

An anthropological reflection on the Summer of 2019 and the social movement #Rickyrenuncia (Ricky Resign) in Puerto Rico

Una reflexión antropológica sobre el verano de 2019 y el movimiento social #Rickyrenuncia (Ricky Resign) en Puerto Rico

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Abstract

The following article presents an anthropological and historical analysis based on the social movement referred to as #Rickyrenuncia and its most important achievements during the Summer of 2019 in Puerto Rico. The theoretical concepts used in this analysis are concepts of agency and citizen participation that enabled social mobilization. The subaltern by Gayatri Spivak and the most recent studies regarding Puerto Rico's political and economic crisis are highlighted in order to contextualize the Summer of 2019.

Palabras clave: crisis de Puerto Rico; participación ciudadana; agencia.

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Resumen

En el siguiente artículo se presenta un análisis antropológico e histórico basado en el movimiento social denominado #Rickyrenuncia y sus logros más importantes durante el verano de 2019 en Puerto Rico. Los conceptos teóricos utilizados en este análisis son conceptos de agencia y participación ciudadana, que posibilitaron la movilización social. Se destaca el subalterno de Gayatri Spivak y los estudios más recientes sobre la crisis política y económica en Puerto Rico para contextualizar el verano de 2019.

Keywords: Puerto Rico's crisis; citizen participation; agency.

Introduction

The following article presents an anthropological and historical analysis based on the social movement referred to as #Rickyrenuncia and its most important achievements during the Summer of 2019 in Puerto Rico. Since 2016, Puerto Rico has been suffering from extreme political, economic, and social calamity in comparison to its contemporary history. In 2017, Puerto Rico was devastated by hurricane Maria which is considered to be amongst the most perilous devastation experienced on the island, killing approximately 4,645 victims. Throughout the rebuilding process, the population expressed their frustrations toward the government's response, including agencies such as FEMA and the local government. In 2019, Puerto Rican press published a private chat in which former governor Ricardo Rosselló and his cabinet members mocked victims of hurricane Maria and other important personalities such as artists, politicians, government workers, etc. After the publication of the private chat, protesters gathered through Old San Juan surrounding the governor's Official Residence. After a series of resilient social manifestations demanding the resignation of the governor some important Puerto Rican artists via Facebook and Twitter convened two important demonstrations, rallying for political alteration. This prominent event in the history of Puerto Rico is the most important social movement conformed by millennials' and outraged people who demanded a new political culture based on citizen participation against the political structure established on the island.

Riots during the protest Summer of 2019



Source: Facebook.

1. A brief history of the political and economic crisis

Puerto Rico begins the 21st century with serious problems. The economic prosperity achieved during the industrialization period in the last 50 years had ceased. Likewise, the political stability had turned controversial alongside local government corruption. The current crisis in Puerto Rico began in the year 2007 when the local government implemented austerity policies which included a radical reduction of government jobs in Puerto Rico. The result of this legislation was known as Law 7 and produced the historical layoff of approximately 30,000 workers. In fact, this policy represented the first action to reduce the largest governmental structure in the history of the island. In order to understand the complex political crisis and the failure of the development model, it is very important to discuss the most crucial event during the industrialization process in Puerto Rico throughout the 20th century.

During the 20th century, Puerto Rico became a role model for other Latin American countries. After WWII, US corporations invested in Puerto Rico creating a successful and historical industrialization process on the island. This included industries such as pharmaceutical, textile factories, gas refineries, and agricultural production. According to the author Jorge Duany (2017) in his book *Puerto Rico: What everyone needs to know*, he explains the successful transformation of the economy and the 25-year industrialization process. The rapid nature of this indus-

trialization process was so dramatic that Puerto Rico's working class shifted from predominantly agricultural labor to the modern-day industrial worker. This is a metaphor that represents the reality of Puerto Rico: An island that emulates the "American dream" and lifestyle without consideration to the economic limitation of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. Under the Commonwealth, Puerto Rico is able to make economical agreements and exchanges with only the United States corporations. According to Duany (2017), this industrialization model achieved the following goals:

(1) The light manufacturing/ labor-intensive stage (1948-65), emphasizing the production of textiles, apparel, and leather goods; (2) the heavy manufacturing/ capital-intensive stage (1965-76), based on oil refining and petrochemicals industries; and (3) the high technology/ high finance stage (1976-present), which has favored pharmaceutical, electric, and electric companies. Each of these stages entailed different combinations of capital, labor, and technology, with various implications for the employment of local workers.

