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**Ni pa' Buitres, ni Corruptos:
[Lack of] Democratic Legitimacy and the
Anti-Austerity Social Movement of Puerto Rico**

“¡Ni pa' Buitres, ni Corruptos! Puerto Rico es Nuestro y Punto.”
(Neither for Vultures, nor Corrupt [Politicians]! Puerto Rico is Ours, Period.)

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Abstract

Since 2006, the Puerto Rican debt crisis has severely crippled the local economy, causing politicians to implement austerity — or structural adjustment reforms — to the already outdated economic and development model of Puerto Rico. Nevertheless, the Anti-Austerity Social Movement of Puerto Rico did not gain strength or wide-spread popularity until the 2016 elections. This leads me to ask the following question: what is motivating Puerto Ricans into anti-austerity street demonstrations? Throughout this Senior Thesis, I will provide evidence that exposes a parallel crisis of democratic legitimacy in Puerto Rico and how democratic illegitimacy has fueled and developed the Puerto Rican Anti-Austerity Social Movement. Utilizing Vivien A. Schmidt's approach to democratic legitimacy, I propose a new understanding of anti-austerity protests as the mobilization of people who consider the current state of democracy insufficient to effectively oppose austerity.

Key words: austerity, anti-austerity social movements, democratic legitimacy, political participation, debt crisis, Puerto Rico

Resumen

Desde el año 2006, la crisis de la deuda en Puerto Rico ha paralizado severamente la economía local, lo que ha motivado a los políticos a implementar austeridad, o reformas de ajuste estructural, al ya deteriorado modelo económico y de desarrollo del archipiélago. Sin embargo, el Movimiento Social de Anti-Austeridad en Puerto Rico no ganó fuerza ni popularidad a nivel isla hasta las elecciones de 2016. Esto me lleva a hacer la siguiente pregunta: ¿qué está motivando a los puertorriqueños y a las puertorriqueñas a organizar y participar en manifestaciones callejeras contra la austeridad? A lo largo de esta Tesis, presentaré evidencia que expone una crisis paralela de legitimidad democrática en Puerto Rico y cómo ésta ha alimentado y desarrollado el Movimiento Social de Anti-Austeridad Puertorriqueño. Utilizando el marco teórico que la politóloga estadounidense Vivien A. Schmidt ofrece sobre la legitimidad democrática, propongo una nueva comprensión de las protestas contra la austeridad como movilizaciones de personas que consideran que el estado actual de la democracia es insuficiente para oponerse efectivamente a la austeridad.

Palabras clave: austeridad, movimientos sociales de anti-austeridad, legitimidad democrática, participación política, crisis de la deuda, Puerto Rico

Porque ya son más de 500 años de yugo...
por un Puerto Rico libre, soberano, socialista y feminista.
A mi familia y a mi patria.

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Introduction

¡Lucha Sí, Entrega No!

On the evening of June 29, 2016, dozens of Puerto Ricans picketed in front of the Federal Tribunal of San Juan, Puerto Rico against PROMESA — or The Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act — a bill proposed in the United States Congress to address Puerto Rico’s historical \$70 billion debt.¹ While angrily chanting “PROMESA es pobreza” (PROMESA is poverty) and “Junta de Control Fiscal, dictadura colonial” (Fiscal Control Board, colonial dictatorship), the protesters received the news that President Obama had signed the Bill, creating the Fiscal Oversight Management Board. The picketing quickly turned into a quiet protest as many were mourning what appeared to be a lost battle to austerity in the archipelago. Although the majority of the protest’s participants left the Tribunal after this event, about a dozen decided to stay and begin the first occupation of federal territory in the history of Puerto Rico.²

The occupying protesters became known as *Campamento Contra La Junta*, or ‘CCLJ.’ This occupation rapidly became national news, not only because of its novelty, but also because hundreds of people started to congregate daily in rejection of *La Junta* and the debt crisis. From hosting festivals and protests to scheduling weekly workshops with lawyers and academics about civil disobedience, the activists did everything they could to voice their discontent with the federal decision. They found creative and horizontal ways to constantly move forward with their demands, inviting the general public to movie nights and even starting agroecological orchards on the sidewalks of the Tribunal. After the foundation of CCLJ, many other activist groups were founded with the goal of auditing the public debt, outlawing *La Junta*, and finding “los culpables de la crisis”: those who are guilty of the crisis.

¹ “Puerto Rico: Factors Contributing to the Debt Crisis and Potential Federal Actions to Address Them,” *US Government Accountability Office*, 2018.

² Campamento Contra La Junta. “¿Quiénes somos?” WordPress.
<https://campamentocontralajunta.wordpress.com/somos/> Accessed October 31, 2019.

Austerity policies, or the reduction of government spending through “large expenditure cuts, significant tax increases, and deep structural reforms,” recently intensified after the creation of *La Junta*.³ These austerity policies bring negative consequences for the Puerto Rican people, particularly those who are part of the poor and working class. Because austerity is the process of downsizing the public sector in order to augment public revenue, the government of Puerto Rico has focused on the closure of hundreds of public schools and dramatically reducing the number of public employees since 2006. Austerity hurts those in already disadvantage socioeconomic conditions because it shrinks the funding for development and outreach programs, thus worsening poverty levels. This counterproductive agenda — created with the purpose of paying back a governmental debt that many would argue is immoral unfair, and possibly even illegal — expands the gap between the rich and the poor.

Consequently, members of the LGBT community, feminists, students, environmentalists, scholars, and even politicians have increasingly engaged in protests — both nonviolent and violent — in order to articulate their opposition to these austerity policies, particularly against the institution of the PROMESA Law and its Board. The political turmoil around the debt crisis, which is driven by people of many different ages and ideologies, represents an Anti-Austerity Social Movement in Puerto Rico that is over a decade-long. By Anti-Austerity Movement, I refer to the people’s collective rejection of the government’s policy of downsizing the public sector, and the economic repercussions such measurements have on the people. As Grasso and Giugni point out in their essay, “Anti-Austerity Movements: Old Wine in New Vessels?”:

Economic crisis may provide the political space and motivations for the mobilization of those seeking to criticize what are perceived to be unjust patterns of wealth

³ Nydia M. Velázquez, “A Discussion on the Future of Puerto Rico’s Economy Compiled Statements,” 2017.

distribution in advanced capitalist democracies and to draw attention to the fact that not all sections of society bear the costs of economic crisis evenly.⁴

The economic crisis in Puerto Rico started in 2006, but anti-austerity protests began years later and strongly intensified after almost a decade. This leads me to ask, **“what is motivating Puerto Ricans into anti-austerity street demonstrations?”** Here, I refer to Van Stekelenburg et al.’s conceptualization of street demonstrations as “collective gatherings in a public space whose aim it is to exert political, social, and/or cultural influence on authorities, public opinion, and participants through the disciplined and peaceful expression of an opinion or demand.”⁵ In the following chapters, I will provide evidence to support the following statement: the debt crisis is not the sole factor enabling collective action in Puerto Rico. Instead, I argue that the simultaneous crisis of democratic legitimacy has fueled and advanced the Puerto Rican Anti-Austerity Social Movement. Utilizing Vivien A. Schmidt’s approach to democratic legitimacy, I propose a new understanding of anti-austerity protests as the mobilizations of people who consider the current state of democracy insufficient to effectively oppose austerity. For them, austerity is harmful because it is an unjust attack on the lives of those who did not consent or even know about how much money was being borrowed and how it was handled.

Hypotheses

First and foremost, I argue that the Puerto Rican debt crisis has unleashed an equal democratic crisis as public opinion about government responsiveness and effectiveness continues deteriorating, thereby prompting the people to reject representative democracy as a whole. The rejection of representative democracy manifests in a decrease in voter turnout and the spread of horizontalism across activist groups. Secondly, I suggest that the biggest crisis

⁴ Maria Grasso and Marco Giugni, “Anti-Austerity Movements: Old Wine in New Vessels?,” *Political Science Association (SISP)*, 2013, 1–19.

⁵ Jacquelyn Van Stekelenburg et al., “Contextualizing Contestation: Framework, Design, and Data,” *Mobilization* 17, no. 3 (2012): 249–62.

in Puerto Rico right now is a political crisis. Austerity policies have inadvertently exposed the lack of power and agency that the Puerto Rican people have to oppose the establishment of austerity. As a result of these dual crises, Puerto Ricans have organized within multi-sectoral Anti-Austerity collectives in order to reclaim power, not only in the streets, but in the polls as well.

In this thesis, I will discuss three manifestations of the Anti-Austerity Social Movement of Puerto Rico (henceforth AASM): changes in voting behavior, the rise of a political realignment, and the increase of anti-austerity protests. Primarily, I hypothesize that the debt crisis has weakened democratic legitimacy in Puerto Rico. Public perceptions of democratic illegitimacy therefore make people more likely to seek alternative forms of democracy in order to cope and counteract austerity. In other words, I suggest that the debt crisis alone is not the main cause of the AASM as it is rather a sense of democratic illegitimacy that motivates people to organize street demonstrations.

The independent variable of my research is the debt crisis and austerity, while the dependent variable is democratic legitimacy and anti-austerity protests. I hypothesize a negative relationship between the debt crisis and democratic legitimacy, meaning that the development of the debt crisis has diminished the public's opinion of its democracy's validity. Secondly, I expect to encounter a positive relationship between the increasing rejection of the current state of democracy and the increase of anti-austerity protests and public unrest. The null hypothesis would be finding no relationship between my independent and dependent variables.

The democratic crisis has motivated Puerto Ricans to condemn traditional political parties, which are perceived as the primary embodiment of illegitimacy and corruption, and to create and endorse new political parties through people's assemblies. Others have simply chosen purposive nonvoting. Additionally, I hypothesize that Puerto Ricans have favored

anti-austerity protesting as a supplement of their voting behavior in order to restore legitimacy and achieve political power. Given the lack of academic research on Puerto Rico's political environment, this thesis will provide an innovative addition to the study of the intersections between politics and economics, paying closer attention to the people than to the political elites.

Literature Review and Analytical Framework

The Grievance Theory was popularized as early as the 1960s to guide the study of protests to consider how a person's absolute or relative deprivation would enable them into collective action. Although the rise of other theories of social movements diminished support for Grievance Theory, the resurgence of anti-austerity protests in the twentieth century caught the attention of scholars such as political scientists Maria Grasso and Marco Giugni. In 2013, Grasso and Giugni published research about anti-austerity movements across Western Europe, where they suggest that Grievance Theory best explains political participation (i.e. protests) during and after the Great Recession.⁶ Grasso and Giugni argue that "austerity movements rather support grievance theory and point to the fundamental importance of context for protest," because, while people can vote every few years and join political parties, they resort to protests to better express their grievance with their current economic crisis.

Although they recognized that grievance is a common emotion among protestors, scholars in the 1970s noticed that some people chose to not protest, even when they were experiencing significant levels of grievance and/or relative deprivation. This put a hole in Grievance Theory's logic. In order to better analyze what really makes people protest, Efficacy Theory was developed to describe the personal perception that determines the extent to which one's political action could effectively forward one's political objectives. Political scientists have not agreed on this issue, however. On one hand, Gadi Wolfsfeld found in his 1986 research, "those most likely to be mobilized are those who believe that protest is both necessary and possible."⁷ On the other hand, in the case of anti-austerity protests, Wolfgang

⁶ Grasso and Giugni, "Anti-Austerity Movements: Old Wine in New Vessels?"

⁷ Gadi Wolfsfeld, "Political Action Repertoires: The Role of Efficacy," *Comparative Political Studies* 19, no. 1 (1986): 104–29.

Rüdiger and Georgios Karyotis found that individuals who join such demonstrations for the first time present lower levels of perceived efficacy than those who are frequent attenders.⁸

In 2010, Russell Dalton, Alix Van Sickle, and Steven Weldon provided evidence to support the Political Opportunity Structure (POS) approach, derived from the Efficacy Theory, which considers the potential institutional structures that facilitate or debilitate protest activity.⁹ On one hand, democratic societies welcome protests as another legitimate form of political participation. On the other hand, the POS approach also views restrictive political systems as the precursors of protests, given the fact that citizens are not allowed to make demands through "conventional" channels. Dalton et al. state that narrow political options to make demands without repercussions may lead to individuals accumulating dissatisfaction and then organizing to protest. They find that disenfranchisement from governmental bodies is not merely the cause of protest; instead, the root of protesting is economic and developmental circumstances that offer (or deny) people the necessary resources to join protests.

Around the same time that Efficacy Theorists were researching their framework, European sociologists noticed some level of novelty in recent social movements, especially regarding their main purposes. The New Social Movement Theory (NSM) refers to the wave of social movements that arose during the 1970s, which sought to blur the lines between the 'public' and the 'private' without intending to revolutionize the entire political system. NSM appear to have solidarity as an objective, centering the movement's goals on group identity (race, gender, sex, age) and direct action. By refusing "to reproduce the mechanisms of control and manipulation" that 'old social movements' exposed (i.e. strict leadership with a

⁸ Wolfgang Rüdiger and Georgios Karyotis, "Beyond the Usual Suspects? New Participants in Anti-Austerity Protests in Greece," *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 18, no. 3 (2013): 313–30, <https://doi.org/10.17813/mai.18.3.r3377266074133w5>.

