, especially in terms of educational opportunities and political representation, the struggle for gender equality and women's rights operated at a slower pace for the following decades. Indeed, most Puerto Rican women remained trapped in their ascribed role of wives, mothers, and housekeepers at the beginning of the second half of the century. Their access to full-time employment did not reduce their share of domestic tasks, leading them to combine their professional activity with the same amount of responsibilities at home as they had before. Although studies have shown that working women had a greater authority in the family than women who did not have a professional occupation, women remained confined to

³⁰ Mary Frances Gallart, "Political Empowerment of Puerto Rican Women, 1952-1956," in *Puerto Rican Women's History*, 228.

the private sphere and men's decisions still largely prevailed.³¹ Furthermore, other studies revealed that “mothers in Puerto Rico [were] more likely to enter the labor force out of economic necessity than for personal satisfaction,”³² showing the general trend that women had come to internalize the traditional patterns of gender roles.

Nonetheless, economic necessity became more and more urgent by the 1960s as Puerto Rico started to lose its financial competitiveness in terms of tax incentives for US industries, pushing these same industries to move to more attractive countries that offered even cheaper labor. This contributed to the reinforcement of already high levels of poverty and unemployment, and women had no choice but to provide economically for the family. As a result, traditional gender roles were rattled, and women's access to financial independence led to an increasing awareness of the insufficiency of their rights.

In the same way, as early as 1962, there were more Puerto Rican women that graduated from college than men,³³ and they gradually became more aware of the social and economic inequalities that they were suffering from. As part of the second-wave of feminism that focused on a larger range of issues such as reproductive rights, domestic violence, inequalities in the workplace or sexuality, many organizations promoting women's rights were founded in the 1960s and 1970s in Puerto Rico. *Mujer Intégrate Ahora (Women Integrate Now)*, created in 1972, was the first and most significant feminist organization, followed by other associations such as the *Asociación de Mujeres Periodistas (Association of Women Journalists)*, the *Alianza Feminista por la Liberación Humana (Feminist Alliance for Human Liberation)* or the *Federación de Mujeres Puertorriqueñas (Federation of Puerto Rican Women)*.³⁴ These organizations shed light on matters that affected many Puerto Rican women, domestic violence

³¹ Nilsa M. Burgos, “Women, Work, and Family in Puerto Rico,” *Affilia* 1, no. 3 (September 1986): 19.

³² Burgos, “Women, Work, and Family in Puerto Rico,” 20.

³³ Cofresí, “Gender Roles in Transition Among Professional Puerto Rican Women,” 161.

³⁴ Serafín Méndez-Méndez and Ronald Fernandez, *Puerto Rico Past and Present: An Encyclopedia, 2nd Edition*, 2nd edition (Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood, 2015), 159.
The English translation of the names of these organizations is not official.

being “the most emblematic issues in their subordination and struggle”.³⁵ Thanks to the work of these organizations, legislative reforms in favor of women began, leading to the establishment of various decisive laws that protected and extended women’s rights.³⁶ It was around the same period that voices really started to make themselves heard against US policies regarding population control that had been going on for decades. Women were the first targets of this lasting policy that advocated birth control, but promoted definitive sterilization over other means of contraception. This campaign had come as a way to control Puerto Rico’s overpopulation, which in the eyes of the US government was the reason for the island’s high rates of poverty.³⁷

The late 1960s and early 1970s also witnessed the emergence of women’s studies in Puerto Rico, a field that had largely been overlooked in the past. With the exception of some early feminist authors such as Luisa Capetillo – a leading figure of the labor movement and fervent advocate for women’s rights – few accurate studies had been conducted on the critical role that women played in the history of Puerto Rico, and the ones that existed focused mainly on ‘feminine’ themes such as domesticity and family for instance.³⁸ These writings were therefore not very representative of the actual living conditions of women and, besides, were often voiced in a paternalistic tone. As part of the global changing political atmosphere of the 60s-70s and the innovations in terms of scholars’ theoretical approaches, historians in Puerto Rico took an interest in studying the marginalized and the oppressed, which were groups that obviously included women. These developments in terms of researching and studying women’s history participated in the feminist revival of the period, because they shed light on the historical

³⁵ Warren, “Puerto Rico : Feminism and Feminist Studies,” 667.

³⁶ For more details on Puerto Rican feminist organizations, see Ana Irma Rivera Lassén, “Las Organizaciones Feministas en Puerto Rico o el Holograma del Poder,” *Revistas Identidades*, vol 5, September 2007, 121.

³⁷ A part of this analysis is dedicated to the issue of sterilization abuse: See PART II, C.

³⁸ Félix V. Matos-Rodríguez, “Women’s History in Puerto Rican Historiography: the Last Thirty Years,” in *Puerto Rican Women’s History*, 10-11.

importance of women in the shaping of a Puerto Rican identity, while also pointing out the oppressive nature of Puerto Rican socioeconomic context.

Later, during the 1980s and 1990s, feminist organizations continued their legislative efforts to include women's rights in the Puerto Rican political agenda, with for example the creation of *Feministas En Marcha (Feminists on the Move)*, that described itself as a feminist lobbying group. Furthermore, other defining elements of oppression such as race or sexual orientation increasingly came under consideration as essential factors to be taken into consideration in the fight for a more equal society. Studying and organizing women's rights under these new perspectives permitted to further reveal the great intersectionality of issues related to marginalized and oppressed groups.

Regarding Puerto Rico's political status, feminists did not present a united front and according to Rivera Lassén in her article about Puerto Rican feminist organizations, the question was the cause of many tensions in their ranks.³⁹ The situation of Puerto Rico also created and still creates ambiguous circumstances for the participation of Puerto Rican groups to international events related to women's rights such as the World Conference on Women, because as a non-independent entity, it is difficult to integrate in debates and agreements that often happen at the level of countries. Even in terms of financing Puerto Rican participation to such events, the particular island's status comes as an obstacle since it is not recognized as part of Latin America and the Caribbean, and the US often proves reluctant to help.⁴⁰

- *Persistence of a 'Machismo' Culture and US influence*

As stated before, Puerto Rico has inherited a very tenacious 'machismo' culture from the influence of the Spanish colonial system, although US domination did not provoke many immediate changes or really improve the situation. Historical issues, such as prostitution for

³⁹ Ana Irma Rivera Lassén, "Las Organizaciones Feministas en Puerto Rico," 128.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 129.

example, have had a great impact on how women were treated throughout the 20th century, and have lasting consequences on the way women are perceived. Under the largest part of the Spanish rule, prostitution was institutionalized as a way to ‘pacify’ the settlers and was even during some periods endorsed by the Catholic Church. When the US took power in Puerto Rico, prostitution first continued unregulated, although hygiene campaigns against venereal diseases were conducted. However, with the Jones Act came compulsory military service for thousands of men on the island, and the repression of prostitution suddenly became a priority in order to protect those men from diseases brought by the lack of hygiene associated to prostitutes.⁴¹ In the following decade, prostitutes were arrested in great numbers whereas the participation of men in the continuation of prostitution remained unchallenged. Brought by US colonization of the island, the Protestant Church strongly opposed prostitution that, according to Puritan morals, embodied a lack of moral standards and civilization. Similarly to what was happening in the US with Prohibition, and keeping up with the notion of Manifest Destiny, Protestant groups actively fought against prostitution and participated in the proliferation of the idea that it was a shameful vice that needed to be erased from this country and that ‘public’ women were a danger to men and American soldiers in particular. The religious Americanization of Puerto Rico further fueled divisions between those in favor of US occupation and those against colonization, and this issue of prostitution is a revealing indicator of this polarization. Indeed, according to José Flores Ramos in his essay, independence advocates often were against this government policy of banning prostitution, and, without defending the practice, saw it as a symptom of the unfair repartition of wealth accentuated by US capitalist occupation.

Two opposing points of view regarding the influence of the US on the feminist movement and women’s rights can be brought out. On the one hand, defenders of US presence

⁴¹ José Flores Ramos, “Virgins, Whores, and Martyrs: Prostitution in the Colony, 1898-1919,” in *Puerto Rican Women’s History*, 82.

argue that Puerto Rico's feminist movement benefited from the repercussions of what was happening on the mainland and that the introduction of the American type of society served as a springboard for women to achieve emancipation. Indeed, it is true that oftentimes a law in favor of women's rights passed in the US was rapidly followed by the establishment of a similar law in Puerto Rico,⁴² and that organizations on the continent sometimes helped Puerto Rican feminist groups to reach their goals (with the right to vote for instance). On the other hand, opponents to US occupation claim that Puerto Rican women cannot reach full equality as long as Puerto Rico remains a colony of the United States. According to many scholars, the import of the capitalist mode of production and society into the island created other forms of oppression for women. Moreover, colonial presence reinforced the tendency for some part of the population to hold on to traditional aspects of Puerto Rican life in order to mark the necessity to distance themselves from the US model.

“[...] the psychological and physical oppression of women who live in a colonized environment that has generated, or perhaps intensified, an aggressive, domineering, machista attitude on the part of males, which [...] classify as a kind of cultural resistance to United States colonialism.

[...] Literary patriarchs, many of whom subscribe to the independentista ideology, have taken on the defense of this culture in their works because they believe the essence of the Puerto Rican nation is under siege by United States colonialism and American feminism. [...] These writers dismiss the impact of industrialization and modernization on women's lives and the rise of feminism as a world phenomena and see the changes in the role of women in Puerto Rico only as American import.”⁴³

This cultural resistance proves fairly paradoxical in the sense that the most radical pro-independence people who see US occupation as the only obstacle to the fulfilment of feminist hopes also greatly contribute to the persistence of the 'machismo' culture by resisting to the modernization of gender relationships. It almost comes down to the idea that, if the idea of gender equality did not originate from them, independentistas refused to acknowledge its legitimacy.

⁴² Warren, “Puerto Rico : Feminism and Feminist Studies,” 666.

⁴³ Ortiz, “Historical Perspectives on Feminism and the Puerto Rican Woman,” 172.

B. Rise and Decline of Puerto Rican Nationalism

The confusion around what the term ‘nationalism’ encompasses is legitimate as one takes into consideration all the different meanings that are ascribed to the word. Its meaning has indeed varied over the decades and different ‘kinds’ of nationalisms seem to exist and interplay today.⁴⁴ According to the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*,

The term “nationalism” is generally used to describe two phenomena: (1) the attitude that the members of a nation have when they care about their national identity, and (2) the actions that the members of a nation take when seeking to achieve (or sustain) self-determination. (1) raises questions about the concept of a nation (or national identity), which is often defined in terms of common origin, ethnicity, or cultural ties, and specifically about whether an individual's membership in a nation should be regarded as non-voluntary or voluntary. (2) raises questions about whether self-determination must be understood as involving having full statehood with complete authority over domestic and international affairs, or whether something less is required.⁴⁵

In the case of Puerto Rico, as in other examples, nationalism and independence movement are not necessarily synonymous. If Puerto Rican nationalists are almost always independentistas – as supporters of the independence cause in the island are called – not all independentistas are nationalists, at least when it comes to a restricted use of the term in affiliation to the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party. In relation to the preceding definition, Puerto Rican nationalists take an immense interest in the safeguard of their cultural identity. More precisely, they believe that full statehood is imperative and non-negotiable in order to achieve the goal of preserving this Puerto Rican identity. As for the range of actions that is chosen in order to reach self-determination, Puerto Rican nationalism could be considered to be on the radical side of the spectrum, at least for most of its history. Nationalists in the Puerto Rican context are very often associated with the enactment of acts of violence as a radical means to achieve complete independence from the US, a path that the Nationalist Party chose to follow under the leadership of the controversial figure of Pedro Albizu Campos. However, many of

⁴⁴ PART III will explore questions related to nationalism more thoroughly.

⁴⁵ Nenad Miscevic, “Nationalism,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Summer 2018 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2018), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/nationalism/>.

those who wanted and still want to be free from US domination reject the resort to any sort of violence and instead think that independence can be lawfully attained by using political means and legislative reforms.

Notwithstanding the existence of deep historical divisions within the pro-independence movement, the attachment of a vast majority of Puerto Ricans to their culture and their homeland is undeniable, and their tireless attempts to free themselves from foreign rule is but one evidence of this attachment. The importance of the question of Puerto Rico's political status regarding its relationship to the US has not diminished since the first steps towards self-governance were taken around the 1950s, and the island's political parties have been largely defined depending on their views on what Puerto Rico's political future should be in relation to the US.

- *Recurrent Puerto Rican Attempts to Proclaim Independence*

The famous Nationalist Revolts of 1950 were only one among many attempts by patriotic Puerto Ricans to proclaim independence. Far from being the first rebellion against foreign occupation, the 1950s uprising nonetheless came as the largest act of rebellion ever enacted. Puerto Ricans have not known independence for more than 500 years when the Spanish first set foot on the island, but their attachment to their country and its independence never failed. As early as 1511, the Taínos, Puerto Rico's original indigenous people, rebelled against the Spaniards in an unsuccessful attempt to challenge Spain's self-proclaimed sovereignty over the island. With their traditional weapons, they were unable to outperform the settlers' heavy armament and horses, and the rebellion was abruptly put to an end.⁴⁶

Over the centuries that followed, Puerto Rico was the stage of many other 'minor' rebellions but it was during the 19th century, the last one of Spanish rule, that the pro-

⁴⁶ "Taino Indian Culture," *Welcome to Puerto Rico*, accessed April 29, 2019, <http://welcome.topuertorico.org/reference/taino.shtml>.

independence movement had the strongest activity. A large majority of supporters to the cause were *criollos*, i.e born on the island. At this time, it was not so much about rebelling against the colonial institution in itself and the lack of sovereignty of the Puerto Rican people, but it had more to do with the rampant poverty and the existence of privileges for a high-class minority at the expense of the majority. Those factors, as well as intense repression from the settlers, fueled the resistance against the colonial power, and different pro-independence groups were created throughout the island and in the neighboring Caribbean countries such as the Dominican Republic. The influence of numerous revolutions happening all over Latin America and the Caribbean (especially in Cuba) on the Puerto Rican independentistas was also non-negligible and it proved them that self-rule was achievable if people provided themselves with the means to do so. The issue of slavery recurrently appeared in connection to the independence movement and the necessity of abolition was a cause dear to many independentistas.⁴⁷

The most famous of the 19th century's acts of rebellions happened in the town of Lares in 1868.⁴⁸ All the rebels that had participated in the Lares uprising were sentenced to death by a military court for the crimes of treason and sedition but thanks to the intervention of powerful Puerto Ricans at the court in Spain, this sentence was revoked and most prisoners were released. Many among them went to exile and took refuge in the US and the neighboring countries where they continued to fight for independence by creating groups and organizations. Almost twenty years after Lares, in 1897, another failed uprising happened in the city of Yauco. This uprising had been organized from the US by the Puerto Rican Revolutionary Committee, working closely with independentistas on the island. All similar attempts at freeing the island failed, most of the time because information somehow leaked, and the rebels were discovered by the Spaniards before they could launch the rebellion.

⁴⁷ Ayala and Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century*, 21.

⁴⁸ See *Introduction* for a description of the event.

The same year, Spain took a step forward and decided to give its freedom to the Puerto Rican people through the Charter of Autonomy.⁴⁹ The charter finally offered sovereignty to Puerto Ricans, but this newly gained liberty was short-lived when the Americans invaded the island⁵⁰ for the Spanish-American War which ended with the victory of the US forces. The US and its president Theodore Roosevelt quickly decided that the island of Puerto Rico shall be ‘theirs’. Indeed, the advantage provided by its location in terms of economic and military strategy was highly appealing for them.⁵¹ The Treaty of Paris consequently had Spain cede the island of Puerto Rico to the US – even though, as the Nationalist Party will repeatedly claim in the near future, Spain had no right to do so.

- *An Ambiguous Puerto Rican Political Status*

Intense debates regarding the Puerto Rican status ensued, both in the US and on the island, leading to the creation of divisions mainly between those in Puerto Rico who wished for immediate statehood, and those whose hopes for independence still subsisted. The latter nonetheless initially represented a minority among the enthusiastic wave of support for the economic and political benefits that an alliance with the powerful US could bring. This enthusiasm faced its first challenge with the implementation of the Foraker Act in 1900. One of its clause for example established a 15 per cent tax on foreign goods entering Puerto Rico, while unrestricted trade between the US and the island made the latter increasingly dependable on the US market.⁵²

Up to the 1920s, the Puerto Rican political stage was divided between two main parties, the Republican Party (Partido Republicano) with their desire for Puerto Rico to be incorporated

⁴⁹ “The Autonomic Charter of 1897,” *Enciclopedia de Puerto Rico*, accessed April 29, 2019, <https://enciclopediapr.org/en/encyclopedia/the-autonomic-charter-of-1897/>.

⁵⁰ The US invasion of Puerto Rico was actually received fairly favorably by a large part of Puerto Ricans who first saw it as a chance to lead the country towards more democratic ideals.

⁵¹ Ayala and Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century*, 14.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 33.

as a US state, and the Union Party (Partido Unión) which took a qualified path between full independence and statehood by advocating for reforms that would grant more autonomy to the island without losing the economic benefits – although reserved to the most prosperous – that the association with the US had created. The Union Party and its leader Luis Muñoz Rivera often voiced their aversion to the idea of independence, seeing it only as a last resort option.⁵³ They actively worked on a set of reforms that saw the light of day in 1917 with the Jones Act, the ambiguity of which nonetheless was a disappointment for many members of the Union Party.⁵⁴

Parallel to these two parties was also a weaker but steady movement for independence. A dissident from the Republican Party, Rosendo Matienzo Cintrón participated in the creation of the short-lived first independence party on the island, the Partido de la Independencia (*Party for Independence*). Matienzo Cintrón's party was not able to gather enough support to be a serious competitor on the Puerto Rican political stage, principally because its program was not to the liking of the wealthiest class. Matienzo Cintrón initially believed that US influence could boost a progressive and modernist momentum in the Puerto Rican society, generalizing democratic ideals such “the separation of church and state, public education, greater independence for women, and the institution of self-government.”⁵⁵ In his belief in women's rights and female suffrage, among other progressive views, he opposed the Union Party's more conservative program. Although he believed in a Puerto Rican specific identity, he was open to the changes imported by American culture and thought that the island and its traditions could benefit from US influence without necessarily losing its core. However, the Foraker Act put an end to his hopes as he rapidly began to regard US rule as nothing less than straight colonialism.

⁵³ Ayala and Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century*, 57.

⁵⁴ For many, the extension of US citizenship to Puerto Ricans, without statehood, was only a way for the US to end all hopes of independence while keeping its domination over the island. Yet, another point of view saw the citizenship as a first step towards possible statehood.

⁵⁵ Ayala and Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century*, 70.

Yet, Matienzo Cintrón's progressive views were not universally shared among other fellow independentistas, more conservative, who rejected US influence on the grounds that it was a threat to traditional Puerto Rican culture – regarding the role of women in society for instance – and that it would eventually destroy it. The early 1900s pro-independence movement was therefore divided between those who wanted to preserve Puerto Rican culture in its entirety and lingered over the past and its conservative traditions, and those who believed that Puerto Rico needed to evolve towards a more equal type of society but feared the harmful effects of US capitalism on the distribution of wealth.⁵⁶

- *Radical Nationalism of the Nationalist Party Under Albizu Campos Leadership*

The independence movement experienced a strong revival with the creation of the Nationalist Party in 1922, born from the discontentment of some Union Party members after the party definitely removed independence from their program.⁵⁷ Its first leader Cull y Cuchi was succeeded in 1930 by Pedro Albizu Campos, who led the party on the most revolutionary path. Born in a poor Puerto Rican family, Albizu Campos was a brilliant student and skilled orator, and became the first Puerto Rican to obtain a degree from Harvard. He also chose to serve in the US military, where he was the witness as well as the victim of racism, which had the effect of changing his perspective on the US.⁵⁸ Upon his return to Puerto Rico in 1922, he rapidly started to notice the inequalities and the repression ensuing from the colonial power and decided to join the Nationalist Party in 1924. Deeply Catholic, Albizu Campos held rather conservative

⁵⁶ Ayala and Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century*, 81.

⁵⁷ Brandyce Kay Case Haub, "Together We Stand Apart: Island and Mainland Puerto Rican Independentistas," (PhD diss., University of Iowa, 2011), 92.

⁵⁸ "Pedro Albizu Campos: Puerto Rican Attorney, Social Activist, and Nationalist," Encyclopaedia Britannica, accessed April 29, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Pedro-Albizu-Campos>.

views regarding traditional gender roles and was one of those who believed that US influence had a negative impact on morality on the island.⁵⁹ Many nationalists entertained similar views:

The nationalists placed a good deal of importance on cultural elements they considered to be inherent to Puerto Rico's Hispanic roots: Catholic faith, the traditional roles of women in society, and the dignity of the work of smallholders and artisans.⁶⁰

Members of the Partido Nacionalista based their claims on the fact that the US illegitimately acquired Puerto Rico whereas the island had already been given autonomy at that time.⁶¹ Evolving from earlier opinions on how independence could be reached, nationalists from the Nationalist Party believed that self-rule could and should be attained by Puerto Rican people themselves, and not by 'passively' waiting for Washington's good will to grant it. The Nationalist Party's efforts to draw the support of Puerto Ricans rested on the celebration of heroic past figures of nationalism and on emphasizing Puerto Rico's historical struggle for independence. Through marches, speeches, and events for the duty of remembrance and the necessity to continue the fight, the Nationalist Party did a great work in raising patriotic feelings among Puerto Ricans and enjoyed its highest popularity in the 1930s.⁶²

At its beginnings, the party had chosen to follow a legal path towards independence by participating in the electoral process. However, the nationalists once again suffered a bitter defeat in the 1932 elections, shortly after Albizu Campos's ascent to the party presidency. This defeat fueled his disillusionment with the legitimacy of the electoral process in reaching independence, and he decided that their goal could never be achieved under the unfair system of 'colonial elections'. Instead, he started to favor armed resistance against the US oppressor,

⁵⁹ Ayala and Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century*, 106.

The factual reality of Albizu Campos' conservative views in relation to the maintenance of traditional gender roles can come as a paradox when one considers the way he invited women to join the fight for independence and advocated for a "free independent Puerto Rican woman". This paradox will be a subject of analysis in PART II, A.

⁶⁰ Kay Case Haub, "Together We Stand Apart: Island and Mainland Puerto Rican Independentistas," 94.

⁶¹ Ramirez-Barbot, *A History of Puerto Rican Radical Nationalism, 1920-1965*, 88.

⁶² Margaret Power, "Nationalism in a Colonized Nation: The Nationalist Party and Puerto Rico," *Memorias: Revista Digital de Historia y Arqueología desde el Caribe*, (20), (2013): 120.

and “under the leadership of Pedro Albizu Campos, the nationalist movement broke away from its traditional methods of moderate opposition [...] and started to denounce and challenge colonial politics directly.”⁶³

In the 1930s, Puerto Rico was the stage of multiple demonstrations of violence, on behalf of the Nationalist Party, with Albizu Campos being at the center of the nationalist fight and tensions with the insular police.⁶⁴ Many nationalists were arrested as a result of brutal skirmishes, and Albizu Campos himself was eventually sent to a prison in Atlanta where he spent the next ten years of his life.