Despite all the prosperity achieved in the 1970s, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico started experiencing an economic deceleration. "Annual rates of economic growth declined to an average of 3.3 percent during the 1970s and 2.1 percent during the 1980s" (Duany, 2017). Another important factor is that unemployment rates increased dramatically as a result of the majority of factories closing in Puerto Rico. This was due to the growing costs of labor, transportation, and energy which resulted in a lack of appeal for investors on the island. Another important factor that contributed to the political and economic crisis in Puerto Rico was the cancellation of Section 936. This agreement allowed us corporations to operate in Puerto Rico without paying federal taxes. The Section 936 was attractive for us investors in order to use the island for industrial operations making profitable factories and creating thousands of jobs which created the hard-working middle class in Puerto Rico. Unfortunately, us Congress canceled Section 936 in the 1990s which initiated the economic crisis. According to Duany (2017), another important factor needed to understand the current political crisis is that during the 1990s the local government of Puerto Rico was not able to create jobs in the private sector. Instead, there was an increase in governmental jobs resulting in an oversized corrupt bureaucracy.

2. Governmental dependency and corruption: Additional factors to the crisis

Notably, the local government was not able to create a proper policy to attend the inequality conditions on the island using the Federal Food Stamp policy. In fact, there is a national consensus in Puerto Rico that using federal food stamps has promoted a culture of dependency from the recipients, namely "Los Cuponeros". This stereotype is promoted by the Federal Food Stamp policy, creating a negati-

ve image of the poor people, unemployed, and professionals without job opportunities. In addition, since the 1990s the local governmental of Puerto Rico has continuously accumulated a large debt inclusive of loans and administrative malpractice without a proposal for repayment. This deceleration of the Puerto Rican economy has perpetuated the inequality conditions and the lack of job opportunities for the middleclass, creating a mass migration predominantly to the state of Florida. The historical debt of the government of Puerto Rico is approximately 123 billion USD. Anthropologically, the governmental dependency has been discussed by local intellectuals who argue that high levels of dependency creates a culture of passiveness and lax attitude regarding occupational ethics. On the other hand, we recognize the lack of job opportunities present in the uncertain climate of Puerto Rico.

Puerto Rico begins the second decade of the 21st century with serious and complex structural problems. Another consideration in the collapse of the economy is the historical corruption and negligence of governmental management. Historically, there is a culture based upon political connections which in turn inhibits equal and fair employment. Additionally, there is a lack of politicians with leadership and compromise to preserve the population's needs. Another important case is the high level of corruption and accusations of government workers and officials. More recently, the notorious case including Former Secretary of Public Education was accused of fraud at approximately 15.5 million dollars. Currently, this case is awaiting trial.

In May 2016, Puerto Rican government declared the bankruptcy and the fiscal state of emergency. In June 2016, the US House of Representatives passed a bill called PROMESA (Puerto Rico Oversight Management and Economic Act) to address Puerto Rico's public debt. President Obama approved the new legislation to guarantee that the local government of Puerto Rico was able to pay back the debt. Since 2016 until the present, the Puerto Rican government has a new structure based on shared political decisions regarding the use of administrative funds. The government promoted a large campaign in regard to cutting funds from the government and the local agencies. The government of Puerto Rico must consult every political decision with the Financial Oversight and Management Board since 2016. The Financial Oversight and Management Board is better known in Puerto Rico as *La Junta Fiscal*.

