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Haciendo patria desde la metrópoli: The Cultural Expressions of the Puerto Rican Diaspora
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This essay provides a comprehensive overview of the evolution of Puerto Rican cultural expressions in the United States, with a major focus on the contemporary period. It argues that these cultural expressions represent and affirm Puerto Ricanness within the diaspora, reinforcing the vitality of Puerto Rican cultural nationalism beyond island borders and a resistance to assimilation into the Anglo American mainstream. The cultural hybridity of Puerto Rican cultural expressions is illustrated by the analysis of a variety of texts. The essay also documents how at different historical periods, Puerto Rican exiles, sojourners, and migrants found a less repressive space to denounce U.S. colonialism and express their nationalistic sentiments or ideological positions than the one found back on the island. [Key words: U.S. Puerto Rican literature, music, visual arts, Spanish-language press, cultural hybridity, cultural nationalism]
Puerto Ricans have made their presence felt in U.S. society. Nonetheless, the Anglocentric historical narrative of the North American nation has been oblivious to their productive and creative lives and those of other ethnoracial minorities. This exclusion did not change in any significant way until the civil rights struggles of the 1960s and ‘70s, when Puerto Ricans and other Latinos began to gain increased visibility as active participants in U.S. socioeconomic, political, and cultural life. Three major factors that account for this increased visibility are the establishment of the Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños in 1974; the emergence of Puerto Rican Studies as an area of academic inquiry at several higher education institutions in the City University of New York (CUNY), the State University of New York (SUNY), and Rutgers University of New Jersey systems; and the creation of numerous civic, cultural, political, educational, professional, and grassroots organizations that focused on community needs and concerns, and on promoting different aspects of Puerto Rican life. This essay provides a comprehensive overview of the creative endeavors of U.S.-based Puerto Rican writers and artists, especially since the 1970s, but with some required background information on cultural activities reaching into the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Puerto Rican presence in the U.S. metropolis. Connections between Puerto Rico and the United States began much earlier than the Spanish-Cuban-American War of 1898. They can be traced back to the early 1800s and intensified through the course of the century.

Spanish-Language Newspapers
The nineteenth-century commercial relations that developed between the Spanish island colonies of Cuba and Puerto Rico and the United States facilitated the flow of island workers and political émigrés. These émigrés included liberal and separatist political and intellectual leaders escaping the repressive Spanish colonial authorities back on the islands. The expatriate Antillean population settled in several U.S. cities, including New York, Philadelphia, Boston, New Orleans, Tampa, and Key West. The flow of émigrés intensified after 1868, when both islands mounted armed rebellions against the Spanish and claimed their independence. The early colonias constituted by these émigrés established migratory patterns of settlement that were to be followed by other immigrants coming from Puerto Rico, Cuba, and other Caribbean and Latin American
nations almost a century later. Of particular importance in these pioneer communities were the Spanish-language newspapers that began to be published in the early 1800s. These newspapers played a key role in keeping émigrés abreast of the political developments in their native countries and in fostering a sense of collective purpose, namely support for the liberation of Cuba and Puerto Rico. Thus they played an important role in fostering Cuban and Puerto Rican nationalism from abroad, away from the colonial oppression that liberal reformists and separatists experienced back on the islands (Poyo 1989; Meléndez 1996).

The Spanish Crown had limited the access to the printing press in most of its New World colonies, including the Spanish North American frontier. The absence of the printing press in these territories lasted until the early 1800s, limiting the circulation of books and newspapers. But despite these conditions, the printing press was available in the British colonies, and, in fact, it has been argued that newspapers and Creole printer-journalists played a key role in promoting the liberal ideas that fueled the American Revolution (Anderson 1983). After the wars of independence spread throughout the Spanish colonies, during the years between 1808 and 1830, many political émigrés sought refuge in several U.S. cities and established their own printing presses to fight Spanish domination and foster the independence of their respective countries.

SEVERAL DECADES AFTER THE EMERGENCE OF THE EARLIER NEWSPAPERS, LA VOZ DE LA AMÉRICA (1865–1867) WAS FOUNDED IN NEW YORK BY PUERTO RICAN AND CUBAN SEPARATISTS.

Up to the first part of the twentieth century, Spanish-language newspapers were the most important creative outlets for writers, intellectuals, and community leaders to express their ideas about the future of their nations and communities. Thus, at first, the expansion of a Spanish-language press in the United States was a function of the Spanish and, later, Mexican control of a portion of the North American territory and, subsequently, of the growth of several colonias hispanas that emerged in different parts of the continent. So far, the oldest Spanish-language newspaper that has been identified is El Misisipi, first published in 1808 in the city of New Orleans (Kanellos and Martell 2000). Newspapers like La Gaceta de Texas and El Mexicano appeared in Texas in 1813 to advocate for Mexican independence. In Philadelphia, Félix Varela, a Cuban separatist priest forced into exile by Spanish authorities, began publishing El Habanero in 1824 to promote that island’s struggle for freedom. New York’s El Mensajero Semanal (1828–1831) and El Mercurio de Nueva York (1828–1831) also focused on Antillean
independence. Francisco P. Ramírez initiated *El Clamor Público* (1855–1859) to denounce the injustices perpetrated against Hispanics, including the frequent lynchings of Mexicans, after California became part of the United States. The Spanish-language press also played a significant role in New Mexico, particularly after the Mexican-American War (1846–1848) and the U.S. takeover of half of Mexico’s territory. The displacement from their native land and injustices endured by the Hispanic population are recorded in these newspapers (Meyer 1996).

Many of the writings first published in Spanish-language newspapers also reached Creole intellectual audiences in the countries of origin. Several decades after the emergence of the earlier newspapers, *La Voz de la América* (1865–1867) was founded in New York by Puerto Rican and Cuban separatists. Another important newspaper promoting the islands’ independence was *La Revolución* (1869–1876), which attracted the collaboration of several intellectual leaders, including Puerto Rican patriots Ramón Emeterio Betances and Eugenio María de Hostos.

THE TABAQUEROS(AS) WERE ONE OF THE MOST ENLIGHTENED AND MILITANT SECTORS OF THE WORKING CLASS, SINCE IT WAS COMMON PRACTICE FOR THEM TO PAY FOR A LECTOR WHO CAME DAILY TO THE TOBACCO FACTORIES TO READ FROM NEWSPAPERS, CLASSICAL LITERATURE, AND FROM MAJOR SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND POLITICAL TEXTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD.

The arrival of Cuban patriot José Martí in New York City in the early 1880s solidified the Antillean separatist movement and generated the necessary support for the second Cuban war of independence (1895–1898). Martí founded the Partido Revolucionario Cubano (PRC) and the newspaper *Patria* (1892–c. 1898), which became the principal forum for the cause. The administration of *Patria* was in the hands of Sotero Figueroa, an Afro-Puerto Rican typographer and journalist. Both Martí and Figueroa wrote many articles, editorials, and biographical profiles for *Patria*.
about the independence struggles and future of their native countries, and the many personalities who had dedicated or given their lives to the fight for freedom.

The New York-based *Patria* drew the collaboration of many intellectuals, creative writers, and political leaders from the islands and other Spanish-speaking countries, including writings by Puerto Rican separatists Ramón Emeterio Betances and Lola Rodríguez de Tió. Another Puerto Rican typographer and journalist émigré, Francisco “Pachín” Marín, revived the separatist newspaper *El Postillón* (1892), which he had published in Puerto Rico before he was exiled by Spanish authorities. Marín also wrote for *La Gaceta del Pueblo* (c. 1892), another New York newspaper. Members of the Sección de Puerto Rico of New York’s PRC started the short-lived newspaper *Borinquen* (1898). Pharmacist Gerardo Forrest was another Puerto Rican separatist involved in journalism. He founded the newspaper *Cuba y Puerto Rico* (1897) before deciding to join the rebels fighting in Cuba. No extant issues of these newspapers have been located to date.

In addition to newspapers run by leading intellectual and political expatriates, a few working-class newspapers also appeared, especially those initiated by Cuban and Puerto Rican *tabaqueros* coming to the United States in the late 1880s to work in the many factories and workshops established in Tampa (Ybor City), New York, Philadelphia, and Key West. The *tabaqueros* were one of the most enlightened and militant sectors of the working class, since it was common practice for them to pay for a lector who came daily to the tobacco factories to read from newspapers, classical literature, and from major social, economic, and political texts from around the world. Hence the *tabaqueros* shared a strong social and political consciousness, and this is reflected in the unions they created, the solidarity shared in their labor struggles, and in the many writings by *tabaqueros* that appeared in workers’ newspapers. The newspaper *El Yara* (1878–?) represented the voice of working-class separatists in the largest Cuban community located at the time in Key West. Other working-class newspapers included New York’s *El Mulato* (1854–?), a staunch defender of the abolition of slavery, and the radical separatist newspaper *El Pueblo* (c. mid-1870s) (Poyo 1989; Meléndez 1996).

Working-class perspectives also were represented in early twentieth-century newspapers such as *Gráfico* (1927–1931) and *Nuevo Mundo* (1928–1930), published in New York City. *Gráfico* was initially edited by Alberto O’Farrill, an Afro-Cuban dramatist and actor, and then purchased and edited by Bernardo Vega, a Puerto Rican *tabaquero*. Vega migrated to the United States in 1916 and remained in the country for several decades. In the 1940s he began recording his experiences as a Puerto Rican migrant, but the manuscript of his memoirs did not reach the public eye until after more than a decade after his death. Vega was to provide one of the most valuable and detailed descriptions of the pre-World War II New York Puerto Rican community in his *Memoirs of Bernardo Vega* (1984 [1977]). Relying on many anecdotal accounts, *Memoirs* contains detailed descriptions of some of the trails and tribulations of working-class migrants and highlights the contributions of numerous organizations and individuals to the community during its early stages of development.

