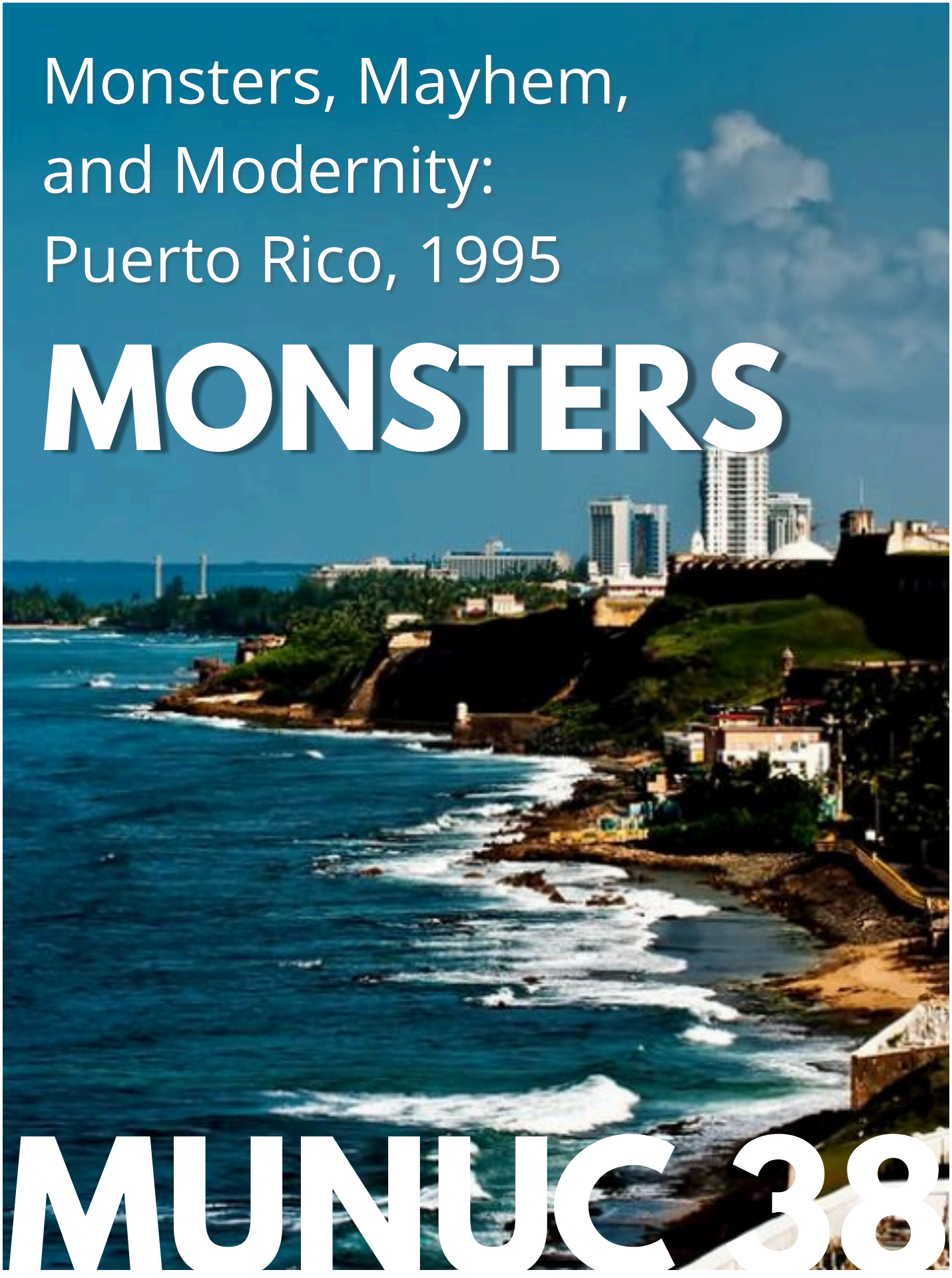
Monsters, Mayhem, and Modernity: Puerto Rico, 1995

MONSTERS



MUNUC 38

Model United Nations of the University of Chicago

Chair Letter

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to Monsters, Mayhem, and Modernity: Puerto Rico, 1995! My name is Pari Shah, and I am excited to serve as your chair for this committee. I am a sophomore pursuing the pre-med track and majoring in Public Policy. As for my Model UN experience, I staffed at MUNUC and ChoMUN last year. I also competed in high school and co-led my school's Model UN Team. Outside of Model UN, I am part of the club field hockey team, Bhangra team, and Alpha Phi Omega chapter.

Throughout the weekend, delegates will be discussing the state of Puerto Rico in 1995, a time period of great changes and uncertainty. Political tensions are rising as debates about statehood and identity emerge. The economy is shifting and the island faces increasing pressure to modernize. Amidst this chaos, something strange appears which is attacking animals in rural areas and catching the eye of local villagers. Reports of this mysterious creature soon capture the attention of the island. What is this creature? Why is it appearing now? What purpose do they serve? These creatures expose the true anxieties that this island is experiencing as it's navigating self-determination, economic change, and cultural transformation.

While addressing political instability and investigating the cracks within a society, delegates are expected to approach these conversations with respect and diplomacy. You will hold influential roles in the transformation of this island and we trust that you will hold these roles and debate responsibly with an overarching goal of bringing peace and prosperity to the region. Please be open minded for this committee as it requires a scope of imagination.

We are excited to see you at MUNUC 38! You can expect a fast-paced, high energy, and engaging committee. Please feel free to reach out to Audrey He, Noah Springhorn, or myself with any questions or concerns about anything related to the content or mechanisms of this committee. We are happy to provide you with any advice. Best of luck!

Sincerely,

Pari Shah

parishah@uchicago.edu

Chair, Monsters, Mayhem, and Modernity: Puerto Rico, 1995, MUNUC 38

Crisis Director Letters

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to MUNUC 38! My name is Noah Springhorn, and I am a second year in the College studying Public Policy and Economics. Hailing from Boston, Massachusetts, I am wickedly excited to be one of your Crisis Directors for Monsters, Mayhem, and Modernity: Puerto Rico 1995. Last year, I served as an Assistant Chair for the Ad Hoc Committee for MUNUC 37 and for the Ad Hoc Committee for ChoMUN 28. Outside of MUN, I am the Editor-in-Chief of a political comedy newspaper, and I lobby for affordable housing policy in the IL Legislature.

Throughout the weekend, delegates will have to navigate the confluence of crises facing the island of Puerto Rico in 1995. Between multiple hurricanes, an earthquake, dozens of sheep gone missing, and a monster out on the loose, delegates must choose how to rebuild the island to prepare for the next century. As they wrestle with limited resources and competing visions, delegates' decisions will shape Puerto Rico's recovery and political future at the dawn of a new era.

Given the seriousness of the subject matter, we expect delegates to conduct themselves and their time in our committee with respect. While we look forward to seeing creative solutions to the array of complicated challenges facing this committee, delegates must always be mindful and aware of the history and significance of these issues. We look forward to seeing you all in February!!

All the best,

Noah Springhorn

Crisis Director, MUNUC 38

nspringhorn@uchicago.edu

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to Puerto Rico, 1995 at MUNUC 38! My name is Audrey He. I am originally from Belize City, Belize and am a transfer student in the College studying Economics and English Literature. Model UN has been a transformative part of my life since I was 13 years old, and I have served as an exec in two other conferences. Outside of academics and MUN, I am an analyst for The Blue Chips investment club and an avid foodie with a love-hate relationship with running.

1995 in Puerto Rico marks a year of mass hysteria, stark cultural shifts, and a seemingly cosmic number of natural disasters and tragedies. Rumors of bloodsucking monsters abound, and centuries of vibrant cultural beliefs seek to undermine the very fact of the island's increasing modernity. In the backroom, you will have the power to each uniquely guide the future of this island. Will you choose to placate the masses and quell disaster? Or will you commit sabotage and unmoor the future of Puerto Rico entirely?

This topic deals with missing people, neocolonialism, livestock deaths, and the political future of an entire region. As such, I ask that you be spirited, but also compassionate. Understand that the rapid-fire changes brought upon Puerto Rico during our crisis timeline still have genuine ramifications for the people of the island today– be creative, but also ground yourself in the political and social realities of the people of this island. I am so excited to see where your backroom arcs take you!

Best,

Audrey He

Crisis Director: Monsters, Mayhem, and Modernity: Puerto Rico, 1995

amh13@uchicago.edu

Sensitivity Statement

This committee will discuss a complicated and sensitive moment in Puerto Rico. As delegates, you will investigate the political, economic, and cultural conditions of the island in 1995. It is important to recognize that these conditions are not simply folklore or a mystery, but rather one of real human experiences and struggles. Conversations in this committee will touch on themes of colonialism, national identity, disaster response, and fear. These topics have impacted generations of Puerto Ricans and continue to shape the island now.

We recognize that Puerto Rico's current status as a U.S. territory has generated tensions around national determination and cultural autonomy. These debates surrounding statehood and independence reflect reality and deserve to be approached with respect. Delegates are encouraged to think critically about how power dynamics have shaped Puerto Rico's identity and to listen carefully when conversing about the legacies of U.S. intervention and Puerto Rico's economic dependency.

The committee will also involve elements of folklore with the emergence of the fantastical beasts in local communities. While these stories may seem lighthearted, they reflect real community fears during times of uncertainty. We expect delegates to not minimize cultural beliefs, but rather approach them through reflective discussion.

Overall, this committee is a space for thoughtful engagement and respectful debate. Delegates are expected to be sensitive to the wide range of histories and identities represented in their roles and to treat all topics with intellectual curiosity and cultural respect. If we all work together to make this committee a space of respect, we can promise you a weekend well spent, with plenty of growth in each and every one of you!

Structure and Mechanics

Monsters, Mayhem, and Modernity: Puerto Rico, 1995 is a Crisis committee. While there are many similarities between Crisis committees and General Assemblies (GA), there are a few key differences.

Firstly, Crisis committees revolve around crisis cycles, which lasts for about 45 minutes to an hour. It can even be said that a Crisis Committee is essentially a series of crisis cycles! Each crisis cycle begins with a crisis break, small skits in which the backroom staff (the Crisis Directors and ACs) showcase with great enthusiasm the problems of the committee. Then, in the frontroom, delegates write directives to serve as solutions to the issues posed and deliver speeches to convince other delegates to work with them to advance their ideas. At the same time, delegates will also be writing crisis notes to the backroom, where they will build their personal arcs based on their individual goals. Based on the directives that pass as well as crisis notes, the backroom staff will craft a brand new crisis break, thus beginning another great crisis cycle. To thrive in a Crisis committee, delegates will need to think on their feet and be ready to work with others to respond to developments in the front and backroom.

Frontroom

The frontroom is where general debate takes place. Unlike in GA committees, delegates in crisis committees do not need to motion for a speaker's list. Instead, delegates will engage in committee through round robins, moderated caucuses, and unmoderated caucuses.

There are subtle differences between each of the three formats. In a round robin, every delegate is given a chance to speak based on where they are sitting. In contrast, only a limited

number of delegates may speak in a moderated caucus (also known as a mod). Once the motion for a moderated caucus is approved by committee, delegates must raise their placard to ask the chair to put them on the speaker's list. As a courtesy, the delegate who motions for the moderated caucus is automatically added to the speaker's list as either the first or last in the queue based on personal preference. Round robins and moderated caucuses are excellent ways to participate in debate and inform the room of the delegate's ideas. Lastly, an unmoderated caucus (also known as an unmod) allows delegates a specified time period to freely move around the room and discuss potential collaboration with other delegates. Generally, each crisis cycle will have at least one round robin or moderated caucus as well as at least one unmoderated caucus.

Unlike the resolution papers present in GA committees, delegates in crisis committees will submit directives. Directives are concise documents written collaboratively by multiple delegates to respond to a crisis break. The directives can range from being military responses, diplomatic solutions, or local or national level actions. To increase collaboration and debate, directives may also require a minimum or maximum number of sponsors (delegates who had worked on the directive). In general, frontroom directives should represent the interest of the committee and implement solutions and motivations that will solve the problems presented in the crisis break.

To succeed in a crisis frontroom, delegates should be adaptive, collaborative, and creative. There will be no pre-writing of directives or backroom notes allowed before the committee begins. However, delegates are encouraged to ask questions about frontroom/backroom mechanics and the progression of personal arcs.

Backroom

An integral part of a Crisis Committee is the backroom. This is the delegates' way of communicating to the backroom their plans, secret dealings, backstabbings, silly escapades, and overall tomfoolery that will elevate their character from zero to hero (or villain). In this committee, we will be using the double notepad system. In a double notepad system, delegates will have access to two notepads for their crisis notes. This way, while the backroom staff is responding to notes on one notepad, delegates will have another notepad to write on, giving them the ability to run two simultaneous crisis arcs that will ideally interact with each other by the end of the committee.

The goal of a crisis arc should be to influence the rest of the committee in a way that benefits the delegate. Ideally, arcs should start with your character's ideology and end goals. Tell us what you hope to achieve by the end of the committee and why that fits in with what your character believes in. The notes that follow should be a mix of gathering resources and then using those resources to make a splash in the front room. Be creative in constructing your crisis arcs! Within the bounds of what you could feasibly do in 1995 Puerto Rico and the limits set by the sensitivity statement, almost everything is within your grasp. For your notes to break into the front room, they must disrupt the normal dealings of the committee. Generally, this is what you want to do, so get creative with your position and how you can become a mover and shaker.

The final aspect of the backroom that should be mentioned are JPDs (Joint Personal Directives). These are essentially crisis notes you write with at least one other delegate to achieve something that couldn't be done alone. It should be clear which resources are coming from each character.

History of the Problem

Political History (1898 - 1995)

The Spanish-American War

Having declared the end of European intervention in the Americas with the Monroe Doctrine in 1823, U.S. foreign policy in the 1800s focused on establishing dominance in the Americas and dislodging European spheres of influence.[1] By 1836, all of Latin America had liberated itself from Spanish colonial rule in the Latin American Wars of Independence, with the exceptions of Cuba and Puerto Rico. Seeing Spain's shriveling power in the Western Hemisphere, an increasingly imperialistic United States set its sights on the remaining Caribbean islands.