⁹ Russell Dalton, Alix Van Sickle, and Steven Weldon, "The Individual-Institutional Nexus of Protest Behaviour," *British Journal of Political Science* 40, no. 1 (2010): 51–73, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S000712340999038X>.

specific sector of the population being targeted), Alberto Melucci described NMS as anti-hierarchical and anti-authoritarian.¹⁰ If NSM theory were to be applied to anti-austerity protests, one could assume that today's activists are not attempting to attack the status quo, but looking to reform it. However, in the 2013 article titled "European Anti-Austerity Protests," social scientists empirically interrogate whether the NSM approach is valid when studying European anti-austerity movements. Abby Peterson et al. found that it is necessary to analyze Anti-austerity protests by taking into account the 'traditional' characteristics associated with 'old' social movements, since they did not find statistically significant differences between types of anti-austerity. For example:

Differences between the modes of activism among European anti-austerity protests lie in their participant profiles and their organization, not within the discontent of their participants or their left political leanings. Only the former aspect resonates with the classic 'old/new' distinction among social movements. [...] In a sense one could also speak of an alliance between the 'new' and 'old' social movements, but when confronted with empirical reality this distinction tends to come out as overly simplistic.¹¹

In the case of the debt crisis in Argentina, sociologist Marina Sitrin introduced the term *horizontalidad* to describe the approaches which social movements have organized around in their anti-austerity activism. Translated into English as horizontalism, the term refers to the "democratic communication on a level plane [which] involves — or at least intentionally strives towards — non-hierarchical and anti-authoritarian creation rather than reaction. It is a break with vertical ways of organizing and relating."¹² In other words, horizontalism becomes the inadvertent byproduct of a debt crisis, which is consequently a democratic crisis. Similarly, Sitrin points out that the lack of government responsiveness as well as repression of protests led to the anti-austerity social movement in Greece, which

¹⁰ Alberto Melucci, "The New Social Movements: A Theoretical Approach," *Social Science Information* 19, no. 2 (1980): 199–226, <https://doi.org/10.1177/053901848001900201>.

¹¹ Abby Peterson, Mattias Wahlström, and Magnus Wennerhag, "European Anti-Austerity Protests – Beyond 'Old' and 'New' Social Movements?," *Acta Sociologica (United Kingdom)* 58, no. 4 (2015): 14, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0001699315605622>.

¹² Marina Sitrin, ed., *Horizontalism: Voices of Popular Power in Argentina* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2006).

disregarded “traditional” forms of protesting and instead hosted people’s assemblies in a direct democratic way.¹³ Practicing horizontalism became a tool to resist austerity throughout social movements as the people, Sitrin argues, realized that the current state of democracy was not answering to their demands. Additionally, Argentinian social movements manifested strong rejection of political parties and the hierarchy they represented. Horizontalism, therefore, enables the refusal of a top-down understanding on “how to do” politics:

It is a rejection of imposed values, ideas and decisions. Emergent is active participation, sometimes outside formal government organizations, sometimes with some relationship to them. At the heart of this rejection and various levels of participation lies the question of how the movement avoids dictation from above.¹⁴

Using Latin America as a case study, Jon Shefner et al. propose a World-System Theory (WST) of social movements, defining hardships as a crucial variable that shapes the system of socioeconomic and power inequalities. WST, they argue, draws attention to the political consequences of economic hardships endured by individuals and collectives across regions and strata. Therefore, the researchers argue that anti-austerity policies are anti-systemic, and — to study this type of social movement — it is imperative to examine the material hardships resulting from short-term economic structural adjustment policies.¹⁵ This theory, according to Donatella della Porta, expects social movements to upsurge as capitalist exploitation persists, since it is the main goal of anti-systemic and anti-austerity protests to resist neoliberalism.¹⁶ Similarly, political sociologist Valentine M. Moghadam points out that the world-system impacts if and when protest emergence, political participation, the generation of grievances, the creation and strengthening of networks, and the overall

¹³ Marina Sitrin and Dario Azzellini, “Greece,” in *They Can’t Represent Us! Reinventing Democracy from Greece to Occupy* (London, UK: Verso, 2014), 69.

¹⁴ Marina Sitrin, “Horizontalidad,” in *Everyday Revolutions : Horizontalism and Autonomy in Argentina*, 2012, 61–82, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107415324.004>.

¹⁵ Jon Shefner, Aaron Rowland, and George Pasdirtz, “Austerity and Anti-Systemic Protest: Bringing Hardships Back In,” *Journal of World-Systems Research* 21, no. 2 (2015): 540–64, <https://doi.org/10.5195/JWSR.1>.

¹⁶ Donatella della Porta, “Late Neoliberalism and its Discontents: An Introduction,” in *Late Neoliberalism and its Discontents in the Economic Crisis: Comparing Social Movements in the European Periphery*, ed. Donatella Della Porta, Massimiliano Andretta, Tiago Fernandes, Francis O’Connor, Eduardo Romanos, Markos Vogiatzoglou (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 1–38.

consequences of networks. These factors differ depending on the world-system itself, as hegemonic countries present different types of social movements than semi-peripheral and peripheral nations.¹⁷

In comparison to Jon Shefner's argument, Cristina Flesher Fominaya disagrees that hardships are the main determinant in mobilization, although she acknowledges that hardships are a pivotal factor for anti-austerity protests. She explains that anti-austerity social movements are not simply struggling against austerity; they are also disrupting the "neoliberal capitalist globalization and illegitimate, ineffective representative democracy."¹⁸ Most importantly, anti-austerity protests have framed the very institution of democracy as an opposite to austerity and neoliberalism, which explains why movements across Europe and Latin America demand a real or, at least, a better democratic society. Furthering a similar argument, Mark Purcell describes neoliberalism as the producer of democratic deficits where only counter-hegemonic movements can effectively "struggle against those interests in an effort to radically transform neoliberal hegemony."¹⁹ Because of this, Flesher Fominaya proposes that anti-austerity social movements should be considered counter-hegemonic manifestations that oppose both economic and political crises in Europe, since protestors view these crises as having an inherent mutualistic relationship.

Taking all of this into consideration, democratic legitimacy appears to be central in anti-austerity protests. The idea of democratic legitimacy can be defined with three main concepts: input, output, and throughput legitimacy. Firstly, Roland Axtmann considers democratic legitimacy to be grounded in the right and lawful "procedure that allows for the

¹⁷ Valentine M. Moghadam, *Globalization and Social Movements: Islamism, Feminism, and the Global Justice Movement*, (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2013), 1-31.

¹⁸ Cristina Flesher Fominaya, "European Anti-Austerity and pro-Democracy Protests in the Wake of the Global Financial Crisis," *Social Movement Studies* 16, no. 1 (2017): 2, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2016.1256193>.

¹⁹ Mark Purcell, "Resisting Neoliberalization: Communicative Planning or Counter-Hegemonic Movements?," *Planning Theory* 8, no. 2 (2009): 140–65, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1473095209102232>.

participation of citizens in the generation of those laws to which they are subjected.”²⁰

Political scientist Vivien A. Schmidt introduced the concept of throughput legitimacy within democratic legitimacy, defining it as the “efficacy of the decision-making, the accountability of those engaged in making the decisions, the transparency of the information, and the processes’ inclusiveness and openness to consultation with the interest groups of ‘civil society.’”²¹ Comparatively, Schmidt defines the input and output legitimacy as the public’s acceptance that government authorities are directed ‘by the people’ and work ‘for the people,’ respectively. In relation to the debt crisis, democratic legitimacy is particularly relevant because, as political scientist Huw Macartney highlights on his book, *The Debt Crisis and European Democratic Legitimacy*:

...the political crisis will not easily dissipate if the economic problems are resolved, since the very solutions proposed are themselves exacerbating the political crisis; this also means that the substance of the policies does indeed matter, and not simply the processes by which decisions are made.²²

²⁰ Roland Axtmann, “Global Governance, Constitutionalism and Democracy,” in *Democracy and Crisis: Democratizing Governance in the Twenty First Century*, ed. Benjamin Isakhan and Steven Slaughter (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 189-208.

²¹ Vivien A. Schmidt, “Forgotten Democratic Legitimacy: ‘Governing by the Rules’ and ‘Ruling by the Numbers,’” in *The Future of the Euro*, ed. Mark Blyth and Matthias Matthijs (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), 369, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107415324.004>.

²² Huw Macartney, “Introduction,” in *The Debt Crisis and European Democratic Legitimacy*, (, 2013, <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137298010>.

Research Methods and Design

Because many different types of protests happen often in Puerto Rico, I will only study those instances that are related to austerity policies and the debt crisis, referring to them as the Anti-Austerity Social Movement of Puerto Rico (AASM). Even though this is not one homogenous group, anti-austerity protests tend to be deeply multisectoral as unionized workers, the University of Puerto Rico (UPR) student movement, feminist collectivities, and environmental groups often convoke their members to participate. Because of this, it is common to find online flyers with different groups inviting diverse sectors to join the same protest.

As Rudolf Heberle defines, a social movement is “a collective ready for action by which some kind of change is to be achieved, some innovation to be made, or a previous condition to be restored.”²³ Anti-austerity social movements, specifically, emerge with the precise purpose of strengthening public resistance to ‘greedy capitalism’: “counter-movements spontaneously emerge in response to pushes towards free market, defending a moral economy that recognizes some modicum of social protection.”²⁴ The AASM demonstrates this spontaneity with how quickly protests organize after the introduction and/or implementation of austerity policies. To clarify, this phenomenon does not necessarily indicate that anti-austerity movements have an absence of substantial solutions or that there is a lack of organization towards a pragmatic goal.

Taking into consideration how reactive anti-austerity movements are, I plan to trace political protests directly and indirectly related to the debt crisis, beginning with the year 2006 when austerity measurements started being explicitly executed. Likewise, using

²³ Rudolf Heberle, “Observations on the Sociology of Social Movements,” *American Sociological Review* 14, 3 (1949): 346-357. www.jstor.org/stable/2086882.

²⁴ Donatella della Porta, “Late Neoliberalism and Its Discontents: An Introduction,” in *Late Neoliberalism and Its Discontents in the Economic Crisis: Comparing Social Movements in the European Periphery*, ed. Donatella della Porta, Massimiliano Andretta, et al. (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 2.

newspapers and social media, I will attempt to gauge if the number of anti-austerity protests have indeed increased across those years. I will conduct semiformal (in-person and over the phone) interviews with activists and leaders of anti-austerity groups to identify their viewpoints regarding political participation and its relationship with the debt crisis. Finally, I will draw from existing scholarly literature to better support my thesis statement.

Breve Economic History

To better understand the democratic crisis of Puerto Rico, it is imperative to consider the relationship that the archipelago has with the United States. After signing the Treaty of Paris of 1898, Spain granted the archipelago of Puerto Rico, among other territories, to the United States. Since the early 1900s, the political environment of Puerto Rico was characterized by a strong presence of US forces across government and military institutions, with the explicit purpose of forcing a process of Americanization on the local population. Despite refusing to resolve the political status of Puerto Rico, the US government imposed US citizenship on all Puerto Ricans with the Jones Act of 1917.²⁵²⁶ In the year 1950, the US Congress passed Public Law 600, allowing Puerto Ricans to draft a constitution, which two years later became the Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico (ELA), literally meaning a Free-Associated State.²⁷ However, known in English as the “Commonwealth,” this new status does not clarify or delimit US legal, military, and constitutional powers in Puerto Rico, nor does it fully determine the political status of the island.²⁸

During the first half of the twentieth century, the people of Puerto Rico did not have much political influence given the fact that most of the policymaking in the Commonwealth was dominated by the US federal government and the influence of sugar corporations. The Merchant Marine Act of 1920, also known as the Leyes de Cabotaje (Cabotage Laws), “banned foreign-flagged ships from carrying cargo between Puerto Rico and US ports. [...] it has undermined Puerto Rico’s ability to diversify its economy by becoming a transshipment

²⁵ “Puerto Rico belongs to the United States, but it is not the United States, nor a part of the United States.” See “Foraker Act of 1900” *US Congress* (1900).

²⁶ “Jones Act of 1917” (1917).

²⁷ Pedro Caban, “Colonialism In Puerto Rico,” *Latin American, Caribbean, and U.S. Latino Studies Faculty Scholarship* 19 (2005): 516–20, http://scholarsarchive.library.albany.edu/lacs_fac_scholarhttp://scholarsarchive.library.albany.edu/lacs_fac_scholar/19.

²⁸ “Puerto Rico in Crisis: Timeline” (New York), accessed September 13, 2019, https://centropu.hunter.cuny.edu/sites/default/files/PDF_Publications/Puerto-Rico-Crisis-Timeline-2017.pdf.

hub.”²⁹ Because of this lack of political and economic power, Puerto Rico was deeply impoverished, with high levels of unemployment, starvation, and diseases.³⁰ But after the creation of the ELA and the 1960s New Deal, the circumstances started to shift.

The New Deal and the local program “Operation Bootstrap” focused on attracting hundreds of US corporations to Puerto Rico with tax incentives, in order to transform the agriculture-based economy into a manufacturing one. Operation Bootstrap also encouraged the privatization of some government enterprises.³¹ However, this program shrunk employment opportunities across the country “in the context of a rapidly increasing population and increasing spatial mobility of labor associated with the decline of agriculture and increase in manufacturing activity.”³²

In 1976, the establishment of Section 936 of the International Revenue Code continued the economic strategy of the New Deal, requesting foreign (USA) corporations to invest in Puerto Rico without having to pay federal taxes. Section 936 was successful in its task, but President Clinton repealed it in 1996, even though then-governor Rafael Hernández Colón insisted that losing such benefits “while facing increased competition with the enactment of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)... could lead to the total collapse of the island’s economy.”³³ The repeal of 936 came to effect in 2006, the very same year the debt crisis gained prominence.

The United States Government Accountability Office highlighted in a 2006 report that Puerto Rico had been experiencing a debilitating fiscal situation for more than a decade,

²⁹ José I. Fusté, “Repeating Islands of Debt: Historicizing the Transcolonial Relationality of Puerto Rico’s Economic Crisis,” *Radical History Review*, no. 128 (2017): 91–119, <https://doi.org/10.1215/01636545-3857830>.