Also from Cayey was Puerto Rican community activist and writer Jesús Colón, a frequent contributor to *Gráfico* and to several other community and workers newspapers, including those affiliated with socialist and labor organizations. Colón published hundreds of short stories and articles in newspapers and magazines during the more than five decades he lived in New York. He arrived in 1918. Some of them were later collected in the volumes *A Puerto Rican in New York*
and Other Sketches (1961), The Way It Was and Other Writings (1993), and Lo que el pueblo me dice (2001). In these writings, Colón provides numerous anecdotal accounts of the diverse experiences, survival struggles, and concerns of working-class migrants. Working-class perspectives of Puerto Rican life in New York City were also recorded by his brother Joaquín Colón in his manuscript Pioneros en Nueva York, 1917–1947 (2002), another rescued manuscript published almost four decades after the author’s death. The importance of these writings is unquestionable since they provide a record of a migrant community struggling for economic survival and against the racial and social injustices they confronted in the wider society.

An important publication in New York during the 1930s was the Revista de Artes y Letras (1933–1939), founded by Puerto Rican feminist activist Josefina (Pepiña) Silva de Cintrón. This monthly magazine circulated widely in the professional sector of New York’s Spanish-speaking community and in several Spanish-speaking countries. The Revista fostered a panethnic sense of hispanismo within the United States by advocating for the maintenance of the Spanish language and Hispanic heritage. Its intellectual and literary focus attracted the collaboration of many well-known writers from different Spanish-speaking countries, including Puerto Rican authors Clotilde Betances Jaeger, María Más Pozo and Pedro Labarthe. The publication paid special attention to women’s issues and community concerns.

In the 1940s Spanish-language newspapers continued to play an important role for Spanish Civil War exiles in New York City and for the increasing number of Puerto Ricans coming to the city during the early years of the Great Migration. Two of the best known were Pueblos Hispanos (1943–1944), founded by Puerto Rican nationalist poet Juan Antonio Corretjer, and Liberación (1946–1949), started by Spanish exiles. These publications also fostered a sense of hispanismo based on what were perceived at the time to be common political causes: condemning fascism in Spain and other parts of Europe, and U.S. colonial domination in Puerto Rico; and denouncing racism against Hispanics and the exploitation of their labor in U.S. society. The writings of Latinos(as) from many different nationalities were also promoted in these publications. Bernardo Vega, for instance, wrote a series of articles about Puerto Rican migration to the United States for Liberación (1946–1949).

Many Puerto Rican nationalists sought refuge in New York City during these years in order to avoid the repressive measures of Puerto Rico’s colonial government. Among the most prominent writers were Corretjer; his wife Consuelo Lee Tapia, who helped administer and occasionally wrote for Pueblos Hispanos; feminist and nationalist poet Julia de Burgos, a regular columnist for the newspaper; and avant-garde nationalist poet Clemente Soto Vélez, also a regular contributor to New York’s Spanish-language press.

There is no doubt that the Spanish-language press in the United States represents one of the most valuable sources to understand how the Puerto Rican and other Latino communities evolved, the issues of interest to particular localities and groups, and how these groups saw themselves in relation to the Spanish metropolitan power, their countries of origin, and the United States. Newspapers kept U.S. Puerto Rican and other Latino communities abreast of what was happening in their native countries as much as they contributed to their adaptation process into Anglo American society. They were important outlets for community businesses and organizations to advertise their services, and played a key role in the publication of literature. Although some Spanish-language newspapers are still published in most of the U.S. Latino communities, by the mid-twentieth century they had stopped
being an important source for the publication of creative writing. Authors wanting to publish their works had to rely on publishing houses, and very few of these mainstream companies had any interest in the U.S. Latino experience or Latino(a) writers. Self-publishing was another option used by some authors to get their work out to the reading public during this period.

**The Civil Rights and Ethnic Revitalization Movements and Contemporary U.S. Puerto Rican Literature**

Although Puerto Ricans were referred to as “newcomers” (Handlin 1959) to the United States during the Great Migration years, the postwar massive influx was only a continuation of a presence that had started more than a century before. But because they were ethnic and racial minorities at the lower end of the socioeconomic ladder, the status of Puerto Ricans, Chicanos, and other Latinos(as) is far from similar to that of the average US citizen. Thus their striving against racial and socioeconomic inequalities and for political empowerment has been an integral part of their presence in U.S. society. These struggles intensified after the 1960s civil rights movement. Chicanos and Puerto Ricans, along with African and Native Americans, fought for equality and engaged in revitalizing and asserting their ethnic identity in order to better enable themselves to face the pervading racism and segregation that afflicted U.S. society. Social, educational, and political struggles in later decades have involved other Latino groups, such as Cubans, Dominicans, Colombians, and most Central and South American nationalities.

THE SEARCH FOR AND RECONSTRUCTION OF A DENIED POSITIVE IDENTITY LED TO AN EXPLOSION OF ACTIVISM, THE EMERGENCE OF GRASSROOTS AND PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, AND NEW CULTURAL EXPRESSIONS.

The ethnic revitalization process undergone by ethnoracial minorities during the civil rights’ years was aimed at ridding themselves of the negative self-image and stigma that came from their marginal status. The search for and reconstruction of a denied positive identity led to an explosion of activism, the emergence of grassroots and professional organizations, and new cultural expressions. Literature, music, and the visual arts represented a collective way of manifesting shared ideological struggles and solidarity among groups of color, and for underscoring the distinctiveness and originality of these social movements, which attracted the support of students and intellectuals, as well as members of
the various communities. Latino cultural and political activism found expression in publications such as El Grito: Journal of Contemporary Chicano Thought, which began publication in 1968, and its counterpart The Rican: Journal of Contemporary Puerto Rican Thought, first published in 1971. These journals provided a forum for pertinent political and social debates, and introduced the work of Puerto Rican and other U.S. Latino writers, artists, scholars, and activists. Other journals, such as the Revista Chicano-Riqueña (later The Americas Review), Bilingual Review, Third Woman, and CENTRO Journal opened new Latino-focused outlets for creative expression and critical analysis. Most of these journals are firmly established and continue to provide publishing opportunities to Latino(a) authors, including Puerto Ricans. They filled a major publishing void at a time when most U.S. mainstream publishers ignored the Latino market. More recent journals, such as the Latino(a) Research Review (LRR) and Latino Studies are expanding the range of opportunities for promoting Latino(a)-focused scholarship.

No other artistic movement has drawn more attention to the U.S. Puerto Rican experience than the one associated with the founding of the Nuyorican Poets’ Cafe. Before it began to be used by these particular groups of poets, the term Nuyorican (an adaptation from the phrase New York Puerto Rican) and its variations (Newyorican, Neorican) carried negative connotations. The term was used frequently by island Puerto Ricans to distance themselves from what they perceived to be the underprivileged lives of their poor migrant compatriots in the U.S. metropolis. The word Nuyorican also carried the underlying assumption that U.S. Puerto Ricans were mostly from New York, a situation that has changed significantly since the 1980s with the gradual geographic dispersion of Puerto Rican migrants to other U.S. urban and suburban localities.

Established in 1975, the Nuyorican Poets’ Cafe was the idea of writer Miguel Algarín and a concept that originated from frequent tertulias or artistic gatherings at his home (Turner 1991). Located in the Lower East Side of Manhattan (promptly baptized Loisaida by these poets, who adapted the neighborhood’s English name into Spanish), the Cafe was aimed at providing an alternative stage for unknown poets to share their work with public audiences. Plays also were frequently performed at the Cafe, and several of the Nuyorican poets became accomplished performance artists and playwrights. These writings and performances served an important consciousness-raising function and fostered a sense of community among Puerto Ricans. Poets Miguel Algarín and Miguel Piñero proudly adopted and popularized the term Nuyorican as a way of giving legitimacy and drawing attention to what it meant to be a product of a marginalized diaspora. Like Chicanos, the Nuyorican sense of identity was born out of the oppression and survival experiences of working-class migrants in a racist and ethnocentric U.S. society. This critical view of the United States, however, did not deter these writers from also being critical of their own heritage. Their relationship with Puerto Rico was often problematic and full of contradictions. The island was the land of their parents, but these authors were born or grew up in the various barrios of New York and other major cities, experiencing racial strife and socioeconomic disadvantage, and were influenced by their contact with other Latinos, African Americans, mainstream Anglo American society, and the English language. Thus they were also different from those Puerto Ricans born and raised in Puerto Rico.

Through their readings and performances at the Nuyorican Poets’ Cafe writers such as Algarín, Piñero, Pedro Pietri, Sandra María Esteves, Tato Laviera, and José Ángel Figueroa, to name only a few of the more prominent, first introduced many
of the works that years later made them some of the best-known names of the Nuyorican literary movement. Like most Latino authors they write primarily in English, but occasionally in Spanish or a mixture of both languages. Their so-called “Spanglish” includes frequent code switching between English and Spanish, or adapting English words into the Spanish language (Acosta-Belén 1975; Aparicio 1988). For the most part, these writers learned Spanish at home or in the urban barrios without much formal instruction, and learned English in the schools and the surrounding environment.

