
[Re]imagining Puerto Rican Liberation

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Introduction

In this paper, I examine the history of Puerto Rican resistance and draw on Michel Foucault's concept of power/knowledge to make the case that collaborative action is indeed rooted in individual practices of freedom. Through this analysis of colonial oppression and resistance in the areas of education and healthcare, I assert that collective liberation is linked to Foucault's "freedom which involves a subjective response whereby one is not solely subjugated by outside power, but instead exercises a freedom that arises from 'the deliberate practices of liberty'" (Hofmeyr, 2006, p. 217). According to Foucault, these practices of liberty depend on loosening the connections between the self and three axes: 1) the self's relation to knowledge/truth; 2) the self's relation to power; and 3) the self's relation to itself (ethics) (Hofmeyr, 2006, p. 217).

In addition, Hofmeyr (2015) describes the emergence of a reconceptualized self in Foucault's later work:

The self is now no longer considered as the passive product of an external system of constraint and prescriptions, but as the active agent of its own

formation...we can be freer by creating ourselves anew (p. 126).

Moving beyond the care of self as an aesthetic phenomenon focused on individual freedom, this paper contemplates how care of self is naturally committed to community and thus collective liberation. Here, I agree with Foucault's (1994) assertion that "[p]ower relations are extremely widespread in human relationships ... that there is in human relationships a whole range of power relations that may come into play among individuals, within families, in pedagogical relationships, political life and so on" (p. 283), yet these relations of power are not limited to the individual, and instead are created through and dependent on various forms of collaborative resistance.

More research needs to examine how anti-systemic resistance is more than opposition directly aimed at state power, but rather organically grown collective forces that blossom from shared action against coloniality. Further study is warranted on the ways that Puerto Rican resistance, rooted in self-care, has materialized historically and continues to emerge in uniquely idiosyncratic albeit sometimes ambiguous ways. These uniquely Puerto Rican forms of pragmatic resistance have included *jaibería*, the "collective practices of nonconfrontation and evasion . . . of taking a dominant discourse literally in order to subvert it for one's purpose" (Grosfoguel & Negron-Muntaner, 1997, p. 30), and negotiation where Puerto Ricans have "negotiated the definitions of rights, obligations and citizenship [with demands that have] tested the discursive promises for social justice and equality" (Del Mora, 2014, p 157).

Using Puerto Rico as a case study, the intention is to apply a Foucauldian analysis on the collective or community level in order to better understand how subjects become active agents in recognizing and interrogating the structures of power/knowledge deployed by the state apparatus to govern and manage them. By interrogating power/knowledge as it relates to the Puerto Rican colonial experience, we can reflect upon a history of colonial power while reimagining ways to challenge such technologies of subjugation.

The Making of the Puerto Rican Colonial Subject

Thinking about power/knowledge as the beliefs and values that materialize the post-colonial experience allows for a different way to understand how Puerto Ricans have been constituted as colonial subjects in a system that has reiterated and sought to legitimize their oppression. It is beneficial to understand that "the subject is not imagined to be an object whose recognition is induced by the mechanisms of truth, power, and the self, but rather that the mechanisms of truth, power and the self actually bring about the

creation of the subject” (Rasmussen and Harwood, 2003, p.26 qtd. in Davies, 2006). An examination of the complexities of Puerto Rico’s particular kind of coloniality and the dialectical dynamics among different interests (Grosfoguel, 2003) recognizes that “it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined,” not in a binary way of accepted versus excluded discourses, but in the recognition of a “multiplicity of discursive elements that come into play in various strategies” (Foucault, 1978, p. 100). These include discourses around education, healthcare, the military, policing, and Puerto Rican nationalism.

The American colonial government and Puerto Ricans have co-determined each other’s emergence in complex ways. Indeed, when U.S. invading forces took over the administration of the former Spanish colony in 1898, at the end of the Spanish-American War, Puerto Rican elites (who expected to enjoy considerable autonomy) embraced American values regarding political and economic modernization of the island and helped with the establishment of rural patrols to squelch resistance to American rule and attacks against the Spanish and Puerto Rican propertied classes (Thompson, 2014). These rural patrols would evolve into the Insular Police, composed of Puerto Rican enlisted men under the command of American officers which provided an effective mechanism for spreading American values.