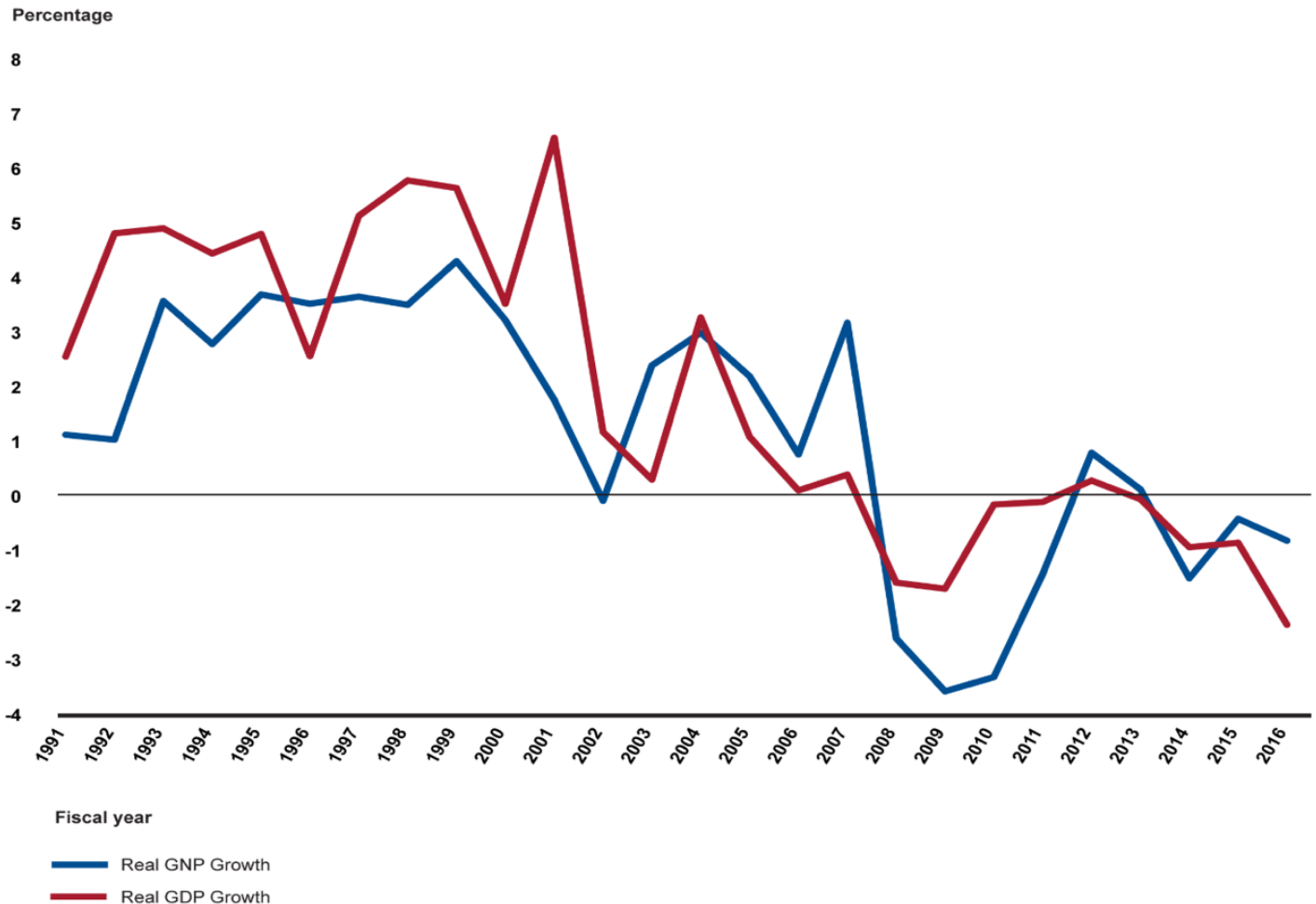
³⁰ Marc D. Joffe and Jesse Martínez, “Origins of the Puerto Rico Fiscal Crisis” (Arlington, Virginia, 2016), <https://www.mercatus.org/system/files/Joffe-Puerto-Rico-Fiscal-Crisis-v1.pdf>.

³¹ John Devereux, “Arrested Development? Puerto Rico in an American Century,” *Journal of Economic History* 79, no. 3 (2019): 708–35, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022050719000329>.

³² César J Ayala, “The Decline of the Plantation Economy and the Puerto Rican Migration of the 1950s,” *Latino Studies Journal* 7, no. 1 (1996): 61–90.

³³ Hilda Lloréns, “Ruin Nation,” *NACLA Report on the Americas* 50, no. 2 (2018): 154–59, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10714839.2018.1479468>.

leading Puerto Rico's economy to be the worst in the entire United States.³⁴ All the aforementioned development programs, budget plans, and laws have had a great influence on Puerto Rico's economy and have intensified the island's political and economic dependency to the United States, as it is illustrated in Figure 4.



Source: GAO analysis of Puerto Rico Planning Board Data | GAO-18-387

Note: GDP measures the value of goods and services produced inside a country, or for the purposes of this report, a territory. In contrast, GNP measures the value of goods and services produced by its residents. GNP includes production from residents abroad and excludes production by foreign companies in a country or territory. 2016 was the most recent year for which data were available as of March 1, 2018.

Figure 4. Real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and Gross National Product (GNP) Growth in Puerto Rico.

³⁴ "Puerto Rico: Factors Contributing to the Debt Crisis and Potential Federal Actions to Address Them" (Washington, DC, 2018), <https://www.gao.gov/assets/700/691675.pdf>.

After the repeal of Section 936, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and the Gross National Product (GNP) have significantly regressed. Nonetheless, the government of Puerto Rico has managed to borrow over \$70 billion US dollars and, as then-Governor Alejandro García Padilla said, this debt is simply unpayable.³⁵ Ironically, even though it is widely known that the Puerto Rican government does not have the income and ability to pay it back, this debt has continued to grow since 2006, as illustrated in Figure 5. The consequences of this economic context and the current debt crisis are tough austerity policies that directly hurt the most disadvantaged sectors of the archipelago.

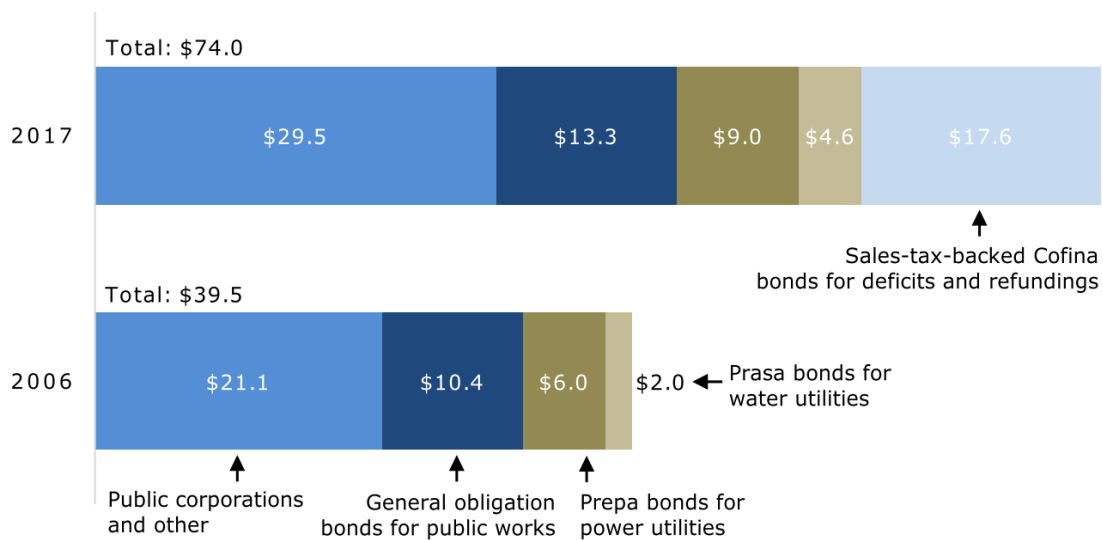


Figure 5. Debt Issued by Puerto Rico, billions of dollars.
Source: Puerto Rico Fiscal Agency and Financial Advisory Authority (2017).

The Debt Crisis and Austerity Policies

The roots of the debt crisis are highly structural, as the economic model of Puerto Rico is obsolete, lacks consistent development strategy, and is susceptible to corruption and unconstitutional deficits. Its economic history, especially the legacy of Operation Bootstrap,

³⁵ Bianca Ko, "Nothing Left to Tax or Cut, The Gate to Chapter 9 Is Shut: The Puerto Rico Debt Crisis," *Loyola of Los Angeles Law Review* 50, no. 3 (2018): 313–28.

has driven the following development projects, which are still planning a post-war transitioning economy and therefore not acclimated with the current reality of the archipelago. The model is particularly archaic in the sense that it pursues “the contradictory goal of maintaining low absolute costs of doing business to attract investment, regardless of productivity gains and expected personal income gains from growth and development processes.”³⁶ According to Quiñones-Pérez and Seda-Irizarry, the emphasis on export-led industrialization continues portraying the fiscal problems of Puerto Rico as the consequence of overpopulation, lack of natural resources, and its small geographical size.

On July 4, 2006, the government passed Law Number 117, a Contributive Justice Law that established for the first time an Impuesto de Ventas y Uso (IVU): in English, a Puerto Rico Sales and Use Tax.³⁷ The objective of this 7% IVU is to create a mechanism of tax collection that would defray costs in harsh fiscal circumstances, and to try to regulate the informal economy. In May 2015, the government approved another Contributive Reform to increase the IVU to 11.5%.³⁸ Beyond all of this, the debt crisis has also facilitated policies that have troubled Puerto Rico and its access to basic services, given the constant closing down and/or privatization of public schools and hospitals. For example, the Department of Education closed down sixty-three public schools in 2015, leaving over 9,000 students without public schooling.³⁹ In 2017, the Department closed down 184 more public schools

³⁶ Argeo T. Quiñones-Pérez and Ian J. Seda-Irizarry, “Wealth Extraction, Governmental Servitude, and Social Disintegration in Colonial Puerto Rico,” *New Politics* 15, no. 4 (2016): 91–98.

³⁷ Marangely Rodríguez Guadalupe, “El Impacto de Las Reformas Contributivas En El Crecimiento Economico de Puerto Rico, España y Chile Durante El Periodo Del 1 de Enero 2006 Al 31 de Diciembre 2015” (2015).

³⁸ Rodríguez Guadalupe, 2015.

³⁹ “Más de 9,000 estudiantes afectados por cierre de escuelas (documentos),” *NotiCel*, 2015. <https://www.noticel.com/ahora/ms-de-9000-estudiantes-afectados-por-cierre-de-escuelas-documentos/611192126>

and, less than a year later, another 283 schools were also shut down.⁴⁰ Some of these were sold and/or rented to private corporations and religious groups for as low as \$1 each.⁴²

Governor Luis Fortuño officialized Act 7, creating a “State of Emergency” as the debt crisis exacerbated, on March 9, 2009. *La Ley 7*, as it is known in Puerto Rico, automatically downsized the public sector by laying off over 30,000 workers, suspending or modifying multiple labor rights, and enabling harsher budget cuts for public institutions such as the University of Puerto Rico (UPR) and the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority (PREPA). Similarly, this state of emergency led to a juridical exceptionalism, where the criminalization of protest was justified to maintain an ideal of economic and political security.⁴³ Although by 2011 the government had not explicitly supported the privatization of state-owned entities such as the UPR, the premeditated and ongoing process of shrinking-down the public budget is clearly part of the neoliberal agenda to manipulate public opinion in favor of privatization.⁴⁴

Austerity has severely crippled the working class, especially when then-Governor Ricardo Rosselló Nevares signed Public Law Number 4. Also known as the Labor Transformation and Flexibility Act, the Law reduced labor rights and benefits for private sector workers on January 25, 2017. Massively condemned, *la Reforma Laboral* (labor reform) tripled the probationary period from three months to nine months, reduced breastfeeding breaks for nursing employees to half an hour, and eased the legal constraints

⁴⁰ Nicole Chavez, “Puerto Rico closing 283 schools over sharp drop in enrollment,” *CNN*, 2018. <https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/06/us/puerto-rico-schools-closing/index.html>

⁴¹ “Julia Keleher defiende el cierre de 184 escuelas,” *El Nuevo Día*, 2017.

<https://www.elnuevodia.com/videos/juliakeleherdefiendeelcierredel84escuelas-video-233327/>

⁴² Hector Ramos, “Federación de Maestros denuncia gobierno vende escuela a iglesia de Font en un peso,” *NotiUno*, 2018. https://www.notiuno.com/federaci-n-de-maestros-denuncian-gobierno-vende-escuela-a-iglesia/article_764252f0-59ff-5b6c-b59a-bcf380a0498e.html

⁴³ José Atilés-Osoria, “Terrorismo de Estado Colonial En Puerto Rico: Una Agenda de Investigación,” *Relaciones Internacionales: Revista Académica Cuatrimestral de Publicación Electrónica* 0, no. 32 (2016): 203–20.