THE ISLAND WAS THE LAND OF THEIR PARENTS, BUT THESE AUTHORS WERE BORN OR GREW UP IN THE VARIOUS BARRIOS OF NEW YORK AND OTHER MAJOR CITIES, EXPERIENCING RACIAL STRIFE AND SOCIOECONOMIC DISADVANTAGE, AND WERE INFLUENCED BY THEIR CONTACT WITH OTHER LATINOS, AFRICAN AMERICANS, MAINSTREAM ANGLO AMERICAN SOCIETY, AND THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

The publication of *Nuyorican Poetry: An Anthology of Words and Feelings* (1975), edited by Algarín and Piñero, introduced some of these young poets to the reading public and provided a cultural and political context for the Nuyorican literary experience. Algarín defined the cultural and linguistic essence of this new artistic movement as a Spanish-English interchange that “yields new verbal possibilities, new images to deal with the stresses of living on tar and cement” (1975: 12).

This was an assertion of both the innovative nature of their work and their different experiences as products of a Puerto Rican diaspora. Almost two decades later Algarín coedited with Bob Horman the anthology *Aloud: Voices from the Nuyorican Poets’ Café* (1994). The introduction to the volume describes the origins and evolution of this institution into a broader artistic stage, where Puerto Rican and other young writers of many different nationalities continue to introduce their work at the Café’s notorious poetry slams.
The concept of “street poetry” or “outlaw poetry” was coined early on by Nuyorican poets to underscore their attempts at producing consciousness-raising writings that reflected the lives of working-class migrants and their alienating experiences of poverty, racism, internal colonialism, and second-class citizenship in the streets of the inner cities. Algarín was among the earlier authors to release individually authored poetry collections with *Mongo Affair* (1970). The late Pedro Pietri was another pioneer. He published one of the most critically acclaimed volumes, *Puerto Rican Obituary* (1973), and produced a recording of the poems in this collection, confirming his commitment to reach the masses through oral performance and dramatization. Piñero released the collection *La Bodega Sold Dreams* (1980), reaffirming his connection with the streets and his Lower East Side community. Sandra María Esteves, who is also a graphic artist, was one of the few recognized women poets within the Nuyorican movement with the publication of *Yerba Buena* (1980) and *Tropical Rains* (1984). Esteves’s identity quest is closely linked to liberation from the lingering effects of colonialism and an affirmation of the inner power of women. Another Nuyorican poet to achieve recognition was Tato Laviera, with his powerful collections *La Carreta Made a U-Turn* (1979), *Enclave* (1981), and *AmeRícan* (1985). Many of Laviera’s poems centered on the construction of U.S.-based Puerto Rican identity and celebrate the cultural, linguistic, and racial hybridity that takes place within the context of the diaspora:

We gave birth to a new generation
AmeRícan salutes all folklores,
european, Indian, black, Spanish,
and anything else compatible (“AmeRícan,” 1985: 94)

Moreover, as a Puerto Rican mulatto, many of Laviera’s poems frequently emphasize his African roots, since this heritage tends to be marginalized within his own culture:

un negrito melodía he came along,
improvising bomba drums on dancer’s feet,
choral songs, sonero heat, snapping hands,
sweat at ease, melodía sang,
he sang like this:
se queda allí, se queda allí, se queda allí, es mi raíz
(“bomba, para siempre,” 1981: 68)

Besides the Nuyorican poets, there are other leading U.S. Puerto Rican poets who have achieved wide recognition. Víctor Hernández Cruz was a pioneer and continues to be one of the most prolific and widely read authors. The impact of his work on mainstream audiences is validated by his inclusion in *Life* magazine’s 1981 list of best American poets. Some of his poetry collections include *Snaps* (1969), *Mainland* (1973), *Tropicalization* (1976), *Rhythm, Content, and Flavor* (1989), and *Maraca* (2001). Hernández Cruz’s poetry is characterized by his frequent use of Spanish, Taíno, and African cultural and historical references, and the recreation of different musical forms. The author himself has stated that as a writer he likes to explore cultural differences, affirm the various historical roots of the Puerto Rican people, and experiment with sounds and imagery (Hernández 1998). Another leading poet, Martín Espada, is a winner of an American Book Award for his collection *Imagine the*
Angels of Bread (1996) and of a PEN/Revson Award for Rebellion is the Circle of a Lover's Hand (1990). More recent works include A Mayan Astronomer in Hell's Kitchen: Poems (2001) and his collection of essays Zapata's Disciple (1998). Espada has been praised for his mastery of the poetic craft, which he combines with a strong sense of social justice and compassion for the poor. Many of the author's poems reflect a strong political and social consciousness, but this does not take away from his masterful use of imagery and the syncopated rhythms of his verses.

Younger New York poets, such as María Teresa (Mariposa) Fernández and Willie Perdomo have also drawn critical attention. Fernández's “Ode to the Diasporican” (1985) is a collective affirmation of a Puerto Rican identity shared by those Boricuas born or raised in the United States. It also introduces another term to differentiate the experiences of island Puerto Ricans from those born or raised in the United States. The poet reclaims her Puerto Rican heritage as a way to define her own place within U.S. society:

Some people say that I am not the real thing
Boricua, that is
Cause I wasn't born on the enchanted island
Cause I was born on the mainland
North of Spanish Harlem
Cause I was born in the Bronx...
What does it mean to live in between
What does it take to realize
That being Boricua
Is a state of mind
A state of heart
A state of the soul

Perdomo, known as a slam poetry performer at the Nuyorican Poets Café and other settings, is the author of the collections Where a Nickel Costs a Dime (1996) and Smoking Lovely (2003), in which he captures the "rhythms of the streets" in his powerful oral renditions of his work. Both publications include a CD of the author's poetic performances.

Compelling autobiographical novels by U.S. Puerto Rican authors began to be published in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The genre of the Bildungsroman, a narrative that captures the experience of growing up in America, has been a common feature of all ethnic literatures. Some of the pioneering examples of these poignant narratives are Down These Mean Streets (1967) by Piri Thomas, its sequel Saviour, Saviour Hold My Hand (1972), and Seven Long Times (1974). As a Puerto Rican mulatto, Thomas's autobiographical narratives exposed from a male perspective the self-destructive effects of the racism and the socioeconomic marginality endured by Puerto Ricans in New York, and their struggles to survive. After spending seven years in prison for his involvement in an armed robbery to support his drug addiction, writing provided Thomas a creative outlet to denounce social and racial ills and to inspire younger generations to overcome the negative forces that for a time derailed his own life.

For Puerto Ricans and other Latino(a) writers, artistic creativity is an effective way of exposing the effects of racial and social oppression and promoting social change. The working-class origins of many of these writers, as well as the nature of their
literary themes, placed them in a position to represent “the voices of the voiceless,” articulating the experiences and struggles of their own families and respective communities. Other well-recognized male narratives include Edward Rivera's *Family Installments* (1982) and Abraham Rodríguez's *Boy Without a Flag: Tales of the South Bronx* (1992) and the novel *Spidertown* (1993). Rivera tends to use satiric humor to illustrate how a Puerto Rican youngster and his family cope with the conflicts that arise from their interactions with the school system and mainstream society. Rodríguez narratives echo the anger and violence of ghetto life found in the works of Piri Thomas. He is, however, from a younger generation of Puerto Ricans still dealing with an environment of hardship, despair, and survival.

Many works about growing up experiences were written by women. Female writers found a sense of solidarity in the international women’s movement of the 1970s and ‘80s and in the writings of other women of color. The writings of Puerto Ricans and U.S. Latinas in general reflect an increased consciousness of the different layers of oppression they experience based on their ethnic, racial, gender, and class subordination within their respective Latino cultures and in the wider society (see Acosta-Belén 1992). Some women authors are critical of *machismo* and expose heterosexist gender roles within their own families and communities, and how these have contributed to their oppression and affected different generations of women. These writers also underscore the ways in which some women break away from traditional roles, in addition to exposing the racism and exclusion they experience as members of U.S. society.

There is a legacy of poignant narratives by women authors that are worthy of mention. A leading prose fiction writer is Nicholasa Mohr. Her first semiautobiographical novel *Nilda* (1975) and her short story collections *El Bronx Remembered* (1975), *In Nueva York* (1977), and *Rituals of Survival: A Woman's Portfolio* (1983) have made her one of the most recognized and anthologized Puerto Rican prose fiction authors. Another well-recognized writer, Judith Ortiz Cofer, drew critical praise for her novel *The Line of the Sun* (1989), a fictional account of the experiences of her childhood commuting between her native Puerto Rican hometown of Hormigueros and Paterson, New Jersey. A prose fiction writer and poet, Ortiz Cofer also authored the short story and poetry collections *Silent Dancing: A Partial Remembrance of a Puerto Rican Childhood* (1990) and *The Latin Deli* (1994), and the novel *The Meaning of Consuelo* (2004), among other works. These two authors also have made important contributions to the children’s and young adults’ reading market, providing Puerto Rican and other Latino(a) youngsters with writings where they can see themselves and their communities in a more positive light.