An image of the Spanish American War.[2]

[1] Brian Loveman, "US Foreign Policy toward Latin America in the 19th Century," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Latin American History*, July 7, 2016, https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199366439.013.41.
[2] *Spanish American War*. n.d. https://itoldya420.getarchive.net/amp/media/naval-battle-at-santiago-cuba-spanish-american-war-july-3-1898-30588162266-e1bb50S.

The Cuban struggle for independence began in February 1895, and as war gripped the island, the fighting threatened U.S. investments. Three years later, on February 15th, 1898, an explosion in Havana harbor sank the USS Maine, killing 260 of her crew. While responsibility for the incident was never determined, U.S. papers quickly printed popular rallying cries such as "Remember the Maine, to hell with Spain!"[3] Thus, the U.S. joined the Cuban effort for independence and declared war on Spain. In just four short months, vastly superior U.S. naval power crushed the Spanish in both Cuba and the Philippines, leading the Spanish to sue for peace. In the Treaty of Paris, signed on December 10th, 1898, the Spanish relinquished Cuba and ceded to the United States the territories of the Philippines, Guam, and Puerto Rico.[4]

The Military Government

At the beginning of U.S. control over Puerto Rico, the U.S. military assumed the administration of civil and governmental affairs. After occupying the island in July 1898, General Nelson Miles was appointed the military governor of Puerto Rico, followed by General John Brooke on October 18th, 1898. In his two months as Governor, Brooke divided the Island into two civilian and military commands, Ponce and San Juan, ordered all schools to open, dissolved the newly chartered Provincial Assembly and gave its power to his Insular Council, and established a new Supreme Court. In December of that year, General Guy Henry succeeded General Brooke as governor. During his tenure, Henry attempted to improve sanitation and school systems, revised election standards to account for low levels of literacy, and abolished taxes on meat and bread. General Henry also took some more controversial measures, such as

[3] The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Spanish-American War | Causes, Facts, Battles, & Results," in *Encyclopædia Britannica*, November 15, 2018, https://www.britannica.com/event/Spanish-American-War.
[4] The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Spanish-American War - Fighting in the Philippines and Cuba," in *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 2019, https://www.britannica.com/event/Spanish-American-War/Fighting-in-the-Philippines-and-Cuba.

suspending foreclosures for one year, and his attacks on the freedom of the press invoked conflict between island newspapers and the military government.[5]

In the final year of the military government, Brigadier General George W. Davis took over as the last military governor of the island. Davis established a United States Provisional Court and freed local courts from the control of the Secretary of Justice. By 1900, a civilian government permanently replaced military control.

Foraker Act

Formally marking the end of the military government in Puerto Rico, the Foraker Act of 1900 established the framework for a civilian government to take control of Puerto Rico.[6] Signed into law by President McKinley, the act designated the Island as an "unorganized territory", withheld U.S. citizenship from its residents, and placed executive power in a governor that would be appointed by the President of the United States. Politically speaking, not much differed between U.S.and Spanish control—Puerto Rico remained a colony. The continued diminishing of Puerto Rico did not sit well with many residents, thus setting the stage for the political tug-of-war between furthering the island's relationship with the U.S.and the fight for independence.

Early Political Parties and the Fight for Statehood (1900 - 1917)

Under the new Foraker Act, Puertoriqueños possessed little political power. However, the bicameral legislative branch of the new civilian government did comprise locally elected

[5] Dani Thurber, "Research Guides: World of 1898: International Perspectives on the Spanish American War: Military Government in Puerto Rico," guides.loc.gov, n.d., https://guides.loc.gov/world-of-1898/military-government-puerto-rico.
[6] Dani Thurber, "Research Guides: World of 1898: International Perspectives on the Spanish American War: Foraker Act (Organic Act of 1900)," guides.loc.gov, n.d., https://guides.loc.gov/world-of-1898/foraker-act.

representatives. As a result, political parties flourished. During Puerto Rico's 17 years under the Foraker Act, the Republican Party dominated politics on the island. They aggressively campaigned for full Americanization and annexation by the United States. The leadership of the party—mostly doctors, lawyers, merchants, and sugar cane growers—represented the interests of the business sector that stood to gain from institutional alignment with the Americans.[7]

The Republican Party was rivaled by the Federal Party, who more closely aligned with Spanish commercial interests. Representing small and large coffee growers and the "leading classes" of the island, the Federalists struggled against the more populist policies of the Republicans and in 1904, rebranded themselves into *La Union Puertoriqueña*.[8]

In this early period of U.S. rule, Puerto Rican politics were defined by the competing economic interests of the island bourgeoisie—represented by the Union party—and the growing professional echelon—represented by the Republicans. Both parties advocated for statehood and integration with the United States. However, if Congress failed to act on the island's admittance into the Union, the Republicans would desire independence.[9]

World War 1 and the Jones Act (1914 - 1917)

In 1914, the Panama Canal was completed, spurring trade through the Caribbean. Now at the crossroads of one of the world's most important trade routes, Puerto Rico's strategic value skyrocketed in the eyes of the United States.[10] Also in 1914, across the pond, a Bosnian-Serb nationalist decided to assassinate Archduke Franz Ferdinand, thus setting off the "War to End All

[7] Pedro A Cabán, "Puerto Rico: State Formation in a Colonial Context," *Caribbean Studies* 30, no. 2 (2002): 170–215, https://doi.org/10.2307/25613375.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Amelia Cheatham and Diana Roy, "Puerto Rico: A U.S. Territory in Crisis," Council on Foreign Relations, January 8, 2025, https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/puerto-rico-us-territory-crisis.

Wars", World War I. While the U.S. remained neutral for the first three years, America eventually joined the war effort and brought Puerto Rico along with it.

San Juan, Puerto Rico, circa 1901.[11]

In March 1917, Congress passed the Jones Act. Meant to replace the Foraker Act as the Island's colonial constitution, the Jones Act did not meaningfully alter the terms of the relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico. However, it granted all persons born on the island U.S. citizenship.[12] This meant that while Puerto Rico remained an "unorganized territory" of the United States, men on the island, as new citizens, were required to sign up for military service when the U.S. declared war the next month. Soon thereafter, the newly minted

[11] *San Juan*. n.d. https://timelessmoon.getarchive.net/amp/media/san-juan-puerto-rico-and-vicinity-1901-1903-governors-palace-and-sea-wall-8a5d3d.
[12] Solsiree del Moral, "Colonial Citizens of a Modern Empire: War, Illiteracy, and Physical Education in Puerto Rico, 19171930," *NWIG: New West Indian Guide / Nieuwe WestIndische Gids* 87, no. 1/2 (2013): 30–61, https://doi.org/10.2307/24713438.

Porto Rico Regiment, made up of nearly 18,000 Puertoriqueños, sent off to defend the Panama Canal for the duration of the War.[13]

Party Fragmentation and Formation (1917-1940)

After the conclusion of WW1 and the implementation of the Jones Act, Puerto Rican politics underwent a period of massive upheaval. From 1917 to 1928, a political union between the Unionists and the Republicans known as the Alianza Puertoriqueña dominated. Unified in their fear of the denationalization of the economy and the relentless Americanization of the population, these former rivals band together in the wake of WW1 and the Jones Act.[14] In 1928, the Alianza broke apart as the Union reorganized into the Liberal Party; those Republicans who hadn't joined the Alianza formed their own alliance with the statehood-focused Socialist Party against the agrarian-autonomy Union/Liberal Party.[15] The *Coalición* between the Socialists—who for the most part abandoned their role as representing the rural proletariat when they joined the pro-business Republicans—and the Republicans took power in 1927. However, they struggled to govern the island amidst massive economic turmoil during the Great Depression and the aftermath of a massive hurricane in 1928, all while operating within the colonial relationship with the United States.

The turmoil of the Great Depression caused a wing of the Socialist party under the leadership of Albizu Campos to splinter off and form the Nationalist Party—an extremist, militant, and anti-imperial movement.[16] This era was characterized by spurts of political violence as economic hardship gripped the island. In 1936, Federal authorities arrested the Nationalist

[13] Ibid.
[14] Pedro A Cabán, "Puerto Rico: State Formation in a Colonial Context," *Caribbean Studies* 30, no. 2 (2002): 170–215, https://doi.org/10.2307/25613375.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Rubén Berríos Martínez, "Puerto Rico's Decolonization," *Foreign Affairs* 76, no. 6 (1997): 100, https://doi.org/10.2307/20048279.

leader Albizu Campos under the wartime-sedition act, and in the next year, under orders from the U.S.-appointed Governor, police fired upon a group of unarmed Nationalist party members in the city of Ponce—killing 22.[17]

By 1940, the Puerto Rican political landscape consisted of: the Republicans and the Socialists, an entrenched, vulnerable, annexationist coalition loyal to the United States; the Liberal Party, which wanted independence; a militant nationalist party; and a decaying autonomy movement.[18] With the leadership of the Nationalists imprisoned, sympathizers with their movement joined forces with independence-minded members of the Liberal party to form the *Partido Popular Democrático* (PPD) under the leadership of Luis Muñoz Marín.[19] The PPD won the 1940 elections on an independence platform.

The 1950 October Uprising and the 1954 Assassination Attempts

On October 30th, 1950, members of the Nationalist Party—led by Albizu Campos—staged multiple attacks across Puerto Rico.[20] They targeted government buildings, police stations, and symbols of American power in an attempt to overthrow the government of Puerto Rico. In its place, they wished to establish an independent, liberal-democratic republic with the support of Puerto Rican elites. Two nationalists even attacked the temporary residence of the U.S. President Truman at the Blair House in Washington, D.C.[21] Ultimately, the uprising failed, and the U.S. National Guard was deployed to target any and all anti-colonial movements.

---

[17] Ibid.
[18] Pedro A Cabán, "Puerto Rico: State Formation in a Colonial Context," *Caribbean Studies* 30, no. 2 (2002): 170–215, https://doi.org/10.2307/25613375.
[19] Rubén Berríos Martínez, "Puerto Rico's Decolonization," *Foreign Affairs* 76, no. 6 (1997): 100, https://doi.org/10.2307/20048279.
[20] José Atiles-Osoria, "Colonial State Terror in Puerto Rico: A Research Agenda," *State Crime Journal* 5, no. 2 (2016): 220, https://doi.org/10.13169/statecrime.5.2.0220.
[21] Manuel Maldonado Denis, "The Puerto Ricans: Protest or Submission?," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 382 (1969): 26–31, https://doi.org/10.2307/1037111.

Governor Luis Muñoz Marirín declared martial law, and thousands of individuals were arrested over the next few months as the government attempted to stamp out any notion of an independence movement.[22]

In 1954, Puerto Rican Nationalists carried out more political attacks against the United States in an attempt to gain recognition from the United Nations. On March 1st, four nationalists carried out an attack on Congress, resulting in the death of a gunman and the long-term imprisonment of the others.[23]

Establishment of the Commonwealth

Post-World War 2, there were more and more critics of colonialism. The newly minted United Nations and its decolonization committee actively worked to dismantle the European colonial empires of old and, in the process, focused their efforts on Puerto Rico. In order to reduce global spotlight, the U.S. finally organized its "unorganized territory". On July 25th, 1952, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico was established.[24] Under this new agreement, Puerto Ricans would be able to elect their own officials, including the Governor. However, Puerto Rico ultimately remained under the control of the United States. While many Puerto Ricans at the time—and now—argue that this is just a gilded form of colonialism, it was enough for the United Nations at the time. In 1953, the UN removed Puerto Rico from its list of Non-Self-Governing Territories.[25]

---

[22] Rubén Berríos Martínez, "Puerto Rico's Decolonization," *Foreign Affairs* 76, no. 6 (1997): 100, https://doi.org/10.2307/20048279.
[23] Manuel Maldonado Denis, "The Puerto Ricans: Protest or Submission?," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 382 (1969): 26–31, https://doi.org/10.2307/1037111.
[24] Cabranes, José A, "The Status of Puerto Rico," *The International and Comparative Law Quarterly* 16, no. 2 (1967): 531–39, https://doi.org/10.2307/757389.
[25] Ibid.

Flag of Puerto Rico.[26]

Political Maneuvering, Movements, and Motions (1952 - 1995)

The period following the establishment of the Commonwealth saw an intense period of forced industrialization under the leadership of the PPD (Partido Popular Democrático). In the late '60s, after internal rifts in the PPD, the Puerto Rican government conducted a referendum on statehood. This action was not authorized by the U.S. Congress and therefore did not bind the U.S. to its results. Much to the chagrin of the ruling party, proponents of statehood won over a third of the votes, ultimately leading to the defeat of the PPD in 1968 by the PNP (Partido Nuevo Progresista).[27]

For the next three decades, the PPD and the PNP battled for control of the government—the PPD took back control in 1973 before switching back to the PNP in 1977 under the leadership of Carlos Romero Barceló. The PDP only regained control of the legislature

[26] *Puerto Rico Flag*. n.d. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flag_of_Puerto_Rico.png.
[27] Pedro A Cabán, "Puerto Rico: State Formation in a Colonial Context," *Caribbean Studies* 30, no. 2 (2002): 170–215, https://doi.org/10.2307/25613375.

and the governor's office in 1984, however, the PNP gubernatorial candidate, Pedro J. Rosselló, won back the highest office in 1992.[28]

Amid growing recognition in Washington that Puerto Rico's *Estado Libre Asociado* was an outdated territorial arrangement, Congress began exploring legislative options to redefine the island's political status. From 1989 to 1991, the U.S. Senate considered legislation to authorize a Puerto Rican referendum on statehood, independence, or enhanced commonwealth, but the bill died in committee after two years of hearings and studies. Federal agencies strongly opposed provisions reducing U.S. control, with the State Department rejecting treaty-making powers for Puerto Rico and the Defense Department resisting changes that could limit military use of the island.[29]

Cultural History and Folklore (1800–1995)

Puerto Rico's cultural history between the 19th century and 1995 was shaped by a blend of Indigenous, Spanish, African, and American influences. Over these two centuries, religion, especially Catholicism, remained central, but, alongside official doctrines, a rich layer of superstitions and spiritual practices, from folk Catholic rituals to espiritismo (spiritism) and brujería (witchcraft), continued to inform daily life.