Political decision in Puerto Rico since 2016

Political Structure:

1. Government of Puerto Rico must consult every political decision with Financial Oversight and Management Board.
2. Austerity Policy cutting funds to operate the government.
3. Results: More inequality, no jobs opportunities, mass migration.

Main political parties in Puerto Rico (2020)

- Partido Nuevo Progresista (New Progressive Party): Promotes statehood where Puerto Rico becomes the 51st state.
- Partido Popular Democrático (Popular Democratic Party): Divided into two sectors. Conservatives, who promote the current relationship of the Commonwealth, and liberals, considered as “Autonomista” seeking more political and economic freedoms such as eliminating or modifying the Jones Act and the Merchant Marine Act.
- Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño (Puerto Rican Independence Party): Promotes the independence of Puerto Rico and the internalization of the Puerto Rican’s economy without restrictions from the United States.
- Movimiento Victoria Ciudadana (The Citizens’ Victory Movement): Promotes a new citizen and political agenda composed of candidates from all political ideologies of Puerto Rico.
- Current governor: From July 2019, Wanda Vázquez, PNP Party.
- Resident Commissioner: Jenifer González, PNP Party.
- House of Representatives (51 members, 34 PNP, 16 PPD, 1 PIP)
- Puerto Rico Senate (30 senators, 21 PNP, 7 PPD, 1 PIP, 1 Independent).

Since 2016, the Financial Oversight and Management Board was established in Puerto Rico in order to guarantee the payment of Puerto Rico’s debt. Since the establishment, the board has approved economic and political cuts based on fiscal austerity. The plan is projected until 2026, including deep cuts to the public service budget, health care, pension, and education services in order to repay creditors. In addition to the collapse of the economy and the political crisis in Puerto Rico, we need to explain another important factor that contributed to the social manifestation and the population’s outrage in Puerto Rico in the Summer of 2019.

3. The spark that started the mobilization and the population’s outrage

During 2017, before the impact of hurricane Maria, former governor Rosselló had begun his political attrition and generated frustration in the citizenship of the island, as writer Silverio Pérez (2019) discusses in his essay “942 days”, “the discrepancies between the fiscal control board and the governor were immediately exacerbated, the governor recognized that taking away 3 billion dollars from the government budget as the board proposed would collapse the economy.” The prestigious economist Joseph Stiglitz visited the island before the hurricane where he mentioned that austerity policies and the proposed cuts would cause more damage to the economy of Puerto Rico because they “put the interests of the creditors above those of the economy of the island and the people” (Pérez, 2019).

Author Pérez (2019) discusses that in 2017 former governor Rosselló repealed the commission to audit the debt which was created in the previous adminis-

tration by former governor García Padilla. The commission sought to audit the amount of the debt and above all, validate whether the debt was legitimate with respect to public spending. As a result of this repealed commission, the people of Puerto Rico lost an opportunity to understand the public debt and how the previous administration had contributed to this debt. Another interesting fact, former governor Ricardo Rosselló eliminated this commission due to fear of public retaliation. His father, former governor, Pedro Rosselló's administration in the 1990s contributed enormously to the debt crisis and is considered among the worst and most corrupted administrations in the history of Puerto Rico. Currently, Puerto Rico's population does not have any political structure to audit the debt.

Hurricane Maria (2017)

The impact of Hurricane Maria, in September 2017, is considered the most dangerous and devastating hurricane in the contemporary history of Puerto Rico, killing approximately 4,645 individuals on the island. After the impact of the hurricane, the residents of Puerto Rico have been suffering a slow and complicated rebuilding process.

The rebuilding process in Puerto Rico has been considered as one of the most difficult moments of survival that has been experienced in the history of the island. It should be noted that before the impact, the island was previously going through complications in terms of the economic crisis. The hurricane further complicated the everyday life and the job opportunities of the island's population. The devastation was so catastrophic that general reconstruction of the electric system and water system took approximately 7 months where in the rural and most affected sectors it took between 10 and 12 months later. In 2020, there still remains high levels of devastation. The electrical system that was damaged still causes constant service interruptions in the event of any storm occurrence, affecting the roads and traffic lights.