The acceptance of Puerto Rico as a geopolitical stronghold for the United States also impacted the governance of the island. Grosfoguel (2003) highlights the global symbolism and ideological strategy employed by the United States during the Cold War that transformed Puerto Rico into a symbol of capitalist development that countered the Soviets. Even as Puerto Rico was held up as a model democratic country, access to information and political transparency, both of which are vital to democracy, were never allowed to fully develop (Bonilla & LeBron, 2019).

Due to the importance of Puerto Rico as a symbolic showcase, the U.S. government strategically acquiesced to some of the desires of its people, while deftly suppressing nationalist threats to their colonial project. For example, Puerto Ricans successfully co-opted the discourse of new imperial power to press for civil and labor demands and were successful in securing rights which ran counter to the interests of U.S. sugar corporations. Even as concessions ran counter to the economic interests of the American corporations, they represented a political win as the effect of these concessions created a pro-colonial bloc within the labor movement that impeded pro-independence alliances with other sectors of the population (Grosfoguel & Negron-Muntaner, 1997).

It is important to note that these minor concessions occurred while resources and land were being drained

away from Puerto Ricans to benefit absentee American capitalists who completely exploited and dominated their commercial industry. While strategically doling out concessions which included billions of dollars in federal aid to uphold the illusion of the capitalist success story (Grosfoguel & Negron-Muntaner, 1997), brutal repressive tactics to quell any nationalist uprisings were deftly institutionalized. Case in point, attacks against nationalist leader, Pedro Albizu Campos, were executed at the behest of the first elected governor of Puerto Rico, Luis Muñoz Marín, and coordinated with and under the close supervision of the infamous FBI director, J. Edgar Hoover, who was consumed by the global optics of the appearance of any communist inroads being made in the American colony (Denis, 2015).

Paradoxically, Luis Muñoz Marín had addressed the pervasiveness and perniciousness of forced American acculturation early on in 1929, when he noted that:

Americanization is more insidious. The tendency works while you sleep. It changes the expression of your eyes, the form of your paunch, the tone of your voice, your hopes of Heaven, what your neighbor and your women expect of you – all without giving you a chance to fight back, without even presenting to you the dilemma of fighting back or not (Muñoz Marín qtd in Jimenez de Wagenheim & Martinez-Fernandez, 2020, p. 149)

The irony of Muñoz Marín’s turnabout is stunning. It is beyond the bounds of this paper to provide even a partial account of how the progeny of Luis Muñoz Rivera, a leading figure in the fight for Puerto Rican autonomy, was so instrumental in solidifying American control of the archipelago. Yet, Muñoz Marín became governor in 1940 on promises to secure Puerto Rican independence only to become a lynchpin in orchestrating the brutal repression of Puerto Rican nationalists. The options he framed as open to the Puerto Rican people, such as fighting for independence; suppressing nationalism; supporting closer economic, political, and cultural alignment with and within the American colonial project, including the transformation of a rural agricultural economy to an industrial model based on private U.S. investments (e.g. Operation Bootstrap) impacted not only the everyday lives of the Puerto Rican people, but the values, beliefs, and knowledges they held about what was most beneficial for their own livelihood. Of course, experiences would vary as Puerto Ricans responded to the propaganda that became so emblematic to the colonial regime.

In drawing from the Foucauldian notion of governmentality, governing is not forcing people to do what the government wants, but instead involves the use of power/knowledge as a strategic game which limits or structures the possible field of action of others (Lemke, 2002). In analyzing the relationship between the

American colonial techniques of domination and the making of the Puerto Rican colonial subject, it is necessary to understand how the subject comes to know and thus govern oneself according to the discursive rules of one's society. Therefore, we must:

[T]ake into account the points...where the techniques of the self are integrated into structures of coercion and domination. The contact point, where the individuals are driven by others is tied to the way they conduct themselves, is what we can call, I think government . . . techniques which assure coercion and processes through which the self is constructed or modified by himself (Foucault 1993, p. 203-4 qtd in Lemke, 2002).

In other words, governmentality, or the art of government can be viewed as “relationships of power, as strategic games between liberties – strategic games that result in the fact that some people try to determine the conduct of others” (Lemke, 2002, p. 6). Government in this manner includes the ways in which the technologies, or the systematized and regulated practices of knowledge as power, work to develop a rationality rooted in the idea that American ideological and economic systems are both superior and beneficial for the island. This allows an examination into the deep divisions that left some Puerto Ricans seemingly acquiescing to the American domination and others fighting against its incursions.

