Puerto Ricans at the Dawn of the New Millennium

Edwin Meléndez and Carlos Vargas-Ramos, Editors
Since 2001, its researchers have made intensive use of the Census Bureau’s annual American Community Survey, which provides a wealth of demographic and economic information about metropolitan areas in the U.S., broken down by ethnicity. Centro has also conducted its own national survey of nearly 500 stateside Puerto Ricans, exploring the effects of the recession and how the Puerto Rican community has coped with the economic hard times.

*Puerto Ricans at the Dawn of the New Millennium* is a result of that research. A comprehensive look at the changing realities for Puerto Ricans since the beginning of the 21st century, this book collects and analyzes research regarding Puerto Rican migration, the lingering effects of the last recession, coping strategies that Puerto Ricans have used, and the issues affecting the population.

An Excerpt from the Introduction
Edwin Meléndez and Carlos Vargas-Ramos

The demographic and socioeconomic profile of Puerto Ricans at this early point in the New Millennium is dramatically different from what it was just a decade ago. To begin with, consider the fact that equal numbers of Puerto Ricans, 3.8 million, lived stateside and on the island in 2003. However, by 2013, the most recent year for which data are available, there were 5,121,921 Puerto Ricans living stateside and 3,466,276 Puerto Ricans residing on the island, representing a population swing of nearly 1.5 million over a decade.

Such a population swing constitutes a migration wave to rival the magnitude of what is known in the literature as the “Great Migration” of Puerto Ricans to the United States during the 1950s. Fueled by the collapse of the Puerto Rican economy and the inability of the political establishment to stabilize the fiscal crisis and reduce crime and violence, an extraordinary wave of migration from Puerto Rico to the United States has changed the landscape. If these patterns continue, by the end of the decade it is probable that two-thirds of Puerto Ricans will reside stateside.

Even as stateside Puerto Ricans became more numerous than those living on the island, a significant change in population settlement and dispersion has also transpired. The Puerto Rican population has grown in almost every state and region of the United States. Puerto Ricans now make up 9.5% of the total Hispanic population, and 1.6% of the country’s total population. These changes warrant both our understanding of this transformation and the forging of fresh approaches and collective responses to the new challenges posed by these patterns.
Consider that in the last decade over a million stateside Puerto Ricans migrated across state lines. This extraordinary rate of mobility is several times the rate for the population of the United States as a whole or for any other major ethnic group. More stunning is the fact that this pattern of migratory behavior is fueled by movement among those born in the United States, not by island-born or recent migrants as one might speculate based on prior historical patterns. In fact, 7 out of 10 Puerto Ricans moving to another state during the last decade were born in the United States.

Consider also that the South, as a region, and Central Florida, in particular, are the main destinations of interstate movers and recent migrants. What is most significant and least known is the likelihood that in just a few years, more Puerto Ricans will live in Florida than in the state of New York, the historical entry port and traditional enclave of Puerto Ricans. Similarly, it is apparent that before long, the fast-growing Puerto Rican population in the South, West, and Midwest will outnumber Puerto Ricans in the Northeast. When (not if) this event happens, it will mark a significant shift in the history of Puerto Ricans in the United States.

Today, population figures show that 60% of Puerto Ricans reside in the states and only 40% on the island.

What explains such dramatic population swings? Related to these patterns of population movement and resettlement is the disproportionate impact of the Great Recession on Puerto Ricans on both the continent and the island. To ascertain the impact of the recession on stateside Puerto Ricans, Centro conducted a national survey that included a sample of close to 500 respondents. This proprietary data was combined with available public data from the American Community Survey (ACS) to construct a detailed profile of how the Puerto Rican community coped with the impact of the recession and how their responses compared with those of other racial or ethnic groups including non-Hispanic whites, non-Hispanic blacks and other Latinos. The findings from this study are revealing and begin to explain the observed migratory and interstate mobility patterns of stateside Puerto Ricans.