Nationalist violence had been equally met with repression, which further intensified already existing tensions. With the imprisonment of its leaders, the Nationalist Party went through a quieter period punctuated by smaller displays of violence often linked to the anti-draft campaign. Nonetheless, when Albizu Campos came back to Puerto Rico in 1947 and retook the leadership of the party, the agitation returned. The year 1948 took an unexpected turn when the Popular Democratic Party (Partido Popular Democrático), a newborn party which advocated for Puerto Rico’s free association with the US, largely won the elections. Its leader Luís Muñoz Marin, son of Muñoz Rivera, was elected governor of Puerto Rico, making him the first Puerto Rican elected to this position. Although having a Puerto Rican in charge of the island could have been a source of satisfaction, the Nationalist Party did not see it that way. Indeed, part of the nationalist argument against US presence rested on the fact that the island was illegitimately governed by a foreigner. With the election of Muñoz Marin as governor, the Nationalist Party found itself partly disarmed by US steps toward Puerto Rican self-governance. 1948 was also the year when the infamous *Ley de la Mordaza* (Law 53) was established in Puerto Rico. This gag law, a copy of the US Smith Act of 1940, made illegal any mention of

⁶³ Ramón Bosque-Perez and José Javier Colón Morera, eds., *Puerto Rico under Colonial Rule: Political Persecution and the Quest for Human Rights* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2006), 71.

⁶⁴ For more details on these events, see Ramirez-Barbot, *A History of Puerto Rican Radical Nationalism, 1920-1965*, Chapter ‘Nationalism and Violence,’ 108-142.

independence and its associated symbols such as the Puerto Rican flag or patriotic songs. Obviously by passing this law, the US government intended on putting an end to the rebellious desires of Albizu Campos and the Nationalist Party and discouraging political dissidence before the decisive coming elections when Puerto Ricans would elect their own governor. According to some scholars, this had the reversed effect as it further provoked nationalist violence.⁶⁵

- *The Nationalist Revolts of 1950*

Muñoz Marin's Popular Democratic Party, founded in 1938, had become the majority party by 1950s. He came up with a new plan for Puerto Rico that would put aside the political status question in order to focus more effectively on more pressing socio-economic matters. This novelty on the Puerto Rican political stage gained him a wide support from the Puerto Rican population, although some independence or statehoods advocates strongly opposed this position. First an independence supporter, Muñoz Marin gradually shifted his views as he became convinced that Puerto Rican independence was not economically feasible. Nonetheless, the question of the political status of the island could not be avoided for long for

The people resented their anomalous colonial status They were caught in the dilemma between two unattainable ideals: independence, impossible for economic reasons, and statehood, equally compatible with their collective dignity, which the United States so far has been unwilling to grant.⁶⁶

Muñoz Marin and the PPD consequently worked on a bill with the US Congress that would offer more political autonomy to the island – although the US government would still have ultimate control over Puerto Rico. Public Law 600, in the form of a new Constitution, was to be ratified by the Puerto Rican electorate itself through a referendum held on June 4, 1951. Of course, the Nationalist Party disagreed with what would become the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico (Estado Libre Asociado) and denounced it as a smokescreen that did not address the real

⁶⁵ Kay Case Haub, "Together We Stand Apart: Island and Mainland Puerto Rican Independentistas," 190.

⁶⁶ Peter J. Fliess, "Puerto Rico's Political Status under Its New Constitution," *The Western Political Quarterly* 5, no. 4 (1952): 638.

issue of colonialism. Albizu Campos and some fervent members of his party had been organizing an armed resistance for years and decided to really put it in place as a response to the upcoming referendum. In the midst of the intense political campaign surrounding the referendum, a wave of arrests of nationalist members by the insular police thanks to information leaks accelerated the rebellion that started on October 30, 1950 in the southern towns of Ponce and Peñuelas where a group of nationalists tried to set the police station and the post office on fire. Similar attacks and violent fights with the police happened in the following days in towns across the island such as Arecibo, Arroyo, Utuado, Jayuya and Mayaguez. The governor's house in San Juan was also attacked and Muñoz Marín called the National Guard to put an end to the rebellion but it was not until November 2 that peace was restored. Meanwhile, Albizu Campos's house in San Juan was raided by the police and he finally surrendered, which triggered another wave of arrests of nationalist members. On November 1, two members of the Nationalist Party tried to assassinate President Truman at his house in Washington but were stopped before reaching him. After the revolts, "more than 1,000 nationalists as well as independentistas and communists not connected with the insurrection were arrested,"⁶⁷ a process greatly facilitated by the *Ley de la Mordaza*.

- *Towards a Weakening of the Nationalist Sentiment*

The abrupt end of the 1950s Revolts probably accelerated the demise of the Nationalist Party. Only two days after the end of the uprising, Puerto Rican people massively went to register to vote. The referendum took place in 1951 and the Puerto Ricans overwhelmingly voted in favor of Public Law 600, that was finally enacted in 1952. Having drawn only poor support from the beginning due to various factors, the party was never the same after the second imprisonment of its leader. Strong and violent repression and incarcerations combined with the

⁶⁷ Ayala and Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century*, 167.

absence of the party on the ballot led many supporters to turn away from the Nationalist Party, a road that many had already taken when Albizu Campos chose to use violence as a means to an end. Peaceful alternatives offered by parties such as the PPD were tempting and more appealing to many Puerto Ricans. Moreover, the arrival in 1946 of new politically active pro-independence party, the Puerto Rican Independence Party (Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño), attracted the support of many independentistas, often at the expense of the Nationalist Party.

A few loyal members of the party tried to keep it alive during the following years. In 1953, the United Nations gathered to discuss the situation of nonindependent territories such as Puerto Rico, as it had done regularly since 1946, and declared, in light of the creation of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, that the US was freed from “having to report on Puerto Rico’s progress toward self-government”.⁶⁸ It was during this meeting that a small demonstration organized by the Women’s Committee for the Liberation of Puerto Rico’s Political Prisoners took place in front of the UN building. The leader of this protest was Lolita Lebrón who was part of the four-member nationalist squad that attacked the US House of Representatives in 1954, wounding five congressmen. This terrorist attack meant to draw attention to Puerto Rico’s persisting issues in relation to colonialism. After having been pardoned by Muñoz Marin in 1953, Albizu Campos was once again imprisoned because of this attack.

1955 to early 1960s were quieter years for the Nationalist Party. In 1964, Governor Muñoz Marin once more gave a full pardon to Albizu Campos. His death in 1965 seems to have dealt a fatal blow to his party, of which he almost had become the essence.

Some evidence of the activity of the Nationalist Party still can be found over the next decades, but they are sparse and mainly take the form of declarations and small gatherings. A poster from July 25, 1973 for example, show that the party still tried to maintain the nationalist

⁶⁸ Ayala and Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century*, 173

rebellious spirit by denouncing the Commonwealth as “the ultimate maneuver of imperialism to destroy nationalism”.⁶⁹ Rosa Meneses Albizu Campos, granddaughter of the controversial leader, has been the president of the party since the 1990s. Although the party persists in its refusal to participate in the electoral process, it is still active through commemorations and protests.⁷⁰

C. A Continuous Support for Independence

Whether it operates on the island or from the continent, the Puerto Rican independence movement is not limited to the nationalist presence of the Nationalist Party. Indeed, a wide range of political parties and other organizations have been fighting for Puerto Rico’s liberty for decades. One of them particularly, the Puerto Rican Independence Party, still counts today as a major force on the political stage in Puerto Rico. Others such as the Young Lord Party have had a great deal of influence in the past in specific parts of the US (New York City and Chicago in particular) while smaller organizations such as the Movimiento Independentista Nacional Hostosiano (*National Independence Movement Hostosian - MINH*) continues to denounce not only US colonialism on the island, but also the effects of US foreign policy in the neighboring countries of the Caribbean and Latin America. On a smaller scale, the Nationalist Party and various other pro-independence organizations still gather every year in Lares to commemorate and honor the ‘nationalist martyrs’.

⁶⁹ “Estado Libre Asociado (ELA), ultima maniobra del imperialism para destruir al nacionalismo.” Declaración del Partido Nacionalista de Puerto Rico, Movimiento Libertador de Puerto Rico, “No Permitan Que Destruyan al Nacionalismo, 24 de Mayo 1973,” *Archivo Digital Nacional de Puerto Rico*, 4, accessed April 29, 2019, <https://archivonacional.com>

⁷⁰ See for instance the Partido Nacionalista’s Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/PartidoNacionalistaDePuertoRico/posts/rosa-meneses-albizu-campos-nieta-del-patriota-puertorriqueño-don-pedro-albizu-ca/2110671105612879/>

Today, Puerto Rico's political status is still a subject of intense debates for people that never accepted the creation of the Commonwealth but also for those who became disillusioned with the extent of its positive effects on self-government.

- *Beyond Nationalism: Political Parties and Organizations Fighting for Independence*

After its creation in 1946 by Gilberto Concepción de Gracia, the Puerto Rican Independence Party rapidly came at the forefront of the pro-independence movement when independentistas, many disillusioned by the PPD's change of opinion regarding independence, chose to put their hopes in a party that would make the question of Puerto Rico's liberty its top priority. It was during the elections of 1952, two years after the Nationalist Revolts, that the PIP enjoyed its highest peak of popularity with 19 percent of the votes. Nonetheless, this resurgence of independentista votes in the electoral process did not last long against the popularity of the PPD and the percentage of votes for the PIP dropped to 3 percent only 8 years later.⁷¹ Although having to cope with a rather feeble share of the voting percentage, the PIP has nonetheless been a continuous presence in Puerto Rico's political landscape and is currently the only pro-independence party on the island. Today, it is also one of the three major Puerto Rican political parties alongside the New Progressive Party (Partido Nuevo Progresista – PNP), pro-statehood, and the PPD, still pro-Commonwealth.

Even though the PIP constitutes the only presence of the pro-independence movement in Puerto Rico's electoral process, many independentistas do not identify with its leaders and its program and refuse to vote for the party, making the low polling numbers less representative and less revealing of what the actual support for independence is on the island. Many of them

⁷¹ Kay Case Haub, "Together We Stand Apart: Island and Mainland Puerto Rican Independentistas," 104.

resent the aging and the stubbornness of the PIP leadership as well as the theoretical aspect of its program that does not really offer realistic actions to reach independence.⁷²

The Puerto Rican Socialist Party (Partido Socialista Puertorriqueño - PSP) was also a significant element in the fight for independence. It was first launched in 1959 under the name Movimiento Pro Independencia (Pro-Independence Movement - MPI), an organization that assembled long standing independentistas figures as well as younger members who did not identify with other independence organizations and parties. The MPI was greatly influenced by Cuba's behavior regarding US imperialism and dedicated much of their efforts to the visibility of the Puerto Rican struggle at the international level, and obtained some success. Active in the electoral process, the MPI, re-baptized Puerto Rican Socialist Party in 1975 after it adopted a more Marxist ideology, was very popular by the middle of the 1970s and held numerous seats in Congress.⁷³

One must not forget that these organizations and political parties were also deeply involved in various socio-economic conflicts, more especially those connected to the labor movement. This was the source of many tensions among parties such as the PSP, whose members often disagreed on the contents and the political leaning of the socio-economic reforms that had to be conducted, leading some of them to quit the party. In this way, the PSP was for long divided between “on the one hand a left-nationalism that, for all its sympathies for labor and poor people's struggles, retained independence as its central goal, and, on the other hand, a more class-oriented perspective that tended to see independence as one aspect, although a central one, of the struggle for socialism.”⁷⁴ Ultimately, the PSP gradually lost momentum in the 1980s before its dissolution in the 1990s.

⁷² Ibid., 116.

⁷³ Ayala and Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century*, 226-229.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 285.

Several organizations promote an abstaining behavior regarding elections and work outside the political sphere, like the Nationalist Party mentioned earlier. The Movimiento Independentista Nacional Hostosiano⁷⁵ (MINH) for example, intends to educate Puerto Ricans on the issue of independence but also seeks the international community's attention over the ambiguous political status of the island. Moreover, they also care for various social struggles such as the environment and women's rights by associating with specific organizations.

MINH promotes national unity, social justice, participatory democracy, and collaboration between the various branches of Puerto Rican independence, keeping up with the propositions of our hero Eugenio María Hostos. Moreover, MINH has always showed support and solidarity to the struggles of diverse sectors of civil society, like environmental protection groups, trade unions, organizations in favor of racial and gender equality. Currently, MINH works with various regional organizations throughout the country, that carry out community work, political education activities, etc.⁷⁶

The weekly newspaper *Claridad*,⁷⁷ created in 1959, two years after the repeal of *La Ley de la Mordaza*, and written in Spanish, is the only pro-independence publication on the island and regularly issues letters from independentistas and opinion columns on the topic.

These political parties and organizations were the subject of intense surveillance and repression on the behalf of the US authorities, especially in the 1970s as a result of a resurgence of violent activities on the mainland by supporters of the Puerto Rican independence movement. These tensions were only heightened by the fact that the US was in the midst of the Cold War, with the Communist threat hovering, and the Puerto Rican pro-independence movement was often seen as a convenient vessel for Communist ideals.

⁷⁵ Named after Eugenio María de Hostos, a 19th century Puerto Rican independence advocate.

⁷⁶ “El MINH promueve la unidad nacional, la justicia social, la democracia participativa y la colaboración entre los distintos sectores del independentismo puertorriqueño, bajo los postulados del prócer puertorriqueño Eugenio María de Hostos. Además, el MINH siempre ha apoyado y se ha solidarizado con las luchas de diversos sectores de la sociedad civil, como es el caso de grupos ambientalistas, sindicatos, comunidades y en favor de la igualdad racial y de sexo. Actualmente el MINH cuenta con diversos organismos de base regionales a través de todo el país, los cuales efectúan trabajos comunitarios, actividades de educación política, y otras.”

MINH, “Nosotros,” accessed April 29, 2019, <https://minhpuertorico.org/index.php/nosotros>.

⁷⁷ “Claridad,” Claridad, accessed April 29, 2019, <https://www.claridadpuertorico.com/>

- *Support from the Mainland*

In the 1950s, the US experienced its first significant wave of immigration from Puerto Rico with Puerto Ricans leaving their island by the hundreds of thousands, attracted by the promise of employment on the mainland and taking advantage of their US citizenship.⁷⁸ This wave of immigration was encouraged by the US government who needed to increase its labor force and Puerto Ricans mainly settled on the East Coast – New York City in particular – establishing the roots of what would become the largest Puerto Rican diaspora on the continent. Scholars often describe Puerto Rican migration as a revolving door because of the continuous back and forth movement between the island and the mainland, and the strong ties that Puerto Ricans in the US keep with the members of their families that have stayed on the island. These patterns of migration have often coincided with observable economic trends. While a fruitful economic climate would favor immigration, a period of crisis pushed Puerto Ricans to go back to their island even though jobs there were as rare.

According to the 2017 US Census, there are 5,5 million Puerto Ricans living in the US, making them the second largest Hispanic group behind Mexicans, while there are a little bit less than 3,5 million people in the island of Puerto Rico.⁷⁹ This huge Puerto Rican diaspora has been keeping close connections with their families on the island and have oftentimes taken an interest in its politics, generating the creation of political parties and organizations on the mainland, whether as antennas of existing island-based political parties, or as autonomous bodies.⁸⁰ Among these organizations, the most famous is probably the Young Lords, whose activity was at its highest between 1965 and 1985. Mixing both mainland and island issues, the

⁷⁸ Juan Manuel García Passalacqua, “The Puerto Ricans: Migrants or Commuters?” in Carlos Antonio Torre, Hugo R. Vecchini, and William Burgos, *The Commuter Nation: Perspectives on Puerto Rican Migration* (La Editorial, UPR, 1994), 105.

⁷⁹ Nashia Román, “Data Sheet: Puerto Ricans in the United States, 2010-2016,” Center for Puerto Rican Studies, March 2018, accessed April 19, 2019, https://centropr.hunter.cuny.edu/sites/default/files/PDF/National_Report_2018_march.pdf

⁸⁰ Kay Case Haub, “Together We Stand Apart: Island and Mainland Puerto Rican Independentistas,” 145.

Young Lords emerged in the revolutionary atmosphere of the late 1960s, early 1970s. It was in the tensed climate of 1960s Chicago streets that the idea of a group, influenced by the rising Black Panther movement but centered around issues crucial to their community, grew in the minds of a few Puerto Ricans. First created as a Chicago street gang in 1965, the Young Lords rapidly expanded to the East Coast. Suffering from discrimination, high rates of poverty, poor housing, and unemployment, stateside Puerto Ricans, especially in New York City, started to organize themselves around the appellation ‘Young Lords’, by associating with other small Puerto Rican groups such as the Sociedad de Albizu Campos, a supporter of independence, and also by joining bigger civil rights organizations such as the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. Coming out of the Young Lords, the Young Lords Party was formed in New York City in 1969 and engaged with various important issues at the level of the community, but also defended total independence for Puerto Rico regarding what they thought was a colonial occupation of their island by the US. This nationalist discourse went along with anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist views and offered a renewal in a pro-independence Puerto Rican movement that was on the decline on the island.⁸¹ However, as opposed to what had been done in the past on the island in the nationalist movement, the Young Lords Party emphasized race as a central issue of their struggle and asserted their Taínos and African roots. Gender equality also constituted a major topic of discussion within the Young Lords Party, as part of their 13-point program.⁸²

Around the same period, Filiberto Ojeda Ríos, a figure of Puerto Rican independence and founder of the island-based Movimiento Pro Independencia, led a more revolutionary fight against US colonialism through a series of attacks on US targets both in Puerto Rico and on the mainland. The Movimiento Independentista Revolucionario en Armas, the Armed Forces of

⁸¹ Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar, “Puerto Rico En Mi Corazon: The Young Lords, Black Power and Puerto Rican Nationalism in the U.S., 1966-1972,” *CENTRO: Journal of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies* 18, no. 1 (2006): 148.

⁸² This will be the subject of Part II – C.

National Liberation (Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional Puertorriqueña – FALN), and the Ejército Popular Boricua (also known as the Macheteros) were all left-wing nationalist organizations that fought – the Macheteros are still active in the 21st century – for Puerto Rican independence, and whose main type of action was the targeting of US corporations through bombings.⁸³

Today, the path of violence seems to have been abandoned by Puerto Rican nationalists, who nonetheless still support the fight for independence, but in a more peaceful way. According to Case Haub in her analysis of the Puerto Rican independence movement, there are two main characteristics that connect stateside Puerto Ricans who are committed to the independence cause:

The first was their firm and consistent support for the independence of Puerto Rico, and the second was the fact that their political participation was rarely marked by membership in a particular organization. Even those who were members of independentista organizations were still primarily active with local issue-oriented causes rather than political events directly aimed at achieving independence for Puerto Rican.⁸⁴

- *Puerto Rico's Political Status in the 21st Century*

Up to now, Puerto Rico's political status remains deeply ambiguous. Since 2017, its governor is a member of the New Progressive Party, the political party that supports statehood, as a reflection of the most recent results given by the assessment of Puerto Ricans' perspectives on their island's political status through referenda. Members of the PNP also represent the majority in the local House of Representatives and the Senate.

In 2012, Puerto Rican voters were asked to give their opinion regarding the maintenance of the current status of the island, and whether they preferred independence, statehood or a sovereign free associated state. More than 50 percent answered 'no' to the first question while approximately 61,2 percent voted in favor of statehood. However, debate arose around the

⁸³ For more details on the FALN, see Michael González-Cruz, "Puerto Rican Revolutionary Nationalism: Filiberto Ojeda Ríos and the Macheteros," *Latin American Perspectives* 35, no. 6 (November 1, 2008): 155.

⁸⁴ Kay Case Haub, "Together We Stand Apart: Island and Mainland Puerto Rican Independentistas," 157.

legitimacy of these results, considering the huge number of blank answers that, if taken into account, would change the outcome of the referendum.⁸⁵

In 2017, another plebiscite was organized by the legislature in an attempt to further confirm the 2012 results and an overwhelming majority of votes (91.2 percent) were cast for the statehood option while 1.5 percent chose independence/free association, and 1.3 percent declared they were satisfied with the current status. Yet, once again, the legitimacy of the referendum was contested because the turnout was of only 23 percent. This low turnout can partly be explained by the calls of independentistas organizations to boycott the plebiscite.

Nevertheless, various bills have been introduced in the US Congress to propose the admission of Puerto Rico as a state if chosen so by Puerto Ricans for example, while others suggested some form of independence. However, it remains important to remember that the US Constitution still gives complete authority to Congress over the matter of Puerto Rico's political status, meaning that it can choose to do as it pleases regardless of the results of the plebiscites on the island. Up to now, the odds have always been against admitting Puerto Rico as a state, and many congressmen, especially at the Trump era, show reluctance to the idea of having the already high Hispanic population grown by a formal addition of 3.5 million Puerto Ricans.⁸⁶ Moreover, it would also mean the inclusion of Puerto Rico into the US GDP, causing it to go down.

A pertinent way to look at Puerto Rico's unequal relation to the US can be through the study of natural disaster federal response. Recently, with Hurricane María, the status of Puerto Ricans as second-class citizens was once again shown to the world.

⁸⁵ Sam Garrett, "Political Status of Puerto Rico: Brief background and Recent Developments for Congress," *Congressional Research Service* (June 12, 2017): 9.

⁸⁶ Ed Pilkington, "Puerto Rico Votes Again on Statehood but US Not Ready to Put 51st Star on the Flag," *The Guardian*, June 10, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jun/10/puerto-rico-vote-statehood-us-economy>.

The disparity of disaster assistance between communities located within the US and these located in US territories has demonstrated an imbalance of power and privilege based on political, racial, and economic dynamics uncomfortably akin to colonialism.⁸⁷

Puerto Rico is highly dependent on the US for resources and the federal natural disaster relief's slow response heightened the disastrous consequences of the hurricane while proving that Puerto Ricans came last in the preoccupations of the US government which nonetheless still takes advantage of the island's strategic location.

Today, the status quo is unbearable for most Puerto Ricans, as evidenced by the results of the referenda. Statehood yet remains most uncertain, and the challenges of independence in terms of economic autonomy are colossal in the vicious circle of lasting colonialism.

⁸⁷ Global South Development Magazine, "Hurricane Maria, US-Puerto Rico Relations and the 21st Century Colonialism," *GSDM* (blog), January 4, 2018, <https://www.gsdmagazine.org/hurricane-mariaus-puerto-rico-relations-21st-century-colonialism/>.

PART II

Feminism at Work: Women's Role in the Independence Movement Post-1950s, and the Inclusion of Women's Rights Issues

The historical elements put forward in the first part form a crucial background and enable a better understanding of the context within and from which the main argument of this analysis ensues. How do feminism and pro-independence movement come together in the particular Puerto Rican circumstances? Was it an easy relationship right from the beginning or did the association of these two movements require the overcoming of challenging obstacles? The second part of this analysis aims at assessing the positive evolution of the relationship between feminism and the Puerto Rican movement through the chronological study of four specific situations when women's rights and the struggle for independence were reunited or found common grounds in their demands.