Disciplinary Regimes and Resistance

Education

Before creating detailed cartographic field books of the new colony, U.S. Army Lieutenant William Henry Armstrong worked as a district supervisor in the nascent Puerto Rican public school system where he oversaw the creation of the first “graded schools.” Central to a new disciplinary regime, both students and teachers would be managed through systematized pedagogical and supervisory techniques coordinated through a centralized authority (Thompson, 2014). This new paradigm incorporated disciplinary tactics which Foucault (1995) described as strategies for accomplishing the distribution and ranking of students and teachers, and to mark the gaps, hierarchize aptitudes, and punish and reward those according to set norms. In addition to the graded-schools, the new Department of Education quickly built scores of one-room school houses, vocational schools, and a normal school for the training of teachers (Thompson, 2014).

The lack of discipline in the early classrooms was quickly corrected by the introduction of textbooks which made for uniform instruction by year and grade-level, as well as the building of newly formed “graded schools” which replaced benches and tables with individual desks (Thompson, 2014). As Thompson explains:

The construction of the graded school, the installation of individual desks, and the use of textbooks assured the repartition of bodies, the temporal control of activities, and the division of sequential tasks in which students were watched, evaluated, and sanctioned as individualized subjects (p. 310).

These newly designed schools functioned as what Foucault described as disciplinary institutions, conceptualizing discipline “broadly as the mechanism for a new mode of domination that constitutes us as individuals with a specific perception of our identity and potential that appears natural rather than the product of relations of power” (Ferguson, 2014, p. 52).

The use of education to the colonial project went one step further when in 1903, the U.S. Commissioner of Education instituted English as the language of instruction for all grade levels. Teachers and administrators who protested the pedagogical disaster and called for an elimination of the English-only policy, were accused of being un-American, impractical, and denying the children opportunities inherent in a democratizing English-language educational model (Urciuoli, 1996). Within ten years of the American occupation of Puerto Rico, all instruction in Puerto Rican schools was mandated to be in English (Denis, 2015).

Instruction was based on textbooks which were all written in English despite the fact that none of the students and few of the teachers could understand them. A typical Puerto Rican classroom during this time period included morning recitations of the Pledge of Allegiance, strict discipline, memorization of American cities and states, and children mindlessly singing English songs that they did not understand. Denis (2015) explains that the curriculum and English only policy adopted by the U.S. was “a direct assault on four hundred years of language and culture under the guise of civilizing a savage people” (p. 21). Many Puerto Rican children dropped out of school, driven by varied factors including the lack of “suitable educational facilities” (Osuna, 1949, p. 490), and the outlawing of Spanish in the classroom:

The children of Puerto Rico got fed up with bad report cards and simply stopped going to school. Even under the threat of expulsion, they still refused to attend-anything was better than going home with a D in every subject and catching a beating from their parents. In this manner, the children aged six, seven and eight succeeded where the adults failed [in resisting the alien invasion] (Denis, 2015, p. 23).

When Puerto Ricans did try to receive an education that would provide a path to better socio-economic conditions for themselves and for their families and communities, extreme poverty and precarious living conditions made that access difficult (Del Moral, 2014)

and by mid-century the overall impact of these realities resulted in a colonial educational system with 35% of children between the ages of 6 and 18 not attending school (Osuna, 1949, p. 626). A study of school enrollment from 1935 to 1946, found that of all “children who entered the first grade in urban schools in 1935, 21% dropped before entering the fourth grade; 47.6% dropped before entering the eighth grade, and 78% dropped before entering the twelfth grade” (Osuna, 1949, p. 490). The outcome was bleaker in rural schools, where 53.5% dropped at the end of the third grade.