The Puerto Rican story is one of resiliency. This is a community that despite facing difficult challenges in finding employment and staving-off poverty has been especially proactive in taking steps to overcome dire circumstances. The narrative that emerges from our research is very different from that of past decades, which sought to explain economic disadvantage by so-called underclass behavior, lack of attachment to the labor markets, or the detrimental effects of migration. Our findings also challenge the portrayal of Puerto Ricans as lacking socioeconomic advancement compared with other “immigrant” groups.

Several years after the Great Recession officially ended, the effects are still palpable to the jobless and the poor and to those whose incomes have stagnated or who have taken lower-paying jobs. Yet Puerto Ricans have recovered faster and fared better in the aggregate than other ethnic groups. Puerto Ricans’ resiliency is demonstrated by their seeking jobs wherever these were available, by taking training to improve skills and employability, by changing careers and occupations to accommodate employment demand, and in general, by deploying more strategies for improving competitiveness in the job market than other ethnic groups. As a result, though the earnings for full-time, year-round Puerto Rican workers remained basically stagnant between 2007 (the last business cycle peak year) and 2011, their relative standing improved compared with average earnings of workers in the United States or non-Hispanic white workers. Puerto Rican women have shown the most significant gains in earnings during this period, in both absolute and relative terms.

Yet a sizable portion of the Puerto Rican community is still caught in the trough of the recession like many others. Puerto Ricans continue to be overrepresented in the low-wage labor market and among the poor, lag behind in educational attainment, and have greater need for childcare in order to participate in the labor force than other groups. For this segment of the population resiliency is insufficient in the midst of declining opportunity. Despite tangible advances in electing representatives to state and local office and in having well-established community and professional leadership, these gains have not been translated into substantial improvement for those suffering adverse social circumstances.
Population Movements and New Settlements

The 1950s are considered the period of the Great Migration, given that about half a million Puerto Ricans migrated to the United States (Vázquez Calzada 1988). However, it is likely that a much higher number of Puerto Ricans migrated to the United States in the 2000s. For the first time under the jurisdiction of the United States, Puerto Rico experienced a net decline in population. Today, population figures show that 60% of Puerto Ricans reside in the states and only 40% on the island. This population surge from the island to the United States has had significant consequences for stateside Puerto Ricans.

Migration to and from the United States is an enduring element in the daily life of Puerto Ricans. Data from ACS and the Puerto Rico Community Survey (PRCS), available since 2001 and 2006, respectively, provide the opportunity to ascertain the social and economic characteristics of migrants moving to and from the island. With this data, it is now possible to create a detailed profile of recent migrants, exploring the factors that contribute to the decision to migrate and ascertaining their meaning for both stateside and island Puerto Ricans.

In the chapter “Puerto Rican Migration and the Brain Drain Dilemma,” Birson presents a detailed profile of recent migrants. In general, the data indicate that recent migrants to the United States “tended to be younger, neither more or less educated, were more attached to the labor force, and consisted of more blue-collar workers compared to their counterparts that they had left behind.” These findings are interesting because they challenge the prevalent view presented in the popular media in Puerto Rico of a “brain drain” of more educated and skilled workers from the island.

It is apparent that before long, the fast-growing Puerto Rican population in the South, West, and Midwest will outnumber Puerto Ricans in the Northeast.

The educational attainment of migrants is consistent with the occupational pattern. Among those twenty-five years of age or older, individuals with bachelor’s or graduate degrees were slightly underrepresented among migrants when compared with Puerto Rico’s labor force. Those with graduate degrees represented 5% of migrants in comparison with 6% of Puerto Rico’s labor force, while those with bachelor’s degrees represented 15% of the flow versus 16% of the island’s labor force.

It is also important to consider the data on the labor-force attachment of migrants. Despite high unemployment and a low labor-force participation rate in Puerto Rico, one year after arriving in the United States, Puerto Rican migrants showed a remarkable attachment to the labor force. Fifty-six percent of the migrants from the island were in the labor force, with 40% employed and 25% unemployed. These findings portray, to a large degree, an exodus that is representative of the island population and migrants who are mostly in search of employment and economic opportunity.