This evolution rather logically echoes a more global trend in the development of feminism throughout the world since the 1950s that is not specific to this particular topic, but the challenges that are posed by the Puerto Rican example regarding feminism offer a stimulating environment for study. Long-lasting colonialism, retrograde nationalism and conservative mentalities are but more barriers to surmount for the advancement of women's rights and for women to reach high-ranking positions or simply efficiently participate in the independence movement.

A. Shy Feminism: Women and the Nationalist Party in the 1950s

Any study of the Nationalist Party under Albizu Campos demonstrates the extent of his hegemony over his party and the great influence he had over its members.⁸⁸ Between his release

⁸⁸ Federico Ribes Tovar, *Albizu Campos: Puerto Rican Revolutionary* (Plus Ultra, 1971), 43-46.

from prison in 1948 and the nationalist revolts of 1950, he delivered multiple speeches against US control on the island to encourage Puerto Ricans, both men and women, to join the struggle for independence. Many women were eager to participate, as they had done historically, and some of them actually had a great importance in the 1950 uprising. Yet, the participation of these women only rarely translated into access to high responsibilities positions and remained hindered by the existence of retrograde mentalities within the party and by Albizu Campos himself, without even mentioning the inclusion of women's rights in the Nationalist Party's agenda.

- *Pedro Albizu Campos Wants to Include Women*

Puerto Rico will be have sovereign power, and will be independent when the Puerto Rican Woman will feel free, will feel independent.⁸⁹

This statement pronounced by Pedro Albizu Campos in October 1933 during one of his most famous speeches reveals his early beliefs that Puerto Rico's access to full sovereignty was deeply connected to Puerto Rican women's future as free, independent human beings. He had indeed been encouraging women to join the ranks of the Nationalist Party since he took the leadership of the party in 1930, and allowed the creation of multiple women's sections across the country. On an overall level, the Daughters of Freedom (Hijas de la Libertad) for instance were the female counterpart of the Cadets of the Republic (Cadetes de la República), also called the Liberation Army of Puerto Rico (Ejército Libertador de Puerto Rico), which was the military branch of the Nationalist Party that was principally made up of young nationalist students. The other name of the Daughter of Freedom was the Army Nurses (Enfermeras del Ejército), a name that better describes the kind of work that these women did. While the Cadets

⁸⁹ "Puerto Rico será soberano e independiente cuando la mujer puertorriqueña se sienta libre, se sienta soberana, se sienta independiente."

Pedro Albizu Campos. "Discurso por el Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos," in *Nacionalismo Enarbola la Bandera de la Raza en Lares* (San Juan: Partido Nacionalista de Puerto Rico, 1971), 35.

were trained for military tactics and received a soldier training, women were taught nursing and did not participate in military drills.⁹⁰

According to Margaret Power's study of women in the Nationalist Party, even though men were the public face of the party, women definitely constituted a decisive support for independence and massively attended party's events. These women believed that it was not solely men's task to fight for the liberation of their island and that they had to do more than passively hope for success. Instead, they actively participated in the life of the party by raising funds, distributing pamphlets and sometimes giving speeches at rallies.⁹¹

Pedro Albizu Campos's rhetoric further stimulated their patriotic feelings and legitimated their participation in the anti-colonialist movement at a time when women's appropriate place was at home taking care of the children. In his series of speeches between 1948 and 1950 that led to the nationalist revolts, he fairly consistently involved women, urging them to fight alongside men and reminding them that they had a great role in the construction of the Puerto Rican nation. In a speech for the commemoration of the nationalist leader Betances in Cabo Rojo on April 8, 1950⁹² he directly asked them to rebel – “Women of Puerto Rico, stand up!” – and referred to their bravery by saying: “Bravery does not require physical strength! The feeblest woman can knock down an empire, if she is brave.” Oftentimes, he made the rhetoric effort of including women in parts of his speech where he did not necessarily have to, as at this period no one would have raised an eyebrow for dismissing them: “The heroism

⁹⁰ Nelson A. Denis, *Guerra Contra Todos los Puertorriqueños: Revolución y Terror en la Colonia Americana* (Hachette UK, 2015), 225.

⁹¹ Margaret Power, “Women, Gender, and the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party,” in Jon Mulholland, Nicola Montagna, and Erin Sanders-McDonagh, *Gendering Nationalism: Intersections of Nation, Gender and Sexuality* (Springer, 2018), 132.

⁹² “¡Levantaos mujeres de Puerto Rico!” – “El valor no necesita de la fuerza física. ¡La mujer mas endeble puede derribar un imperio! Si tiene valor.” – “El heroismo de una sola mujer, y el heroismo de un solo hombre pueden estremecer en su cimiento al imperio mas poderoso.” - “Aquí tenemos [...] todas estas damas llenas de belleza y que llevan en sus entrañas toda la grandeza de nuestra patria.”
ArchivoAlbizuCampos, “Pedro Albizu Campos Habla Sobre La Independencia de Puerto Rico,” Youtube video, 14:00. Posted July 15, 2011, accessed April 29, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G_2XglarIgY.

of a single woman, and the heroism of a single man can shake the foundations of the most powerful empire.”

Albizu Campos also repeatedly used the feminine metaphor of ‘la patria’ and the idea of the mother and childbearer to underline the key role of women as mothers of independentistas, able to create the nation, holding the power to raise children in the belief of a free Puerto Rico: “Here we have all these ladies, full of beauty, holding all the greatness of our homeland within.” In another speech at the Junta Municipal in Lares around 1952 about the Free Associated State, he compared Puerto Rico to a sick weakened mother lying in bed, at the mercy of the murderous power of the United States: “It is not easy to make a speech when our mother is lying down in bed, her life threatened by an assassin. This is the current situation of our homeland, of our mother Puerto Rico.”⁹³

Not only did Albizu Campos ask women to be an active part of the nationalist movement, but he also continuously denounced the harmful effects of US colonial presence on women. On September 23, 1950 also in Lares, he said: “Puerto Rico is okay with being a possession of the United States, a thing that the US can dispose to its liking, and they can use its women as ‘wacas’ [...]”⁹⁴ The term ‘wacas’ alludes to the Women’s Army Corps, a branch of the US army solely composed of women. As US citizens since the Jones Act of 1917, Puerto Rican women had indeed the possibility of joining US armed forces, something that Albizu Campos could not accept as part of the anti-draft campaign.

⁹³ ArchivoAlbizuCampos, “*Albizu Campos Habla Sobre el Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico*,” Youtube video in 3 parts, 42:00. Posted August 24, 2011, accessed April 29, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y9z2Uwh9rfY>

⁹⁴ “No es fácil pronunciar un discurso cuando tenemos la madre tendida sobre el lecho y en acecho de su vida un asesino. Tal es la situación de presente de nuestra patria, de nuestra madre Puerto Rico.” “Puerto Rico se conforma con ser una posesión de los Estados Unidos, una cosa de la cual los Estados Unidos pueden disponer a su antojo, pueden disponer de sus mujeres para que sean wacas [...]”. Pedro Albizu Campos, “The Historic Speech of September 23, 1950, Commemorating the Rising of Lares,” In *Habla Albizu Campos*. New York: Paredo Records, 1971. https://folkways-media.si.edu/liner_notes/paredon/PAR02501.pdf

Finally, a recurrent rhetoric pattern than can be find in these 1950 speeches is the crucial importance of ‘masculine’ merit and honor.

Where are the Puerto Rican men that tolerate all the humiliation that is suffered by their women and their children? Do these men deserve such beautiful, such virtuous women? Those who do not love their homeland are unworthy of the sweet gaze of a great woman born on these lands. [...] And our women will be the ones who will push men to be the glorious men they were born to be, for the women of Puerto Rico have not given birth to cowards [...].⁹⁵

According to Albizu Campos, Puerto Rican women are part of the spirit of Puerto Rico and those who do not fight against colonialism and accept US presence are therefore unworthy of them. As a consequence of his Catholic faith, he placed Puerto Rican women at a ‘holy’ position, as bearers of virtue and emphasized the need to respect them.

Albizu Campos’ speeches demonstrate his desire to unite the Puerto Rican people in the quest for independence, and that obviously included women. But what was the point of view of female members of the Nationalist Party? Was part of their reasons to join a political party motivated by the desire to rattle traditional gender roles or was their participation in the nationalist movement only a way for them to express their attachment to the cause of independence?

- *Female Voices and Attachment to the Nationalist Cause*

Although the Nationalist Party had many women among its ranks, only a few of them have ‘achieved posterity’ in the history of the party, especially for their actions in the 1950s around the time of the revolts. In her book *Nationalist Heroines: Puerto Rican Women History Forgot, 1930s-1950s*, Olga Jiménez de Wagenheim tries to shed light on the participation of

⁹⁵ “¿Donde están los hombres de Puerto Rico que toleran toda esa humiliación sobre sus mujeres y sobre sus hijos? Merecen estos hombres tan bellas mujeres, tan virtuosas mujeres?” - “Los que no aman la patria son indignos de la mirada dulce de una gran mujer nacida en la tierra.” - “[...] Y las mujeres nuestras serán las que empujaran los hombres a ser los hombres gloriosos para que han nacido, las mujeres de Puerto Rico no han parido hombres cobardes [...]”
ArchivoAlbizuCampos, “Pedro Albizu Campos Habla Sobre La Independencia de Puerto Rico,” accessed April 29, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G_2Xg1arIgY.

women in the life of the Nationalist Party, by recounting how their attachment to independence for Puerto Rico led them to spend years in jail.

Blanca Canales, Ruth Mary Reynolds, Lolita Lebrón, Isabel Rosado Morales, Carmen María Pérez González or Doris Torresola are probably the most famous of these women, for they showed an unwavering commitment to the recovery of Puerto Rican self-governance, never shying away from taking up arms if needed. Despite their multiple imprisonments, their life-long belief in a free Puerto Rico earned them the respect of the Puerto Rican people who often treat them as national heroines, as evidenced by the memorial erected in their honor.⁹⁶

Deep devotion to the leader of the Nationalist Party Pedro Albizu Campos seems to be a common thread between these women. Indeed, according to the testimonies collected by Jiménez de Wagenheim, they considered him almost as a holy man and dedicated their life to his protection and the fulfilment of his life goal. Most of the women under study here discovered the Nationalist Party through the speeches of Albizu Campos at nationalist events where their families brought them or after meeting him. A mix of admiration, respect, fear and love leaks out of their words when talking about him. They called him Don Pedro or El Maestro and all praised his courage despite the harshness of his life. Blanca Canales for instance describes her choice not to marry: “[...] [T]hey were men without spirit... I loved them all but could have never feel [for them] the admiration I felt for Don Pedro.”⁹⁷ Canales is famous for her role in the 1950 revolts, as she led the Jayuya uprising and was the one waving the Puerto Rican flag from the balcony of the River Palace Hotel while shouting ‘Long Live Free Puerto Rico’. Lolita Lebrón, who yet never met Albizu Campos, went even further in her opinion of him:

[I] was ready to be faithful to God, to my homeland, and to Don Pedro Albizu Campos, all at once. [...] [He] was the perfect man one could love unconditionally, the way one loves Christ. [...] I loved my homeland as one loves God [and] could love Albizu Campos as God’s incarnation on earth. I was ready to follow him without questioning his orders.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ See Annex 1

⁹⁷ Olga Jiménez de Wagenheim, *Nationalist Heroines*, 1st edition (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2016), 86.

⁹⁸ Wagenheim, *Nationalist Heroines*, 248.

This devotion to both an independent Puerto Rico and to Albizu Campos led her to conduct the attack on the US House of Representatives on March 1, 1954, where she and three other male members of the Nationalist Party opened fire, wounding 5 congressmen. According to a note found in her purse, this attack aimed at making the Puerto Rican plea heard throughout the world, as no one seemed to pay attention to the sufferings of her people.⁹⁹ The four assailants were arrested and Lebrón spent more than 15 years in prison. The 1954 attack also caused the arrest of Albizu Campos in his house in San Juan, only a year after his pardon. At the time of his arrest, due to his poor health, he was taken care of by three other female members of the Nationalist Party, Torresola, Morado and Pérez González. The latter occupied the position of secretary and did not hesitate to shoot at the police when they came to arrest Albizu Campos in an attempt to defend her leader.¹⁰⁰ It was during this fight that Torresola was shot, but she survived her injury. All of them were arrested and spent almost 11 years in jail before being released in 1965. It was not the first time that the three women were imprisoned as they had all been arrested in the aftermath of the 1950s revolts for being members of the Nationalist Party.

Ruth Mary Reynolds's case is slightly different as she was born in the US and became acquainted with the Puerto Rican fight for independence later in her life. After meeting Albizu Campos in New York, she declared that she admired him and his dedication immediately even though she was torn between her commitment to pacifism, which was in contradiction with Albizu Campos and his party's methods, and her fight against US imperialism.¹⁰¹ To support the cause, she participated in the creation of the American League for Puerto Rico's Independence and helped on multiple occasions, although her contribution was more intellectual than the other women mentioned above. She published articles and continuously

⁹⁹ Wagenheim, *Nationalist Heroines*, 257.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 116.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 131.

tried to make the Puerto Rican plea known to the world. She was also arrested in 1950 in Puerto Rico and was released a little bit less than two years later.

After Albizu Campos's death and the subsequent decline of the Nationalist Party, all these women kept on fighting for Puerto Rican independence. Ruth Reynolds continued her work with the newly renamed Americans for Puerto Rico's Independence and for instance presented her second report to the UN in 1977 (the first one was in 1957) to denounce colonialism in Puerto Rico. Canales was politically active through the 1980s, while Rosado Morales and Lebrón (after she was pardoned by President Carter in 1979) turned to civil disobedience and participated for instance in the Vieques protests against the presence of the US Navy for which they were arrested in 2000.

These women were given responsibilities inside the party, which was not such a common thing at this time. Encouraged by Pedro Albizu Campos, they took positions of leadership, even though it was not to everybody's taste within the Nationalist Party. Carmen María Pérez González explained that "he [Albizu Campos] gave women the opportunity to lead, and treated them as equal partners in the struggle," and even though other men in the party disagreed with his decision to include women, "they always respected us because of Don Pedro."¹⁰² In the same way, Reynolds told how Albizu Campos encouraged her to be a leader.¹⁰³

To put it in a nutshell, the testimonies of women inside the Nationalist Party reveal a profound attachment to the independence cause, as well as admiration and commitment to its leader, who represented for them the quintessence of patriotic love. They dedicated their lives to achieve freedom for Puerto Rico and to protect Albizu Campos.

¹⁰² Wagenheim, *Nationalist Heroines*, 108.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 132.

- *Women's Rights on the Sideline*

Despite evidence of some women having held leadership positions in the Nationalist Party, they were nonetheless only a small minority. In Jiménez de Wagenheim's book, there are almost no direct mention of women's rights, even though some of the women acknowledge a feeling of pride when given responsibilities.¹⁰⁴ Some women resented this lack of female representation and thought it unfair, like Carmen María Pérez González when she said that "not enough women were appointed or elected to leadership positions in the party, though they were the one who kept it going while the male leaders were in prison."¹⁰⁵ What came the closest to feminism appeared in demands for more representation in the leadership of the party, but desires for economic or political equality did not seem to be these women's first preoccupation. In the book, only Lolita Lebrón who lived most of her life in El Barrio¹⁰⁶ in New York City clearly mentions the advancement of women's rights as a goal that could only be achieved once Puerto Rico becomes independent. But even then, her vision of women's role remains fairly traditional. Margaret Power reports her word in *Nationalist Heroines*

It pained her [Lebrón] to see 'the disintegration of the Puerto Rican families as women had to go to work in order to remedy the poverty of their households' and she was bothered by 'the oppression of Puerto Rican women who, in addition to caring for their home and families, had to go out to work and then come home to put up with difficult husbands'.¹⁰⁷

She was there referring to the situation of Puerto Ricans in the US, but in her mind their poverty was indirectly caused by the US presence in Puerto Rico. The unfair economic and social system established by the Americans in her homeland prevented Puerto Ricans from having a decent quality of life and forced them to move to the US to find employment, where

¹⁰⁴ This is especially true for Blanca Canales.

¹⁰⁵ Wagenheim, *Nationalist Heroines*, 109.

¹⁰⁶ El Barrio (East Harlem) is located in Upper Manhattan and is home to the largest Puerto Rican community in New York City.

¹⁰⁷ Wagenheim, *Nationalist Heroines*, 248.

instead they only found more poverty. Independence would allow the creation of an equal society “in which women, children, and the poor would be able to thrive.”¹⁰⁸

Although Albizu Campos seemed to encourage them to get involved in the life of the party, men often monopolized the stage at party events, and this habit lasted long after Albizu Campos’s death. One of the women remembered how she and two other famous women from the party were not even invited to speak at an event in their honor.¹⁰⁹

As for Albizu Campos himself, a study of his rhetoric shows that it remained very paternalistic in its content. He often focused on women’s beauty, emphasized their role of mothers, and his very religious vision pushed him to see and to present women as eminently virtuous, meaning that, as opposed to men who were driven by passion and anger in an excusable way, women had no room for error. Placing women in this position had the effect to put everything on their shoulders and legitimized men’s behaviors. This vision was nonetheless quite typical of the period, and can be seen as an example of ‘machismo’ culture manifestation in Puerto Rico. He, as well as many of his nationalist counterparts, believed in the preservation of traditional gender roles because they were rooted in the original Puerto Rican society. Oftentimes, feminism was seen as an imperialist import, not indigenous to Puerto Rico and for many nationalists it only displayed the extent to which Puerto Rico’s society had become Americanized. Albizu Campos himself once criticized feminism in Puerto Rico as the sole result of US colonial influence.¹¹⁰

Albizu Campos’s behavior regarding women’s rights can therefore appear paradoxical, as on the one hand he repeatedly encouraged women to take leadership positions within his party, placing them in his speeches on the same level as men, while on the other hand, he believed in the safeguard of Puerto Rican society as it was before US rule, and this was virtually

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 249.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 126.

¹¹⁰ Ramirez-Barbot, *A History of Puerto Rican Radical Nationalism, 1920-1965*, 112.

synonymous with a patriarchal type of society. What is more, the advancement of women's rights never was on the political agenda of the Nationalist Party which only focused on independence and was never mentioned as such by Albizu Campos in his speeches.

The result of women's participation in the Nationalist Party under Pedro Albizu Campos is a mixed one, that produced a 'shy feminism' which nonetheless is remarkable enough for the period. Even though women's rights were not at all a priority both for the party and for these women – at least explicitly – the fact that some of them had significant leadership roles shows the existence of a desire to reach some form of equality.

B. Independence Movement Using Women's Rights: The Sensitive Topic of Sterilization Abuse

- *US Policies Against Overpopulation in Puerto Rico*

Only a few decades after it took control of Puerto Rico, the US became concerned with the rampant poverty plaguing the island. Deeply influenced by eugenicist theories¹¹¹ which were very much in vogue at the beginning of the 20th century, studies determined that persistent poverty and unemployment were the consequence of overpopulation. As a result, population control solutions were developed to slow down the demographic growth of Puerto Ricans on the island. One solution consisted in encouraging emigration to the US where Puerto Ricans could be used as cheap labor force – by doing so the US government was killing two birds with one stone. The other solution logically resided in limiting the number of births in Puerto Rico, and this led to the development of birth control campaigns in the 1930s inciting Puerto Ricans to have less children. Women were the principal targets of these campaigns as they were considered to be the ones responsible for fertility control within the family.

¹¹¹ The practice or advocacy of controlled selective breeding of human populations (as by sterilization) to improve the population's genetic composition. "Definition of eugenics," accessed April 29, 2019, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/eugenics>.

Modern contraceptive technologies were at their beginnings and in the 1950s the earliest form of the contraceptive pill was tested in Puerto Rico, introduced by US pharmaceutical firms, and promoted by US scientists on the island.¹¹² However, many deterrent side effects pushed the Puerto Rican women on the trials to stop using it, and scientists – white men in an overwhelming majority – rapidly came to the conclusion that low-class Puerto Rican women, the main subjects of these trials, were incapable of following the contraceptive methods’ posology instructions and turned toward permanent sterilization as the easiest solution for population control.¹¹³ Already in 1937, Law 116 legalizing sterilization had been passed on the island and many women had resorted to have the operation. Stereotypes about Puerto Rican women, such as hypersexuality and lack of education, pushed the scientists to promote sterilization above any other form of contraception, and the Puerto Rican government offered monetary incentives to hospitals that performed the procedure. Clinics were even set up in some factories with a lot of women workers in order to facilitate access to the operation, resulting in less time, and therefore less money, lost for the companies. They encouraged women to undergo the procedure because of the advantages of not having to pay for maternal benefits and finding replacements during a pregnancy.¹¹⁴ Moreover, another factor fostered the ‘popularity’ of sterilization among US population agencies and the insular government: the emigration solution was losing ground in the US because of adverse economic conditions, causing many Puerto Ricans to come back to their island and making sterilization all the more the most effective solution against the ‘surplus’ of population.

As a result of this massive sterilization campaign, about one third of Puerto Rican women of child-bearing age had been sterilized by 1965, putting Puerto Rico at the first place

¹¹² Iris Lopez, *Matters of Choice: Puerto Rican Women’s Struggle for Reproductive Freedom* (Rutgers University Press, 2008), 3.

¹¹³ Bonnie Mass, “Puerto Rico: A Case Study of Population Control,” *Latin American Perspectives* 4, no. 4 (1977): 73.

¹¹⁴ Lopez, *Matters of Choice, Puerto Rican Women’s Struggle for Reproductive Freedom* 43.

in the world regarding the percentage of use of this contraceptive method. The practice was indeed effective with an noticeable reduction of the number of births.¹¹⁵ As of 1980, Puerto Rico was “the country with the highest incidence of female sterilization in the world.”¹¹⁶

- *La Operación*

In a 1982 documentary called *La Operación*, Ana María García denounced the abuses of the widespread sterilization campaign by collecting the testimonies of Puerto Rican women who had submitted to the surgery. ‘La operación’ was the nickname given to the sterilization procedure where women had their Fallopian tubes tied irreversibly. According to the women questioned in the documentary, they often received no advice, whether in relation to the existence or the possibility of other forms of contraception, and were mistaken about the permanency of the procedure. For them, their tubes were simply ‘tied’ and not cut, meaning that they could have them ‘untied’ if they wanted to have children again. Upon the discovery of the irreversibility of the operation, some of these women expressed regret.

A majority of the women in the documentary talk about the pressure imposed on them by doctors and by society in general to have less children, especially in a situation of poverty, as they would be incapable of appropriately taking care of them. In grammar books at school, propaganda for the financial soundness of having a small family appeared in the form of pictures showing couples with two children having a happy life and access to material goods they would not have had accessed to with more children. Advertisements from local anti-natality associations also preached the use of contraceptives, especially sterilization, to limit illegal abortions. What is more, these women explained the necessity to get sterilized because pregnancy prevented them from working whereas their income was indispensable for the

¹¹⁵ Harriet B. Presser & al., “Demographic Responses And Population Change,” *Journal of Population Research*, Vol. 23, No. 2 23, no. 4 (November 1, 1969): 143.