⁴⁴ Rima Brusi-Gil de Lamadrid, “The University of Puerto Rico: A Testing Ground for the Neoliberal State,” *NACLA Report on the Americas* 44, no. 2 (2011): 7–10, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10714839.2011.11722160>.

that prevented illegal and/or unjustified layoffs.⁴⁵ Previously, employees had up to three years to sue employers who unjustly fired them, but the *la Reforma* reduced this period to twelve months. Among other things, the Reform reduced the minimum wage for employees working holidays, weekends, and overtime.⁴⁶

Taking into consideration the unbearable debt crisis and the pressure on bondholders, the United States Congress proceeded to pass the PROMESA Law, an act signed by the President Barack Obama in June 2016. The Law immediately established a Fiscal Oversight Management Board in Puerto Rico to restructure the debt and manage public funds, though it is exclusively funded by Puerto Rican taxes. It is highly important to establish that:

At the time PROMESA was enacted, the fiscal crisis had already evolved into severe austerity and an ensuing humanitarian crisis. For example, the budget of the island's only children's hospital had been cut by 14 percent, lacked CT and MRI machines, and has 70 vacant nursing positions; security guards for the public school system have gone unpaid for months; a town on the west coast was without its water supply for several days after a valve broke since the contractor would not fix the break due to lack of payment on prior bills; and the food supply for nearly 12,500 inmates in Puerto Rico's 37 prisons was almost interrupted after the prison system's food vendor stopped.⁴⁷

However precarious the scenario was in 2016, PROMESA was and continues to be deeply criticized by many as another example of US colonialism, given the fact that its Board is comprised of a seven-member panel whose members are appointed by the president and are not required to be Puerto Rican. Although one of these appointees must be the Governor of Puerto Rico or a representative of him/her, this representative does not have the right to vote. That rule was put in place to keep the Board "neutral," thus protecting the creditors' interests. As an authoritarian legal instrument, the Law diminishes the constitutional powers of the Supreme Court of Puerto Rico, as the latter cannot interfere or overrule the decisions taken by the former. There is massive potential for a conflict of interests enabled by PROMESA, given

⁴⁵ "Reforma laboral del 2017: Cambios importantes en derechos laborales," *Ayuda Legal Puerto Rico*, 2017. <https://ayudalegalpr.org/resource/reforma-laboral-del-2017-cambios-importantes>

⁴⁶ "Conoce las leyes enmendadas por la reforma laboral," *Microjuris: Inteligencia Jurídica*, 2017. <https://aldia.microjuris.com/2017/03/14/conoce-las-leyes-enmendadas-por-la-reforma-laboral/>

⁴⁷ Edwin Meléndez, "The Politics of PROMESA," *Centro Journal* 30, no. 3 (2018): 43–71.

the fact that Section 104(e) allows the members of the Board to receive personal gifts, among other things, to "facilitate" their job.⁴⁸ All of this to make sure vulture funds continue profiting off the archipelago's debt crisis:

The clear "winners" of the debt crisis have been banks that did the underwriting for Puerto Rican bonds — mostly large multinational banks — which profited from fees. Underwriters collected fees totaling \$1.6 billion across 87 deals from 2006 to 2013, in which \$61 billion of debt was issued, according to a Wall Street Journal analysis. These banks often sold the bonds they were issued in payment of these fees, limiting their exposure to risk.⁴⁹

Although some claim the historical debt of Puerto Rico is — though structural — quite self-inflicted, its political status does not help prevent or even properly address the debt and its economic impact.⁵⁰ Even considering Puerto Rico's poverty levels, the rising migration patterns, and the high levels of unemployment, the US Congress does not allow the Commonwealth to file for bankruptcy and, because of its colonial relationship with the United States, they cannot turn to international aid. Moreover, not only is Puerto Rico the most unequal territory of the United States, the majority of the archipelago's population also lives in poverty.⁵¹ This chaotic scenario, along with PROMESA and other austerity policies, has unleashed political instability and other economic problems in Puerto Rico. In the following chapters, I will explore the variety of anti-austerity street demonstrations (riots, general strikes, and pickets) that together emphasize the mantra *¡no la debemos y no la pagaremos!* (we do not owe it and we will not pay for it).⁵²

⁴⁸ Eric Joshi and Amogh Joshi, "Where Credit Is Due: On the Puerto Rican Debt Crisis," *Information Management and Business Review* 9, no. 1 (2017): 6, <https://doi.org/10.22610/imbr.v9i1.1591>.

⁴⁹ Lara Merling et al., "Life After Debt in Puerto Rico: How Many More Lost Decades?" (Washington, DC, 2017), www.cepr.net.

⁵⁰ Quiñones-Pérez and Seda-Irizarry, "Wealth Extraction, Governmental Servitude, and Social Disintegration in Colonial Puerto Rico."

⁵¹ Quiñones-Pérez and Seda-Irizarry.

⁵² Joshi and Joshi, "Where Credit Is Due: On the Puerto Rican Debt Crisis."

Political Context of Puerto Rico

Despite the territorial relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States, Puerto Rican political parties and voters are different from those in the mainland. The political environment is distinct from the United States' and other Latin American countries' because "the main political cleavage in Puerto Rico is not the liberal-conservative continuum [...]. Rather, it revolves around the so-called 'status' debate, which features three political options: statehood, commonwealth, and independence."⁵³ Because of this, Puerto Rico has two major parties and one major third party, respectively: Partido Popular Democrático (PPD), Partido Nuevo Progresista (PNP), and Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño (PIP).

Luis Muñoz Marín, the first democratically elected governor in Puerto Rico, founded the PPD in 1938. The Popular Democratic Party endorses the establishment of the current political status of Puerto Rico, the ELA. Viewing the PPD as a traitor to the ideals of independence and social justice, Gilberto Concepción de Gracia founded the PIP in 1946. The PIP represents a sector of the Puerto Rican population that seeks to start a secessionist process from the Union and acquire full independence from the United States. Finally, in 1968, Luis A. Ferré founded the PNP, a party that supports an immediate transition to statehood as part of the US Union. Since the first elections in 1948, the only successful parties have been the PPD and the PNP, while the PIP tends to win some seats in the Senate every other election. As Puerto Ricans view each election as a decisive debate that could impact the political status of Puerto Rico, amongst other things, Puerto Rico has reported high levels of voting participation that surpass those seen in the United States.

⁵³ Luis Raúl Cámara Fuentes, *The Phenomenon of Puerto Rican Voting*, University Press of Florida: Gainesville, FL, 2004.

It is worth noting that, according to Luis Cámara Fuentes in 2004, Puerto Rico's high turnout levels are not affected by voting and registration laws, which the scholar perceives as restrictive and even hindering. Interestingly, Puerto Rico has the highest voter turnout rates in comparison with other Latin American democracies that do not have compulsory voting laws. Fuentes' paper exposes the fact that the most accepted political theories about voting behavior are not as accurate or applicable in the case of Puerto Rico. Although the Puerto Rican demographic tends to be younger, less educated, have lower income, and have higher unemployment levels, his research shows that an individual's age is not a determinant on how they participate in each election. Moreover, when paying closer attention to the effect that demographics have on turnout, he finds that Puerto Ricans, regardless of their level of education or type of job, vote at the same rate across the board: "In this sense, electoral behavior in Puerto Rico more closely resembles that of other Latin American and European high-turnout democracies than that of the United States, even though Puerto Rico's institutions are modeled on those of the United States".⁵⁴

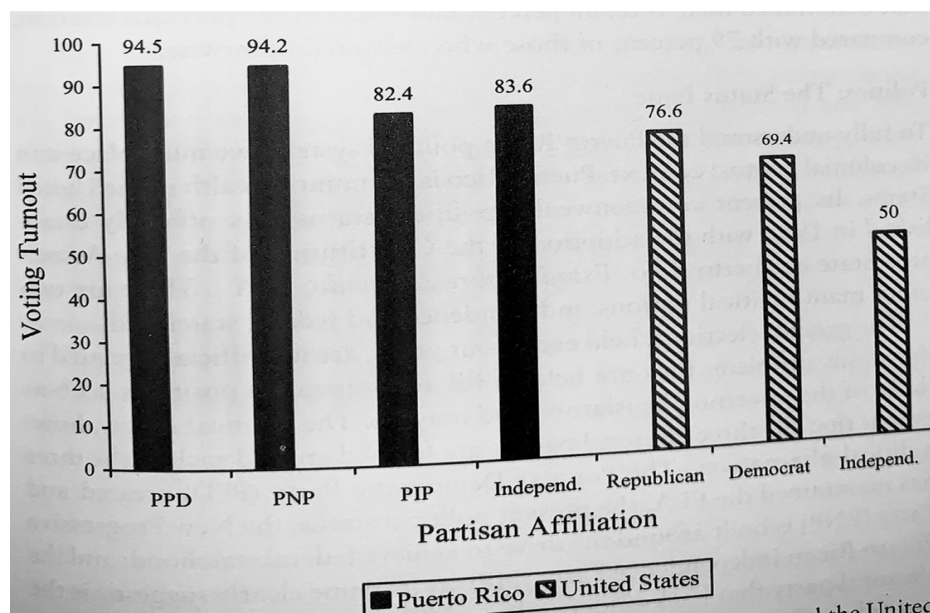


Figure 1. Party affiliation and voting turnout in Puerto Rico and the United States. Source: *The Phenomenon of Puerto Rican Voting*, 2004.

⁵⁴ Luis Raúl Cámara Fuentes, *The Phenomenon of Puerto Rican Voting*, 2004.

On the other hand, in comparison with the United States, Puerto Ricans' partisanship tends to be stronger and, because party mobilization emphasizes effective voting, those individuals with weaker party ties also go out to vote. In the case of the PIP, however, the party is at a disadvantage because most secessionists in Puerto Rico reject the electoral system, perceiving it as another institution that provides a false illusion of democracy when in reality a colony could never have a democratic system. For example, Ashley N. Guerrido Cotto, a researcher and member of the Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (Nationalist Revolutionary Movement), condemns voting because "votar en una colonia es efímero [...] porque las decisiones no las tomamos nosotros" or, in English: 'voting in a colony is an ephemeral action because the decisions are not made by us [Puerto Ricans].' The political status of Puerto Rico is so present in the political, cultural, and social climate that every election is commonly perceived as a strong determinant of the future of Puerto Rico's status.

Democratic Legitimacy in Puerto Rico

While secessionists with this abstentionist belief are arguably a political minority in Puerto Rico, statistics show that voting turnout has decreased in the last three general elections as well as the last referendum, with the latter gathering only 22.93% of the registered electorate (see Appendix 1).⁵⁵ This leads us to the essential question: **if the importance of voting has heavily been linked to the political status, even during general elections, then why are fewer Puerto Ricans showing up to vote?** One argument that could be made is that Puerto Rico is facing an increasing number of Puerto Ricans leaving the archipelago in recent years. However, Carlos Vargas-Ramos finds that the rate of migration is lower than the rate of decrease in voting participation, even within municipalities in Puerto Rico (see Appendix 2).

⁵⁵ "Consultas del estatus: resultados isla," *Comisión Estatal de Elecciones*, 2017. http://resultados2017.ceepur.org/Noche_del_Evento_78/index.html#es/default/CONSULTA_DESCOLONIZACION_Resumen.xml

Using Hirschman's framework, Ramos theorizes that Puerto Ricans' exiting in the form of migration is not a significant factor determining voter turnout because it is a phenomenon more correlated to the economic crisis: "[the] Puerto Rican electorate in 2016 may actually be a response to their declining faith in the political system, its political institutions and political class in their ability to respond to the needs and wants of Puerto Ricans."⁵⁶ Although Vargas-Ramos underestimates the impact of the debt crisis on how Puerto Ricans participate politically, he still points out that disappointment with the political status quo might be motivating people to abstain.

Nevertheless, I argue that Puerto Ricans are not showing up to the polls because their faith in democratic legitimacy has decreased concurrently with the magnification of the debt crisis, which has affected millions of lives in Puerto Rico. Because people do not perceive the government or its officials as receptive to their needs and interests, Puerto Ricans registered to vote are choosing purposive nonvoting, often in conjunction with their anti-austerity protest participation. They join these protests not only to reject austerity policies, but also to pressure the government to finally pay attention to their demands. Anti-austerity protests have become, I argue, the new channel for Puerto Ricans to participate and exercise democracy.

As Figure 2 illustrates, Puerto Rico does not have a problem with people not registering to vote. As a matter of fact, Puerto Ricans continue to register to vote in high numbers. However, the rate of voting participation has actually been decreasing since the elections of 1988. In the elections of the twenty-first century, though, these numbers have dramatically declined from 83% in 2000 to 56% in 2016. It is out of the scope of this research to determine the influence that the political status of Puerto Rico still has on whether and how

⁵⁶ Carlos Vargas-Ramos, "Political Crisis, Migration and Electoral Behavior in Puerto Rico," *Centro Journal* xxx, no. iii (2018): 279–313.

people vote, but across my interviews, I have found a more prevalent issue that appears to be driving recent political participation: people are tired of the traditional political parties and are actively seeking other options to achieve the political and economic change they consider necessary. I argue that this dissatisfaction with the debt crisis is the main reason why the elections of 2008, 2012, and 2016 have gathered fewer voters *and* showcased new political parties, new faces, and independent candidates running for office. Likewise, the increase of political protests against PNP and PPD politicians along with the austerity policies show that Puerto Ricans are attempting to create change by any means necessary.