19th Century: Spanish Colonial Era (1800–1898)

In the 1800s, Puerto Rico was a Spanish colony, and Roman Catholicism was the official and dominant faith. The Church was a pillar of colonial life, sponsoring fiestas patronales (annual patron-saint festivals) and providing moral authority. However, traditional Taino and

[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.

African beliefs still persisted covertly and syncretically as the enslaved Africans that were brought to Puerto Rico to work on sugar and coffee plantations carried with them their diverse spiritual traditions. They identified Yoruba or other African deities with Catholic saints and continued to venerate them in disguise. This syncretic practice laid the groundwork for folk Catholicism in Puerto Rico, an informal religious style where, for example, a Catholic saint's image might be used in rituals that owed more to West African or Taino cosmologies than to Church orthodoxy.[30]

By the mid-to-late 19th century, an unusual spiritual movement from Europe also took root: Espiritismo (Spiritism). Spiritist séances and mediums offered an alternative form of religious practice focused on communicating with spirits and healing the sick. In Puerto Rico, espiritismo evolved in a uniquely syncretic way, integrating Taino and African elements. For instance, Puerto Rican spiritists adopted traditional healing herbs and rituals reminiscent of Taino shamans, and invoked African orishas (deities) under the guise of Catholic saints. Espiritismo became an "ethnocultural faith" balancing the island's four cultural lineages (Indigenous, African, Spanish, and Anglo-American) and coexisted with mainstream Catholicism without open conflict.[31] By 1898, Puerto Rico's culture was already a nuanced mosaic: an officially Catholic society where a folk Catholicism full of saints, spirits, witchcraft fears, and home remedies formed the true bedrock of everyday belief.

[30] Pew Research Center, "Religion in Latin America," Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project, November 13, 2014, https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2014/11/13/religion-in-latin-america/.
[31] Luis Santollano, "LA PLAZA Y LA CALLE.," in *Mirada al Caribe*, vol. 54 (El Colegio de Mexico, 1945), 75–78, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvbcd2vs.12.

1898–1950: Transition Under American Influence

In 1898, Spain ceded Puerto Rico to the United States. The early 20th century brought American policies and economic changes that affected religious institutions, family structure, and folk practices. The U.S. established a civil government and, critically, disestablished Catholicism as the state religion. For the first time, Protestant missionaries were allowed to preach on the island. These missionaries founded schools, hospitals, and churches, seeking to convert Puerto Ricans from what they viewed as "backward" Catholicism and folk superstitions. By the mid-20th century, about 30% of Puerto Rico's population identified as Protestant, but practiced a more "populist" style of religion, less bound by church hierarchy and more by personal faith and local custom.[32] Many people still called themselves devout Catholics while rarely attending Mass. Instead, they expressed their faith through private prayer, family rosaries, and charity.

Crucially, syncretic folk religion persisted and adapted during this era. Espiritismo remained widespread across social classes as an alternative spiritual outlet and practices like santería entered Puerto Rico in the early 20th century via Cuban immigrants. Over time, a uniquely Puerto Rican blend of santería and espiritismo emerged, informally called "Santerismo" or "Sanse," which mixed Afro-Cuban orisha worship with Spanish Spiritism and Catholic folk ritual.

By 1950, Puerto Rico's cultural identity was strongly hybrid: deeply familial and Catholic on the surface, yet equally defined by folk healers, spiritist séances, and a pragmatic approach to religion. For example, church teachings were respected, but when illness or

[32] Reinaldo Roman, *Governing Spirits : Religion, Miracles, and Spectacles in Cuba and Puerto Rico, 1898-1956* (Chapel Hill, Nc: University Of North Carolina Press, 2007).

misfortune struck, many would as readily light a candle to a saint, visit a santero, or seek out a curandero as they would see a doctor or priest.

1950–1995: Modernization and Cultural Continuity

The second half of the 20th century was marked by rapid modernization, urbanization, and closer integration with the United States, especially after the establishment of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico in 1952. Industrialization programs (like Operación Manos a la Obra / Operation Bootstrap) and mass migration to U.S. cities (New York, Chicago, etc.) profoundly changed the island's socio-economic landscape. By the 1990s, the Catholic portion of the population was estimated around 70% (down from over 85% earlier in the century).[33]

A needlework factory in Puerto Rico.[34]

[33] Pew Research Center, "Religion in Latin America," Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project, November 13, 2014, https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2014/11/13/religion-in-latin-america/.
[34] Woman in a needlework factory. n.d. Picryl. https://picryl.com/media/san-juan-puerto-rico-woman-in-the-needlework-factory.

Religiosity in Puerto Rico took on a cultural character. Many islanders identified as Catholic culturally but were non-observant in the formal sense. However, late into the 20th century, espiritismo and brujería were still very much alive. The storefront botánica remained a fixture in many towns, selling medicinal herbs, prayer candles, saint statues, and books on spells. People of all social strata quietly patronized spiritist mediums for help with physical or psychological ailments that they felt modern medicine or formal religion did not address.[35]

Puerto Rico, despite its modern skyline and industrial economy, remained in touch with its folk soul. Many superstitions persisted as quiet undercurrents to modern life. For example, some families would still warn children not to sweep the house at night (a belief that it could invite bad spirits) or to avoid leaving a rocking chair swaying empty (lest an invisible spirit sit in it). The belief in mal de ojo continued – parents might attribute a baby's unexplained crying or fever to the evil eye and perform a small ritual to cure it, such as passing an egg over the child's body or having an older woman (often the grandmother) quietly pray and apply oil in the sign of the cross. It was not uncommon for politicians and public figures to visit a Bishop for a blessing and also keep a consult with an espiritista or santero for good measure, illustrating how deeply ingrained these parallel belief systems were.[36]

Folkloric Creatures and Cryptids of Puerto Rico

Beyond formal religious history, Puerto Rico's tradition was flushed with legends of mysterious creatures, spirits, and cryptids. These mythical beings have provided entertainment

[35] Countries and Their Cultures, "Culture of Puerto Rico - History, People, Clothing, Traditions, Women, Beliefs, Food, Customs, Family," Everyculture.com, 2009, https://www.everyculture.com/No-Sa/Puerto-Rico.html.
[36] Terrence Leslie Hansen, *The Types of the Folktale in Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, and Spanish South America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957).

and cautionary tales for generations. Below is a list of some major folkloric creatures and cryptids.

Juracán (Taíno Hurricane Spirit)

In indigenous Taíno mythology, Juracán is the embodiment of chaos and natural destruction. The name Juracán, from which the English word "hurricane" is derived, refers to the evil spirit of the storm. According to Taíno creation stories, Juracán originated from a deity's jealous rage: the god Guacar became envious of his brother's creations and transformed himself into the furious spirit Juracán. His howling winds were said to tear down the work of the creator god, devastating the Caribbean islands, and being feared by all.[37]

Hupía (Night Spirit)

The hupía are ghostly entities from Taíno oral tradition, representing the spirits of deceased people who did not ascend to the heavens. They occupy a prominent place in Puerto Rican folklore as nocturnal, shape-shifting spirits that can appear at night as a person, an animal (often an owl or a bat), or a shapeless presence. One consistent detail is that a hupía lacks a navel, since as a being of the dead it was never born.

In many tales, hupías lurk on lonely roads or near the forest edge, luring people away, and serving as an explanation for eerie cries, disappearances, or the feeling of being watched in Puerto Rico's dark tropical forests.[38]

---

[37] Kris Pethick, "10 Myths Legends and Superstitions of Puerto...," Culture Trip, March 14, 2018, https://theculturetrip.com/caribbean/puerto-rico/articles/10-myths-legends-and-superstitions-of-puerto-rico.
[38] Rebecca Toy, "Chasing Chupacabras? You May Find Something Even More Extraordinary Here.," Travel, November 8, 2022, https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/article/chasing-chupacabras-you-may-find-something-even-more-extraordinary-here.

La Llorona (The Weeping Woman)

Though La Llorona is originally a Mexican legend, it has been fully incorporated into Puerto Rican folklore with local twists. She is said to be the restless ghost of a woman who lost or killed her children and now wanders, wailing in anguish.

In Puerto Rico's version, the story is often situated in the town of Coamo, near an old bridge called Las Calabazas. Many locals claim that on certain nights a sobbing woman in white can be seen near the roadside by the bridge. Drivers have recounted picking up a mysterious hitchhiking woman who then disappears from the backseat, or else ignoring a figure by the road only for her apparition to suddenly appear inside the car, leading to terror and accidents.[39]

A depiction of La Llorona.[40]

[39] Stephen Winick, "La Llorona: An Introduction to the Weeping Woman | Folklife Today," blogs.loc.gov, October 13, 2021, https://blogs.loc.gov/folklife/2021/10/la-llorona-an-introduction-to-the-weeping-woman/.
[40] La Llorona. n.d. Wikimedia Commons. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:La_llorona.jpg.

El Vampiro de Moca (The Moca Vampire)

Long before "Chupacabra" became a global buzzword, Puerto Rico had been transfixed by reports of a blood-sucking monster in the town of Moca. On March 7, 1975, a cow in Moca's Barrio Cruz was found lifeless with small piercing wounds on its skull. Over the next few weeks the death toll mounted to over 90 animals, all reportedly drained of blood through small circular incisions, fueling rumors of a vampiric creature on the loose. Panicked farmers and residents offered varying descriptions of the culprit.

Some claimed to have seen a "strange animal" flitting among the trees – one woman described a winged, bird-like entity that landed on her roof at night and emitted a terrifying scream. Others speculated the killer might be a giant vampire bat that wandered over from the mainland. For a time, authorities even suspected the killings were the work of a Satanic cult rather than an animal, given the bloodless corpses and precise wounds. Panic spread as newspapers dubbed the mystery killer the Vampiro de Moca, cementing its place in Puerto Rican lore; but soon, the killing spree stopped, ending as suddenly as they had started.[41]

Each of these creatures and legends, from Juracán to the Vampiro de Moca, plays a role in Puerto Rico's rich tapestry of folklore. They serve as cultural metaphors and teachers by giving insight into human behavior, representing the forces of nature, or symbolizing the intrusion of the supernatural into daily life. In Puerto Rico's oral tradition, the past and present intertwine: ancient spirits still roam the night, colonial devils lurk in forts, and new monsters can be born from contemporary fears. These stories, told around campfires, over family dinners, or on the local news, continue to bind Puerto Ricans to their history and to each other, reinforcing a

[41] The Anomalies, "1975: The Vampire of Moca," Anomalies: the Strange & Unexplained, April 4, 2014, http://anomalyinfo.com/Stories/1975-vampire-moca.

shared identity as a culture who live with one foot in the modern world and one in the realm of myth.

Economic History of Puerto Rico (1800s–1995)

The economic history of Puerto Rico from the 1800s to 1995 is one of sweeping change. As one of Spain's sugar colonies, Puerto Rico was first under mercantilist extraction. After Spain ceded Puerto Rico to the U.S., Puerto Rico was integrated into American economic circuits but that also made it dependent on U.S. markets and federal support. During this time period, major industries rose and fell; sugar and coffee agriculture gave way to factories, tourism, and pharmaceuticals. Each shift brought disruption as well as development. For the people of Puerto Rico, these changes transformed daily life, bringing higher incomes, better education and health, and longer lifespan, even among deep economic dependency and periodic hardship.

Spanish Colonial Economy in the 19th Century

During the 19th century, Puerto Rico was a Spanish colony with an economy centered on agriculture. Large plantations (haciendas) cultivated these crops, often using coerced labor, and the colonial government invested little in local infrastructure or social services. Sugar had become a dominant export in the early 1800s, and by mid-century, sugar and molasses made up the bulk of Puerto Rico's exports. Meanwhile, coffee cultivation spread into the highlands. By the 1870s, coffee production surged and eventually surpassed sugar as the chief export by the

late 19th century.[42] Slavery and indentured servitude was widespread, and Puerto Rico's population grew steadily in this period, providing labor for expanding plantations.[43]

Transition to U.S. Rule (1898–1940)

In 1898, the Spanish-American War abruptly ended Spanish sovereignty. Puerto Rico was ceded to the United States by the Treaty of Paris, making it an American territory. The change of colonial rulers brought dramatic economic reorientation. The Foraker Act of 1900 established a civilian colonial government and American companies swiftly moved in, buying up extensive sugar lands. Most local landowners were outcompeted by U.S. companies, which came to control the major sugar plantations and mills.[44] Extensive American investment expanded sugarcane operations drastically, while the once-thriving coffee sector collapsed.

Under U.S. rule the economy shifted from a Spanish mercantilist system to a capitalist market system. By the 1920s and 1930s, Puerto Rico was essentially a one-crop export economy dominated by sugar. Sugar plantations generated unprecedented export growth, but little of this wealth reached the Puerto Rican masses. By 1930, over 1.5 million people lived on the island, with the majority struggling as landless farm laborers or subsistence farmers.[45]

---

[42] Library of Congress, "Society and the Economy in Early-Nineteenth-Century Puerto Rico ," Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540 USA, 2025, https://www.loc.gov/collections/puerto-rico-books-and-pamphlets/articles-and-essays/nineteenth-century-puerto-rico/society-and-economy/.
[43] Israel Ayala, "The Coffee History of Puerto Rico," Whetstone Magazine, August 3, 2024, https://www.whetstonemagazine.com/journal/the-coffee-history-of-puerto-rico.
[44] Marisabel Brás, "Puerto Rico and the United States ," The Library of Congress, 2015, https://www.loc.gov/collections/puerto-rico-books-and-pamphlets/articles-and-essays/nineteenth-century-puerto-rico/puerto-rico-and-united-states/.
[45] Manuel Rodríguez, "The New Deal in Puerto Rico | Who Built America?," Whobuiltamerica.org, 2025, https://www.whobuiltamerica.org/item/the-new-deal-in-puerto-rico.