Old beach pier in Boquerón, Cabo Rojo; Summer 2019.



Picture by Dr. Victor Vazquez.

Rebuilding process controversies

The process of rebuilding energy services, drinking water, and roads took approximately 7 months and in some rural sectors it took one year. This desperate situation has contributed to more deaths after the hurricane. Without a doubt, it has been one of the biggest challenges that Puerto Rican society has suffered since the declaration of bankruptcy in 2016. That is, life in Puerto Rico since 2007 has been experiencing a series of fundamental cuts and services of the government. In addition to this economic climate and the initial impact of the hurricane, the after effects resonate out to the final part of 2017 and the first 6 months of 2018. Therefore, the frustration towards the rebuilding process has been a very important element for the development of a new political awareness to demand from politicians of the island and the members of the Oversight Board to improve the living conditions and finalize the austerity policies implemented in Puerto Rico since 2016. During the reconstruction process, it should be noted that approximately 300,000 Puerto Ricans left the island, changing life radically in Puerto Rico. A society that had been accustomed to certain standard of living that the island

had achieved radically changed to a life without technology, gas service, television, access to roads, and leisure. Other very important aspects, according to the documentary *Blackout Puerto Rico* (PBS, 2018) was the psychological impact on the population which included greater anxiety, depression, and an increase in collective stress.

Other observations during the reconstruction was the meaning and usage of the Puerto Rican flag in many citizens and areas severely affected by the hurricane. Where the flag represented a symbol of resistance and struggle, it united a people seeking recovery. However, the people's tolerance was dwindling as news related to the failure of both FEMA and the local government to address the situation emerged. As the documentary discusses, FEMA had not handled such a chaotic crisis previously in its history. Therefore, logistics and planning and the rapid response procedures failed in Puerto Rico. Another issue about the work of FEMA was during that same year there were two storms in Texas and Florida and a large part of the supplies and materials of this agency had been previously distributed in these states. A frustrating occurrence included the image of president Trump throwing paper towels to the audience, in a press conference in Puerto Rico. Unfortunately, the image of the president throwing paper, and the lack of confrontation by the local politicians, generated a high degree of impotence and discomfort in Puerto Rican society. It is worth mentioning the figure of Carmen Yulín, mayor of San Juan in that time, was the only one who expressed the rebuilding process deserved a better compromise. Where she emphasized the concept of "humanitarian crisis" in order to describe the chaotic situation characterized by a lack of food, medicine, service as well as immense fatalities. In fact, the mayor became a very important and notable figure in representation of Puerto Rico catching the attention of multiple media sources such as CNN, FOX News, and named Person of The Year by *TIME* Magazine. Notably, an iconic image of an interview by Univision Media displaying a t-shirt she wore that said "Nasty" in reference to the difficult conditions of the rebuilding process in Puerto Rico.

Another important situation is the malpractice regarding the role of FEMA during the rebuilding process. FEMA began hiring other companies to expedite the reconstruction and assistance processes. The slow pace of restoring electricity showcased a culture of poor government administration and excessive budget spending within Puerto Rico. Among this situation, the Electric Power Authority that belongs to the broken government of Puerto Rico did not have the administrative capacity to provide effective maintenance and renewal of the island's electricity. On the other hand, the entire budget has been misused to pay the impressive salaries of political officials who lack expertise in electrical infrastructure. This administrative error can be seen during the reconstruction of Puerto Rico, especially with the high degree of deterioration of the power line infrastructure. However, the process continued full of both vicissitudes and administrative complications. For example, FEMA hired small enterprises in order to expedite the reconstruction of roofs and provided provisions for groups such as Bronze Star, Master Group, and Blue Roof. All these companies did not have previous expe-

riences to handle a situation of this magnitude. In addition, there was the contract provided to White Fish Energy, a controversial company that does not have any experience or previous background with this emergency. The amount of the contract was 300 million USD where White Fish Energy did not finish the terms of the contract adding more problems to the rebuilding process. This contract was canceled and became controversial because the company had no experience and was created for this situation with a clear interest in benefiting from the millions that it would receive from the Puerto Rican government. It is for that reason that the rebuilding process of Puerto Rico was full of malpractice and inexperience that affected the entire process.