One of the most important findings reported in this volume is that between 2000 and 2011, a total of 1.2 million Puerto Ricans, equivalent to a quarter of the Puerto Rican mainland population, crossed from one state into another. The continued dispersion of the Puerto Rican population throughout the country has come to characterize a new period in the history of Puerto Ricans in the U.S. While the majority of Puerto Ricans are still concentrated in the Northeast, their concentration continues to increase in the South. New York is still the state with the most Puerto Ricans, with more than one million, but Florida is closely behind with 987,663 as of 2013, and is poised to take the lead by 2020. In the chapter “A Brief Look at Internal Migration of Puerto Ricans in the United States,” García-Ellín analyzes the composition and main points of origin and destinations of these migratory flows. To our knowledge, this is the first time that data from over a decade of observations have been combined in an effort to analyze the internal migration of stateside Puerto Ricans. Who moves? Where do they go? Are they men or women, young or old, born in the United States or on the island, more or less educated?
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García-Ellín finds that migration to the South and Northeast accounted for most of the population flow, with Florida receiving the greatest number of migrants. The South received about half of the total flow of internal migration (599,359), and Florida received about half of the flow to the South (283,045). For the most part, New York is the largest sending state to Florida, but also sends migrants to the neighboring states of New Jersey, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania. Florida receives migrants from these eastern states as well as Illinois. Overall, these migrants are slightly more educated than the stateside Puerto Rican population as a whole, with overrepresentation among those with some college education (32.3% of the flow compared with 27.6% of the population) and underrepresented among the least educated (20.8% of the flow have less than a high school degree compared with 26.6% of the population).

In the chapter “New Puerto Rican Diasporas in the Southern United States,” Silver dissects the magnitude of the flows and characteristics of migrants to the seven southern states that had over 10,000 Puerto Ricans in 2000 and that grew by over 10,000 Puerto Ricans from 2000 to 2010. Over the last decade, Florida has seen the largest growth in population with a gain of 365,000 to reach almost 850,000 as reported by the 2010 Census. The remaining settlements in the South are smaller in comparison. The second-largest settlement is in Texas, with about 131,000 in 2010. In the southern states with the largest population growth, Puerto Ricans generally have a better educational profile than stateside Puerto Ricans as a whole, although there are important differences between states. While in Florida and South Carolina, those with a bachelor’s degree and above are about equally represented as they are among Puerto Ricans nationally, Puerto Ricans in Virginia have a sizable advantage in this category as well as among those with graduate and professional degrees. There also tends to be a smaller gap in median household income between Puerto Ricans and non-Hispanic whites in the southern states.

The Puerto Rican population in the South has experienced different socioeconomic dynamics from what has been reported in the literature about earlier settlements, and Silver concludes with suggestions for further research on Puerto Ricans in the South. In contrast to early migrants to New York and settlements in other northern cities, contemporary migration to the South is relatively more scattered with lower concentrations of Puerto Ricans. The majority of Latinos in the region are of Mexican descent (or Cuban in Miami), and racial dynamics are tainted by the history of Jim Crow segregation. Furthermore, the mix of Puerto Ricans born and raised in the United States and recent arrivals from the island induces a different cultural experience. These racial and inter-ethnic dynamics offer a new complexity that is yet to be fully understood.

Another chapter by Silver, “Puerto Ricans in Florida,” offers a unique case study of the contemporary stateside Puerto Rican experience. New Puerto Rican settlements in Florida are concentrated in the central region, while the smaller and older settlements are in Miami and South Florida. The origin of these communities can be traced to military service, land sales, and the opening of the Disney World complex in the Old Enclave, 2006-2013

The Old Enclave, 2006-2013

The New Enclave, 2006-2013

Migration patterns of the “Old Enclave” represent movement between the long-established Puerto Rican enclaves in the Northeast and Midwest, such as in New York City, Boston, Northern New Jersey, and Chicago.