The name of Esmeralda Santiago was added to the list of prominent prose fiction authors after she published the autobiographical novel *When I Was Puerto Rican* (1993), and brought fresh insights to the cultural straddling that characterizes the migrant experience from the perspective of a child turning into an adolescent. The success of Santiago’s first novel led to the sequel *Almost a Woman* (1998), which was made into a movie for public television. One of her latest novels, *The Turkish Lover* (2004), documents a more mature and tumultuous stage in the author’s life during her college years. In most of these narratives by Puerto Rican women authors, the protagonists are empowered by their own creativity and by forging a record of their respective families’ survival struggles and their own coming-of-age experiences as the offspring of migrant parents. Writing allows them not only to validate these experiences, but also to overcome the shattering social forces that limit the progress of their respective communities.
A groundbreaking book for Latinas and other women of color was *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (1981), edited by Chicana authors Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa. A few years later, Moraga coedited with Ana Castillo a Spanish edition of this anthology under the title *Esta puente, mi espalda: Voces de mujeres tercermundistas* (1988), aimed at a Spanish-speaking audience. Two well-known Puerto Rican authors are included in these anthologies: Rosario Morales and Aurora Levins Morales. A few years later, the unusual pairing of two talented writers who happen to be mother and daughter yielded the volume *Getting Home Alive* (1986). In this collection, the two authors reveal the multiple oppressions confronted by women and emphasize the birth of a new liberating cultural synthesis:

I am what I am
_A child of the Americas._
A light-skinned mestiza of the Caribbean
_A child of many diaspora, born into this continent at a crossroads,_
_I am Puerto Rican. I am U.S. American._
_We are new..._  
_History made us..._  
_And we are whole._ (1986: 213)

A feminist outlook is also at the core of Levins Morales’s subsequent works, *Remedios* (1998a) and *Medicine Stories: History, Culture, and the Politics of Integrity* (1998b), in which the author combines her skills as a historian, storyteller, and poet to give voice to the oppression experienced by women and other colonized groups.

Sexuality became another important dimension of women’s oppression, especially for Latinas. In this regard Moraga’s and Anzaldúa’s writings were at the vanguard in breaking down the heterosexist barriers and affirming a lesbian identity within Latino culture. The anthology *Compañeras: Latina Lesbians* (1987), edited by Puerto Rican scholar Juanita Ramos, also broke new ground by introducing some of the writings and testimonials of women marginalized because of their sexual orientation, paying particular attention to the myriad of social and cultural forces that perpetuate their oppression. The collection *The Margarita Poems* (1987), by Puerto Rican poet and literary critic Luz María Umpierre, is another important contribution to challenging conventional heterosexist norms.

A new female voice in Puerto Rican prose fiction is Marta Moreno Vega, author of the autobiographical narratives *The Altar of My Soul* (2001) and *When the Spirits Dance Mambo: Growing Up Nuyorican in El Barrio* (2004). An Afro-Puerto Rican, Moreno Vega emphasizes the transformative influence of _santería_ and _espiritismo_ in her spiritual growth and in strengthening her ties to family and community. They also give testimony of how in the diaspora certain cultural traditions are kept alive and passed along and take on new meanings for the younger generations.

There are several Latino(a) writers currently residing in the United States or who have spent some portion of their lives here in the past and have achieved an international reputation throughout Latin America and other parts of the world. Most of their writings tend to focus on the particular social and political conditions of their native countries and not necessarily on the (im)migrant experience. They write primarily in Spanish, although it is common for their works to be translated into English or other languages. In a few cases, their degree of Spanish-English bilingualism allows them to write in either language or be their own
translators. One of the best examples of this crossover writing is Puerto Rican author Rosario Ferré. Ferré became an acclaimed author throughout the Spanish-speaking world, after the publication of her short story collection *Papeles de Pandora* (*The Youngest Doll*, 1990) and her novel *Maldito amor* (*Sweet Diamond Dust*, 1988). This writer has lived intermittently in the United States and currently resides in Puerto Rico. In 1995 she published *The House on the Lagoon*, her first novel written in English. The author then proceeded to rewrite the novel in Spanish. She followed a similar approach in her second English novel *Eccentric Neighborhoods* (1998).

Another prominent Puerto Rican writer frequently “commuting” between the island and New York is Luis Rafael Sánchez, author of the internationally acclaimed novel *La guaracha del Macho Camacho* (*Macho Camacho’s Beat*, 1976). But it is in his collection of stories and essays *La guagua aérea* (*The Airbus*, 1994), in which Sánchez combines his mastery of language and humor to put a human face on the migrant experience, and illustrate the many ways in which Puerto Ricans adapt and modify their back and forth journey between the cultural worlds of the island and the metropolis.

**THE HISTORY OF PUERTO RICAN THEATER IN THE UNITED STATES IS LINKED TO A LONG PROFESSIONAL AND WORKING-CLASS TRADITION IN THIS GENRE, ONE THAT DATES BACK TO THE SECOND HALF OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY AND FLOURISHED ESPECIALLY IN NEW YORK CITY DURING THE DECADES OF THE 1920S TO THE 1940S AND, AGAIN, SINCE THE 1970S.**

*Performing Culture*

Theater is another genre that has played an important cultural and social role within the community. Beyond being a popular source of entertainment, it has fostered a sense of community and is an effective consciousness-raising tool. Most plays emphasize various facets of the life and cultural heritage of the different Latino groups. In his pioneering study *A History of Hispanic Theater in the United States: Origins to 1940* (1990), Nicolás Kanellos documents this prominent aspect of the
cultural life of various Latino communities, and brings to light a long tradition of 
dramatic performance and writing that remained neglected for many years.

The history of Puerto Rican theater in the United States is linked to a long 
professional and working-class tradition in this genre, one that dates back to the 
second half of the nineteenth century and flourished especially in New York City
during the decades of the 1920s to the 1940s and, again, since the 1970s. Kanellos notes that New York was an important “model in solidifying diverse Hispanic nationalities on the stage” (1990: xv). As the largest Latino group in the city, Puerto Ricans held their presence on the stage as writers and performers. Kanellos was able to identify several published and unpublished plays by Puerto Rican and other Latino(a) writers that reflect some of the issues concerning the various Latino nationalities during the earlier stages of community development, and attest to the level of cultural activity taking place in these localities.

There are several plays that stand out in reflecting the social and political concerns of the New York Puerto Rican community during the early decades of the twentieth century. These include Gonzalo O’Neill’s *Pabellón de Borinquen o bajo una sola bandera* (1929) and *La indiana borinquena* (1922). Both plays uphold the proindependence and antiimperialist ideals of the author, a supporter of the Puerto Rican nationalist movement during its burgeoning years. O’Neill’s comedy, *Moncho Reyes* (1923), provides a satirical view of the Americanization policies pushed by E. Montgomery Reily, at the time the U.S.-appointed governor of Puerto Rico. The name in the title of the play is a Spanish adaptation of this North American public official’s name, coined by Puerto Ricans to ridicule him. Another playwright, Frank Martínez, authored the play *De Puerto Rico a Nueva York* (1939) focusing on migration issues. According to Kanellos (1990), this play was performed but never published, and was an important antecedent to René Marqués’s play *La carreta* (1953). For a long time, Marqués’ tragic view of migrant life depicted in *La carreta* was the main point of reference that island Puerto Ricans had about the experiences of their compatriots in the United States.

A popular entertainment form among Puerto Rican and Cuban performers during the 1920s and ’30s was the humorous *teatro bufo-cubano*, which combined elements of vaudeville and African-American minstrel shows. Puerto Rican actor and playwright Erasmo Vando was known for his contributions to this popular genre and for writing and producing the play *De Puerto Rico al Metropolitano o el Caruso Criollo* (1928) (Kanellos 1990).

Many theater productions during the Depression years were aimed at consciousness-raising among working-class audiences. The *teatro obrero* was a genre linked to the labor movement that was very popular during the 1920s and ’30s, both on the island and the metropolis. Community organizations such as the Mutualista Obrera Puertorriqueña regularly sponsored performances by professional companies and provided space for amateur productions (Kanellos 1990).

A play that focuses on the exploitation of workers by the capitalist system and the aftereffects of the Great Depression is *Los hipócritas* (1937) by Puerto Rican author Franca de Armiño. De Armiño, a member of a tobacco strippers union in Puerto Rico, was known for her feminist and labor activism. In 1919 she participated in the First Congress of Women Workers. She also was president of the women workers’ suffragist organization Asociación Feminista Popular before she migrated to New York in the late 1920s. But not much is yet known about her life and writings while living in New York, except for the above mentioned play and a few articles published in Bernardo Vega’s newspaper, *Gráfico*, and in *Nuevo Mundo*.

The Nuevo Círculo Dramático (1953–1960) was established in New York by the playwright Roberto Rodríguez Suárez, director of the premiere performance of Marqués’s drama *La carreta* in 1953. In subsequent decades, the productions of the Puerto Rican Traveling Theater, founded by Miriam Colón in 1967, brought theater to the people of the New York barrios and offered new
opportunities to actors and playwrights. In fact, *La carreta* was the Traveling Theater's first major production. The Traveling Theater was initially a vehicle to introduce the work of island writers to community audiences, but in later years it began to showcase the work of U.S.-born Puerto Rican writers. In addition to promoting theater activities, Colón is a very talented actor, and she has made numerous contributions to film and television.

Under the artistic direction of Rosalba Rolón, the Teatro Pregones, founded in 1980 and located in the Bronx, continues to promote theater “rooted in Puerto Rican traditions and popular artistic expressions” (Newsletter Fall 1999: 1). The company has performed all over the world and provides a stage for young actors, playwrights, producers, directors, and musicians to flourish and be mentored by more experienced professionals.