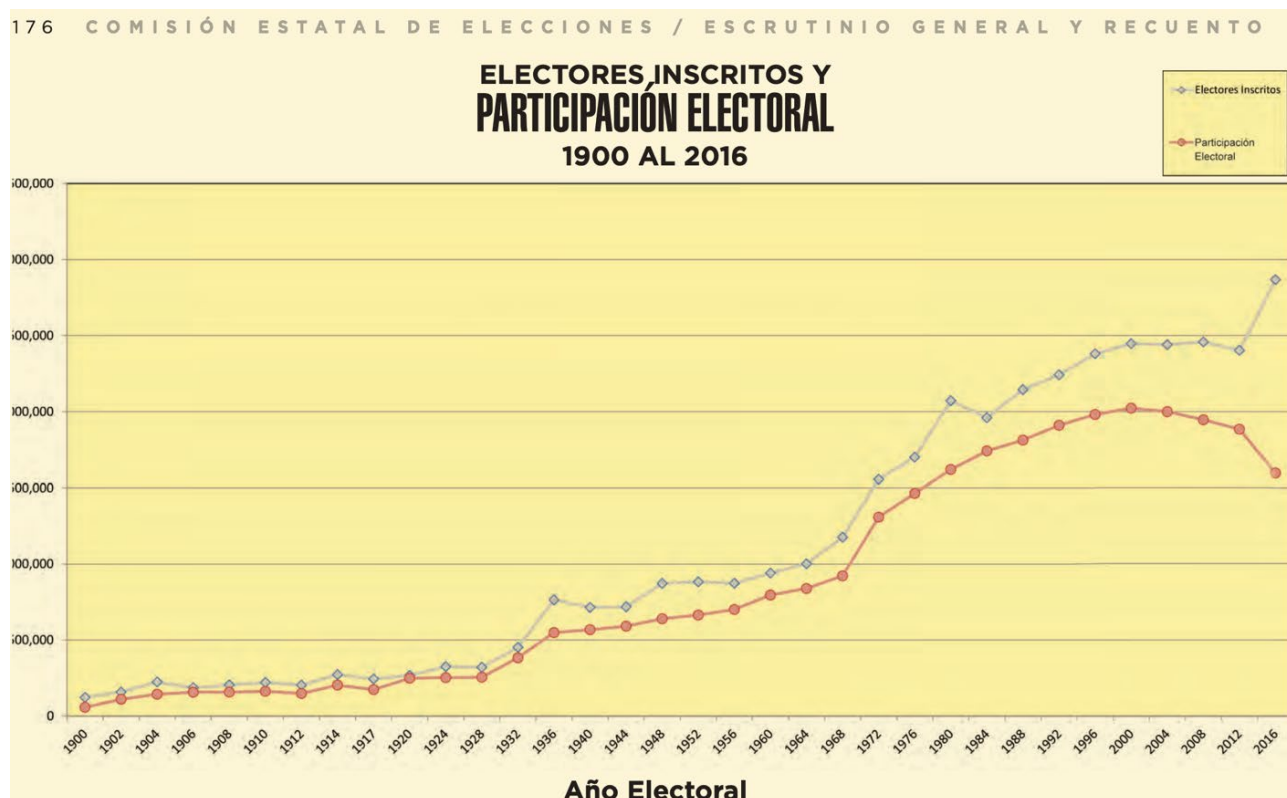


Figure 2. Registered voters and electoral participation 1900 to 2016.



Figure 3. Percentage of electoral participation 1900 to 2016.

Findings and Discussion

The last four decades of late capitalism have been fueled by worldwide austerity, but the events of the early 2000's — better known as the Great Recession — increased global resistance. The consequences of austerity are arguably life-threatening to members of lower classes, especially in developing countries; austerity policies bring higher levels of poverty, unemployment, diseases, and inequality.⁵⁷ To extrapolate David McNally's analysis, the Great Recession has exacerbated political and economic stability in Puerto Rico, specifically when "the [economic] problems of 40 years ago remained latent and made their reappearance in 2006."⁵⁸ I argue that Puerto Rico's crisis of democratic legitimacy has obligated Puerto Ricans to find better forms of democratic action by joining protests, collectives, and similar organizations, as well as practicing direct and participative democracy in the form of "asambleas de pueblo," "asambleas feministas," and "asambleas de estudiantes" (people's assemblies, feminists assemblies, student assemblies). Likewise, the decisions taken in such assemblies are manifested "en la calle," or in the streets, attempting to let the government know that they can be resistant and resilient to austerity. This way of doing politics has resulted in lower turnout rates, and — even though voting and protesting are not mutually exclusive — Puerto Ricans have increasingly showed their support for pressuring the government with direct action rather than waiting for the next election year.

The People Fight Back

"De norte a sur, de este a oeste, ¡esta Lucha sigue cueste lo que cueste!"

The mantra of "luchar hasta vencer," or to struggle until defeating, is very common in Puerto Rico and has become a very visible motto within the working class since Spring 2006, when the government shut down due to not having enough cash flow to sustain the public

⁵⁷ McNally, David. *Global Slump*.

⁵⁸ Quiñones-Pérez and Seda-Irizarry, "Wealth Extraction, Governmental Servitude, and Social Disintegration in Colonial Puerto Rico."

sector. The government shutdown meant that 1,600 schools stopped functioning, 205,000 workers went without pay, and all government entities were shuttered, except police forces and hospitals.⁵⁹ This situation moved workers to declare a general strike that accounted for up to 50,000 workers yelling “today there are no political parties, [...] today there is only this crisis” in front of the Capitol of San Juan.⁶⁰ The Summer and Fall of 2006 continued with workers and their families putting pressure against austerity, especially in the form of privatization of beaches, public corporations, and development programs that are harmful to natural resources and local populations. (See Appendix 3).

Protests against development projects were the main focus in 2007 and 2008 as the government started to allow private entities to occupy and use natural resources in violation of environmental protections (See Appendix 4). As one of the protest participants described, the debt crisis has driven the government to allow violations of such protections in an attempt to profit and pay back what is owed. The belief that the government is selling Puerto Rico and its people is certainly one of the main motivators for people to protest, both individually and collectively. This situation mirrors the democratic crisis that Puerto Rico is facing because of the lack of input legitimacy, or holding politicians accountable “for policy choices that are in conflict with the politically salient preferences of constituents,” in this case being austerity.⁶¹ Those policy choices are enough to mobilize people into street demonstrations, but the weakened output legitimacy, or the outcomes of such policies, open the political space for people to continue protesting for longer periods of time as it is the case of worker strikes and other multi-sectoral strikes.

⁵⁹ Miranda Leitsinger, “Puerto Rico days away from government shutdown, leader warns; Anxiety soars on island in face of \$1b deficit,” *The Boston Globe*, 2006.
http://archive.boston.com/news/nation/articles/2006/04/27/puerto_rico_days_away_from_government_shutdown_n_leader_warns/

⁶⁰ Enrique Martel, “Puerto Rico protest demands deal to avert shutdown,” *Reuters*, 2006.
<https://web.archive.org/web/20060501182458/http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/N28291933.htm>

⁶¹ Fritz W. Scharpf, “Monetary Union, Fiscal Crisis and the Disabling of Democratic Accountability,” in *Politics in the Age of Austerity*, ed. Wolfgang Streeck and Armin Schäfer (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2013).

In September 2009, Roberto García threw an egg at the ex-governor Luis Fortuño in Fajardo during a development conference, screaming “charlatán, tú lo que eres es un abusador, hipócrita, ¿cómo te atreves a hablar de empleos si le estás quitando el trabajo a todo el mundo?” (charlatan, what you are is an abuser, hypocrite, how dare you talk about employment if you are taking everyone’s job?).⁶² A year later, eight women protested topless in front of the Procuraduría de la Mujer, the Office of Women’s Attorney, to express how they were both “devoid of bras and rights” as a consequence of the Ley 7.⁶³ These are but two of many iconic examples that display the extent to which Puerto Ricans have gone to express their anger and frustration concerning austerity, in this case against the Fortuño’s State of Emergency. Similarly, members of the working class have increasingly used El Día de los Trabajadores y de las Trabajadoras, The Workers Day, as a startup campaign against austerity, especially after *La Ley 7* was officialized. As researchers Yarimar Bonilla and Rafael A. Boglio Martínez established in their 2010 report:

The popular challenge to Fortuño’s agenda began May 1, when massive mobilizations of labor unions, political parties, and other interest groups took place in protest of Public Law 7. On June 5, the growing discontent became apparent as a crowd of between 40,000 and 100,000 came together in a demonstration organized by a new coalition of unions, religious leaders, and community organizations called All Puerto Rico for Puerto Rico (Todo Puerto Rico por Puerto Rico). The work stoppage of October 15 was also organized by the All Puerto Rico coalition, as well as by the labor leaders of the Broad Front of Solidarity and Struggle (FASyL), another new organization mobilized in response to Fortuño’s agenda.⁶⁴

⁶² “Arrestan a hombre que lanzó huevo a Fortuño en Fajardo,” *Primera Hora*, 2009.

<https://www.primerahora.com/noticias/gobierno-politica/notas/arrestan-a-hombre-que-lanzo-huevo-a-fortuno-en-fajardo/>

⁶³ Aixa Vázquez, “Protesta mujeres ‘topless,’” *Noticentro*, 2010. <https://www.wapa.tv/noticias/locales/protesta-mujeres--topless-20091102085839.html>

⁶⁴ Yarimar Bonilla and Rafael A. Boglio Martínez, “Puerto Rico in Crisis: Government Workers Battle Neoliberal Reform,” *NACLA Report on the Americas* 43, no. 1 (2010): 6–8, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10714839.2010.11722207>.

“...*De la Abolición a la Esclavitud...*”⁶⁵

Understanding the Reforma Laboral as a regressive “restructuring” that would bring back slavery, the people of Puerto Rico organized a massive multisectoral-general strike on May 1, the International Workers Day, in 2017. May Day of 2017 was commemorated with a massive protest made up of people representing public and private universities, religious groups, feminist collectives, environmentalists, and worker unions. Various demonstrations in San Juan, Ponce and Mayagüez paralyzed Puerto Rico’s workplaces, main roads, and commerce. Moreover, “groups from the diaspora supported the cause by doing the same in New York,” Washington D.C., and other Puerto Rican enclaves in the United States.⁶⁶

The Paro Nacional, or the National Strike, had an impressive level of organization, which included numerous free food stations, first aid centers, and transportation spots everywhere in the mainland to encourage people to participate. The protests turned violent with dozens of protesters arrested and reprehended by the police, and private property being damaged. The manifestations during El Primero de Mayo continued during the following two years with similar numbers of participants, despite the risk of violence and police brutality, with a stronger emphasis against austerity.⁶⁷

*“Si tú te creías que la IUPI no venía na’ ...
La IUPI está en la calle con su último detalle
¡Y su bomba Molotov! ¡La IUPI ya llegó!”*

The UPR’s student movement is characterized for its constant struggle on behalf of a quality and affordable public education. In order to achieve their goals, they have enforced three main student strikes in the last decade. Of course, these strikes have been mainly triggered by austerity measurements introduced since 2006 as a consequence of the debt

⁶⁵ Daniella Claudio Sánchez, “Catalogan a la reforma laboral como ‘nueva esclavitud moderna’” NotiCel, 2017. <https://www.noticel.com/ahora/catalogan-a-la-reforma-laboral-como-quotnueva-esclavitud-modernaquot/609198767>

⁶⁶ Meléndez, “The Politics of PROMESA.”

⁶⁷ Jasmine Gómez, “Blackout in Puerto Rico: How 120 Years of Corporate Dominance & Political Inequality Stifle Self-Determination Today,” 2018, www.freespeechforpeople.org/Puerto-Rico.

crisis.⁶⁸ A well-known consigna, or protest chant, that the University of Puerto Rico's student movement (UPR) exclaims is "if you believed the UPR would not come... The UPR is in the streets... The UPR has arrived!" Their presence in the struggle started to intensify in 2010 in rejection of Fortuño's 'state of emergency' when students declared a strike to be able to mobilize in the streets and assemble supporters island-wide, both online and through canvassing.⁶⁹ Perceiving that their demands were not being heard, a second strike was organized in 2011. As the austerity policies affected the broader Puerto Rican population, the student strike became a multisectoral movement with strong public support, even when the government intensified the criminalization of students and anyone near the campuses expressing their support.⁷⁰

The student movement and its manifestations against austerity both within and outside the college campuses "garnered enormous support among large cross-sectors of the population and was explicitly articulated as a movement bent on assuaging social inequalities through a political, financial and ideological investment in the public university system."⁷¹ The purpose of both strikes in 2010 and 2011, therefore, was to oppose the establishment of these austerity policies not only for their education, but also for the broader society of Puerto Rico. In 2017, however, the panorama had an additional element against the students and their claims: La Junta de Control Fiscal. Commonly referred to as the Gran Huelga del 2017, or the Great Strike of 2017, the strike popularized the students' rejection of the JCF and its anti-democratic policies as well as the potential illegality of the Puerto Rican debt. For example, the famous chant "\$500 millones, que clase de cojones, por eso hacemos huelga y

⁶⁸ Quiñones-Pérez and Seda-Irizarry, "Wealth Extraction, Governmental Servitude, and Social Disintegration in Colonial Puerto Rico."

⁶⁹ José M. Atilés-Osoria, "Neoliberalism, Law, and Strikes: Law as an Instrument of Repression at the University of Puerto Rico, 2010-2011," *Latin American Perspectives* 40, no. 5 (2013): 105–17, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0094582X13492123>.

⁷⁰ Rocío Zambrana, "Pasarse Políticamente: Interrupting Neoliberal Temporality," *Diacritics* 46, no. 2 (2018): 96–116.

⁷¹ Guillermo Rebollo Gil, "A New Heroic Figure: Female Protestors and Precarity in Puerto Rico," *Journal of Feminist Scholarship* 10, no. 10 (2016): 23.

cerramos los portones,” characterizes how the rejection of austerity measures moved the students to strike, principally a \$450 million budget cut proposed by the JCF and Ricardo Roselló.⁷²⁷³ This particular chant is another factor that supports the fact that Puerto Rico’s debilitated output legitimacy puts people in a position where street demonstrations are the only appropriate channel to counteract austerity. The 73-day-long strike had a deeper emphasis against privatization and neo-liberalization of Puerto Rico than previous strikes, conveyed in their demands to audit the debt and to stop debt payments.⁷⁴

“Mete mano, mete pecho, ¡que te roban tus derechos!”

Worker unions have also politically organized in order to fully express their anti-austerity viewpoints, considering such policies to be “stealing their [labor] rights.” From taking over the streets in protests, to creating multisectoral coalitions and creating new political parties, workers are hoping to counteract neoliberal policies that would minimize the size of the government through budget cuts, minimum wage reductions, and firing public sector employees. Workers understand all of this as a tactic to dismantle the public sector, which explains why they are not hesitant to protest.⁷⁵

Anés Cedeño Soto is a member of the teacher union Educamos, and — like many Puerto Ricans — she initially favored the JCF as she thought it would represent an opportunity for Puerto Rico to finally tackle the debt crisis. However, after learning about the law and its various problematic nuances in March 2017, Cedeño Soto started making online videos explaining how the debt crisis and austerity policies negatively affected public schools, students, faculty, and staff. A frequent participant of protests against all forms of austerity

⁷² Roughly translates to “\$500 million, how dare you, this is why we strike and close down the gates.” Translated by author.