Patterns of the “New Enclave” demonstrate an expansion from these traditional migrant networks to the nascent Puerto Rican communities in the Southern and Western United States.
the early 1970s. Although the educational profile of Puerto Ricans in these areas is not different from those in other parts of the country, Florida’s Puerto Rican households enjoy a slightly higher median income and lower poverty rates. In Central Florida, there is an even distribution of Puerto Ricans who were born in the United States and on the island. Even as Puerto Ricans in Florida have made some modest gains in political representation, they were energized by the 2012 Presidential election in which they voted in record numbers.

One of the critical questions posed by this surge in the number of Puerto Ricans moving to various areas across the country is whether or not increased population dispersion has led to greater social isolation. Vargas-Ramos uses the most common social science indicators to address the question, “Are Puerto Ricans More Segregated?” Using decennial census data, he found that the segregation of Puerto Ricans from non-Hispanic whites decreased markedly between 2000 and 2010 as measured by the dissimilarity index. In 2000, nearly half (45%) of Puerto Ricans lived in the 26 counties identified as having high levels of segregation (i.e., with dissimilarity scores higher than .60). By 2010, this number dropped to about a third of Puerto Ricans who lived in the 20 counties identified as having high levels of segregation. In similar fashion, Puerto Ricans are mingling with other ethnic groups as they increasingly reside in areas that are also populated by blacks and non-Puerto Rican Latinos.

**Education and Economic Opportunity**

Years after the Great Recession ended, many workers and working-class families are still experiencing its effects. In the chapter “Puerto Rican Economic Resiliency after the Great Recession,” Birson and Meléndez analyze the impact of the recession and the strategies that workers have implemented to cope with economic adversity. In particular, they examine the long-term effects of the recession on the stateside Puerto Rican community compared with its effects on the major racial and ethnic groups within the United States—non-Hispanic whites, non-Hispanic blacks, and Latinos.

Puerto Ricans experienced the highest increase in unemployment in the labor force of the United States during the recession, from 6.1% in 2007 to 9.8% in 2011. Among the unemployed, the percentage of those who were undergoing long-term unemployment rose dramatically, from 30.7% in 2007 to 46.4% in 2011. Of course, the erosion of employment during the recession had an effect on poverty rates for Puerto Ricans. Two years after the recovery started, Puerto Rican poverty rates for all individuals remained three percentage points higher than in 2007, reaching 27.4% in 2011. For Puerto Rican children under 18 years of age, the poverty rate of 35.5% was among the highest of all other groups and twice that of non-Hispanic whites.

Despite the worsening employment indicators across the board for Puerto Ricans, mean earnings for full-time, year-round workers stayed about the same on average ($42,390 in 2007 compared with $42,351 in 2011); they actually improved 4% for Puerto Rican women, rising to $38,591 by 2011. Similarly, the overall ratio of .80 of Puerto Rican workers’ earnings in 2011 to non-Hispanic whites’ earnings was higher than the ratios for non-Hispanic blacks (.76) and for Latinos overall (.59). The earnings ratio improved slightly for Puerto Rican men over pre-recession levels, from 74.2% to 74.4%, but improved four percentage points from 83.8% to 88.0% for Puerto Rican women. This relative increase in the earnings ratios of Puerto Rican women compared with non-Hispanic white women was the result of a slight gain during the period for Puerto Rican women and a slight loss for non-Hispanic white women.

**The data suggest that Puerto Rican workers implemented a variety of strategies to improve their competitiveness in labor markets.**

The data suggest that Puerto Rican workers implemented a variety of strategies to improve their competitiveness in labor markets. Among the employed, they reported moving to find a job (26%), taking training for new skills (25%) or job hunting (17%), taking a job in a new field (24%), visiting career centers (13%), and using the Internet for job searching (36%) at a higher rate than all other ethnic groups. Furthermore, the evidence from various chapters in this volume documents the high internal mobility and migration from the island, which is primarily driven by efforts to gain employment.