¹¹⁶ Carlos Mandrill, “*La Operación*,” Filmed in 1982 by Ana María García, Youtube Video, 40 min, posted May 31, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e3RPScdod6E>

survival of their family. What about the possibility of male sterilization then? A woman in the documentary explains how her husband refused to get sterilized because of the rumors that men became impotent due to the operation.

Contrary to the few theories advancing the idea that many Puerto Ricans did not willingly choose to have the operation, women in ‘La Operación’ explained how they mostly volunteered to do it. Nonetheless, most of them obviously were not sufficiently informed, both on the procedure and on the existence of other means of contraception. One of them insists on the fact that she would have preferred having recourse to non-permanent forms of contraception instead of tubal ligation if she had been better advised. However, as mentioned earlier, the documentary also shows that other contraceptive methods had high rates of failure because of its significant and dangerous side effects, like the pill introduced in 1956 through the experimentation on poor Puerto Rican women living in government housing projects. In the documentary, women who were part of the experiments seem surprised by the discovery that they were the first to try the pill in the world.

Ana María García concludes the documentary by explaining how during the 1970s, “inflation and unemployment reached alarming proportions”, with a third of the US companies that had come to Puerto Rico during Operation Bootstrap¹¹⁷ leaving to establish themselves elsewhere. As a result, the sterilization propaganda continued, despite the fact that it had had literally no measurable effect on the reduction of poverty on the island.

Although there was no official US sterilization campaign, most of the scientists working on birth control solutions came from the mainland, and the insular government as well as local pro birth control organizations – influenced by US population agencies – promoted the

¹¹⁷ “Operation Bootstrap, Governor Luis Muñoz Marín’s strategy to develop and modernize Puerto Rico’s economy, encompassed a number of economic initiatives that began in the mid-1940s.” in “Puerto Rico’s Operation Bootstrap,” *Modern Latin America Brown University Library*, accessed April 30, 2019, <https://library.brown.edu/create/modernlatinamerica/chapters/chapter-12-strategies-for-economic-development/puerto-ricos-operation-bootstrap/>.

procedure, as evidenced in the documentary by the words of the mayor of Barceloneta, a town close to San Juan. Very proud of the success of his population control policies, he explains how “beneficial it is for women to be able to get out of home to work” thanks to the results of sterilization programs and how “men do not have to work as much and can do activities like chatting in the streets.” As another ‘proof’ of progress, he reports the closing of four schools due to the decrease in population.

- *Sterilization in Relation to Nationalism, Colonialism, and Feminism*

The debate around sterilization engaged different forces on the island: religion, nationalism, colonialism and feminism interconnected in a complex way, with no clear demarcations between ‘sides’. The Catholic Church, which was very powerful in Puerto Rico, of course traditionally opposed any form of birth control and exerted influence on the local government. However, in the case of sterilization, religious officials slightly eased pressure for a while as the one-time procedure bore less stigma than abortion and other contraceptive methods.¹¹⁸ It was considered that life started at conception and therefore sterilization could not be as sinful. In the same way, Puerto Rican women believers saw sterilization as easier to cope with since it had to be done only once. Anti-imperialist views of the Catholic Church in Puerto Rico also led them to denounce birth control, and especially abortion, as a “foreign concept” and its legalization in 1973 as a result of the US Supreme Court decision *Roe v. Wade* was seen as “the worst and most painful form of colonial oppression.”¹¹⁹ This position of the Catholic Church echoed the Nationalist Party’s perspective, although nationalists were willing to go even further in their criticism of sterilization, abortion, and other birth control methods. In the 1930s, Pedro Albizu Campos had already voiced his strong opposition to birth control, which he saw as an imperialist import aimed at wiping out the Puerto Rican civilization and its

¹¹⁸ Lopez, *Matters of Choice: Puerto Rican Women's Struggle for Reproductive Freedom*, 43.

¹¹⁹ Yamila Azize-Vargas and Luis A. Avilés, “Abortion in Puerto Rico: The Limits of Colonial Legality,” *Reproductive Health Matters* 5, no. 9 (1997): 57.

culture.¹²⁰ The argument of a ‘genocidal plot’ used by the Catholic Church and the Nationalist Party was highly anti-colonialist, and through a patriarchal perspective, its members relegated women to a lesser status, describing them as incapable of protecting themselves, and limiting them to their role of child bearers.¹²¹ As seen earlier, Pedro Albizu Campos saw women as the producers of nationhood and patriotism, and the guardians of Puerto Rican culture as they could bring citizens into the world. Briggs rightly formulates in her book *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science, and US Imperialism in Puerto Rico*: “Puerto Rican women’s wombs were intensely politicized.”¹²² By victimizing women in Puerto Rico in regard to US anti-natality policies, nationalists used the cover of the defense of women’s rights to advance their own anti-colonialist agenda, without taking into account that maybe Puerto Rican women desired to finally achieve reproductive freedom and take control of their sexuality. This essential aspect has to be taken into consideration: this context made it all the more difficult for feminism to achieve considerable progress in Puerto Rico where the significance of religion and the persistence of a ‘machismo’ culture made even more difficult open militancy on such a controversial question as birth control.

Considering the nationalist perspective on the issue, it is difficult to imagine members of the feminist movement adhering to the paternalistic discourse condemning sterilization. Yet, did it mean that nationalist, or at least independentistas’ views, and feminism were necessarily in opposition? Feminists in Puerto Rico supported the birth control movement in the sense that it meant greater control for Puerto Rican women over their sexuality and their life in general, giving them opportunities to choose the right moment to have children if they wanted to. It also represented another step towards a more equal society where women do not have to choose

¹²⁰ Laura Briggs, *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, and Science in the U.S. Imperial Project in Puerto Rico* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 148.

¹²¹ Lopez, *Matters of Choice: Puerto Rican Women's Struggle for Reproductive Freedom*, 10.

¹²² Briggs, *Reproducing Empire*, 160.

between having a family and having a job. Yet, many of these feminists also resented the way birth control solutions were presented to Puerto Rican women, as Helen Rodríguez Trías¹²³ explained in *La Operación*:

Sterilization has been pushed really internationally as a way of population control. And there is a difference between population control and birth control. Birth control exists as an individual right, something that should be built into health programming, it should be part and parcel of choices people have. And when birth control is really carried out, people are given information, and there is facility to use different kinds of modalities of birth control. What population control is really is a social policy that is instituted with the thought in mind that there are some people who should not have children, or should have very few children, if any at all.

What many feminists criticized was the lack of information about contraceptive solutions and the restricted options that were presented to Puerto Rican women. With the issue of sterilization also came into play discriminating factors such as race and class. Minorities and working-class Puerto Rican women were the first targets of the sterilization campaign and were demonized for being irresponsible if they brought more children into an already ‘saturated market’, and they were seen as the source of poverty. On this subject, feminists in Puerto Rico in the 1970s, but also on the mainland where sterilization campaigns targeting minorities and lower-class women also existed, had divided opinions. While the majority of them only saw birth control as a way for women to gain control over their life, another faction supported on top of that the idea that poor women should indeed think about restricting the number of children they had so it would not worsen their already delicate economic situation.¹²⁴ Some others among the feminist movement supported birth control but shared part of the nationalist view that the US had no right to impose population control policies on Puerto Ricans and denounced the way Puerto Rican women had been used as ‘laboratory rats’, often without them knowing, for the development of contraceptive technologies. They were independentistas because they wanted Puerto Rico to be its own authority, and wanted to free the island from

¹²³ Helen Rodríguez Trías was a doctor and women’s rights activist of Puerto Rican descent and campaigned for a better access to health services for women and children from the minorities/with low-incomes.

¹²⁴ Briggs, *Reproducing Empire*, 147.

North American control. Nonetheless, they envisioned the Puerto Rican family as in need of modernization and challenged the traditional vision of the Puerto Rican woman as only a mother and a child bearer, and in doing so, opposed the conservative nationalist perspective. According to these feminists, and later confirmed by demographers, “sterilization was a response to the inadequate promotion by the government of adequate and safe contraceptive services available at the birth control clinics,”¹²⁵ and the Puerto Rican government that was strongly influenced by US directives. Being a feminist that fought for both reproductive freedom and independence for Puerto Rico was therefore not an irreconcilable position.

- *The Committee to End Sterilization Abuse*

In 1974, Helen Rodriguez-Trías along with some feminist figures of the period founded in New York City the Committee to End Sterilization Abuse. Their goal was the implementation of guidelines to codify the sterilization procedure, both in the US and in Puerto Rico. In 1975, they issued the CESA Statement of Purpose (*see Annex 2*), with point 5 saying:

In Puerto Rico, under the guise of needed population control, the U.S. with the collaboration of the colonial government, has carried out programs for the past thirty years which have resulted in the sterilization of fully one third of Puerto Rican women of childbearing age. The Department of Health Education and Welfare in the U.S. has stated that "As U.S. professional attitudes change, it is possible that we may see sterilization become as important in family planning in the fifty states as it already is in Puerto Rico." For this reason, CESA will focus particularly on the case of Puerto Rico.¹²⁶

By linking the issue of sterilization and women’s rights to colonialism, CESA promoted a qualified perspective. They advocated for access to birth control while denouncing the harmful influence of the US on the insular policies carried out by the Puerto Rican government. By doing so, they shed light on the relevance of including women’s rights in the independence

¹²⁵ Mass, “Puerto Rico: A Case Study of Population Control,” 73.

¹²⁶ “CESA Statement of Purpose,” CWLU HERSTORY, accessed April 29, 2019, <https://www.cwluherstory.org/health/cesa-statement-of-purpose>.

movement's discourse, as it further demonstrated the oppression of the Puerto Rican people as a result of colonial power.¹²⁷

To conclude this discussion on sterilization and birth control in general, it is necessary to be careful not to change the narrative of what really happened mainly between 1930s and 1970s just as it is crucial not to deprive Puerto Rican women of their own voice in order to fit the convenient shortcut of saying that they were all victims of sterilization abuses encouraged by the US. The nationalist discourse did exactly the opposite by patronizing women and using women's rights as a pretext to further denounce imperialist interventions. Although it is true that many of them underwent the operation as a result of a lack of information, Puerto Rican women nonetheless were eager to gain control over their fertility and were not just passive participants in this issue. All the same, through the issue of sterilization and birth control in general, women's rights started to be taken into account in the independence movement's discourse.

C. Feminism Stated Loud and Clear: The Young Lords Party

Access to safe birth control means and the end of sterilization abuses on Puerto Rican women were also central issues in the demands of Puerto Rican organizations on the mainland in the 1970s. The Young Lords Party in particular rebelled against these US policies targeting women from the minorities in general, as well as the lack of access to healthcare solutions or even the hazardousness of being treated in certain facilities such as the Lincoln Hospital in New York City.¹²⁸ These claims were part of the revolutionary feminist agenda of the Young Lords Party, which can be considered as the first Puerto Rican pro-independence party to officially

¹²⁷ Thomas M. Shapiro, *Population Control Politics: Women, Sterilization, and Reproductive Choice (Health, Society and Policy)* (Temple University Press, 1985), 150.

¹²⁸ José E. Velásquez, "Another West Side Story: An Interview with Members of El Comité-MINP," in Andrés Torres and José Emiliano Velázquez, *The Puerto Rican Movement: Voices from the Diaspora* (Temple University Press, 1998), 94.

include women's rights and feminism to its program alongside self-determination for Puerto Rico.

- *'We Want Self-Determination for Puerto Ricans'*

The first point of the 13-point program and platform of the Young Lords Party¹²⁹ (See Annex 3) was written as followed:

WE WANT SELF-DETERMINATION FOR PUERTO RICANS, LIBERATION ON THE ISLAND AND INSIDE THE UNITED STATES.

For 500 years, first Spain and then the United States have colonized our country. Billions of dollars in profits leave our country for the United States every year. In every way we are slaves of the gringo. We want liberation and the Power in the hands of the People, not Puerto Rican exploiters.

QUE VIVA PUERTO RICO LIBRE!

Even though the Young Lords Party operated mainly on the continent, Puerto Rican independence was one of their leading goals because the liberation of the island from US control would give all Puerto Ricans, including those living in the US, better tools to be the masters of their own destiny. Not only did the members of the Young Lords aim for Puerto Rico's independence, but they also added in points 2 and 3 'self-determination for all Latinos' and the 'liberation of all Third-World people'. They linked the Puerto Rican plea to the larger issue of minorities' oppression all around the world. Obviously, their main target was US hegemony, and they particularly criticized the exploitative way it built its economic and cultural empire to the detriment of Latin American and Caribbean countries. The Young Lords Party was largely inspired by Pedro Albizu Campos's activism and nationalism and they viewed him and the Puerto Rican nationalists as heroes and martyrs that gave their life for the independence cause.¹³⁰ Students of Puerto Rican descent formed a large part of the Young Lords membership

¹²⁹ The Young Lords Party, "Young Lords Party: 13 Points Program and Platform," *Caribe: The Young Lords Party 1969-1975* (New York), (1983), accessed April 19, 2019. <https://icaadocs.mfah.org/icaadocs/THEARCHIVE/FullRecord/tabid/88/doc/841843/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

¹³⁰ Iris Morales, "¡Palante, Siempre Palante! The Young Lords," in *The Puerto Rican Movement: Voices from the Diaspora* (Temple University Press, 1998), 223.

and as they became more familiar with the Puerto Rican plight, they began to organize a special organization dedicated to the independence fight called ‘Free Puerto Rico Now! Committee.’¹³¹ The Young Lords considered themselves as ‘revolutionary nationalists’¹³² in the sense that they did not base their fight on racial distinctions of any kind, but on the contrary supported all people that were the victims of US injustice regardless of their skin color or their roots. By calling the US ‘AmeriKKKa’ in reference to the Ku Klux Klan – the infamous white supremacist organization that was still very active in the 1970s – they strongly pointed out its fascist and racist face and the dysfunctions of the system.

The commitment of the Young Lords Party to the Puerto Rican plea for independence showed in the field with its participation to nationalist commemorations and demonstrations and the opening of two party branches on the island.¹³³ In his book *We Took the Streets: Fighting for Latino Rights with the Young Lords*, Mickey Miguel Melendez, a former member of the party, explains how on October, 30 1970, the Young Lords organized the “largest anti-colonial street demonstration set up by mainland Puerto Ricans”¹³⁴ This march was a commemoration to the 1950 nationalist revolts and according to Miguel Melendez, “over ten thousand people marched to the United Nations from El Barrio”, the Puerto Rican neighborhood of New York City. They reiterated their independence claims, but also demanded the release of political prisoners, and especially of the Puerto Ricans that were imprisoned on US soil at that time – Lolita Lebrón, the leader of the 1954 attack on the House of Representatives, being one of them.

The freedom of all political prisoners and prisoners of war had its own point in the party program in which the Young Lords denounced the illegitimacy of the incarceration of Puerto

¹³¹ Iris Morales, “¡Palante, Siempre Palante! The Young Lords,” 216-217.

¹³² Point 4 of “Young Lords Party: 13 Points Program and Platform.”

¹³³ Young Lords Party, Michael Abramson, and Iris Morales, *Palante: Young Lords Party*, Reprint edition (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2011), 152.

¹³⁴ Mickey Melendez and José Torres, *We Took the Streets: Fighting for Latino Rights with the Young Lords* (St. Martin’s Press, 2013), 192.

Ricans on US soil, along with other foreign convicts, as well as the unfairness of the trials that were conducted by prejudiced mainland US citizens and not by Puerto Ricans peers. The Young Lords Party also opposed the military draft and the Vietnam War (Point 9) on the basis that Puerto Ricans were used as disposable soldiers whose loss would not be as terrible as the loss of ‘real’ US citizens, and that Puerto Ricans should not participate in an unlawful war and fight against a people that had the same ideals of freedom as they did.

The Young Lords Party believed that socialism was the key answer to the creation of a more equal society. Capitalism was for them the main generator of inequalities suffered by Puerto Ricans both in the US and on the island, and they thought that social justice could only be attained by changing the fundamental manner in which the system worked. In Points 8 and 13 of the party program, they make it clear that capitalism is the enemy of solidarity between people and only reinforces poverty and the racist stereotypes that are often attached to it.

As evidenced by its party program and platform, the Young Lords Party placed the Puerto Rican independence cause and the fight against capitalism and imperialism embodied by the US at the center of their demands. Even though they lived on the mainland, far from their ancestral home and sometimes their family, they had their heart set on liberating the Puerto Rican people from US domination. They linked their community-level struggle to the long-lasting state of colonization imposed on Puerto Ricans, the effects of which persisted even when they lived on the mainland and tried to be part of US society.

- *‘We Want Equality for Women: Down with Machismo and Male Chauvinism’*

In the original Young Lords Party 13-point party program and platform published in October 1969 (*See Annex 4*), point 10 said

WE WANT EQUALITY FOR WOMEN. MACHISMO MUST BE REVOLUTIONARY – NOT OPPRESSIVE.

Under capitalism, our women have been oppressed by both the society and our own men. The doctrine of machismo has been used by our men to take out their frustrations against their wives, sisters, mothers, and children. Our men must support their women in their fight for economic and social equality, and must recognize that our women are equals in every way within the revolutionary ranks.

FORWARD, SISTERS, IN THE STRUGGLE!¹³⁵

Dedicating an entire point to the fight for equality between the sexes was certainly a huge step forward for the development of feminist ideas within the Young Lords Party. Even though it was in keeping with the progressive momentum of the civil rights movement of the late 1960s - early 1970s in the US, the official inclusion of feminism into the political agenda of the Young Lords nonetheless expressed a resolute desire to change the sexist mentalities within the party. Miguel Melendez explains that despite the presence of many female activists in the Young Lords, “the Central Committee was all-male”.¹³⁶ Another example of machista behavior is given by Pablo ‘Yoruba’ Guzman when he describes how the majority of male members would react to feminist-oriented proposals within the party: “The first time we heard about Women’s Liberation our machismo and our male chauvinism said “Well, these chicks are all frustrated – that’s their main problem. What they really need is a good – you know.””¹³⁷ For the women in the party, the first, and maybe the most arduous task was to make male Young Lords members aware of their machismo so they could then recognize the numerous situations when they had a sexist behavior. A female member of the Young Lords Party explains how gender segregation happened, especially at the beginnings of the party, with the assignment of traditional female tasks such as paperwork, typing, and looking after the children. Women had to repeatedly “correct and discipline” their male counterparts regarding sexist conducts of various kinds, some more subtle than others.¹³⁸ In order to discuss the question of feminism within the party, the female members of the Young Lords organized a caucus to which only they could participate so they could speak freely without having to fear the judgment of the men. However, they quickly realized that to make progress, it was essential to include men in

¹³⁵ “13 Point Program and Platform of the Young Lords Party,” The Sixties Project, accessed April 29, 2019, http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML_docs/Resources/Primary/Manifestos/Young_Lords_platform.html.

¹³⁶ Melendez and Torres, *We Took the Streets*, 174.

¹³⁷ Young Lords Party, Abramson, and Morales, *Palante*, 40.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 45.

their discussions because they were the ones who needed to be educated on gender equality issues – although women also had to undo the way they had come to internalize their ‘lesser’ role in society. Progress that could seem derisory such as the integration of gender inclusive language use – “brothers AND sisters”, “men AND women”, “compañeros AND compañeras” – was part of the baby steps that led the Young Lords Party to be so revolutionary in terms of feminist ideals. In 1970, one of the main leaders of the party was discharged for sexist behavior. Famous leader Felipe Luciano was the husband of equally famous Iris Morales, a female member of the Young Lords and director of the documentary *¡Palante, Siempre Palante!*.¹³⁹ Luciano cheated on his wife, and she viewed his behavior as a matter of political concern within the party because it came as further evidence for the latent machismo. Although most men thought that this was a private matter, she and other women tried to raise awareness on how much introspection was needed. Speaking about gender equality was not enough, they had to put it into practice.¹⁴⁰ Thanks to their efforts, more and more women were able to access positions of leadership over the months.

Yet, by saying that ‘machismo must be revolutionary’, the title of point 10 still incorporated the idea that machismo was an unavoidable characteristic of Puerto Rican culture, which implied that some of its dimensions were socially acceptable. Dissatisfied with this element, among other details, Young Lords female activists pushed for a revised version of the party program that was published in May 1970.

WE WANT EQUALITY FOR WOMEN. DOWN WITH MACHISMO AND MALE CHAUVINISM.

Under capitalism, women have been oppressed by both society and our men. The doctrine of machismo has been used by men to take out their frustrations on wives, sisters, mothers, and children. Men must fight along with sisters in the struggle for economic and social equality and must recognize that sisters make up over half of the revolutionary army: sisters and brothers are equals fighting for our people.

FORWARD, SISTERS, IN THE STRUGGLE!¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Iris Morales, *¡Palante, Siempre Palante!*, DVD, Directed by Iris Morales, New York, NY: SubCine, 2009.

¹⁴⁰ Melendez and Torres, *We Took the Streets*, 174.

¹⁴¹ The Young Lords Party, “Young Lords Party: 13 Points Program and Platform.”

Even more revolutionary, this version aimed at taking down machismo in its entirety and no longer accepted male chauvinism, even rhetorically. This version also acknowledges the numerical presence of women within the ranks of the Young Lords, and emphasizes the necessity for men to work alongside women in their struggle for gender equality.

Another point of interest that appears in both versions is the reference to capitalism as one of the sources of machismo. This argument can also be found in the party's 'Position Papers on Women' published in 1971 and 1973 in their newspaper Pa'lante. In these platforms, women from the Young Lords connect their struggle to the struggle of Third World women in general, describing their oppression in a threefold way.

Puerto Rican, Black, Asian, Native American, and other Third World Women (women of color) are becoming more aware of how we have been especially oppressed. Women have historically been at the bottom of the ladder; under capitalism, this has been intensified so that we are oppressed three ways. First, we are oppressed as Puerto Ricans, Blacks, Chicanas, Native Americans, or Asians (Third World People). Second, we are oppressed as women. Third, we are oppressed by our own men who have been brainwashed by this capitalist system into believing a whole set of false, empty standards of what manhood is supposed to be – machismo.¹⁴²

Just as many points indicate in the 13-point party program and platform, equality, whether it is social, economic, or gender equality, can only be achieved through the establishment of a socialist type of society that is in opposition to a capitalist one. Feminists from the Young Lords did not view men as the enemy, but instead blamed capitalists, men as well as women rulers, as the real source of injustice. According to them, the persistence of high rates of domestic violence in Puerto Rican households was partly due to the oppression that men have to endure under the colonial system. Frustrated, they unleashed their anger on the women at home. Nonetheless, they also acknowledged the fact that “machismo has always been a very basic part of Latin American and Puerto Rican culture,”¹⁴³ long before the US started to exert influence over them. They neither decided against or in favor of abortion, arguing that the

¹⁴² Tiffany K. Wayne, *Women's Rights in the United States: A Comprehensive Encyclopedia of Issues, Events, and People* (Santa Barbara, UNITED STATES: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2014), 363.