4. Citizen participation and the growth of the awareness

According to the writer Pedro Reina Pérez (2019) he argues that the extraordinary mobilization of the #Rickyrenuncia movement was generated by the outrage of the people during the crisis and the violence promoted by the local government. For example, violence from the government corruption affected the most vulnerable populations such as workers, middleclass, protesters, single-mothers, retirees, students, and workers from University of Puerto Rico.

On the other hand, this essay demonstrates the dynamics of class struggle and the arrogance that represents the figure of former governor Ricardo Rosselló. The former governor represented the epitome of privilege and wealthy upper class of Puerto Rico's society. This upper class historically live a life without complications unlike the rest of the population of Puerto Rico. The idea of a "silver spoon child" in the United States is synonymous with inherited wealth where it is locally known on the island as a "guaynabito." If you are a "silver spoon child" you live a privileged life with accumulated wealth where there are no issues with acquiring jobs and success. In fact, Rosselló was educated in prestigious universities, he is the son of a governor, and became governor without any previous background in politics. Interestingly, Rosselló was a professor at the University of Puerto Rico where his contract was highly controversial as he did not have all the requirements that this position required. He represented the true reality of Puerto Rico: only the rich and those who belong to the political parties can have access to power and the best employment and development opportunities on the island. Those who do not, unfortunately, have to settle for poorly paid jobs or leave Puerto Rico simply because there are no job opportunities available. The governor Ricardo Rosselló represents the image of the mediocre upper class who belong to political clubs and gain momentum in this system based solely upon political contacts versus merit.

According to the writer Pedro Reina Pérez (2019),

the gradual emergence of Puerto Ricans in the street lived two stages. In the first, it was thought that the bulk of the protesters were university students and trade unionists, who have been protagonists year after year of the marches in defense of the University of Puerto Rico and the celebration of International

Labor Day. Violence against civil rights and contempt for youth who exercised their right to express themselves peacefully were clear. Later, in the march for International Labor Day on May 1, 2017, the demonstration that became violent with vandalism to the building of the popular bank and severe aggressions by the police and private security guards. Finally, the Feminist Collective in Construction conducted an improvised camp in November 2018 to demand that the governor declare an emergency for the femicides that afflict the country. On that occasion, he refused to receive them, and I threw the Shock Force over the protester to clear the camp.

Our observations based upon the previous discussion surrounding Puerto Rico where these historical elements have contributed to the development of a new citizen awareness and political activism in Puerto Rico. We observe how the state has been promoting violence and criminalized poverty as well as those who protest to transform Puerto Rico into a more stable society that promotes inclusion rather than segregation. This is a big achievement where Puerto Rico has been historically considered as lazy and docile without any cultural awareness or class struggle according to Luis Galanes-Valldeljulli's (2018) ethnographic research on Vieques society or the classic culture of poverty by Oscar Lewis (1969).