These findings on the labor-market standing of Puerto Ricans two years after the recession ended are indicative of two different scenarios within the stateside Puerto Rican community. One group of workers suffered higher unemployment,
Puerto Ricans at the Dawn of the New Millennium
Abstracts of the Chapters

Puerto Rican Migration and the Brain-Drain Dilemma
Kurt Birson
In 2004, the number of Puerto Ricans living in the mainland U.S. exceeded the population in Puerto Rico for the first time in history. This unprecedented event highlights a new shift in the pattern of Puerto Rican migration.

A Brief Look at Internal Migration of Puerto Ricans
Juan Carlos García-Ellín
This chapter presents the state-to-state migration patterns of Puerto Ricans living in the United States after the 2000 census. The findings show that across the decade Puerto Ricans are migrating away from the state of New York and relocating to other states in the northeast.

Patterns of Puerto Rican Settlement and Segregation in the United States, 1990–2010
Carlos Vargas-Ramos
The chapter describes the continued growth of the Puerto Rico in the United States and its dispersion throughout the country, particularly toward the Sunbelt. The analyses find that residential separation from non-Hispanic whites had improved between 2000 and 2010 to the extent that there were fewer Puerto Ricans living in counties with very high dissimilarity rates from non-Hispanic whites.

Puerto Ricans in Florida
Patricia Silver
A review of Puerto Rican settlement in Miami, Tampa, and Orlando is followed by an ethnographic portrait of Central Florida, especially Orlando, home to the largest concentration of Puerto Ricans in the state.

New Puerto Rican Diasporas in the Southern United States
Patricia Silver
New Puerto Rican diaspora settlements in the U.S. South challenge earlier research frameworks. In southern “right-to-work” states, where immigration is a relatively new phenomenon, the context of reception is significantly dispersed, and compared to the largely working-class migration of the mid-20th century, Puerto Rican class relations in 21st century southern settlements are less unified.

Puerto Rican Economic Resiliency after the Great Recession
Kurt Birson and Edwin Meléndez
Several years after one of the longest and deepest recessions in the United States since the 1930s, we look back at its long-term impact on Puerto Ricans in the United States.

Rebuilding the Puerto Rican Education Pipeline for a Multilingual and Multicultural Future
Luis O. Reyes
Puerto Ricans in New York City continue to experience chronic, academic underachievement with low enrollment levels at various points in the “education pipeline” and with low education attainment levels among adults over 25 years of age. The chapter presents policy and programmatic solutions based on re-envisioning our educational goals and instructional programs.

School, Work, and the Transition of Puerto Rican Youth to Adulthood
Edwin Meléndez, M. Anne Visser, and Kurt Birson
Puerto Ricans experience rates of non-participation in school or work as high as those of African-American youth and higher than other Latinos. Moreover, rates of employment among Puerto Ricans who hold higher levels of education suggest that Puerto Ricans also experience difficulties in the transition to adulthood across various levels of educational attainment.

The Asset Profile of Puerto Ricans and Other Latinos after the Great Recession: 2008–2010
Kurt Birson, Ramón Borges-Méndez and Kofi Ampaabeng
Using the Consumer Expenditure Surveys for 2008 and 2010, we analyze the asset wealth of Puerto Ricans compared to other groups in the United States, and observe the changes in the composition of asset portfolios after the Great Recession.

The Well-Being of Puerto Rican Veterans and Service Members
Harry Franqui-Rivera
The military offers opportunities to Puerto Rican youth not readily available in civilian society. Overall, Puerto Rican veterans enjoy advantages in measurable standards of quality of life over their Puerto Rican civilian counterparts. Such advantages disappear when compared to the total population.

Lessons from the European Demographic Winter for Puerto Rico
Alejandro Macarrón
Puerto Rico is in the initial stages of the so-called “demographic winter.” It would start a steady loss of population within a few years. At the same time, the island’s population is aging very quickly.

Asthma and Diabetes within the Puerto Rican Population
Anna Rosofsky and Judith Aponte
The wellness of Puerto Ricans in the United States is challenged by a number of health conditions, in particular, diabetes and asthma.