¹⁴³ The Young Lords Party, “Position Paper on Women, 1970,” Pa'lante.org. Accessed April 19, 2019, <http://palante.org/Women%27s%20Position%20Paper.pdf>

way it was used at that time by the US equated to a genocidal instrument against the Puerto Rican people, while at the same time agreeing on the fact that correctly advertised and safely performed, abortion should be legal. The problem was again capitalism, since it generated poverty and poor people were not able to decently support large families. By moving up from a capitalist system to a socialist one, women would be free to choose how many children they want to have without having to take into consideration materialistic issues.

Young Lords feminists also explicitly tackled the issue of toxic masculinity, as well as topics such as feminine sexual pleasure and the institution of marriage. They denounced the double standards allowing men to act way more freely than women, putting them in a weaker position that made them dependent of their husbands, brothers, and fathers. They challenged traditional perceptions of men and women and denied the attribution of particular sets of qualities to a specific gender. Reductive factors such as virginity and purity should no longer be perceived as defining features for a woman to be socially accepted. Characteristics that were traditionally attributed to men should be available for women too, and vice-versa. In the context of ‘hegemonic masculinity’¹⁴⁴ which imposes as a norm stereotypical behaviors such as the repression of a need to cry, the Young Lords Party intended to redefine what it meant to be a man or a woman. In this way Pablo Guzman said that “it would be healthy for a man, if he wanted to cry, to go ahead and cry. It would also be healthy for a woman to pick up the gun.”¹⁴⁵ Women needed to be empowered because they had been raised in the idea that they were intrinsically weaker than men. Nevertheless, Denise Oliver, another famous female member of

¹⁴⁴ Hegemonic masculinity: “The mythology of gender dominant within cultural representations of males, reflecting normative behavioural ideals for males in a culture in a particular period (regardless of the actual prevalence of such behaviour in that society). Such representations promote stereotypical masculine heterosexual values (see also masculinity). Also, those men who exemplify, perform, and perpetuate the mythology of dominant masculinity, who are implicated in the subordination of women and of men who represent marginalized masculinities (such as gay men). In contemporary Western cultures, masculinity is typically associated with personality traits such as independence and competitiveness, role behaviours such as being the primary provider and initiative-taking, and physical characteristics such as muscularity and a deep voice.” in “Hegemonic Masculinity,” Oxford Reference accessed April 29, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095928286>.

¹⁴⁵ Young Lords Party, Abramson, and Morales, *Palante*, 40.

the Young Lords, explained how women should use male chauvinism to their advantage in order to carry out the struggle. Since men were more reluctant to harm a woman, and since women were perceived as less dangerous than men, it enabled them to access areas of the city less suspiciously, or to be arrested without much consequences compared to what could happen to their male counterparts.

Finally, Young Lords Party feminists expressed their opposition to ‘white feminism’, which they described as a racist and sometimes extremist movement that solely focused on the “bourgeois and petty-bourgeois complaints”¹⁴⁶ and that forgot – whether or not on purpose – to include women of color and poor or working-class women for instance. Besides, according to them, many white radical feminists aimed at rejecting men from the feminist fight, which was absolutely not the right solution for the advancement of the cause. Men, as well as women, needed to be educated on an issue that was the result of an inadequate system, not the consequence of individual behaviors linked to a specific gender: “The right wing in the women’s movement says men are evil and can’t be changed. Babies are not born oppressors. Therefore, our major enemy is capitalism rather than men.”¹⁴⁷

The rise of feminism within the Young Lords Party was the product of the continuous efforts of its female members, but not only. As the vessels of sexist behaviors, men also had to look inside themselves in order to acknowledge their mistakes and try to correct them. Being consistent with their feminist rhetoric within the party was not an easy task but testimonies from both Young Lords men and women come as a proof of their involvement in what they called “the revolution within the revolution.”¹⁴⁸ This Puerto Rican pro-independence, nationalist movement seemed to have successfully integrated a feminist dimension to its political agenda,

¹⁴⁶ Ken Wachsberger et al., *Insider Histories of the Vietnam Era Underground Press, Part 1* (Michigan State University Press, 2011), 248.

¹⁴⁷ Wayne, *Women’s Rights in the United States*, 363.

¹⁴⁸ Young Lords Party, Abramson, and Morales, *Palante*, 111.

while at the same time enacting policies that promoted women's rights inside their own organization.¹⁴⁹

D. Feminism and Independence in 21st Century Puerto Rico: More of a Matching Pair

- *The First Women to Represent the Independence Cause at the Puerto Rican Senate*

After the demise of the Nationalist Party, the Puerto Rican Independence Party rapidly became the only independence party that still accepted to participate in the electoral process. With only very little support in the polls, the PIP nonetheless remains an important political force to be reckoned with as proven by the strong activity of its members in the media and on the various social networks. As one of the three main political parties dominating the Puerto Rican political stage, the PIP currently holds one seat out of 51 in the House of Representatives, as well as one seat out of 30 in the Senate. These two seats are presently occupied by two men. However, from 2005 to 2009 and from 2013 to 2017, the position of senator for the PIP was filled by a woman, María de Lourdes Santiago Negrón. With this election, she became the first woman to represent the pro-independence movement in the Puerto Rican Senate. Santiago Negrón started her political carrier as a legal counselor for various PIP representatives and senators, before being elected as vice-secretary for public relations of the party. As such, she represented the PIP and the independence cause in local and international events, making the most of every occasion to promote the Puerto Rican plea for full sovereignty.¹⁵⁰ In 2001, she was elected vice-president of the party, and still holds this position as of today. More recently, in 2016, she participated for the second time in the hearings on Puerto Rico's political status

¹⁴⁹ See *Annex 5* for photographs of women of the Young Lords Party

¹⁵⁰ "Biografía María de Lourdes Santiago," Senado Del Estado Libre de Puerto Rico, January 22, 2009, accessed April 19, 2019, https://web.archive.org/web/20090122154238/http://senadopr.us/senadores/sen_msantiago.php.

organized by the United Nations decolonization committee.¹⁵¹ The same year, she was also chosen by her party to be the PIP candidate for the gubernatorial elections. With 2,13 percent of the votes, she only came fifth in the race. The New Progressive Party candidate Ricky Rosselló became Puerto Rico's 12th governor, gathering more than 41 percent of the votes.¹⁵² Only one woman, Sila M. Calderón, has ever been elected as governor in the history of Puerto Rico, whereas the island was the first to have a woman elected to a government legislative body in all of Latin America (María Luisa Arcelay in 1932) and the first in all the Americas to appoint a woman as mayor of a capital city (Felisa Rincón de Gautier in 1946). None of these women supported the independence cause, but they all were active supporters of women's rights.

María de Lourdes is also a dedicated women's rights activist, as proved by her involvement in the fight against domestic violence – a real plague in Puerto Rico – and her efforts to make the issue of gender a cross-disciplinary theme that is present throughout all the other issues such as education, political representation, homelessness, housing, etc. During an interview for *El Nuevo Día* in 2016¹⁵³ – in the middle of her gubernatorial campaign – she explained how she intended to 'desegregate' the themes related to women's rights that are often put apart from the other issues. As a result, they form an independent block of measures that are not working enough in close association to the rest of the governmental proposals, making them almost ineffective. She therefore aimed at modifying the government's range of actions on how to deal with gender issues and make women's rights a subject so present in governmental policies that it would be difficult to deal with such and such other issue without incorporating the gender dimension. On the question of domestic violence, Santiago Negrón

¹⁵¹ Webmaster, "María de Lourdes Santiago ante Comité de Descolonización de Puerto Rico en la ONU," *Información al Desnudo* (blog), June 25, 2016, <http://infoaldesnudo.com/maria-de-lourdes-santiago-ante-comite-de-descolonizacion-de-puerto-rico-en-la-onu/>.

¹⁵² "Puerto Rico 2016 General Election," The Green Papers, accessed April 29, 2019, <https://www.thegreenpapers.com/G16/PR>.

¹⁵³ "María de Lourdes lucha por los derechos de la mujer," *El Nuevo Día*, Posted October 24, 2016, accessed April 19, 2019, <https://www.elnuevodia.com/videos/mariadelourdesluchaporlosderechosdelamujer-video-220849/>

does not pretend that there is a single solution and advises the development of educational tools for children to raise awareness on the issue from an early age and to prevent the reproduction of stereotypes that can lead to domestic violence. Meanwhile, she encouraged Puerto Ricans to openly talk and communicate about domestic violence so that the issue is always in the spotlight. Finally, she asks women that are holding governmental positions to get involved and act more on the issue because they have the power to change things. She publishes a lot on social media platforms, declaring that domestic violence in Puerto Rico is a state of emergency, and does not hesitate to post news about domestic violence cases on social media to raise awareness.¹⁵⁴

Within the perspective of the gubernatorial election, Santiago Negrón intended to implement practical solutions for the development of women's rights, and indeed a large part of her program rested on the integration of women's rights into Puerto Rico's legal, economic, and social policies, alongside environmental issues and of course decolonization.

She was arrested and put into jail for a month while she was leading a group of PIP women for trespassing on US military territory during a civil disobedience protest in 2002 against the continuation of US navy bombing tests in the Puerto Rican island of Vieques.¹⁵⁵ Santiago Negrón took part in the long-lasting opposition to the presence of the US army on the island that denounced the environmental damages resulting from the bombings that greatly affect the inhabitants of Vieques. Puerto Ricans living there have a 27 percent higher risk of developing a cancer, and although the link between the bombings and the health crisis has not formally been confirmed, many Puerto Ricans and environmental organizations blame the US military activity for it.¹⁵⁶ About her month in jail, Santiago Negrón said :

¹⁵⁴ See Annex 6

¹⁵⁵ Justia US Law, "United States v. Lourdes Santiago, 194 F. Supp. 2d 82 (D.P.R. 2002)," accessed April 29, 2019, <https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/district-courts/FSupp2/194/82/2577629/>.

¹⁵⁶ Valeria Pelet, "There's a Health Crisis on This Puerto Rican Island, but It's Impossible to Prove Why It's Happening," *The Atlantic*, September 3, 2016, accessed April 19, 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/09/vieques-invisible-health-crisis/498428/>.

The month we spent in jail for our civil disobedience acts in Vieques was, in part, a contribution to the protest strategy that had spread through the country, but it also made possible for me to become acquainted with an important part of the suffering and the marginalization, mostly of women, in my country. [...] We were detained with women that had been imprisoned for a wide variety of reasons. Some of them had been forced into crime because of economic and gender oppression; others were Latin American women, especially from the Dominican Republic, detained by the US migratory system and held in prison for extended periods of time, and deprived of any ways of communication.¹⁵⁷

Instead of being discouraged by her incarceration, the PIP vice-president transformed this condemnation into an opportunity to get closer to Puerto Rican women from all backgrounds and get a better understanding of their struggle. When asked if she would do it again if necessary, she answers ‘obviously’. The struggle of Vieques enabled the get-together of diverse political forces. Not only independence activists protested against the US navy presence, but people from all political backgrounds joined the demonstrators throughout the years. In a 2014 interview for Telesur¹⁵⁸, Santiago Negrón explained that the goal of these protests was to make the Vieques plight visible to the world in order to force the US to take responsibility for the harmful consequences of its military activity. The US eventually withdrew its navy in 2003, after more than 50 years of occupation.

Santiago Negrón also uses her influence and popularity with the Puerto Ricans to defend other causes linked to independence such as the release of Oscar López Rivera, a Puerto Rican independence activist and member of the FALN who was imprisoned in US jails for 36 years, until President Obama commuted his sentence in 2017. According to Santiago Negrón who

¹⁵⁷ “El mes que estuvimos encarceladas por nuestros actos de desobediencia civil en Vieques fue, por una parte, una contribución a ese reclamo que se había extendido a todo el país, pero, además, me permitió conocer una parte importante del sufrimiento y la marginación en mi país y sobre todo de las mujeres. [...] En la cárcel compartimos con mujeres encarceladas por los más diversos motivos. Algunas llevadas al delito por sus condiciones de opresión económica y de género; otras, mujeres latinoamericanas, en especial de República Dominicana detenidas por el sistema migratorio de los Estados Unidos y retenidas en prisión por períodos extendidos y privadas de comunicación.”

Inter News Services, “‘La lucha por la independencia de Puerto Rico ha sido un imperativo moral’, dice María de Lourdes Santiago,” *Metro*, February 17, 2018, accessed April 29, 2019, <https://www.metro.pr/pr/noticias/2018/02/17/la-lucha-la-independencia-puerto-rico-ha-imperativo-moral-dice-maria-lourdes-santiago.html>.

¹⁵⁸ Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño, “*Senadora María de Lourdes Santiago Negrón En Entrevista Por Walter Martínez , Dossier*,” Youtube Video, Posted May 28, 2014, accessed April 29, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=05ryPxdEwg4>.

went to meet him in prison, López Rivera was detained under terrible conditions, and was unfairly used by the US as a constant reminder of what happened to Puerto Ricans that dedicated themselves to the independence of their island. Later in the same interview for Telesur, she celebrates the stamina of Puerto Rican independence activists and refers to Lolita Lebrón as a heroic figure in the history of the independence movement. Santiago Negrón is a member of Las Lolitas en Su Centenario, a collective of women honoring the memory of the nationalist activist.¹⁵⁹ Very active in the media, she seems to be the public face of the PIP and gathers the most followers on social media platforms such as Facebook or Twitter when compared to her PIP colleagues. Indeed, she has undeniable oratory skills and argues for the independence cause in a very instructive and realistic way, with both passion and composure. Her main efforts and those of her party rest on making the Puerto Rican plea for independence more visible to the world in order to force the US to pay attention to the issue and put it on its list of priority – just like what Lolita Lebrón and her companions intended to achieve half a century ago. She also emphasizes the importance of earning the support of other Latin American and Caribbean nations, of which Puerto Rico is a part as opposed to North America.

As part of her fight for women's rights, she also supported a bill that aimed at forcing hospitals to disclose their rates of C-section procedures, as well as the medical reasons to choose it. Puerto Rico indeed presents rates of C-sections three times higher than what the average and recommended rate given by the World Health Organization.¹⁶⁰

María de Lourdes Santiago truly embodies the coming together of the pro-independence movement with the nationalist spirit and feminism in a two-dimension perspective. On the one

¹⁵⁹ Facebook Page, “Las Lolitas En Su Centenario - Homepage,” accessed April 29, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/laslolitasensucentenario/>.

¹⁶⁰ “María de Lourdes Santiago Busca Frenar Incidencia de Cesáreas,” Primera Hora, August 5, 2013, <https://www.primerahora.com/noticias/gobierno-politica/nota/mariadelourdessantiagobuscafrenarincidenciadecesareas-943212/>.

To see more about this feminist-oriented bills that Santiago Negrón supported see, Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño, “Medidas Legislativas Presentadas por la Senadora María de Lourdes Santiago Negrón,” n.d, accessed April 29, 2019, https://partidoindependentistapuertorriqueño.com/images/pdf/ObraLegislativa_MLS.pdf

hand, she is part of the leadership of the PIP, was the first pro-independence women elected to the Senate, and was chosen by her party to be their gubernatorial candidate. On the other hand, and simultaneously, she endeavors to put forward the issue of women's rights within the agenda of her party and turned it into a central point of interest by constantly communicating on the issue.

- *The Puerto Rican Independence Party: An Advocate of Women's Rights?*

As admirable as they might be, the efforts of one woman within the party are certainly not enough to assure that the PIP has adopted a feminist-oriented type of political agenda. In order to have a better overall view of the situation, it is necessary to look at what the party in its entirety is trying to achieve in terms of women's rights as well as the composition of the rest of its leadership.

A study of the 2019 leadership of the PIP shows that María de Lourdes Santiago is the only woman holding a function with high responsibilities. The rest of the leaders of the party are all men, from the president for life Rubén Berríos Martínez to the executive president Fernando Martín García to the current representatives and spokespersons at the bicameral legislature. Only the position of secretary for gender and women's issues was occupied by a woman, Edda López, although she has not shown any sign of activity since 2017.¹⁶¹ This lack of female representation in the party leadership is nonetheless not distinctive of the PIP since the other two main political parties, the Popular Democratic Party and the New Progressive Party proportionately do not show better numbers. One could argue that the substantial presence of María de Lourdes Santiago within the PIP is only a publicity stunt to give the illusion that the party cares about the development of women's rights but a close look at its political agenda demonstrates the real interest of the party in the issue. Gender parity was actually part of the

¹⁶¹ "Edda López (@EddaLopez)," Twitter, accessed April 29, 2019, <https://twitter.com/EddaLopez>. I was unable to find out whether or not she is still occupying her function as for today.

2016 gubernatorial program of the PIP which intended to promote the fair and global inclusion of women into political, economic, social, and cultural public areas, as well as the equitable participation of both men and women in elective and governmental positions. The PIP also planned on documenting all incidents of gender discrimination and sexual harassment within the governmental spheres.¹⁶² Of course, in line with María De Lourdes Santiago's work, the PIP dedicated a large section of its program to the fight against domestic and sexual violence. Furthermore, the independence party encouraged for a radical change in the traditional distribution of gender roles within the Puerto Rican society in order to keep up with the evolution of the family structure.¹⁶³ The upbringing of the children, the development of relationships based on respect and equality within couples, the necessity to share domestic tasks equally between men and women, etc., were an essential part of the political program.

On a wider scale, the PIP denounced the lack of data on the actual situation of women's rights and opportunities on the island and intended to establish a 'national gender observatory' to serve both as a platform of information for issues related to gender, and to reinforce existing initiatives while developing new ones:

We propose to establish the National Gender Observatory as a tool for political impact, as a space that would be used to make viable the consensual assessment of the social, political, economic, and individual reality of gender rights in Puerto Rico. The National Gender Observatory will be used to reinforce initiatives of social vigilance and to gather collective requests regarding women's rights and gender equality on a platform of information to then turn the situation of human rights for women and gender into critical themes. It will be a virtual public space, open to debate, reflection, and the creation of knowledge and proposals.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño, "Desarrollo Social – Sociedad y Calidad de Vida," Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño, accessed April 19, 2019, <https://partidoindependentistapuertorriqueño.com/2015-11-30-02-48-23/desarrollo-social-sociedad-y-calidad-de-vida>

¹⁶³ Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño, "Desarrollo Social – Sociedad y Calidad de Vida," Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño, accessed April 19, 2019, <https://partidoindependentistapuertorriqueño.com/2015-11-30-02-48-23/desarrollo-social-sociedad-y-calidad-de-vida>

¹⁶⁴ "Proponemos el Observatorio Nacional de Género como la herramienta de incidencia política, un espacio que sirva para viabilizar una evaluación consensuada de la realidad social, política, económica e individual de los derechos en Puerto Rico en materia de género. El Observatorio Nacional de Género servirá para reforzar iniciativas de vigilancia social y exigencia colectiva en materia de derechos de mujeres y equidad de género, convirtiéndose en la plataforma de información sobre el estado de situación de los derechos humanos de las mujeres y el género en áreas temáticas priorizadas. Será un espacio público virtual, abierto al debate, la reflexión, la generación de conocimientos y propuestas."

In more recent events, the Puerto Rican Senate had to vote on two projects in relation to the issue of gender. First, ‘Proyecto 950’ proposed the establishment of a new set of rules that would put limitations on the practice of abortion on the island. This bill provides that a patient has to wait 48 hours before getting an abortion. During this period, the doctor has to inform the woman about the age of the fetus, and notify her that the process of abortion ends the life of a unique living being. Moreover, Proyecto 950 stipulates that minors who want to get an abortion have to obtain the consent of their parents, a tutor, or the tribunal. On March 7, 2019, the Senate voted in favor of this bill (20-9). Among the opponents of the law is Juan Dalmau Ramírez, the PIP senator who described it as a “dangerous path”. He denounced the lack of medical evidence and statistics showing a high level of mortality linked to the practice of abortion – the ‘protection of women’ was the official justification of Proyecto 950. Dalmau argued that there was no need to establish public policies limiting access to abortion, and added that the decision for a woman to terminate her pregnancy was already tough and traumatic enough, and made in very strong emotional state.¹⁶⁵ Parallel to Proyecto 950 was the vote of Proyecto 1000, which proposed the prohibition of conversion therapies. Conversion therapies usually aim at ‘fixing’ homosexual or bisexual individuals by trying to change their sexual orientation and are largely used on members of the LGBTQ+ community. Juan Dalmau Ramírez participated in the creation of the bill, who was accepted by the Senate with 20 votes in favor, 7 against, and 2 abstentions.

Today, the PIP seems to hold a fairly progressive vision on the issue of women’s rights, at least in its political agenda. It is interesting to wonder if this feminist momentum is fueled

Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño, “Reforma Gubernamental,” Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño, accessed April 19, 2019, <https://partidoindependentistapuertorriqueño.com/2015-11-30-02-48-23/reforma-gubernamental>

¹⁶⁵ “Senado aprueba con enmiendas el proyecto del aborto y prohíbe las terapias de conversión,” *El Nuevo Día*, March 7, 2019, accessed April 19, 2019, <https://www.elnuevodia.com/noticias/politica/nota/senadoapruebaconenmiendaselproyectodelabortoyprohibelastterapiasdeconversion-2480955/>.

by the activism of its female vice-president and gubernatorial candidate María de Lourdes Santiago, or if it is a shared aspiration of the members of the party to campaign for the advancement of women's rights on their island. With the end of Santiago Negrón's senator mandate, it seems like the PIP has given a little bit less attention to gender issues according to the current events that are featured on the party's official website. The next gubernatorial program for the elections of 2020 will show if the feminist orientation of the PIP is a lasting element, or if it was more fundamentally linked to the candidate being a woman. A long way from the ideals of the Nationalist Party of Albizu Campos, the PIP seems to have moved with the progressive times and evolved into a political entity that manages to pay attention to issues other than decolonization, even though this question remains at the very center of its existence. Even though its detractors criticize the party's lethargy and the stubbornness of its leadership, and blame them for not attracting more independentistas who do not identify with the party's operational mode,¹⁶⁶ it is fair to suggest that the PIP has nonetheless taken up a more modern and practical turn, at least when it comes down to a feminist perspective.

The second part of this analysis showed that the Puerto Rican pro-independence movement evolved truly positively in its relation to feminism and the inclusion of women's rights. From the rather unrequited, uneven love between women and the Nationalist Party to the exploration of common grounds with the issue of birth control in the 60s-70s, to the blazing feminism of the Young Lords Party on the mainland, it is really with the Puerto Rican Independence Party in the 21st century that feminism and the pro-independence movement became more of a matching pair, largely under the influence of María de Lourdes Santiago. Of course, the debate around the possibility of an association between nationalism and feminism

¹⁶⁶ Jaime Pieras Castañer, "Líderes Del Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño Son Incapaces de Llenar Los Zapatos de Su Fundador," *El Post Antillano*, July 10, 2014, accessed April 19, 2019, <http://elpostantillano.net/politica/10881-jaime-pieras-castaner.html>.

is still topical, in the Puerto Rican context as well as on a wider scale. Numerous divergence and tension points exist in the study of the two ideologies, but the Puerto Rican example provides solid grounds in the assertion that nationalism and feminism do not have to be mutually exclusive.