A few of the Nuyorican poets also made important contributions to theater. Miguel Algarín is a major force behind the Puerto Rican Actors'/Playwrights Workshop and the Nuyorican Theater Festival, and the author of several plays that have been produced but not published. Algarín also coedited the anthology *Action: The Nuyorican Poets Cafe Theater Festival* (1997). Nuyorican poet and playwright Miguel Piñero was quite successful with his drama *Short Eyes* (1975), a work that captures the harshness of prison life. Piñero, who had grown up in the Lower East Side of Manhattan, had been a gang member in his youth. He became addicted to drugs and went to prison because of his participation in an armed robbery. A prison theater workshop introduced him to acting and writing, activities he continued to pursue after his release. *Short Eyes* received the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for Best American Play and an Obie Award for Best Off-Broadway play of 1974, and was later made into a major motion picture. The poet’s talented, tortured, and self-destructive path that shortened his life was later reenacted in the film *Piñero* (2002).

Some new writers have achieved recognition in the off-Broadway theater circuit. Worthy of mention is playwright José Rivera, author of *Marisol* (1994), a futuristic and apocalyptic dark comedy about urban violence and the breaking of male and female stereotypes. Rivera’s autobiographical play *The House of Ramón Iglesia* (1983) was produced for television by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting in 1986 and published three years later. Another well known U.S. Puerto Rican dramatist is Carmen Rivera, author of *Julia* (1992), a play that challenges traditional women's roles and evokes the poetic rebelliousness of Julia de Burgos.

Theater and film roles for Latino(a) actors have never been abundant. Actors constantly struggle for recognition, and most are conscious of the pitfalls of the ethnic typecasting that dominates U.S. entertainment circles. Rodríguez (2004 [2000]) has documented and analyzed many of the stereotypical images and representations of Latinos(as) propagated in the U.S. media and their demeaning effects at an individual and collective level. She notes that Latinos(as) in general still continue being “the most underrepresented ethnic group in films and primetime television” despite the unprecedented growth in this population since the latter decades of the twentieth century (2004: 243).

*Con la música por dentro: Puerto Rican Salsa and Other Popular Rhythms*¹

The mythification and yearning for the Puerto Rican homeland expressed in creative literature is also found in some of the most popular songs written by composers and musicians, especially those coming to the United States at some point in their lives.

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1. *Con la música por dentro: Puerto Rican Salsa and Other Popular Rhythms*
either for brief periods of time or a longer stay. A common phrase to describe Puerto Ricans is to say that “llevan la música por dentro.” The popular phrase indicates the importance of this particular genre in the sum of Puerto Rican cultural expression. Popular songs such as Rafael Hernández’s “Preciosa,” Noel Estrada’s “En mi Viejo San Juan,” and Bobby Capó’s “Soñando con Puerto Rico” are only a few of the best-known examples of the nostalgia, patriotic pride, and love for the Puerto Rican homeland expressed by those Puerto Ricans finding themselves in distant shores.

Popular music undoubtedly represents an expressive form that contributes in a significant way to propagating Puerto Rican cultural traditions, affirming a Puerto Rican national consciousness within the diaspora, and generating the cultural vitality that exists between island and U.S. communities. From typical forms such as the plena, the bomba, décima, or the aguinaldo, to the romantic bolero or the faster dancing rhythms of salsa, musical expression is a vibrant part of Puerto Rican and the wider Latino cultural and social life in the United States. Rap and reggaetón are new popular forms that have captivated young audiences in recent years and reflect a whole gamut of social, cultural, racial, gender, and sexuality issues (see Flores 2000; Rivera Marshall and Pacini Hernandez 2009).

POPULAR MUSIC UNDOUBTEDLY REPRESENTS AN EXPRESSIVE FORM THAT CONTRIBUTES IN A SIGNIFICANT WAY TO PROPAGATING PUERTO RICAN CULTURAL TRADITIONS, AFFIRMING A PUERTO RICAN NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS WITHIN THE DIASPORA, AND GENERATING THE CULTURAL VITALITY THAT EXISTS BETWEEN ISLAND AND U.S. COMMUNITIES.

Folk music interpreter Manuel “Canario” Jiménez first recorded and popularized his plenas in New York in the 1920s and 30s. For many of the performers who are part of Puerto Rico’s popular music hall of fame, their experiences within the Latino communities throughout the United States were important in establishing their careers. Whether their travels outside the island were temporary or they resided in
the U.S. metropolis for long periods, Puerto Rican and other Latino performers often shared the stage of the Teatro Hispano de Nueva York, the Teatro Puerto Rico, the Teatro San José, the Park Palace Theater, or the famous Palladium dancing hall. Harlem’s celebrated Apollo Theater also opened its doors to Puerto Rican and other Latino(a) performers.

IN THE LATE 1950S AND 1960S, A NEW GENERATION OF PUERTO RICAN PERFORMERS BORN OR RAISED IN THE UNITED STATES BEGAN TO REVOLUTIONIZE THE NEW YORK LATINO MUSICAL ENVIRONMENT AND THEIR POPULARITY EXTENDED TO THE ISLAND AND OTHER PARTS OF LATIN AMERICA.

For the community, music has been and continues to be more than a form of entertainment. The creativity, visibility, and prominence of Puerto Rican performers are important symbols for a community confronted with a constant barrage of negative images in the press, movies, and other media (Glasser 1995; Santiago 1994). The songs and musical styles that emerged from within the diaspora reflect a deeply rooted sense of Puerto Ricanness, and are part of that inexhaustible repertoire of survival strategies that migrants develop in the process of adapting to new and alienating environments.

 Included among the best known early figures in New York’s musical circles were the talented performer-composers Rafael Hernández, Pedro Flores, and Bobby Capó. Hernández’s Trío Borinquen and Cuarteto Victoria first performed some of his most memorable compositions in New York. The Puerto Rican homeland was central to Hernández’s internationally known songs “Lamento Borincano” (also known as “El Jibarito”) and “Preciosa,” both written in New York. The first song describes the misery and despair that dominated the Puerto Rican rural landscape during the Great Depression years, and the last one is a patriotic exaltation of the natural beauty of the Puerto Rican homeland and its lack of political freedom.

 Singer-composers Bobby Capó, Mirta Silva, and Pedro Ortiz Dávila (Davilita) performed at different times with Rafael Hernández’s Cuarteto before they achieved their own individual fame as composers and musical interpreters. Capó was one of the first performers to host his own television show on a New York network.

 From New York, Davilita also was a featured singer in composer Pedro Flores’ New York musical ensembles. Years later, Davilita joined Felipe (“La Voz”)
Rodríguez, becoming one of the most acclaimed duos in New York and Puerto Rico. Raised in New York, singer Daniel Santos also made popular his unique singing style during this period. A fervent nationalist, Santos found a less repressive political environment away from the island.

Some of the problems confronted by black Puerto Rican artists, like Hernández, Davilita, and Santos were caused by the segregationist practices prevalent in U.S. society at the time. Such practices excluded these artists from performing in some of the most prominent whites-only clubs, especially before the 1960s civil rights laws barred segregation. Not only were dark-skinned performers excluded from certain venues, they also were paid less than white or light-skinned Latinos(as) (Glasser 1995).

Musicians such as Noro Morales, Tito Puente, and Tito Rodríguez are among the pioneers of the Big Band and Mambo Kings era who entertained audiences in New York’s celebrated Palladium dancing hall. Morales’ orchestra, which often alternated on the stage with Glenn Miller’s, also performed on Broadway. Born in the United States of Puerto Rican parents, Tito Puente studied at Juilliard and soon became known for his musical experiments, in which he combined African American jazz with Latin rhythms. He was known as “el rey del timbal” and of a new genre labeled Latin jazz. Until his death in 2002, Tito Puente was one the leading percussion artists and orchestra leaders in the United States and the rest of the continent, with a musical career that spanned for more than half a century.

Tito Rodríguez and his Mambo Devils were among the first successful Puerto Rican musical groups to entertain U.S. audiences in the late 1940s. Rodríguez came to New York, where his brother Johnny and his trio had achieved popularity among Latinos(as). In later years, Tito Rodríguez’s ventures into the bossa nova beat and his heartfelt style as a singer of romantic boleros also gained him fame in Venezuela, Argentina, and other countries.

In the late 1950s and 1960s, a new generation of Puerto Rican performers born or raised in the United States began to revolutionize the New York Latino musical environment and their popularity extended to the island and other parts of Latin America. New York-born Charlie Palmieri, also a piano student at Juilliard, began to achieve recognition with his Orquesta Siboney in the early 1950s. In 1959, he joined Dominican flautist, Johnny Pacheco, and founded the Charanga Duboney. Using a combination of the flute, violin, bass, and small drums, they popularized the pachanga and charanga rhythms that turned into dancing favorites for many U.S. Latino audiences during the early 1960s. Another Puerto Rican pachanguero, Joe Quijano, started his own recording label, Cesta, and asked Charlie Palmieri to direct the production of the recordings of the Cesta All Stars, a label that included some of the most popular performers of these musical beats. Charlie Palmieri’s brother, Eddie, made his own contributions to this new musical genre and to Latin jazz. Despite the fact that these performers made an impact on the Latino musical world of the 1950s and ‘60s, they were not as successful in crossing over into the mainstream U.S. market and the Billboard charts, in contrast to some of the more prominent Latino(a) performers who achieved recognition in the 1990s and thereafter.

Born in Brooklyn of Puerto Rican parents, Ray Barreto, was the first pachanga performer to cross over and make it to the Billboard’s list of hits with his recording of the song “El watusi” (Santiago 1994). During the same period, Gilberto Calderón, better known by his artistic name of Joe Cuba, also achieved success with his famous Sexteto group for his combination of mambo and North American rhythm and blues.
to create the late 1960s boogaloo craze. The bugalú was occasionally interpreted in English or bilingually. Ricardo “Richie” Ray, an accomplished U.S.-born Puerto Rican pianist and graduate from Juilliard, started his career with this musical genre. He recruited another U.S.-born Puerto Rican, Bobby Cruz, to become the lead singer in his orchestra, which had an extensive bilingual repertoire and achieved considerable popularity within the Latino communities.