Puerto Rican Political and Civic Engagement in the United States
Carlos Vargas-Ramos
An analysis of current conditions of political and civic involvement of the Puerto Rican population in the United States reveals a continuing pattern of relatively low political involvement in the political process and civic life in the United States among Puerto Ricans (and other Latinos).
One of the most significant paradigmatic changes in approaches to alleviating poverty over the last decades has come from the community development movement. The asset-building approach proposes that the failure of anti-poverty strategies has been partly rooted in its focus on income rather than on asset development. Advocates of an asset-building approach claim that a focus on savings, investments in post-secondary education and training, and creating a nest egg for retirement, along with other strategies and programs that enable people with limited financial resources to accumulate long-term, productive assets, will have a greater impact on poverty alleviation.

Any approach to asset building within the Puerto Rican and overall Latino population has to start with the dramatic wealth gap that exists relative to non-Hispanic whites. At the heart of the problem is the fact that Puerto Ricans have the lowest mean assessed value for housing assets, the most important component of wealth, which accounts for 86% of all assets for the population as a whole. Housing assets for Puerto Ricans are primarily affected by extreme spatial segregation in low-value housing areas and very low incomes that impede conventional financing, especially in the Northeast where Puerto Ricans are still concentrated. Although home ownership and equity are critical when explaining wealth differences, the gap is the same for all types of assets, such as savings, cars, business ownership, retirement, stocks, bonds and other financial investments.

How workers fare in job markets and in accumulating wealth to cope with economic fluctuations are closely related to educational attainment, an area in which Puerto Ricans have made steady gains over the last decade. Between 2000 and 2011, the proportion of high school graduates increased 12 percentage points to .75, and the rate of completion for a bachelor’s degree gained almost four percentage points to reach .16. Yet, paradoxically, disparities in relation to other groups have remained constant. Even more puzzling, disparities for Puerto Ricans residing in New York City and gender disparities are substantially higher across the educational attainment ladder. Enrollment in college or graduate school among Puerto Ricans and Latinos overall is about 10 percentage points lower than it is among non-Hispanic whites in New York State and in the country as a whole. The disparity is 16 percentage points in New York City, with 20.5% enrollment rates for Puerto Ricans compared with 36.4% for non-Hispanic whites.

In the chapter “Rebuilding the Puerto Rican Education Pipeline for a Multilingual and Multicultural Future,” Reyes presents an educational profile of Puerto Ricans in New York City, discusses the limitations of the civil rights framework embedded in current transitional bilingual education programs, and proposes a reform agenda that is culturally and linguistically appropriate for Puerto Rican and other Latino children. An education reform agenda that will benefit Puerto Rican children includes the recognition of bilingualism and the native language of children as a foundation for learning and school readiness, the engagement of parents and community organizations in school governance and partnerships, and the adoption of a rigorous curriculum.

Youth not at school or work are commonly referred to as “disconnected youth” in the academic literature and popular media. Research on disconnected youth portrays a population that is largely African American, male, and low-income. However, Puerto Ricans have as high an incidence of not being at work or school as African Americans and a higher rate than other Latinos. In the chapter “School, Work and the Transition of Puerto Rican Youth to Adulthood,” Meléndez, Visser, and Birson present a statistical profile of Puerto Rican youth ages 16 to 24 and discuss policies to benefit them.

In sum, disparities in school enrollment and employment among Puerto Rican youth begin early, when entering high school, and grow throughout the transition to post-secondary education.