Operation Bootstrap and Mid-Century Industrialization (1940s–1960s)

In the 1940s, as an effort to combat mass poverty among locals, Puerto Rican leaders launched an ambitious economic development plan known as Operation Bootstrap (Operación Manos a la Obra). This program, initiated under Governor Luis Muñoz Marín and industrial strategist Teodoro Moscoso, aimed to transform Puerto Rico from an agricultural economy into a modern industrial one.[46]

Operation Bootstrap took off in the late 1940s and 1950s. Using extreme tax advantages to encourage foreign and main-land American investment, hundreds of factories were established. The first phase (late 1940s–50s) attracted labor-intensive industries such as textiles, apparel, processed foods, and wood products, which provided jobs for many rural Puerto Ricans. Hundreds of thousands migrated into towns and cities. By the 1960s, a second phase of Operation Bootstrap was underway, bringing more capital-intensive industries. Petrochemical refineries, oil processing, pharmaceutical plants, and electronics assembly became major employers on the island.[47]

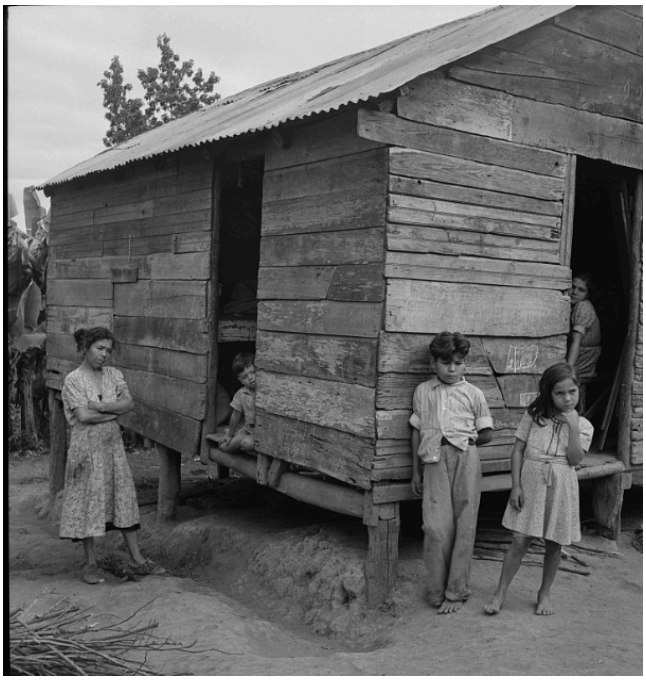
The impact of Operation Bootstrap on Puerto Rico's economy was dramatic. Factories rapidly replaced farms as the main engine of the economy. Manufacturing output and exports surged, and island GDP growth averaged over 5% per year in the 1950s and 1960s. This was an unprecedented boom — Puerto Rico went from a poor agrarian society to an industrializing economy often touted as the "showcase of development" in Latin America.[48] Average incomes

[46] James Dietz, *Economic History of Puerto Rico: Institutional Change and Capitalist Development* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003).
[47] Ibid.
[48] Kal Wagenheim, "Puerto Rico - the Economy," Encyclopedia Britannica, July 2025, https://www.britannica.com/place/Puerto-Rico/The-economy.

rose significantly (though remaining below U.S. mainland levels), and by the 1960s Puerto Rico's per capita income was far higher than in neighboring Caribbean countries.

However, the rapid industrialization also had mixed consequences. Agricultural decline accelerated; as investment flowed to industry, sugar and coffee production sharply contracted. By the late 1960s, even sugar, once the dominant crop, was no longer competitive and many sugar mills shut down. Puerto Rico became a net food importer, increasing reliance on outside sources. Meanwhile, the job creation from new factories, while significant, did not fully absorb the growing population. Unemployment remained persistently high. As a result, the government actively encouraged Puerto Ricans to emigrate to the mainland U.S. to reduce the unemployment rate. Indeed, hundreds of thousands left for New York, Chicago, and other cities in the 1950s and 60s. In 1940, 96% of people of Puerto Rican origin lived on the island, but by 1960 only 72% did. Indeed, in just two decades, a huge Puerto Rican diaspora in major cities across the U.S. mainland.[49]

[49] James Dietz, *Economic History of Puerto Rico: Institutional Change and Capitalist Development* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003).



Puerto Rican Farm Family, 1942.[50]

Late 20th Century Economic Changes (1970s–1995)

After the initial post-war boom, Puerto Rico's economic growth slowed. The 1970s brought new, unprecedented challenges as global oil crises and a recession hit some of Puerto Rico's key industries. For example, the nascent petrochemical complexes built in the 1960s suffered when oil prices spiked in 1973, causing some factories to close.[51] As global competition increased, traditional labor-intensive manufacturing like textiles also began relocating to lower-wage countries in Latin America and Asia. In response, Puerto Rico began to pivot to even more high-value manufacturing sectors. This transition was assisted by the U.S. Congress's creation of Section 936 tax credits in 1976, which gave U.S. companies increased incentive to

[50] Puerto Rican Farm Family, 1942. n.d. Picryl.
[51] Kal Wagenheim, "Puerto Rico - the Economy," Encyclopedia Britannica, July 2025, https://www.britannica.com/place/Puerto-Rico/The-economy.

invest in Puerto Rico. This investment ultimately led to a manufacturing boom of pharmaceuticals, medical device production, and electronics during the late 1970s and 1980s. By the 1980s, Puerto Rico was a major center for pharmaceutical manufacturing.

Alongside manufacturing, the service sector grew substantially in the late 20th century. The Commonwealth government became a huge employer through public agencies, utilities, and education. Tourism also emerged as an important industry. Starting in the 1960s and accelerating by the 1980s, Puerto Rico marketed itself as a Caribbean travel destination. Resort hotels, casinos, and cruise ship ports developed, especially around San Juan. By the 1990s, tourism was a significant source of income and jobs, with the island's economy dominated by the combination of manufacturing and services. Meanwhile, agricultural contribution to the economy eventually fell to less than 3% of national GDP by this time.[52] Sugar plantations had virtually vanished, and other agriculture (like coffee and tobacco) was greatly reduced. Puerto Rico now imported most of its food and consumer goods, while exporting industrial products (pharmaceuticals, electronics, apparel) and services. By 1995, the island had eliminated much of the dire poverty of the 1930s and achieved a standard of living that, while modest next to the mainland United States, was among the highest in the Caribbean.[53]

[52] Antonio Weiss, "America's Forgotten Colony: Ending Puerto Rico's Perpetual Crisis | the Volcker Alliance," The Volcker Alliance, June 10, 2019, https://www.volckeralliance.org/news/americas-forgotten-colony--puerto-ricos-perpetual-crisis.
[53] Ibid.

Natural Disasters (1899–1995)

From the late 19th century to the 20th century, there have been a series of hurricanes and floods which have repeatedly revealed structural weakness in Puerto Rico's governance and economic dependency.[54]

1899 Hurricane San Ciriaco

Hurricane San Ciriaco (1899) was the first big storm that Puerto Rico experienced as a U.S. territory. It rained for twenty-eight days and wind speeds were estimated to be 100mph. About 3,400 people died, three times more than the deaths that the island had experienced during a hurricane. The economic damage was estimated at about $20 million or 36 million pesos.[55] A majority of the sugar and coffee farmlands were destroyed, generating a dent in the economy as sugar and coffee were some of the main cash crops of Puerto Rico at this time.[56] Most of the agrarian rural, lower class were left homeless, hungry, and unemployed. Ultimately, over 5,000 Puerto Ricans ended up moving to Hawaii to work on their sugar plantations.[57] Many Puerto Ricans described past hurricanes as a "pallid shadow of Hurricane San Ciriaco."[58]

The *Boletín Mercantil de Puerto Rico,* one of the most popular newspapers at the time, commented on the hurricane, stating,

> "The 8th of August will be a day of terrible memory for Puerto Rico. Before the island had recovered from the state of perturbation and turmoil in which the Spanish-American war left it, and when all its efforts to reconquer its previous normality and prosperity were successively and fatally failing, an extremely violent hurricane hammered the

[54] Luís A. Salivia, Historia de los temporales de Puerto Rico y las Antillas (1492–1970) (San Juan: Editorial Edil, 1972), 242–57.
[55] Library of Congress, "Hurricane San Ciriaco," The World of 1898: The Spanish-American War, https://guides.loc.gov/world-of-1898/hurricane-san-ciriaco.
[56] Ivan Ray Tannehill, The Hurricanes (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Weather Bureau; 6th ed. Princeton, 1945).
[57] César J. Ayala and Rafael Bernabe, "The Hurricane of San Ciriaco: Disaster, Politics, and Society in Puerto Rico, 1899–1901," Hispanic American Historical Review 72, no. 3 (1992): 303–34.
[58] Ibid.

island, intensifying the measure of its pains, immersing it in the most horrendous ruin and destroying the last hope for its salvation and welfare."[59]

Responses to the disaster were complicated as governing systems changed through the switch from Spanish to U.S. rule. The U.S. forces thought that local administrations within the municipal government were "traditionally subservient to central government, rife with venality and incompetence, and, worst of all, virtually bankrupt."[60] Because local level recovery effects were being overlooked by the U.S., the recovery progress was slow. There also were conflicts between the Republican and Liberal parties who were competing for control within each administration, further disrupting the ability to allocate resources to address the damage.[61] Despite their reputation in the U.S., the local governments traditionally led recovery. However, with their funds drained by U.S. occupation, big landowners and the U.S. military government stepped up to become the main source of damage relief.[62]

1928 Hurricane Okeechobee

Decades later, Puerto Rico's political and economic structure remained dependent on U.S. governance. There were infrastructural improvements, however, the island became strongly reliant on the Puerto Rico-U.S. sugar market. Puerto Rico had a guaranteed market and premium prices due to its tariff free access to the U.S. market as a U.S. territory. By 1927, sugar was around "60% of the island's exports" and U.S. companies controlled 65% of sugar production and three-fifths of the sugarcane farming land.[63] This left rural farmers and communities more

[59] Sobre el ciclón del glorioso San Ciriaco y compañeros mártires (San Juan: A. Lvnn e hijos de Pérez Moris, 1899).
[60] Ayala and Bernabe, "The Hurricane of San Ciriaco."
[61] Mariano Negrón Portillo, Las turbas republicanas, 1900–1904 (Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 1990), 71–77.
[62] Ayala and Bernabe, "The Hurricane of San Ciriaco."
[63] James L. Dietz, *Economic History of Puerto Rico* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 119, 122, 128.

economically dependent than before, which became very evident when Hurricane Okeechobee hit the island in 1928.

The U.S. Weather Bureau and news stations were able to spread information and issued warnings regarding the hurricane's path two days beforehand. This warning, the first warning of a hurricane to ever be broadcasted, saved many lives as citizens were able to retreat from the water before the hurricane hit.[64] Hurricane Okeechobee was classified as a category 5 hurricane with its winds reaching up to 160 mph. More than 312 people were killed, 24,728 homes were destroyed and 500,000 people were left homeless.There was more than 50 million dollars in damage.[65] Most of the sugarcane fields were ruined, the coffee harvest was lost, and tobacco farms took a hit. Because of the severity of the hurricane, Puerto Rico never regained its title as a major coffee exporter.[66] Many agricultural jobs were lost and the national income decreased significantly.

By 1930, most of the Puerto Rican farm land was reserved specifically for exported crops and therefore, could not be used to feed the Puerto Rican themselves. Many spent their income mostly on food and other needed items which they bought at inflated prices as these products were imported from the U.S. By then, 94.3% of Puerto Rican exports were to the U.S. and 33.3% of their imports was food by 1935.[67] This led to major strikes in the country by 1933 where workers in the food and textile industry protested for better wages and went to the extent of calling for independence from the U.S.[68] The New Deal initiatives responded to this resistance by

[64] Frank Mújica-Baker, Huracanes y tormentas que han afectado a Puerto Rico (San Juan: Servicio Nacional de Meteorología, n.d.); Stuart B. Schwartz, "The 1928 Hurricane and the Shaping of the Circum-Caribbean Region," Hispanic American Historical Review 87, no. 1 (Winter 2007).
[65] Mújica-Baker, Huracanes y tormentas; Schwartz, "1928 Hurricane."
[66] Schwartz, "1928 Hurricane"; Dietz, Economic History, 128.
[67] Dietz, Economic History, 146–147; USDA, *The Rise and Decline of Puerto Rico's Economy* (Washington, D.C.: Economic Research Service, 2017), https://www.ers.usda.gov/sites/default/files/images/rise-and-decline-of-puertorico_5_17.pdf.
[68] Dietz, *Economic History*, 146–147.

generating The Puerto Rico Emergency Relief Administration (PRERA) which provided direct relief funding and created jobs.[69] However, after receiving flood relief applications (50,000/year), the PRERA could not support natural disaster recovery processes. However, their work successfully helped supply food for many families in economic turmoil.[70]

Hurricane Okeechobee Aftermath.[71]

1989 Hurricane Hugo

In 1989, tropical cyclone Hurricane Hugo struck Puerto Rico at category four intensity with winds exceeding 140 mph. The storm displaced about 50,000 people and caused 140 million dollars in agricultural losses, wiping out essential cash crops like sugarcane and coffee while decimating livestock. Property losses exceeded one billion dollars with more than 80% of

[69] "Puerto Rico Emergency Relief Administration (PRERA)," New Deal Network, Federal Emergency Relief Administration Archive, http://newdeal.feri.org/pr/pr12.htm.
[70] Ibid.
[71] *Palm Beach Hurricane 92 Views*, American Autochrome Company, Chicago, IL, 1928.

wooden structures on the island being destroyed.[72] The tourism and wealthier neighborhoods such as San Juan and resort areas with stronger ties to U.S. investment had their utilities restored after only a week of the hurricane. Meanwhile, eastern Puerto Rico, with mostly residential, agrarian, and for lower income Puerto Ricans, endured long blackouts, water shortages, and demolished homes. Indeed, federal disaster relief remained out of reach for vulnerable communities. This unequal allocation of aid mirrored the political reality of the time where Puerto Rico's status as a territory limited its ability to correctly assess and lead recovery efforts.[73]

In a New York Times article *Hurricane Left Grievous Wounds To Land and Spirit of Puerto Rico* about Hurricane Hugo's damage to Puerto Rico and the U.S., writers described how this natural disaster could "put aside for some time an issue that had invigorated the island and symbolized its coming of age: a drive in Congress and among Puerto Ricans themselves to gain more autonomy by changing the island from a commonwealth to a state, an independent nation, or a more independent common wealth."[74] José Berrocal responded by saying, "There's no question the storm is a set-back, a break from that momentum. What we have to do is find a way to quickly regain the momentum, the sense of optimism. This is a critical time for us."[75]

Weeks before Hurricane Hugo hit (August), the U.S. Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee approved Senate Bill 712 which offers three options (statehood, independence, or enhanced commonwealth) of Puerto Rico's political status. While the bill is seemingly responding to Puerto Rican advocacy for sovereignty, the bill ensured that the U.S.