It must be noted that Puerto Ricans articulated their concerns with the educational system as early as 1898, as manifested by resolutions passed by representative citizens who met in an assembly just days after the American flag was raised in the new colony. They called for an educational system with three grades of instruction – a fundamental public school; secondary schools with a focus on scientific, civic and technical subjects; and the professional level with a focus on jurisprudence, medicine, engineering and technology and normal schools for competent formation of teachers of both sexes (Osuna, 1949). Puerto Rican educational leaders fought for an educational system based on a progressive educational philosophy which centered the cultural environment of the Puerto Rican child as the point of departure for teaching, with a curriculum that cultivated a clear political, economic and cultural Puerto Rican consciousness, and an aim to develop in all students the greatest possible capacity and a disposition for contributing to the betterment of society (Osuna, 1949, p. 479).

By 1912, a teachers’ association was formed which was able to capitalize on the stated goals of the colonial system of modernization and improvement and “[t]hrough this association, teachers struggled for economic betterment while they subtly promoted a notion of citizenship aligned more with the idea of Puerto Rican *patria* (mother country or nation) than with Americanization” (Thompson, 2017, p. 41). According to Foucault, the “ability to change oneself, and by extension the society in which one lives, is rooted in the ability “to know how and to what extent it might be possible to *think* differently” (Hofmeyr, 2015, p. 128). The teachers’ association was able to *think* different and consequently individual agency was derived through collective action and teachers were able to define their subjectivities within the system by pragmatically taking advantage of opportunities for advancement while “subtly critiquing and negotiating the rules, curriculum, and even language of instruction” (Thompson, 2017, p. 42). In terms of an English-only colonization policy, Schmidt (2014) notes that the original goals of the teacher’s union were the “material improvement of the teaching class and change of the educational language

policy” (p. 112) and that “from its inception until 1946, approved an annual resolution rejecting the use of English as the instructional medium” (p. 112).

By the 1940s and 50s, there was in Puerto Rico a “collective vision” embraced by students who “were not passively absorbing political discourses; rather they were dreamers, workers, citizens and intellectuals” (Del Moral, 2014, p. 169). Students believed that educational advancement, their families, communities and *la patria* would only thrive through deliberate refusal of colonial regimes of truth. Del Moral (2014) describes how students would negotiate their subjectivities with the colonial administrators and demand that the representatives of the colonial state make good on their promises to make education accessible to the poor as exemplified by the letters written by students seeking access to scholarships who “declared their rights as citizens and clarified their expectations of the colonial state” (p. 151).

I would be remiss not to include information about the activism of the University of Puerto Rico (UPR) over the past few decades. In the 1970s, “the growth of pro-statehood and pro-independence groups . . . along with the tensions created by the Vietnam War, resisting ROTC and military presence at UPR campuses became the focus of student activism in UPR. Peaceful protests like sit-ins to demand reform were met with police violence” (Martinez & Garcia, 2018). In the 1980s, students, facing tuition hikes and privatizations, went on strike as they demanded to be part of the dialogue and again the UPR’s response was an increasingly militarized police presence to quell the protests (Martinez & Garcia, 2018). In 2010, with the island in the throes of an economic crisis, students facing new laws which criminalized public protests and a violent police force, went on strike again; a state of fiscal emergency was declared which called for the dismissal of 17,000 public employees, an expansion of privatization and funding cuts to UPR such that tuition waivers to Pell grant eligible students would not be provided (Martinez & Garcia, 2018).

The strikes caused the UPR to shut down its flagship Rio Piedras Campus for over three months and resulted in a “poignantly expressive culture of resistance” (Fiet, 2011). Fiet (2011) describes how UPR theater students and graduates maintained a presence throughout the entire strike “using their bodies as canvases to convey specific messages about the need for dialogue with the administration” (p. 144). The students reimagined forms of resistance with performances that included the “Clown Police” conceived by UPR graduate Israel Lugo where “the antics of their blundering slapstick circus act of martial discipline were performed directly in front of, and mimicked and mocked, the fully equipped riot squad” (p. 145). In 2017, students went on strike once more, protesting

austerity measures and significant budget cuts made at the behest of the Financial Oversight and Management Board (FOMB) created by the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act (PROMESA) passed by the U.S. Congress in 2016 as part of a debt restructuring scheme.

The role of the UPR students signaled a struggle for collective liberation that required a reconceptualized self, not as a passive individual constrained by the regime, but as a creator of its own formation. Martinez (2018) summarizes the centrality of this group:

Since its founding, there have always been a group of students in UPR organizing to address student concerns of the education institution. Whether it is demanding more culturally relevant curriculum, more representation, greater access, or transparency on administrative decisions, these organized protests, demonstrations, and strikes have played a significant role in the ways in which the island-wide post-secondary education system operates. The difference between the activism during its early years and now is the presence and popularity of using social media to bring global attention.