PART III

Nationalism and Feminism: Not Necessarily Mutually Exclusive?

The last part of this analysis intends to provide food for thought for the study of the connection between two ideologies that to all appearances do not operate well together: nationalism and feminism. Feminist scholar Ranjoo Seodu Herr in her compelling article “Reclaiming Third World Feminism: or Why Transnational Feminism Needs Third World Feminism”¹⁶⁷, argues for the legitimacy of concepts like nation and nationalism within the feminist scholarship, and this analysis will use her theoretical arguments and apply them to the particular Puerto Rican context. By reviewing the existing scholarship on the subject and explaining why a large section of the feminist movement rejects nationalism as a valid concept or a tool that can be useful for the advancement of women’s rights on a global scale, a first part will demonstrate that, indeed, cooperation seems to be rather challenging on paper. However, another significant part of feminist scholars, often pertaining to the branch of what is called “Third World feminism”, opposes this vision of the two ideologies as mutually exclusive. The second section will explore these theories. By acknowledging the diversity of the feminist movement’s structure and avoiding reductive theories, these feminist critics advance the idea that nationalism can constitute a legitimate assistance for the achievement of feminist goals – in specific contexts, it goes without saying. The singular Puerto Rican situation could be, I believe, an environment conducive to the development of a fruitful cooperation between nationalism and feminism. Nationalism has been part of the Puerto Rican political landscape for decades and the power of the feminist movement on the island is constantly on the increase. Previous sections of this analysis have shown that the association of the two ideologies has

¹⁶⁷ Ranjoo Seodu Herr, “Reclaiming Third World Feminism: Or Why Transnational Feminism Needs Third World Feminism,” *Meridians* 12, no. 1 (2014.): 1–30.

proven successful on some occasions and, as a result, could/should be considered as a legitimate avenue for the future.

The concepts and words ‘Third World women’ or ‘Western feminism’ will be used in the following paragraphs and need precisions regarding their meaning, at least in this analysis. Definitions given by the Merriam-Webster dictionary can provide a fairly good understanding of the first concept. By ‘Third World’, one can understand (1) the aggregate of the underdeveloped nations of the world; (2) a group of nations especially in Africa and Asia not aligned with either the Communist or the non-Communist blocs; (3) an aggregate of minority groups within a larger predominant culture.¹⁶⁸ Even though this term cannot exactly render the complexity of what it encompasses – it is likely that none could – it is still the one used by the vast majority of scholars, including in feminist circles. The third definition is particularly relevant in the situation of Puerto Rico, which, as ‘part’ of the US, could be considered as a developed nation, but that presents levels of socioeconomic indicators that could place it in the ‘category’ of Third World countries. Moreover, Puerto Ricans could be regarded as a minority group that develops inside the larger predominant US culture. As for the word ‘Western’, it is to be understood as descriptive of regions mainly of Europe and North America that descend from Greco-Roman traditions / non-communist countries.¹⁶⁹ These two concepts of ‘Third World’ and ‘Western’ are of course not fixed and have to be used cautiously. As imperfect as they might be, they are nonetheless useful to depict global tendencies and are probably the most accurate up to today.

¹⁶⁸ “Definition of Third World,” Merriam-Webster Dictionary, accessed April 29, 2019, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/third+world>.

¹⁶⁹ “Definition of Western,” Merriam-Webster Dictionary, accessed April 29, 2019, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/western>.

A. Nationalism and Feminism: A Difficult Cooperation on Paper

- *Defining “Traditional” Nationalism*

Before pursuing the exploration of the relationship between nationalism and feminism, it is necessary to give precisions on what these terms exactly encompass, at least in the way they are used in this analysis. As explained in *Part I – B*, nationalism is a moving concept and a multiplicity of definitions have been associated to it since the first noteworthy occurrences of the word in Europe during the 19th century. In its definition of nationalism in 2017 in the *Encyclopædia Universalis*, Raoul Girardet retains three main notions carried by the word nationalism: (1) it can be used in a pejorative way to stigmatize outrageous forms of patriotism, and becomes in this case synonymous with chauvinism; (2) it can point out the demands of a subjugated people that aspires to reach independence; (3) it can be used as a label and a manifesto by certain groups – often classified as belonging to the far right of the political spectrum – that defend the priority nature of the safeguarding of national values and interests. Girardet also adds that, more generally, the word nationalism refers to the diverse expressions of national consciousness and characteristics.¹⁷⁰ One can see that these three definitions are accurate within the Puerto Rican context. First, the word ‘nationalists’ was used by the US government to denounce the people that carried out what they saw as terrorist attacks and violent activities. Second, Puerto Rican nationalism obviously aims at achieving independence, and third, the Nationalist Party and its various branches and descendants makes a point of honor to defend a specific Puerto Rican history and identity. Called *Feminism and the Puerto Rican Independence Movement*, this analysis does not focus on nationalism alone but on the wider independence/pro-independence movement. The two terms are not always synonymous as sometimes, independence supporters do not concur with nationalist ideals or methods. Indeed,

¹⁷⁰ Raoul Girardet, “Nationalisme,” *Encyclopædia Universalis*, accessed April 29, 2019, <http://www.universalis.fr/encyclopedie/nationalisme/>.

they can aim for political and economic sovereignty without necessarily fighting for the preservation of, for instance, a particular language and other cultural, social or religious values that supposedly form a national identity. Nonetheless, nationalism and the independence movement within the Puerto Rican context mostly coincide if one goes beyond the simple correlation nationalism/members of a nationalist party. Even though today and for various reasons,¹⁷¹ all independentistas are not members of the Puerto Rican Independence Party, the large majority of them still supports values and goals that could be deemed as belonging to the nationalist ideology: preserving the Puerto Rican identity and achieving complete sovereignty. The latter appears as a more tangible concept, as it ‘*simply*’ requires the end of US political involvement on the island. The idea of a Puerto Rican identity is a lot more complex and abstract. What exactly is the Puerto Rican identity? Does it encompass the protection of Spanish language? Is Catholic religion one of its determining features? Is it related to music, the arts, the environment? More importantly in connection to this study, is it synonymous with the safeguarding of traditions – including the concept of the traditional family and its assigned gender roles? The second section of this part will try to show the limits of some distinctive historical characteristics of nationalism in its most literal meaning.

- *A Third-Wave Feminism’s Acknowledgment of Multiple Forms of Oppression*

The second element that is examined in this study is of course feminism. It is defined very clearly in the Merriam-Webster dictionary: (1) the theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes, and (2) organized activity on behalf of women’s rights and interests.¹⁷² From this simple definition stem multiple theoretical currents which, although they agree on the final goal, sometimes diverge on the ways and tools that are to be used to reach it. Third-wave feminism, with then post-colonial and transnational theories, built itself in the

¹⁷¹ See Part II – C and Part I - C

¹⁷² “Definition of Feminism,” Merriam-Webster Dictionary, accessed April 29, 2019, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/feminism>.

1990s in reaction to white second-wave feminism which it criticizes for homogenizing too much the kinds of oppressions suffered on the account of gender, and obliterating third world women's voices.¹⁷³ For third-wave feminists, gender is far from being the only variable that is to be taken into consideration when studying and finding solutions against women's oppression all over the world. Other significant factors such as race, sexual orientation, class, capitalism, or colonialism are as accountable as gender for the enduring subjugation of women. As such, the idea of universal patriarchy as the sole reason for women's misery is rejected by third-wave/transnational feminists who instead view it as the result of the intersection of multiple forms of oppressions. Moreover, the third-wave feminist movement emphasizes the experiences and voices of Third World women themselves and aims at respecting their own perspectives on feminism, which might differ from a dominant white, middle-class, straight feminism of a country like the US, because its needs and interests grow out of a very different environment and history. According to third-wave feminists, it is simply reductive, disrespectful, and mistaken to treat women as if they were a "homogeneous powerless group" that share the same goals and have similar experiences.¹⁷⁴ In *Introduction au féminisme postcolonial*, Laetitia Dechaufour puts forward the theory that western white second-wave feminists – maybe unintentionally – bolster their confidence in their very own emancipation by looking upon third world women as an homogeneously oppressed group lagging behind in terms of women's rights accomplishments.¹⁷⁵ Third World women have built their own forms of resistance, more adapted to their particular set of experiences, and which are as legitimate as the resistance mechanisms that have been developed by second-wave feminists. As for the transnational feminist movement, it has focused on developing solutions at the international

¹⁷³ Herr, "Reclaiming Third World Feminism," 1.

¹⁷⁴ Chandra Tapade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes. Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," in *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives* (University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 337-338.

¹⁷⁵ Laetitia Dechaufour, "Introduction au féminisme postcolonial," *Nouvelles Questions Feministes* Vol. 27, no. 2 (2008): 106.

level, therefore going beyond the borders of nation-states, and has become very popular thanks to the success of large feminist organizations and networks which pursue “gender justice at the transnational level against neoliberal global capitalism and fundamentalist religious movements.”¹⁷⁶

Third-wave/transnational feminism focuses on resisting to the white second wave feminist tendency to showcase Third World women as merely victims of universal patriarchy and colonialism. On the contrary, it is necessary to recognize Third World women’s agency and intentions – doing otherwise is depriving them of their own voice. In the case of Puerto Rico, it happens with the issue of sterilization abuse. Second-wave feminists in the US – and nationalist figures as well as we have seen in Part II of this analysis – sometimes argued that Puerto Rico women were universally tricked into performing the sterilization operation and by doing so refused them the possibility of having their own actual intentions. Colón Warren in *Puerto Rico: Feminism and Feminist Studies* presents and defends research studies that go against this automatic victimization of Puerto Rican women. They show that “women were using neo-Malthusian policies on their own terms,” how “feminists and women reformers [...] defended birth control against the more conservative interests on the Island as a means of dealing with illegitimacy, child abandonment, and maternal and child health.” Some of this academic work also aimed at “transcending dichotomous interpretations of sterilization as either abusive or freely chosen.”¹⁷⁷

Feminism today in Puerto Rico is greatly influenced by third-wave/post-colonial feminism and follows the theories that refuse to regard women as a monolithic block and emphasize the necessity to take into account other criteria of oppression, as well as to recognize the complexity of each individual:

¹⁷⁶ Herr, “Reclaiming Third World Feminism,” 2.

¹⁷⁷ Warren, “Puerto Rico : Feminism and Feminist Studies,” 681.

The fact that the ‘Woman’ category has imploded into multiple and diverse ‘women’ and feminine subjects requires of us [...] to begin addressing in a plural manner the practices of feminisms and accept an understanding of this feminine subject that is not unique but diverse and multiple. Accepting the multiplicity of these identities of the feminine subject cannot be limited to the incorporation to analyses of the variables of class and race, among others, for these variables have already been addressed in the larger debate of postmodernity. There are places for the proper transformation of contemporary capitalism and, in any case, the notion of multiple identities of the subject is the sum of the diverse identities, provided that each of them is made up of its own complexity and diversity. They live simultaneously and in manners that are not necessarily conciliatory: this is the collapse to heterogeneity of the diverse categories.¹⁷⁸

- *Feminists Reject Nationalism*

Feminism in Puerto Rico is the interesting product of both the influence of a white, Western feminism imported by the US, and the development of a women’s rights movement that is peculiar to the island. With its unique position, Puerto Rico is indeed a fascinating topic because it gathers many of these factors of oppression in a single place: lasting colonialism, ethnic and cultural diversity coupled nonetheless to a powerful sense of belonging, shock between tradition and modernity... Likewise, the presence of a nationalist movement on the island cannot be disregarded within a feminist-oriented perspective as it has played a critical role in Puerto Rico’s history, and so many women were involved in it. Yet, nationalism is considered intensely detrimental to the favorable development of women’s rights by transnational feminists. According to them, nationalist ideals cannot create an environment where feminist ideals can thrive. They consider nationalism as a patriarchal structure that maintains forms of gender oppression, sometimes as part of the defining culture of the society. Indeed, feminism and nationalism can be perceived as incompatible. On the one hand, feminists

¹⁷⁸ “El hecho de que la categoría *Mujer* implusione en múltiples y diversas mujeres y sujetos femeninos requiere de nosotras [...] el comenzar a hablar en plural de las prácticas de los feminismos y asumir además una concepción no unitaria y sí diversa y múltiple de ese sujeto femenino. Asumir esas múltiples identidades del sujeto femenino no puede circunscribirse a la incorporación en el análisis de las variables de clase y raza, entre otras, toda vez que esas variables ya han sido cuestionadas en el debate más amplio de la postmodernidad, se encuentran emplazadas por las propias transformaciones del capitalismo contemporáneo y porque, en todo caso, la noción de múltiples identidades de sujeto no es la suma de las diversas identidades, en la medida en que cada una de éstas conforma su propia complejidad y diversidad, se viven simultáneamente y de maneras no necesariamente conciliatorias: la implosión en heterogeneidad de las diversas categorías.”

Madeline Román, “Feminismo y Post-Modernidad En Puerto Rico,” *Revista de Ciencias Sociales*, vol xxx, no. 1-2 (1991): 66-67.

aim at reaching gender equality by, for instance, giving women the opportunity – if it is their desire – to untie themselves from their traditional roles of mothers and house-keepers in the private sphere. On the other hand, nationalism is very often synonymous with the preservation of a cultural identity linked to the construction of a nation, and therefore seeks to protect and promote its traditional culture, sometimes with all the existing historical inequalities that can come alongside. Beyond the noble quest for independence, nationalism in Puerto Rico also means, or at least meant under the guidance of Albizu Campos, a return to a conservative Catholic model of society that would keep women confined to the domestic sphere, support a restricted use of contraceptive solutions, and maintain marriage as the ultimate patriarchal institution to respect. Assigned gender roles and religious oppression do not seem to provide a very suitable environment for the development of women's rights. Under this critical light, transnational feminists appear to be right in their automatic dismissal of nationalism. Ranjoo Seodu Herr explains:

One of the main reasons for [*the tumultuous relationship between nationalism and feminism*] is that male third world nationalists have consistently subscribed to essentialist and masculinist conceptions of nation and nationalism, predicated on the subjugation of women.¹⁷⁹

The colonial relationship that Puerto Rico has with the US also shaped the island's feminist focus and resulting actions. The working-class struggle and the pro-independence/nationalist movement have been in the spotlight for decades in Puerto Rico and might have slightly put feminist concerns in the shade, or have incorporated those feminist concerns into their own fight against imperialism and capitalism, preventing them to have a life for themselves. To refer to this idea, Madeline Román in *Feminismo y post-modernidad en Puerto Rico* talks about “a feminist struggle inserted in the broader struggles that class war and anticolonial national fights are.”¹⁸⁰ This integration of feminism into other movements is

¹⁷⁹ Herr, “Reclaiming Third World Feminism,” 7.

¹⁸⁰ Madeline Román, “Feminismo y Post-Modernidad En Puerto Rico,” 62.

something that has been criticized by a certain number of some second-wave transnational feminists because it pushes feminism into the background:

[There] is the idea, in some academic feminist circles, that evidence of strong nationalist sentiment among women negates an “authentic” feminist identity that is, by definition, solely based on gender.¹⁸¹

This is how, for instance, the Irish nationalist fight – which enjoyed the support and serious involvement of many women – was denounced by some feminist scholars as detrimental to the feminist cause.¹⁸² There is a similarity between the Irish and the Puerto Rican fight for self-determination, and their links with feminism. Just like Lolita Lebrón did when she explained that Puerto Rico could only turn into an equal society when it would be free from US domination, many nationalist women in Ireland thought that it was justifiable to put aside their feminist claims in order to support more efficiently the nationalist fight against the British.¹⁸³ Equality would spread naturally after independence is reached because it is the imperialist presence that is at the roots of the unfair system. To a certain extent, feminist scholars who have criticized this behavior by advancing the argument that capitalism and colonialism do not determine the level of oppression of women are right. Indeed, “the subordination of women pre-dates capitalism” and numerous examples show that it “continues under socialism”.¹⁸⁴ In the case of Puerto Rico, women’s oppression did not suddenly start with the arrival of the US on the island, and neither did it come into existence under Spanish occupation. Although the colonial presence might have exacerbated gender inequalities, it would be incorrect to put the blame solely on this. Some feminist scholars also obviously reject biological determinism as the origin of women’s oppression - although they have not yet agreed on a single explanation.

¹⁸¹ Frances S. Hasso, “The ‘Women’s Front’: Nationalism, Feminism, and Modernity in Palestine,” *Gender and Society*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (August 1998) 441-442 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/190177>.

¹⁸² Ranjoo Seodu Herr, “The Possibility of Nationalist Feminism,” *Hypatia* 18, no. 3 (2003): 135.

¹⁸³ Dana Hearne, “The Irish Citizen 1914-1916: Nationalism, Feminism, and Militarism,” *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* 18, no. 1 (1992): 3.

¹⁸⁴ Joan W. Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” *The American Historical Review*, vol. 91, no. 5 (December 1986): 1059.

Another argument against the association of feminism and nationalism that is advanced by transnational feminists and that is relevant in the Puerto Rican context is the subjective perception of the relationship between the colonized and the colonizer. Laetitia Dechaufour explains how the colonizers are often presented and perceived as an overly masculine presence while the colonized are belittled through a feminization process.¹⁸⁵ Nationalist theories and discourses, as we have seen with some of Albizu Campos' speeches, indeed present the colonial presence as a masculine, greedy, and violent entity, while the land of the colonized is always displayed as a feminine figure. The feminine is therefore associated to notions of purity, tradition and unspoiled space, which contributes to the persistence of stereotypical combinations such as 'woman belongs to the private sphere'.¹⁸⁶ From this kind of rhetoric ensue certain sets of ideas that 'the vulnerable pure woman needs to be protected' from the colonizer and that it is 'the strong man's role to do so'.¹⁸⁷ In the colonialist discourse, the subjugated people is given pejorative attributes that are stereotypically associated to femininity (weakness, emotionalism, unreasonableness) and, as such, they need to be controlled.¹⁸⁸

In a nutshell, it is fair to observe that a majority of the feminist movement, mainly through academic circles, strongly argue against the usefulness and relevance of nationalism regarding feminism and women's rights on the global scale. To a certain extent, they are right to do so: many nationalist theories are based on stereotypical conceptions of masculinity and femininity that create and/or perpetuate unequal gender relationships. Herr, in an earlier article on feminist nationalist even concedes that "Third World feminists should be aware of the dangers of nationalism and try to avoid falling in the traps of patriarchal nationalists."¹⁸⁹ On

¹⁸⁵ Dechaufour, "Introduction au féminisme postcolonial," 103.

¹⁸⁶ Danielle Haase-Dubosc and Maneesha Lal, "De la postcolonie et des femmes : apports théoriques du postcolonialisme anglophone aux études féministes," *Nouvelles Questions Feministes* Vol. 25, no. 3 (2006): 41-44.

¹⁸⁷ Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," 1073.

¹⁸⁸ Caroline Courbières, "Représentations du féminin : sexe, concept et définitions," *Communication langages* N° 175, no. 1 (2013): 158.

¹⁸⁹ Herr, "The Possibility of Nationalist Feminism," 136.

paper, it is therefore difficult to imagine that a cooperation between nationalism and feminism could be successful, partly because the former seems to be turned towards the past and the respect of traditions while the latter looks towards the future and modern conceptions of gender.

Yet, a branch of third-wave feminism supports a more neutral, if not optimistic, vision of nationalism. Moreover, history has proven that many women around the world have successfully combined their fight for independence and their involvement in the advancement of women's rights. The last part of this analysis will try to defend the theory that nationalism and feminism can work with one another, providing the existence or creation of a particular context, and will offer perspectives on this relationship applied to the Puerto Rican situation.

B. A Feminist Nationalism? Prospects on a Possible Reconciliation Enlarged to the Puerto Rican Context

- *Recognizing Third World Women's Agency and Voices*

Third World feminism is part of the third-wave of feminism and knew its highest rate of popularity during the 1990s before being overtaken by transnational feminism which became the dominant outlook on Third World women. At first glance, Third World feminism and transnational feminism appear to focus in very similar ways on acknowledging the diversity and intersectionality of forms of oppression on Third World women. The difference between the two lies in the interests and efforts of Third World feminism in studying "Third World women's activism in their particular local/national context,"¹⁹⁰ as opposed to transnational feminists who prefer an approach that goes beyond the borders of a nation-state. Third World feminism therefore allows the development of analyses that are more geographically and historically situated, and give even more room for Third World women's voices and experiences.

¹⁹⁰ Herr, "Reclaiming Third World Feminism," 2.

In her analysis of Third World feminism, Ranjoo Seodu Herr makes two principal observations. First, Third World women often direct their militant efforts towards diverse local social movements that – although they are indirectly related to it – do not put the advancement of women’s rights as their central goal. These movements generally aim at defending and improving human rights, promoting independence (through nationalist organizations for instance), or protecting democracy. As a desirable consequence of this involvement, and even though it was not necessarily their first intention, these women eventually come to tackle issues that are directly connected to the promotion of equality between the sexes. The second observation, which is particularly relevant to the development of this analysis, is the fact that

[...] Third world women tend to opt for gradual changes that result from their collaboration with their male counterparts to enhance their communal influence vis-à-vis other members and to improve living standards of their families and of the community itself.¹⁹¹

Real change on issues such as gender inequality cannot happen without the participation of the majority of the community, and this of course includes men too. Radical actions that have been effective in making the mentalities evolve somewhere in the world might not be as powerful somewhere else. This perspective is delicate though: on the one hand, feminists are trying to reach full equality – a condition that should be self-evident and correspondingly achieved without any delay. It is therefore logical to think that a certain ‘radicalism’ in the movement might be understandable. On the other hand, it would be common knowledge if universal radical actions were the most efficient way to reach equality. Quite the opposite, as unfair as it might be, changing mentalities in a positive way requires time and patience, and above all work ‘from the inside’; i.e. mainly education. This is of course true for human rights, environmental, and social movements in general. That is why the contribution to the feminist movement made by Third World women’s activism should be taken seriously, even though it is not always directly focused on women’s rights per se.

¹⁹¹ Herr, “Reclaiming Third World Feminism,” 5.

- *Why Nationalism Should Not Be Automatically Dismissed in Feminist Theories: Converging Interests Under Particular Circumstances*

As mentioned earlier, for transnational feminists, the concept of nationalism is problematic because of the retrograde values it most of the time defends. What is more, they criticize women who participate in national movements for ‘forgetting’ to put their feminist claims first. According to them, these nationalist women harm the movement by giving priority to issues that are deemed of lesser importance than the struggle for gender equality. Yet, one could argue that where women are present, the fight for women’s rights can be present as well. By getting into nationalist movements and gaining leadership positions, women have the opportunity to make themselves heard and can gradually introduce the question of women’s rights to their male counterparts. When they refuse to acknowledge the input to women’s rights development – as indirect as it might be – made by these women who are involved in various nationalist struggles, some feminists deprive their own movement of an impetus that could prove useful in the long term. Some Third World feminists believe in the idea that the movement can use all the help it can get, even though it does not translate into quick, radical improvements. It is therefore both unproductive and unfair to dismiss the contribution of Third World women simply because they choose to associate with nationalist movements. The case made against transnational feminists by a number of Third World feminists also rests upon the claim that their reject of nationalism stems from an essentialist conceptualization of the nation-state.