---

[72] U.S. Geological Survey, High Energy Storms Fact Sheet (Reston, VA: USGS, 1990), https://pubs.usgs.gov/fs/high-energy-storms/; J. R. Clark, "Hurricane Hugo and the Urban Forest of Puerto Rico," Journal of Arboriculture 19, no. 6 (1993): 368–373.
[73] Hurricane Left Grievous Wounds to Land and Spirit of Puerto Rico, New York Times, October 1, 1989, https://www.nytimes.com/1989/10/01/us/hurricane-left-grievous-wounds-to-land-and-spirit-of-puerto-rico.html; Freedom Archives, "Puerto Rico: Hugo Relief and Politics," Puerto Rico Libre (Nov–Dec 1989), https://freedomarchives.org/Documents/Finder/DOC41_scans/41.free.puerto.rico.nov-dec.1989.pdf.
[74] New York Times, "Hurricane Left Grievous Wounds."
[75] Ibid.

would get military rights no matter the outcome.[76] However, when the hurricane struck the island in September, the focus of Puerto Ricans-U.S. relationship shifted entirely. Recovery relief became the main focus, while the statehood of Puerto Rico debate took the backseat. The Senate Bill 712 never advanced to a Senate/House vote. Many pro-independence campaigns became volunteer and relief organizations. Ultimately, the hurricane led to increased dependence on the U.S. for federal funding and relief services.[77]

[76] Freedom Archives, "Puerto Rico: Hugo Relief and Politics."
[77] New York Times, "Hurricane Left Grievous Wounds."

Statement of the Problem

Mythology, Culture, and Mass Hysteria

The 1995 Chupacabra Incident in Puerto Rico

Puerto Rico's cultural landscape has long been rich with folklore of supernatural creatures and eerie tales. By the turn of the 21st century, the killing spree of "El Vampiro de Moca" had already cemented tales of strange blood-sucking creatures in Puerto Rico's collective memory. Indeed, few on the island were unfamiliar with the legends and creatures which lurk in the dark.

Yet, in mid-1995, an outbreak of unexplained animal deaths in Puerto Rico gave birth to a new legend: El Chupacabra (Spanish for "goat-sucker"). In March 1995, rural mountain farmers discovered a cluster of dead animals under bizarre conditions. In one case, eight sheep were found dead with three small puncture wounds in the chest area and their bodies reportedly drained of blood.[78] There were no signs of the kind of messy predation or consumption that typical predators would leave; instead, the carcasses were largely intact aside from the mysterious circular wounds. News of these gruesome discoveries spread quickly through other rural communities, and fear mounted as people struggled to explain what kind of creature could kill in such a manner.[79]

[78] PBS. "El Chupacabras, a Modern Mystery." PBS.org. Monstrum, May 10, 2019. https://www.pbs.org/video/el-chupacabras-a-modern-mystery-qeyye6/.
[79] Gold, Simon. "Unveiling the Chupacabra Legend: Creature of the Night - Discovery UK." Discovery UK, October 21, 2024. https://www.discoveryuk.com/mysteries/unveiling-the-chupacabra-legend-creature-of-the-night/.

Over the following months, additional attacks were reported across the island, with a notable concentration in the northeast region. By the summer of 1995, the municipality of Canóvanas, a town near San Juan, became the epicenter of the phenomenon. In August 1995, a local eyewitness named Madelyne Tolentino gave a detailed report that galvanized the Chupacabra story: she claimed to have actually seen the creature responsible for the killings, right in front of her house in Canóvanas. Tolentino's dramatic account, soon echoed by other witnesses, described a nightmarish being unlike any familiar animal.

According to these descriptions, the creature stood on two legs and was roughly 4 to 5 feet tall, with powerful hindlimbs that allowed it to hop like a kangaroo. Its skin was typically described as leathery or scaly and gray-green in hue, and it had a distinctive line of spines or quills running down its back from the neck to the tail. Perhaps most striking were its eyes: large, almond-shaped, and said to glow red in the darkness, giving it an almost alien appearance. Witnesses also noted sharp fangs or teeth and sometimes a long, forked tongue.[80]

Artist Depiction of El Chupacabra.[81]

[80] PBS. "El Chupacabras, a Modern Mystery." PBS.org. Monstrum, May 10, 2019. https://www.pbs.org/video/el-chupacabras-a-modern-mystery-qeyye6/.
[81] Artist Depiction of El Chupacabra. n.d. Flickr. https://www.flickr.com/photos/cartercomics/141058618.

Reports of Chupacabra attacks in 1995 followed a chronological escalation. After the initial spring incidents of dead goats and sheep, the summer brought more frequent and geographically dispersed cases. Farm animals of various kinds — goats, sheep, chickens, ducks, cats, and even dogs — were found dead in the mornings, with similar telltale puncture marks and apparent blood loss. Canóvanas, in particular, saw a spike in incidents; as many as 150 animals were said to have been killed in that area alone by the end of summer.[82] The pattern of the killings often involved small livestock or pets outdoors at night. Owners would recount hearing agitated noises from their pens or yards, only to find their animals lifeless by daylight with strange wounds on the neck or abdomen. Notably, the bodies were usually intact — not mauled or partially eaten as one would expect from a dog, mongoose, or other known predator. This fueled the perception that the attacker was drinking the animals' blood like a vampire but not consuming the flesh. Such observations made the Chupacabra seem all the more frightening and un-natural, since it appeared to kill for blood alone.[83]

As the string of mysterious deaths lengthened, eyewitness encounters also accumulated. Aside from Tolentino's famous sighting, other residents came forward with their own chilling stories. In various barrios of Canóvanas, people claimed to have glimpsed a spiky-backed, quick-moving creature darting across roads or lurking near henhouses at night. One local pastor, Eliezer Rivera, reported that while driving a van full of church members one night, he nearly crashed when a strange humanoid figure matching the Chupacabra's description leapt into the road, causing him to swerve violently to avoid it.[84]

---

[82] Radford, Benjamin. "Slaying the Vampire: Solving the Chupacabra Mystery." Skeptical Inquirer, Volume 35 Issue 3. June, 2011. https://skepticalinquirer.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/29/2011/05/p45.pdf
[83] Wagner, Stephen. "On the Trail of the Chupacabra." web.archive.org. Paranormal Phenomena, September 19, 2005. https://web.archive.org/web/20050919215215/http://paranormal.about.com/library/weekly/aa051898.htm.
[84] Winiarski, Kristen . "The Blood-Sucking Chupacabra of Puerto Rico." www.americanghostwalks.com, February 15, 2023. https://www.americanghostwalks.com/articles/chupacabra-puerto-rico.

By the fall of 1995, the Chupacabra panic was in full swing in Puerto Rico. Dozens upon dozens of animal deaths had been attributed to the mysterious predator, and the sense of alarm peaked. One contemporary summary noted that the wave of attacks had caused "immediate panic" among farmers and residents who found their animals exsanguinated with neat puncture wounds. The notion of a malignant, unknown creature stalking the countryside at night led many to keep their livestock penned up securely and their children indoors after dark.[85]

In the farming communities hit hardest by the animal deaths, residents were deeply alarmed, and in some cases verging on panic, at the thought of an unknown predator in their midst. As one local official described, "La gente estaba bien preocupada" ("people were very worried") and even "hysterical" over the unexplained livestock losses. Dozens of farmers from neighborhoods like Palmasola, Cubuy, and Loíza Valley (in the Canóvanas region) went to the Puerto Rico Department of Natural Resources and Environmental agency pleading for help, yet officials were at a loss for what to do.[86] No one in authority could identify the culprit or offer a solution, largely because the attacks did not fit the pattern of any known predator on the island. This vacuum of official action prompted local citizens and leaders to take matters into their own hands. In Canóvanas, Mayor Soto organized night-time Chupacabra hunts in the fall of 1995.[87] Armed with rifles, nets, and determination, he and a band of volunteers ventured into the dense brush and forests around Canóvanas, searching for the elusive "goat-sucker." On October 27, 1995, in a highly publicized expedition, the mayor himself donned military-style camouflage

[85] Wagner, Stephen. "On the Trail of the Chupacabra." web.archive.org. Paranormal Phenomena, September 19, 2005. https://web.archive.org/web/20050919215215/http://paranormal.about.com/library/weekly/aa051898.htm.
[86] Primera Hora. "Chemo Soto Está Seguro de Que El Chupacabras Es Un Extraterrestre." Primera Hora, October 29, 2010. https://www.primerahora.com/noticias/puerto-rico/notas/chemo-soto-esta-seguro-de-que-el-chupacabras-es-un-extraterrestre/.
[87] Radford, Benjamin. "Slaying the Vampire: Solving the Chupacabra Mystery." Skeptical Inquirer, Volume 35 Issue 3. June, 2011. https://skepticalinquirer.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/29/2011/05/p45.pdf

gear and led a posse out into the darkness in an attempt to capture the creature alive. “It was a real situation that was causing damage among animal breeders here. People were very worried and as mayor I had to do something.”[88]

After the initial wave of reports in 1995, the legend spread throughout Latin America, popping up in Mexico, Central America, and the southern United States. In Puerto Rico, Chupacabra mania combined age-old superstition with new media sensationalism. Some folklorists have interpreted the Chupacabra’s popularity as reflecting fears of the unknown in a rapidly changing world (the 1990s brought economic uncertainty and environmental concerns, and the idea of a blood-sucking creature resonated as an embodiment of those fears). Others see it as a form of resistance: a homegrown mystery rooted deep in native mythology in an era when Puerto Rico was often defined by its political relationship to the U.S.[89]

Natural Disasters

In September of 1995, Puerto Rico experienced one of the Atlantic’s most destructive hurricanes of the decade. Hurricane Marilyn, a storm that began as a tropical wave crossing the west of Africa, intensified into a Category 3 hurricane raging through the Virgin Islands and passing close by to Puerto Rico. Though the most central parts of the island did not experience the worst of Marilyn, the smaller islands of Puerto Rico such as Vieques and Culebra endured the storm’s devastating consequences and exposed some of the sociopolitical vulnerabilities of that time.[90]

---

[88] Torres, Raúl Camilo. “Chemo No Se Detiene.” Primera Hora, October 27, 2016. https://www.primerahora.com/noticias/puerto-rico/notas/chemo-no-se-detiene/.
[89] PBS. “El Chupacabras, a Modern Mystery.” PBS.org. Monstrum, May 10, 2019. https://www.pbs.org/video/el-chupacabras-a-modern-mystery-qeyye6/.
[90] National Hurricane Center, Tropical Cyclone Report: Hurricane Marilyn (AL151995), NOAA, 1995, https://www.nhc.noaa.gov/data/tcr/AL151995_Marilyn.pdf.

Citizens of Puerto Rico were made aware of the hurricane through the National Weather Service about two to three days prior to the impact. The sources were stating that Marilyn was on the northwest track with a high probability of hitting Puerto Rico. However, as the storm moved closer, the advisories indicated that the storm would move more north, ultimately sparing Puerto Rico as a location that could be hit. Unfortunately, because of this prediction, warnings and hurricane watches for the island were canceled, making people believe that the danger passed. The Roanoke Times reported this false sense of security, stating, "It moved away from the Caribbean region later in the day, and all hurricane and storm watches were canceled. At 5 p.m., Marilyn was 125 miles north-northwest of San Juan, drifting harmlessly into the open Atlantic. But the damage had been done. At least three people were reported dead, and 100 more were injured or missing, including several dozen trapped in a collapsed apartment complex on St. Thomas."[91] There was intensive flooding, affecting the agricultural fields and infrastructure, and rainfalls passed 5.5 inches in vulnerable locations like Culebra. 100 homes were destroyed and 12,000 Puerto Ricans were moved to shelters.[92] Locations which had just recovered from the damages of Hurricane Hugo had been destroyed once again.[93]

Bill Clinton ordered a federal disaster declaration for Puerto Rico. Most of the relief funds were allocated to the peripheral islands of Puerto Rico, highlighting how islands like Vieques and Culebra are disproportionately impacted during natural disasters.[94] Hurricane Marilyn revealed this gap between outlying islands and funded cities and communities inland. Usually, while islands rely on external aid and their neighbors for support after these hurricanes, inland cities have control and emergency networks. Overall, Marilyn brought into light the

[91] Roanoke Times, "Hurricane Marilyn Skirts Puerto Rico, Heads for Open Atlantic," September 17, 1995, https://scholar.lib.vt.edu/VA-news/ROA-Times/issues/1995/rt9509/950917/09190008.htm.
[92] National Hurricane Center, Tropical Cyclone Report: Hurricane Marilyn.
[93] CNN, "Hurricane Marilyn Leaves Trail of Destruction," CNN Newsbriefs, September 21, 1995, https://www.cnn.com/US/Newsbriefs/9509/9-21/am/index.html?eref=sitesearch.
[94] Ibid.

island's strength and resilience to commonly occurring disasters and its vulnerabilities in which they need external support to get the economy and infrastructure back on the ground.[95]

Independence, Statehood, or Commonwealth

H.W. Bush and Puerto Rico

In 1989, the presidents of the three principal political parties in Puerto Rico—each representing the three potential political futures of the island—signed a letter to the United States formally asking that "the people of Puerto Rico wish to be consulted as to their ultimate political status."[96] This letter aimed to address Puerto Rico's legal status in relation to the United States. Indeed, since the Treaty of Paris in 1898, the U.S. had never asked Puertoriqueños what they wanted their status to be. So, H.W. Bush decided to address this.

In his State of the Union address in 1989, President Bush urged Congress to take the necessary steps to allow Puerto Rico to voice their opinion in a congressionally recognized referendum. However, Congress failed to act, so the referendum that took place a few years later was unofficial.