⁷³ Melissa Correa Velázquez, “Ratificado en Río Piedras el voto de huelga,” EL VOCERO, 10/05/2017. https://www.elvocero.com/educacion/ratificado-en-r-o-piedras-el-voto-de-huelga/article_400030da-0ccc-5665-a40a-447c3974995d.html

⁷⁴ Zambrana, “Pasarse Políticamente: Interrupting Neoliberal Temporality.”

⁷⁵ Jennifer Wolff, “Debtors’ Island: How Puerto Rico Became a Hedge Fund Playground,” *New Labor Forum* 25, no. 2 (2016): 48–55, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1095796016639295>.

and on behalf of a feminist transformation of Puerto Rico, the activist recognizes that it is also important to encourage people to vote in the next elections: “no podemos dejar de luchar por un mejor país [...] las elecciones son cada cuatro años, así que hay que continuar la lucha mientras tanto” (we cannot stop fighting for a better country [...] elections are every four years, so we must continue the struggle in the meantime). Although recognizing that the State has attempted to criminalize protest, she considers that this attitude has only inflamed the people, making them even more eager to participate in protests, because they feel that their needs and interests are being deliberately disregarded.

Political Parties and Voter Turnout

“¡PNPPD es lo mismo, ya lo ves!”

A very common protest mantra across sectors is “PNPPD are the same, you can see that,” which symbolizes people’s disenfranchisement with the democratic status quo that maintains the traditional parties that control politics. Similarly, this chant resembles how the public opinion has changed since 2006: the traditional political parties are one and the same. PNPPPD are a binary of two equals. According to the interviewees, PNPPPD are the entities that are actively corrupting democracy, making it illegitimate, and in need of radical change. As a consequence of this public opinion, the last three elections (2008, 2012, and 2016) have presented a historical wave of new political parties challenging the PNP, the PPD, and even the PIP.

For example, the Partido Puertorriqueños por Puerto Rico [PPR] (created to follow similar ecological platforms as European green parties), “Movimiento Unión Soberanista [MUS] (which sought political sovereignty for the island), and the Partido del Pueblo Trabajador [PPT] (which advocated for a worker-focused economy).”⁷⁶ The success of these parties is relative, but in comparison with the PIP, the PPR earned 2.80%, while the PIP

⁷⁶ Wolff.

gathered 2.06% of votes for governor in 2008. However, as the number of small minority parties increased by 2012, the PIP was able to recuperate votes. For example, in the 2012 elections, 2.54% of the electorate voted for the PIP, .98% for the PPT, .56% for the MUS, and .36% for the PPR (for the governor position).

The 2016 elections were historical in Puerto Rico as two independent candidates ran for governor for the first time: Alexandra Lúgaro and Manuel Cidre, respectively gathering 11.14% and 5.73% of the votes for governorship. More people voted for Lúgaro and Cidre than for the PIP and the PPT, the former collecting 2.13% and the latter earning .34% of the votes. Most importantly, 2016 elections showcased a significant 20% of the Puerto Rican voting population that rejected the traditional winning parties, the PNP and the PPD:

Governor Rosselló (PNP) won the elections with 42 percent of the vote and defeated his opponent by less than 3 percent of the vote. Surprisingly, independent candidates to the governorship accumulated 17 percent of the vote—the largest percent attributed to other than the PPD and PNP candidates in decades. As significant, for a country with historically high electoral participation rates, 1.3 million registered voters did not vote.⁷⁷

This data reinforces my hypothesis that Puerto Ricans are not necessarily viewing voting as the only mechanism to achieve political change, or even the most effective avenue. For example, the 2017 plebiscite was openly and strongly boycotted by dozens of sectors in Puerto Rico. The PPD, PPT, and the PIP called their supporters to abstain from participating. Similarly, the student movement of the UPR also decided to boycott the plebiscite as it was seen as a waste of money, given the fact that the government of Puerto Rico approved over \$6 million dollars to the plebiscite while ignoring the demands to audit the debt, which only required \$5 million dollars. The boycott movement was fruitful, as only 23% of eligible voters participated.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Meléndez, “The Politics of PROMESA.”

⁷⁸ R. Sam Garrett, “Political Status of Puerto Rico: Brief Background and Recent Developments for Congress” (Washington, D.C., 2017), www.crs.gov.

For the 2020 elections, the previous minority parties (with the exception of the PIP) are not likely to run. In fact, the PPT and alienated members of the PPD have joined forces to create Movimiento Victoria Ciudadana (MVC), with Lúgaro as their candidate for governor. I had the opportunity to interview Rosa Seguí Cordero, an MVC politician, who described this new party as a coalition that seeks to attract people across the ideological spectrum through participatory democracy. Refusing to take a stand regarding the political status of Puerto Rico, as it is perceived to be an issue of the people and not of a particular political party, the MVC is described as the result of Puerto Ricans trying to find a solution that does not include the PPD or the PNP. The MVC is an outspoken convergence of Puerto Ricans who are against paying back the debt, at least without a process of auditing it beforehand. This agenda is similar to the demands that have been expressed within the UPR's student movement and other interest groups such as the Frente Ciudadano Por La Auditoría de la Deuda (Citizen Front for the Audit of the Debt).

Furthermore, Seguí Cordero points out that while the traditional parties have discouraged people to vote, the MVC is trying to attract those disenfranchised voters through an online campaign to motivate eligible voters to register called #SácalaChallenge. As opposed to the PNPPD binary, the MVC is a coalition that supports other types of political participation, such as protesting. #EnLaCalleYEnLasUrnas, or "in the streets and the polls," is a famous hashtag, currently used and promoted by the MVC, but the spirit behind it is as old as the PPT's initial years.⁷⁹ The new political parties of Puerto Rico's embrace of protesting is part of the many strategies to distance themselves from the PNPPD dichotomy, which have repressed freedom of speech for as long as they have existed.

Another rising political party is the Proyecto Dignidad (PD), or the Dignity Project, which mainly pursues the Christian segments of Puerto Rico. The platform of the PD is

⁷⁹ #EnLaCalleYEnLasUrnas, *Twitter*: <https://twitter.com/hashtag/enlalleyenlasurnas>

different from other minority parties, which tended to be left-leaning groups, even though it believes in Puerto Rico's political self-determination. Proyecto Dignidad is also in favor of auditing the debt and demanding restitution. In regard to social issues, the PD is strongly in favor of protection religious freedom and the environment while opposing a gender-based perspective in the curriculum of public education and abortion.⁸⁰

I interviewed Herminio Pagán Calderín, a PD politician, who joined the PD because the other political parties furthered indignity for Puerto Ricans. As he believes that “the peaceful way of bringing political change is to create a party,” Pagán Calderín considers that continuing participating within the PNPPD dynamic is simply unfair for future generations. In his opinion, protesting is just as important as voting because “la deuda es el enemigo de la credibilidad” (the debt is the enemy of credibility). Both Seguí Cordero and Pagán Calderín agreed that the wave of new political parties is the consequence of corruption and incompetence of the traditional political parties. Moreover, they applauded the increase of political parties, as it offers Puerto Ricans more options to more accurately decide which group truly represents them.

Trust of Federal Institutions	
FBI	84%
Supreme Court	81%
Oversight Board	79%
Distrust of Federal Institutions	95% agree Puerto Rico is governed by a few groups that seek their own benefit
Source: Desconfían los boricuas en sus instituciones (2016).	

Figure 6. Public Trust of Federal Institutions in Puerto Rico

For the purposes of this thesis, it is important to point out that both MVC and PD are not “doing politics” in the traditional way. Instead, both political parties are implementing the

⁸⁰ “Los postulados básicos del Proyecto Dignidad,” NotiCel, 2020. <https://www.noticel.com/ahora/politica/los-postulados-basicos-del-proyecto-dignidad/1157909235>

same democratic dynamics that activist groups have carried out since 2006: they organize people's assemblies, they join protests, and appear to condone protesting even more than “just” voting. Even though the political ideologies of both parties seem to be opposite, the anti-austerity social movement has pushed, perhaps without realizing it, a tremendous political realignment. The conversation is no longer focused on the political status of Puerto Rico; it is rather about which party is more against PROMESA Law and the public debt. This new political scenario creates an environment where voting is not the only, and certainly not the most important, form of democratic action to achieve political change.

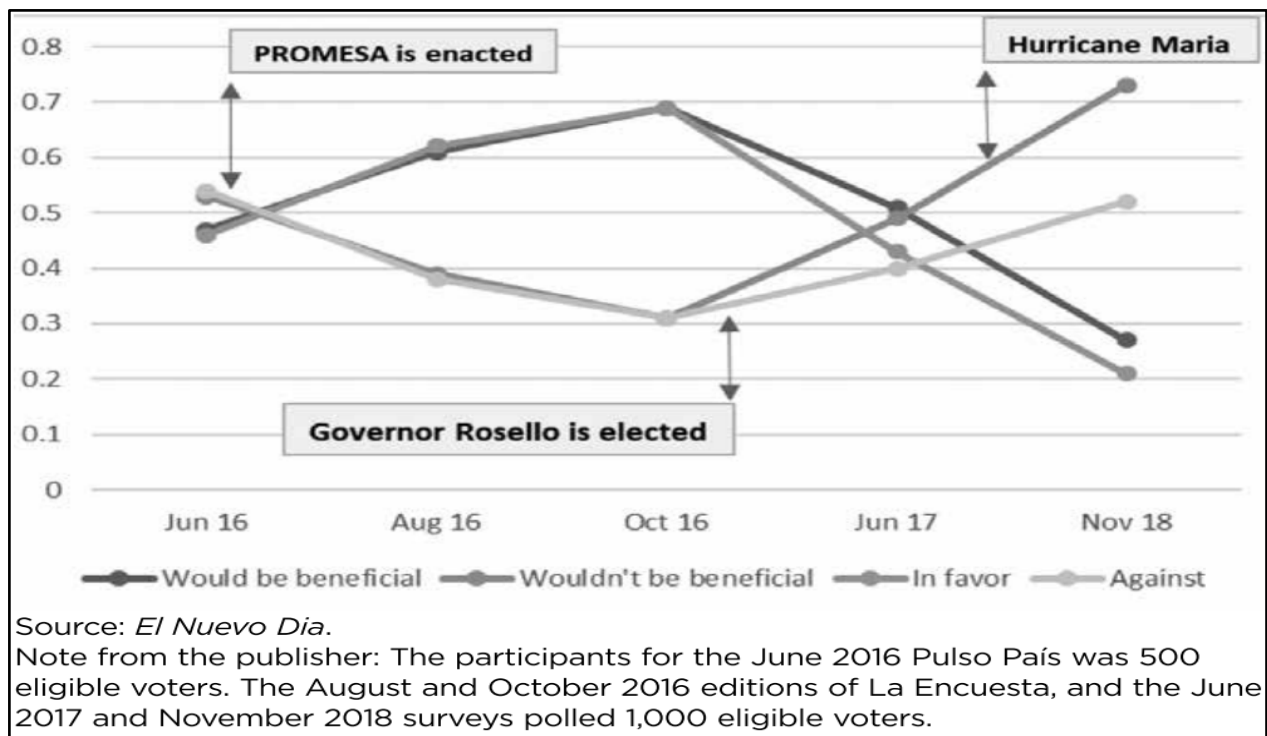


Figure 7. Public Opinion on the Fiscal Oversight and Management Board

On the other hand, poll data shows that a large demographic of Puerto Ricans supported the establishment of PROMESA back in 2016, a finding that resonates with Puerto Ricans' approval of US institutions and overall dissatisfaction with the local government and its officials, as it is presented in Figure 6. However, Figure 7 indicates that the favorable public opinion starts diminishing in 2017, especially after Hurricane María and how the [mis]management of relief funds affected Puerto Rico and its residents. Moreover, during the

Verano 2019, or the Summer of 2019, many protest chants against Roselló exposed the growing rejection to PROMESA. One such chant went “Ricky renuncia y llévate a la Junta,” or “Ricky resign and take the Board with you.”

A member of the Movimiento Diálogo Soberanista (Sovereign Dialogue Movement) and the Convergencia Nacional Boricua (National Puerto Rican Convergence), Luis Torre Goyco perceives the JCF as a body that has taken away Puerto Rico’s power to decide what is best for their country. Likewise, he considers that the vast inconformity with status quo is pushing people to the streets and to minority parties. This is an opinion shared by Jorly Flores, a visual artist who resides in the United States, but visits Puerto Rico often to protest. Flores said that the lack of transparency is motivating people to protest, even as the government continues to repress them. Jorly Flores’ opinions particularly resonate with Schmidt’s approach to democratic legitimacy because the absence of input legitimacy makes individuals believe the output legitimacy is null. Exercising the right to vote is important, Flores says, because it is necessary to put an end to the PPD and the PNP. However, all of the interviewees agreed that protests are even more relevant, because everyone within and outside the government of Puerto Rico needs to be reminded of the push against austerity in a regular and consistent matter.

Conclusion and Future Research

“¡Esa deuda es ilegal, no la vamos a pagar!”
(That debt is illegal, we won’t pay for it!)

As Catherine J. Badillo Ortiz — a member of the Colectiva Feminista De-construye (Feminist Collective Deconstruct) — establishes that “through the polls we are going to be able to push out those who are currently in power [...] but not every political action happens every four years.” Throughout my interviews, I have found that the goal of putting a stop to the PPDNP is seen in parallel to the goal of ending the debt crisis. In other words, these traditional political parties have inadvertently opened the door for an anti-austerity social movement to grow and strengthen. This thesis provides compelling qualitative evidence to establish that the debt crisis is not the only problem impacting Puerto Ricans’ lives; rather, the debt crisis has released a deeper crisis of democracy where the legitimacy of the main traditional parties and the mere act of voting is brought into question as austerity continues to be implemented despite clear public opposition.