[Their] insistence on rejecting the local/national does not demonstrate that any conception of the local/national is bound to be essentialist and monolithic but rather attests to the paradoxical fact that [they] themselves are subscribing to an essentialized and monolithic conception of the local/national.¹⁹²

Whereas most third-wave feminists criticize the universalist vision of white second-wave feminism, they tend to reproduce the same pattern of homogenization when they limit

¹⁹² Herr, “Reclaiming Third World Feminism,” 19.

nationalism to an oversimplified, reductive perception. This behavior is paradoxical because they claim to respect Third World women's agency and voices – which they most of the time do – while sometimes refusing to grant legitimacy to those participating in nationalist/independence movements, which are yet meaningful to them. Participating actively at the local and national levels is absolutely not unreasonable and should actually be encouraged because for many daily struggles for women, this is where change and improvement start decisively.

There is an interesting parallel between the goals of the nationalist movement and the goals of the feminist movement. Both aim at liberating a subjugated people – the colonized for the former / women for the latter – from the oppression of an illegitimate domination – the imperialist presence / men and the patriarchal society. It is nonetheless crucial to remember that Third World women endure this oppression in, at least, a two-fold way because they are members of both these underprivileged groups. Added to that can be other factors of oppression such as race, social class, sexual orientation, etc.). In keeping with this theory, Puerto Rican women's involvement in the fight for independence appears appropriate because achieving self-governance would free them from one of the factors of oppression. Then, in some nationalist theories, freedom from the imperialist presence would also facilitate the creation of a more equal society. It is possible that their feminist agency was not as visible as other forms of resistance against gender oppression because they prioritized the fight for independence but they nonetheless were legitimate: women involved in the nationalist struggle fought for a more just, and more equal society delivered from the capitalist influence, another form of oppression on Third World women.

Of course, it would be mistaken to claim that feminism and nationalism naturally belong together. It was previously demonstrated that the relationship between the two ideologies have been more than hectic, and for good reasons. Nonetheless, there are multiple examples of a

fruitful cooperation, at least when the nationalist ideology heads for a more progressive vision of what it means to protect the national identity, or when women within the movement help pushing for more modernity in gender relationships.

- *Beyond a Static National Identity: Reconceptualizing Nationalism*

[...] Nationalism must be conceived as involving dual goals: first, externally, it is to attain veritable self-determination of the nation, and the recognition and respect for the nation as an equal partner among nations in the international area; and second, internally, it is to secure an inner environment in which the members of the nation can enjoy equality amongst themselves and work with one another to promote collective prosperity.¹⁹³

With this statement, Herr provides a modern reconceptualization of nationalism that, while respecting the independence plea and the need for international recognition, preserve a spirit of solidarity within the particular national community. Yet, one can argue that the expression ‘modern nationalism’ sounds as an oxymoron precisely because nationalist ideals most of the time rely on the protection of a set of values that supposedly belong to the existence of a specific nation and form the core identity of this nation. This notion of ‘identity’ can be dangerous when it is understood as a time-bound, rigid, and exclusive concept. In Albizu Campos’s conceptualization, the authentic Puerto Rican identity was based on a time that preceded the arrival of the US on the island and that corresponded to a catholic, agricultural type of society with the traditional family at its center, associated to a conservative vision on gender roles. Yet, his reasoning seems paradoxical and even slightly hypocritical. First, he himself barely knew Puerto Rico without the US presence. Born in 1891, he was only nine years old when the Spanish were defeated and the island ceded to the US. His knowledge of Puerto Rican life before US rule was mainly based on what he had been told, not on his own experiences. Next, he enjoyed the advantages brought by the links between his island and the US when, for instance, he enrolled in Harvard University and was awarded a scholarship. Finally, Puerto Rico under the Spanish system was still a colonized Puerto Rico. Does it mean

¹⁹³ Herr, “The Possibility of Nationalist Feminism,” 149.

that there is one kind of colonial system that is better than the other? Were the living conditions of Puerto Ricans necessarily better under Spanish domination? According to the kinds of claims of the earliest forms of nationalist movement on the island, it would appear not. The way that Albizu Campos and many supporters of the nationalist movement envisioned the Puerto Rican identity was flawed in the sense that they attached it to a particular point in time. Life under the Spanish system might have been preferable for the bourgeoisie on the island, which Albizu Campos's family was a member of, but it certainly does not seem to be the case for the largest, poorest part of the Puerto Rican population. In keeping with this reasoning, if the 'real' Puerto Rican nation is one that is free of any foreign presence, would not the time of the Taínos be the true reference? Defining a national identity can be a dangerous process when it limits it to a particular point in history or a particular ethnic group, and can quite easily lead to the development of a fascist ideology:

A political philosophy, movement, or regime [...] that exalts nation and often race above the individual and that stands for a centralized autocratic government headed by a dictatorial leader, severe economic and social regimentation, and forcible suppression of opposition.¹⁹⁴

Although Puerto Rican nationalism never grounded its discourse on the supremacy of one ethnic group over another and rather 'only' aimed at getting rid of the colonial presence, it still glorified the idea of a Puerto Rican nation that is 'purer' without a foreign presence. Beyond the noble quest for independence, it is of course possible and authentic to feel sentiments of attachment, pride and belonging towards one's nation in a 'healthy' way, as well as it is important to take care of its history and its culture. Simply, it should not be at the expense of a spirit of openness and the respect of the most basic human rights. This is this balance between modernity and the protection of a national heritage that is arduous to reach when it comes to the nationalist ideology.

¹⁹⁴ "Definition of Fascism," Merriam-Webster Dictionary, accessed April 29, 2019, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fascism>.

Albizu Campos's vision of nationalism grew more and more inaccurate with time because it was based on the resistance to an older form of colonialism, much less subtle, that does not correspond to the reality of today's colonial system's implications in which "most Puerto Ricans value their US citizenship and the freedom of movement it offers,"¹⁹⁵ while retaining a strong sense of national identity.

As Diane Lamoureux rightfully argues in her article "Y'a t'il une troisième vague féministe", it is crucial to challenge the binary way of viewing the world, and this can apply to the way one conceptualizes nationalism.¹⁹⁶ Based on the theory of the continuum, concepts and ideas need to be envisioned as placed on a spectrum instead of being opposed to each other. Feminism is a moving concept, and as a result, there is not one, hegemonic feminism. In the same way, nationalism does not have to be a static concept. There is not one conception of what it means to be nationalist, and maybe it does not have to always be a negative one. Why one could not be both feminist and nationalist? History has shown that it is possible and legitimate to want to fight for one's nation's independence, for the protection of its history and culture, while at the same time aspiring for equal gender relationships.

- *A Puerto Rican Feminist Nationalism?*

Going back to this idea of a 'modern nationalism', there are various solutions that exist to take the path of progress regarding gender equality and human rights in general without throwing away the nation's historical and cultural heritage. In her article "The Possibility of Feminist Nationalism", Herr brings up Anthony Smith's distinction between ethnocentric nationalism, which, in its focus on power and the definition of the nation based on the supremacy of a particular ethnicity, remains absolutely inconceivable, and polycentric nationalism which more justly emphasizes notions of community and solidarity against unequal

¹⁹⁵ Jorge Duany, "Imagining the Puerto Rican Nation: Recent Works on Cultural Identity," ed. Silvia Alvarez-Curbelo et al., *Latin American Research Review* 31, no. 3 (1996): 249.

¹⁹⁶ Diane Lamoureux, "Y a-t-il une troisième vague féministe ?," *Cahiers du Genre* HS n° 1, no. 3 (2006): 61-62.

treatment by an illegitimate third party.¹⁹⁷ In light of a polycentric kind of nationalism, she brings up several solutions for a peaceful cohabitation of feminism and nationalism.

Focusing on the development of the local economy could be one of these solutions. While benefiting Puerto Rico's economic and social development because the profits stay on the island instead of going into the pockets of a big, say US, company, it also fosters the creation of jobs for Puerto Rican men and women. Moreover, by pointing at the unfair economic agreements with multinational companies that take advantage of their nation's cheaper labor force, nationalist strategies shine a light on the poor working conditions suffered by the local population.¹⁹⁸ Beyond the study of economic repercussions in the case of a potential independence for Puerto Rico, breaking up with the US system might allow the development of a more socialist kind of system. Indeed, Puerto Rico's model is, as a consequence of its political situation, based on the US one, which is not really famous for the generosity of its welfare state. This type of system would benefit many Puerto Rican women who are often limited in their employment perspectives because they are the ones who take care of the children while still widely depending on their husbands for the family income. For instance, developing childcare solutions that would be cheaper and more accessible would enable women to pursue a professional carrier more easily if they desire to. Widening benefits' eligibility requirements for single female headed families could also help many Puerto Rican women and their children to get out of poverty. Comprehensive maternity and paternity leaves systems have also proven to be beneficial for a better insertion of women in the professional sphere as well as more equal gender relationships within the family.¹⁹⁹ A socialist-oriented Puerto Rican government would

¹⁹⁷ Herr, "The Possibility of Nationalist Feminism," 139.

¹⁹⁸ This analysis does not aim at discussing and comparing the benefits and drawbacks of the potential political situations solutions (independence, ELA, or statehood), but only at presenting the potential benefits for women's rights in case of independence.

¹⁹⁹ Claire Cain Miller, "The Economic Benefits of Paid Parental Leave," *The New York Times*, December 21, 2017, accessed April 19, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/01/upshot/the-economic-benefits-of-paid-parental-leave.html>.

favor a more equal type of society and encourage greater independence for women. That is why, within the perspective of their fight for self-sovereignty, nationalist claims can be absolutely compatible with feminist ideals of development as long as they do not focus too much on the notion of national identity, and as long as they are not anchored in right-wing movements.

There are many examples throughout the world of a successful cooperation between nationalist movements and feminism, and Puerto Rico's history has already provided such a case. Studied in the second part of this analysis, the Young Lords Party comes as a perfect illustration of the possibility of a feminist nationalism. In line with Albizu Campos's anti-colonial ideals, the party was openly nationalist and placed first on their program the independence plea and the end of all imperialist domination of its people both in the US and in Puerto Rico. At the same time, its members, often very young, were aware of the sexism that plagued its ranks and society in general and were deeply committed to a radical transformation of gender relationships. At the instigation of women who grew tired of suffering from an unequal treatment whereas they were as involved in the party, Young Lords male members started to acknowledge the need for a change. Women of the Young Lords put the absurdity of men's sexist behaviors right under their noses and intelligently highlighted the parallel between the fight against the imperialist presence and the struggle for women's rights. Without actually compromising, they were aware that both men and women needed to be educated on the issue of gender equality and that men had to be included if real change was to be achieved. The Young Lords Party actually showed signs of an early third-wave feminism that would only develop later, during the 1990s. On repeated occasions, they explicitly mentioned the multiple layers of oppression that weighed upon Puerto Rican women in light of their gender, race, and particular status as a 20th century colonized people. They understood the importance of

supporting activism at the level of the community and were involved in many different militant movements, whether they were health-related, environmental, or economic.

A second example of the reconciliation between feminism and nationalism in Puerto Rico appears in the serious interest that the Puerto Rican Independence Party has been developing towards questions of women's rights since the turn of the century. The PIP presents characteristics that can be deemed as belonging to a nationalist movement. They aspire to independence and focus most of their energy and resources on the question, and actively participate in every nationalist commemoration while celebrating the memory of nationalist activists. Only one aspect of the definition given by Raoul Girardet does not correspond to the PIP. A close reading of their political agenda as well as a study of the bills they promote in the House and Senate show that the party absolutely does not belong to the far-right of the political spectrum, but rather holds a socialist-oriented kind of program. The PIP is the last nationalist movement that is politically involved in the Puerto Rican political landscape. A lot less radical than Albizu Campos's resort to violence, the party nonetheless strongly opposes any form of US presence and emphasizes the need to preserve the Puerto Rican lifestyle, as well as its history and culture. The reinstatement of Spanish as the official language on the island is for instance one of the PIP's goals regarding arts and culture. This is how the party defines a 'nation':

A nation is the sum of the diverse characteristics shared by a social group within a defined territory. Among these characteristics, we can point out: a singular identifying personality, a historical trajectory that creates uniqueness, a language that unite them, a collective cultural development and an idiosyncrasy that joins them together as a particular social group. Puerto Rico is a Latin-American and Caribbean nation with a historical-cultural trajectory that defines us.²⁰⁰

²⁰⁰ “Una nación es la suma de las diversas características, compartidas por un grupo social, en un territorio definido. Entre estas características, podemos destacar: una personalidad propia que los identifica, una trayectoria histórica que les imparte singularidad, un idioma que los une, un desarrollo cultural colectivo y una idiosincrasia que los particulariza como grupo social. Puerto Rico es una nación latinoamericana y caribeña con una trayectoria histórico-cultural que nos define.”

Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño, “Arte y Cultura,” Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño, accessed April 19, 2019, <https://partidoindependentistapuertorriqueño.com/2015-11-30-02-48-23/arte-y-cultura>

The party's understanding of 'nation' fits into a more positive reconceptualization of nationalism. It makes no mention of a specific 'race', nor holds a nativist kind of discourse. Quite the contrary, it describes Puerto Rico as a 'melting pot' (*mestizaje*), and views it as a crucial element for the creation of its cultural roots. It defends the vigor of the Puerto Rican culture and aims at protecting it against US assimilation while at the same time promoting a moving, not fixed in time, vision of what the Puerto Rican national identity is. For these reasons, the PIP seems to be a very interesting example of a modern nationalist movement.

Mainly under the influence of María de Lourdes Santiago Negrón, the party has successfully engaged in a momentum of modernity that is necessary if it wants to remain a political force to be reckoned with. She managed to put the feminist question at the forefront and dedicated an entire section of her political program to women's rights. Both a nationalist and a feminist, Santiago Negrón holds a position of responsibility within her party and spends a significant part of her time raising awareness on issues that directly concern women.

In her article on nationalism and feminism in Palestine, Frances S. Hasso provides more useful ideas for the coexistence of the two ideologies.²⁰¹ The first one is "a commitment to a variant of modernist ideology that was marked by grassroots as opposed to military mobilization". Instead of promoting a military vision of nationalism, like Albizu Campos did, she argues that the movement is better served when it focuses on gaining the support of various local organizations because it allows it to get closer to the population and its concerns. This is where the Nationalist Party of Albizu Campos failed,²⁰² and where the Puerto Rican Independence Party lacks strength. Often criticized for its paternalistic discourse and the elitism of its 'bourgeoisie' kind of membership,²⁰³ the PIP would benefit from the support of grassroots

²⁰¹ Hasso, "The 'Women's Front,'" 1.

²⁰² Manuel Maldonado-Denis, "Prospects for Latin American Nationalism: The Case of Puerto Rico," *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 3, No. 3, Puerto Rico: Class Struggle and National Liberation (Summer, 1976): 40-41.

²⁰³ Kay Case Haub, "Together We Stand Apart: Island and Mainland Puerto Rican Independentistas," 97-98.

social and labor movements. It should continue its efforts to understand that its own members' concern for independence is not at the center of every Puerto Rican's attention, and consequently widen its areas of focus. The party should sustain its momentum of trying to mix the central question of the political situation with socioeconomic issues to present a more accurate depiction of what Puerto Ricans, who are indeed deeply attached to their nation and its cultural heritage, also want: the improvement of living conditions and opportunities for socioeconomic development. The current PIP president Rubén Berríos made a step in this direction when he publicly recognized the attachment of Puerto Ricans to their US citizenship for the convenience it provides regarding their back and forth movements between their island and the continent, where they very often have members of their family.²⁰⁴

The second factor that Hasso talks about in her article is “a concern with proving the cultural worth of Palestinian society to the West, a project that was symbolized by women's status in important ways.” Applied to the Puerto Rican context, this could be a stimulating element for both the nationalist cause and the feminist movement. Showing the cultural richness of Puerto Rico while at the same time valorizing women's contributions to it is another example of a fruitful cooperation between the two ideologies. The island possesses its own national cultural heritage in the form of museums, system of universities, specific literature and arts, and the three main Puerto Rican political parties, regardless of their perspective on the political question, have already recognized the power of nationalist emblems such as the flag or anthems and do not hesitate to use them on many occasions to attract the support of the Puerto Rican people, who is deeply attached to these symbols of national identity.²⁰⁵

Although the PIP has been a good example of what a ‘feminist nationalism’ can be, progress still needs to be made within the party. María de Lourdes Santiago Negrón remains an

²⁰⁴ Jorge Duany, *The Puerto Rican Nation on the Move: Identities on the Island & in the United States* (Univ of North Carolina Press, 2002), 16.

²⁰⁵ Duany, *The Puerto Rican Nation on the Move*, 15.

isolated case of a woman holding a leadership position and it would be interesting to study the membership of the PIP in its entirety to have a better perspective on the involvement of women. It is difficult to know exactly if the development of women's rights would have held the same importance in the PIP's political agenda without the feminist impulse given to the party by Santiago Negrón. Puerto Rican nationalist scholars also need to refresh their vision of feminism as a US imperialist import on the island and recognize the authenticity of local feminist organizations. Just as important, they have to stop speaking in women's place and start speaking with and alongside them. Finally, feminists inside the nationalist movement must make the achievement of their goals non-negotiable and place them at the same level as the fight for independence, while feminists in general should be careful of not "leaving nationalist discourses solely at the hands of patriarchal nationalists" by refusing to acknowledge its potential benefits or to even consider them.

Conclusion

This analysis was designed to reveal the evolution of the relationship between feminism and the Puerto Rican independence movement seen through two angles, one being more quantitative, and the other more qualitative. On the quantitative perspective, the evolution appears slightly less flagrant. When one looks at the number of women occupying leadership positions today in pro-independence organizations such as the Puerto Rican Independence Party, which was the focus of one section of this analysis, it is easy to notice that it is still far from full parity. Although she has a certain authority as vice-president, Santiago Negrón is the only woman within the PIP executive office. The presence of women within pro-independence organizations has unquestionably been institutionalized since the ‘golden years’ of the Nationalist Party when women participated actively in the movement but did not really hold formal positions. At the beginnings of the Young Lords Party, women still occupied mostly administrative functions, but they rapidly protested against this unfair division of labor, arguing that they had participated in the creation of the party on the same level as their male counterparts and therefore they deserved to be given high-ranking posts, for which they were as qualified. Nonetheless, despite the efforts of these women, men constituted the largest part of the executive office of the Young Lords Party. In order to remedy this lack of parity, initiatives such as affirmative action could be implemented to have political parties put as many women as men on their electoral rolls. Affirmative action for gender equality is not yet a public policy of the US government though – and therefore in Puerto Rico as well - and presents its share of defects and detractors. For a more accurate understanding of the gendered composition of the various pro-independence political parties and organizations, it would have been interesting to have actual numbers of feminine membership (in the PIP for instance), but unfortunately, I was not able to find such figures.

From a qualitative perspective, progress is much more visible. Feminist goals and the development of women's rights have increasingly been included into pro-independence/nationalist political agendas since 1950, the starting date of this study. When I first started my research work, I used the Center for Puerto Rican Studies (Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños)²⁰⁶ and discovered a recurrent pattern that was rather representative of the reality of the relationship between women's rights and the nationalist movement. With the entry '*feminism*', I found documents related to both women's rights and the independence movement, showing the trend of women's high activity regarding the fight for self-sovereignty. With the entry "*independence movement*" or "*nationalism*", women and women's rights were hardly ever mentioned. This showed the unequal relationship that existed at the time of the nationalist party, and even later, with women being deeply involved in the nationalist question without receiving the same kind of attention from the nationalist party regarding the development of their rights. Fortunately, with the rise of feminism during the following years, progress was made as to the inclusion of feminist goals in the independence movement. Debates such as the issue of sterilization abuse in Puerto Rico were useful to shed light on the consequences of the colonial status on women's rights and the victimization of women that sometimes accompanies discourses misrepresenting the factual reality and transforming it to fit their own purposes. This is how, in my initial research work, I came to believe that most Puerto Rican women underwent the sterilization procedure without consent, which is of course a misconception born from the efforts of the nationalist movement to take up the issue to show the universal harmful impact of US colonial occupation of the island. It was only when I started to read a feminist approach of the issue of sterilization abuse that a vision that was less dichotomous and more nuanced emerged. Once again, it was with the Young Lords Party that women's rights decisively started

²⁰⁶ "Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños | Understanding, Preserving, Sharing the Puerto Rican Experience," accessed May 2, 2019, <https://centropr.hunter.cuny.edu/>.

to be included into the political agenda of a pro-independence movement, at the radical instigation of its women members, generally followed by their male counterparts. Today, the Puerto Rican Independence Party demonstrates a feminist engagement, but it remains to be seen if it is solely the result of the beliefs of its vice-president. It would be interesting to examine the political agendas of the two other main parties in Puerto Rico to see if they also take an interest in pursuing a feminist agenda. The votes that were recently cast by the New Progressive Party on the issue of abortion in Congress show that they might not be as progressive as they claim, at least on the issue of women's rights.

The progress that has been made regarding the inclusion of women's rights in pro-independence entities' political agenda is obviously a positive consequence and a logical repercussion of the feminist impetus of the last decades throughout the world. Each of the sections in this analysis deserves to be the subject of an entire thesis, but since the organizations, political parties, or movements they examine all have a quite short 'lifespan', it was more judicious to research at a global level in order to show a real long-term evolution. The modernity of the Young Lords Party's feminist engagement, ahead of its time regarding the third-wave of feminism, was definitely a pleasant discovery.

The last part of this analysis aimed at demonstrating that a cooperation between feminism and nationalism is possible and even desirable under particular circumstances that mainly imply the reconceptualization of nationalism to fit a more contemporary and progressive understanding of the nation and national identity. Puerto Rico with its unique context and the transnational character of its population seems to be an appropriate environment for the development of a feminist nationalism, because it makes it more difficult to define a specific, static Puerto Rican nation or identity, which in turn favors progressive views on gender equality. Evolving from the original Nationalist Party's vision, the Puerto Rican Independence Party seems to have understood the necessity to adapt, at least to certain extent, if they want to

remain a political force to be reckoned with at a time when a majority of Puerto Ricans favors the statehood option above independence, and the PIP seems to lose little by little the already poor numbers of registered supporters it has.

It would be interesting for further research to focus in more depth on the Puerto Rican Independence Party in order to get a better insight of its members' opinion on women's rights, and see if Santiago Negrón's feminist involvement is echoed by the other members of the party. The next Puerto Rican gubernatorial elections are scheduled for 2020, and the PIP has not yet announced its candidate. It remains to be seen if the next candidate will dedicate such a large portion of his agenda to the achievement of feminist ideals. What is certain is that the question of the political status of Puerto Rico in relation to the United States is far from being resolved and that pro-independence women must continue to push for the inclusion of their rights alongside the goal of independence.