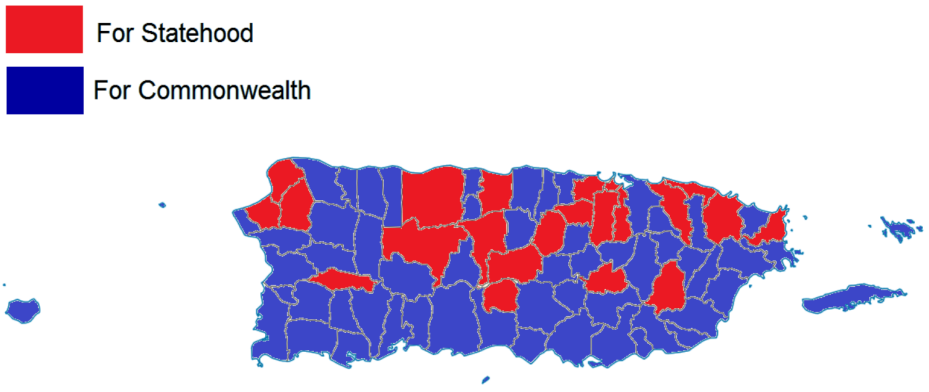
The 1993 Referendum on Statehood

In November 1993, the Puerto Rican government released a status plebiscite to gauge the feelings of Puertoriqueños. The three options that were laid out to the people of Puerto Rico were: do you wish to retain the status of the *Estado Libre Associado*, become the 51st state, or be citizens of a free and independent nation? The results were as follows: Statehood, 788,296

[95] National Hurricane Center, Tropical Cyclone Report: Hurricane Marilyn; CNN, "Hurricane Marilyn Leaves Trail of Destruction."
[96] "H. Rept. 104-713 - UNITED STATES-PUERTO RICO POLITICAL STATUS ACT," Congress.gov, 2025, https://www.congress.gov/committee-report/104th-congress/house-report/713/1.

(46.3%); Commonwealth, 826,326 (48.6%); Independence, 75,620 (4.4%); and blank and void ballots, 10,748 (0.7%).[97] The incredibly small margin between Commonwealth and Statehood is quite significant as just 25 years earlier, the status plebiscite resulted in over 60% voting for Commonwealth (supported by the PPD), and just 39% voting for Statehood (supported by PNP).[98] It is important to be noted that the 1993 Status Plebiscite was not authorized by Congress, and therefore, Congress was not obligated to act upon its results.[99]

The elections in the year prior showed mirrored results. The *Partido Nuevo Progresista* (PNP)—the pro-statehood party—won the general election with 50.3% of the votes, while the pro-commonwealth, *Partido Popular Democrático* (PPD), only won 45.6% of the votes.[100] Thus, these results show an intense divide on the island between the continuation of Puerto Rico's Commonwealth status and the desire to join the Union as the 51st state.



Map of Puerto Rican status referendum, 1993 results by municipality.[101]

[97] "1993 Status Plebiscite Vote Summary," Electionspuertorico.org, 2025, https://electionspuertorico.org/1993/summary.html.
[98] Milton O. Rodriguez, "The Political Status of Puerto Rico--A Comparative Study of the 1967 and 1993 Plebiscites" (1998), https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/tr/pdf/ADA352916.pdf.
[99] ABC News, "Analysis: The Puerto Rico Plebiscite That Wasn't," ABC News, November 8, 2012, https://abcnews.go.com/ABC_Univision/Opinion/puerto-rico-status-plebiscite/story?id=17674719.
[100] "1993 Status Plebiscite Vote Summary," Electionspuertorico.org, 2025, https://electionspuertorico.org/1993/summary.html.
[101] Map of Puerto Rican status referendum, 1993 results by municipality. n.d. Wikimedia Commons. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Puerto_Rican_status_referendum,_1993_results_by_municipality.png.

The Status of Puerto Rican Statehood

Ever since the military invasion during the Spanish-American War in 1898, Puerto Rico has maintained a colonial relationship with the United States. While the relationship has shifted from direct military control to its current Commonwealth status, Puerto Rico has existed in political limbo for over a century. Puerto Ricans are citizens, but they cannot vote for their president. Puerto Rico self-governs, but it cannot conduct its own relations with other countries. When disaster strikes, the island must ask the United States for federal aid—unlike the other 50 states. For decades, there hasn't been any overwhelming support for any of the three status options. Yet, as Puerto Rico prepares to enter the new century and as tragedy strikes the island, it might finally be time to take a stance.

Modernity and Infrastructure

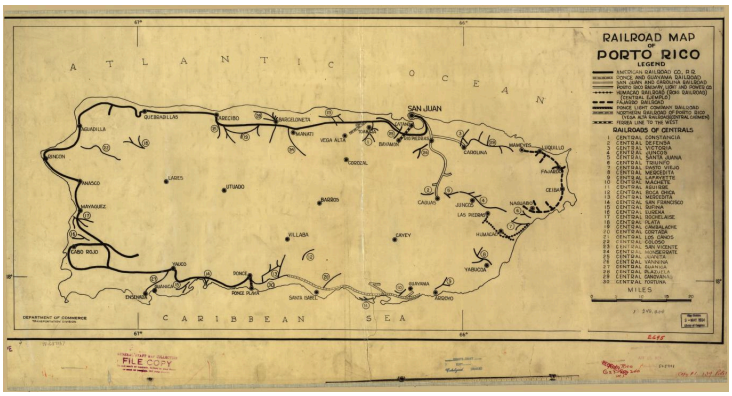
Electrical Grid

From the mid-'70s to the '90s, Puerto Rico received the entirety of its electricity from the monopoly supplier, PREPA (Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority). PREPA generated over 98% of its electricity from fossil fuels, with the only exception being 2% from hydropower.[102] In 1992, the Energy Policy Act was passed, which, among other things, allowed independent companies to sell electricity to consumers in Puerto Rico. This policy aimed to encourage PREPA to clean up its energy sources, but there has yet to be definitive changes. As climate change continues to accelerate the intensity of storms that ravage the infrastructure of the island, and as the grid recovers from damage sustained by said storms, Puerto Rico must set itself up for the next century of power generation with climate resilience and clean sources in mind.

[102] "History of Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority – FundingUniverse," FundingUniverse, 2025, https://www.fundinguniverse.com/company-histories/puerto-rico-electric-power-authority-history/.

Transportation

Under Spanish colonial rule, railroad infrastructure was constructed across the island. As it was the era before motor vehicles, the extent of passenger railways was quite impressive.[103] However, once the United States took control of the island, this infrastructure did not last. Now, there is only one passenger railway on the entire island—an urban metro that is only 10 miles long in the capital of San Juan.



Railroad map of Puerto Rico.[104]

In place of the railway system, the United States constructed a series of highways across the island. With serious public transportation options severely lacking, Puerto Rico's transportation infrastructure exists at a single point of failure. One bad storm that knocks out a highway, and ease of movement across the island crumbles apart.

[103] United States Department Of Commerce. Railroad map of Porto Rico. [S.l, 1924] Map. https://www.loc.gov/item/98687137/.
[104] Ibid.

Delegate Positions

Pedro J. Rosselló - Puerto Rican Government Representative

Pedro J. Rosselló entered politics after a career in medicine and public health, where he developed a reputation for ambitious reform proposals and an appetite for systemic change. As head of Puerto Rico's health system, he had already worked on large-scale public health initiatives before winning the governorship in 1992 under the pro-statehood New Progressive Party (PNP). By 1993 to 1995, Rosselló launched modernization campaigns that touched every sector: overhauling healthcare delivery, expanding public infrastructure such as highways and schools, and pursuing privatization of certain public services to attract investment. He positioned these reforms not merely as economic modernization but as evidence that Puerto Rico could meet the standards and responsibilities of U.S. statehood. Framing statehood as a matter of civil rights and equality, Rosselló actively sought to bring the status question before U.S. Congress, using policy successes to argue Puerto Rico was ready to join the Union. By 1995, he was the most visible and strategic political advocate for annexation, blending reformist zeal with political calculation.

Norma Burgos - Secretary of State (PNP Party)

An engineer by training, Norma Burgos brought technical precision and an analytical mindset into the political arena. Before becoming Secretary of State in 1993, she had built a career in public administration and economic development, earning a reputation as a problem solver who could handle multi-stakeholder negotiations. As Governor Rosselló's close advisor, she played a behind-the-scenes yet pivotal role in shaping the PNP's approach to advancing

statehood, bridging technical analysis with political messaging. Burgos often acted as a liaison between the Puerto Rican government and U.S. officials, skillfully managing the political sensitivities that came with lobbying for a status change. By 1995, she was among the most influential women in Puerto Rico, using her influence to push for modernization policies while maintaining focus on the broader goal of annexation. Known for her strategic discipline, she combined policy acumen with a clear ideological stance that Puerto Rico's future lay within the U.S. as an equal state.

Rubén Berríos Martínez - President of the Puerto Rican Independence Party

Rubén Berríos Martínez was, by 1995, the island's most recognized and unyielding voice for independence. A constitutional lawyer with decades at the helm of the Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP), he had run multiple gubernatorial campaigns to promote the cause, even knowing electoral success would be limited. His activism went far beyond speeches as he engaged in acts of high-profile civil disobedience, including his famed 1970s occupation of U.S. Navy lands in Vieques, which became a touchstone for anti-colonial resistance. In the 1990s, he continued to frame independence as the only path to true self-determination, rejecting both statehood and commonwealth as forms of continued colonialism. His rhetoric combined legal scholarship with moral urgency, drawing connections between Puerto Rico's political subordination and its economic dependency. By 1995, he was a figurehead not just for a political party but for a broader movement, embodying a blend of intellectual credibility and grassroots defiance that kept the independence cause visible despite institutional resistance.

Jaime Fonalledas - CEO of Empresas Fonelledas

By the mid-1990s, Jaime Fonalledas had transformed his family's holdings into one of Puerto Rico's most powerful business empires. He oversaw operations ranging from agriculture, most famously Tres Monjitas dairy, to retail, including ownership of Plaza Las Américas, the island's largest shopping mall and a major economic hub. His influence extended beyond corporate performance; as a major employer and developer, Fonalledas helped shape consumer culture and urban landscapes. His advocacy leaned toward policies that promoted investment stability, infrastructural growth, and favorable regulatory frameworks, regardless of party affiliation. While not an outspoken player in the status debate, his priorities aligned with ensuring a business environment conducive to expansion and foreign investment, whether under statehood or commonwealth. By 1995, he was viewed as part of the island's economic backbone, someone whose support or opposition to policy shifts could quietly sway political actors, and whose wealth and reach made him an enduring figure in Puerto Rico's modernization narrative.

Carlos M. de la Cruz Sr. - Chairman of CC1 Companies

Carlos M. de la Cruz Sr. stood at the helm of CC1 Companies, a powerhouse in beverage manufacturing and distribution, most notably Coca-Cola Puerto Rico Bottlers. By the 1990s, his operations commanded significant market share on the island and extended into southern Florida, embedding him in both Puerto Rican and mainland U.S. business circles. Although he never sought public office, his influence was exerted through political donations, behind-the-scenes lobbying, and his role in shaping consensus among the business elite on trade and tax policy. De la Cruz viewed stability in governance and economic policy as essential for sustained growth, and he was attentive to how political status could affect tariffs, market access, and regulatory

costs. By 1995, he was recognized as a successful entrepreneur capable of aligning business interests with political movements and influencing the climate in which Puerto Rico's economic future would be negotiated.

Ricardo Santos Ramos - UTIER Labor Leader

By the 1990s, Ricardo Santos Ramos had emerged as one of Puerto Rico's most combative and recognizable labor leaders. At the helm of UTIER, the powerful electrical workers' union tied to the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority, he became known for fiery speeches and the ability to mobilize large-scale worker demonstrations. His leadership fused workplace demands, such as fair wages, improved safety standards, and pension protections, with broader political critiques about sovereignty and economic justice. Santos Ramos viewed the government's modernization and privatization pushes in the early 1990s as existential threats to public-sector workers, warning that privatization would dismantle hard-won labor rights and hand critical infrastructure to corporate interests. In the status debate, he consistently emphasized a working-class perspective: would statehood truly improve conditions for labor, or would independence offer more leverage to protect domestic jobs? By 1995, he had positioned himself as the voice of organized labor in Puerto Rico's political arena, representing grassroots resistance to neoliberal reforms.

Manuel Cidre - Entrepreneur

Manuel Cidre's story in the 1990s was one of entrepreneurial grit and expansion. Starting from a small bakery, he built Los Cidrines into a household name, distributing bread and pastries across Puerto Rico. Unlike corporate magnates who inherited wealth, Cidre's trajectory was

rooted in hands-on business creation, giving him a pragmatic view of the island's economic landscape. By 1995, his company faced the challenges of competing with multinational food producers while navigating Puerto Rico's complex web of trade regulations, tax codes, and supply chain constraints. Cidre often argued for policies that leveled the playing field for small and medium-sized enterprises, which he believed were the true backbone of the local economy. In discussions of status, he stressed concrete economic impacts like how tariffs, federal subsidies, or trade agreements would affect local producers. His stance was less ideological and more operational: political status mattered insofar as it shaped the daily realities of doing business in Puerto Rico.

Luis A. Ferré Rangel - Media Executive

By the 1990s, Luis A. Ferré Rangel held the reins of Grupo Ferré Rangel, the media conglomerate that owned El Nuevo Día, Puerto Rico's most influential daily newspaper. In a political environment where mass media could define public discourse, Ferré Rangel's editorial direction shaped how Puerto Ricans engaged with status debates, elections, and policy reforms. While El Nuevo Día offered a platform for multiple perspectives, Ferré Rangel understood that editorial framing, what was highlighted and what was buried, could subtly influence public sentiment. His reach extended beyond print, affecting television and radio discussions, making him a key intermediary between political elites and the public. By 1995, he had cultivated a reputation for balancing editorial independence with the practical realities of operating in a politically charged environment. Whether promoting investigative journalism or curating opinion columns, Ferré Rangel's decisions helped set the tone of political conversation, reflecting the media's dual role as both mirror and architect of public opinion.

Blanca Canales - Nationalist Revolutionary

Though well into her senior years by the 1990s, Blanca Canales remained a living symbol of Puerto Rico's independence struggle. Decades earlier, she had led the 1950 Jayuya Uprising against U.S. rule, an act that resulted in a lengthy prison sentence and cemented her place in nationalist history. Upon her release, she returned to grassroots activism in her hometown, dedicating herself to political education and mentoring younger activists. Canales was deeply concerned that the independence cause could fade without sustained historical consciousness, so she spoke frequently at community gatherings and academic forums about the sacrifices made for sovereignty. By 1995, she continued to warn against the dangers of delaying full independence, arguing that statehood and commonwealth perpetuated colonial subjugation in different forms. Her voice carried moral weight, not just as a veteran of the nationalist movement, but as a custodian of its historical memory, ensuring that debates over status never erased Puerto Rico's long colonial struggle.