Starting the 21st century, Puerto Rico experienced the most important social mobilization in its entire history. We refer to the people's struggle against the United States Navy on the island of Vieques. This movement has been considered one of the most important social mobilizations able to force the exit of the US Navy. In 2001, the Vieques activism originated from the years of military practices, pollution to natural resources, poor treatment of the residents of the island and the death of security guard David Sanes due to erroneous navy pilots. However, this scenario of Vieques in sociological terms represented hope of transformation and political awareness as well as maturity of the people to demonstrate how capable they are when they unite to demand change. Anthropologist Luis Galanes in 2017 published an interesting ethnographic study on the survival of inequality and the culture of poverty of Vieques, *Tourism and Language in Vieques: An Ethnography of the Post-Navy Period*; in chapter 3, "Work", he makes a description about the myths of poverty and the stereotyped image of laziness that the politics of the benefactor state has fostered in Puerto Rico. In this study, this anthropologist establishes a historical analysis of how Puerto Ricans are perceived historically as "docile" where the Caribbean subject is lacking a political culture of agency capable of changing their living conditions. Galanes (2017) arrived at the conclusion that the precarious conditions of employment that exist on the island of Vieques and explores the myths about the Puerto Rican poverty discourse of lazy people that has been promoted by the welfare state policy in Puerto Rico. Also, he proposed the importance of Puerto Rico's need to change to a paradigm based on work ethic, citizen participation, decentralization of the government and environmental awareness. We are in agreement with Galanes' (2017) observations. Puerto Rico must change their political paradigm in order to promote a functional society.

5. Publication of the chat and the Summer of 2019

The Summer of 2019 began with negative coverage about instances of corruption in the government of Puerto Rico. One that affected the population of Puerto Rico was the investigations and accusations made by the FBI regarding the Department of Education and its former secretary, Julia Keleher. This secretary was among the most controversial in the cabinet of former governor Rosselló because she carried out the most radical reforms and cuts of the Department of Education further deteriorating the conditions of teacher salaries and a plan to close schools. In addition, the controversy was mentioned and discussed by various members of workers unions where the secretary's salary was 400,000 USD annually in a bankrupt country such as Puerto Rico. This official was arrested and awaits trial in 2020. Another act that alerted the citizens of the eventual collapse of the Rosselló administration were the accusations publicly issued by former secretary of the treasury "Hacienda" and his son who began issuing public comments about the mishandling of Rosselló in administrative terms using the phrase "institutional mafia". This accusation began to generate much disgust in Puerto Rican society. In fact, the FBI still continues to investigate "Hacienda" for alleged illegal contracts and mismanagement of public funds, and other local politicians.

According to the magazine *Puerto Rico Triunfó, The People on the Streets, Democracy in Action* (2019), the indignation of people of Puerto Rico was the result of a series of events that began during the process of rebuilding after hurricane Maria, and the following events:

Labor reform, the cuts in the budget of the University of Puerto Rico, Pension cuts for retirees, Corruption in the rebuilding process and the Whitefish contracts. Mismanagement of the crisis during Hurricane Maria. Corpse crisis at the Institute of Forensic Sciences. Unfulfilled promises about the restoration of the electric service. Fund cuts in municipalities. Millionaire contracts to political investors in the Treasury and Department of Education. Refusal to declare a state of emergency due to gender violence. A WhatsApp chat that was filtered that indicated certain regulations on political process in the Elections Commission. Excessive use of state resources such as Helicopters for transportation of the former governor. Repression and violence by the state and politics towards workers' day demonstrations May 1, 2017 and 2018. Excessive salaries of officials (Publication of the controversial chat of Rosselló).

In July, collective anxiety increased when the local press and the Investigative Journalism Center published the first pages of the controversial chat of former governor Rosselló and his cabinet. In the chat, local press published segments of conversations held by former governor Rosselló and the members of his cabinet using violent, misogynist language while mocking artistic figures and the victims of hurricane Maria. As discussed in the article "Using the anthropological concept of core cultural values to understand the Puerto Rican 2019 Summer protest" by

Carlos G. García-Quijano and Hilda Lloréns (2019), they mention the publication of this chat was an offense and a violation of Puerto Rico's cultural core values such as respect, compassion and humility. "The leaked chat shows repeated violations of respect for woman the poor, and the dead among others." Interestingly, these authors argue that the spontaneity of the protests, the re-use of insults and expletives by the activists were a response to the lack of cultural respect and integrity from these officials. For example, in the chat, Rosselló used the word whore ("puta"), he also mocked artists known as Ricky Martin for their sexual orientation, and he made fun of Puerto Rican personalities such as recently deceased Carlos Gallisá, a defender of the independence movement. They also made fun of other personalities such as the mayor of San Juan and members of his own party (Carlos G. García-Quijano and Hilda Lloréns, 2019).