In 1964, Johnny Pacheco created the Fania recording label and opened the doors to many other Latino(a) performers to join the celebrated Fania All Stars, including Puerto Rican performers Bobby Valentin, Willie Colón, and Héctor Lavoe, and Jewish-American pianist Larry Harlow. The experimentation and fusion of Afro-Caribbean rhythms with jazz, rock, and rhythm and blues was to be marketed by Fania as the salsa genre, creating an unbreakable musical link between Boricuas on the island and those born or raised in the United States. Salsa incorporated elements of the most popular Afro-Caribbean musical rhythms—the son, mambo, guaracha, pachanga, chachachá, son montuno, and rumba. It was a term that reflected most accurately the effervescence and sabor of Latino music and a marketing label that unified the diverse musical experiences of the various Caribbean diasporas in the United States.

PROMINENT STUDIES ON SALSA MUSIC (QUINTERO RIVERA 1998; APARICIO 1999) ARGUE THAT BESIDES ITS ENTERTAINMENT VALUE, THIS POPULAR GENRE PROVIDES A MIRROR OF SOCIAL AND POWER RELATIONS AMONG VARIOUS SOCIAL STRATA AND BETWEEN THE SEXES.

Unquestionably, the Caribbean rhythms of salsa have penetrated the North American musical mainstream as demonstrated by the enormous success of many contemporary Latino(a) performers practicing this genre, either in Spanish or bilingually. A new wave of younger and successful salsa interpreters has emerged. A leading singer in this genre is Marc Anthony, also a performer of ballads and pop rock. Marc Anthony’s popularity in the United States has reached levels similar to those achieved by other Puerto Rican pop rock performers such as Ricky Martin and Jennifer López. Hollywood film productions, such as Salsa (1998) and Dance with Me (1999), the former featuring ex-Menudo Robby “Draco” Rosa, and the latter Puerto Rican singer Chayanne and the well-known African-American performer, Vanessa Williams, reflect the growing popularity of salsa and Latino music among U.S. audiences.
Prominent studies on salsa music (Quintero Rivera 1998; Aparicio 1999) argue that besides its entertainment value, this popular genre provides a mirror of social and power relations among various social strata and between the sexes. Cultural definition and affirmation is another important component of this music. Songs such as “Color Americano” recorded by Puerto Rican salsero Willie Colón, “Buscando América” by Panamanian singer Rubén Blades, and “Latinos en Estados Unidos” by the late Cuban diva Celia Cruz illustrate ways in which Latino interpreters and composers use music as an instrument of social consciousness and as a means of reaffirming a panethnic sense of Latino identity that frequently transcends their individual national origins. In “Color Americano,” a song written by Amilcar Boscán and interpreted by Willie Colón, some of the basic elements of this identity are defined, emphasizing both national and panethnic connections:

Tengo el honor
de ser hispano
llevo el sabor del borincano,
mi color morenito
ya casi marrón
es orgullo del pueblo
latino señor.

Puerto Rican folkloric music, particularly those compositions reflecting the influence of African rhythms such as the plena and the bomba, also has inspired many interpreters. One of the best-known contemporary groups in this genre is Los Pleneros de la 21, a group founded in 1983 by Juan Gutiérrez. Through their recordings and concerts this group has revitalized Afro-Puerto Rican traditional music within the diaspora.

Some Puerto Rican folk singers of the genre called “la nueva trova” [the new folk song] became popular during the social and political activism of the 1960s and ’70s. This music was performed at colleges and universities, or at activities sponsored by community organizations. Some performers shared their time moving between the island and the United States. One of the most popular is Roy Brown. He recorded the album, Nueva Yol (the title is a common Spanish colloquial adaptation of the name New York) (1983). Earlier in his career, Brown had popularized the song “El negrito bonito,” a song that captures some of the sadness and perils of a destitute black Puerto Rican migrant.

Different forms of popular musical expressions continue to emerge from the barrios, including rap, hip-hop, and reggaetón. The latter genre combines hip-hop, salsa, and reggae. During the last several years this hybrid musical expression has reached a popularity that extends beyond Puerto Rican borders to the United States and other parts of Latin America. With its contagious rhyming and bass beat, the reggaetón is one of the most successful contemporary musical crossovers, since although English is frequently used in its lyrics, Spanish continues to dominate the genre. Interpreters such as Daddy Yankee, Tego Calderón, Ivy Queen, along with trailblazers Vico C and El General, are keeping reggaetón one of the most influential musical happenings of recent years. Rap, hip-hop, and reggaetón all provide offbeat ways of understanding the cultural, social, and racial interactions among working-class Puerto Ricans and African Americans in the inner city. Flores (2000) argues that, “Like other Latino groups, Puerto Ricans are using rap as a vehicle for affirming their history, language,
and culture under conditions of rampant discrimination and exclusion" (2000: 137).
There is no doubt that the participation of Puerto Ricans in the creation of these new
musical genre adds to the many other forms of bilingual creative expression coming
out of the urban barrios. Their huge popularity allows for its working-class social and
political content to reach the U.S. mainstream as much as it does a Latino audience.

The Visual Arts

Puerto Rican visual artists from the island are among the most frequent sojourners and
migrants to the United States. Because of the nature of their trade, many of these artists
have studied, resided, held exhibitions, or received recognition outside the island.
Even many of those artists based in Puerto Rico maintain a continuous exchange with
other Puerto Rican artists born or raised in the metropolis around some of the same
issues of cultural identity and resistance to assimilation found in literary expression.

The struggles and accomplishments of Puerto Rican visual artists during the
last half century usually reflect some of the same difficulties and challenges faced
by some of the earlier masters, in particular their pilgrimages to many parts of the
world seeking training or the mentorship of established foreign artists intended to
increase their chances for a successful career. The evocation of the native landscape
and traditions, and the difficult adaptation to a culturally different and unwelcoming
environment shapes the work of many Puerto Rican visual artists of the diaspora.

Efforts to promote Puerto Rican culture within the United States were part of
the charge of the Migration Division, established in 1948 by the government’s
Department of Labor to facilitate the employment of migrants and their transition
to their new environment. The decades prior to the 1950s had witnessed the arrival
of a few Puerto Rican artists, but they worked mostly without the benefit of a
supportive artistic environment, often in isolation from each other, and their work
was, therefore, less known to the community.

According to Torruella Leval (1998), the activities of Puerto Rican artists in the
United States can be placed into three different cycles. The first, beginning in the
1950s, opened the dialogue between artists from the island and the metropolis
around cultural issues of self-definition. The second cycle took place during the
ethnic revitalization movement of the 1960s and ‘70s and focused on social protest
and community empowerment. The third one links Puerto Ricans to the cultural
debates and struggles of a growing Latino population and the wider panethnic Latino
experience within U.S. society.

A few names stand out when making reference to the most notable artists of the
pre-World War II migration period. Juan De’Prey, an artist of Puerto Rican and
Haitian ancestry, came to New York from Puerto Rico in 1929 and became known
for landscapes that illustrate a nostalgia for his native land and his mulatto racial
background. De’Prey’s style has often been compared to that of Gauguin, particularly
his portraits of children (Bloch 1978).

Prior to becoming one of Puerto Rico’s most internationally acclaimed artists,
Lorenzo Homar lived in New York in the early 1930s working as a designer for the
famous Cartier house of jewelers. Painter Rafael D. Palacios arrived in New York
in 1938 and developed a prominent career as a book illustrator and cartographer for
U.S. publishing houses. Olga Albizu was another painter achieving some prominence
in New York before the 1960s. She exhibited her work at the Organization of
American States Gallery and designed record album jackets for RCA (Benitez 1988;
Acosta-Belén et al. 2000).

Puerto Rican cultural activities in the diaspora were influenced by the cultural and intellectual environment that began to be promoted on the island during the 1950s. Reacting to the rapid changes that were occurring in Puerto Rico during the Operation Bootstrap years, the administration of then Governor Luis Muñoz Marín also sponsored Operación Serenidad. This ambitious cultural endeavor was aimed at maintaining a balance between the overwhelming North American economic and cultural influences in Puerto Rico and the preservation of the island’s cultural distinctiveness and traditions. Some of the government-sponsored initiatives under Operación Serenidad included incentives in the form of scholarships, travel grants, performances, exhibits, films, and publications that often brought Puerto Ricans from the island to the United States to work on joint artistic projects with their fellow compatriots. Many of these activities were coordinated by New York’s Migration Division, then headed by Joseph Monserrat. The Division sponsored the Oller-Campeche Gallery, which allowed many Puerto Rican artists to introduce their work to the community. Puerto Rican fine arts in New York also were fostered by the efforts of organizations such as the Puerto Rican Institute, directed at the time by Luis Quero Chiesa. The presence in New York of well-known Puerto Rican visual artists Rafael Tufiño and Carlos Osorio during this period also enriched the diaspora’s artistic circles (Torruella Leval 1998).

Before the ethnic revitalization movement of the Civil Rights era, it was not easy for Puerto Rican or other Latino(a) artists to make significant incursions into U.S. mainstream artistic circles from which they were largely excluded. This situation started to change when members of the community began to develop opportunities for artists to train, create, and exhibit. The founding in 1953 of Los Amigos de Puerto Rico by artist Amalia Guerrero served those purposes. For more than two decades some of the best-known island artists came to New York to teach or learn at Guerrero’s workshop (Torruella Leval 1998).