For Foucault, focus is laid on such practices of freedom, the deliberate acts of struggle that immediately spur the individual to change itself and consequently the world it lives in. Tensions between the colonial educational system and Puerto Rican educational leaders, teachers, students, and activists around a myriad of issues have heated the crucible in which educational possibilities have been created and in which Puerto Ricans have constructed themselves as educators and students.

Science and Health

Throughout the 20th century, the U.S. established research institutes and conducted experiments in Puerto Rico, practically turning the island into a social science laboratory (Briggs, 2002). Like other colonized people, Puerto Ricans were both forcefully and unwittingly used as subjects of research. Science and medicine operated to extend authority, not just over the individual, but the entire local population, removing existing tribes, clans, and language groups, and recategorizing how Puerto Ricans came to see themselves and their relationships to others (Briggs, 2002). Exercising what Foucault termed as biopower, these scientific and medicalizing technologies of colonialism created distinctions that classified the population and created state-sanctioned “biological distinctions—[that] within the population form the hierarchy whereby certain races are described as good and . . . others, by contrast, are described as inferior” (Feder, 2004, p. 20). According to Foucault (1978), these:

techniques of power present at every level of the social body and utilized by very diverse

institutions (the family and the army, schools and the police, individual medicine and the administration of collective bodies), operated in the sphere of economic processes, their development, and the forces working to sustain them (pp. 45-46)

In “Narrating the Tropical Pharmacy,” scholar Jose Quiroga (1997) describes the work of Dr. Bailey K. Ashford and situates Dr. Ashford’s fieldwork in Puerto Rico in the 1930s within the framework of classical colonial medicine. Dr. Ashford wrote an autobiographical account of his work among the *jibaros* (peasants) of Puerto Rico and how he came to discover the cause of the deadly and wide-spread anemia *perniciosa*: the hookworm. Quiroga explains that Dr. Ashford, upon deciphering the cause of this anemia, connected it to a more global tropical disease, connected to “the indolence of Mexicans, of Central Americans, of people everywhere in the old Spanish Main” (Grosfoguel & Negron-Muntaer, 1997, p. 119).

Prior to the discovery of the hookworm, this “indolence” came to characterize Puerto Ricans as lazy, biological inferior, uncivilized, etc., with many of these characterizations having taken root in the colonial project. These characterizations were prominent in early colonizing discourses. For example, a field report sent to the Spanish king in 1765, by field marshal and efficiency expert Alejandro O’Reilly noted that: “These people, quite indolent by nature, and undisciplined by government regulation” were aimless as the “gentle climate encouraged their casual manner” (Wagenheim, Jiménez & Martínez-Fernández, 2020, pp. 30-31). Discursive frames bolstered by doctors, writers and journalists presented feeble Puerto Rican anemic peasants whose condition arose from the excesses of alcohol, lack of a work ethic, inadequate nutrition, poor housing, lack of hygiene, and racial mixing and other environmental factors (Amador, 2017).

Certainly, Ashford’s work was executed from the colonizer’s perspective and is within the discursive framework of colonizing medical research which catalogues and pathologizes the “other”. However, this view is complicated when we note that the campaign to eradicate hookworm highlighted “colonial dynamics [that were] not strictly derivative of, dependent on, or respondent to metropolitan forces, but [were] instead part of a dense network of forces that continuously [remade] each other” (Amador, 2017). Members of the Puerto Rico Medical Association embraced the campaign to eradicate hookworm disease. Puerto Rican elites built the infrastructure envisioned by the Rockefeller Sanitary Commission and disseminated hookworm information through civic organizations. Nevertheless, some of the elites opposed the campaign based on their political alliances while Puerto Rican peasants, for their part, “appropriated specific elements

of colonial rule that most directly benefited their health interests and rejected those that did not” (Amador, 2017).

In a similar vein, the history of birth control on the island is complex and fraught with controversy. In *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science, and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico*, Briggs (2002) describes that it was through science and social science that Puerto Rican difference was produced and located in women’s sexuality and reproduction. She explains how inferiority was produced as a biopolitics through the dissemination of knowledge on the bodies and behaviors of Puerto Rican women which produced a system of differentiation that would carry on into public policy debates on sexuality and reproduction.