Lillian Torres Díaz - Public Housing Community Organizer

By the early 1990s, Lillian Torres Díaz had become one of the most respected grassroots leaders in San Juan's public housing communities. Born and raised in a government housing project, she experienced firsthand the systemic challenges with underfunded schools, lack of job opportunities, and persistent street violence, which shaped daily life for residents. Her activism began in the 1980s, organizing mothers and youth to demand better school facilities and after-school programs. By 1995, she had expanded her organizing to multiple housing complexes, serving as a leading voice in resident councils across the city. Torres Díaz was known for her uncompromising stance: she refused to align with political parties, prioritizing the needs

of her community over partisan agendas. In status debates, she was skeptical of promises from both pro-statehood and pro-independence camps, focusing instead on tangible commitments to education, housing, and job training. Her leadership brought the lived reality of marginalized communities into political discussions dominated by elite perspectives.

Wilma Pastrana - Financial Analyst

In the 1990s, Wilma Pastrana was building a reputation as one of Puerto Rico's most capable and independent-minded economic voices. Working in finance and strategic planning, she consulted for private firms on investment feasibility, market risk assessment, and long-term growth modeling. Pastrana's greatest strength was translating complex financial data into plain-language recommendations that executives and non-specialists alike could understand. By 1995, she had become a trusted advisor for business leaders navigating a shifting Puerto Rican economy, marked by globalization pressures, potential changes to U.S. tax incentives, and debates over the island's political status. Pastrana approached the status question with a pragmatism, preferring to ground her opinions in fiscal reality rather than ideology. She analyzed how statehood, independence, or enhanced commonwealth would impact federal funding flows, corporate taxation, credit ratings, and investor confidence. Her independence from party politics made her a rare and valuable figure: a numbers-driven strategist whose credibility rested on objectivity.

Dr. Ramón Luis Rivera Jr. - Urban Planner

Son of the long-serving mayor of Bayamón, Dr. Ramón Luis Rivera Jr. was forging his own path in the early 1990s as an expert in urban planning and municipal development. Trained

in planning and public administration, he spearheaded modernization projects in Bayamón, from upgrading public parks and transit systems to fostering commercial growth corridors. Rivera Jr. understood that local governance was often where the impact of political status changes was felt first, whether through shifts in federal funding, changes in regulatory authority, or alterations in economic development strategies. By 1995, he advocated for any future political arrangement to include robust investment in cities, efficient service delivery, and sustainable growth policies. His pragmatic approach bridged politics and technical planning, emphasizing that grand status debates would be meaningless without tangible improvements in infrastructure and community well-being. He viewed status not as an abstract constitutional matter, but as a framework for delivering concrete improvements to Puerto Rican urban life.

Dr. José Caraballo Cueto - Economist

In the mid-1990s, Dr. José Caraballo Cueto was beginning his career as an academic economist, focusing on issues of poverty, inequality, and the informal economy in Puerto Rico. His research challenged simplistic narratives about how political status alone could solve the island's economic woes. Caraballo Cueto argued that whether Puerto Rico achieved statehood, independence, or enhanced commonwealth, systemic inequalities would persist unless policy directly targeted the root causes, structural unemployment, uneven regional development, and limited access to capital. By 1995, his work analyzed how federal aid patterns, local tax structures, and labor market segmentation interacted to entrench disparities. In public forums, he urged policymakers to pair any status change with comprehensive social programs aimed at education, job training, and infrastructure investment in underserved regions. As a young but

clear-eyed voice in the debate, Caraballo Cueto brought empirical rigor to conversations often dominated by rhetoric and ideological positioning.

José González Freyre - Entrepreneur

By the 1990s, José González Freyre was running Pan American Grain, one of Puerto Rico's largest privately held agribusinesses. His company handled rice milling, grain imports, and coffee roasting, with operations spread across multiple ports. This position gave González Freyre a front-row view of how federal tariffs, shipping regulations, (especially under the Jones Act) and global commodity markets shaped Puerto Rico's agricultural viability. While many large-scale producers pushed for market liberalization, González Freyre advocated for balanced trade policies that protected local farmers from being undercut by cheaper imports, while still maintaining access to U.S. consumer markets. He was deeply concerned about food security, rural employment, and the survival of domestic agricultural expertise. By 1995, his voice in the status debate was pragmatic: whatever form Puerto Rico's political relationship with the U.S. took, it needed to preserve a competitive edge for local producers and safeguard the island's agricultural infrastructure from external shocks.

María de los Ángeles Vélez - Entrepreneur

Before 1995, María de los Ángeles Vélez had risen through the ranks of one of Puerto Rico's largest coffee cooperatives, starting in quality control and eventually becoming its general manager. Her leadership came during a time of crisis for the island's coffee industry with global prices falling, competition from Latin American producers intensifying, and younger generations moving away from farming. Vélez championed cooperative models that allowed small producers

to pool resources, retain profits locally, and compete more effectively on both domestic and export markets. She became a vocal advocate for fair trade agreements, targeted subsidies, and branding strategies that emphasized Puerto Rico's unique coffee heritage. In the context of the status debate, Vélez pushed for arrangements that would give local farmers competitive access to markets without sacrificing cultural and agricultural traditions. By 1995, she was recognized as a defender of both the economic and cultural lifeblood of Puerto Rico's coffee-growing regions.

Ana María Cordero - Small Business Owner

By the 1990s, Ana María Cordero had built a career that straddled both the private hospitality industry and public tourism administration, culminating in her role as Executive Director of the Puerto Rico Tourism Company. Tasked with managing one of the island's largest economic sectors, she worked to boost international tourism through aggressive marketing campaigns, while also overseeing sustainable development in rural and coastal areas. Cordero was adept at balancing the demands of large-scale developers with the needs of local communities, promoting eco-tourism and cultural tourism as ways to diversify the visitor economy. Her diplomatic skills made her both a business strategist and a cultural ambassador. In the status debate, she was pragmatic by weighing the benefits of statehood's infrastructure funding against the flexibility of the commonwealth and the branding potential of independence. By 1995, she was an influential figure ensuring that Puerto Rico's tourism growth preserved the island's natural beauty and cultural identity.

Pedro Pierluisi - Secretary of Justice

Serving as Puerto Rico's Secretary of Justice since 1993 under Governor Pedro Rosselló, Pedro Pierluisi held one of the most critical legal posts on the island. His role encompassed criminal prosecution, civil litigation, and constitutional advisory work for the executive branch. By 1995, Pierluisi had become deeply involved in analyzing the legal consequences of potential status changes through studying how federal laws would apply under statehood, what treaty obligations would emerge under independence, and what structural reforms would be needed under any scenario. He collaborated with legal scholars, legislators, and policy experts to map out transition frameworks. Pierluisi viewed status through the lens of public safety and institutional integrity, arguing that the justice system must be equipped to handle new legal realities while addressing existing challenges such as street crime and corruption. His combination of legal expertise and political positioning made him a key architect in preparing Puerto Rico for any constitutional shift.

Dr. Emma Fernández - Healthcare Reformist

By the 1990s, Dr. Emma Fernández was directing one of San Juan's largest public hospitals, having risen from an ER physician to a respected administrator. She faced firsthand the challenges of an overburdened public health system with shortages of medicine, outdated facilities, and fluctuating Medicaid reimbursements from Washington. Fernández was outspoken about how political status directly influenced Puerto Rico's healthcare infrastructure: statehood could grant access to full federal healthcare funding formulas, while independence could allow for tailored, sovereignty-based public health strategies, but both carried risks. She lobbied for policies that would stabilize hospital budgets, modernize equipment, and retain medical talent.

Fernández framed status not just as a political question, but as a determinant of whether Puerto Ricans would receive equitable healthcare. By 1995, she was a respected voice bridging the worlds of medicine, policy, and administration, pushing for a future in which Puerto Rico's hospitals could meet modern standards of care.

Dr. Margarita Irizarry - Researcher

During the 1990s, Dr. Margarita Irizarry was one of Puerto Rico's leading figures in the pharmaceutical industry, heading research and production at Bristol-Myers Squibb's Humacao facility. She was known for her ability to connect laboratory innovation with large-scale manufacturing, ensuring the facility's output of cardiovascular and oncology drugs met the highest quality standards. Irizarry was deeply aware of the global pressures on pharmaceutical production with competition from lower-cost countries, changing U.S. tax incentives, and the need for a skilled workforce. She argued forcefully that Puerto Rico's Section 936/926 tax benefits, combined with its educated labor pool, made it indispensable to multinational pharmaceutical strategies. In the status debate, she advocated for arrangements that would keep multinational companies anchored in Puerto Rico while protecting local jobs. By 1995, she had become an industry leader whose voice carried weight in boardrooms and policy discussions about the island's role in global drug manufacturing.

Hiram González - Port Authority Director

By 1995, Hiram González was leading the Puerto Rico Port Authority, managing the island's most critical economic infrastructure: its ports. From food imports to pharmaceutical exports, nearly every sector of the economy depended on efficient cargo flow through facilities

under his jurisdiction. González had risen from port operations management to the top post, known for his skill in streamlining logistics and negotiating with powerful U.S. shipping companies bound by the Jones Act. He also mediated between shipping interests and local stevedore unions. For González, political status was not an abstract question, but it was about whether Puerto Rico could make its shipping system more competitive, reduce costs, and improve resilience against economic shocks. He saw efficient port operations as foundational to economic growth. By 1995, his leadership ensured that the Port Authority was both a logistical hub and a critical voice in shaping the island's economic future through infrastructure policy.

Monsignor Roberto González Nieves - Bishop

In the 1990s, Monsignor Roberto González Nieves was a rising figure in Puerto Rico's Catholic hierarchy, known for his theological scholarship and deep engagement with community life. Born in New Jersey to Puerto Rican parents and raised on the island, he joined the Franciscan order and gained administrative experience as chancellor before becoming a bishop. González Nieves believed the Church's role extended beyond spiritual guidance to addressing social welfare, poverty alleviation, and cultural preservation. He was unafraid to comment on political issues when they touched moral concerns, knowing that pastoral letters or sermons could sway thousands in an overwhelmingly Catholic population. In the status debate, he emphasized protecting the independence of religious institutions, maintaining strong social safety nets, and preserving Puerto Rico's cultural heritage regardless of constitutional arrangement. By 1995, his moral authority made him a respected figure in public policy discussions.

José F. Ortiz - Electric Power Authority Director

As leader of PREPA in the 1990s, José F. Ortiz oversaw one of Puerto Rico's largest public enterprises and most politically sensitive institutions. PREPA powered every home and business on the island, employed thousands, and was central to economic stability. Ortiz faced the challenges of aging infrastructure, heavy reliance on imported oil, and rising calls for diversification into natural gas and renewables. He also navigated complex labor relations and environmental compliance mandates from U.S. federal agencies. In the status debate, Ortiz evaluated how different political outcomes could affect energy policy, whether through federal environmental standards, access to infrastructure funding, or freedom to set independent energy strategies. His focus was on ensuring affordable, reliable electricity that could withstand hurricanes and economic fluctuations. By 1995, Ortiz had become a central figure in the intersection of energy policy, economic competitiveness, and Puerto Rico's long-term development.

Jaime B. Fuster Berlingeri - Supreme Court Associate Justice

Before joining the Supreme Court of Puerto Rico in 1992, Jaime B. Fuster Berlingeri served as Puerto Rico's Resident Commissioner in Washington, giving him firsthand experience in the island's relationship with the U.S. Congress. On the court, he quickly became known as the liberal conscience of the bench, championing social justice causes, family protection laws, and expanded services for vulnerable populations. Fuster approached the status debate through a judicial lens: how would constitutional changes affect access to social services, civil rights protections, and equality under the law? He was concerned that certain status outcomes might entrench disparities rather than eliminate them. His opinions reflected a belief that legal

frameworks must actively promote justice, not just codify political arrangements. By 1995, Fuster was a prominent legal thinker whose voice carried weight in both court decisions and broader political debates.

Antonio S. Negrón García - Supreme Court Associate Justice

Appointed to the Supreme Court of Puerto Rico in 1974, Antonio S. Negrón García was one of its longest-serving members by the 1990s and a leader of its conservative bloc. With a background in labor and administrative law, he brought a textualist approach to constitutional interpretation, often deferring to legislative authority over judicial intervention. Negrón García was cautious about judicial overreach, preferring procedural discipline and stability. In the context of the status debate, he emphasized the need to avoid legal chaos during any transition, preserve existing statutory frameworks where possible, and maintain checks on executive power. His influence on the bench provided a counterbalance to more activist judicial voices, making him a key stabilizing force in politically sensitive cases. By 1995, he was respected for his legal consistency and his commitment to orderly governance, regardless of Puerto Rico's future constitutional arrangement.

Jorge A. Rodríguez - Natural Resources Commissioner

In the 1990s, Jorge A. Rodríguez led Puerto Rico's Department of Natural and Environmental Resources, overseeing the management of the island's forests, water reservoirs, mineral deposits, and maritime boundaries. A trained civil engineer with expertise in coastal infrastructure and water management, Rodríguez faced constant tensions between developers seeking economic growth, environmentalists advocating conservation, and federal agencies

enforcing U.S. environmental law. He sought to strike a balance through promoting sustainable economic activity while protecting fragile ecosystems. Rodríguez argued that political status would determine Puerto Rico's ability to control its own natural resources, set independent environmental regulations, and shape its energy mix. He was particularly vocal about reducing dependence on costly federal constraints in favor of locally tailored solutions. By 1995, Rodríguez had positioned himself as both a steward of the island's environmental heritage and a strategist for integrating natural resource management into Puerto Rico's economic development plans.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Antonio Weiss, “America’s Forgotten Colony: Ending Puerto Rico’s Perpetual Crisis | the Volcker Alliance,” The Volcker Alliance, June 10, 2019, https://www.volckeralliance.org/news/americas-forgotten-colony--puerto-ricos-perpetual-crisis.