However, it was not until the 1960s and ’70s that those Puerto Rican artists born or raised in the United States began to make their mark with works that combined the images, colors, symbols, and traditions of the homeland with some
of the sobering realities of barrio life. Be it through murals, sculptures, paintings, silkscreens, posters, or photographs, the artistic world of the diaspora began to flourish and to capture what it meant to be Puerto Rican in a bicultural environment. These artists also depicted the many ways in which the Puerto Rican people struggled and endured as part of a disenfranchised U.S. working class.

During the time when some of empty spaces of the urban barrios were often filled with graffiti, many Puerto Rican artists found creative outlets to channel their anger and disaffection, or to celebrate and affirm their heritage through different forms of public art. Public art provided the means for bringing a mythical Puerto Rico to the various U.S. communities where Puerto Ricans had settled. The reproduction of African and Taíno indigenous motifs and folkloric traditions were very popular among these artists. According to Marimar Benítez (1988: 78), “the walls of Puerto Rican business places, particularly those of La Marketa...began to blossom with murals painted by folk artists.... Artists such as Johnny Vázquez and Millito López painted the rural scenes they had left behind.”

PUBLIC ART PROVIDED THE MEANS FOR BRINGING A MYTHICAL PUERTO RICO TO THE VARIOUS U.S. COMMUNITIES WHERE PUERTO RICANS HAD SETTLED.

A few of the best examples of public art include Rafael Ferrer’s sculpture Puerto Rican Sun (1979), located in the South Bronx. The sculpture brought a tropical flavor to a sterile environment in the form of palm trees holding up a shining sun. Manuel Vega’s mural Playa de amor (1988), depicted Afro-Puerto Rican dancers celebrating their musical traditions. Nitza Tufiño was hired by New York’s Metropolitan Transportation Authority in 1989 to create a ceramic mural at a subway station in Spanish Harlem. The imposing mural Neo-Borikén reproduces Taino Indian petroglyphs in bright colors. Marina Gutiérrez, a high school art teacher, tries to capture through her images elements of Puerto Rican social and political oppression on the island and the United States (Torrueña Leval 1999). Among her most impressive contributions to public art is her 1996 installation of colorful suspended mobile structures that attempt to visually capture the images of Julia de Burgos’ poetry. This installation is displayed at the atrium of the Julia de Burgos Latino Cultural Center in Manhattan’s East Side.

Other artists, such as Pedro Villarini, created paintings that transported the Puerto Rican rural landscape and traditions to the cold and colorless environment of the city. His El artesano en Nueva York is a tribute to the artisan tradition of religious woodcarvings. Curriculum materials, illustrated anthologies, posters, and the covers of the Comité Noviembre’s annual magazine displayed the artwork of Ernesto Ramos-Nieves, a talented artist who died of illness at a young age. The Comité Noviembre was established in New York in 1987 to institutionalize the celebration
of the month of November as Puerto Rican Heritage Month. The Comité was founded by the joint efforts of several community organizations, and its annual publication was a way of highlighting the work of artists and the overall cultural life of the U.S. Puerto Rican community.

An impressive display of the images, traditions, and dilemmas of Puerto Rican barrio life is offered by the works of Juan Sánchez. This artist’s powerful paintings and collages fill many public spaces and are displayed on the covers of numerous books and journals. Jiménez-Muñoz and Santiago-Valles summarize the essence of Sánchez’s body of work:

Isn’t this part of what being Puerto Rican is all about, particularly in the U.S.: being caught between Spanish and English, being the Caribbean/tropical hybrid in Niuyol City’s cold wasteland, trying to negotiate between American-ness and Latin American-ness, between “el welfare” and “las 936,” crossing “el charco” in “la guagua aérea,” etc.? It is no accident that practically all of these are themes which Sánchez has included (explicitly or implicitly) in recent paintings. (1995: 22)

One of Sánchez’s major works is Conditions that Exist. The piece embodies some of the most compelling images and issues of the diaspora. The words Sánchez included on this collage reveal the identity quest that is such an integral part of many U.S. Puerto Rican cultural expressions: “¿Dónde está mi gente?/¿dónde está mi país?/ ¿para dónde vamos?”

The few institutions established to promote artistic endeavors within the Puerto Rican community have been quite successful in achieving their goals. Two of the leading ones are the Museo del Barrio and the Taller Alma Boricua (better known as the Taller Boricua), both established in New York in 1969. Founded in East Harlem by a group of Puerto Rican artists and educators, the Museo is now a key cultural and educational resource. In addition to its many rotating exhibits, education programs, and publications, it holds a permanent collection. Artists Martha Vega, Rafael Montañez Ortiz (also known as Ralph Ortiz), and Hiram Maristany are among the founders of this institution. The Museo’s 1973 exhibit “The Art Heritage of Puerto Rico,” a joint initiative with the Metropolitan Museum of Art, afforded the opportunity for a large collective exhibit of a whole gamut of artistic expressions, including Taíno cemies and other stone and ceramic crafts, santos wood carvings, classical and modern paintings, posters, silk screens, and sculptures. Since then, the Museum has sponsored numerous exhibits by Puerto Rican and other Latino(a) artists, and many other cultural activities. Worth mentioning is the 1978–1979 exhibit, “Bridge Between Islands,” aimed at fostering connections between Puerto Rican artists from the island and the diaspora.

Founded by Puerto Rican artists Marcos Dimas, Carlos Osorio, Manuel Otero, Armando Soto, Adrián García, and Martín Rubio, the Taller Boricua is a center for community art education in East Harlem. Nonetheless, a large number of the most talented Puerto Rican artists, both from the island and the United States, have spent time working there. The Taller provides a setting for artists to work and exchange ideas and the artwork produced at this workshop often explores the roots of what it means to be Puerto Rican, especially by emphasizing Taíno and African symbols and traditions (Torruella Leval 1998).

New York Puerto Rican writer and artist, Jack Agüeros, a member of Los Amigos de Puerto Rico and a former Director of El Museo del Barrio, supported the work of Latino(a) artists through the establishment in the mid-1970s of Galería Caymán in Soho. This gallery later became the Museum of Contemporary Hispanic Art (MOCHA). Other artists, such as James Shine, have supported the artistic activity
of Latinos(a) in New York as a member of the New York State Council for the Arts (1988–1998). Shine is the owner of an extensive collection of Puerto Rican art posters, which he often lends out to schools and universities.

In Philadelphia, the Taller Puertorriqueño, founded in 1974, has played a role similar to New York’s Taller Boricua. It is a community-based cultural education organization that houses a cultural awareness program, a gallery, a bookstore, and a museum collection and archives. Chicago’s Juan Antonio Corretjer Puerto Rican Cultural Center (PRCC) has been instrumental in maintaining the vitality of the Paseo Boricua, considered “the cultural and economic heartbeat” of the city’s Puerto Rican community. The Paseo is the site of an impressive architectural display of two steel Puerto Rican flags that run across Division Street. The Paseo is also the site of a casta and numerous murals, including Sea of Flags by Puerto Rican artists Gamaliel Ramírez and Eden Star Padilla. This particular mural depicts a crowd waving Puerto Rican flags and surrounding the Puerto Rican nationalist patriot Lolita Lebrón, who is holding the flag that became a symbol of the Lares insurrection of 1868. The PRCC supported the development of the Institute of Puerto Rican Art and Culture (IPRAC), an organization that supports a whole range of activities promoting Puerto Rican artistic and musical expression.

From 1988–1996, the Institute of Puerto Rican Affairs, headed by Paquita Vivó, maintained a lively cultural presence in Washington, D.C. The Institute sponsored art exhibits, concerts, lectures, conferences, and publications. It was associated with the island-based Fundación Puertorriqueña de las Humanidades, itself sponsored by the Washington-based National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH).

FOR SOME ISLAND PUERTO RICAN ARTISTS, NEW YORK AND MANY OTHER U.S. COMMUNITIES ARE ONLY ANOTHER STOP MADE BY THE “AIRBUS” THAT CONNECTS THE ISLAND WITH THE METROPOLIS.

The arrival of the Internet made room in cyberspace for the disseminating the work of Puerto Rican visual artists. This new generation of experimental artists is represented by the work of photographer and visual artist Adal Maldonado. He cofounded with Nuyorican writer Pedro Pietri the website El Puerto Rican Embassy in 1994, although artist Eduardo Figueroa is responsible for the original concept developed in the website El Espíritu Republic de Puerto Rico (see www.elpuertoricanembassy.org). Maldonado and Pietri expanded upon the original concept by creating a Puerto Rican “passport,” appointing Ambassadors of the Arts, writing a Manifesto, and a “Spanglish” National Anthem. El Puerto Rican Embassy is described by its founders as a “sovereign state of mind,” an ironic take on Puerto Rico’s “unsovereign” political status. Maldonado’s collection of photographs, Out of Focus Nuyoricans, is also displayed on this website, and it is described
as a collection that “expresses the political and psychological conditions of the Puerto Rican and Nuyorican identity” (www.elpuertoricanembassy.org: 2). It is clear from this website that political and cultural issues related to the colonial subordination of Puerto Ricans continue to be as important to both island and U.S.-based Puerto Rican artists.