Puerto Ricans have a rate of non-participation in school or work of 20%, less than that of non-Hispanic blacks but almost double the rate of non-Hispanic whites and three points higher than the overall rate of 17% for Latinos. The rates of being not at school or work increase with age for all groups, but Puerto Ricans have the highest rates within each of the age cohorts. The proportion of Puerto Ricans who attend school and do not work is fairly similar to that of Latinos and non-Hispanic whites, suggesting that there is a core group among Puerto Rican children that follow the idealized pattern of transitioning from high school into college enrollment or employment training. The chances of being out of work and school by age 24 are roughly one in eight for non-Hispanic whites, but one in five for Puerto Rican youth. In New York City, the figures are more stark; one in ten for non-Hispanic whites, and one nearly one in three for Puerto Rican youth. The majority of youth ages 22 to 24 are entering the workforce, yet a significant number of young Puerto Ricans reach this stage completely
disconnected from school or work.
In sum, disparities in school enrollment and employment among Puerto Rican youth begin early, when entering high school, and grow throughout the transition to post-secondary education. These disparities, the authors suggest, are intricately related to educational attainment, and confirm a general finding in the literature that “disconnected youth” have less education than their counterparts (Bloom et al. 2010; Fernandes and Gabe 2009). The evidence presented in the chapter indicates that work and education are closely related in the transition to adulthood for many young people. The authors suggest that pathways programs combining education and workforce development could be especially beneficial to Puerto Rican youth (Visser and Meléndez 2011).

Old Problems, New Challenges
It is evident that migration patterns are fueling significant population changes for stateside Puerto Ricans. In this volume, we take a closer look at the interdependence of the island’s economy and migration. Over the years, Puerto Ricans in general and the government of Puerto Rico in particular have regarded migration as an escape valve for growing unemployment. In the early 1950s, when policies were developed to support the massive export of workers, migration was portrayed as having an additional benefit: return migrants, with enhanced skills and experience in growing industries and occupations, would spur the island’s economic development. In essence, migration reduced unemployment and served as a training ground for workers.

Today economic circumstances have changed. Schools are closing for lack of students, new residential buildings are empty, commercial spaces remain vacant for years, pension funds are defunded, and the country’s debt spirals out of control. All of these indicators point to a structural decline in aggregate demand in the economy, and no other factor contributes as much to this economic downfall as the sudden and severe decline in population primarily driven by migration.

Given the state of the global economy, Puerto Rico is not alone. In the chapter “Lessons from the European Demographic Winter for Puerto Rico,” Macarrón examines the effects of demographic changes on the economy and society of Puerto Rico. Besides the impact of migration, Macarrón considers the impact of fertility rates dropping below replacement rates and of higher life expectancy. In many European countries fertility levels are below 2.1 children per woman and native populations are shrinking. This phenomenon is dubbed “demographic winter” by many, as the winter in Nordic latitudes of Eurasia and America is a season in which nature seems close to dead. Macarrón refers to this phenomenon as “demographic suicide” (Macarrón Larumbe 2011), because indefinite voluntary sub-replacement fertility would eventually lead to extinction of the population.

Macarrón proposes that the combination of demographic winter and high migration is “very challenging for the economic welfare, the quality of democracy and the richness of interaction in private lives.” However, Europe has experienced this demographic winter phenomenon a few decades ahead of Puerto Rico and offers useful lessons to the island from the Old World. In the end, the fate of the island depends on policies to mitigate population loss, especially for keeping on the island—and attracting back to the island—young workers in the prime of their reproductive years.

For youth serving in the military, serving in the armed forces is a pathway to socioeconomic advancement, and this path is inherently linked to migration to the United States.

Since World War II, military service has been one of the constant sources of employment, skills development, and work experience available to Puerto Rican youth both on the island and in the United States. Yet, although many studies have documented the contributions of Puerto Ricans to the military, especially during wars, to date there are very few studies examining military service as an industry that provides career advancement and opportunities as well as spatial mobility. Franqui-Rivera examines those issues “The Well-Being of Puerto Rican Veterans and Service Members and Their Place within the Diaspora.”