Annex

- *Annex 1: Plaque on Jayuya Monument in honor of the Puerto Rican women participants in the 1950 Jayuya Uprising*

“Plaque on Jayuya Monument in honor of the Puerto Rican women participants in the 1950 Jayuya Uprising — a Nationalist revolt in Puerto Rico. The Monument is located in the Cruzados' subsection of the Aguilar Ward in Mayagüez, southwestern Puerto Rico.”

Source: “Fichier:1950 PRNationalist Women.JPG.” n.d. In *Wikipédia*. Accessed May 2, 2019. https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fichier:1950_PRNationalist_Women.JPG.



- *Annex 2: CESA Statement of Purpose, 1975*

(1975) Outlines the program of the Committee to End Sterilization Abuse (CESA). (1975)

(Editors Note: The Committee to End Sterilization Abuse issued the document as part of their struggle against the use of sterilization to cure social ills. CWLU members were very active in CESA.)

The women and men of CESA: Committee to End Sterilization Abuse recognize the following:

In the United States today there is a massive drive to convince people that social evils such as poverty, overcrowding, increased crime, poor education, poor health care, etc. are all due to overpopulation.

Population control programs have been pushed by the U.S. for people in the United States as well as in many countries abroad to do exactly that: control people and keep us from understanding the real causes of our suffering and thus keep us from dealing with the problems by eliminating oppression and exploitation. By pushing population control programs, the United States government and corporations hope to stave off the struggles of people for liberation from direct and indirect domination by the U.S.

Sterilization of women, and to a lesser extent of men, is on the increase in the United States. Sterilizations have tripled in the last five years. This is the result of an increase in sterilizations of women who are Black, Puerto Rican and Chicano and of all working women.

Many sterilizations are done without women knowing that the result is permanent, that there are complications, or that there are other methods of birth control. Many are done on women who are coerced by threats of withdrawal of services such as welfare, the right to abortion, medical services and the like.

In Puerto Rico, under the guise of needed population control, the U.S. with the collaboration of the colonial government, has carried out programs for the past thirty years which have resulted in the sterilization of fully one third of Puerto Rican women of childbearing age. The Department of Health Education and Welfare in the U.S. has stated that "As U.S. professional attitudes change, it is possible that we may see sterilization become as important in family planning in the fifty states as it already is in Puerto Rico." For this reason CESA will focus particularly on the case of Puerto Rico.

Sterilization abuse will continue unchecked and victimize many more people unless we organize and struggle to stop it.

CESA is therefore working toward the following:

to educate and publicize the issues raised by sterilization abuse, namely the purposes that population control programs serve, and to denounce the implementation of racism, sexism and the oppression of working people within the health care system.

to demand that families and all women of childbearing age have free access to methods of birth control within high quality, comprehensive health care so that people may exercise choices.

the establishment of guidelines on sterilization for New York City hospitals which insure that women give consent only after being truly informed and counseled, are not coerced into being sterilized and are permitted a waiting period of at least 30 days before the actual operation. Existing HEW guidelines provide only 72 hours. The New York City guidelines will set a precedent for all cities in the United States.

Both New York City and Puerto Rico fall under Region 11 for health services of the Health Education and Welfare Department of the U.S. federal government. Clearly what is the rule in Puerto Rico today -rampant sterilization abuse -may well become the trend in New York City. Conversely the fight for guidelines in New York will have repercussions in Puerto Rico. The guidelines are the first to go beyond the federal guidelines and will mark a victory toward halting sterilization abuse.

initiating legal actions against those who abuse patients' rights by whatever means.

CESA is unaffiliated and invites organizations and individuals to participate in our program to end sterilization abuse. There are a number of ways to participate, among them: sponsorship, inclusion of the issue in your organizational program, help with mailings and compiling mailing lists, donation of your time and/or your money, help with production and distribution of literature and publication of the issue within your communities and your workplaces.

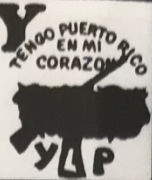
Join us in the struggle to end sterilization abuse!

Source: "CESA Statement of Purpose." n.d. CWLU HERSTORY. Accessed January 15, 2019. <https://www.cwluherstory.org/health/cesa-statement-of-purpose>.

- *Annex 3: Young Lords Party 13-point Program and Platform, Revised Version May 1970*

YOUNG LORDS PARTY

13 POINT PROGRAM AND PLATFORM



THE YOUNG LORDS PARTY IS A REVOLUTIONARY
POLITICAL PARTY FIGHTING FOR THE LIBERATION OF ALL
OPPRESSED PEOPLE

- 1. WE WANT SELF-DETERMINATION FOR PUERTO RICANS, LIBERATION ON THE ISLAND AND INSIDE THE UNITED STATES.**

For 500 years, first Spain and then the United States have colonized our country. Billions of dollars in profits leave our country for the United States every year. In every way we are slaves of the gringo. We want liberation and the Power in the hands of the People, not Puerto Rican exploiters. **QUE VIVA PUERTO RICO LIBRE!**
- 2. WE WANT SELF-DETERMINATION FOR ALL LATINOS.**

Our Latin Brothers and Sisters, inside and outside the United States, are oppressed by American business. The Chicano people built the Southwest, and we support their right to control their lives and their land. The people of Santo Domingo continue to fight against gringo domination and its puppet generals. The armed liberation struggles in Latin America are part of the war of Latinos against imperialism. **QUE VIVA LA RAZA!**
- 3. WE WANT LIBERATION OF ALL THIRD WORLD PEOPLE.**

Just as Latinos first slaved under Spain and the Yankees, Black people, Indians, and Asians slaved to build the wealth of this country. For 400 years they have fought for freedom and dignity against racist Babylon. Third World people have led the fight for freedom. All the colored and oppressed peoples of the world are one nation under oppression. **NO PUERTO RICAN IS FREE UNTIL ALL PEOPLE ARE FREE!**
- 4. WE ARE REVOLUTIONARY NATIONALISTS AND OPPOSE RACISM.**

The Latin, Black, Indian and Asian people inside the U.S. are colonies fighting for liberation. We know that Washington, Wall Street, and City Hall will try to make our nationalism into racism; but Puerto Ricans are of all colors and we resist racism. Millions of poor white people are rising up to demand freedom and we support them. These are the ones in the U.S. that are stepped on by the rulers and the government. We each organize our people, but our fights are the same against oppression and we will defeat it together. **POWER TO ALL OPPRESSED PEOPLE!**
- 5. WE WANT EQUALITY FOR WOMEN. DOWN WITH MACHISMO AND MALE CHAUVANISM.**

Under capitalism, women have been oppressed by both society and our men. The doctrine of machismo has been used by men to take out their frustrations on wives, sisters, mothers, and children. Men must fight along with sisters in the struggle for economic and social equality and must recognize that sisters make up over half of the revolutionary army: sisters and brothers are equals fighting for our people. **FORWARD SISTERS IN THE STRUGGLE!**
- 6. WE WANT COMMUNITY CONTROL OF OUR INSTITUTIONS AND LAND.**

We want control of our communities by our people and programs to guarantee that all institutions serve the needs of our people. People's control of police, health services, churches, schools, housing, transportation and welfare are needed. We want an end to attacks on our land by urban renewal, highway destruction, and university corporations. **LAND BELONGS TO ALL THE PEOPLE!**
- 7. WE WANT A TRUE EDUCATION OF OUR AFRO-INDIO CULTURE AND SPANISH LANGUAGE.**

We must learn our long history of fighting against cultural, as well as economic genocide by the Spangards and now the Yanquis. Revolutionary culture, culture of our people, is the only true teaching. **JIBARO SI, YANQUI NO!**
- 8. WE OPPOSE CAPITALISTS AND ALLIANCES WITH TRAITORS.**

Puerto Rican rulers, or puppets of the oppressor, do not help our people. They are paid by the system to lead our people down blind alleys, just like the thousands of poverty pimps who keep our communities peaceful for business, or the street workers who keep gangs divided and blowing each other away. We want a society where the people socialistically control their labor. **VENCEREMOS!**
- 9. WE OPPOSE THE AMERICAN MILITARY.**

We demand immediate withdrawal of all U.S. military forces and bases from Puerto Rico, Vietnam, and all oppressed communities inside and outside the U.S. No Puerto Rican should serve in the U.S. army against his Brothers and Sisters, for the only true army of oppressed people is the People's Liberation Army to fight all rulers. **U.S. OUT OF VIETNAM, FREE PUERTO RICO NOW!**
- 10. WE WANT FREEDOM FOR ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS AND PRISONERS OF WAR.**

No Puerto Rican should be in jail or prison, first because we are a nation, and America has no claims on us; second, because we have not been tried by our own people (peers). We also want all freedom fighters out of jail, since they are prisoners of the war for liberation. **FREE ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS AND PRISONERS OF WAR!**
- 11. WE ARE INTERNATIONALISTS.**

Our people are brainwashed by television, radio, newspapers, schools and books to oppose people in other countries fighting for their freedom. No longer will we believe these lies, because we have learned who the real enemy is and who our real friends are. We will defend our sisters and brothers around the world who fight for justice and are against the rulers of this country. **QUE VIVA CHE GUEVARRA!**
- 12. WE BELIEVE ARMED SELF-DEFENSE AND ARMED STRUGGLE ARE THE ONLY MEANS TO LIBERATION.**

We are opposed to violence - the violence of hungry children, illiterate adults, diseased old people, and the violence of poverty and profit. We have asked, petitioned, gone to courts, demonstrated peacefully, and voted for politicians full of empty promises. But we still ain't free. The time has come to defend the lives of our people against repression and for revolutionary war against the businessmen, politicians, and police. When a government oppresses the people, we have the right to abolish it and create a new one. **ARM OURSELVES TO DEFEND OURSELVES!**
- 13. WE WANT A SOCIALIST SOCIETY.**

We want liberation, clothing, free food, education, health care, transportation, full employment and peace. We want a society where the needs of the people come first, and where we give solidarity and aid to the people of the world, not oppression and racism. **HASTA LA VICTORIA SIEMPRE!**

Source: Party, Young Lords. "Young Lords Party: 13 Points Program and Platform." *Caribe: The Young Lords Party 1969-1975*. New York (1983). Accessed April 19, 2019. <https://icaadocs.mfah.org/icaadocs/THEARCHIVE/FullRecord/tabid/88/doc/841843/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

• *Annex 4: Young Lords Party 13-point Program and Platform, October 1969 Version*

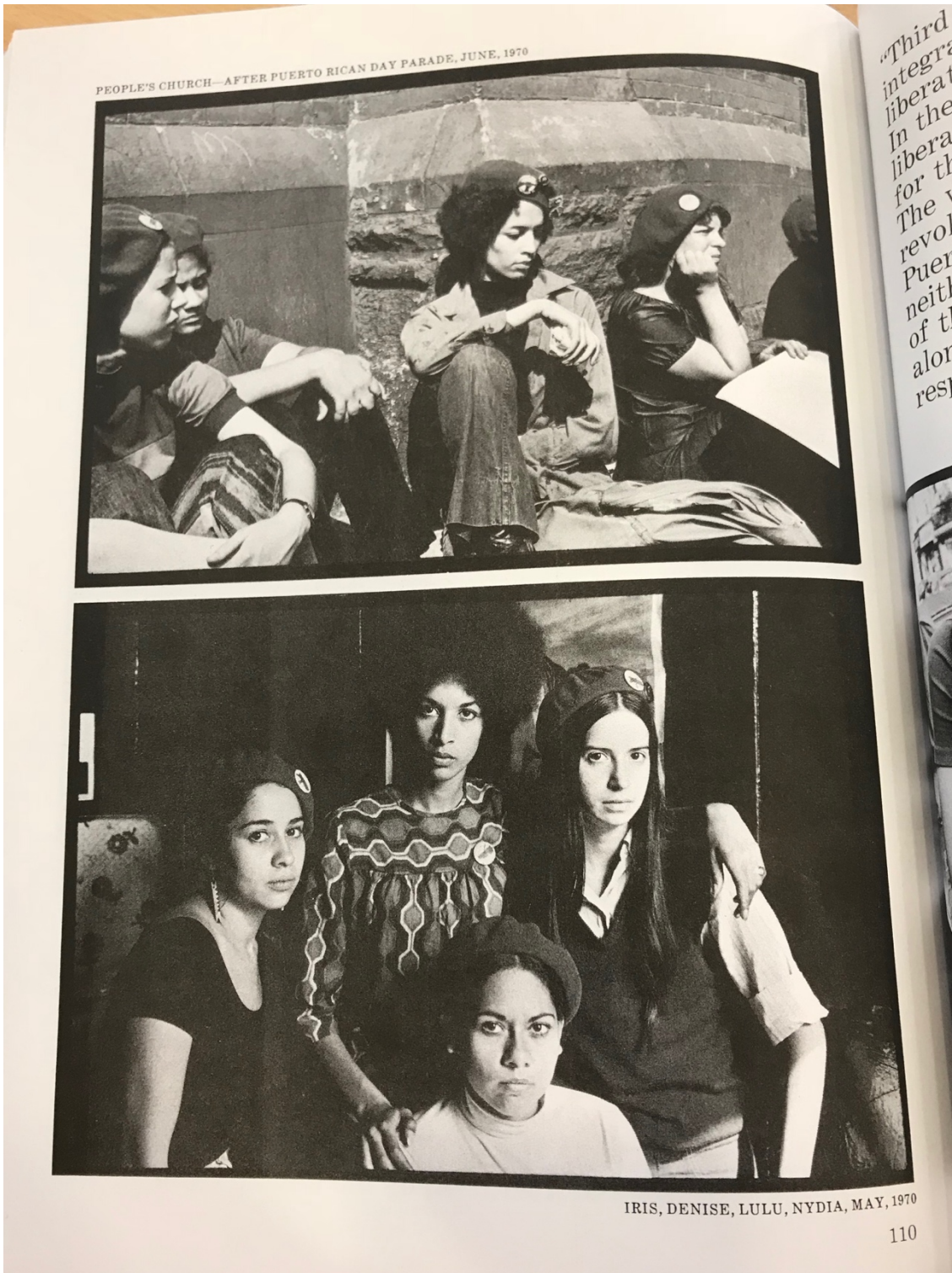
The Young Lords Party is a Revolutionary Political Party Fighting for the Liberation of All Oppressed People

<p>1. We want self-determination for Puerto Ricans-- Liberation of the Island and inside the United States. For 500 years, first Spain and then United States have colonized our country. Billions of dollars in profits leave our country for the United States every year. In every way we are slaves of the gringo. We want liberation and the Power in the hands of the People, not Puerto Rican exploiters. Que Viva Puerto Rico Libre!</p> <p>2. We want self-determination for all Latinos. Our Latin Brothers and Sisters, inside and outside the United States, are oppressed by American business. The Chicano people built the Southwest, and we support their right to control their lives and their land. The people of Santo Domingo continue to fight against gringo domination and its puppet generals. The armed liberation struggles in Latin America are part of the war of Latinos against imperialism. Que Viva La Raza!</p> <p>3. We want liberation of all third world people. Just as Latins first slaved under Spain and the Yankees, Black people, Indians, and Asians slaved to build the wealth of this country. For 400 years they have fought for freedom and dignity against racist Babylon (decadent empire). Third World people have led the fight for freedom. All the colored and oppressed peoples of the world are one nation under oppression. No Puerto Rican Is Free Until All People Are Free!</p> <p>4. We are revolutionary nationalists and oppose racism. The Latin, Black, Indian and Asian people inside the U.S. are colonies fighting for liberation. We know that Washington, Wall Street and City Hall will try to make our nationalism into racism; but Puerto Ricans are of all colors and we resist racism. Millions of poor white people are rising up to demand freedom and we support them. These are the ones in the U.S. that are stepped on by the rules and the government. We each organize our people, but our fights are against the same oppression and we will defeat it together. Power To All Oppressed People!</p> <p>5. We want community control of our institutions and land. We want control of our communities by our people and programs to guarantee that all institutions serve the needs of our people. People's control of police, health services, churches, schools, housing, transportation and welfare are needed. We want an end to attacks on our land by urban removal, highway destruction, universities and corporations. Land Belongs To All The People!</p>	<p>7. We oppose capitalists and alliances with traitors. Puerto Rican rulers, or puppets of the oppressor, do not help our people. They are paid by the system to lead our people down blind alleys, just like the thousands of poverty pimps who keep our communities peaceful for business, or the street workers who keep gangs divided and blowing each other away. We want a society where the people socialistically control their labor. Venceremos!</p> <p>8. We oppose the American military. We demand immediate withdrawal of U.S. military forces and bases from Puerto Rico, Vietnam and all oppressed communities inside and outside the U.S. No Puerto Rican should serve in the U.S. Army against his Brothers and Sisters, for the only true army of oppressed people is the people's army to fight all rulers. U.S. Out Of Vietnam, Free Puerto Rico!</p> <p>9. We want freedom for all political prisoners. We want all Puerto Ricans freed because they have been tried by the racist courts of the colonizers, and not by their own people and peers. We want all freedom fighters released from jail. Free All Political Prisoners!</p> <p>10. We want equality for women. Machismo must be revolutionary... not oppressive. Under capitalism, our women have been oppressed by both the society and our own men. The doctrine of machismo has been used by our men to take out their frustrations against their wives, sisters, mothers, and children. Our men must support their women in their fight for economic and social equality, and must recognize that our women are equals in every way within the revolutionary ranks. Forward, Sisters, In The Struggle!</p> <p>11. We fight anti-communism with international unity. Anyone who resists injustice is called a communist by "the man" and condemned. Our people are brainwashed by television, radio, newspapers, schools, and books to oppose people in other countries fighting for their freedom. No longer will our people believe attacks and slanders, because they have learned who the real enemy is and who their real friends are. We will defend our Brothers and Sisters around the world who fight for justice against the rich rulers of this country. Viva Che!</p> <p>12. We believe armed self-defense and armed struggle are the only means to liberation. We are opposed to violence--the violence of hungry children, illiterate adults, diseased old people, and the violence of poverty and profit. We have asked, petitioned, gone to courts,</p>
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<p>6. We want a true education of our Creole culture and Spanish language. We must learn our history of fighting against cultural, as well as economic genocide by the yanqui. Revolutionary culture, culture of our people, is the only true teaching.</p>	<p>demonstrated peacefully, and voted for politicians full of empty promises. But we still ain't free. The time has come to defend the lives of our people against repression and for revolutionary war against the businessman, politician, and police. When a government oppresses our people, we have the right to abolish it and create a new one. Boricua Is Awake! All Pigs Beware!</p> <p>13. We want a socialist society. We want liberation, clothing, free food, education, health care, transportation, utilities, and employment for all. We want a society where the needs of our people come first, and where we give solidarity and aid to the peoples of the world, not oppression and racism. Hasta La Victoria Siempre!</p>
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Source: The Sixties Project. "13 Point Program and Platform of the Young Lords Party." n.d. Accessed April 29, 2019.
http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML_docs/Resources/Primary/Manifestos/Young_Lords_platform.html.

- *Annex 5: Photographs of Women of the Young Lords Party*



Photographs of women of the Young Lords Party.

Source: Party, Young Lords, Michael Abramson, and Iris Morales. 2011. *Palante: Young Lords Party*. Reprint edition. Chicago: Haymarket Books.

- *Annex 6: María de Lourdes Santiago Negrón on Social Media Against Domestic Violence*


María de Lourdes Santiago
 28 novembre 2018 · 🌐

#NiUnaMenos
 Esta terrible noticia confirma la urgencia de revolucionar la forma en que se atiende el tema de la violencia de género
https://www.elvocero.com/.../article_d0f05286-f2f1-11e8-8d4b-...
 Voir la traduction



ELVOCERO.COM
Hombre asesina a su pareja y se suicida en Trujillo Alto
 TRUJILLO ALTO – Una mujer de 60 años de edad fue asesinada a tiros...

Source: María de Lourdes Santiago's Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/mariadelou rdessantiagopip/>


María de Lourdes Santiago
 28 décembre 2018 · 🌐



En el 2019
 Ni
 desigualdad
 Ni
 patriarcado
 Ni
 violencia
 Ni
 machismo
 Ni
 una más
 Ni
 una menos
 libres nos queremos

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Abstract

This analysis explores the evolution of the relationship between feminism and the Puerto Rican independence up to today, with the Nationalist Revolts of 1950s as a starting date. As a “unincorporated territory” of the United States, Puerto Rico’s political status today remains ambiguous, as it has been the case for centuries of life under a colonial system. As a result, the pro-independence/nationalist movement on the island has always been a force to be reckoned with, and women have been eager participants in the struggle for the liberation of the nation. My research explores on the one hand, the involvement of women within the separatist organizations (mainly here the Nationalist Party, the Young Lords Party, and the Puerto Rican Independence Party) and the extent to which they have had access to leadership positions within these organizations, and on the other hand, the place that the independence movement gave to the issue of women’s rights among their demands for complete sovereignty. This place logically grew in importance over the decades, along with society’s increasing care for women’s rights. Thus, it goes from an almost non-existent attention given to women’s rights issues during the time of the Nationalist Party to a portion of the 2016 PIP program exclusively dedicated to the advancement of women’s rights. A final question naturally arises from the main topic of this analysis: do feminism and nationalism necessarily have conflicting interests? Their relationship is certainly tumultuous, but I contend that a feminist nationalism is possible in the Puerto Rican context, as long as it implies a more modern reconceptualization of nationalism.

Key words: feminism, nationalism, Puerto Rico, independence movement, United States

Résumé

Ce mémoire a pour but d'examiner la relation entre féminisme et mouvement indépendantiste portoricain depuis les Révoltes Nationalistes de 1950 jusqu'à aujourd'hui. En tant que « territoire non-incorporé » des Etats-Unis, la statut politique de Puerto Rico reste ambigu même aujourd'hui, après des siècles de vie au sein d'un système colonial. En conséquence logique, le mouvement indépendantiste/nationaliste est une force sur laquelle il faut compter dans le paysage politique portoricain, et les femmes ont toujours été d'actives partisans de la libération de leur nation. Mon travail de recherche porte d'une part sur l'implication des femmes au sein des différentes organisations séparatistes (principalement dans cette étude le Parti Nationaliste, le Young Lords Party, et le Parti Indépendantiste Portoricain) et la mesure selon laquelle elles ont pu avoir accès à des postes à responsabilités au sein de ces organisations, et d'autre part sur la place allouée par le mouvement indépendantiste/nationaliste aux questions de droits des femmes parmi leurs revendications d'autonomie. Cette place a logiquement augmenté au cours des décennies, aux côtés de l'intérêt grandissant porté par la société en général aux questions féministes. Ainsi, on passe d'une attention quasi inexistante portée aux droits des femmes durant la période du Parti Nationaliste à une section entière du programme 2016 du Parti Indépendantiste Portoricain dédiée à leur développement. Une question finale émerge naturellement du sujet central de cette analyse : féminisme et nationalisme sont-ils condamnés à avoir des intérêts divergents et incompatibles ? Leur relation est certes tumultueuse, mais je plaide en faveur de l'existence possible d'un nationalisme féministe dans le contexte portoricain, pourvu qu'elle implique une reconceptualisation plus moderne du terme nationalisme.

Mots-clés : féminisme, nationalisme, Puerto Rico, mouvement indépendantiste, Etats-Unis