More than ever artists are using the Internet to display and promote their work. Through her website, Soraida Martínez, the creator of what she calls “Verdadism” or a philosophy of truth, describes her style as “a form of hard-edge abstraction in which paintings are juxtaposed with social commentaries.” Martínez has made the following comments about her painting *Puerto Rican Stereotype: The Way You See Me Without Looking at Me*:

Throughout my life I have met lots of people that have never experienced meeting or getting to know a Puerto Rican woman. I have had some people admit to me their feelings on what they though a Puerto Rican woman looked and acted like. *Puerto Rican Stereotype: The Way You See Me Without Looking at Me* is a satirical painting based on the false information given to me by the media and other life experiences. (1992)

New York is not the only art scene for Puerto Ricans. The presence of acclaimed painter Arnaldo Roche Rabell in Chicago, an artist who, like many others, travels back and forth between the island and the metropolis, is characteristic of the cultural straddling that is so much a part of the migrant experience and that brings so many different kinds of cultural explorations or “Rican-constructions” around identity issues. In 1984, Roche Rabell was the first Puerto Rican to receive the Lincoln medal from the Governor of Illinois. Almost half a century earlier, another Puerto Rican artist, Rufino Silva, made his mark in Chicago where he was on the faculty of the famous Art Institute for many years (Benítez 1988).

Another prominent Chicago-based Puerto Rican artist is Bibiana Suárez, a graduate of the Chicago Art Institute and a faculty member at DePaul University. Juan Sánchez describes Suárez’s work as “a conflictive plebiscite of the mind” which “illuminates the cultural, social, and political friction of [her] spiritual, human, female, and Puerto Rican state of mind” (1991: 1–2). The artist herself states that her work attempts to create “a metaphorical sense of place, ...not in Puerto Rico, not in Chicago, but my own island” (1991: 1).

In Orlando, Puerto Rican artist Obed Gómez has become a leading figure with his distinctive style and colorful images that recreate the Puerto Rican musical spirit and the island’s countryside and urban traditions (see www.obedart.com). Often described as “the Puerto Rican Picasso,” Gómez’s work has been featured in several of the city’s publications, and his work has also been showcased throughout the state of Florida.

Born in Puerto Rico, Miguel Luciano received his college education in the United States and his public art work and gallery exhibitions have made him a well-known visual artist within the diaspora. He is regarded as one of the most innovative artists of his generation. Many of his works rely on a combination of visual media that uses commercial product labels, historic publications, graffiti, and other popular images, often subverting them to convey powerful social and political messages about different aspects of Puerto Rico’s colonial status, and the Puerto Rican experience on the island and in the metropolis (see miguelluciano.com).

The work of visual artist Yasmin Hernández provides one of the best examples of how Puerto Rican artists in the United States continue “haciendo patria desde la metrópoli.” In her website (www.yasminhernandez.com), she classifies her work in
three categories: the political, cultural, and spiritual, all underlying a fundamental belief that “creating from the ‘margin’” is in itself “a very political space.” Although born in Brooklyn, Hernández’s work is deeply influenced by Puerto Rican history. She often recreates historical events or political figures from old photographs (e.g. Ponce Massacre, photographs of some of the martyrs of Puerto Rican independence).

For some island Puerto Rican artists, New York and many other U.S. communities are only another stop made by the “airbus” that connects the island with the metropolis. Thus, it is difficult to fully understand their body of work without this important dimension. Antonio Martorell is one of those frequent commuters
enriching the life of the U.S. Puerto Rican communities with his impressive mixed-media installations and performances—often combining art, theater, and literary text. He recurrently installs exhibits at U.S. colleges, galleries, and museums. His exhibition, *Blanca Snow in Puerto Rico*, held at New York’s Hostos Community College Art Gallery in 1997, is one of his most impressive contributions to the community’s cultural life. Moreover, with the collaboration of theater director, Rosa Luisa Márquez, both artists have traveled to many U.S. universities to engage students in the process of writing, staging, and acting in performances that rely on the students’ own creativity and talent.

**Crossing Over: Being Bilingual in America**

In Puerto Rico, it is often said by those who oppose statehood or independence that, because of its relationship with the United States, the island shares the best of two worlds. This statement is based on the more than usual exposure of Puerto Ricans to the Anglo American culture and the English language, and their holding of U.S. citizenship, all of which make it easier for some Puerto Rican writers and artists to cross over into the U.S. market. The same can be said of many U.S. Puerto Rican writers and artists trying to reach out to Spanish-speaking audiences in Puerto Rico and other countries. The latter view their cultural straddling and affirmation of their Puerto Rican identity as indications of their resistance to assimilation into the Anglo American mainstream that marginalized them, and as a way of denouncing existing racial and social inequalities.

Since the 1990s many of the writings by U.S. Puerto Rican and other Latino authors are being translated into Spanish, and distributed and marketed throughout Latin America and Spain. A few U.S. Puerto Rican authors also write in Spanish or bilingually, and in the 1940s and 50s literary figures, such as Jesús Colón and Julia de Burgos, occasionally wrote in English despite the fact that Spanish was their native language. But this kind of crossover writing is not the norm within Latin American or North American literature, although it is becoming quite common in the growing field of U.S. Latino literature, confronting both critics and readers with the perennial question of where to place these literary works. Are they part of U.S. or Latin American literature, or are they now unequivocally part of both? Without doubt, the increasing Latino(a) presence in U.S. society and the transnational dynamics at work in the Americas during the era of globalization is producing new and provocative realities of culture contact and hybridity that are challenging old literary canons and models of immigrant assimilation.

Artistic crossovers are also demonstrated by the unprecedented success of bilingual Puerto Rican performers Ricky Martin, Marc Anthony, and Jennifer López, along with other Latino performers, such as Gloria Estefan, Cristina Aguilera, Enrique Iglesias, and Shakira, to mention a few. Their ability to sing in Spanish and English and the cultural hybridity reflected in their musical interpretations is more than just an exotic marketing ploy to sell a product to the North American public. It is rather a sign of how the people of Latin American and the Caribbean—Puerto Ricans included—are now “invading the invader,” turning the spaces where they migrate into their own by bringing their cultural heritage and language into their creative endeavors, and making their presence felt in the rest of U.S. society.

**Concluding Remarks**

Puerto Rican writers and artists are actively engaged in issues related to their own histories, cultures, and identities, their relationship and interaction with the U.S.
mainstream culture, and their place in North American society. This endeavor involves the task of reconstructing and documenting their presence as well as rescuing the neglected elements of their native culture. They often emphasize the indigenous or African cultural roots, which in the past were overshadowed by the emphasis given to the Hispanic heritage, and challenge traditional boundaries on issues of gender and sexuality. Moreover, at different historical periods, including the present, cultural production within the diaspora has contributed to the growth and vitality of Puerto Rican cultural nationalism.

**THERE IS NOW A WELL-DEFINED AND RECOGNIZED CORPUS OF LITERARY WORKS, AND AN INCREASING NUMBER OF ANTHOLOGIES THAT, IN ADDITION TO THEIR ARTISTIC MERIT, HAVE BECOME MAJOR SOCIOLOGICAL SOURCES TO LEARN ABOUT MIGRANT EXPERIENCES AND THE PROCESS OF ADAPTATION TO U.S. SOCIETY.**

Literature is one of the most effective ways to represent the cultural and historical experiences of minority groups, and Puerto Ricans are no exception. There is now a well-defined and recognized corpus of literary works, and an increasing number of anthologies that, in addition to their artistic merit, have become major sociological sources to learn about migrant experiences and the process of adaptation to U.S. society. This body of literature captures the writers’ straddling of two different cultures and languages, and many aspects of the cultural and historical relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States.

Affirming their national identity as Puerto Ricans or a wider panethnic identification as Latinos(as) often provides most authors, musicians, performers, and visual artists a sense of solidarity based on the historical exclusion and prevailing inequalities they collectively experience, in addition to denouncing specific social, racial, educational, or political conditions. At the same time, the proximity and interactions that Puerto Ricans and other Latino groups share with their particular countries of origin, and the ongoing transnational migration patterns that characterize some of these groups continues to invigorate their individual sense of national and panethnic identities, and challenge the cultural borders of both U.S. society and their respective ancestral homelands.
Some portions of this essay first appeared in Chapter 4 of Acosta-Belén et al. (2000). The information has been revised and updated. The terms Neorican and Nuyorican have been frequently used to identify Puerto Ricans born or raised in the United States, although at the beginning they carried some negative connotations. Traditionally, ethnic groups in U.S. society identify themselves by a hyphenated version of their nationality and the term American (e.g. Mexican-American, Cuban-American). However, historically, Puerto Ricans have rejected this form of identification. Thus there is not a single generalized rubric that as of yet identifies U.S. Puerto Ricans from those on the island. The acceptance of the term Nuyorican has been limited to a particular group of writers and artists, although it has been occasionally used to refer to U.S. Puerto Ricans in general. Puerto Rican and Boricua are still the most frequently used terms to identify Puerto Ricans on the island and abroad.


In 1999, the theme of the annual Christmas musical TV show and videotape sponsored by the Banco Popular de Puerto Rico was Con la música por dentro (San Juan: Banco Popular, 1999).

A musical competition between cocolos — those who favored salsa music — and rockeros — those more involved with rock music — was promoted by Puerto Rico’s media for many years. This separation in musical tastes was also a separation along class and racial lines. The cocolos or salseros were usually dark-skinned and from the working class. The term cocolo is commonly used in New York by Latinos to refer to African Americans. See the documentary film Cocolos y Rockeros by Ana García.

La Marketa is a produce market located in Spanish Harlem. The place recreates the concept of a traditional Plaza del Mercado or produce market in Puerto Rico.

The term “Rican-constructions” was coined by visual artist Juan Sánchez as the title of one of his exhibitions.

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