In the case of controlling the reproductive freedoms of Puerto Rican women, this push to reduce the Puerto Rican population was implemented in ways consistent with what Giroux (2003) identifies as a new racism which is more subtle. Avoiding the overt racism of fixed hierarchical biological categories, this new racism is able to operate in “various guises proclaiming among other things race neutrality, asserting culture as a marker of racial difference, or making race as a private matter” (Giroux, 2003, cited in Leonard & King, 2012, p.7). In the 1930s, legislation was passed which encouraged the sterilization of the poor, authorized the Commissioner of Health to license physicians and midwives to “teach and practice eugenic principles,” and authorized eugenic boards to sterilize prisoners and others who suffered from “mental disease, mental retardation, epilepsy and sexual perversion.” Between 1947 and 1982, the sterilization rate rose from 6.6 percent to 39.0 percent (Lopez, 2008, p. 11-12).

A modern (progressive) form of eugenics emerged and was manifested following the Great Depression, when as an off-shoot of Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s New Deal Program, the Puerto Rican Emergency Relief Administration (PRERA) was created under the direction of James Bourne. Bourne identified overpopulation as the island’s most serious problem and oversaw the creation of an experimental birth control clinic that was a division of the School of Tropical Medicine (Briggs, 2002; Lopez, 2008). Protests by the Catholic Church over the use of federal funds to sponsor birth control clinics led to the disbanding of PRERA, but federal birth control programs continued under a new agency, The Federal Emergency Relief Administration for Puerto Rico (FERA-PR) and between 1935-1936, fifty-three to sixty-seven maternal clinics were opened (Lopez, 2008).

In 1936, private philanthropist, physician, and researcher, Charles Gamble, heir to the Proctor and Gamble soap fortune, founded the Maternal and Child Health Association and established a network of clinics which promoted replacing the more effective use of

diaphragms (maintaining they were too difficult to use due to the limited skills and intelligence of the impoverished women) with less effective spermicidal jellies and creams (Briggs, 2002). Gamble stood to gain from this venture, as he promoted his own stock of spermicidal jellies and tested contraceptives on “fifteen hundred women that the FDA had not approved in the U.S. market at that time” (Lopez, 2008, p. 15). Over time, Gamble used the clinics and Puerto Rican women as unwitting medical research subjects to test the diaphragm, foam powder and sponge, and spermicidal powder and jelly for future use in the United States (Lopez, 2008).

Puerto Rico was arguably constituted as America’s research laboratory in the twentieth century with the biopolitical effects of science and medicine classifying the population and creating a colonial governmentality which aimed to define reproductive freedom. Lopez (2018) notes that even as poor women were the targets of birth control, and were indeed unwitting participants in scientific experiments, it is important to refuse a binary framework of women as powerless victims or voluntary agents. Briggs (2002) explains that in addition to and discursively linked to the views of overpopulationists and conservative eugenicists who argued for and against U.S. rule through the “idiom of birth control,” a third position was put forth by liberal modernizing middle-class professionals who “through discourses of maternal health, illegitimacy, and a progressive eugenics” sought to reform motherhood and stressed that “the excessive childbearing of working-class women was involuntary, unwanted, and detrimental to the health of the mother, the children, and the nation” (p. 90). Thompson (2017) notes that the dissemination of knowledge on tropical medicine and science has been both a means of biopolitical governing of the colonized body and improving health and sanitation at the level of society at large. From the eradication of the hookworm to birth control, the healthcare choices available for Puerto Rican colonial subjects arose from strategic games of power/knowledge which engaged multiple discourses to structure while also limit the possible field of options.

Recognizing Puerto Rican Practices of Freedom

This paper is not intended to render a full account of the American colonization of Puerto Rico, nor does it purport to be a survey of historical discursive practices related thereto. Recognizing that it is through discourse that power and knowledge are joined (Foucault, 1978), this paper attempts to move away from a framing of accepted versus excluded discourses in the Puerto Rican colonial project in order to:

M]ake allowance for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an

instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it (Foucault, 1978, cited in Young, 1995, p.4)

I discuss education and public health as two means by which discourse can be both an instrument and effect of power, while connecting the production of knowledge to institutions, systems, and structures that attempted to reshape the colonial subject. In offering historical examples, this paper traces some of the complexities involved in a network of systems and discursive practices through which Puerto Rican colonial subjects and the Imperial regime co-constructed each other, in order to reimagine the multitude of forms that Puerto Rican liberation can take.