The Fortaleza in Old San Juan is a historical building which has served as the governor's Main Residence. During the Summer protest in 2019, it was an important meeting point for the protesters





Pictures by Dr. Victor Vazquez.

6. Artistic originality of protests and the utilization of agency

The originality and spontaneity of the protests are reflective of the passionate Puerto Rican culture. The protests became a spontaneous and artistic performance drawing international attention. For instance, throughout the #Rickyrenuncia movement, interesting protests showcased flamboyant ways to demand the resignation. Artistic expressions such as public dances, concerts, people practicing yoga, people dancing salsa as if it was a festival. The streets of Old San Juan became scenarios of spontaneous performances including “reggaetonero” singers, Ricky Martin performance, motorcycle and bicycle caravans, and most notably, a reggaeton dance called “Perreo combativo”. The “Perreo combativo” is something that interests us as researchers because reggaeton music is historically the most popular music for the younger generation in Puerto Rico. The fact that the protestors utilized reggaeton as an instrument of agency is something remarkable in Puerto Rican society. The originality of this protest represents the youth’s outrage in order to change the political oppression and demand the resignation of the governor. The general protests became a carnival-like celebration including protestors who camped in the streets of Old San Juan. Unfortunately, at night, it became a warzone after 10 PM when the police declared the protests unlawful. Protesters

were arrested and wounded by the police which sparked riots including fires in trash cans throughout the streets of Old San Juan. Police performance has been argued by Puerto Rican activist as a violation of human rights guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States.

This movement was able to agglomerate all sectors of Puerto Rican society that had previously expressed its disagreements with the actions of the Puerto Rican government in the past 10 years. Sectors such as feminists, university students of the UPR, workers unions, religious, retirees, members of the LGBTQ community, unemployed professionals, youth without work, artists and media personalities, etc. This demonstration has been one of the most abundant and capable of stopping the country and was organized by the artists Ricky Martin, Bad Bunny and Residente through social media, especially Facebook and Twitter, causing #RickyRenuncia to trend on these platforms. There are four important dates before the ex-governor's resignation. The one in which the publication of 889 pages of the private chat on July 13th, 2019 initiated a series of demonstrations and events that led to the resignation process. Secondly, on July 14th, 2019 was the first mass protest in Old San Juan. Thirdly, July 17th, 2019 was the gigantic march called by Residente, Bad Bunny and Ricky Martin where there was an estimated 700,000 people in San Juan. Every manifestation and protest were countered with violence from the government via teargas. Lastly, on July 24th, 2019 the expected announcement of the resignation of governor Rosselló was achieved, it was televised, and there was a burst of jubilation and triumph in the streets of Old San Juan. This unity and celebration were distinctive and never observed in the history of Puerto Rico because for the first time in its history, Puerto Rican youth defined this movement providing an identity to represent all ideologies of Puerto Rican society. If it was not for the youth, the success of this social movement and the resignation of the former governor would not have happened.

7. Important achievements and conclusions

The success of the #Rickyrenuncia movement constitutes a new hope in terms of observing a new population with agency, capable of transforming the island's policy. In reference to the concept of agency it is defined as "the active role that individuals play in interpreting, using, making, and remaking culture" (Conrad Phillip Kottak, & Kathryn A. Kozaitis, 2012). The #Rickyrenuncia movement was a spontaneous and necessary reaction to enhance cultural awareness, especially integrating the youth to participate as a new agent of social change in Puerto Rico.