Therefore, the austerity of the debt crisis decreased the public’s support for the democratic legitimacy of Puerto Rico because input, output, and throughput legitimacy does not appear to be a priority of the government. The reason behind this statement is that the PNP and the PPD have been the ones who borrowed enormous amounts of money in the first place and have lacked transparency with the people of Puerto Rico. Along with the debt crisis, the PNP and PPD have not been able, or perhaps even willing, to properly address their own role in the creation of the fiscal chaos that has subjugated Puerto Ricans to almost two decades of non-stop austerity. Put differently, I have provided evidence through individual interviews and interpretation of data that supports my argument: the debt crisis is a variable within the political instability of Puerto Rico. The main crisis of Puerto Rico is a crisis of democratic legitimacy.

Austerity has converted Puerto Rico's democracy into a weak institution because people understand the government as an unsuccessful and irresponsible entity that works against the very interests and needs of the constituency it's supposed to work for. The increase of people protesting, especially minorities, is the effect of a "historically oppressive economic model," which obligates Puerto Ricans to either migrate from the island to look for a better economic future, or to organize against the precarious circumstances they endure.⁸¹ In this research, I have focused on those who have stayed in the country even when the financial circumstances are barely endurable. Through Puerto Rican lenses, the only way to achieve political change is to organize and participate on street demonstrations, regardless of voting behavior, because they need to reclaim the power of policymaking.

It is remarkably important to clarify that this study has found that the Puerto Rican people have taken over the streets *regardless* of their electoral behavior. Who they vote for, or if they vote at all, has little to do with their drive to protest against austerity. Because of these new dynamics, minority political parties have no option other than to support and even participate in those anti-austerity protests. I consider the new political parties to be highly aware of the democratic crisis of illegitimacy, which leaves them with no choice but to get involved in direct forms of democracy. This essay has encountered the importance of multi-sectorial political behavior, where different political factors such as Christianity, environmentalism, and feminism are coming together as a stronger way to resist austerity. Therefore, the Puerto Rican Anti-Austerity Social Movement is as heterogeneous as the precarious effects of the debt crisis.

For future research, I would recommend conducting quantitative studies that would provide evidence to support that the degree of dissatisfaction has indeed impacted electoral behavior. Secondly, it would be interesting to further investigate how political campaigns and

⁸¹ Rebollo Gil, "A New Heroic Figure: Female Protestors and Precarity in Puerto Rico."

messaging tactics have changed since 2006. Finally, it is necessary to determine how the debt crisis has modified how Puerto Ricans within or outside the archipelago view the relevance of the country's political status.

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Appendix 1

CONSULTA DE ESTATUS**RESULTADOS ISLA**

Orden: Resultados

	Votos	Por ciento
Estadidad		
	502,801	97.18%
Libre Asociación/Independencia		
	7,786	1.50%
Actual Estatus Territorial		
	6,823	1.32%
TOTAL: 517,410		

*OTROS VOTOS		PARTICIPACIÓN	
PAPELETAS NO ADJUDICADAS	1	INSCRITOS EN COLEGIOS REPORTADOS	2,260,804
PAPELETAS SIN VALOR DE ADJUDICACIÓN	983	TOTAL DE PAPELETAS PARTICIPACIÓN	518,394
TOTAL DE PAPELETAS	518,394	TOTAL DE INSCRITOS	2,260,804
AÑADIDOS A MANO			
TOTAL DE SOBRES DE ELECTORES QUE VOTARON AÑADIDOS A MANO	6,272		

COLEGIOS REPORTADOS: 4587 DE 4587 PARA UN 100.00%

Appendix 2

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Table 4a: Election data for Puerto Rico and municipios, 2012 and 2016

	2012	2016	Difference	Percent change
<i>Islandwide</i>				
Registered voters in PR	2,402,941	2,867,557	464,616	19.3%
Total votes cast in PR	1,878,969	1,589,991	-288,978	-15.4%
Votes cast for governor in PR	1,877,179	1,580,184	-296,995	-15.8%
Registered voter turnout rate in PR	78.2%	55.4%		-29.1%
<i>At municipio level</i>				
Average number of votes cast for governor	24,066	20,258	3,807	-15.4%
High end in range of votes cast for governor	177,602	151,349	-262	-8.0%
Low end in range of votes cast for governor	1,495	1,233	-26,253	-21.0%
Average turnout in election for governor	79.4%	56.7%	-22.6%	-28.6%
High end in range of turnout for governor	87.0%	71.0%	-16.0%	-19.0%
Low end in range of turnout for governor	68.0%	45.0%	-23.0%	-35.0%

Source: Comisión Estatal de Elecciones de Puerto Rico.

Table 4b: Population data for Puerto Rico and municipios, 2011 and 2016

	2011	2016	Difference	Percent change
<i>Islandwide</i>				
Total population	3,742,586	3,529,385	-213,201	-5.7%
Total citizen, voting-age population	2,759,510	2,712,072	-47,438	-1.7%
<i>At municipio level</i>				
Average population	47,981	45,248		-5.7%
High end in range of municipio's population	399,474	363,744		-8.9%
Low end in range of municipio's population	1,831	1,508		-17.6%
Average citizen, voting-age population	35,378	34,770		-1.7%
High end in range of municipio's CVAP	282,231	267,312		-5.3%
Low end in range of municipio's CVAP	1,450	1,120		-22.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (5-yr. estimates), 2011 and 2016.

Appendix 3

2006 Protests

Participants	Organizer	Place	Municipality	Articles about it	Purpose	Month	Newspaper
	FEDERACION DE MAESTROS	Fortaleza	San Juan	"Protestarán frente a La Fortaleza"		January	El Vocero
drivers				"Motociclistas protestan medidas discriminatorias"	Discriminatory Policies	January	El Vocero
AAA employees				"Protestan empleados despedidos de la AAA"	Against Lay off	March	El Vocero
			Dorado	"Protestan por un desarrollo en Dorado"		March	El Vocero
Patients and Employees		HOSPITAL ONCOLOGICO DE RIO PIEDRAS		"Protestan pacientes y empleados"		March	el Vocero
Dominican immigrants		Diamond Palace		"Protestan por racismo en el Diamond Palace"	Racism	April	El Vocero
			Cabo Rojo	"Protesta por privatización de un puente"	Privatization	May	El Vocero
Neighbors and Bussiness people			Cabo Rojo	"En Boquerón: cobra fuerza protesta de vecinos y comerciantes"		May	el Vocero
socialists?		Capitolio	San Juan	"Protestan los socialistas"		May	El Vocero
workers		BGF	San Juan	"Tensa protesta de trabajadores BGF"	CIERRE DEL GOBIERNO DE P.R.	May	El Vocero
teacher unions	FEDERACION DE MAESTROS			"Se diluyen protestas sindicales pautadas"	CIERRE DEL GOBIERNO DE P.R.	May	El Vocero
teacher unions				"Ante cierre patronal, protestan las uniones de Educación"	CIERRE DEL GOBIERNO DE P.R.	May	Claridad
TEAcher unions	FEDERACION DE MAESTROS	MALLS		"A protestar en los centros comerciales"	CIERRE DEL GOBIERNO DE P.R.	May	EL Vocero
nurses				"Enfermeras protestan por proyecto que las sustituiría en laboratorio"	Against Lay off	June	El Vocero
AUTORIDAD DE EDIFICIOS PUBLICOS?		Fortaleza	San Juan	"Protestan frente a Fortaleza"		September	El Vocero
workers	UNION DE TRABAJADORES DE LA INDUSTRIA ELECTRICA Y RIEGO (UTIER)			"UTIER teme privatización: protesta ante Evertec"	Privatization	September	el Vocero
	Coalición Piñones		Loíza	"Coalición Piñones protesta contra megaproyecto"	Development project - COSTA SERENA	September	El Vocero
firefighter unions, CUERPO DE BOMBEROS DE PUERTO RICO				"Bomberos protestan por salarios"	Wages	September	El Vocero
		MUSEO DE LA UNIVERSIDAD DE PUERTO RICO	San Juan	"Reinauguración entre protestas."		September	Primera Hora
		UPR Theater	San Juan	"Falta de diálogo generó protesta: Incidente en teatro de la UPR."		September	Primera Hora
		UPR Theater	San Juan	"Derechos civiles en la escena de la UPR: Protesta por el teatro."	For the Theater	September	Primera Hora
			Vieques	"Pugna: grupo de viequenses protestan privatización playa Bastimiento"	Privatization	September	El Vocero
				"Anticipan protestas: Ante reestructuración gubernamental."	Privatization	October	Primera Hora
				"Despidos: Protesta por la inminente reducción Edificios Públicos"	Budget Cuts	October	El Vocero
drivers		LMM		"Camioneros protestan en el LMM"		October	El Vocero
			Loíza	"Singular protesta: por Costa Serena"	Development project - COSTA SERENA	October	El Vocero
veterans				"Protesta grupo de veteranos"		October	El Vocero
Residents of Culebra		Court		"Protestan frente al tribunal culebrenses por libre acceso a playa"	Free access to the beach	November	El Vocero
residents		Villa Panamericana		"Protestan residentes de Villa Panamericana: debido a construcción de proyecto"	Development project	November	El Vocero
teacher unions	ASOCIACION DE MAESTROS DE PUERTO RICO/ FEDERACION DE MAESTROS			"Tensa la protesta magisterial"		December	El Vocero
firefighter unions, CUERPO DE BOMBEROS DE PUERTO RICO				"Bomberos protestan por tranque en convenio"		December	El Vocero

Appendix 4

2007 Protests

Participants	Organizer	Place	Municipality	Articles about it	Purpose	Month	Newspaper
environmentalists			Vieques	"Protesta viequense por detonaciones en limpieza"	Contamination	January	El Vocero
Citizens			Ponce	"Ciudadanos protestan destrucción de árboles por Municipio de Ponce"	Deforestation	January	Claridad
environmentalists			Ponce	"Protesta ambiental en Ponce por tumba de árboles"	Deforestation	January	El Vocero
Students		UPR	San Juan	"Estudiantes seguirán las protestas en UPR"	Theater	January	El Vocero
environmentalists			Ponce	"Protestan contra permiso a la empresa Cemex"	Against Permit	February	El Vocero
environmentalists			Ponce	"Protestan la quema de gomas"	Tire Fire, Combustion	February	El Vocero
teacher unions	FEDERACION DE MAESTROS			"FMPR realiza protesta dentro de sede DE contra enmiendas reelamento"	Education Reforms	February	El Vocero
environmentalists				"Ecologistas satisfechos por protesta: contra barco plutonio"	Environmental implications of plutonium	February	
mothers			Vieques	"Protestan las Madres"	Irak War	February	El Vocero
				"Organizan protesta Mensaje Presupuesto: de no haber aumentos"	Budget	March	El Vocero
				"Protesta por unicameralidad"	Unicameralidad	March	El Vocero
			Las Piedras	"Protestan por obra paralizada"	Development	March	El Vocero
students		UPR	San Juan	"Firmes contra ROTC en las universidades: Grupo de universitarios iniciará protesta."	ROTC	April	El Nuevo Día
students		UPR	San Juan	"Universitarios protestan contra la privatización: Anuncian "jornada antiprivatización" en la UPR."	Privatization	April	Primera Hora
private sector workers		Univision Event	San Juan	"Protestan política antiobrera de Univisión durante Gala de Objetivo Fama"	Antiworker policies	June	Claridad
driver workers		CSP		"Camioneros protestan frente CSP"		June	El Vocero
driver workers				"Protestan choferes escolares"		June	El Vocero
	ESCUELA RESIDENCIAL AGRICOLA JOSE BARCELO		Adjuntas	"Protestan en Adjuntas."		June	Primera Hora
		FUNDACION NILITA VIENTOS GASTON		"Protestan por la retención fondos"	Budget	June	El Vocero
		National Guard convention		"Protestan convención de la Guardia Nacional"		July	El Vocero
		National Guard convention		"Anuncian protesta masiva contra evento militarista"	Militarism	July	Claridad
		PASEO CARIBE / FORTIN SAN JERONIMO		"Protesta frena proyecto"		July	El Vocero

2007 Protests

		JERONIMO		"Protesta por unicameralidad"	Unicameralidad	July	El Vocero
firefighter workers		AEROPUERTO DE ISLA VERDE LUIS MUÑOZ MARIN / AUTORIDAD DE LOS PUERTOS		"Protestan bomberos del Aeropuerto"		August	El Vocero
environmentalists			Amigos del Mar	"Protestan Amigos del Mar"		August	Claridad
				"Protesta contra la guerra y el militarismo"	Militarism	August	Claridad
		ADMINISTRACION DE INSTITUCIONES JUVENILES		"Protestan por traslado de internos en AU"	Transferring imprisoned youth	September	El Vocero
farmers		INDUSTRIA LECHERA DE PUERTO RICO		"En pie protesta los ganaderos"		September	El Vocero
driver workers				"Protesta de camioneros por pago de pólizas"	Income	October	El Vocero
animal lovers?		ANIMAL CONTROL SOLUTIONS (ACS)		"Ladridos de protesta: frente a Capitolio repudio a matanza mascotas en Vega Raia"	Animal Abuse	October	El Vocero
			Vega Baja	"Protestan por proyecto en balneario"	development	October	El Vocero
			Vieques	"Protesta relámpago por servicio marítimo Vieques"	Militarism	October	Claridad
workers				"Obreros contra Tito Kayak: Protestan contra los ambientalistas."	against environmentalists	November	Primera Hora
consumers		Fortaleza	San Juan	"Exigen firma de "Ley Limon": Consumidores protestan frente a Fortaleza"	passing a law	November	Primera Hora
immigrants				"Emotiva protesta ante Inmigración"	immigration	December	El Vocero
secessionists	MOVIMIENTO INDEPENDENTISTA NACIONAL HOSTOSIANO			"Anuncian actividad de contraprotesta"	militarism	december	El Vocero
secessionists	MOVIMIENTO INDEPENDENTISTA NACIONAL HOSTOSIANO			"MINH llama a protestar la colonia el Día de la Bandera"	Flag Day	December	Claridad
		paSEO CARIBE / FORTIN SAN JERONIMO		"Protesta desata el caos"			El Vocero
workers				"Exigen aplazar la paralización (protesta obreros)"		December	El Vocero
EVERYONE		Paseo Caribe		"Protestan abogados, monjas, arqueólogos y deportistas en Paseo Caribe"		December	Claridad
				"Protestan contra regulaciones a industria rótulos"	Regulations	December	El Vocero