In thinking about how governmentality has shaped the everyday lives of Puerto Ricans on the island, it is important to note that one is never absolutely determined by the discourses that shape them and that the possibilities for resistance can unfold in a variety of ways. Liberation can result from practices of freedom and an ethics of the care of self which reframes governmentality and acts as a resistance to political power (Gallo, 2016). Practices of freedom refers to work by the self that is done on the self in order to reconfigure or loosen what is believed as truth, to change the structures that divide, and to see the possibility for creating something new (Foucault, 1997, cited in Gallo, 2016). Care of self can be a form of active resistance and a counterpoint to a domination system (Gallo, 2016) with individual action capable of causing ripple effects and chain reactions across the fabric of society (Hofmeyr, 2006).

Final Reflections

Engaging a Foucauldian lens leads to questions such as: what shifts in knowledge can today's Puerto Rican activists create? In what spaces and through what actions are they constructing themselves on their own terms? Foucault's observations seem a fitting way to fuel our imaginings for liberation by focusing on our abilities to constitute ourselves for ourselves in addition to trying to fight powerful institutions, elites or groups. Part of this work requires us to refuse the categories that mark the individual and "imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize, and which others have to recognize in him" (Foucault, cited in Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983, p. 212). Here, there are two meanings to the idea of colonial domination: one that is controlled by the other, but also one that is controlled by conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to. In this way, Puerto Ricans constitute themselves as

subjects based on their own self-knowledge and through heteronomous practices that find freedom, not from power, but *through* power (Hofmeyr, 2006).

Indeed, there are many examples of how Puerto Ricans construct new ways of being, new relationships with each other and new ways of being organized. Through uniquely Puerto Rican practices such as *jaibería*, (Negron-Muntaner & Grosfoguel, 1997) and negotiation (Del Mora, 2014) along with straightforward forms of protests, their demands for new forms of governmentality are still "generating change [which in turn] means generating a movement for modifying the paradigms of political functions . . . [all while emphasizing] the strong connection between the issues of health, culture, and general well-being" (Lebron, 2019, p. 317). Lebron (2019) describes how individuals such as Mari Mari Narvaez, the founder and executive director of Kilometros 0, an organization that fights state repression and violence against citizens, grew out of the grassroots work of citizen accountability, how their tireless efforts to increase transparency and access to information can transform the relationship between the police and the people of Puerto Rico who have endured discrimination, targeted abuse, and human rights violations.

Another inspiring example for reimagining liberation is evident in the work of community kitchens which function as grassroots political organizing units to combat hunger and scarcity and whose numbers have risen in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, and the Covid-19 pandemic. These community kitchens are now part of a Mutual Support Network led by individuals throughout the island (Roberto, 2019). Activist Giovanni Roberto (2019), whose model of sustainable mutual aid through community kitchens has been adopted by others for application in agricultural and ecological projects, explains that it is necessary to "construct different social, political, and economic systems [to] replace capitalism and all of its practices of exclusion" (p. 310).

Recently, Roberto was arrested while organizing a caravan protest to demand the reopening of public school cafeterias, more efficient distribution of unemployment benefits, and improvements in Covid-19 testing (Vega, 2020). Roberto has risen to prominence, "demanding the government do more to help Puerto Rico's poor during the pandemic [and] has attracted tens of thousands of dollars in donations" (Florida, 2020). His arrest, which was widely viewed as a move to intimidate protestors, fueled outrage. A video recording that went viral showed the long interior passageway of a jail, with inmates banging rhythmically halting the beat to accommodate Roberto's singing, "all I want is food for the poor." This poignant interlude was evocative of Puerto Rico's traditional *bomba* call and response and became a moment which captured the

promise that Puerto Ricans have, and will continue to have; the will to organize around solidarity based on self-knowledge for true liberation. These practices of freedom have emerged as guides for the most committed individuals who will in turn become leaders and masters of care.

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