On the other hand, citizen participation and political activism continues in Puerto Rico. The chat managed to develop this new culture of mobilization, particularly of young people historically mistreated by power structures. Denying employment and development opportunities promoted a dependency on federal government aid to resolve inequality in Puerto Rico. The chat illuminated the stratification of Puerto Rican society in the past 50 years, especially the consolidation

of a caste system dominated by a powerful, privileged, and politicized social class, mainly of the New Progressive Party. As Pedro Reina Pérez (2019) mentions,

There is little talk about this, but Puerto Rico is, in effect, a caste society, twelve last names and skin color determine the access to power. Objectively, the island is in the third place with the greatest economic inequality among families. The result of this gap is observed in all areas, but particularly in business and politics, certain schools, churches, and luxury developments demarcate a geography of privilege. Who does not have these membership cards, will have the difficult way to advance his career or his life with ease? Whoever owns them, obtains some immunity from the daily tribulations that others experience and also some impunity (p. 89).

In the arrogance of the chat, we observe sexist language, criminalization of poverty, the constant mockery of the poor, and the mockery of the 4,645 dead from hurricane Maria. This presented the true face of the former governor and his former cabinet members where this chat represents the privileged class that live isolated lives without any sense of ethics and social commitment to the people of Puerto Rico. It is not the first time that the state belonging to the privileged class mock and criminalize the poor people in Puerto Rico. As I discuss in my doctoral thesis project, "Social policy and poverty in Puerto Rico" (Vázquez, 2012), I ethnographically analyzed the community struggle and citizen participation efforts of a group of residents from a poor community of the Municipio of Guaynabo named "Los Filtros" (2006-2012). In this struggle, residents carried out a series of citizen participation acts to avoid forced eviction and ill-intentioned gentrification by the Guaynabo government which promoted through these actions more class disparity and discrimination against the poor in Puerto Rico.

The resignation of governor Rosselló in the Summer of 2019 will remain in recent history as an act of unity and solidarity of all sectors socially, politically, and economically divided in Puerto Rico. This new image of a militant Puerto Rican society, with agency and with a greater awareness of their political structures that oppress them, deserve to be thought of and understood as the struggle of the subordinate. Referring to the theoretical analysis presented by the feminist writer Gayatri Spivack (1988) "Can the subaltern speak?", Antonio Gramsci's concept of "subaltern" is used to include and analyze Marxist thinking in terms of understanding the historical segregation of oppressed and voiceless groups including the proletariat, women, peasants, immigrants, and tribal or indigenous groups. The objective pursued by the concept is to "deconstruct the subaltern as a monolithic category in which an identity and unitary consciousness of the subject is presumed." The idea of the subordinate subject, therefore, aims not only to show the internal diversity of marginalized groups, but also to show a new vision of their conscience (Vázquez, 2012). In this sense, the #Rickyrenuncia movement is considered as the new voice of the Puerto Rican subordinates composed of diverse groups with diverse political, economic, and social actors and interests.

Protesters gathered in front of The Capitol of Puerto Rico building in Old San Juan using the Puerto Rican flag as a political symbol of the protest. Another protester tries to take off the United States flag during the Summer protest in 2019





Pictures by Dr. Victor Vazquez.

Finally, it is in our analysis to understand what the direction of the #Rickyrenuncia movement will be. Consequently, there is a new political culture in Puerto Rico. Since the resignation, a more active and critical Puerto Rican society against the State is observed. As a result of this movement, community assemblies were created with the aim of continuing citizen education and fostering a new culture of participation and political activism. Puerto Rico is no longer the same lazy or docile population described in previous anthropological research conducted during the 1960s. From now on, this population is less tolerant of corruption and refuse the corrupt agenda of the privileged class with access to political power. A much more educated population is observed in terms of the economic and political limitations of the Commonwealth, and seeks a new political agenda that promotes new strategies to solve the crisis and to audit the government's historical debt. This is a new population that rejects austerity measures promoted by the Oversight Board and budget reductions in government services. Seeing a more active society with new social actors discussing political injustices, crisis, debt, corruption, and inequality is a collective maturity of Puerto Rico that historically has been immersed in a welfare-culture which prevented the development of citizen participation. This new citizen consciousness is undoubtedly considered a great achievement of the #Rickyrenuncia movement and, above all, the effect it may have on the upcoming elections and the political future of Puerto Rico.

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