Among the most interesting findings in Franqui-Rivera’s paper is that military service and veteran status among Puerto Rican youth are contributing to the growth of communities around military bases and to the dispersion of Puerto Rican migrants. Puerto Rican military service has steadily increased since the first Gulf War and in subsequent wars after September 11, 2001. The surge in troops has led to a subsequent rise in the number of Puerto Rican military veterans. The rate of military participation among Puerto Ricans is higher than it is for the population as a whole, a clear departure from the pattern observed for other Latinos. Puerto Rican veterans enjoy higher median income and lower unemployment and poverty rates than the non-veteran population. In 2013, for example the mean income of island-side Puerto Rican female veterans (with income) was $33,109 while for non-veteran females it was $20,045; for male veterans it was $33,577 compared with

Income for Veterans and Non-Veterans, US and Puerto Rico
$22,139 for non-veterans. For youth serving in the military, serving in the armed forces is a pathway to socioeconomic advancement, and this path is inherently linked to migration to the United States.

Puerto Ricans in this country have the highest rates of cancer, infant mortality, diabetes and asthma. In the chapter “Asthma and Diabetes within the Puerto Rican Population,” Rosofsky and Aponte examine the two health conditions that have received the most attention in the literature and public discourse over the last decade, and with good reason. Asthma is a chronic disease that has no cure and can be triggered by a host of environmental toxins. Although genetics play a role, such environmental factors as higher exposure to pollutants and allergens have been linked to the spread of asthma. As for diabetes, in 2013 the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimated that the rate of diabetes prevalence among Puerto Ricans of 10.1%, which was higher than it was for other ethnic groups.Genetics, cultural factors, and access to health care services, as in the case of asthma, play a role in inducing a high incidence of diabetes among Puerto Ricans. In addition, physical activity and dietary customs also play an important role.

**Given the great need for alleviating the adverse circumstances affecting many Puerto Ricans, civic and political engagement should be a high priority.**

The management of asthma is influenced by access to health insurance, family-based supports, and access to health facilities. Community strategies in prevention and management can help mitigate the incidence and costs to families of both asthma and diabetes. The authors advocate for the implementation of such programs as education, patient navigators, and community health care workers that have proven to be effective in Puerto Rican and other Latino communities. In this context, popular education and healthy neighborhood initiatives focusing on diabetes, asthma, and alcohol consumption may help reduce health disparities.

Most of these health disparities are partly related to environmental, nutritional, and other social conditions. For example, diabetes is related to diet and alcohol consumption, and asthma is related to family poverty and access to health care resources. The CDC has estimated that two-thirds of the disparities in infant-mortality rates between Puerto Rican and non-Hispanic whites are attributable to preterm-related causes of death, while congenital malformations accounted for only 6% of the difference.

Civic and political participation play a determinant role in the improvement of social conditions affecting any community. Given the great need for alleviating the adverse circumstances affecting many Puerto Ricans, civic and political engagement should be a high priority. Yet one of the puzzling findings of political science is the low level of participation in electoral processes among stateside Puerto Ricans—in stark contrast with the electoral intensity and voter participation among Puerto Ricans living on the island.

In the chapter “Puerto Rican Political and Civic Participation in the United States,” Vargas-Ramos takes a look at the stateside Puerto Rican population and its political and civic engagement. Although, voting is the most common form of Puerto Ricans' involvement in the political process, only about half of eligible Puerto Ricans voted in 2008. This turnout rate was commensurate with the Latino population as a whole, higher than the largest Latino subgroups (i.e., Mexicans), but lower than some Latino subgroups, such as Cubans or South Americans. This pattern of political participation is confirmed by other indicators, such as contributing to or working for political campaigns or attending meetings where political issues are discussed.

Despite the overall picture suggested by the data on political engagement, there must be more to the story. Stateside Puerto Ricans have made great strides in the political arena as evidenced by the number of elected representatives serving in Congress and the scores of state legislators, mayors, and municipal officials in office throughout the country. How do we explain that despite showing lower rates of electoral and civic engagement, Puerto Ricans have made significant strides in the political arena and elected a considerable number of state and federal government officials?

Vargas-Ramos asserts that Puerto Ricans benefited from the social and political reforms of the 1960s that created state and local districts, which facilitated the election of previously unrepresented minorities. However, an
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