Appendix 5

COMISIÓN ESTATAL DE ELECCIONES
ELECCIONES GENERALES - 4 DE NOVIEMBRE DE 2008
ESCRUTINIO GENERAL Y RECUENTO
DISTRIBUCIÓN PORCENTUAL DEL VOTO PARA CANDIDATOS A GOBERNADOR

Totales por Distrito Senatorial	Votos para Gobernador	ANÍBAL ACEVEDO VILÁ (PPD)		LUIS G. FORTUÑO BURSET (PNP)		EDWIN IRIZARRY MORA (PIP)		ROGELIO FIGUEROA GARCÍA (PPR)	
	Total	Votos	Por Ciento	Votos	Por Ciento	Votos	Por Ciento	Votos	Por Ciento
SAN JUAN I	205,583	86,965	42.30	106,337	51.72	5,374	2.61	6,907	3.36
BAYAMÓN II	228,177	90,280	39.57	126,142	55.28	4,810	2.11	6,945	3.04
ARECIBO III	254,647	105,493	41.43	139,187	54.66	4,287	1.68	5,680	2.23
MAYAGÜEZ IV	253,812	104,659	41.23	137,091	54.01	5,768	2.27	6,294	2.48
PONCE V	236,893	99,368	41.95	126,808	53.53	5,053	2.13	5,664	2.39
GUAYAMA VI	270,284	115,994	42.92	143,297	53.02	5,109	1.89	5,884	2.18
HUMACAO VII	252,781	108,377	42.87	131,112	51.87	4,954	1.96	8,338	3.30
CAROLINA VIII	218,142	89,935	41.23	115,991	53.17	4,235	1.94	7,981	3.66
Totales Isla	1,920,319	801,071	41.72	1,025,965	53.43	39,590	2.06	53,693	2.80

COMISIÓN ESTATAL DE ELECCIONES
ELECCIONES GENERALES - 4 DE NOVIEMBRE DE 2008
ESCRUTINIO GENERAL Y RECUENTO
DISTRIBUCIÓN PORCENTUAL DEL VOTO PARA CANDIDATOS A COMISIONADO RESIDENTE

Totales por Distrito Senatorial	Votos para Comisionado	ALFREDO SALAZAR CONDE (PPD)		PEDRO PIERLUISI URRUTIA (PNP)		JESSICA MARTÍNEZ BIRRIEL (PIP)		CARLOS A. VELÁZQUEZ LÓPEZ (PPR)	
	Total	Votos	Por Ciento	Votos	Por Ciento	Votos	Por Ciento	Votos	Por Ciento
SAN JUAN I	204,682	88,738	43.35	104,851	51.23	5,185	2.53	5,908	2.89
BAYAMÓN II	226,953	91,682	40.40	124,614	54.91	4,594	2.02	6,063	2.67
ARECIBO III	252,408	106,428	42.17	136,920	54.25	4,145	1.64	4,915	1.95
MAYAGÜEZ IV	251,217	105,433	41.97	134,886	53.69	5,455	2.17	5,443	2.17
PONCE V	234,469	100,044	42.67	124,684	53.18	4,842	2.07	4,899	2.09
GUAYAMA VI	267,906	116,942	43.65	141,155	52.69	4,859	1.81	4,950	1.85
HUMACAO VII	250,529	109,689	43.78	129,077	51.52	4,705	1.88	7,058	2.82
CAROLINA VIII	216,242	91,155	42.15	114,117	52.77	4,080	1.89	6,890	3.19
Totales Isla	1,904,406	810,111	42.54	1,010,304	53.05	37,865	1.99	46,126	2.42

COMISIÓN ESTATAL DE ELECCIONES
ELECCIONES GENERALES - 6 DE NOVIEMBRE DE 2012
ESCRUTINIO GENERAL Y RECUENTO
DISTRIBUCIÓN PORCENTUAL DEL VOTO PARA CANDIDATOS A GOBERNADOR

Totales por Distrito Senatorial	Votos para Gobernador	Luis G. Fortuño Burset (PNP)		Alejandro García Padilla (PPD)		Juan Dalmau Ramírez (PIP)		Arturo L. Hernández González (MUS)		Rogelio Figueroa García (PPR)		Rafael A. Bernabe Riefkohl (PPT)	
	Totales	Votos	Por ciento	Votos	Por ciento	Votos	Por ciento	Votos	Por ciento	Votos	Por ciento	Votos	Por ciento
SAN JUAN I	210,961	95,824	45.42	101,340	48.04	6,753	3.20	1,900	0.90	913	0.43	4,231	2.01
BAYAMÓN II	218,741	109,764	50.18	97,771	44.70	6,084	2.78	1,463	0.67	821	0.38	2,838	1.30
ARECIBO III	248,827	124,260	49.94	115,773	46.53	5,274	2.12	1,129	0.45	726	0.29	1,665	0.67
MAYAGÜEZ IV	247,128	113,974	46.12	123,186	49.85	6,067	2.46	1,358	0.55	847	0.34	1,696	0.69
PONCE V	243,838	117,025	47.99	117,632	48.24	6,078	2.49	999	0.41	634	0.26	1,470	0.60
GUAYAMA VI	253,255	120,126	47.43	124,384	49.11	5,624	2.22	894	0.35	591	0.23	1,636	0.65
HUMACAO VII	232,131	107,301	46.22	114,165	49.18	6,063	2.61	1,324	0.57	993	0.43	2,285	0.98
CAROLINA VIII	208,788	96,501	46.22	101,809	48.76	5,388	2.58	1,456	0.70	1,143	0.55	2,491	1.19
Totales Isla	1,863,669	884,775	47.47	896,060	48.08	47,331	2.54	10,523	0.56	6,668	0.36	18,312	0.98

COMISIÓN ESTATAL DE ELECCIONES
ELECCIONES GENERALES - 6 DE NOVIEMBRE DE 2012
ESCRUTINIO GENERAL Y RECUENTO
DISTRIBUCIÓN PORCENTUAL DEL VOTO PARA CANDIDATOS A COMISIONADO RESIDENTE

Totales por Distrito Senatorial	Votos para Gobernador	Pedro R. Pierluisi Urrutia (PNP)		Rafael Cox Alomar (PPD)		Juan M. Mercado Nieves		María De Lourdes Guzmán Rivera (MUS)		Sadiasept Guillont Juarbe (PPR)		Félix Córdova Iturrigui (PPT)	
	Totales	Votos	Por ciento	Votos	Por ciento	Votos	Por ciento	Votos	Por ciento	Votos	Por ciento	Votos	Por ciento
SAN JUAN I	210,233	99,238	47.20	99,808	47.47	5,333	2.54	2,174	1.03	766	0.36	2,914	1.39
BAYAMÓN II	217,968	112,820	51.76	95,776	43.94	4,962	2.28	1,654	0.76	694	0.32	2,062	0.95
ARECIBO III	247,751	126,281	50.97	113,905	45.98	4,541	1.83	1,207	0.49	618	0.25	1,199	0.48
MAYAGÜEZ IV	245,968	116,771	47.47	120,828	49.12	5,012	2.04	1,452	0.59	677	0.28	1,228	0.50
PONCE V	242,730	118,827	48.95	115,912	47.75	5,166	2.13	1,177	0.48	592	0.24	1,056	0.44
GUAYAMA VI	252,381	122,313	48.46	122,581	48.57	4,722	1.87	1,067	0.42	497	0.20	1,201	0.48
HUMACAO VII	231,042	109,776	47.51	112,396	48.65	4,907	2.12	1,472	0.64	858	0.37	1,633	0.71
CAROLINA VIII	207,646	99,040	47.70	99,975	48.15	4,298	2.07	1,561	0.75	945	0.46	1,827	0.88
Totales Isla	1,855,719	905,066	48.77	881,181	47.48	38,941	2.10	11,764	0.63	5,647	0.30	13,120	0.71

Appendix 6

Totales por Distrito Senatorial	PARTIDO POPULAR DEMOCRÁTICO (PPD)			PARTIDO NUEVO PROGRESISTA (PNP)			PARTIDO INDEPENDENTISTA PUERTORRIQUEÑO (PIP)			PARTIDO DEL PUEBLO TRABAJADOR (PPT)			Otros Votos			
	Integros	Mixtos	Total	Integros	Mixtos	Total	Integros	Mixtos	Total	Integros	Mixtos	Total	Cand.	Blanco	Nulos	Total
SAN JUAN I	55,603	1,206	56,809	62,813	2,114	64,927	3,672	1,449	5,121	800	336	1,136	54,019	338	81	54,438
BAYAMÓN II	52,624	1,055	53,679	68,873	2,238	71,111	2,595	908	3,503	430	237	667	56,820	371	132	57,323
ARECIBO III	68,998	1,316	70,314	84,765	2,364	87,129	2,275	705	2,980	229	177	406	50,100	574	86	50,760
MAYAGÜEZ IV	71,227	1,351	72,578	78,067	2,125	80,192	2,935	728	3,663	266	199	465	52,876	661	86	53,623
PONCE V	70,625	1,247	71,872	77,543	1,978	79,521	3,214	718	3,932	337	137	474	48,631	489	95	49,215
GUAYAMA VI	80,877	1,132	82,009	81,848	1,763	83,611	2,726	653	3,379	209	147	356	46,852	517	79	47,448
HUMACAO VII	68,749	1,198	69,947	69,798	1,762	71,560	2,627	773	3,400	357	234	591	52,325	447	68	52,840
CAROLINA VIII	56,879	1,271	58,150	62,167	1,783	63,950	2,417	774	3,191	404	231	635	52,913	486	85	53,484
TOTALES ISLA	626,582	9,776	636,358	686,874	16,127	703,001	22,461	6,708	29,169	3,032	1,698	4,730	414,636	3,883	712	419,231

DISTRIBUCIÓN PORCENTUAL DEL VOTO PARA Candidatos a Gobernador POR DISTRITO SENATORIAL

Totales por Distrito Senatorial	Votos para Gobernador	David Bernier (PPD)		Ricardo Rosselló Nevares (PNP)		María De Lourdes Santiago (PIP)		Rafael Bernabe Riefkohl (PPT)		Manuel Cidre (INDPTE)		Alexandra Lúgaro (INDPTE)	
		Totales	Votos Por ciento	Votos Por ciento	Votos Por ciento	Votos Por ciento	Votos Por ciento	Votos Por ciento	Votos Por ciento	Votos Por ciento	Votos Por ciento	Votos Por ciento	Votos Por ciento
SAN JUAN I	181,325	67,157	37.04	70,962	39.14	6,062	3.34	1,413	0.78	12,648	6.98	23,083	12.73
BAYAMÓN II	185,134	64,382	34.78	78,302	42.29	4,044	2.18	777	0.42	13,192	7.13	24,437	13.20
ARECIBO III	210,237	78,786	37.47	94,986	45.18	3,357	1.60	424	0.20	13,597	6.47	19,087	9.08
MAYAGÜEZ IV	208,984	81,934	39.21	87,905	42.06	4,202	2.01	497	0.24	10,064	4.82	24,382	11.67
PONCE V	203,747	81,060	39.78	87,291	42.84	4,547	2.23	549	0.27	9,688	4.75	20,612	10.12
GUAYAMA VI	215,545	92,485	42.91	89,752	41.64	3,807	1.77	389	0.18	8,499	3.94	20,613	9.56
HUMACAO VII	197,104	80,462	40.82	78,661	39.91	3,874	1.97	641	0.33	11,204	5.68	22,262	11.29
CAROLINA VIII	178,108	67,924	38.14	72,651	40.79	3,836	2.15	740	0.42	11,602	6.51	21,355	11.99
Totales Isla	1,580,184	614,190	38.87	660,510	41.80	33,729	2.13	5,430	0.34	90,494	5.73	175,831	11.13

DISTRIBUCIÓN PORCENTUAL DE VOTOS PARA CANDIDATOS A COMISIONADO RESIDENTE

Totales por Distrito Senatorial	Votos para Comisionado	Héctor Ferrer (PPD)		Jenniffer González (PNP)		Hugo Rodríguez Díaz (PIP)		Mariana Nogales Molinelli (PPT)	
		Totales	Votos Por ciento	Votos Por ciento	Votos Por ciento	Votos Por ciento	Votos Por ciento	Votos Por ciento	Votos Por ciento
SAN JUAN I	170,284	80,300	47.16	79,452	46.66	6,407	3.76	4,125	2.42
BAYAMÓN II	172,170	77,242	44.86	87,116	50.60	5,066	2.94	2,746	1.59
ARECIBO III	196,146	89,403	45.58	101,027	51.51	4,098	2.09	1,618	0.82
MAYAGÜEZ IV	193,665	91,863	47.43	94,687	48.89	5,042	2.60	2,073	1.07
PONCE V	189,315	89,207	47.12	93,044	49.15	5,176	2.73	1,888	1.00
GUAYAMA VI	202,198	99,049	48.99	97,076	48.01	4,450	2.20	1,623	0.80
HUMACAO VII	183,613	89,606	48.80	86,717	47.23	4,798	2.61	2,492	1.36
CAROLINA VIII	165,010	78,403	47.51	79,472	48.16	4,667	2.83	2,468	1.50
Totales Isla	1,472,401	695,073	47.21	718,591	48.80	39,704	2.70	19,033	1.29