Artist Depiction of El Chupacabra. n.d. Flickr. https://www.flickr.com/photos/cartercomics/141058618.

Atiles-Osoria, José. “Colonial State Terror in Puerto Rico: A Research Agenda.” State Crime Journal, vol. 5, no. 2, 2016, p. 220, https://doi.org/10.13169/statecrime.5.2.0220.

Ayala, César J., and Rafael Bernabe. “The Hurricane of San Ciriaco: Disaster, Politics, and Society in Puerto Rico, 1899–1901.” Hispanic American Historical Review 72, no. 3 (1992): 303–334.

Ayala, Israel. “The Coffee History of Puerto Rico.” Whetstone Magazine, August 3, 2024. https://www.whetstonemagazine.com/journal/the-coffee-history-of-puerto-rico.

Brás, Marisabel. “Puerto Rico and the United States .” The Library of Congress, 2015. https://www.loc.gov/collections/puerto-rico-books-and-pamphlets/articles-and-essays/nineteenth-century-puerto-rico/puerto-rico-and-united-states/.

Cabán, Pedro A. “Puerto Rico: State Formation in a Colonial Context.” Caribbean Studies, vol. 30, no. 2, 2002, pp. 170–215. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/25613375,

https://doi.org/10.2307/25613375.

Cabranes, José A. “The Status of Puerto Rico.” The International and Comparative Law Quarterly, vol. 16, no. 2, 1967, pp. 531–539. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/757389, https://doi.org/10.2307/757389.

Carter, Jeff. HowStuffWorks.com. 2001. https://www.flickr.com/photos/cartercomics/141058618/in/photostream/

Cheatham, Amelia, and Diana Roy. “Puerto Rico: A U.S. Territory in Crisis.” Council on Foreign Relations, 8 Jan. 2025, www.cfr.org/backgrounder/puerto-rico-us-territory-crisis.

Clark, J. R. “Hurricane Hugo and the Urban Forest of Puerto Rico.” Journal of Arboriculture 19, no. 6 (1993): 368–373.

CNN. “Hurricane Marilyn Leaves Trail of Destruction,” 1995. https://www.cnn.com/US/Newsbriefs/9509/9-21/am/index.html?eref=sitesearch.

Congress.gov. “H. Rept. 104-713 - UNITED STATES-PUERTO RICO POLITICAL STATUS ACT,” 2025. https://www.congress.gov/committee-report/104th-congress/house-report/713/1.

Countries and Their Cultures. “Culture of Puerto Rico - History, People, Clothing, Traditions, Women, Beliefs, Food, Customs, Family.” Everyculture.com, 2009. https://www.everyculture.com/No-Sa/Puerto-Rico.html.

Díaz, José O. “Puerto Rico, the United States, and the 1993 Referendum on Political Status.” *Latin American Research Review* 30, no. 1 (January 1, 1995): 203–11. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0023879100017258.

Dietz, James L. *Economic History of Puerto Rico: Institutional Change and Capitalist Development*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986.

Dietz, James. *Economic History of Puerto Rico: Institutional Change and Capitalist Development*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003.

Electionspuertorico.org. "1993 Status Plebiscite Vote Summary," 2025. https://electionspuertorico.org/1993/summary.html.

Freedom Archives. "Puerto Rico: Hugo Relief and Politics." Puerto Rico Libre (Nov–Dec 1989). https://freedomarchives.org/Documents/Finder/DOC41_scans/41.free.puerto.rico.nov-dec.1989.pdf.

Gold, Simon. "Unveiling the Chupacabra Legend: Creature of the Night - Discovery UK." Discovery UK, October 21, 2024. https://www.discoveryuk.com/mysteries/unveiling-the-chupacabra-legend-creature-of-the-night/.

Hansen, Terrence Leslie. *The Types of the Folktale in Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, and Spanish South America*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957.

Hurricane Left Grievous Wounds to Land and Spirit of Puerto Rico. New York Times, October 1, 1989. https://www.nytimes.com/1989/10/01/us/hurricane-left-grievous-wounds-to-land-and-spirit-of-puerto-rico.html.

Hurricane Okeechobee Aftermath. n.d. Picryl.

https://picryl.com/media/1928-okeechobee-aftermath-16-65ff75.

Kal Wagenheim, "Puerto Rico - the Economy," Encyclopedia Britannica, July 2025,

https://www.britannica.com/place/Puerto-Rico/The-economy.

La Llorona. n.d. Wikimedia Commons.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:La_llorona.jpg.

Library of Congress. “Hurricane San Ciriaco.” The World of 1898: The Spanish-American War. https://guides.loc.gov/world-of-1898/hurricane-san-ciriaco.

Library of Congress. “Puerto Rico: Overview.” The World of 1898: The Spanish-American War. https://guides.loc.gov/world-of-1898/puerto-rico-overview.

Library of Congress. “Society and the Economy in Early-Nineteenth-Century Puerto Rico .” Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540 USA, 2025. https://www.loc.gov/collections/puerto-rico-books-and-pamphlets/articles-and-essays/nineteenth-century-puerto-rico/society-and-economy/.

Loveman, Brian. “US Foreign Policy toward Latin America in the 19th Century.” Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Latin American History, 7 July 2016, https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199366439.013.41.

Maldonado Denis, Manuel. “The Puerto Ricans: Protest or Submission?” The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, vol. 382, 1969, pp. 26–31. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/1037111, https://doi.org/10.2307/1037111.

Manuel Rodríguez, “The New Deal in Puerto Rico | Who Built America?,” Whobuiltamerica.org, 2025, https://www.whobuiltamerica.org/item/the-new-deal-in-puerto-rico.

Map of Puerto Rican status referendum, 1993 results by municipality. n.d. Wikimedia Commons. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Puerto_Rican_status_referendum,_1993_results_by_municipality.png.

Martínez, Rubén Berríos. “Puerto Rico’s Decolonization.” Foreign Affairs, vol. 76, no. 6, 1997, p. 100, https://doi.org/10.2307/20048279.

Moral, Sorsiree del. “Colonial Citizens of a Modern Empire: War, Illiteracy, and Physical Education in Puerto Rico, 19171930.” NWIG: New West Indian Guide / Nieuwe WestIndische Gids 87, no. 1/2 (2013): 30–61. https://doi.org/10.2307/24713438.

Mújica-Baker, Frank. Huracanes y tormentas que han afectado a Puerto Rico. San Juan: Servicio Nacional de Meteorología, n.d. (PDF report).

National Hurricane Center. Tropical Cyclone Report: Hurricane Marilyn (AL151995), 1995. https://www.nhc.noaa.gov/data/tcr/AL151995_Marilyn.pdf.

National Hurricane Center. “Hurricane Marilyn News Advisory, September 17, 1995,” 1995. https://web.archive.org/web/20071026210823/http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/archive/storm_wallets/atlantic/atl1995/marilyn/news/mh0917p2.gif.

Negrón Portillo, Mariano. Las turbas republicanas, 1900–1904. Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 1990.

News, ABC. “Analysis: The Puerto Rico Plebiscite That Wasn’t.” ABC News, November 8, 2012. https://abcnews.go.com/ABC_Univision/Opinion/puerto-rico-status-plebiscite/story?id=17674719.

Noticel. “De Algunas Leyendas de Terror Boricuas.” Noticel.com, 2024. https://www.noticel.com/vida/20151018/de-algunas-leyendas-de-terror-boricuas/.

PBS. “El Chupacabras, a Modern Mystery.” PBS.org. Monstrum, May 10, 2019. https://www.pbs.org/video/el-chupacabras-a-modern-mystery-qeyye6/.

Pethick, Kris. “10 Myths Legends and Superstitions of Puerto...” Culture Trip, March 14, 2018. https://theculturetrip.com/caribbean/puerto-rico/articles/10-myths-legends-and-superstitions-of-puerto-rico.

Pew Research Center. “Religion in Latin America.” Pew Research Center’s Religion & Public Life Project, November 13, 2014. https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2014/11/13/religion-in-latin-america/.

Primera Hora. “Chemo Soto Está Seguro de Que El Chupacabras Es Un Extraterrestre.” Primera Hora, October 29, 2010. https://www.primerahora.com/noticias/puerto-rico/notas/chemo-soto-esta-seguro-de-que-el-chupacabras-es-un-extraterrestre/.

Puerto Rican Farm Family, 1942. n.d. Picryl. https://picryl.com/media/utuado-puerto-rico-vicinity-farm-labor-family-in-the-hills.

“Puerto Rico Emergency Relief Administration (PRERA).” Federal Emergency Relief Administration Archive, New Deal Network. http://newdeal.feri.org/pr/pr12.htm.

Puerto Rico Flag. n.d. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flag_of_Puerto_Rico.png.

Radford, Benjamin. “Slaying the Vampire: Solving the Chupacabra Mystery.” Skeptical Inquirer, Volume 35 Issue 3. June, 2011. https://skepticalinquirer.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/29/2011/05/p45.pdf

Rivera, Luis. “10 Puerto Rican Superstitions – BoricuaGenes.” Boricuagenes.com, 2025. https://boricuagenes.com/10-puerto-rican-superstitions/.

Roanoke Times. “Hurricane Marilyn Skirts Puerto Rico, Heads for Open Atlantic,” 1995. https://scholar.lib.vt.edu/VA-news/ROA-Times/issues/1995/rt9509/950917/09190008.htm.

Rodríguez, Manuel. “The New Deal in Puerto Rico | Who Built America?” Whobuiltamerica.org, 2025. https://www.whobuiltamerica.org/item/the-new-deal-in-puerto-rico.

Rodriguez, Milton O. “The Political Status of Puerto Rico--A Comparative Study of the 1967 and 1993 Plebiscites.” 1998. https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/tr/pdf/ADA352916.pdf.

Roman, Reinaldo. *Governing Spirits : Religion, Miracles, and Spectacles in Cuba and Puerto Rico, 1898-1956*. Chapel Hill, Nc: University Of North Carolina Press, 2007.

Romero-Barceló, Carlos. “Puerto Rico, U.S.A.: The Case for Statehood.” Foreign Affairs, vol. 59, no. 1, 1980, p. 60, https://doi.org/10.2307/20040653.

Salivia, Luís A. Historia de los temporales de Puerto Rico y las Antillas (1492–1970). San Juan: Editorial Edil, 1972.

San Juan. n.d. https://timelessmoon.getarchive.net/amp/media/san-juan-puerto-rico-and-vicinity-1901-1903-governors-palace-and-sea-wall-8a5d3d.

Schwartz, Stuart B. “The 1928 Hurricane and the Shaping of the Circum-Caribbean Region.” Hispanic American Historical Review 87, no. 1 (Winter 2007).

Sobre el ciclón del glorioso San Ciriaco y compañeros mártires. San Juan: A. Lvnn e hijos de Pérez Moris, 1899.

Santollano, Luis. “La Plaza y La Calle.” In *Mirada al Caribe*, 54:75–78. El Colegio de Mexico, 1945. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvbcd2vs.12.

Spanish American War. n.d.

https://itoldya420.getarchive.net/amp/media/naval-battle-at-santiago-cuba-spanish-american-war-july-3-1898-30588162266-e1bb50S.

"Spanish-American War | Causes, Facts, Battles, & Results." Encyclopædia Britannica, 15 Nov. 2018, www.britannica.com/event/Spanish-American-War.

Tannehill, Ivan Ray. The Hurricanes. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Weather Bureau; 6th ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1945.

The Anomalies. "1975: The Vampire of Moca." Anomalies: the Strange & Unexplained, April 4, 2014. http://anomalyinfo.com/Stories/1975-vampire-moca.

The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Spanish-American War - Fighting in the Philippines and Cuba." Encyclopædia Britannica, 2019, www.britannica.com/event/Spanish-American-War/Fighting-in-the-Philippines-and-Cuba

Toy, Rebecca. "Chasing Chupacabras? You May Find Something Even More Extraordinary Here." Travel, November 8, 2022. https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/article/chasing-chupacabras-you-may-find-something-even-more-extraordinary-here.

Thurber, Dani. "Research Guides: World of 1898: International Perspectives on the Spanish American War: Foraker Act (Organic Act of 1900)." Guides.loc.gov, guides.loc.gov/world-of-1898/foraker-act.

Torres, Raúl Camilo. "Chemo No Se Detiene." Primera Hora, October 27, 2016. https://www.primerahora.com/noticias/puerto-rico/notas/chemo-no-se-detiene/.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. The Rise and Decline of Puerto Rico's Economy. Washington, D.C.: USDA ERS, 2017. https://www.ers.usda.gov/sites/default/files/images/rise-and-decline-of-puertorico_5_17.pdf.

U.S. Geological Survey. High Energy Storms Fact Sheet. Reston, VA: USGS, 1990. https://pubs.usgs.gov/fs/high-energy-storms/.

Wagenheim, Kal. "Puerto Rico - the Economy." Encyclopedia Britannica, July 2025. https://www.britannica.com/place/Puerto-Rico/The-economy.

Wagner, Stephen. "On the Trail of the Chupacabra." web.archive.org. Paranormal Phenomena, September 19, 2005. https://web.archive.org/web/20050919215215/http://paranormal.about.com/library/weekly/aa051898.htm.

Weiss, Antonio. "America's Forgotten Colony: Ending Puerto Rico's Perpetual Crisis | the Volcker Alliance." The Volcker Alliance, June 10, 2019. https://www.volckeralliance.org/news/americas-forgotten-colony-ending-puerto-ricos-perpetual-crisis.

Winiarski, Kristen . "The Blood-Sucking Chupacabra of Puerto Rico." www.americanghostwalks.com, February 15, 2023. https://www.americanghostwalks.com/articles/chupacabra-puerto-rico.

Winick, Stephen. "La Llorona: An Introduction to the Weeping Woman | Folklife Today." blogs.loc.gov, October 13, 2021. https://blogs.loc.gov/folklife/2021/10/la-llorona-an-introduction-to-the-weeping-woman/.

Woman in a needlework factory. n.d. Picryl. https://picryl.com/media/san-juan-puerto-rico-woman-in-the-needlework-factory.

Zeidan, Adam. "Foraker Act | United States [1900] | Britannica." Encyclopædia Britannica,

2020, www.britannica.com/topic/Foraker-Act.